



Islamic Republic of Iran
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MFA DIGEST

CENTRE FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY



FERDOWSI; A CREDIT FOR IRANIAN IDENTITY, PERSIAN LANGUAGE



MFA NEWSLETTER

IRANIAN, IRAQI FMS MEET IN TEHRAN





MFA NEWSLETTER

FM ARAGHCHI VISITS TURKEY





MFA NEWSLETTER

Iran's Foreign Minister held telephone conversations with his counterparts from Turkiye, Pakistan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Azerbaijan Republic, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.





IRANIAN LUMINARIES

FERDOWSI; IRANIAN IDENTITY, A CREDIT FOR PERSIAN LANGUAGE



January 21 is the birthday anniversary of prominent Iranian poet Abolqassem Ferdowsi and many people around the world, including Iranians, observe the day to pay tribute to this highly revered Persian poet.

He is best known for his magnum opus, *Shahnameh* (Book of the Kings), which is a classic in epic Persian poetry and recounts Iran's mythical and historical past.

Abolqassem Hassan, son of Ali Tusi known as Ferdowsi, was born in 940 CE in Tus, Iran, an ancient city near modern-day Mashhad. Little is known about his early life. It is believed that Ferdowsi came from an aristocratic family, had a

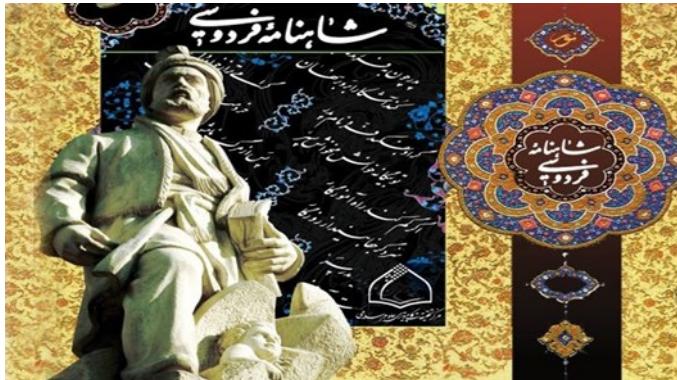
wife from the same social class, and a son, whose death at the age of 37 is mourned in his masterpiece, *Shahnameh*.

It has been said that before *Shahnameh*, it is possible that Ferdowsi wrote other poems, none of which are available today.

The book, as the national epic of the Persian-speaking world, is a literary masterpiece that tells the mythical partially historical past of the Persian Empire, beginning from the creation of the world up until the Islamic invasion of Persia in 651. Today, this masterpiece is celebrated in several countries, namely Iran, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Georgia, Armenia, and Turkey.

Shahnameh consists of three parts: The Mythical Age, the Heroic Age, and the Historical Age. Throughout the book, Ferdowsi does not adhere strictly to a chronological pattern but a general movement through time can be seen.

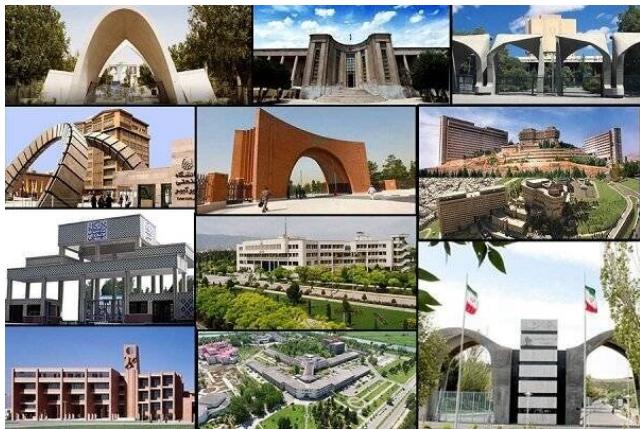
It is indisputable that the existence of many cultural and social aspects and characteristics of the Persian-speaking world, as well as the Persian language and identity, can be attributed to this great tale of kings and queens, heroes and villains, royalty and slaves, and farmers and warriors.





SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

OVER 100 IRANIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE WUR 2026 BY SUBJECT



The Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings (WUR) 2026 has placed 101 Iranian universities among the top universities in the world in 11 subject areas, compared to 81 universities in 10 subject areas in 2025.

These ten subject rankings include arts and humanities; business and economics; clinical and health; computer science; education; engineering; life sciences; physical sciences; psychology; social sciences, and Law.

