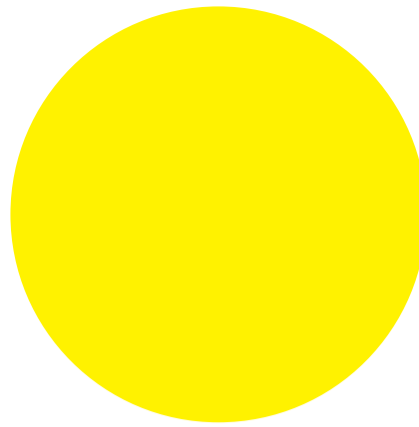




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# Iran Daily

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EXCLUSIVE



### The significance of Vietnam in the world



By Reza Yeganehshakib  
Lecturer at CSU

PERSPECTIVE

Vietnam is evolving as a growing power in the middle of the Indo-Pacific region and an increasingly significant partner for several chief global players.

The area of Vietnam is 331,699 square kilometers, holding 103 million people. The country's capital city is Hanoi, and Vietnam's life expectancy is 71 years for men and 79 years for women.

The country used to be one of the world's poorest and most isolated countries. Now, Vietnam is a middle-income country with a vibrant, young population and an auspicious future.

Since the country joined ASEAN in 1997, she has played a significant part in regional diplomacy and development. Her foreign policy's goal is to act as a "friend and reliable partner to all countries in the international community". Vietnam has established partnerships with Japan, China, India, Russia, and other Western countries like the United States and the European Union nations.

Although the ensuing effects of COVID-19 have been hard to control, Vietnam's economy has been growing at the highest rate in the entire Southeast Asia region. The country's economic strength, which creates a suitable ground for absorbing investment can be summarized as followed.

Vietnam is in a very strategic place, which makes it an important destination for manufacturing and China+1. She is located along shipping and transport routes, bordering South China, and centered along East Asia. Vietnam has a growing economy with a strong GDP growth consistently outperforming its global and regional equals. In 2022, the country experienced a high record of 8.0% y/y growth, which was 3.3% in the first quarter of 2023.

Vietnam has a stable government with a concrete economic vision, reasonable policy control, low investment obstacles, and robust incentive schemes relative to similar markets.

Doing business with Vietnam is remarkably easy. The country has set a record in the fair and improving ease of doing business rankings for foreign investors.

Vietnam has a large and young labor force of nearly 60 million workers, which is growing by 1 million workers every year.

Vietnam has matured Economic Zones, Industrial Parks, Business Districts, and Residential Centers.

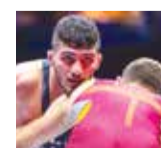
Vietnam has a strong Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) environment. The FDI has been \$19.7 billion in 2021 projects disbursed and \$31.2 billion including paid-in capital.

Vietnam is experiencing growing consumer spending. The country's population is exceeding 103 million, with a swiftly growing middle class and mounting services sector that surpasses 40% of GDP.

Vietnam has a strong network of free trade agreements (FTA), and she is a signatory of more than 18 free trade agreements, giving trade advantages through countries in APAC, ASEAN, Europe, and elsewhere globally. Page 2 >



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## NEWS IN BRIEF

**Russia reaffirms Iran's sovereignty over isles**

IRNA - Russia reaffirmed its respect for Iran's sovereignty over three Persian Gulf islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa following Tehran's protest over its stance on the issue during a joint conference with some Arab countries.

During a meeting with the Iranian Ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali, Mikhail Bogdanov, the Russian president's special representative for the Middle East, underscored his country's firm stance toward Iran as a friendly country.

**Iraqi officials: Iran barter deal doesn't violate sanctions**

AP - Iraqi officials defended a deal inked to barter oil for gas with Iran, saying that the deal does not violate US sanctions on Tehran and that it will help alleviate a worsening electricity crisis in Iraq.

A previous arrangement, in which Iraq was buying gas from Iran and paying dollars for it, was held up because Washington declined to approve sanctions waivers. That, in turn, led Iran to cut the gas supply, triggering severe power shortages in Iraq.

**Iranian border guards injured in blast**

IRNA - At least four Iranian border guards were injured after their car was hit by an explosive device in the southeastern city of Mirjaveh in Sistan and Baluchestan Province near the Pakistan border.

One of the victims is in critical condition. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the explosion.

# Chinese envoy: Tehran-Riyadh thaw sets example for settling disputes

## Beijing supports Iran's BRICS membership

## International Desk

Chinese ambassador to Tehran described a recent Beijing-brokered rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia as a successful effort at holding dialogue for resolving disputes.

In an interview with ISNA, Chang Hua referred to an initiative on global security proposed by the Chinese president, saying that the restoration of relations between Tehran and Riyadh is a successful example of this global security initiative.

He said that China is committed to enhancing regional peace and stability through the initiative.

"China maintains positive relationships with all countries in the region. Last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Saudi Arabia, and earlier this year, Iran's president also visited China," Chang Hua said.

"The presidents of Iran, China, and Saudi Arabia engaged in discussions on regional peace and security. Both Iran and Saudi



Arabia expressed their commitment to restoring bilateral relations and ensuring peace and stability in the region, a stance that China welcomes," he said. Back in March, Beijing successfully mediated

talks between Tehran and Riyadh that led to the Persian Gulf littoral states' signing of a deal enabling the restoration of their diplomatic ties.

The Chinese diplomat also said Beijing sup-

ports Iran's membership in the BRICS nations group.

When asked if China will continue to support Iran's membership in organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization,

the Chinese diplomat specifically said that China certainly supports Iran's membership in the BRICS organization. Although, the consent of other member states is necessary for the membership.

## Baqeri urges enhanced security cooperation with Pakistan



IRNA

Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri said Iran and Pakistan should enhance military relations and boost joint defense-security cooperation in the region.

Baqeri was meeting on Saturday with Pakistan's Chief of

the Army General Asim Munir, who is in Tehran at the head of a high-ranking delegation, Press TV reported.

The top Iranian general said the records show the two neighboring countries can count on the improvement of cooperation in various fields.

Over the recent years, Tehran and Islamabad have been working towards enhancing relations, bilateral economic ties, and mutual efforts aimed at combating terrorism in the areas that straddle the border.

On July 9, four armed terrorists and two Iranian police officers were killed in an attack on a police station in the city of Zahedan, the capital of Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan. Sistan and Baluchestan borders Pakistan and Afghanistan. It has been the scene of several terrorist attacks against civilians and security forces in recent years.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist



## The significance of ...



AFP

Vietnam has been successfully integrated with legal works. The country is a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a signatory of most major worldwide intellectual property protection conventions, protocols, and agreements.

However, Vietnam's rapid economic growth is putting pressure on its energy sources, especially since there have been power outage problems for businesses nationwide.

