

Evaz in southwestern Fars named Iran's Book Capital

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance has named the southwestern town of Evaz as the country's ninth Book Capital, citing a decade-long commitment to reading and grassroots literacy programs. The announcement was made Tuesday during a ceremony at the ministry's headquarters in Tehran, attended by local officials, cultural figures and media representatives, IRNA reported. "Evaz symbolizes endurance and continuity in promoting books and reading," said

Mohsen Haji-Zeinolabedini, the chief juror of the selection committee. The jury highlighted the town's community-led efforts and deep cooperation between civil society and government agencies. According to the ministry, 110 cities entered the nationwide contest, but only 47 presented eligible proposals. Among those, Evaz stood out for its creative and sustained initiatives, such as traditional maktab-khaneh schools, a prison library, and international book promotion campaigns reaching the UAE, Kuwait, and Germany.

The town, located in the arid southern reaches of Fars Province, has long been recognized for its civic innovation. UNESCO has already designated Evaz as a "safe town for children" – a rare title in the region. Despite lacking high-rise buildings or grand cultural centers, Evaz has quietly built a reputation for inclusive development and education. Villages around Evaz, including Galar and Fishvar, also played a part. Projects like the "Alley of Joy," run by local teenagers to manage neighborhood cultural events, and museums focused

on dolls and folklore, added to the town's edge. "This is not just about books," said Azadeh Nazarboland, Secretary General of Iran's Public Libraries Institution. "It's about empathy, connection, and resilience. Right now, Evaz is the capital of all three." The selection process also honored cities including Shahin Shahr, Urmia, Qazvin, Lahijan, and Behshahr as "Book-Friendly Cities." Fuman, Rabar, and Fahraj were named "Under-the-Book Umbrella," while Khoy, Sirjan, and Sabzevar earned the title of "Book-Thirsty Cities."



Iran launched the Book Capital initiative in 2014 to decentralize cultural development and encourage reading at the grassroots level. The program has grown in scope, pushing towns across the country to innovate in literacy outreach and cultural engagement.



Persian Gulf as Iran's geo-civilizational core of peace, identity: Minister



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Iran's ministers of culture and heritage called the Persian Gulf a cornerstone of national identity and regional solidarity, urging deeper cultural ties, sustainable

tourism, and peaceful coexistence across its shores. Reza Salehi Amiri, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, described the Persian Gulf not simply as a body of water but as a "civilizational concept" deeply "woven into the fabric" of Iran's history and development. He said the Gulf's value reaches beyond "economic and security equations," rooted instead in ancient records, heritage, and widely accepted global narratives. In a formal statement, Salehi Amiri framed the Persian Gulf as a platform for cultural diplomacy, regional convergence, and economic renewal. "Peaceful coexistence is not

a dream but a geo-civilizational necessity," he wrote, calling for expanded cooperation among Persian Gulf countries to strengthen tourism and dialogue. Tourism, particularly with neighboring Persian Gulf states, was described as a powerful tool for "reproducing national power" and fostering cultural understanding. The minister stressed shared religious and historical links, saying they could help draw more regional travelers to southern Iran. To boost this potential, he said the government is stepping up efforts to improve infrastructure, streamline visa processes, expand air routes, and strengthen partnerships with local communities and the

private sector. Southern islands like Kish, Qeshm, Hormuz, Hengam, Abu Musa, and Hendurabi could become major destinations, he noted, "if managed under a unified ecological strategy." Abbas Salehi, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, echoed those sentiments in a separate message, calling the Persian Gulf "a piece of Iran's soul" and a name "stitched into the cultural memory and honor" of the nation. He praised Iranians for historically standing firm in defense of every inch of their land and waters. However, official events planned by the ministry were scaled back due to a deadly explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar

Abbas. "The Persian Gulf mourns with us," the minister said, offering condolences to the victims' families and wishing recovery for the injured. April 30 marks the anniversary of the 1622 victory by Safavid naval forces over the Portuguese at the Strait of Hormuz, an event that led to the naming of the day as Persian Gulf Day. Iran consistently defends the historical term "Persian Gulf" against alternative names it sees as politically motivated. Officials emphasized the Persian Gulf's continued role as a symbol of peace, dignity, and heritage. "It will continue to shine," Salehi Amiri wrote, "as a symbol of peace, dignity, and lasting legacy."

Dust control, forest revival on Iran's environmental agenda: VP

Social Desk

Iran is stepping up efforts to contain domestic dust storm sources, according to the country's Vice President and head of the Department of Environment (DoE), Shina Ansari. Speaking during a two-day visit to Lorestan province, Ansari said dust hotspots are being "identified and stabilized" in coordination with relevant agencies to tackle pollution. The project, part of a broader environmental action plan, includes soil management, reforestation, and air quality measures.