To create the THE WUR 2026 list, THE's data team drew on a comprehensive and growing database containing hundreds of thousands of data points on more than 3,100 global research universities, and employed a global Academic Reputation Survey of more than 108,000 leading scholars, who provided us with their expert views on the world's leading universities.

In addition, it also analyzed 174.9 million citations to 18.7 million academic publications (from Elsevier's Scopus database) published over a five-year period between 2020 and 2024.

IRAN RANKS 1ST IN COGNITIVE SCIENCES AMONG ISLAMIC NATIONS



According to Web of Science (WoS) data, over a five-year period (from 2021 to 2025), Iran (with 32 documents) ranks first in cognitive sciences among Islamic countries.

Turkey, with 23 documents, and Saudi Arabia, with 22 documents, are placed second and third, respectively, IRNA reported.

From 2014 to 2023, Iran ranked either first or second in most fields of cognitive sciences among Islamic countries.

Over the course of the decade, the country ranked first in cognitive neuroscience, cognitive rehabilitation, and cognitive linguistics with 387, 156, and 30 documents, respectively.

It ranked second in cognitive psychology (124 documents), cognitive education (561 documents), philosophy of mind (34 documents), and cognitive evaluation (898 documents).



SCINCE & TECHNOLOGY

IRAN, CHINA, UNAIDS CELEBRATE SUCCESS OF PATHFINDER HIV PROJECT



The Islamic Republic of Iran, the People's Republic of China, and the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) recently celebrated the successful completion of a pathfinder HIV project, designed to bridge the HIV testing gap in Iran's national HIV response and generate alternative solutions to ensure a resilient national HIV testing program in the years to come.

This people-centered project combined supply chain, capacity development, and knowledge exchange solutions to fill a gap in the testing pillar of Iran's national HIV response. The project's USD 655,000 budget was donated by the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges (CICETE), and it was implemented by UNAIDS in close collaboration with the Centre for Communicable Diseases Control (CCDC) of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, Iran, the United Nation Development Program (UNDP), with technical support from the China National Center for AIDS/STD Control and Prevention (NCAIDS).

'IRAN THE ONLY ISLAMIC COUNTRY IN EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN WITH RARE BLOOD PROGRAM'

Iran is the only Islamic nation in the Eastern Mediterranean region that has a rare blood program, an official with the Iranian Blood Transfusion Organization (IBTO) has said.

In the Iranian year 1389 (2010-2011), the country joined the International Rare Blood Association, which currently has 30 member states, IRNA quoted Mehdi Karbasizadeh as saying.

The official went on to say that Iran, China, and Japan are the only member states of the association in Asia that have rare blood management programs.

One out of 5,000 to 10,000 individuals in Iran has a rare blood type. The frequency of rare blood types in each country depends on its population and the blood type. Bombay blood type is among the rarest blood groups known in the country, the official added.

There are currently fewer than 10 of the rarest blood types and 30 rare blood types in the country. About 150 out of 376 solidified units of blood stored at a rare blood bank are the rarest, Karbasizadeh said.

Presently, 262 individuals with a really rare blood type are identified in the country, but not all of them can donate blood.





ART & CULTURE

JAPANESE ENVOY HIGHLIGHTS BOOSTING TIES WITH IRANIAN UNIVERSITIES IN AI, EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES



Japanese Ambassador Tamaki Tsukada has highlighted the significance of promoting scientific ties with Iranian universities in different areas, especially emerging technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and advanced materials.

Science and industry are the two main indicators of power in the 21st century, which play a critical role in scientific diplomacy, IRNA quoted Tsukada as saying.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Mahmoud Shokrieh, the chancellor of Iran University of Science and Technology (IUST). The ambassador said the scientific capabilities and capacities of Iran have never been truly presented to Japan, and that it is his main responsibility to do so. He also announced readiness to foster interactions between the IUST and Japanese universities.

IRANIAN DOCUMENTARY “CUTTING THROUGH ROCKS” NOMINATED AT 98TH ACADEMY AWARDS

The feature documentary “Cutting Through Rocks” directed by Iranian filmmakers Sara Khaki and Mohammadreza Eyni, a coproduction of Iran, Germany, the U.S., Qatar, the Netherlands, Chile, and Canada, has been nominated for the 98th Academy Awards.

This is the first time in the history of Iranian cinema that an Iranian feature documentary film has been nominated for an Oscar.