The Ukraine conflict and subsequent sanctions on Russia have made many countries — especially in Europe — seek alternative energy sources, leading to an increase in the price of coal and other energy sources. This particularly makes things harder for Vietnam as almost 53% of its electricity is supplied by burning coal. Its other major sources of electricity-generating power are hydro (consisting of

26%), natural gas (26%), and non-hydro renewable (around 5%). This hunger for energy sources can be satisfied by importing natural gas, particularly in the form of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

Vietnamese government plans to import LNG in the southern part of the country to help fulfill the rising demand for gas, particularly in the power sector. PetroVietnam (PV) Gas, a subsidiary of PetroVietnam, is developing the 67 Bcf/y-Thi Vai LNG terminal in the Vung Tau province in southern Vietnam. This terminal is scheduled to serve industrial and power consumers in the nearby area. A second terminal, Son My LNG, is planned to be built in several phases, with the first phase having a capacity of 86 Bcf/y. Son My LNG is intended to serve a new gas-fired power project in southern Vietnam. The Vietnamese government expects both terminals to come online in 2023.

This provides a great opportunity for countries that like to expand energy cooperation with Vietnam, especially by offering better delivery and competitive prices in the market. Although Vietnam still satisfies almost half of the country's energy need with coal, the current rising cost of coal and the global concerns over carbon emissions, greenhouse gasses accumulation, acid rains, and several other serious negative environmental impacts of burning coals seem to encourage the country to import more natural gas to replace coal. The latter may seem cheaper, but the long-term health impacts on Vietnam and the neighboring countries, combined with attractive terms, will eventually lead coal-burning countries to balance growth rate with burning high-emission fuels like coal and go toward increasing importation of natural gas.



By Ebrahim Beheshti  
Staff writer

# Iran-Vietnam cooperation to increase: *Ambassador Huy*

During a meeting that explored the future prospects of Iran-Vietnam relations, a book titled '50 Years of Iran-Vietnam Relations' was officially unveiled. The event was attended by Ambassador of Vietnam in Tehran Luong Quoc Huy and Abed Akbari, the author of the book.

The occasion took place yesterday at the Iran Cultural & Press Institute, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Iran and Vietnam. The event was organized under the patronage of Iran Daily, in collaboration with the Tehran International Studies and Research Institute, known as Abrar.

The ceremony began with the national anthems of both countries, followed by greetings offered by Ali Kaka-Dezfuli the managing director of Iran Daily. Afterwards, the Vietnam envoy expressed gratitude toward the organizers of the event and highlighted the historical trajectory of the political relations between the two nations.

Huy said that official relations between Tehran and Hanoi began in 1973, when the US war against Vietnam came to an end. Initially, the relationship did not witness significant progress due to various reasons, but over time, it gradually developed.

Furthermore, the envoy pointed out that over the course of five decades of political ties between Iran and Vietnam, officials from both countries had engaged in meetings at various levels. Notably, between 1995 and 2018, the presidents of the Republic of Iran, namely Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Hassan Rouhani, as well as the speakers of the Iranian Parliament, Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri and Ali Larijani, had all visited Vietnam.

In this context, Huy announced that Vietnam's National Assembly (Parliament) Chairman Vuong Dinh Hue would visit Tehran within the next three weeks, in response to an invitation extended by his Iranian counterpart.



Highlighting Vietnam's strategic foreign policy of enhancing cooperation with all nations, the ambassador emphasized the president of Vietnam's commitment to strengthening relations between the peoples, governments, and intellectual communities of both countries.

He regarded the newly-unveiled book as a comprehensive portrayal of the ties between the two nations and expressed his optimism that the book, with its extensive use of documents and sources, would serve as a valuable resource for Iranian researchers.

According to the ambassador, the book aims to provide a "realistic" perspective on the issues

concerning both countries. He expressed his hope that the book would be made accessible to the public, allowing for an accurate understanding of Vietnam's realities and its relationship with Iran. Highlighting the significant positions of Iran in West Asia and Vietnam in South Asia, the ambassador emphasized the potential for significant advancements in economic cooperation between the two countries.

He expressed satisfaction with the current level of bilateral relations and added, "I believe there are boundless opportunities remaining in the relations between our nations, especially in the realm of people-to-people connections. I hope the publica-

tion of this book will serve as an excellent catalyst for enhancing our countries' ties."

Furthermore, the ambassador pointed to Iran's status as a great country in the Middle East, possessing substantial potential for further economic development. He expressed hope for the lifting of Western sanctions against Iran and drew attention to Vietnam's history of enduring sanctions imposed by major powers, including China, the US, and other Western nations.

"Nevertheless, we managed to overcome these sanctions.

The Vietnamese ambassador acknowledged the economic challenges experienced this year, attributing them to global factors

such as the conflict in Ukraine and the trade tensions between China and the US. Despite these obstacles, the ambassador expressed a positive outlook on the advancement of bilateral cooperation between Hanoi and Tehran. Furthermore, Huy expanded on the upcoming three-day visit by Vietnam's National Assembly chief to Iran, scheduled for August 8. He said the primary objective of this trip is to engage in discussions regarding the enhancement of bilateral relations, particularly in the economic domain. The agenda for the visit includes a business meeting, where the two sides will explore potential opportunities, and the Vietnamese top lawmaker will

elaborate on Hanoi's policy toward Tehran.

## Trade capacity of \$2b

Also addressing the unveiling ceremony, Mehrdad Fakhraei Lahiji, a consultant to the CEO of Abrar Institute, said that the profound historical and civilization ties between the two nations were resilient against transient political events.

Lahiji emphasized that the contemporary history of both nations has offered abundant opportunities, and all endeavors aimed at fostering and strengthening these longstanding connections are firmly grounded in their shared historical legacy and deep public affection.

He drew attention to the trade volume between the two nations, referencing the statistics provided by Iranian customs that revealed it surpassed \$120 million two years ago. Notably, Vietnam's imports to Iran amounted to \$41 million, while Iran's exports to Vietnam amounted to approximately \$82 million.

However, Lahiji noted that these statistics fell short of the existing potential. Taking into account Vietnam's membership in the ASEAN, as well as Iran's membership in ECO and the Eurasian Economic Union, he asserted that the bilateral exchange level could increase to \$2 billion.

In order to achieve this, Lahiji stressed that the governments of Iran and Vietnam need to establish certain infrastructures and tools to facilitate trade development. "These measures include implementing the 2020 trade deal for sea-air transportation, establishing a monetary and financial mechanism, creating a system of regular shipping lines, initiating direct flights between the two countries, and paying attention to enhancing joint investments," he concluded.

## Iran's energy can stoke Vietnam's economic growth



Iran's Ambassador to Vietnam, Ali-Akbar Nazari, first expressed his gratitude to the organizers of the specialized meeting focusing on the Iran-Vietnam relationship. In a video message to the event, he hailed the occasion as a "valuable opportunity" to delve into the extensive history shared by the two nations over the past five decades.

