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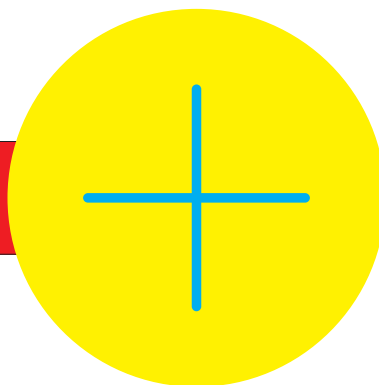
Charles Simic, Pulitzer prize-winning poet, dies at age 84



GUARDIAN – Charles Simic, the Pulitzer prize-winning poet who awed critics and readers with his singular art of lyricism and economy, tragic insight and disruptive humor, died at age 84.

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MP: Iran's tourism potential unique in the world

Leila Imeni
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Iran's tourism potential is unparalleled in the world and the proper use of it can create a significant boost in the country's domestic economy, said the head of the Parliament Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Committee. Speaking in an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Mojtaba Mahfouzi called for a five-year tourism plan to be devised to help the country eliminate the need for the exports of oil and gas. "The objective, which can be realized within the framework of the Seventh Five-Year Economic Development Plan, would help meet a significant part of the country's need for hard currency," he noted. The MP observed that tourism is a pillar industry of the global economy, pointing out that relying on the tourism industry and making investments in the sector have helped a large number of low-income nations make a significant economic leap. Mahfouzi said that Iran is among the few countries that have suitable potential in all fields of tourism. As a country of four seasons, it has various natural landscapes, from mountains and plains to seas and deserts.



IRNA

The lawmaker referred to the valuable cultural heritage of the country including historical monuments, and noted that Iran is capable of becoming a top destination in the region in the field of medical and religious tourism. "This is while a major part of the country's tourism potential has been neglected and the sector failed to attract adequate investments." He said that the proper use of the country's tourism po-

tential requires a national determination, noting the top officials of the country, including the president, should make decisions for this purpose. He said that adequate funds have not been made available to the tourism industry, thus, the country's president, Parliament and the Planning and Budget Organization should pay special attention to attracting more investments for the sector. He termed the amount of in-

come earned by the country from the tourism sector as meager, adding that a major part of the figure pertains to religious and medical tourism. Mahfouzi noted that the outbreak of COVID-19 caused the tourism sector to decline in the past two years, but effective prevention and control of the disease will help the industry revive. Meanwhile, Jabbar Kouchakinejad, a member of the Parliament's Plan and Bud-

get Committee, said that the previous Iranian Parliament (2016-2020), which recognized the significance of the sector, upgraded the tourism organization to a ministry. "However, tourism is still far from its ideal state and a proper infrastructure is not available for the development of tourism," he said. He noted that the government should prioritize measures related to the development of the tourism sector.

Iranian passport rises by 3 places in global ranking



HENLEY GLOBAL

HENLEY GLOBAL – The Iranian passport has risen by three places in a global passport ranking, compared to last year's figure, according to a new quarterly report released by London-based global citizenship and residence advisory firm Henley & Partners. Iran's passport reached 99 from the last year's ranking which stood at 102. Iranian citizens enjoy visa-free or visa-on-demand access to a record 43 destinations around the world. A trio of Asian passports offer their holders greater global travel freedom than those of any other countries. Japanese citizens enjoy visa-free or visa-on-demand access to a record 193 destinations around the world, just ahead of Singapore and South Korea whose citizens can freely visit 192. The Henley Passport Index ranks passports according to the number of countries their holders can access visa-free or with a visa-on-arrival programme. According to the Henley Passport Index which is based on data from the International Air Transport Association, a fall or improvement in ranking is the result of several factors. They include the country's efforts to strengthen its diplomatic relations with other nations and its efforts to modernize its visa processes and improve security measures at its borders.

Fajr Film Festival aims to bring happiness to society: Minister

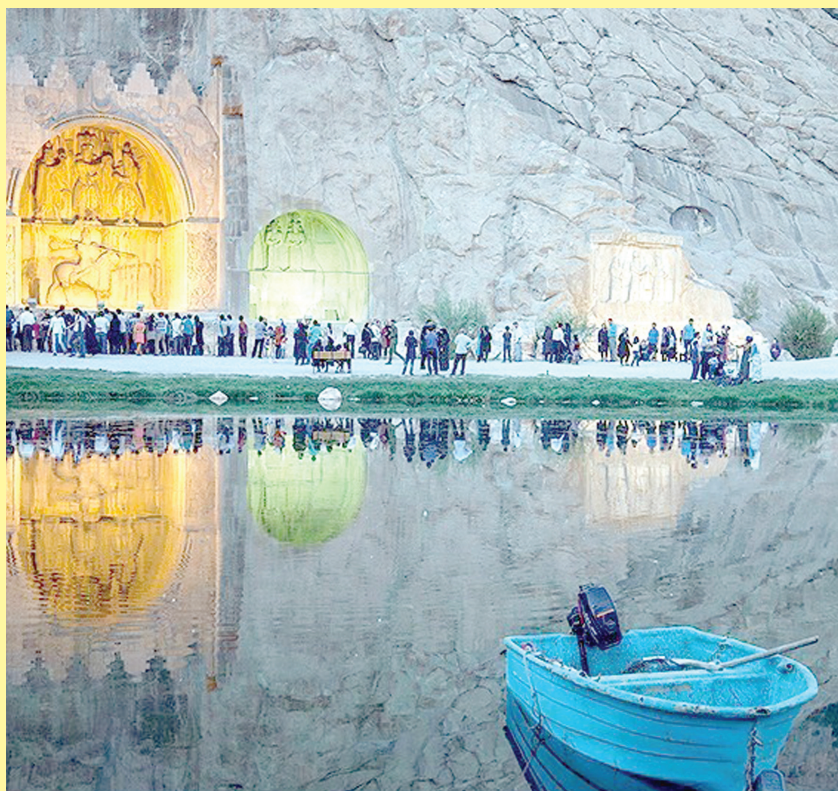
IRNA – Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili said that holding the Fajr Film Festival in 31 Iranian provinces aims to bring happiness to the society. The minister made the statement on the sidelines of the cabinet meeting on Wednesday. During his recent visit to the secretariat of the festival, he said that successful international films have so far been submitted to the secretariat. Speaking on this year's festival, he said that this year, the festival's organizers have a special look at underprivileged regions, and mobile cinemas will be vastly available in these areas. He noted that some foreign-based media have tried to ruin the upcoming Fajr Film Festival's



image by circulating rumors about the festival's boycott by artists and cinema lovers. Esmaeili

said that tickets for the festival's films are to be sold as of next week. On the confiscation of

some actors' passports, Esmaeili said that the ministry would do its best to solve the problem.



People gather at the site of Taq-e Bostan in Iran's western province of Kermanshah, on January 11, 2023, to mark the national registration anniversary of the historical monument.

FARZAD MENATI/TASNIM