



# Bust of Ferdowsi now graces University of Oxford

Tehran Times Culture Desk

TEHRAN — The bust of Ferdowsi was unveiled at the University of Oxford Friday on the occasion of the Shahnameh millennium.

Iran's ambassador to London, Rasul Movahedian, cultural attaché Ali-Mohammad Helmi, the Warden of Wadham College, Sir Neil Chalmers, University Lecturer in Persian Literature Firuza Abdullaeva, Professor of Persian Studies and Fellow of Wadham College Edmund Herzig, and several other scholars attended the unveiling ceremony.

Ambassador Movahedian made the opening speech and expressed hope that Ferdowsi's ideals would act as a bridge on the way to increasing understanding among nations.

"Paying tribute to a master of Persian poetry is actually honoring



Warden of Wadham College Sir Neil Chalmers (2nd from right) delivers a speech after unveiling a bust of Ferdowsi (C) at the University of Oxford on May 8, 2009. Iranian cultural attaché Ali-Mohammad Helmi (1st from left), Iranian Ambassador Rasul Movahedian (2nd from left), and Persian literature professor Firuza Abdullaeva (1st from right) are also seen in the photo. (IRNA)

the eternal figures which belong to all generations," he remarked.

He regarded establishing the bust by the University of Oxford a great act in preserving the spiritual achievements of mankind and said that Shahnameh, as part of Persian literature, has played a great role in enriching world literature.

Cultural attaché Helmi was next who regarded the bust of Ferdowsi as a gift from the Iranian nation to Oxford University and said that no doubt, Ferdowsi was one of the most influential literary figures of Iran.

"The Iranian nation knows Ferdowsi as their great epic poet and now after 1000 years, they still recite his poetry," he remarked. (By 2009, a millennium has past since the composing of Ferdowsi's magnum opus Shahnameh.)

Sir Neil Chalmers was next to talk and said that Ferdowsi is

a great poet known to all the world and his Shahnameh enjoys many different social, political, and cultural aspects and has played major role in the life of the Iranian people.

Scholars Firuza Abdullaeva and Edmund Herzig also praised Persian culture and literature, and expressed hopes that establishing the bust of Ferdowsi will boost academic and cultural relationships.

Set up at the Ferdowsi (Firdousi) Library of Wadham College, the statue was created by British-based Iranian sculptor Mehran Ghahari under the supervision of Wadham College officials and Iran's cultural office in London.

Iranians celebrate May 15 as the national day of Ferdowsi (circa 935-1020), the Persian poet and author of the Shahnameh (The Epic of Kings).

## Shamaqdari making campaign film for Ahmadinejad

Tehran Times Art Desk

TEHRAN — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's art advisor Javad Shamaqdari said here on Saturday that he is currently making a campaign film for Ahmadinejad.

Shooting began on Friday when Ahmadinejad came to the Interior Ministry to register as a candidate for presidential election, Shamaqdari told MNA.

He said that no talks have been held between him and the president about the film so far.

Shamaqdari also made Ahmadinejad's campaign film for the previous presidential election in 2005.

It was previously rumored that Masud Dehnamaki, director of the sequels "The Outcasts" and "The Outcasts 2", and Farajollah Salahshur, director of the TV blockbuster series "Prophet Josef (AS)," were going to make the campaign film for Ahmadinejad.

Both of them denied the report.

**What about others?**

Many people believe that world renowned Iranian filmmaker Majid Majidi will make a campaign film for the reformist candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi. His frequent appearances in Mousavi's meetings increase the likelihood of the validity of the conjecture.

Top Iranian cineaste Behruz Afkhami also said that he backs Mehdi Karroubi, another reform candidate in the forthcoming presidential election, which will be held on June 12.

"I never intended to reenter the country's political arena," stated Afkhami, adding, "My maximum political activity will be limited to



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad poses for a photograph with his ID card at the Interior Ministry on May 8, 2009 as he came to register as a candidate for the upcoming presidential election. (Mehr/Majid Asgaripur)

making a campaign film for Mr. Karroubi." Afkhami also served in the Iranian Majlis from 2000 to 2004.

The son of deceased Iranian director Rasul Mollaqlolpur, who was mainly known for his films on the 1980-1988 Iran-Iran war, has refused to make a campaign film for Mohsen Rezaii.

Ali Mollaqlolpur said that since he didn't have the necessary experience for making such a film he rejected the proposal.

Although Rezaii is classified in the conservatives' camp, he has said that the country would be on the verge of collapse if Ahmadinejad is reelected.

Mollaqlolpur's father made a campaign film for Rezaii in the previous presidential election in 2005. However Rezaii withdrew from the competition just a few days before the election.

"I do not hold the high status of my father and have no experience in political issues, so I didn't accept the proposal," Ali told the MNA on Saturday.

In addition, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad has recently said that she is currently making a documentary on presidential elections in general.

The film entitled "We Are Half of Iran's Population" discusses women's rights from the viewpoint of each presidential candidate.

The modern style of presidential campaigning made its first appearance in Iran with the campaign film made by Afkhami for former president Mohammad Khatami's reelection campaign in 2001.

## Christian Bale forces "Terminator" rewrite

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — British actor Christian Bale forced a rewrite of upcoming action movie "Terminator Salvation," because his star had grown too big for the small role of John Connor he chose, the filmmakers said on Friday.

Director McG, whose real name is Joseph McGinty Nichol, said he had the disconcerting experience of going to England to convince Bale to play central character Marcus Wright in the man vs. machines film, only to have Bale tell the director he wanted to play Connor instead.