According to Nazari, historical records indicate that the earliest interactions between Iranians and Vietnamese can be traced back to the ancient Parthian Empire in Iran. However, it was in the

15th century that Iranian merchants began venturing into South Asia, engaging in trade with various nations in the region including Thailand and Vietnam. The ambassador also mentioned Alexandre de Rhodes, a figure renowned for designing Vietnam's modern alphabet, who passed away in Isfahan while on a trip to Iran. Nazari pointed to the annual visits made by Vietnamese people to De Rhodes' tomb in Isfahan, underscoring the cultural ties between the two nations. Moreover, the ambassador said that throughout history,

the relations between Iran and Vietnam have been consistently characterized by friendship, development of cooperation, and mutual interests.

"In the present era, these ties have been further reinforced in alignment with the principles of multilateralism and opposition to unilateralism," he added. Nazari attributed the strength of the bilateral relationship to their shared values such as "the pursuit of freedom, independence, and support for multilateralism". Furthermore, the ambassador pointed out Vietnam's impressive economic growth of 7% over the past decade, highlighting the country's increasing need for energy to sustain this development.

"Iran as one of the world's largest energy suppliers has the potential for economic collaboration with Vietnam," he said. Nazari expressed hope that in the next 50 years, Iran and Vietnam would foster even deeper and more robust relations through enhanced synergy between the two countries.

## Culture, a secure anchor for relationships



In a welcoming address, the Managing Director of Iran Daily Ali Kaka-Dezfuli expressed his satisfaction with organizing the ceremony to mark the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Iran and Vietnam, titled "The Perspective of Iran-Vietnam Relation," in collaboration with Tehran International Studies and Research Institute.

Emphasizing the cultural commonalities between the two nations, Kaka-Dezfuli highlighted how these cultural ties contribute to

fostering closer relations between nations, more so than political and economic factors.

"Especially in today's world, where the role of nations as actors in the international arena has become more prominent, it is culture that can determine the path that communication between two countries follows, and everything else is formed around it," Kaka-Dezfuli remarked.

"I am happy that we here in Iran Daily can play a larger role than being a mere media; Iran Daily tries to

take an in-depth look at issues, not a passing one, and maybe that's why we decided to hold this series of meetings in collaboration with a research institute."

The chief of Iran Daily said the newspaper seeks to lay the groundwork for the development of diplomatic relations and demonstrate that diplomacy can benefit from initiatives and creativity.

Kaka-Dezfuli stated that the primary objective of these meetings is to underscore the role of culture and identity in foreign relations.

"Iran and Vietnam both have a long and old historical background, and perhaps this has maintained the relationship between the two countries through time. Political and economic factors may play a stronger or weaker role at different times due to the unstable nature of the international [arena]; But what is lasting is culture, which can always play the role of a secure anchor in relationships."



# Shushtar Historical Hydraulic Systems, an engineering marvel



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visitiran.ir



destinationiran.com

Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System is one of Iran's most amazing UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Located in the southwest of Iran, near the city of Ahvaz, it's an ensemble of dams, manmade rivers, bridges, mills, and even a castle, built 2,500 years ago, on the Karun River, Iran's largest river. Not only is it a masterpiece of engineering, but it creates a stunning scenery.

**An incredible complex**  
Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System

is an incredible complex, dating back to the era of Darius the Great, in the fifth century BCE. The Achaemenids had found a way to control the water flow to irrigate the semi-arid lands of the region and provide water to the population, [surfiran.com](http://surfiran.com) wrote.

It is not just a dam, but a vast network of bridges, canals, dams, basins, cascades, watermills, natural and man-made rivers, diversion and irrigation systems. It also has defensive structures and a place called "sika", dedicated to rest and recreation. At the center of the whole system was the Salasel Castel, functioning as an operation center of the hydraulic system.

To picture the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System in a simple way, we have to start with the Karun River. Two canals derive from the river, among which the Gargar canal is still in use. The Achaemenids first built the Gargar Dam to contain the water flow. From this dam, three tunnels lead the water into the complex, which is then dispatched among the various canals to serve different purposes. The water then pours out like a waterfall into basins and continues its way to irrigate other areas.

## What was the complex made for?

Evidently, the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System was built with a precise goal, not a simple display of know-how or power. Every single structure of the complex has a specific function and application, all being interconnected.

The main function of the system is to provide water equally to the city, and to protect it by preventing the Karun River from overflowing.

It allowed the irrigation of semi-arid lands and mills, playing a crucial role in the development of agriculture and industry. The complex made possible the construction of a new town, as well as planting of orchards and farming over an area of 40,000 hectares.

Eventually, Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System was also a means of transportation, communication and trade.

## A UNESCO masterpiece of creative genius

This interconnected ensemble is recognized by UNESCO as an amazing example of human interaction with

the environment. It was registered as a World Heritage Site in 2009 and is inscribed as a "masterpiece of creative genius". The site indeed reflects the knowledge of the Elamites and Mesopotamians, among the world's oldest civilizations.

The site is exceptional because of the diversity of its civil engineering structures and their use. The Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System would indeed provide urban water supply, irrigate lands and power mills among other functions.

Most of the complex is built with stone, brick and mortar. Part of the structures have been damaged and disappeared over time, but many have remained, a few still functioning.

Among the oldest parts dating back from the Achaemenid era (550-330 BCE) is the dam "Band Mizan", a true masterpiece of ancient engineering. This dam divides the Karun River into two branches to regulate its flow. The Salasel also dates back to the Achaemenid era.

## From the Achaemenids to the Sassanids

Later, under the Sassanid era (224-651 CE), many constructions were added. Several important bridges were built over a manmade river, one of which was the Shahdorvan Weir Bridge. It was built by Roman soldiers and engineers made captive by King Shapur I, along with the Roman Emperor Valerian. The Lashkar Weir Bridge is another important bridge built by the Sassanid, as it played a critical role in connecting the city of Shushtar to other villages and channeling the water to increase cultivation.

With the expansion of the city, many other structures were added, such as stables, barracks, baths, a bakery, a kitchen, and courtyards, to become, at some point, the residence of the governor of Khuzestan Province.

## When to visit?

Because of its location, most travelers miss their chance to visit Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System during their trip to Iran. While it's one of the most beautiful and interesting UNESCO sites in Iran, it is indeed situated outside the "classic route" that focuses mainly on central Iran. Yet, it's worth making a small detour.



destinationiran.com



eghamat24.com



rokna.net

Keep in mind that Khuzestan is Iran's warmest province: In the summer, temperatures can exceed 50°C. It's thus recommended to visit Shushtar between October and May.

