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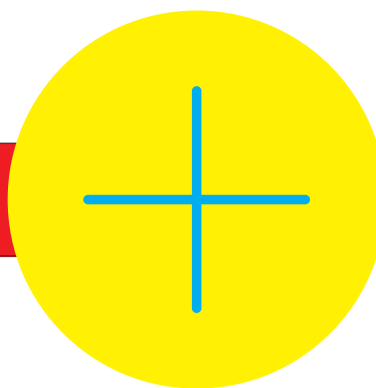
Moon Mission



The U.S. space agency NASA has named the four astronauts who will take humanity back to the Moon, after a 50-year gap. This includes the first woman and Black man to voyage into deep space.

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Alarming decrease in 'reading literacy' among new generations of Iranians



Social Desk EXCLUSIVE

Education authorities are concerned about the impact of educational systems on the development and growth of a country, and international studies like TIMSS and PIRLS monitor educational activities for success. Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) are two studies that serve to reveal some interesting findings about the state of education worldwide. The TIMSS study, which is conducted every four years, measures the math and science skills of fourth and eighth-grade students from around the world. The latest results show that while some countries have improved their scores since the last study in 2015, overall progress has been slow. Singapore, Hong Kong, and Korea continue to top the rankings, while countries like the United States and England have seen little improvement.

The PIRLS study, which measures the reading skills of fourth-grade students, also revealed some concerning trends. While some countries, such as Russia and Singapore, have seen improvements in their scores, others, including the United States and England, have seen declines. The study also found a significant gender gap in reading skills, with girls outperforming boys in almost every country. Masoud Kabiri, faculty member of Center for Educational Research, discussed the two studies and Iran's performance with regards to its educational growth and setbacks. "Our country's scores have ranged from 430 to 460, with recent performance being lower than the international average," Kabiri said. However, according to him, Iran has had a balanced growth process in mathematics scores since 1995, gradually improving in the fourth and eighth grades. It should be noted that early intervention and support for struggling students are crucial,

highlighting the need for continued investment in education to ensure all students can reach their full potential. The educational researcher further mentioned that the latest results for PIRLS are yet to be published due to the COVID-19 situation, while the last round of TIMSS was conducted in 2019, and the next one is scheduled for April 2023. "The latest round of PIRLS was conducted in 2021, and Iran's results will be published in late April or early May of 2022. Despite the lower scores compared to the international average, Iran has had balanced growth in certain subjects over the years, which can be seen by comparing past performance with current scores," he said. Iran's education system has faced challenges, including limited funding and resources. However, the government has made efforts to improve the quality of education, including increasing teacher training programs and investing in technology for classrooms. The literacy rate in Iran is high, with over 97 percent of the population able

to read and write. Additionally, Iran has a strong emphasis on higher education, with many universities and technical institutes throughout the country. Despite the challenges, the Iranian education system has produced many successful graduates who have gone on to pursue careers in various fields. "While the government mentions these issues in its education programs, there is a lack of coherent and coordinated research regarding students. Not paying attention to study data in policy making can lead to a failure to use experiences from other countries and evidence-based decision making which is needed to address them effectively. Neglecting to use experiences from other countries can lead to a failure to improve educational quality," Kabiri said.

He believes that more work is needed in the field. The educational expert holds that the current state of children's reading ability in Iran is concerning as it can have a significant impact on the quality of their education. Strong reading and comprehension skills are essential for success in any field, yet these skills are not receiving the attention they deserve. "Additionally, there is a lack of research and data related to educational justice, which is hindering progress in this area. We have the necessary findings and variables to achieve educational justice, but there is neglect and a lack of focus on implementing them effectively. Overall, there is a significant need for increased attention and resources towards improving reading ability and promoting educational justice in Iran," he said.

