

Iraq issues commemorative stamp for martyred Leader

Arts & Culture Desk

Iraq issued a commemorative postage stamp on Wednesday to mark the funeral ceremonies for Iran's martyred Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, as mourners and senior officials from two countries, Iran and Iraq, gathered in the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala, according to Iraq's Ministry of Communications. The special stamp, unveiled by Iraqi Communications Minister Mustafa Jabbar Sanad, commemorates one of the largest religious and state ceremonies held in Iraq in recent years and reflects Baghdad's decision to preserve the occasion in the country's historical record. The funeral ceremonies began in Najaf on July 8 before continuing to

Karbala under extensive security and logistical arrangements. "The commemorative stamp has been issued to honor the grand funeral ceremony that Iraq is witnessing," Sanad said, describing it as a symbol of recording the event in Iraq's national memory. The ministry said the postal issue was intended to memorialize the ceremony and underscore its historical significance. The body of Ayatollah Khamenei and several members of his family arrived at Najaf International Airport late on July 7, where they were formally received by senior Iranian and Iraqi officials. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian headed the Iranian delegation, while Iraqi Prime Minister Ali

Falih al-Zaidi led the Iraqi reception alongside political, religious and tribal figures. The funeral procession drew large crowds of Iraqi citizens, pilgrims and visitors, with prominent Iraqi political leaders, including members of the Coordination Framework, joining the ceremonies. Commemorative stamps have long been used by governments to mark defining national, historical and cultural events. Iraq has previously issued special postal releases to commemorate major religious occasions and milestones, with the latest edition highlighting the significance Baghdad has attached to the funeral ceremonies held in the country's revered Shia holy cities.



Iran pitches halal tourism potential Vietnam forum



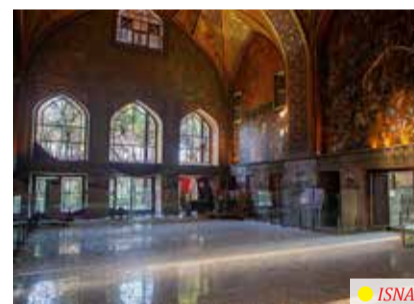
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Iran promoted itself as a safe and competitive destination for the fast-growing halal tourism market at an international conference attended by delegates from around 30 countries in Vietnam on July 8, according to Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, as Tehran stepped up efforts to expand its share of Muslim travel. The conference, held in Vietnam's coastal Khanh Hoa province under the theme "Vietnam, A New Destination of Halal Tourism", brought together about 350 government officials, tourism authorities, investors and businesses from South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and member states of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, showing

intensifying competition for Muslim travelers, ILNA reported. Parham Janfeshan, adviser to Iran's tourism minister and director-general for tourism services supervision and evaluation, said Iran's civilizational heritage, Islamic culture, diverse landscapes and Muslim-friendly infrastructure positioned it to become "one of the world's influential destinations" in the expanding halal tourism market. "Halal tourism is no longer limited to halal food," Janfeshan said. "It requires a complete ecosystem, including standard accommodation, family-oriented services, facilities compatible with Islamic culture and well-trained personnel." He said Iran's location at the crossroads of major Muslim regions, combined with cultural and social infrastructure already

aligned with Muslim-friendly travel standards, gave the country a competitive edge. Janfeshan also argued that first-hand visits offered foreign travelers the chance to experience Iran's "security, tranquility and hospitality" directly, providing what he described as a more accurate picture of the country than negative portrayals abroad. He called for broader international cooperation, including joint tourism agreements, specialized travel packages for Muslim visitors, stronger health tourism, higher service standards and the training of specialist tour guides to support long-term growth. The conference highlighted the commercial importance of the sector. Vietnam said it welcomed more than 21mn international visitors in 2025, including around 600,000 Muslim travelers, or nearly 3% of total arrivals. Vietnamese officials said they were building a nationwide halal ecosystem and encouraging destinations such as Khanh Hoa to expand halal-certified services as demand from Muslim travelers continues to rise. Iran has been seeking to diversify its tourism industry by developing religious, cultural and medical travel, while placing greater emphasis on halal tourism as global Muslim travel spending continues to expand.