You can also combine your visit with two other interesting historical sites nearby. One is Choqa Zanbil, an ancient pyramidal structure built by the Elamites in 1250 BCE. And the other one is the historical city of Susa, once one of the most important in the region, which holds the Tomb of Daniel.

## Revival of Persian poetry

By the late nineteenth century all the trademarks of what would come to define 'literary return' as conceptualised by commentators like Mohammad Taqi Bahar in the twentieth century were falling into place. While the narrative of 'literary return' was not yet fully formed, authors in Zand and Qajar began to articulate the idea that the revival of Persian poetry and a return to the style of the masters were occurring before their eyes, to wipe away the last vestiges of the bad stylistics dominating the Persianate sphere.

Historians, litterateurs and anthropologists like Lutfali 'Azar' Bigdeli, 'Abd al-Razzaq' Maftun' Dunbuli, Muhammad Fazil Khan Garrusi and Reza-Qoli Khan Hedayat offered varying impressions about the stylistic shift under way and the poetic communities responsible for carrying it out. These authors' keen observations of literary developments demonstrate how the politically tenuous times of eighteenth- and nineteenth century Iran did not hinder their ability to offer critical opinions about the major trends in poetry

happening around them.

In actuality, the lack of political stability in eighteenth-century Iran was a crucial factor in instigating a movement of poets there to 'return' to the classical styles of the masters.

The Isfahan-born, peripatetic poet Azar was perhaps the first author in Iran to intimate a need to return to the masters in response to the en vogue poetic practice later associated with the 'Indian Style'. Writing in his 'Azar Fire Temple' (Atashkadeh-ye Azar), the only major biographi-

cal anthology to emerge in Iran in the eighteenth century, he notes that poets in his home town of Isfahan 'had a great zeal for the construction of poetry', but because 'the method of the ancient writers was abolished during this time, there was no outpouring of excellent poetry from them'.

Azar's praise of the talents of poets while at once bemoaning their detachment from the style of 'the ancient writers' represents yet another of the back-handed compliments in the historiography of the so-called 'Indian Style'.



Manuscript of Azar Bigdeli's Atashkadeh

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter, 'Persian Literary Historiography of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', from a book entitled, 'Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700-1900', written by Kevin L. Schwartz, published by Edinburgh University Press.



# Iran confirms freestyle lineup for Wrestling World Championships



◀ Mohammad Nokhodi will be Iran's freestyle 79kg wrestler in September's World Championships after winning the gold medal at the UWW Ranking Series in Budapest, Hungary.  
● UWW

## Sports Desk

Two-time world silver medalist Mohammad Nokhodi as well as Amirmohammad Yazdani and Milad Valizadeh sealed their spots in September's Wrestling World Championships as Iran completed the 10-man squad for the freestyle competitions in Belgrade. The trio were in action in the UWW Ranking Series event in Budapest on Thursday and Friday – which also served as the final round of the Iranian trials for the World Championships. Nokhodi represented the country in the 79kg

contests – alongside Ali Savadkouhi – and defeated Georgian Vladimeri Gamkrelidze 3-0 for the ultimate prize. The Iranian came within inches of the world gold over the past two years, only to come short against American sensation Jordan Burroughs in the final on both occasions. With the six-time world champion absent in September's world meet, Nokhodi will be looking to make it third time lucky in the Serbian capital. Savadkouhi stole the headlines in last year's FS World Cup by coming out victorious against Burroughs

– a first triumph over the legendary wrestler in 15 attempts for the Iranians – but his pursuit of a place in the world event came to an end after a last-eight defeat against Georgia's Avtandil Kentchadze, who was later beaten by Nokhodi in the semifinals. Yazdani, meanwhile, had a below-par run in the 70kg contests as back-to-back defeats against American Joseph McKenna and Kazakhstan's Sanzhar Doszhanov saw the 2021 world silver winner settle for a fifth-spot finish in Budapest. However, Yazdani was given a second chance in about

against his fellow Iranian Mohammad Bakhshi – who was stunned by Egyptian Amr Hussien in the quarterfinals – and made the most of it by a 6-0 win to book the ticket for Belgrade. The quest for the Iranian 57kg berth also went down to a head-to-head battle after both Valizadeh and Ahmad Mohammadnejad-Javan failed to finish on the podium. Valizadeh was knocked out by USA's Zane Richards in the quarterfinals while Mohammadnejad-Javan suffered a 5-0 defeat against China's Zou Wanhao in the bronze medal match. Valizadeh still managed to

edge out his compatriot 4-3 in the decider for a place in the Iranian team. The three wrestlers will join reigning world champions Rahman Amouzad (65kg) and Kamran Qassempour (92kg) plus Reza Atri (57kg), Younes Emami (74kg), eight-time world and Olympic medalist Hassan Yazdani (86kg), Mojtaba Goleij (97kg), and Amirhossein Zare' (125kg) in the World Championships as Iran – runner-up to USA last year – will be chasing a first freestyle crown in a decade. Qassempour could still miss out on a third successful world gold after limping off injured in a training

session in June, though he insisted last week that he would recover in time for the visit to Belgrade. Should the Iranian be ruled out of the World Championships, he will be replaced by young prodigy Amir-Ali Azarpira – a two-time world under-23 champion. Azarpira took part in the Budapest tournament and delivered some impressive performances – including an emphatic 11-0 victory over last year's world bronze winner Miriani Maisuradze of Georgia – but was unlucky to leave the event empty-handed due to a leg injury before the semifinals.

## Record-breaker Paralympian Afroz grabs world javelin gold



● paralympic.ir

## Sports Desk

Iran's Saeid Afroz stole the show at the World Para Athletics Championships in Paris on Friday by shattering the world record en route to the javelin throw gold. Representing the country in the F34 class, Afroz – gold medalist at the Tokyo Paralympics – registered a remarkable throw of 40.27m for the ultimate prize, finishing above Colombian duo Mauricio Valencia and Diego Meneses, who settled for the silver and bronze medals respectively. This was a third gold for Iran in Paris, following victorious shotput campaigns for Mehdi Olad and Rashid Masjedi earlier in the competitions. Olad's 13.79m throw sealed a second world gold for the Tokyo Olympic champion in the F11 event, while Masjedi topped the F53 table thanks to a successful 8.49m throw. Olad won his second world medal in the French capital on Saturday – a discus throw silver in the F11 class with 43.73m. Also a reigning Paralympic champion, Amir Khosravani left the French capital with a long jump silver as a best attempt of 7.26m saw the Iranian finish second to Uzbekistan's Daniyoz Saliev in the T12 class. In the women's contests, Hashemiyeh Motaqian's successful 22.95m attempt saw the Tokyo Paralympic gold medalist bag a bronze in the javelin throw F56 event. The five Iranian medalists were joined by Elnaz Darabian, Elham Salehi, Amanollah Papi, and Alireza Mokhtari in securing a quota for next year's Paralympic Games in Paris.

