

Khodnevis Contest Selects 20 Emerging Iranian Authors



TEHRAN -- The sixth edition of the Khodnevis Story Writing Competition, organized by Saad Publishing, has concluded its initial phase with the announcement of 20 selected finalists. The contest aims to discover and support new literary talent in Iran's contemporary fiction scene.

This year's competition focused on the theme of the "Iranian narrative," encouraging writers to explore subjects such as the Persian Gulf, influential Iranian women, national pride and independence, local myths and epics, and the protection of the country's cultural and natural heritage. A free-topic category was also available.

According to the event organizers, more than 400 story proposals were submitted from across the country, ranging from small villages to major

cities. The majority of participants held academic degrees, reflecting the strong link between Iran's literary community and higher education. Tehran Province recorded the highest number of submissions.

After review, 20 story outlines were selected for the next round of the competition.

In the next stage, each finalist will be asked to write a full chapter based on their selected proposal. From these, ten writers will be chosen to take part in Khodnevis's specialized creative writing workshops. Divided into two groups, they will work with mentors to expand their ideas into complete novels.

Since its launch, the Khodnevis competition has led to the publication of more than 70 selected works, offering a platform for emerging authors to enter Iran's literary market.

Animated Hit 'Yooz' Screens Nationwide at Half Price



TEHRAN -- In celebration of World Animation Day, Iranian animated feature Yooz, directed by Reza Arzhangi and produced by Ehsan Kaveh, will screen nationwide on Wednesday at half price.

The film is a co-production between the Sooreh Animation Center and Vistamedia, with distribution handled by Bahman Sabz.

Yooz has already made a major impact on Iran's box office. During its earlier half-price release coinciding with World Children's Day, the film shattered records for a domestic animated feature — logging 48 additional showtimes, earning 3.36 billion tomans (approximately \$75,000 USD), and drawing over 70,000 viewers in a single day. That performance made it the highest-grossing and most-attended day in Iranian cinema history for a children's film.

Since its premiere, Yooz has continued its strong theatrical run, attracting nearly 600,000 moviegoers and surpassing 37 billion tomans in total box office revenue, solidifying its place as one of Iran's biggest animated hits to date.

The film tells the story of a young Asiatic cheetah — one of the world's rarest big cats — embarking on a perilous yet heartfelt journey to return to its homeland. Blending fast-paced adventure with themes of belonging, courage, and environmental preservation, Yooz has been praised for its high-quality production values,

cinematic storytelling, and emotional resonance that appeals to both children and adults.

Meanwhile, the Cinema Museum in Tehran will host a special week-long screening of selected films from the Sixth "Panj" International Film and Photo Festival, beginning October 31. The event is being held in collaboration with the festival organizers and will feature international works from Japan, Turkey, Romania, Russia, China, and other countries.

According to the organizers, screenings will take place at the Ferdows Hall of the Cinema Museum in two sessions daily — from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Following each screening, review and discussion sessions will be held with the participation of filmmakers, critics, and cinema experts.

The program is designed to introduce Iranian audiences to new voices and perspectives in international cinema, while also encouraging professional exchange between local and foreign filmmakers.

Admission to all screenings and discussion panels will be free to the public, allowing cinema enthusiasts and students to attend and engage with the works and their creators.

The "Panj" International Film and Photo Festival is recognized for its focus on human stories, visual innovation, and cross-cultural dialogue.

Qazvin Excavations Reveal 6th Millennium BCE Village Life

TEHRAN -- A new season of archaeological research is set to begin across the ancient landscapes of Qazvin Province, promising to shed fresh light on one of the earliest centers of human settlement in Iran's central plateau.

According to Muhammadreza Asgari, head of the Archaeology Department at the Qazvin Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Office, several major excavation projects are currently underway or about to commence—each aimed at reconstructing different chapters of the region's deep past.

At the forefront stands the excavation of Ebrahimabad Tepe in Abyek, a prehistoric mound now entering its second season under the direction of Dr. Hasan Fazeli from the University of Tehran. The project seeks to explore the evolution of early village life and architectural traditions in the sixth millennium BCE, reconstruct the agricultural history of central Iran through archaeobotanical and archaeozoological studies, and examine ritual and belief systems of Neolithic and Chalcolithic communities.

In the Takestan region, Kondor Tepe will soon undergo excavation directed by Dr. Mojgan Moradi, focusing first on defining its legal boundaries before moving toward full stratigraphic exploration in subsequent seasons. Simultaneously, Qostinlar Tepe, led by Kambiz Kabiri, is being investigated as part of its nomination process for the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Among the season's highlights is the sixth phase of work at Qaleh Kord Cave, jointly supervised by Dr. Hamed Vahdati-Nasab and Milad Hashemi. Discoveries there include evidence of Neanderthal occupation dating



back 400,000 to 450,000 years, with recent studies hinting at even earlier phases of human presence.