In the Best Documentary Feature race, “Cutting Through Rocks” will go up against “The Perfect Neighbor” by Geeta Gandbhir, “The Alabama Solution” by Andrew Jarecki and Charlotte Kaufman, “Come See Me in the Good Light” by Ryan White, and “Mr. Nobody Against Putin” by David Borenstein and Pavel Talankin.



Cutting through Rocks

DIRECTED BY SARA KHAKI & MOHAMMADREZA EYNI

OSCAR®

NOMINEE: DOCUMENTARY FEATURE FILM

TRY DELICIOUS IRANIAN FOODS:

AMAZING TAHCHIN, A PERSIAN RICE CAKE



Apart from an amazing taste, Tahchin is a good-looking Iranian food, and that's why it's an integral item on the menu of almost every restaurant, party, or formal ceremony in Iran.

There are different varieties of Tahchin all of which mainly involve layering rice and a kind of meat or vegetable. But one made with chicken is the most common and favored version of this Persian rice cake that includes rice, yogurt, saffron, egg, and chicken fillets. It is also possible to use vegetables, fish, or meat instead of the chicken fillets. Tahchin is composed of two different parts: The thin Tahdig part which includes the chicken fillets, saffron, and other ingredients at the bottom of the cooking pot and the second part which is the white rice. In restaurants, Tahchin is mostly prepared and served without the white rice part.

DOCUMENTARY ON PALESTINIAN PHOTOJOURNALIST FATIMA HASSOUNA WINS AT FRANCE'S LUMIÈRE AWARDS



The documentary "Put Your Soul on Your Hand and Walk" directed by Iranian filmmaker Sepideh Farsi about life in Gaza during the Israeli military actions, won the Best Documentary award at France's 31st Lumière Awards in Paris. The 112-minute France/Palestine film is the filmmaker's response to the massacre of Palestinians by the Zionists.

Farsi thinks that a miracle happened when she met the 25-year-old photojournalist Fatima Hassouna. It was in April 2024 that the director first contacted her and recorded visually the conversation that they had when using smartphones.

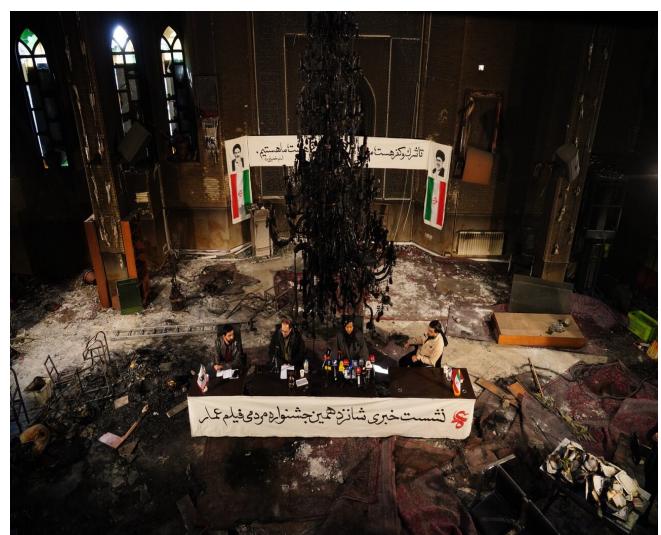
Farsi was in Cairo at the time and she had heard of Fatima through a Palestinian refugee who, knowing that Farsi was deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza and had been unable to get permission to go there, had suggested that she should contact Fatima, who was living with her family in the Tuffah quarter of Gaza City.

AMMAR POPULAR FILM FESTIVAL GROWS IN GLOBAL REACH WITH OVER 700 ENTRIES WORLDWIDE

The 16th edition of the Ammar Popular Film Festival has received over 700 works from 11 countries, the secretary of the festival has announced.

"The number of submissions has tripled compared to last year, featuring artists from Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Jordan, Morocco, and the UK," Marzieh Hashemi said during a press conference held at the Jameh Mosque of Abuzar in Tehran. Many others from different countries wanted to participate but refrained out of fear due to the recent unrests, she added.

Referring to the recent unrest in the country, she stated: "Seeing burned mosques and Qurans is painful. Previously, I had only heard about such events in Libya and Gaza, but I never thought that several mosques would be burned in the Islamic Republic of Iran."



IRAN, TAJIKISTAN TO WAIVE VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR DRIVERS



The Tajik Foreign Ministry announced that the country and the Islamic Republic of Iran will lift the visa regime for each other's international truck drivers from the beginning of March this year.