## Iranian sprinter Fasihi wins Asian 100m silver; Taftian bags men's bronze

### Sports Desk

Iran's Farzaneh Fasihi won the women's 100m silver in the Asian Athletics Championships in Bangkok, Thailand, while Hassan Taftian took the men's bronze. An Asian Indoor 60m champion in February, Fasihi crossed the finish line in 11.39 seconds to stand next to Singaporean gold medalist Shanti Pereira (11.20 seconds) on the podium. China's Ge Manqi took the bronze with 11.40 seconds. Fasihi's compatriot Hamideh Esmailnejad, whose 11.33 record in the preliminary round

was a new national high, finished fourth in the final. In the men's 100m final, Taftian – a champion in 2017 – settled for the third place behind Japan's Hiroki Yanagita (10.02 seconds) and Saudi sprinter Abdullah Abkar Mohammed (10.19 seconds) with 10.23 seconds. Elsewhere in the competition, Mehdi Saberi added a silver to Iran's medal count on Friday – thanks to a 19.98m throw in the men's shotput contests. Indian Tajinderpal Singh Toor – a gold medalist in the 2018 Asian Games – tallied 20.23m for the top spot, with Ivan Ivanov of Kazakhstan taking the bronze with 19.87m.

## Aliakbari beats Canadian Joynson, taunts Malykhin for world heavyweight title

ASIAN MMA – Mixed martial arts fighter Amir Aliakbari looks set to challenge for the ONE Championship heavyweight title. The Iranian was supposed to face off with Anatoly Malykhin after his victory over Canadian Dustin Joynson at ONE Fight Night 12 on Friday but the plan was scrapped after the two men nearly came to blows. Malykhin was invited into the ring and immediately began to taunt Aliakbari, although it wasn't clear exactly what was being said. The two men briefly wrestled with one another before the altercation was broken up and the Russian escorted back to his seat. They both ended up in an awkward clinch although it is possible one of them might have been simply trying to embrace the oth-



◀ Iranian Amir Aliakbari celebrates his victory over Canadian Dustin Joynson at ONE Fight Night 12 in Bangkok, Thailand, on July 14, 2023.  
● ONE CHAMPIONSHIP

er. Whether or not the plan was to announce a rematch we don't know but Aliakbari is clearly the number one contender. The Iranian has well and truly turned his ONE Cham-

pionship career around after losing his first two fights with the promotion. He will have an opportunity to avenge one of those losses when he rematches Malykhin later this year.

Aliakbari looked sharp in the early exchanges as he fired off hooks to the head. The Iranian drove Joynson back with a series of jabs and had the Canadian trapped in the corner. He fired off a hard right hand to the head and with Joynson's hands high Aliakbari was easily able to secure a takedown. He immediately secured side control and trapped the Canadian in the crucifix position. With both arms pinned Joynson's head was completely exposed and Aliakbari took advantage to land several punches. Eventually the Canadian decided he had had enough with the tap coming at the 1:48 mark. With the win Aliakbari improves to 13-3 and probably secures a shot at the heavyweight title. Joynson drops to 7-2-0-1.



● olympic.ir



## Iran, Russia mulling establishment of joint shipping company: Ambassador



IRNA

Iran's ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali said Tehran and Moscow are discussing the possibility of establishing a joint shipping company, as the two sides work to further bolster strategic cooperation.

Jalali said in an interview with the Rossiya-24 TV Channel that the creation of a joint shipping company was discussed between Iranian and Russian officials as part of efforts to "strengthen" Tehran-Moscow's shipping fleet.

"There is a need to reinforce our ports; there is a need to strengthen the shipping fleet. Even to create a joint shipping company. I just had a conversation with First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia Andrey Belousov. Iran's Minister of Transport also discussed this topic with him. Our Russian counterparts welcomed the creation of a joint shipping company," the diplomat said.

Countries need to develop ports and link them "like railroads," he said. "The potential for freight shipping is huge there."

Moscow and Tehran are working together on multiple fronts, facilitating bilateral trade and business, expediting the completion of transit routes including the North-South Transit Corridor and its Caspian Sea component, and linking their banking systems to facilitate financial transactions.

The development comes as Iran and Russia plan to open multiple new areas of cooperation by finalizing a long-term strategic cooperation agreement.

According to official reports, trade between the two countries doubled in 2022. Russia invested \$2.76 billion during the Iranian calendar year that ended in March, becoming Iran's largest foreign investor.

The two sides also aim to reduce the use of the dollar in regional and international transactions, joined by several countries, in order to minimize the West's dominance over the global economy.

The bilateral cooperation comes despite draconian Western sanctions, spearheaded by the US, on both Tehran and Moscow.

Iran has been hit by unilateral US sanctions, imposed by Washington after former president Donald Trump declared an unprovoked withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 and targeted the Iranian economy with what he called a "maximum pressure" campaign.

# Iran targets \$3b in annual trade with Africa: Official

The Iranian government aims to reach a minimum of \$3 billion in annual trade with Africa by 2025, said an Iranian official. Alireza Peyman-Pak, the deputy minister of Agriculture, made the remarks in an interview with the Iran Economy newspaper, which was published on Saturday.

He pointed to the recent visit of Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi to Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe and said the visit to Africa will have a positive impact on bilateral relations, especially in economic fields.

Peyman-Pak, who is the former head of the Trade Promotion Organization,

noted that under previous governments, Iran's annual trade with Africa was less than \$500 million, but the current administration has successfully increased it to \$1.2 billion. President Raeisi's recent visit to Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe marks the beginning of a new phase of economic and trade cooperation between Iran and Africa, the official said.

The potential for collaboration in various sectors — particularly in petrochemicals, construction, healthcare, tourism, raw materials, and agricultural products — provides opportunities for the Iranian private sector to



IRNA

benefit from Africa's resources and contribute to Iran's economic growth, he noted.

Peyman-Pak noted that agriculture was a main topic

during the president's visit to Uganda due to the African country's abundant water resources.

By utilizing Uganda's capacity for extra-territorial

cultivation, Iran can import agricultural products more efficiently and at better prices, thereby ensuring food security, he said.

## Iran's grain production expected to exceed 20m tons: FAO

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its latest report entitled "Prospects of Crops and Food Situation" predicted the total production volume of Iran's grains in the current Crop Year to reach 20.6 million tons. Iran produced 20.6 million tons of grains in 2022 and according to FAO prediction, will produce the same amount in 2023,

the report added, Tasnim news agency reported. Iran's production of wheat will increase by 500,000 tons in 2023 compared to a year earlier, reaching 13.5 million tons in the current year.

FAO had put Iran's grain reserves at the end of 2022 at 12.5 million tons while the country had produced 11.8 million tons of grains in 2021.



IRNA

Accordingly, Iran accounted for about 1.5 percent of the world's total grain reserves at the end of 2022.