Restoration begins at UNESCO-listed Chehel Sotoun after war damage



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Restoration work began at Iran's UNESCO-listed Chehel Sotoun World Heritage site in the central city of Isfahan after blast damage linked by the 40-day US-Israeli military aggression on Iran, the site's director said, marking the first phase of efforts to preserve one of the country's most important Safavid-era monuments. The project aims not only to repair damaged sections but also to safeguard the site's historical authenticity while documenting physical evidence left by the conflict for future research. The restoration follows technical assessments, damage surveys and the procurement of traditional building materials. "The main objective is to protect the site's authenticity and historical identity," Mostafa Hadipour, director of the Chehel Sotoun World Heritage Base, told ISNA. He said conservation work is being carried out under internationally recognized restoration principles and with the minimum intervention required to

stabilize the monument. According to Hadipour, the blast wave from an attack on the nearby Isfahan governor's office damaged parts of the historic complex, which lies within the site's protected buffer zone. The ticket office's decorative brick latticework was destroyed, safety glass shattered, equipment was damaged and part of the roof over a staff building collapsed. Restoration crews have begun replacing fractured wooden beams with matching timber treated against moisture, termites and wood-boring insects. Plasterwork, structural reinforcement and repairs to damaged walls are also under way. Hadipour said the work has uncovered previously concealed architectural features, including a historic wall niche and traces of earlier painted decoration hidden beneath later layers of plaster. "These findings provide valuable evidence of the building's evolution through different historical periods," he said. "We are documenting and preserving every layer revealed during the conservation process." He added that conservators would use a special method to preserve selected historical layers and retain evidence of the recent damage as part of the monument's documented history. Built in the 17th century under the Safavid dynasty, Chehel Sotoun is one of nine Persian gardens inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List since 2011. The palace is renowned for its mirror hall, monumental frescoes and landscaped gardens, making it one of Iran's foremost cultural landmarks.

Iran wins four medals at Int'l Scientific Physics Olympiad

Social Desk

Iran's national physics Olympiad team won two gold, one silver and one bronze medal at the International Scientific Physics Olympiad (ISPhO) 2026, held online from June 21 to June 30, the Ministry of Education announced. The online competition brought together secondary school students from more than 60 countries and served as a preparatory event for national teams ahead of major international physics contests, IRNA reported. Hirbod Foudazi delivered the competition's strongest overall performance, winning a

gold medal, the Best Participant award and the highest score in the theoretical examination. Amirsam Goharpey claimed Iran's second gold medal, while Kian Zarabian earned silver and Mohammad Mirmohammadi took bronze, completing Iran's four-medal haul. Established to promote international scientific cooperation and excellence in physics education, the International Scientific Physics Olympiad provides outstanding secondary school students with an opportunity to demonstrate their theoretical knowledge and problem-solving skills in an international competitive environment.

Five Iranian short films to shine at Russian festival

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Five Iranian short films will compete at the 16th Light of the World festival in Russia from September 12-16, organizers and Iranian media said, underscoring growing cultural exchanges between the two countries. Held in Russia's Yaroslavl Region, the festival focuses on films for children and young audiences. Founded by the Rybinsk Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church, it brings together international productions exploring youth, family and social themes, IRIB News reported.

The Iranian lineup includes 'Bitura' by Faraj Salehi, Rana al-Azm and Kiasha Tangestani; 'Dandelions Girl' by Azadeh Masihzadeh, Tara Soroush, Benjamin Afraneh and Abdollah Bahadori; 'The Road We've Come' by Narges Fazeli; 'Distant Land' by Abbas Qadirmohseni and Farshad Borzou; and 'The Old Woman and the Great Tree' by Robabeh Hashemi. Produced by Documentary, Experimental & Animation Film Center (DEFC) of Iran, 'The Road We've Come' follows a mother with a disability who faces mounting obstacles while trying to bring her daughter home from school.



'Dandelions Girl' tells the story of an 11-year-old village girl determined to play soccer, using her talent as a goalkeeper to challenge social expectations and pursue her dream.