

Afghan Kite Sellers See New Hollywood Film as Boon for Business

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The movie *The Kite Runner* has yet to be released in Afghanistan, but thanks to the Internet and word of mouth, many Afghans are aware of the film based upon the best-selling novel of the same name. Kite makers in Kabul hope the film will boost their business and bring international recognition to their art. VOA's Rahimgul Sarwan reports on the kite making industry of Kabul. Robert Raffaele narrates.

Kite flying has been popular in South Asian countries for centuries. Khalid Hosseini's novel, *The Kite Runner*, introduced this aspect of Afghanistan to the rest of the world. While most of the movie was filmed outside Afghanistan, several scenes were shot in Kabul. Learning to fly a kite skillfully was a real challenge for the child actors. Local kite makers were hired to teach the youngsters.

Ustad Noor Agha is one of Kabul's most acclaimed kite makers.

He says he taught the boys how to fly and "fight" with kites as high as 3,000 meters in the sky.

"The film's producers hired us to teach the three main child actors - Ahmad, Zikria, and Elham - how to fly kites," explains the kite maker. "We trained them for about one and a half months in our kite-flying field, which is near our house."



Children learning how to fly a kite



Ustad Noor Agha, Afghan kite maker

Ustad Noor Agha lives in the oldest section of Kabul. He inherited the kite making skill from his father and says kite flying came to Afghanistan some 900 years ago from India and China.

Pahlawan Karim, another trainer and kite seller, says an increasing number of foreigners are

visiting his shop and paying good prices.

He hopes the movie *The Kite Runner* will attract international kite-flying fans to Afghanistan. "Yes, making a movie and exporting our kites certainly encourages the industry. It definitely gives us a lot of international credibility," Karim said.

The kite sellers of Kabul say they are enjoying the "overnight" success of an ancient Afghan pastime.

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