## India envoy: Chabahar a golden opportunity for New Delhi

India's Ambassador to Tehran Rudra Gaurav Shresth said Iran's southeastern Chabahar port is a golden opportunity for India to expand its economic ties. "Chabahar's position in the expansion of trade exchanges in the Middle East, Eurasia, and even Europe is unique," Shresth said during his visit to the port on Friday, IRNA reported. "We planned this trip to

visit the port's infrastructure and implement our investment commitments," the ambassador maintained. The official called on the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to take the necessary measures for using the capacities of the Chabahar port. "The International North-South Transport Corridor



ANI

can serve as a safe and efficient route for landlocked countries in Central Asia to access the Indian Ocean, and we all must strive to realize the corridor's full potential," the official added.

## Expert recommends producing electric busses first

### Economy Desk

As the global automotive industry is increasingly transitioning to electric vehicles, an Iranian expert advised the country to prioritize the production of electric vehicles on the whole but specifically, direct investment toward electric buses rather than electric cars or motorcycles.

Amir-Hassan Kakaei, a university professor, told IRNA on Saturday that by doing so, "Iran can capitalize on new technologies and gradually gain expertise

in maintaining this type of vehicle".

The expert however warned that there must be a "well-thought-out strategy, supporting infrastructure, and economic validation" for the successful development and utilization of electric vehicles in Iran.

He expressed regret that the mass production of electric vehicles and its associated prerequisites have not received adequate attention considering the current state of the automotive industry and societal expectations.

According to statistics,

there is substantial potential demand for at least 200,000 city and inter-city buses in the country, Kakaei said. However, he also warned that widespread utilization of electric buses without having the necessary infrastructure and prerequisites would only lead to dissatisfaction if issues arise.

The expert suggested that while specifically-designed engines and gearboxes may need to be imported for electric buses, their chassis and bodies can be domestically produced. He emphasized that Iran's ex-

pertise in bus manufacturing can help address any challenges encountered in the process.

Kakaei also highlighted China as a role model, citing the country's successful implementation of incentives to promote the production and use of electric vehicles. He noted that despite Iran's existing capability in manufacturing "battery packs" and the collaboration between two major Iranian car companies — Iran Khodro and SAIPA — in making the first electric passenger car five years ago, tangible outcomes have yet to materialize.



IRNA

"To realize the significance of this endeavor within the country, a strategic plan that aligns with overarching policies must be devised. Moreover, it requires a phased implementation approach accompanied

by appropriate incentives. Furthermore, foundational infrastructure improvements such as increasing electricity production capacity and establishing multiple charging stations need to be prioritized," the expert said.

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**Notice of tender for export sale No. Z/1402/10**

**GolGohar Mining and Industrial Company**

Hereby GolGohar Mining & Industrial Co. announces selling and export 70,000 metric tons of Pellet (%Fe:65.00) on basis of F.O.B at Barco Jetty Bandar Abbas - Iran. Interested bidders should find tender documents at GolGohar website: www.gog.ir. All bids on conformity to tender instructions must be submitted no later than 14:00 P.M. on 18. Jul.2023 to GolGohar complex in sirjan (50 km in shiraz road). Bidders are invited to the transactions commission department of the seller with an introduction letter of interested buyer and personal identification of the representative. Tender results shall be announced at 10:00 A.M. on 19.Jul.2023 at the office of the Seller.

Analysis %		
Min	65.00	Fe
Max	1.0	FeO
Max	0.05	P
Max	0.01	S
Max	3.5	SiO2
Max	0.7	Al2O3
Max	0.9	CaO
Max	2.5	MgO
Ave 255		CCS(kg/p)
Min	90	8-16 mm%
Ave5		-6 mm%
Max	3.8	A.I%
Min	95	T.I%
19-24		Prosity%
Min	90	Reducibility%

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# Iran tops global, regional rankings for access to drinking water

## Social Desk

In a recent report released by the World Bank, Iran has emerged as the leader in global and West Asian access to drinking water, both in urban and rural areas. According to the report, an astonishing 99.83 percent of Iranians living in urban areas and 82 percent in rural areas have easy access to clean drinking water. These figures exceed the global averages of 85.7 percent in urban regions and 59.6 percent in rural areas, as well as the West Asian averages of 83.2 percent and 69.5 percent respectively, Press TV reported.

Iran's achievement can be attributed to its exceptional localization and production capabilities in the water industry. The report highlights Iran's domestic production of 80 percent of the necessary equipment for water treatment plants, 65 percent for sewage treatment plants, and an impressive 90 percent for water and sewage net-

works. Moreover, the country ensures water supply for almost 100 percent of its urban population, surpassing the global average.

The report sheds light on various indicators of Iran's thriving water industry. Iran's commitment to localizing production and optimizing efficiency has yielded exceptional results. Not only does Iran excel in equipment production, but it has also implemented efficient management practices, including the establishment of collaborative mechanisms for watershed management, water productivity enhancement, proper allocation of water resources, bulk delivery of agricultural water, installation of gauging tools, and the prevention of unauthorized water extraction.

Iran has also made significant strides in infrastructure development, such as the construction of dams, irrigation and drainage networks, and the creation of sewage facilities. These initiatives, coupled with



● PRESS TV

comprehensive water stress management strategies, reinforce Iran's commitment to securing reliable and accessible drinking water for its population.

The success and recognition Iran has garnered exemplify the transformative impact of adopting innovative approaches to water management and infrastructure

development. Through substantial changes in the water industry, Iran has positioned itself as a role model for other nations aiming to ensure water security and accessibility.

The country's achievements underscore the importance of sustainable strategies and collaborative efforts in addressing global and regional water challenges.

## Fire extinguishing system helped avert disaster in downtown Tehran

### Social Desk

A fire broke out in a commercial building warehouse in central Tehran, but a quick response from firefighters and an effective fire extinguishing system prevented a major disaster, according to the Tehran Fire and Safety Services Organization.

The fire was reported at 12:38 p.m. in a building located on Amirkabir St., South Nazem ol-Ateba St., said Seyyed Jalal Maleki, the organization's spokes-

person, according to ISNA. Firefighters from three stations were immediately dispatched to the scene. The first group of firefighters arrived approximately four minutes after the incident was reported. They found a warehouse, about 50 meters on the fifth floor of a five-story commercial building, ablaze. The warehouse, filled with spare parts and cardboard, was completely on fire. "Firefighters immediately began their efforts to extinguish the fire and managed

to put out the flames within minutes," Maleki said. Despite the heavy smoke that filled the air after the fire, a major catastrophe was averted thanks to the warehouse's fire extinguishing system. "There have been many incidents where such a fire has spread to several shops or a large part of the building," Maleki said. "In this case, the presence of an intelligent fire extinguishing system prevented the fire from spreading." A local resident also played

a part in controlling the fire due to his familiarity with fire extinguishers. After securing and cleaning the site, the firefighters returned to their stations. The organization's fire expert has begun an investigation into the cause of the fire. Mohammad Esmail Tavakoli, head of Tehran's medical emergency department, said that two emergency ambulances were dispatched to the scene. One person received emergency services on the spot.



