

## Candidates to Represent Iran at Qur'an Competition in Mecca Named



TEHRAN -- Iran's Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization has announced two contenders to represent the nation at the 44th King Abdulaziz International Competition for the memorization, recitation, and interpretation of the Qur'an.

Muhammad Hussein Behzadfar and Muhammad Mahdi Rezaei will participate in the full Qur'an memorization and 15 Juzes categories, respectively.

The announcement coincides with the recent restoration of diplomatic ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia, marking a significant moment for both na-

tions. Scheduled for early August in Mecca, the competition is renowned for drawing participants worldwide and boasts a prize pool of SR4 million (\$1.07 million). It encompasses five categories, each focusing on different aspects of Qur'anic memorization and recitation, adhering to traditional recitation rules.

Prizes for the primary category include sums of SR500,000, SR450,000, and SR400,000 for the top three placements. The event will conclude with a ceremony at the Grand Mosque in Mecca.

## Iranian Musician Jailed in France Target of Smear Campaign

TEHRAN -- Almost three weeks after he was arbitrarily arrested and jailed in France, Iranian musician and cultural figure Bashir Biazar finds himself in the throes of militant anti-Iran groups.

As the likelihood of his release and possible deportation from France increases, some elements associated with the anti-Iran terror cult MKO have mounted a campaign to keep him behind bars, Press TV wrote.

Biazar was summoned by French police on June 4 without a warrant and was arrested immediately after he arrived at the police station. He was then transferred to a detention facility for illegal migrants.

In a chargesheet filed by the French interior ministry, a copy of which is in the possession of Press TV, Biazar has been accused of "Iranian propaganda," "anti-Zionism and anti-Americanism," "hateful social media posts," being a "vector of hatred," and posing a "threat to public order in France."

Human rights activists, Iranian government officials, and Biazar's family and friends have firmly rejected the charges against him as baseless and politically motivated.

On Monday, Kazem Gharibabadi, secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights and deputy judiciary chief for international affairs, reiterated that the French detainment of Biazar was illegal.

He emphasized that a French court has told the Iranian national that he must leave the country within 28 days, but he has been imprisoned over the past 20 days.

"It is really unfathomable why they should keep him in custody until the last day," Gharibabadi said, adding that Iranian authorities are in contact with their French counterparts to seek his release.

Biazar's lawyer has also slammed his client's continued detention and planned expulsion as "political."

Anti-Iran groups in France have in recent days upped the ante to make sure Biazar continues to languish in a French jail on charges that according to activists smack of political vendetta.

On June 20, some of these groups based in Paris filed a complaint against the Iranian music maestro, accusing him of "participation in acts of torture" and "intelligence for a foreign power."

The complaint is based solely on his previous work for the Song Department of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the country's state broadcaster.

Behind the complaint is a group

named "Iran Justice," whose activity has been focused on spreading disinformation and propaganda against Iran, under the guise of "fighting for human rights."

The group is headed by Chirinne (Shirin) Ardakani, a French lawyer of Iranian origin who has a background in cooperation with radical separatist groups, designated as terrorist groups in Iran.

During the last two years, Ardakani has been spreading propaganda against Iran on social media platforms, including debunked lies about the cases of Mahsa Amini and Armita Geravand, while defending convicted murderers who were involved in Western-backed riots in 2022.

To gain media attention, she falsely presented herself as a lawyer for the Amini family and Narges Mohammadi, even though the families of the two women never even mentioned her by name.

Her anti-Iran engagement has been full of venom, such as insulting millions of Iranians at the funeral of the late President Ebrahim Raisi as "fanatics" and the funeral ceremony as an "industry of death."

Ardakani founded the aforementioned NGO as a so-called "legal task force," with the mission of suing and slandering Iranian officials, as evidenced by her open threat that "they should not walk peacefully in the European Union."

Last year, she indicted an Iranian minister and the top commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) in Paris, using baseless accusations and conspiracy theories about "hidden fatwas."

Her claim that the statement -- "those responsible for the riots will pay wherever they are" -- "encourages terrorism" was intended to have IRGC on the EU list of terrorist groups.

After that move, which the French media described as symbolic, Ardakani this time turned against Bashir Biazar, an Iranian musician and cultural figure currently based in France with his family.

This time, as in the previous two cases, Ardakani presented herself to the media as a lawyer representing alleged "political prisoners," again without verifiable accreditation or even providing personal names.