**An extensive version of Masoud Kabiri's interview appeared in Iran Newspaper on April 3, 2023.*

Shapes of lustre-painted wares

The shapes of the lustre-painted wares show a pattern of survival different from other Safavid wares. They include far more closed shapes, such as the small cup, proliferate. Of the 255 lustre-painted objects in our database, 18 percent are bottles, while the largest number of open shapes consists of bowls (20 percent). The survival rate of the bottles is remarkable, considering that it is much lower in other categories of decorative technique. More unusual shapes, such as ewer, jar, and multi-nozzle vase, and the spouted pot with three handles, make up altogether only about 10 percent of the surviving lustre-painted objects. The large quantity of bowls is particularly notable.

wares is the paysage scene. Usually there is a meandering stream, a rectangular pool (hawz), a pair of cypresses, other assorted trees, and animals such as a peacock or a fox. The background is filled with small plants and flowers, resembling the floral decoration of Kerman slippainted polychromes. Exteriors of bowls with paysage scenes, although charming, are repetitive. One lustre bowl has the peacock scene but adds to it an L-shaped object with a finial, perhaps the headstone of a tomb. The prominence of the peacock on these wares may have religious (mystical) significance. The escutcheon is a common motif, perhaps derived from Safavid metalwork, where it was used in conjunction with elon-



Small bowls range in diameter from 11cm to 15cm and are shallow to medium in depth. The medium bowls range from 18cm to 19cm in diameter and are all of medium depth. The larger bowls range from 20cm to 24cm in diameter and tend to be shallow.

Decoration on lustre-painted wares

The potter used the brilliant white ground to paint the subject matter in a copper-coloured lustre. Cobalt blue or copper (turquoise) also occur as background colours for the lustre-painting, but the potter often chose to contrast the white ground with a coloured one, usually cobalt. Frequently, the interior and exterior of an open shape were contrasted in this way. Cobalt sometimes appears alongside the lustre as painted detail. Other colours joined the palette occasionally, but it is not clear whether the use of this extended palette signifies a different atelier. Copper lustre is used for outlining the opaque yellow. Certainly, the style of the painting differs from that of the potters who used a system of contrasting backgrounds. One of the most attractive and common themes found on these

gated cartouches. Another common motif is the palmette interlace, sometimes with as many as three overlapping palmettes. The palmette interlace border was also common on the Isfahan polychrome wares and some Isfahan blue-and-whites. The forms of the plants and the narrow border designs constitute a repertory that varies little even though different painters were involved. The underside of dishes often bears a simple standardized border design. Vessels with this treatment of the back often have designs featuring large plant elements rather than the delicate floral life found on the paysage scenes. Perhaps different ateliers account for the variation. Some of the pieces are clearly more elaborate, such as the three-handled spouted pots (sometimes referred to as "teapot" or "posset pot"), while others, particularly cups, are less ambitious in their decoration. Absent from all but one example is the contemporary background of Kerman wares, the leaf-curl. Notable on Safavid lustre-ware is the effort made to decorate all the surfaces that the user could enjoy, such as the turned out lip of a flask, or vase, on which the artist has continued the design found on the exterior.

Persepolis, Iran's most visited global heritage during Nowruz

Persepolis world heritage site, located in Iran's southwestern province of Fars, was the most visited monument in Iran during Nowruz holidays, said a director at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts. A total of 261,049 visitors toured the historical site, followed by the Imam Square in Isfahan and Fin Garden in Kashan, IRNA wrote. Nowruz is the richest ritual heritage from the national culture, while the month of Ramadan is the most important symbol of Islamic cul-

ture in Iran, he said, adding that the coincidence of the two events this year is of great significance. The five most visited provinces in terms of national and global heritage, were Fars (521,912 visitors), Isfahan (437,223 visitors), Kerman (153,504 visitors), Kermanshah (134,208 visitors), and Khorasan Razavi (133,259 visitors), he noted. Fars Province in southwest Iran is home to several historical and cultural sites such as Karim Khan Citadel, Pars Museum and many others.



● IRNA

The above is a lightly edited version of part a chapter entitled, 'Dominant Fashions and Distinctive Styles', from a book entitled, 'Persian Pottery in the First Global Age', written by Lisa Golombek, Robert B. Mason, Patricia Proctor, Eileen Reilly and published by Brill. The photos were taken from the book.