● IRNA

The recent fire incident highlights the paramount importance of robust fire safety regulations. Thanks to the swift response of firefighters and the effectiveness of the fire extin-

guishing system, a major disaster was averted. This incident serves as a powerful reminder of the potential devastating consequences of neglecting fire safety measures. Mov-

ing forward, it is crucial that organizations and individuals prioritize the implementation and maintenance of rigorous fire safety protocols to safeguard lives and properties.

## Gov't aims to popularize environmental protection

### Social Desk

Vice president and head of the Department of the Environment (DoE), Ali Salajegheh, emphasized the government's commitment to popularizing, localizing, and encouraging public participation in environmental and national resource protection during a recent event.

Salajegheh noted that the government's successes in these areas have often been due to the capacity and support of the public, according to IRNA.

The comments were made on the sidelines of the unveiling ceremony for the National Environment Award's statue and poster, an event Salajegheh highlighted as a crucial pillar for cultural development and the expansion of environmental literacy.

Head of the DoE underscored the importance of the National Environment Award, stating that



● IRNA

it reviews and evaluates both individual and group actions in the form of real and legal personalities. He added that a serious demand for environmental protection has emerged at all levels of governance, often with the public leading the way. "This issue is evident in categories such as protection of water resources, waste management, expansion of green space and in general in playing the role of social responsibilities in the field of

environment and is commendable," Salajegheh said. Despite progress in promoting environmental protection culture, the official stressed the need for increased sensitivity and further measures. He expressed hope that the ethics and culture of environmental protection will become institutionalized in the country, and that initiatives like the National Environment Award will serve as a model for enhancing public participation.

## Iran's rainiest province faces severe rainfall shortage, latest data reveals

### Social Desk

National Climate and Drought Crisis Management Center of Iran's National Meteorological Organization has reported a concerning rainfall deficit in Gilan, the country's rainiest province.

According to recent data, the deficit has reached a staggering 199 mm, ISNA reported.

The Meteorological Organization's announcement highlights that Gilan typically receives approximately 794 mm of rainfall during the water year period up until this point. The water year, which spans from one September to the next, is considered a crucial period for assessing precipitation levels.

The shortage of rain is not limited to Gilan alone. Two other northern provinces in the country, Mazandaran and Golestan, are also grappling with

significant deficits in rainfall. Mazandaran has experienced a shortfall of about 144 mm, while Golestan has recorded 133 mm of rainfall deficiency. Consequently, these provinces rank second and third, respectively, after Gilan in terms of the largest rainfall deficits in the country. Additionally, Tehran province stands as the sixth province with a rainfall shortage of 107 mm.

Since the start of the current water year on September 23 of last year, the country has received a total of 181 mm of rain. This figure indicates a 20.5 percent decline compared to normal conditions, highlighting the severity of the overall rainfall shortage. The ramifications of this drought sit-

uation on agriculture, water resources, and the environment have yet to be fully assessed. Measures and strategies to mitigate the impact of the rainfall deficit will likely be crucial for the affected provinces to minimize potential consequences.

The National Climate and Drought Crisis Management Center continues to monitor the situation closely, as officials and experts work to address the challenges posed by this concerning weather pattern.



● ISNA



## Iran honors top books of the year



**IRNA** - The 40th Iran's Book of the Year Awards celebrated the top publications in various categories during a special ceremony held at Tehran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry on Saturday.

In the Encyclopedias and Dictionaries Section, the prestigious award went to 'Imam Khomeini Encyclopedia,' authored by a group of writers under the guidance of Seyyed Zia Mortazavi.

In the Islamic Philosophy Section, 'Hakim Sabzevari's Philosophical Innovations' by Hossein-Ali Sheidaan Sheed and Mohammad-Hadi Tavakkoli received commendation.

During the event, Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, presented the country's per capita reading statistics.

He stated, "In this regard, we have reliable national surveys that indicate our country's average reading time is 33 minutes. This figure excludes television programs, textbooks, study aids, and prayers."

Esmaeili also referenced the 34th Tehran International Book Fair, noting, "This year, we achieved virtual sales of over 1.4 million books, offering discounts and free shipping to ensure wide access for our readers."

## Iranian actor Khosro Amir-Sadeqi dies



**IRNA** - Iranian actor and cinema producer, Khosro Amir-Sadeqi, passed away at the age of 75.

Amir-Sadeqi made his mark in the entertainment industry with his notable roles in numerous films and TV series spanning over four decades.

One of his recent appearances was in the Iranian series 'Capital 6', showcasing his talent and versatility. Throughout his career, he played diverse characters in more than 30 films and television productions.

Not only an accomplished actor, but Amir-Sadeqi also ventured into film production, contributing to the creation of notable works such as 'Tehrani Boy', 'The Key to Marriage', and 'Bale Boroon'.

The funeral service for Amir-Sadeqi will take place on Sunday at Tehran's Artists' Section located at Behesht-e Zahra Cemetery, where he will be laid to rest.

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# Zoroastrian Sassanian inscription discovered in Fars

## Arts & Culture Desk

A group of researchers, during an expedition in Marvdasht, Iran, successfully discovered one of the largest inscriptions from Sassanian headstones related to a Zoroastrian devotee. Zoroastrian burials during the Sassanian period had remarkable diversity, depending on the social status and financial capabilities of individuals. During the period, burials took place in a number of different locations such as vault tombs, dolmens, rock-cut tombs, and chamber tombs. It is worth noting that rock-cut chambers, pit tombs, brick graves, and ossuaries were reserved for burying members of the higher classes of society. From some of these burials, inscriptions that introduce the deceased individuals are still being discovered to this day.

In this regard, Abolhasan Atabaki, an ancient languages and history researcher, reported the discovery of a large inscription alongside a carved brick ossuaries dating back to the late Sassanian period in an interview with ILNA. He pointed out that a description of the inscription has been previously published in Iranian scientific journals in collaboration with Najmeh Ebrahimi. Ebrahimi, a fellow re-

searcher specialized in history, noted that the inscription was first discovered and examined during a mountain expedition by Atabaki and is attributed to an ossuary from the late Sassanian period. In the base section of the ossuary, a small grooved line is engraved in a heptagonal shape, which served as a rainwater outlet for the ossuary. "The reason for this groove might be to ensure that rainwater does not penetrate into the tomb," she predicted.

