

Muslims in Taiwan



Members of the Hui Chinese Muslim community at the stand of Muslim women in Da'an Park, Taipei.

TAIPEI (Global Voices) -- Taiwan is a predominantly Buddhist and Taoist society yet it counts several religious minorities, including Muslims. According to various estimates there are about 250,000 Muslims on the island, thus representing around one percent of the total population.

Taiwan's Muslims are predominantly Sunni, and originate from different migration waves. Of the estimated 250,000, about 60,000 belong to the Chinese Muslim community, also known as Hui in Chinese or as Dungan in Central Asia. The Hui are Chinese who converted to Islam as early as the seventh century and sometimes intermarried with Arab and Persian traders. Some of them moved from mainland China to Taiwan as the ethnic Chinese colonization started in the 17th century. Another wave moved after 1949 when the Kuomintang lost the civil war to the Communists and fled to the island, thereby imposing its rule over Taiwan. An estimated 20,000 Hui soldiers served in the Kuomintang army and eventually settled in Taiwan with their families. Finally, a third wave of Chinese Muslims who had relations with Taiwan and/or the Kuomintang moved from Thailand and Myanmar in the 1980s and created a small Muslim center in New Taipei City.

The vast majority of Taiwan's Muslims are migrant workers from Southeast Asia, mostly Indonesia and Malaysia. They do not have Taiwanese citizenship and typically come for only a few years, with women largely working as domestic, health, or hospitality workers and men finding employment in factories or on fishing boats. None of those countries recognize Taiwan officially as an independent state, but they maintain vibrant economic, tourism, and labor relations and have representative offices on the island.

Islam is present across Taiwan but perhaps more visible in Taipei, where the Grand Mosque is established and sits on the side of the Da'an Park - a major landmark

in the center of the city. It was built in 1960 and has maintained special ties with Saudi Arabia. Its architect, Yang Cho-cheng, also designed some of Taipei's most renowned landmark buildings, such as the Taipei Grand Hotel, Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, National Theater and Concert Hall.

The Chinese Muslim Association, which keeps its reference to China in its name as it was established in 1938 in mainland China, plays a key role for local Muslims as the largest Islamic organization in the community. It also plays an indirect diplomatic role as it maintains relations and exchanges with Muslim nations that do not officially recognize Taiwan as an independent country, yet engage with the island economically and religiously.

On April 23, a public celebration to mark the end of Ramadan took place in Da'an Park. The event has been a yearly occurrence since 2016 with the support of the Taipei City government and other governmental departments. The celebration included small stands promoting food, drinks, clothes, and souvenirs from the Muslim world. It also provided information on Islam in general and its role in Taiwan, as well as leaflets and counseling to migrant workers — most of whom are from Indonesia.

The official ceremony also drew notable public figures, including Taipei's mayor Chiang Wan-an (Kuomintang party), and the heads of representative offices of Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. The mayor insisted on the need to develop Muslim-friendly tourism, as tourists from such countries tend to travel in larger groups and have specific needs that could boost an industry that was severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A music performance followed, showing how non-Muslim Taiwanese also participate in the promotion of Arabic, Turkish, and Iranian culture. One local band performed Egyptian and Turkish songs played on Middle-Eastern instruments.

Kanoon Exhibition of Books Wins Geisel Award

TEHRAN -- The Institute for Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (IIDCYA or Kanoon) has held an exhibition of books which have won Theodor Seuss Geisel Award which will run by May 21.

The Theodor Seuss Geisel Award is given annually to the authors and illustrators of the most distinguished American book for beginning readers published in English in the United States during the preceding year.

The winners, recognized for their literary and artistic achievements that demonstrate creativity and imagination to engage children in reading, receive a bronze medal. Honor Book authors and illustrators receive certificates, which are presented at the ALA Annual Conference. The award was established in 2004 and first presented in 2006.

The award is named for the world-renowned children's author, Theodor Geisel. "A person's a person no matter how



small," Theodor Geisel, also known as Dr. Seuss, says. "Children want the same things we want: to laugh, to be challenged, to be entertained and delighted."

Brilliant and playful, Dr. Seuss charmed his way into the consciousness of four generations of youngsters and parents. In the process, he helped them to read.

