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# Marble Palace transformed into cultural haven for Iranian arts

## Iranica Desk

The Marble Palace, a lasting symbol of the early Pahlavi era and one of Tehran's most iconic historical landmarks, has been transformed into a museum that brings together the full spectrum of Iranian art — from intricate mirror work and marquetry to plasterwork and high-relief paintings — a heritage still unfamiliar to many Iranians. A walk through the Marble Palace offers visitors a glimpse into the grandeur of Iranian architecture. From walls to ceilings, every corner showcases a unique blend of traditional arts, including mirror work, marquetry, plasterwork, and high-relief paintings depicting iconic Iranian landmarks such as the Veresk Bridge and Persepolis. Regarded as one of the country's premier venues for experiencing Iranian and Islamic art, the museum's collection spans from the 5th millennium BCE to contemporary works. On June 20, 1978, the palace was officially registered as one of Iran's National Heritage Sites under registration number 1606, IRNA wrote. The building was initially converted into a museum in 1976, aimed at familiarizing the public with the Pahlavi era, and was named the "Pahlavi Museum." Following the Islamic Revolution and the fall of the monarchy, the Marble Palace underwent nearly four decades of administrative use. It first served as the headquarters of the Revolutionary Committee, later accommodating offices for senior judiciary officials, former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and hosting sessions of the Expediency Council. In 2017, the palace was transferred to the Mostazafan Foundation. After extensive restoration, it reopened in 2019 under its new name, the "Iran Art Museum," offering the public a major cultural destination.



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Sajad Samani, Director of the Iran Art Museum (Marble Palace), explained that the museum now operates under the Mostazafan Foundation's Cultural Institution of Museums. "Although the palace has functioned as a museum for several years, many people are still unaware of its existence," he said. Samani acknowledged that the museum's location presents certain challenges for visitors but emphasized that efforts are underway to improve accessibility and comfort. "All forms of Iranian art — from mirror work and marquetry to plasterwork and high-relief paintings — can be seen here in one place. Visitors leave the museum with a sense of joy and in-

spiration," he added. Addressing questions about why the museum is sometimes closed and lacks visible signage, Samani noted, "We cannot leave the doors open all the time. However, to make it clear that this is a museum, a signboard crafted by Isfahan artisans using tiles matching those above the entrance will soon be installed." In addition, the museum actively promotes its programs through social media, environmental advertising in metro stations, and tourism networks to introduce both domestic and international visitors to the richness of Iran's art, culture, and architectural heritage.

## Efforts underway to bring Mirza Kochak Khan Ship back to Caspian Sea

### Iranica Desk

Local authorities in Bandar Anzali, in the northern part of Gilan Province, coordinate inter-agency efforts to accelerate the restart of Iran's first Caspian passenger ship, the Mirza Kochak Khan, into service. According to IRNA, the meeting featured reports from participating executive bodies on actions taken and prerequisites within their respective responsibilities. The participants stressed the importance of ongoing coordination

and interagency collaboration among the relevant entities to hasten the process of resuming operations for the ship. The Mirza Kochak Khan measures 74 meters in length, 12 meters in width, 20 meters in height, and weighs 2,000 tons, with a passenger capacity of 150. The vessel entered the Caspian Sea in 1992 CE and was placed under the management of the Caspian Sea Shipping Company. From 1999-2006 CE, the ship was under the control of the IRGC Navy, after which it was

purchased by a private sector party. It underwent undersea and afloat repairs as well as modernization of navigational electronic equipment and auxiliary navigation gear by September 2009, achieving coastal waterways navigation certificates. Between 1991-1996, the ship made several voyages to the Republic of Azerbaijan. However, due to the lack of modern weather forecasting and navigation systems at the time, along with passenger discomfort and resulting low passenger num-

bers, the service was halted. The ship was relaunched but shortly afterward ran aground again. Bandar Anzali remains a focal point for Caspian maritime initiatives, with ongoing discussions and pilot programs geared toward reviving regional passenger and freight services. Local ports, universities, and maritime authorities in Anzali have expressed continued interest in showcasing the city as a hub for safe, modern, and tourist-friendly Caspian travel.



● IRNA

## ATU hosts first international Iranian studies forum



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### Iranica Desk

The first international Iranian studies forum, hosted by Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU), was held for four days in Tehran and Shiraz in November attended by Iranologists from Turkey, Sri Lanka, China, Kazakhstan, Georgia, and Tunisia. This forum, which was with the cooperation of the University of Tehran, Shahid Beheshti University, the University of Science and Culture, the Iranology Association and Foundation, and organized by the Islamic Culture and Communication Organization, hosted 48 international guests from 23 countries. The significance of this forum lay in the examination of diverse dimensions of Iranian studies by admirers of Iran, according to atu.ac.ir. At the beginning of the session held at ATU on Nov. 16, Ali Guzel Yuz from Turkey delivered a speech on Iranian Studies in Turkey from the Ottoman period to the present, outlining the history of these studies. Yu Gui Lee from China, while introducing her university

and the growth of the Persian language there, noted the interest of Chinese students in Iranian culture and language and recited verses of her own poetry regarding her love for Iran. Azizi from Tunisia addressed topics of shared interests and economic issues between Iran and the Arab world, identifying resistance against the oppression of superpowers as a characteristic of Iranian society. He described his authorship of a book on the "Sociology of Resistance" as an effort to explain the methods of resistance of Iranian society against the enemy and the invaluable experience of Iranian resistance, which is noteworthy and a model for other Arab countries. Azizi stated, "The Tunisian experience has a Western framework, while the Iranian experience is rooted in religious heritage, allowing for the examination of development within a new, anti-colonial framework." Momeni, the scientific secretary of the conference, also stated, "The political category is far more in-

fluent than the category of organization. We are geographically connected with many countries, so we must not allow politics to be the defining influence; for today's world is a world of people-to-people connections, and it is necessary for people to interact more." Japaridze from Georgia also delivered a speech at this session regarding Persian linguistic remnants found in the Mizdakhan hills in tombs dating back to the 2nd and 3rd centuries, which indicate the staged progression of the Khwarazmian, Pahlavi, and Sogdian languages. Continuing the session, Al-Samadi stated, "Due to the absence of dialogue, the Arab world is deprived of Iranian studies, and political barriers can be counted as one of the reasons. Many researchers believe that the economic or cultural aspect is also of special importance. The absence of Iranians in many scientific and cultural forums is also one of the reasons for this deficiency." Kambarbekova, referencing the poems of Hafez during a part of

this session, added, "The 'Turk of Shiraz' is a symbol of solidarity between Iran and Kazakhstan. Had any other word been used in its place, the beauty and harmony would have been lost." She pointed to the number of Persian language students in Kazakhstan compared to Bangladesh and deemed the strengthening of the Persian language department in Kazakhstan necessary. Mohammad-Amir Jalali and Mahsa Nazari, referring to related carpets and cultural relations between Iran and China, pointed to historical documents in the city of Dunhuang, Manichaean documents in China, and images of the Simurgh, the dragon, and other animals in Chinese and Iranian symbols. Mandana Tishehyar, Vice President for Research at ATU, serving as the closing speaker of this forum, expressed appreciation for the presence of the Iranologists in the country and hoped for the continuation of these dialogues for the development of Iranian Studies.