Ebrahimi said, "In the lower section of this ossuary, there is a large stone inscription written in Pahlavi script, in four lines, in a lying position. It is related to this ossuary and an individual from the past." She continued, "The translation that we presented for the first time indicates that 'this tomb' (ossuary) was 'self-made' by a person named 'Hōrdād-gōšnasp'. In the last two lines of the stone inscription, it states, 'May eternal paradise be for him.' In addition to this inscription, there is another unfinished and older inscription reading 'ZNH dhmhk hy,' written vertically in the upper part of the mentioned inscription, which is probably related to this ossuary. However, due to the erosion and unevenness of the rock wall,

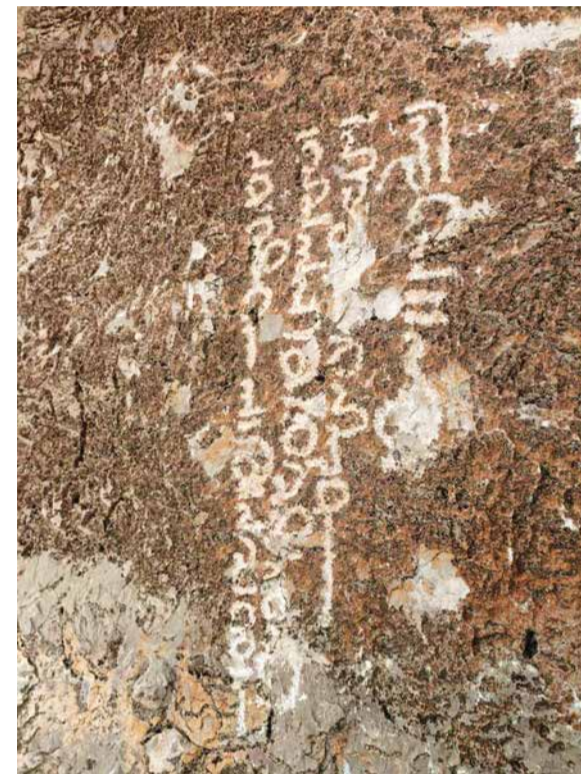
the continuation of writing on this inscription was discontinued, and intentionally, it was slightly blurred at the time. A newer and clearer inscription was written in its place, which is, in fact, the mentioned inscription".

Atabaki explained that ossuaries are referred to cubic-shaped cavities created in the walls of rocks or cliff-side formations, serving as repositories for the bones of deceased individuals in the Zoroastrian religion. After the passing of a person, according to Zoroastrian beliefs, for the "purification" of sacred elements, especially the soil, the body was ceremoniously placed in a sun tomb after undergoing the "sagdid" ritual (i.e. removal of the flesh from the bones by birds and scavenging animals). The remains, which mostly includes the bones, were then collected and buried in various tombs. Even after death, diverse rituals were performed at different times, a prominent example of which is the "commemoration of the Farvahar of the deceased people" (i.e. burying the ashes of the deceased). Despite religious pressures from Safavid rulers, some remnants of the ritual are still being practiced by residents of Marvdasht.

Atabaki admitted, "The most famous 'commemo-

ration of the Farvahar' rituals that have survived to this day are the 'ruz-e alafe' ceremonies, where children go to a plain and, after collecting tall grasses, place them in an 'upside-down' position on the doorstep and courtyard of their homes. They believe that on the occasion of Nowruz, the 'spirits of the deceased' enter their homes with joy and happiness (greenness). The clumps of grass are kept until the 'sizdah bedar' day to respect the ashes of the deceased."

The researcher mentioned another custom of note, wherein the people would bake thin, dry bread (local bread) on the ruz-e alafe and place them separately in the streets. It was believed that this was for the souls of the recently departed who had bid farewell to their perishable bodies. "The vivid image I remember from my childhood is that dogs would eat this bread, and the villagers believed that the reward greatly benefited the state of the deceased," Atabaki reminisced. And finally, in the last half of the night of sizdah bedar, they would stack three stones on top of each other and place them outside the courtyards and village gates, believing that they would prevent the spirits of the deceased from leaving.



He said, "This ceremony shows that they valued the importance of the spirits of the deceased in this world and the afterlife and that even after 2,200 years, this ritual continues to be practiced." Atabaki reckoned that perhaps it is because of this "respect for the spirits of the deceased" that their surviving descendants in the Marvdasht plain made great efforts to provide an eternal home and permanence for the

deceased. He emphasized, "The Zoroastrian faith owes much to the local kings of Fars since it was they who established the foundations of the Zoroastrian religion after the conquest of Alexander the Great. If we consider the coins and other remnants they left behind, these kings were the ones who officially recognized the Zoroastrian faith, which was later revived by the Sassanians."

## First Iran-Pakistan cultural heritage festival opens in Lahore

### Arts & Culture Desk

The Cultural Heritage Festival of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan, organized by the Khana-e-Farhang in the Pakistani Embassy, opened on Saturday in Lahore, with wide public participation and the presence of government officials.

According to IRNA, the cultural event was inaugurated in the presence of Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran Mehran Movahhedfar and Punjab Minister for Information

and Tourism Amir Mir in Lahore, the capital of Punjab Province known as the cultural heart of Pakistan. During the two-day festival, Iranian tourist attractions, handicrafts, artworks, and literary works were showcased for enthusiasts, alongside a food festival, calligraphy workshop, and cultural program.

The festival received an enthusiastic reception from visitors, particularly the youth, with over a thousand people visiting various sections of the

festival on the first day. The Iranian handicrafts and food festival sections received special attention from the visitors.

In his opening speech, Movahhedfar expressed appreciation to the officials of the Punjab government, particularly the Tourism Department, for their collaboration in organizing the festival of the two friendly and brotherly Muslim countries, Iran and Pakistan.

He stated that expanding relations with neighboring countries, especially Paki-

stan, in all areas is a priority for Iran's foreign policy, and that arts and culture are among the most influential spheres of activity in this regard.

He added, "Today, a small part of the culture of the two countries is on display at the festival, but even this small part has a significant impact on deepening the fraternal relations between the Iranian and Pakistani people."

He emphasized that Iran and Pakistan are two great countries with high capacities in economic, commercial, and cultural areas and expressed hope that the festival would familiarize the people of both countries with their

cooperation potential.

Amir Mir, for his part, mentioned the historical friendship and cultural commonalities between Iran and Pakistan, stating that both countries have high capacities for developing tourism. The aim of this festival is to introduce people to the tourist and cultural attractions of both countries.

Usman Ali, Managing Director of the Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab, highlighted the increase in cultural exchanges between the two countries, adding that Iran and Pakistan have abundant cultural similarities, and expanding these exchanges is one of the most effective ways to develop bilateral relations.

Various delegations from the artistic, literary, cinematic, and cultural sectors of Punjab are also expected to participate in the festival, and speeches will be delivered on the expansion of cultural interactions, particularly strengthening relations between Iran and Pakistan.