At a tree-planting event in Khorramabad, Ansari praised the work of rangers and environmental volunteers, saying environmental protection "requires collective effort" and that the government "won't hold back" on this front. She also paid tribute to fallen rangers, including those killed in recent years—such as in Golestan National Park and the Zagros wildfires. "These trees are symbols of sacrifice," she said, "by those who gave their lives for Iran's nature." The Zagros forests, home to a declining population of oak trees, are under new threat from the green oak leaf roller moth.

Ansari said a "national will" is needed to contain the outbreak, which has reached even protected areas. Joint efforts with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Natural Resources Organization are underway to manage the forests and prevent wildfires, using emergency services' capacity. A national conference on the Zagros forests is scheduled for July to push the agenda forward. In Khorramabad, local officials highlighted a shortage in green spaces. Mayor Dariush Barani Beyranvand said urban green space per capita stands at only nine square meters—below the national standard of 7–12

square meters. "We've lost 1,200 hectares of garden land to housing," he said. To reverse the trend, the city has launched a "green belt" initiative and plans to plant 20,000 trees to expand urban greenery. Ansari's visit also included meetings with NGOs, a tour of the Khorramabad combined cycle power plant, and a stop at a Persian fallow deer restoration site in the region. According to the United Nations, Iran faces some of the world's most severe desertification and air pollution challenges, with sand and dust storms posing serious threats to health and agriculture in recent years.



Iranian doctor awarded at Geneva Invention Expo

Social Desk

An Iranian gynecologist has been awarded the WIPO Medal for her groundbreaking work in women's health, according to Iran's state news agency IRNA. Hasti Hosseini received the honor at the 50th International Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva, organized by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialized UN agency. The award is often referred to as the "Nobel Prize of inventions." Hosseini was recognized for developing a stem cell-based therapy that helps control HPV and heal cervical wounds. Her

invention earned an A-grade rating for innovation and humanitarian value from the International Federation of Inventors' Associations (IFIA). It also won the Gold Plus Medal from the Swiss judging panel in Geneva. WIPO medals are awarded annually to inventors whose creations show "exceptional value" and real-world application. The Geneva event, under UN auspices, is one of the most respected platforms for global inventors. In a recent achievement, Hosseini also took home a gold medal from Silicon Valley in September 2024 for her medical innovation in HPV treatment.

A man from the land of words; Iran remembers Mohammad Moin



Arts & Culture Desk

April 30 marked the birthday of Mohammad Moin, Iran's most revered lexicographer and creator of the landmark Moin Dictionary, a cornerstone of modern Persian lexicography. Scholars and literary circles across the country paid tribute to the man whose life, as one colleague put it, was "sacrificed for the Persian language." Known for working up to 20 hours a day, Moin poured his energy, health, and intellect into preserving and expanding the Persian lexicon. He died in 1971 at the age of 61, Fars News Agency reported. "Moin was a man who lived among words," said

Ali-Ashraf Sadeghi, a linguist and former student. "Even a moment away from language was difficult for him." Born in Rasht, northern Iran, on April 30, 1914, Moin began his academic journey in Persian literature and Islamic philosophy, later earning a doctorate in linguistics. He served as a professor at the University of Tehran, where his intense dedication to research left a lasting impression on students. "He was so focused on work," Sadeghi recalled, "he barely had time to talk." The Moin Dictionary was part of a three-tier vision: a large encyclopedia-style dictionary, a mid-sized reference (the version most published), and a smaller, portable edition. It aimed to bridge classical and modern Persian, and its "almost encyclopedic" scope set it apart from previous dictionaries, many of which had been compiled outside Iran or by non-native speakers, often riddled with errors. Before Moin, dictionaries such as Burhan-e Qati or Farhang-e Amouzgar were widely used but lacked academic rigor. The Moin Dictionary,

published posthumously, quickly became a national reference, praised for its structure, accuracy, and modern approach. It remains a staple in homes, schools, and offices throughout Iran. Moin's scholarly integrity earned him the trust of Ali-Akbar Dehkhoda, compiler of the monumental Dehkhoda Dictionary. In his will, Dehkhoda named Moin the sole guardian of the project's manuscripts — a rare gesture in Iran's tightly knit literary community. "He was a man of trust," said Mohammad-Taqi Rashed Mohassel, a member of Iran's Academy of Persian Language and Literature. "Dehkhoda handed everything over to him without hesitation." Yet Moin's legacy is more than academic. Literary historian Jalal Khaleghi-Motlagh once said Moin combined "scientific precision with deep humanity." His colleagues often described him as humble, noble-hearted, and quietly driven by an overwhelming love for knowledge. Esmaeil Azar, a leading voice in Persian literature, called him "a complete human being."