McG told reporters that the script was a "moving target" that became a filmmaking challenge, and that he worked day and night with Bale, who starred last year in box office smash "The Dark Knight," talking about how to work Connor into the movie.

Connor is an iconic character in the film franchise that began in 1984 with "The Terminator," but his role was originally small in the series' fourth movie, "Terminator Salvation," which debuts in theaters on May 21.

"A lot of the work was integrating (Connor) into scenes ... and having that feel integral and sensible, as opposed to grafted on just because there was a star in the part," John Brancato, a screenwriter on the film, told reporters.

## "Star Trek" launched to robust advance screenings

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — The big-screen return of "Star Trek" launched into warp drive as it grossed an estimated \$7 million from advance screenings in North American theaters, Daily Variety reported on Friday.

That tally, generated from Thursday night showings in most of the 3,800-plus U.S. and Canadian theaters where the film officially opened on Friday, puts "Star Trek" on track to rival or exceed the \$85 million debut of the comic book adventure "X-Men Origins: Wolverine" last weekend.

"Star Trek" ranks among the best reviewed movies of the year. The big question is whether it can bridge the generation gap between aging "Trekkie" fans of the 43-year-old franchise and legions of younger moviegoers on whom the film's financial success depends.

There was no immediate word from the film's distributor, Viacom Inc's Paramount Pictures studio, on its early returns.

But the \$7 million Variety estimated in preview business from Thursday's 7 p.m. and midnight screenings bodes well for the movie, the 11th feature-length title in the "Star Trek" canon.

"That's a very solid start. That means people really went out of their way to see the movie," said Paul Dergarabedian of Hollywood.com Box Office, who credited the film's eye-catching trailer for spurring early interest in the picture.

## "Humphrey Bogart" wins top prize at Cuban contest



Tehran Times Art Desk

TEHRAN — Iranian cartoonist Shahrokh Heidari won the top prize at the 16th International Graphic Humor Biennial in Cuba.

He won the first prize in the caricature section of the biennial for depicting the American actor Humphrey Bogart's caricature.

Cosponsored by the Havana Provincial Culture Division and the Latin American Federation of Journalists (FELAP), the contest is held in the different sections of general humor, political satire, cartoons, caricature and humorous photography

The workshops of the contest were held from March 29 to April 2 at the San Antonio de los Banos and the City of Havana during which participants exchanged their experiences.

## "Snow" wins award at San Francisco filmfest

Tehran Times Art Desk

TEHRAN — "Snow" by Bosnian Aida Begic won the new directors award at the 52nd San Francisco International Film Festival, which was held from April 23 to May 7.

"Snow" is a joint production of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Germany, France, and Iran, and has already won the Cannes Critics' Week Grand Prix, the International Critics' Week of the film festival in 2008.

The story is set in the small isolated village of Slavno four years after the war in Bosnia. A government delegation comes to Slavno, offering the villagers money to leave the village. But the villagers, mostly women, find it hard to abandon their homes and decide to fight for their freedom and the survival of Slavno.

In addition, Babak Amini's "Angels Die in the Soil" received the award at the Short Narrative section of the festival. Amini had already worked as assistant director for Bahman Ghobadi in his productions "A Time for Drunken Horses" and "Turtles Can Fly."

The Founder's Directing Award of this year was presented to Francis Ford Coppola. Robert Redford was also this year's recipient of the Peter J. Owens (1936-91) award, which honors an actor whose work exemplifies brilliance, independence and integrity.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Book on Iranian women calligraphers published

TEHRAN — Iranian calligrapher Azra Aqiqi has compiled information on Iranian female calligraphers in a book which is available at the 22nd Tehran International Book Fair.

Entitled "Women calligraphers," the book contains biographies of women calligraphers and over 350 illustrations of works created by them.

The book was released by three publishers; Kalhor, Bakhshayesh and Navid-e Eslam.

The Tehran International Book Fair runs until May 16 at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla.

### Persian versions of Agatha Christie's books available at TIBF

TEHRAN — Hermes Publication offers the Persian version of four books by Agatha Christie at the Tehran International Book Fair (TIBF).

The Persian version of "Murder at the Vicarage," "Towards Zero," "Innocent Lies" and "The Mystery of the Blue Train" by Mojtaba Abdollahnejad are available at the book fair.

### TIBF to commemorate scholar Saffarzadeh

TEHRAN — The Tehran International Book Fair will commemorate the late Iranian scholar Tahereh Saffarzadeh on Tuesday.

Seyyed Ali-Mohammad Rafie, Seyyed Ali Musavi Garmarudi, Ahmad Mir-Ehsan and several other scholars will be attending the event.

### Turkish scholar translating Shahnameh

Tehran Times Culture Desk

TEHRAN — Turkish scholar Nimet Yildirim is translating Ferdowsi's magnum opus Shahnameh into the Turkish language in its entirety for the first time.

"Turkish academic Necati Lugal previously has translated 20,000 couplets into Turkish and I decided to translate the remainder and publish them with Lugal's translation," Yildirim told MNA on Saturday.

He has translated 50,000 couplets which were published along with Lugal's translation and he is now translating 30,000 remained couplets.

"The first volume of the translation, published by Kabalci Publications, contains mostly the couplets translated by Lugal and the next volume will be published in near future," he added.

He has penned "Dictionary of Persian Myths" which was published by Kabalci Publications.

"I have worked on Persian myths for more than five years and one of my main sources was Mohammadjafar Yahaqqi's 'Dictionary of Persian Myths,'" he mentioned.

Ancient Persian religions, Zoroastrian myths, myth and creation, the role of myths and other notions including death, heaven and hell are discussed in his book.

The book is arranged in alphabetical order and each entry concludes with related poems by Iranian poets, he said.