



Historic Si-o-se-pol bridge appears on global irrigation heritage list

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's historic Si-o-se-pol bridge in the central city of Isfahan has been added to the World Heritage Irrigation Structures (WHIS) list after being recognized by the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID), a move the province's heritage chief said on Sunday should lead to practical conservation rather than become a publicity label.

Amir Karamzadeh, director-general of Isfahan's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, said the listing could pave the way for greater research, documentation, scientific conservation and restoration of Si-o-se-pol, IRNA reported.

The Safavid-era bridge, built

on the Zayandeh Rud river under Shah Abbas I in the early 17th century has 33 arches, is 295 metres long and 14 metres wide. It is one of Iran's largest historic bridges and a globally recognized symbol of Isfahan.

"The bridge, also known as Alahverdi Khan Bridge, is part of Isfahan's historic memory and one of the main links in the Chaharbagh axis and the city's historic structure connected to the Zayandeh Rud river," Karamzadeh said.

Its value should not be reduced to its architecture or tourism role, he added.

Karamzadeh noted that Si-o-se-pol should instead be viewed alongside Isfahan's wider water heritage, with its historic bridges reflecting the region's relationship with water, settlement

and urban development.

The global listing could also open the door to interdisciplinary research bringing together architectural history, engineering, urban planning and water management, he said.

The official called for long-term monitoring, funding, public participation and joined-up action, saying restoration should be documented, technical and measurable.

Three other Iranian sites have also been included on the WHIS list: Band-e Amir in Fars, Band-e Shadorvan in Khuzestan and the hydraulic structures of Siraf in Bushehr.

A commemorative award will be presented at the 26th World Congress on Irrigation and Drainage in Marseille, France, in October 2026.



● IRNA

Creative industries could drive economy, cultural influence, minister says

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Culture Minister Abbas Salehi said on Sunday creative industries could become a key driver of the country's economy, identity and cultural influence, describing the sector as a potential shortcut to development despite Iran's economic woes and recent wars. Speaking at the launch of the Culture and Arts Development Research and Technology Fund, Salehi said Iran's revenues from creative industries were currently below \$1 billion, despite the sector's vast untapped potential, IRNA reported.

"Creative industries have become a strategic part of the global economy," Salehi said, contributing significantly to output, employment, turnover, exports and national income. Iran's thousands of years of historical and civilizational heritage give it considerable advantages in the sector, he said, adding that creative industries could help restore Iran's historical and cultural influence.

Salehi also said the growing



overlap between the cultural and artistic economy, lifestyle and identity offered a new opportunity to develop Iran's cultural relations with the world. "Despite difficult economic conditions, creative industries were an area where Iran could work with greater confidence and determination," he said, noting that the country's cultural and artistic capabilities had continued to show themselves even during the recent war that the US and Israel waged against Iran in late February.

The newly launched fund has

initial capital of 1,000 billion rials (\$538,000) and aims to finance, invest in and commercialize businesses in culture, arts and media. It is intended to replace grants with more productive and sustainable financing, acting as a financial bridge between ideas, capital and markets and helping cultural and artistic players turn ideas into marketable products.

Salehi identified 10 major challenges facing Iran's creative industries. The first was weak statistical and information systems, with the sector



Iran's Culture Minister Abbas Salehi (c) address a high level meeting in Tehran on August 16, 2026.
● IRNA

still relying heavily on estimates rather than accurate data.

He cited inadequate regulations as a second problem and called for "short, issue-based single-article laws" to create rules that facilitate growth and provide greater stability.

The gap between Iran's creative-industry technology and the pace of global development was another major challenge, he said, warning that it could hold back growth.

Salehi also pointed to the migration of talent, a weak private sector and fragmented government agencies, calling for greater coordination among the institutions involved.

If these capacities can be brought together, he said, creative industries could become one of the foundations of Iran's economy, identity and regional and global influence.

Pezeshkian calls students Iran's 'most important social capital'; urges education reform

Social Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday students were the country's "most important asset and social capital", urging education officials to change their approach to teaching, promote teamwork and focus on problem-solving.

Speaking at the 39th national meeting of education officials in Tehran, Pezeshkian stressed educational equality and greater attention to disadvantaged areas, calling on teachers and administrators to shift their focus towards improvement, IRNA reported.

The president said capable people in schools were the country's greatest asset, while mines and industries were simply tools to be placed in the hands of Iran's experts and children.

"Our greatest pride is our human resources and our children," he said.

He urged teachers to teach students to serve their country, take responsibility, live well and believe that all problems could be overcome through unity and cohesion. Referring to regional tensions, Pezeshkian said Israel had plunged the Middle East into instability, making scientific and comprehensive investment in children essential.

He said educational equality meant addressing the needs of all social groups, rather than focusing only on students with special circumstances. The government, he said, must recognize the needs of all sections of society for equality to be properly implemented.



President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses a national meeting of education officials in Tehran, Iran, on August 16, 2026.
● president.ir

Pezeshkian urged education officials to break out of existing mindsets and teach students problem-solving, teamwork and group-based learning.

Every student had a talent, he said, and those talents could succeed in solving problems when brought together.

"Accepting the status quo would lead to stagnation adding that reaching ambitious goals first required the belief that they could be achieved," he said.

Changing teaching and management methods, improving efficiency and using new technologies could create different paths to excellence, he said.

The president also said that teachers should be given room for creativity and administrators should avoid excessive orders and instructions.

Iran breaks into global top 20 for AI, claims 3rd spot in Muslim world

Social Desk

Iran ranks 18th worldwide and third among Islamic countries in artificial intelligence, with 5,068 research papers published in the field, Science, Research and Technology Minister Hossein Simaei Sarraf said on Sunday. Speaking at a ceremony honoring winners of the International AI Olympiad, Sarraf said about 44,000 students and 400 specialized companies were active in the field, IRIBNEWS reported.

"Digital economy companies account for 27% of Iran's tech-based businesses," he said, adding that about 16,000 technology units oper-

ate across 60 science and technology parks. Sarraf said the achievements had been made despite wartime conditions, which had affected some facilities and resources used to prepare Iran's teams. "Nevertheless, Iran's team broke new ground by winning a gold medal at the International AI Olympiad for the first time."

The minister referred to an attack on the laser laboratory at Shahid Beheshti University during the 40-day US-Israeli war that broke out in late February and said it was wrong to think that destroying a building could bring down Iran's scientific structure.

"Iran's thousands of years of civilizational,

scientific and cultural history could not be erased by targeting several buildings," he said. "Even advanced countries cannot easily compete with Iran's capacity" in human resources, Sarraf said, while acknowledging limitations in facilities and infrastructure. He called on officials to value the country's human capital and provide the resources needed for its development.

The minister said the country would roll out 25 new AI degree programs for the new academic year. "A dedicated fast-track system has also been created to recruit AI faculty members, while AI has been added as a key subject in educational curricula."