She filed a complaint against Biazar for alleged "personal participation" in televised confessions of convicted criminals, for which she did not provide any evidence or indications, which she interprets as "forced," again without evidence.

She also accused him of acting on French soil as "an agent of the Islamic

# 'Douman' Documents President's Helicopter Crash

TEHRAN -- New documentary revisits the tragedy that claimed the lives of late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and his accompanying delegation in a helicopter crash.

The documentary 'Douman' (The Foggy Weather) directed by Mohsen Talaei promises to reveal unknown aspects of the incident through never-before-seen footage. 'Douman' is produced by the Royat Fath Cultural Foundation, known for its focus on war veterans and martyrs in Iran.

The documentary aims to pay tribute to the martyred officials and



Rescue team members carry the body of a victim after a helicopter carrying President Raisi crashed in northwestern Iran in May.

portray their courage and sacrifices.

It is scheduled to air on one of the IRIB channels on the occasion of the 40th day after the officials' martyrdom.

Raisi and his accompanying delegation passed away in a chopper crash on May 19 in the Iranian province of East Azarbaijan.

The incident resulted in the tragic loss of all passengers on board. The whole nation and the world were deeply moved by the sad news.

The Iranian people deeply honor the memory of these brave officials.

## Venezuela, Iran Open Joint Innovation Center

TEHRAN -- Iran and Venezuela have opened a joint innovation center to promote the market of the Iranian technological achievements in Latin America, an official said.

"One of the important steps taken to develop technological diplomacy in the 13th government was the establishment of centers for the supply of Iran's technological capabilities in the neighboring, friendly and allied countries, and therefore, during the (late) president's visit to Venezuela last year, the two governments signed an agreement to establish a joint innovation and technology center between Iran and Venezuela in Caracas," said Amir Hussein Mirabadi, the head of the International Scientific and Technological Cooperation Development Organization of the Iranian Vice-Presidency for

Science, Technology and Knowledge-Based Economy.

"This center operates similar to the model and structure of Iran's innovation and technology houses, and will be a platform for the supply of Iran's knowledge-based, technological and creative capabilities," he added.

Noting that the center is named as 'Iran-Venezuela Joint Innovation and Technology Center', Mirabadi said, "Among the actions that are going to be carried out in the framework of this center are the establishment of a permanent exhibition of knowledge-based products and advanced technologies in Venezuela, the establishment of an Iranian knowledge-based company that will take on projects in Venezuela, holding joint training courses by Iranian



experts for Venezuelan experts and having assembly and production workshops in this location."

In March, Mirabadi said Iran was

trying to become Venezuela's partner in the field of science and technology, particularly in the telecommunications area.

## Latest From Iranian Cinema



TEHRAN -- The eagerly awaited film 'Money and Party', co-produced by Sina Mehrad and Soheili, has received its screening license.

Set to hit cinemas across the country soon, the film stars Saed Soheili and Pardis Ahmadiyeh in the lead roles, with additional cast members to be announced shortly.

The 'Money and Party' is believed

to be one of the highest-grossing films of the year.

The film 'Love Passion', which depicts the journey of the Karbala prisoners' caravan from Kufa to Sham, will be released in cinemas nationwide during Muharram and Safar.

Written, directed, and produced by Darioush Yari, the film will premiere on July 3.

"Salma must speak for the Karbala prisoners to preserve the truth. She must reach the people before Shimir and his soldiers to prevent them from misleading people. She joins the caravan to avenge his father's murder," reads as a synopsis of the flick.

The film features an ensemble cast, including Shohreh Mousavi, Payam Ahmadiania, Mehdi Zaminpardaz, Siamak Safari, Nader Fallah, and Alireza Ostadi.

The 'Love Passion' has already garnered critical acclaim, winning the Crystal Simorgh for Best Interfaith Film at the 42nd Fajr International Film Festival.

In the past week, 'Texas 3' emerged as the best-selling movie, drawing 383,000 viewers to the cinemas.

The comedy film 'Don't Be Embarrassed 2: Separation of Qanbar from Sanam' secured the second spot.

Meanwhile, 'Intoxicated by Love' and 'Bloody Crocodile' continue to maintain steady sales.

## Picture of the Day



Ballot boxes are carried on a boat to Turkmen villages in Gorgan, Golestan province.

Photo by IRNA