Other key projects include the Shakin Mine, directed by Dr. Iman Mostafapour of Shahid Beheshti University, which focuses on sampling prehistoric mining activities that continued into historical times; Meshkin Tepe, where excavations by Dr. Hamid Amanollahi and Dr. Muhammad Esmail Esmaili Jelodar have defined site

boundaries and trained new archaeologists; and the Lotfali Khan site in Avaj, where Bronze Age cultural layers were identified beneath modern residential areas.

Funding for these endeavors—ranging from 350 to 800 million tomans—has largely come from provincial allocations. Yet, Asgari notes that persistent threats remain, including widespread illegal excavations and limited resources for site protection and enforcement.

Renowned Musician Mehrad Nobakhtpour Dies at 40

TEHRAN -- Mehrad Nobakhtpour, a respected Iranian musician, composer, and teacher known for his mastery of the kamancheh, violin, and tanbur, has died of cardiac arrest at the age of 40. His passing was confirmed by the Iranian House of Music on Monday.

Born in 1985, Nobakhtpour was part of a generation of Iranian artists who bridged classical tradition and modern experimentation. A graduate of the High School of Music in Tehran, he devoted more than two decades to teaching and performance, guiding young musicians through the intricacies of instruments like the violin, kamancheh, daf, tonbak, and tanbur, as well as solfège and theory.

Over the years, Nobakhtpour studied under some of Iran's most influential masters — Mostafa Kamal Pourtorab, Hussein Dehlavi, Hamid Deybazi, Hadi Montazeri, Muhammad Moqqadasi, Ardeshtir Kamkar, Samer Habibi, and Siamak Jahangiri — shaping a career that blended precision with deep emotional reso-



nance.

His recording credits spanned a wide range of work. As an arranger, performer, and recording supervisor, he contributed to albums like Hafez-Khani 2, Ghogha-ye Hasti ("The Turmoil of Existence"), and Negar-e Man To Maro ("My Beloved, Do Not Go"). Nobakht-

pour also brought his musicianship to film and television, composing or performing for productions such as I Am Shirin, Aroos-e Chit (The Fabric Bride), Qalaqiran, Shekarestan (Sugarland), and Javanmardan (The Brave Ones).

On stage, he performed with numerous ensembles, including Bam, Ordibehesht, Barzin, Shalireh, Moj-Ava, Vaziri, Farhangsaraye Bahman, Tariqat, Bidad-e Zaman, Avaye Zنده-Ruy, and Avaye Rasam — collaborations that reflected his passion for live performance and collective musicianship.

Nobakhtpour's colleagues and students remember him not just as a skilled performer, but as a deeply generous teacher and collaborator — the kind of artist who lived to keep music alive in others.

In a statement, the Iranian House of Music offered condolences to his family, students, and the wider artistic community, honoring Nobakhtpour's "devotion to the craft and his lasting contribution to Iranian music."

Hormuz Island's Silk Road Legacy on Display at National Museum

TEHRAN -- A new exhibition at the National Museum of Iran is casting light on the maritime crossroads that once linked the Persian Gulf to the far reaches of East Asia.

Entitled "Gift of Silk", the national exhibition showcases an exceptional collection of ceramics, porcelains, and trade artifacts unearthed from archaeological excavations on Hormuz Island—a site long recognized as a pivotal hub along the Indian Ocean segment of the Silk Road.

According to Sepehr Zarei, deputy for Cultural Heritage at the Hormozgan Province Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, the exhibition features celadon wares from the 15th century CE (9th century AH) and blue-and-white Chinese porcelains from the 15th–16th centuries CE (9th–10th centuries AH).

These finely crafted pieces not only testify to Hormuz's prosperity during the Islamic Middle Period but also reveal the island's active role in the artistic and commercial exchanges between Iran, China, and India.

"Hormuz was once one of the most important ports on the maritime Silk Road," Zarei notes. "The artifacts uncovered there illustrate the vibrant flow of goods, artistic ideas, and technologies that defined the cultural landscape of the Persian Gulf."

The "Gift of Silk" exhibition is organized by the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism and the National Museum of Iran, in collaboration with the Golestan Palace World Heritage Site, the Sheikh

Safi al-Din Ardabili Ensemble, and the Museum of Decorative Arts of Isfahan.

Together, these institutions have brought together artifacts that narrate centuries of interaction across both the land and sea routes of the Silk Road, highlighting Iran's dual

role as a mediator of civilizations and a center of artistic innovation.

Through displays of ceramics, coins, and ornamental works, visitors are invited to explore the layered stories of trade, diplomacy, and cultural adaptation that shaped connections between Iran and East

Asia.

Running until November 12, the exhibition offers a rare opportunity to encounter the material legacy of Hormuz, a small island whose archaeological record continues to reveal the grandeur of its past as a maritime jewel of the Persian Gulf.

Picture of the Day



Kerman's historic neighborhoods, with their charming mud-brick houses, central courtyards, and winding alleys, showcase the city's rich architectural heritage and timeless cultural identity.