A senior official from Tajik Foreign Ministry announced this news to media, stating that the decision was based on a mutual agreement between the governments of the two countries. Under this decision, they can stay in each other countries visa-free for up to 30 days.

According to the official, international truck drivers with Tajik and Iranian passports can now enter the two countries' territories visa-free through border crossings.

"This decision facilitates international transport, trade and economic cooperation, and increases profitability of logistics between the two countries," the Tajik Foreign Ministry stated.

The visa waiver through land borders between Tajikistan and Iran was discussed during a meeting in April 2025 between Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and Iranian Minister of Interior Eskandar Momeni.

At the time, Iranian media quoted Eskandar Momeni as: "It has been decided in the first stage to lift visas for land travel to create convenient travel conditions for citizens of the two countries."

IRAN SHOES EXHIBITION RUNNING IN TEHRAN

Iran's largest specialized footwear industry exhibition, featuring 700 brands, opened and commenced its work at the Shahr-e Aftab Exhibition Center.

Javad Shabanzadeh, the head of the Export Committee of the Iranian Footwear Industry Association, stated on the sidelines of the exhibition's opening ceremony: "Holding the exhibition at this time was very sensitive and important, and we are witnessing its organization through the capability of Iran's youth."

He pointed to the presence of 700 footwear brands at the exhibition and said: "We are witnessing significant growth in Iran's footwear industry moment by moment, and this industry must always be supported."

The head of the exhibition organizing committee, emphasizing the government's comprehensive support for the footwear industry, stated: "Everyone must work together towards the vision of developing the footwear industry and its exports, and support production units with the language of demand."



TRADE & ECONOMY

IRAN FREE ZONES SEEK INVESTMENT FROM CIS COUNTRIES



Iran's free trade and special economic zones are ready to attract investment from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

The comments were made at a conference in Tehran aimed at expanding international exchanges and cooperation between Iran's free zones and CIS member states, attended by ambassadors from CIS countries and chief executives of Iran's free zones.

Reza Masrour, secretary of the Iranian Free Zones High Council, said Iran's free zones have the capacity to host foreign investment and offer significant employment opportunities. He added that the zones are also prepared to receive tourists, citing their potential in the tourism sector.

Iran has established several free trade and special economic zones across its border regions and coastal areas, offering incentives such as tax exemptions, simplified customs procedures and eased regulations for foreign investors. The zones are intended to boost exports, attract capital and promote regional trade links.

TEHRAN TO HOST IRAN-EURASIA ECONOMIC COOPERATION SUMMIT IN EARLY FEBRUARY

The Head of the Iran Trade Promotion Organization (TPO), while outlining the fundamental objectives of the fourth Eurasia International Trade Exhibition, announced the initiative of holding the Iran-Eurasia Economic Cooperation Summit on the sidelines of this event with the presence of a group of officials from the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and neighboring countries.

According to the TPO's public relations department report, Mohammad Ali Dehghan Dehnavi, in a meeting for the fourth Eurasia International Trade Exhibition attended by a group of Iranian traders, businessmen, and some officials from the Iran Chamber of Commerce, pointed to the increase in Iran's trade exchanges with Eurasia, stating: "It seems that the current trade volume is not proportionate to the existing trade capacities; although, based on eight-month statistics, Iran's trade with Eurasian countries shows a 16 percent growth."

According to the head of the Iran TPO, the private sector and Iranian traders have gained a good understanding of the Iran-Eurasia Free Trade Agreement and have utilized the opportunity to trade with Eurasian member countries, although there is still untapped capacity for trade with these nations.



CULTURE & SOCIETY

TABRIZ CAN BE STARTING POINT FOR TOURISM COOPERATION BETWEEN IRAN, TURKEY, CONSULTANT SAYS



Orhan Baki, the consultant of the Turkish tourism, commerce and trade company Sulduz considered Tabriz, the capital city of Iran's East Azarbaijan province, one of the effective destinations for starting joint tourism cooperation between the two countries.

He highlighted Iran's real and field capacities in the field of tourism, and emphasized the necessity of an approach based on personal experience and civilizational commonalities.

Referring to his field observations of Tabriz, he stated that the image drawn of Iran abroad is far from the social, cultural and tourism realities of this land, and the experience of being in Tabriz shows that security, social intimacy and economic interactivity are tangibly present in the heart of the city.

