

# Maragheh joins UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities

Iranica Desk

The ancient city of Maragheh in East Azarbaijan Province has officially been admitted to UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), the city's mayor announced. Shahram Morovati underscored the importance of effective urban management, emphasizing that Maragheh's accession to the UNESCO network represents both an international honor and a significant responsibility. "We believe that lifelong learning is the foundation of sustainable development, innovation, and strengthened social participation," he said. Morovati noted that the municipality will make full use of the network's opportunities to enhance the quality of life for residents. He recalled that Maragheh was recognized as a WHO Healthy City last year, and said the combination of these two global titles — Healthy City and Learning City — offers a promising outlook for the city's future development. This dual recognition, he added, reflects

the municipality's commitment to improving public health, raising awareness, and advancing the overall quality of life, according to chtn.ir. As part of its new global membership, Maragheh has placed several priorities on its agenda, including the development of local learning centers, the promotion of educational equity, the improvement of urban health, the expansion of social participation, and the creation of learning opportunities for people of all ages. The mayor also announced that a comprehensive program to implement the Learning City framework is already underway. Several elements are currently in progress, including the establishment of themed parks such as the Music Park, Sound Park, Education Park, Hydro Park, Sand Play Park, Adventure Park, and Animal Park — all designed to enhance civic education. With the Learning City certification, all urban spaces and infrastructure — including cultural centers, public parks, and pe-



● mianehnegar.ir

destrian pathways — may now serve as platforms for learning and community awareness. Morovati outlined three core strategies Maragheh has proposed to UNESCO: strengthening cross-sector collaboration among civil society, governmental bodies, and local organizations to promote lifelong learning; making use of the

city's cultural heritage and existing educational resources; and prioritizing health-oriented programs as part of the Learning City model. He further reported that a specialized Learning City Committee has been established, bringing together various municipal departments, government agencies, and NGOs to pursue these

strategies through an integrated, cross-sectoral approach. Stressing the importance of cooperation with UNESCO, the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, and the UNESCO Office in Tehran, Morovati said such partnerships will support joint projects and enable Maragheh to draw on successful international experiences. He

added that Maragheh, having already demonstrated strong performance in implementing the Healthy City program, is prepared to play an active role in the global network. The official unveiling of Maragheh's membership certificate in the UNESCO Learning Cities Network will take place soon, in accordance with UNESCO protocols and with the participation of officials from various organizations. According to UNESCO, nine Iranian cities — Isfahan, Shiraz, Tehran, Mashhad, Bandar Khamir, Kermanshah, Hashtgerd, Rasht, and Kashan — were previously part of the network. With the admission of Maragheh, the number of Iranian member cities has now risen to ten. The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities is an international initiative aimed at promoting lifelong learning, facilitating knowledge exchange among cities, enhancing urban quality of life, and supporting sustainable educational policies.

## Export growth elevates Langerud's handicraft status



● iranhotelonline.com

Iranica Desk

Regular exports of artworks created by artisans from Langerud, located in Iran's northern Gilan Province, have significantly elevated its standing in the regional handicrafts sector, according to the head of Langerud's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department. Rahman Hosseinzadeh stated that based on reports reflecting the performance of the city's skilled artisans — particularly those active in pottery and ceramics — the export of these products to international markets has experienced remarkable growth. He noted that the exquisite works produced by master artisans of the Anzali-Mahalleh neighborhood of Langerud, crafted through specialized expertise and several years of experience, are being exported regularly and in bulk to Iraq, Bahrain, Qatar, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates, chtn.ir wrote. He added that these high-quality products, distinguished by their artistic authenticity and strong local identity, have succeeded in securing a prominent position in target markets and have played a significant role in introducing Langerud's handicraft potential to a wider audience. Hosseinzadeh also emphasized that efforts are currently underway to explore and develop new export destinations, and with further support, the county's share of pottery and ceramic exports is expected to increase even more. Gilan Province, known for its rich cultural heritage, is widely recognized

as one of Iran's most vibrant centers of traditional handicrafts. The region's diverse natural landscape and deep-rooted artistic traditions have given rise to a variety of distinctive crafts, including pottery, woodcarving, mat weaving, traditional textile production, wickerwork, and decorative objects inspired by the province's lush environment and rural lifestyle. Many of these crafts, passed down through generations, reflect the creativity and cultural identity of local communities. The province's pottery and ceramics, in particular, hold a special place among Iranian handicrafts. Gilan's artisans utilize locally sourced clay and traditional firing techniques to produce items that blend functionality with aesthetic appeal. Their designs often incorporate motifs inspired by the Caspian Sea, rice paddies, forests, and local folklore. These unique artistic characteristics have helped Gilan's ceramic products gain recognition both nationally and internationally. In recent years, increasing global interest in sustainable, handmade, and culturally inspired products has created new opportunities for Gilan's handicraft sector. As demand for authentic, locally produced works grows, the province's artisans — especially those in hubs like Langerud — have expanded their presence in international markets. The consistent export of handcrafted items from Anzali-Mahalleh neighborhood is a strong example of this broader trend, illustrating how local craftsmanship can contribute directly to regional economic development.

