

Iranian Contender in Malaysia Qur'an Competition Named



TEHRAN – Iran has named its contender in this year's edition of Malaysia's annual international Holy Qur'an competition.

Mohsen Qassemi will compete for Iran in the recitation category of the prestigious Qur'anic event.

He was selected as Iran's representative by the Committee for Inviting and Dispatching Qaris and Memorizers.

It came after the Qur'anic Affairs Center of the Awqaf and Charity Affairs Organization received an invitation from the organizers of the Malaysian competition.

Malaysia's international Qur'an competition is annually organized in the country's capital of Kuala Lumpur

by the Department of Islamic Development (JAKIM).

This year, the 65th edition will be held in two rounds, with the preliminary stage slated to take place virtually on May 17-24.

Those making it to the finals will travel to Kuala Lumpur to compete in the final round on August 2-9.

Qassemi is a renowned Iranian qari who came third in Iran's 47th National Holy Qur'an Competition.

He has so far competed in two international Qur'anic events, coming third in Tanzania international Qur'an contest and finishing runner-up in Khayr al-Tilawa Qur'an contest in Lebanon.

A Journey Through Modern Persian Prose



TEHRAN -- Modern Persian prose started to develop at the beginning of the 20th century, following the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911).

This social and political movement aimed at ending the absolute monarchy and giving power to the people, and with it, conveyed new ideas about democracy, freedom and equality that were reflected in the artists and intellectuals' works.

One of the first significant contributors to this movement was Zeyn al-Abedin Maraghehi. He published the "The Travel Diary of Ebrahim Beg" ("Siहतنامه‌ی‌ی‌براهیم‌ب‌ی‌گ"), which is often considered as one of the first modern Persian novels. The theme of the book reflects the struggle of the time, speaking of social justice in Iran through the eyes of a traveler. His work had a great influence on writers and on the development of prose and novel writing in Iran.

During the 20th century, Iran started to open to the West and its ideas, and Persian writers also absorbed this influence in their writings, both in terms of ideas and style.

Muhammad Ali Jamalzadeh Esfahani is one of the most prominent writers of this era. His collection of short stories, "Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud" ("Once Upon a Time"), is recognized as the first modern work of Persian prose.

The stories are once again dealing with social and political issues of the time in Iran, written in a simple and colloquial speech, using humor to convey messages.

While considered nowadays as a classic, Jamalzadeh's work was not well received when published, so much so that the writer chose to refrain from writing for the next 20 years.

Another important and worldwide famous figure of modern Persian literature is Sadeq Hedayat. "The Blind Owl", published in 1937, is regarded as one of the most important works in Persian prose.

The book portrays themes of isolation, death and madness, making it a

deeply psychological and existential novel. Regarding his writing style, Sadeq Hedayat was one of the first Iranian writers to use literary modernism, filled with elements of surrealism and symbolism.

With "The Blind Owl", Sadeq Hedayat demonstrated the capacity of Persian prose to evolve into more philosophical and emotional levels.

During the middle of the 20th century, a new shift emerged in Persian prose toward engaged political books. Writers would use their work to directly criticize social, economic and political conditions in Iran.

One of the most emblematic authors is Bozorg Alavi and his book "Cheshm Hayash" ("Her Eyes") published in 1952. Bozorg Alavi was a founding member of the communist party in Iran, the Tudeh Party, and as such a fervent opponent to the monarchy of the Pahlavi.

In "Cheshm Hayash", which was banned in Iran, Bozorg Alavi explores the themes of political repression, corruption, censorship and human desire in an authoritarian regime.

Jalal Al-e-Ahmad is another key figure of modern Persian prose during this period. His novel "Nefrin-e Zamin" ("The Curse of the Earth") and his famous essay "Gharbzadegi" ("Westoxification") criticized Iran's imitation of Western culture at the expense of its own traditions. Jalal Al-e-Ahmad's prose used direct language to communicate his critic of the social transformations of Iran.

The 1979 Islamic Revolution marked another turning point for modern Persian prose. Writers had to navigate a new political and social landscape. Mahmoud Dowlatbadi is one of the most prominent contemporary Iranian novelists, famous for his epic novel "Kelidar" published in 1984. This novel consists of ten books in five volumes and was written over 15 years. It depicts the life of a rural Kurdish family over several decades, integrating many Iranian folkloric themes.

Koocheh Festival Cut Short Over Bandar Abbas Tragedy

TEHRAN -- The "Koocheh" music festival in the southern Iranian city of Bushehr has been canceled following a deadly explosion at Shahid Rajaei Port in Bandar Abbas that killed dozens and injured hundreds.

Organizers announced the decision in an official statement, expressing grief over Saturday's incident.

Governor Muhammad Ashouri Taziani declared three days of public mourning in Hormozgan province.

"The festival, which was set to feature five nights of regional folk music performances, will not continue its remaining programs," the statement read.