Emphasizing the role of social security in the decision-making of foreign tourists, he said that the market atmosphere, economic relations, and behavior of urban activists in Tabriz are such that a foreign tourist can travel confidently and peacefully in different parts of the city, and it is considered one of the most important indicators of choosing a destination in international tourism.

Referring to the common capacities of Iran and Turkey, Baki added that Tabriz and Trabzon, as two neighboring destinations, can be the starting point for the formation of common tourism routes; a route that began with the regional cooperation and has the potential to expand to the other cities and destinations in the two countries.

MEXICAN PHOTOGRAPHER: IRAN, A COUNTRY WITH CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BEYOND STEREOTYPES

Mexican documentary photographer Roberto Flores, who traveled to Iran for the first time, emphasized Iran's cultural and human potential and said: "My goal in traveling to Iran is to record the cultural diversity and lifestyle of Iranian nomads, a living reality that can challenge the stereotypical narratives of Iran in the world."

In an interview released by Miras Aria on Wednesday, Flores referred to his motivations for traveling to Iran and said: "The idea of recording the life of nomads had been in my mind for years, and Iran, due to its cultural, climatic, and human diversity, was considered one of the most important destinations for this project."

According to the news agency, despite his age of 26, he has a record of traveling and documentary photography in 75 countries around the world. "My perspective in photography is always focused on people; their way of life, the relationship between generations, and the connection with nature and animals. Contrary to popular belief, people around the world are more similar than different."

Describing his journey in Iran, the documentary photographer said: "After arriving in Tehran and at the same time as it was snowing and raining, my journey changed to Lorestan and Khuzestan provinces. We took a local train from Doroud to Andimeshk and spent a whole day as guests of a nomadic family." Flores continued: "In Andimeshk and Dezfool, I witnessed a Bakhtiari wedding and then spent some time with a family of Haftlang Bakhtiari. The sincerity, decency and hospitality of the people were beyond any imagination I had before the trip."



IRANIAN SPORTS

IRANIANS WIN GOLD AND SILVER AT 2026 UIAA ICE CLIMBING WORLD CUP

Mohammadreza Safdarian and Mohsen Beheshti Rad of Iran won gold and silver medals at the UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup.

Safdarian finished in first place in the men's speed



with a time of 8.60 seconds.

Beheshti Rad came second with 9.06 and the bronze medal went to Florian Gantner (Lie) with 9.14.

The UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup was held in Saas-Fee, Switzerland from Jan. 22 to 24.

IRAN'S FARAJI WINS WTT YOUTH CONTENDER DOHA 2026

Benyamin Faraji of Iran won the title at the WTT Youth Contender Doha 2026.

Faraji dominated Hong Kong's Man Long in a 3-0 sweep in the Under-17 boys' category.

He defeated players from Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, and South Korea on his way to the final.

Arshia Lorestani was Iran's other representative at the tournament, but failed to advance to Round of Eight. This tournament marks a pivotal moment in the broader Qatar International Table

Tennis Series. With two events already in the books, the action is set to accelerate as the "Star Contender Youth" championship takes center stage from January 23rd to 25th.



IRAN BEAT MALAYSIA AT 2026 AFC FUTSAL ASIAN CUP

Iran's title defense started with a 4-1 win against Malaysia in their AFC Futsal Asian Cup Indonesia 2026 Group D tie. With the win, Iran joined Afghanistan - who beat Saudi Arabia 3-0 earlier in the day - on maximum points.

Malaysia forced Bagher Mohammadi into making two early saves, both efforts from Awalluddin Nawi but it was Iran who would take the lead inside the opening minute.

A mix-up between goalkeeper Syaifuddin Syukri and Saad Sani saw what was supposed to be an easy gather turned into a simple tap-in for Mohammadhossein Derakhshani.

Mohammadi came to the rescue of Iran again in the fifth minute, coming out of his goalmouth to stop a marauding Firdaus Ambiah who had broken through the last line of defense, the-afc.com reported.

Similarly, Syaifuddin had to work hard to prevent the gap from widening, making a smart reflex swing to tip away Salar Aghapour's rasping drive in the 10th minute and then sticking his leg out in the 18th to clear a volley from the same player before Hossein Tayebi cracked a shot against the post just before the break.



DISCOVER IRAN IN PICTURES

THE TOMB OF FERDOWSI, THE GREATEST IRANIAN POET, TOUS, MASHHAD, KHORASAN RAZAVI, IRAN