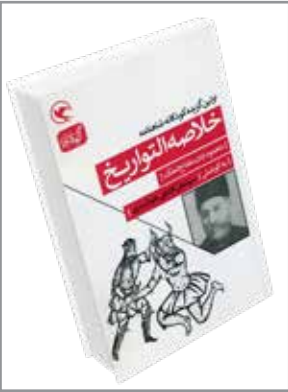
## Exemplifying patriotism in Qajar-era history books for kids

Iranica Desk

Qajar-era textbooks not only carry historical value and educational significance but are still engaging and enjoyable to read. One of the earliest history textbooks for elementary schools was authored by Mahmud Meftah-ol-Molk, who, more than three decades earlier, had also produced one of the first examples of modern Persian children's literature. He sought to create a child-friendly, fluent, and captivating account of Iranian history using the Shahnameh. The book, titled *Khulasat-ol-Tavarikh* (literally meaning *A Summary of Histories*), is the first child-oriented selection of the Shahnameh, compiled by Seyyed Ali Kassefi Khansari, and has been published by Mohajer Publishing as part of the "Ganj-e Qajar" series. IBNA conducted an interview with Kassefi Khansari, about the history of children's historiography in Iran.

### When did historiography for children and adolescents begin?

**SEYYED ALI KASSEFI KHANSARI:** Directly addressing children in history books became more common after the introduction of the printing press in Iran. The first notable example may be the book entitled *Nameh-ye Khosrovan* written by Jalal al-Din Mirza. However, it is debatable whether this book was intended for all children. Jalal al-Din Mirza was not a children's author and did not make extensive efforts to simplify language for young readers. Nonetheless, through illustrations and other devices, he produced a three-volume work for children. While important for its time, formal primary schooling and standardized textbooks were not yet established in Iran, which is why the book is considered the first true history textbook for children.



● IBNA

### What was the purpose of writing history for children, and how long did this trend continue?

The motivations for creating history books for children during that period were varied. One primary reason was to provide educational materials for schools. Another was to promote patriotic, liberal, and expansionist ideals, which occupied the minds of many Iranians, especially intellectuals and educated elites, during the Qajar era and after the Constitutional Revolution. These nationalist approaches sometimes appeared in opposition to traditionalist or religious perspectives within certain historical texts.

### How was the language of children's history books, and which efforts were

### particularly successful?

Numerous history textbooks were written during the Qajar and post-Constitutional periods. Determining which were most successful requires further research. Meftah-ol-Molk's son, Musa, who inherited his father's title, also wrote history books for children. Other authors included Mohammad Ali Foroughi and his son, known as first and second Zoka-ol-Molk, and Abbas Eqbal Ashtiani, whose

historical works later adopted a more scientific approach. By the early Pahlavi era, other authors began writing formal history textbooks for children. Interestingly, during these earlier periods, schools even published specialized historical books for children on topics such as world history, the history of prophets, and Islamic history — a practice not seen in later years.

### What is the state of children's historiography today?

Today, children's history books are far more diverse. However, the heavily dull nature of official textbooks can turn children away from history. On the other hand, private publishers have popularized translations of historical works presented in imaginative, humorous,

and playful ways. While the diversity and formats of historical books have increased — including fantasy, reference works, and historical stories — high-quality and comprehensive historical books for children remain limited. Professionally authored histories of people, literature, art, and the world by Iranian authors are still relatively rare.

### Which areas of history remain underexplored for children?

One long-standing concern of mine is the history of Muslims. Despite its critical importance, very little attention is given to the history of Muslims in textbooks or non-textbook publications for children. After the early Islamic centuries and the Arab conquest of Iran, textbooks rarely mention the fate of other Muslim communities or Islamic governments. Religious classes touch briefly on the prophets and the Twelve Imams of Shia Muslims, but children rarely learn about the diversity, spread, and development of Islam across 15 centuries. About nine years ago, I authored a five-volume series titled "I am a Muslim" with this goal in mind. Unfortunately, due to unprofessional, illogical, and unethical reasons, the books have not yet been published, and the publisher has not allowed their transfer to another publisher. While I regret the lack of publication, I remain hopeful. I believe that, whether before or after my death, this series will eventually be published by this or another publisher. Through these books, children — particularly those with a keen interest — will gain a deeper cultural, spiritual, and historical connection to Muslim communities across time and geography.