In their poetic statement, the organizers wrote, "The southern home – with its palm tree, old boat in the corner – has one room in Ahvaz, another in Bushehr, and its largest, most beautiful room in Bandar Abbas."

The organizers said a mourning ceremony would be held on Monday night to commemo-



rate the victims of the incident.

"Tonight we gather in Saadat Schoolyard to

read the final story and entrust you to God's mercy," the statement read.

Massive Molecular Cloud Close to Earth Discovered

LONDON (CNN) -- An invisible molecular cloud that could shed light on how stars and planets form has been detected surprisingly close to Earth.

Named Eos after the Greek goddess of the dawn, the cloud of gas would appear huge in the night sky if visible to the naked eye. It measures roughly 40 moons in width and has a weight about 3,400 times the mass of the sun, researchers reported in a study published Monday in the journal Nature Astronomy.

"In astronomy, seeing the previously unseen usually means peering deeper with ever more sensitive telescopes — detecting those smaller planets ... those more distant galaxies," said study coauthor Thomas Haworth, an astrophysicist at Queen Mary University of London.

"This thing was pretty much in our cosmic backyard, and we've just missed it," he added.

Molecular clouds are composed of gas and dust from which hydrogen and carbon monoxide molecules can form. Dense clumps within these clouds can collapse to form young stars.

Scientists usually spot a molecular cloud using radio and infrared observations that can pick up the chemical signature for carbon monoxide, Haworth explained.

"We normally look for carbon monoxide, just one carbon atom and one oxygen atom, and that emits light pretty easily at wavelengths that we can detect," he said. "(Carbon monoxide is) bright, and we have lots of facilities that can spot that."

However, Eos eluded discovery despite being the closest molecular cloud to Earth because it does not contain much carbon monoxide, and therefore doesn't emit the characteristic signature detected by conventional approaches, the researchers said. The key to unlocking this stunning find was searching for ultraviolet light emitted by hydrogen in the cloud.

"The only reason we managed to catch it in this instance is be-

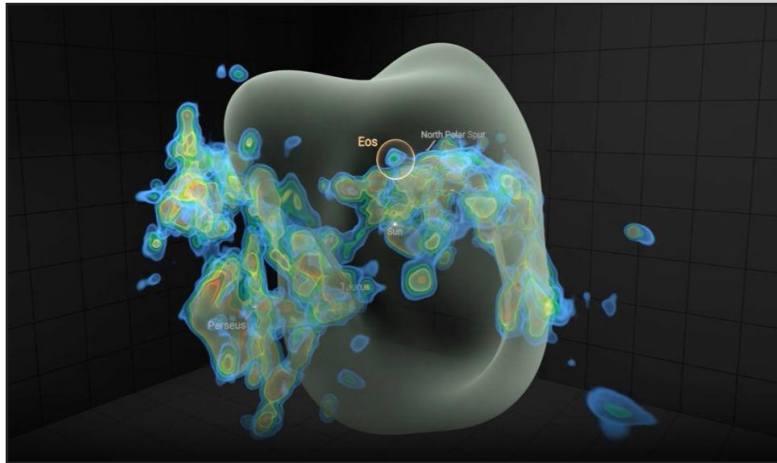
cause we've been able to look with a different color of light," Haworth added.

Haworth and his colleagues detected Eos in data collected by a far-ultraviolet spectrograph called FIMS-SPEAR that operated as an instrument on a Korean satellite called STSAT-1.

The data had just been released publicly in 2023 when lead study author Blakesley Burkhart, an associate professor in the department of physics and astronomy in the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences, came across it.

The spectrograph breaks down far-ultraviolet light emitted by a material into its component wavelengths, similar to what a prism does with visible light, creating a spectrum that scientists can analyze.

"This is the first-ever molecular cloud discovered by looking for far ultraviolet emission of molecular hydrogen directly," Burkhart said in a news release. "The data showed glowing hydrogen molecules detected via fluorescence in the far ultraviolet. This cloud is literally glowing in the dark."



The molecular cloud's proximity to Earth provides a unique opportunity to study how solar systems form, Burkhart said.

"Our discovery of Eos is exciting because we can now directly measure how molecular clouds are forming and dissociating, and how a galaxy begins to transform interstellar gas and dust into stars and planets," Burkhart said.

Astronomers thought they had a good handle on the locations and properties of the molecular clouds within about 1,600 light-years of the sun, making this "pretty cool discovery" quite a surprise, said Melissa McClure, an assistant professor at the Uni-

versity of Leiden in the Netherlands.

"This new molecular cloud, Eos, is only 300 light-years away, which is closer than any of the molecular clouds that we've known about previously," McClure, who wasn't involved in the research, said.

"It's puzzling why there's something this big right in our solar neighborhood that we didn't see before," McClure added. "It would be a bit like living in a suburb with above-ground houses and open lots in it, and suddenly realizing that one of the open lots actually hosts a hidden underground bunker in it."

Picture of the Day



Heyran tourism village is located 30 km from Astara on the way to Ardabil.

Photo by ISNA