Australia Holds Persian Film Festival

TEHRAN -- Iranian short animated film 'The Sprayer' has made its way to the Persian Film Festival Australia.

'The Sprayer', directed by Farnoush Abedi, will compete in the 10th edition of the festival.

"One day, a soldier finds a seed buried deep down in the dust...", a synopsis for the film reads.

The film previously took part in several festivals, including the DC Shorts Film Festival in the US.

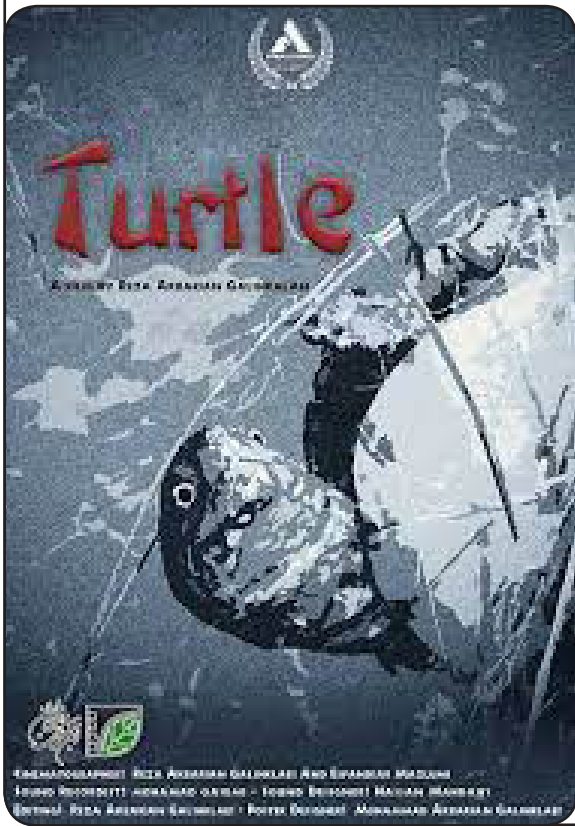
It also managed to win the Best Animation award at the 3rd edition of the Better World Film Festival in Germany.

The upcoming edition of Persian Film Festival Australia will kick off on April 26 and run until May 7.

'The Sprayer' is reportedly among 11 features and 9 short films that will be competing during the festival.

The festival will open in Sydney and will tour Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide, according to the organizers.

Cinema Verde Awards Short Documentary 'Turtle'



TEHRAN -- Iranian short documentary 'Turtle' has been awarded at Cinema Verde Environmental Film & Arts Festival in the U.S.

'Turtle', directed by Reza Akbarian, won the Habitat Award at the 14th edition of Cinema Verde, the Iranian Youth Cinema Society reported.

The film has no dialogue, and is about a turtle that has been trapped by hunters and is trying to save itself.

The film was previously awarded at several festivals, including Tehran International Short Film Festival in Iran and the 15th Fauto Doc Festival in Italy.

The mission of Cinema Verde is to "provide environmental education to the public through film, arts, workshops, events, tours and any other forum or media", the event's website reads..

"We strive to increase awareness of environmental practices that enhance public health and improve quality of life in urban, suburban and rural settings."

The 14th edition of Cinema Verde took place in February.

Picture of the Day



Razif Khani, a travelogue reading performance, is one of the most beautiful heritage attractions of Qeshm Island, which poetically depicts the journey of sailors, and is composed of the remembrance of the Prophet of Islam and his Household.

Photo by IRNA

Iranian Folklore Band Performs in Canada



TEHRAN -- Iranian folklore music band 'Lian' has performed in Canada.

Led by renowned Iranian musician Mohsen Sharifian, the band performed in the cities of Toronto and

Vancouver.

This unique performance was performed in three separate parts with narration of stories and songs in Bushehri dialect and was welcomed by the audience.

The program kicked off with a performance by Liana Sharifian, the only female musician of this group.

Then the members of the band entered the stage with their instruments, and the sound of cymbals and dammams took the audience thousands of kilometers away to the south of Iran.

The Nii Anban duet of Mohsen Sharifian and his daughter Liana Sharifian was the closing section of the event.