

## Asghar Farhadi receives Belgrade Victor Award



Iranian filmmaker Asghar Farhadi has been honored with the Belgrade Victor Award for Outstanding Contribution to Film Art at the 52nd Belgrade International Film Festival.

The prestigious award ceremony, held annually to recognize influential contemporary artists worldwide, presented this year's accolade upon Farhadi for his remarkable role in the field of cinema, ISNA wrote.

The festival, taking place from February 23 to March 3, attracts a diverse audience, including filmmakers, enthusiasts, and the general public.

The Belgrade Victor Award, previously granted to notable figures such as Costa Gavras, Alexander Sokurov, Carlos Saura, John Malkovich, Emir Kusturica, Richard Dreyfuss, and others, highlights Farhadi's impact on the global cinematic landscape. The festival organizers praised Farhadi's screenplay, noting its profound societal, psychological, and philosophical insights into universal challenges.

The celebration, attended by Farhadi, witnessed the enthusiastic participation of audiences, filmmakers, and cinema aficionados appreciative of Farhadi's work. Currently, Farhadi is actively preparing for the production of his 10th film in the US, marking his ongoing commitment to the world of filmmaking.

# Archaeologists unearth traces of 14,000-year-old site in Fars Province

### Arts & Culture Desk

After a month-long archaeological expedition in the rock shelter of "Pir Qooch" in Iran's south-central city of Arsanjan, Fars Province, the head of the excavation team said that the region's history dates back approximately to 14,000 years ago.

Hassan Afshari stated, "Stone tools and bone remains were discovered in this area during the excavation."

Conducted with the permission of the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage & Tourism and the support of the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department of Fars Province, as well as the Heritage Protection Unit, the excavation involved a team of 10 individuals working for a month, IRNA reported.

The head of the excavation team continued, "This historical shelter, near the village of Qasr Jamal, is considered one of the important and valuable sites with significant archaeological evidence. However, due to looting by cultural heritage raiders in recent years, exploring this site is crucial and necessary to understand the cultural layers, craft industries, and the ancient climate of the region."



Mohammad Sadeq Eqlidi said, "This shelter, with a history dating back between 7 to 12 years before Christ, was investigated by archaeologists

for the first time. According to archaeological evidence from prehistoric periods and continuous human presence in the Fars region, engaging

in archaeological activities and completing these studies is essential for understanding historical periods." Eqlidi stated, "The recent ex-

ploration in the Pir Qooch rock shelter in Arsanjan aimed at studying the prehistoric archaeological period and yielded significant results."

## Mental health challenges on rise in Iran: Hospital president



By Sadeq Dehqan  
 Staff writer

The director of Roozbeh Hospital, Amirhossein Ja'fari, highlighted the increasing trend of mental health disorders in the country.

He emphasized that approximately one in every four to five Iranians is affected by a psychiatric illness. Roozbeh Hospital serves as the oldest and primary center for the treatment and education of individuals with mental health issues in the country. Ja'fari, in an interview with Iran Daily, referred to various studies indicating that 20 to 25 percent of the Iranian population aged 18 and above are grappling with at least one mental health disorder.

He linked the rise in psychiatric disorders to issues such as suicide rates. According to Ja'fari, the causes of mental health

disorders are diverse and cannot be attributed solely to one factor. Social, economic, and cultural factors are intricately involved in this matter.

Speaking about the increase in psychiatric disorders, Ja'fari explained that stigma or social judgment towards individuals with mental illnesses is a significant barrier to seeking professional help. He expressed concern that many affected individuals avoid consulting mental health specialists due to fear.

Ja'fari exemplified individuals facing sexual problems might lack the courage to consult a specialist, or those with other mental disorders may choose unrelated healthcare providers to avoid facing the stigma associated with mental health issues. He emphasized that the lack of proper understanding about mental health in society hinders the treatment of psychiatric illnesses in Iran.

Ja'fari outlined the broad

spectrum of psychiatric disorders, including phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, sexual and marital issues, depression, bipolar disorders, and schizophrenia.

He noted that mental illnesses can occur at any age, with conditions such as hyperactivity being more prevalent among children. Ja'fari pointed out that the prevalence of mental illnesses highlights the need for increased attention to mental health. Unfortunately, many people do not prioritize their mental well-being because mental illnesses are not visibly apparent and do not manifest physical pain like other health problems.

He stressed the misconception that associates personality traits with mental illnesses, explaining that behaviors like constant worry or mood fluctua-

tions might be indicative of depression or bipolar disorder rather than inherent character traits. Ja'fari urged for more awareness and emphasis on mental health, emphasizing the importance of vigilance, especially for individuals with a family history of mental disorders.

He noted that depression has a higher frequency among women, influenced by biological, hormonal factors, as well as environmental stressors like social and economic issues.



## Iranian cinemas break 23-year audience record



### Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian cinemas achieved a 23-year audience record in the current year (starting from March 21, 2023), attracting over 27.5 million viewers, a milestone not reached in the past two decades.

Iran's cinemas, after the peak of 33 million viewers in 1979, have not experienced such audience numbers until this year, IRNA reported.

During the spring, cinemas attracted 6.3 million viewers. In the summer, due to the overlap with the months of Muharram and Safar, the number of cinema-goers decreased to 4.5 million. The audience num-

bers reached 9.5 million in the fall and 6.5 million until March 1. Additionally, 715,000 people watched films left over from last year in the early months of this year, bringing the total cinema audience for the year to 27.515 million.

Iranian cinemas have achieved over 27.5 million viewers, surpassing last year's figure of 13.7 million, a doubling in audience numbers for the current year.

In addition to the massive audience attraction and strong box office performance, Iranian cinemas have also set other records. On November 14, 2023, they achieved the highest number of viewers in one

day during the past four years, with 282,000 attendees. Although this day is likely the most attended in the past decade as well.

The latest statistics on the increase in cinema audiences date back to 1979 when 33 million people attended cinemas during that year. If there was proper planning for the summer season, the most lucrative screening period after Nowruz (Persian New Year), and considering the strong film lineup during February and March, the industry could exceed the 33 million mark of 1979. However, it lost the summer season as well as February and March and it is highly unlikely to achieve the goal.