

Lebanese minister hopes for a cultural week in Isfahan



Lebanon's Minister of Culture
Mohammad Wissam al-Mortada
● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Lebanon's Minister of Culture Mohammad Wissam al-Mortada lauded his country's relations with Iran as broad and inclusive, expressing hope for a Lebanese Cultural Week to be organized in Iran to enhance cultural and artistic connections. In an interview with IRNA, the Lebanese minister referred to the Iranian Cultural Week held in Beirut, Lebanon's capital in 2020, expressing optimism for a Lebanese Cultural Week to be organized in Iran, specifically in Isfahan, to introduce the Iranian people to Lebanon's diverse cultural heritage. Dubbed "Fajr (dawn) Cultural Days," the cultural program in 2022 covered several roundtables and symposia, a large exhibition of Iranian

handicrafts and artworks, screening of Iranian films and an Iranian music night. Mortada described the Lebanon-Iran relationship as broad and inclusive, highlighting their shared commitment to values of faith, morality, and opposition to injustice in the region. The Lebanese official also expressed optimism for cultural cooperation to enhance collaboration in various fields, recognizing Iran's substantial capabilities in industry, agriculture, and energy, while acknowledging his country's challenges in these areas. In response to a question of whether Lebanon is less referred to as the "Bride of the Middle East" these days than in the past, the minister replied, "Despite the current conditions and challenges,

Lebanon remains the gem of the Middle East, and nothing will diminish the exceptional beauty of its nature. It continues to shine as a beacon for the world in terms of intellect, culture, and tourism." Despite current challenges, as Mortada said, Lebanon remains a jewel for the Middle East, preserving its exceptional natural beauty and serving as a beacon of intellect, culture, and tourism globally. Lebanon has demonstrated resilience and stability over the years, showcasing its capacity to overcome obstacles, the minister added as he expressed hope for the region's liberation from the Zionist dominance, envisioning Lebanon reclaiming its position and becoming a model for the world on how people, ir-

respective of religion, belief, or culture, can coexist with a national spirit of unity. The Mediterranean country is still suffering a debilitating economic crisis that has gripped the country since 2019. About 80 percent of the population is below the poverty line and 36 percent is below the "extreme poverty line", living on less than \$2.15 a day. The Lebanese resistance movement Hezbollah fought off two Israeli wars against Lebanon in 2000 and 2006, forcing a humiliating retreat upon the Tel Aviv regime's military on both occasions. The illegal entity began waging sporadic attacks against the country following the onset of the Gaza Strip on October 7, 2023, prompting a firefight with Hezbollah.

Iranians register 12% rise in blood donations in two months

The Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) reported a 12% rise in blood donations in the first two months of the current Iranian year (starting March 20) compared to the same period last year, as stated by the organization's spokesperson. Bashir Haji-Beigi was cited by IRNA as saying that around 435,000 units of blood were donated during this period. Iranians contributed 435,000 units of blood in the stated interval, with Tehran Province leading the way with 74,600 units, accounting for approximately 17% of the

total donations. Haji-Beigi noted that Khorasan Razavi and Fars Provinces trailed Tehran with nearly 7% each. Over the past two months, Iran's blood donation rate exceeded

55%, with Semnan Province having the highest rate at over 66%, as stated by the IBTO spokesperson. He also mentioned that the central provinces of Yazd and Qom ranked

next with around 65%. Haji-Beigi highlighted that Iranian women donated about 19,280 units of blood during this period, marking a more than 16% increase from the previous year.



Public access to historical photos 'useful' to researchers: Official

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An official with Iran's Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism has extolled the publication of historical photos and works as a source of useful information for researchers. In reaction to an unauthorized publishing of photos from the Golestan Palace Photo-Archive as well as publicly released photos from the excavations at Shush for the first time, Mostafa Dehpahlavan said researchers are "thirsty for this information." Dehpahlavan expressed hope that the ministry should move towards a direction in the museums of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts that the doors of repositories and store-rooms can be opened to researchers "as they are thirsty for this information." "When we put this infor-

mation at the service of the academic community, rest assured that new research topics will emerge with these intellectual downpours, and as long as we lock the doors, there will be no healthy nourishment for noble research," he said. According to ISNA, recently a digital file containing more than three thousand pieces of photos from the album collection of Golestan Palace has been published in the cyberspace from an unknown source. The release of these photos, which have been difficult for many researchers to access until now, has been met with various reactions. Following the unprecedented release of these photos, Golestan Palace explained in a statement that "no object or album from Golestan Palace is missing," clarifying that "a small part of the historical

photo album of this palace has been published, and soon more albums of photos from Golestan Palace's photo gallery will be published." The palace emphasized that "in line with better serving the academic and research community and in line with this year's International Council of Museums theme, "Museums for Education and Research," the Golestan Palace World Heritage Collection has decided to publicly release the 'Shadow Albums.'" Further in response to these reactions, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ezatollah Zarghami has recommended that, "People should be informed of valuable reserves." There are 1040 photo albums containing nearly 42500 photographs housed at the Golestan Palace Photo-Archive today.



Iran unveils flight models of Kowsar, Hodhod satellites

Iran has unveiled flight models of the homegrown Kowsar and Hodhod satellites. The models were put on display on Sunday at a ceremony, where the active figures of the private sector had gathered to honor the endeavors of late President Ebrahim Raisi in the aerospace field, Press TV reported. The Kowsar satellite is expected to be placed at a distance of 500 kilometers from the Earth's surface this autumn aboard the Russian rocket Soyuz. It can be used for agricultural, mapping and demarcation purposes. The satellite is equipped with two cameras and can take images with a resolution of 3.45 meters. Back in February, Iran successfully launched the indigenously-manufactured Pars 1 research-sensing satellite by a Soyuz rocket from Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome spaceport. It came one month after the country simultaneously put into orbit the Mahda research satellite, as well as the Keyhan-2 and Hatef-1 nanosatellites, using the Simorgh (Phoenix) carrier. Iran is among the world's top 10 countries capable of developing and launching satellites.

