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## Iranian civilization

1. In the middle of the 6th century BC, a powerful empire — Achaemenid empire — arose in Iran (Persia). The founder of this empire was Cyrus with his capital at - Pasargadae.
2. He was succeeded by Darius I (522 BC — 486 BC). The empire reached its greatest extent under him and covered entire Iran, Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Asia minor and north-western India. He built a new capital at Persepolis.
3. Darius I and his successors were involved in wars with the Greek states. They were defeated by Greeks. Alexander dealt the empire a final blow during the reign of Darius III.
4. In the 3rd century AD, a new and powerful empire — Sassanid empire — arose in Iran. This empire which was founded by Ardashir in 226 AD held sway in Iran up to the middle of the 7th century AD.
5. The Arabs, who emerged as a strong power after the rise of Islam, conquered Iran in 651 AD.
6. The Achaemenids had introduced the use of money - coins of gold and silver - on a large scale throughout the empire.
7. Iran in ancient times produced a number of famous sailors and explorers. One of them, Scylax, undertook a voyage from the mouth of Indus to Egypt on orders of Darius.
8. The main religion of the ancient Iranians was Zoroastrianism. This religion was founded by Zarathustra or Zoroaster (628 BC - 551 BC) as the Greeks called him in 7th century BC. The teachings of Zarathustra are recorded in the Zend Avesta, the holy book of Parsis. Zarathustra said that the world consists of two forces, good and evil. The god, Ahura Mazda represents the forces of good, and Ahirman, the forces of evil. The sun and the fire came to be worshipped as visible symbols of Ahura Mazda, who represents light. Both Judaism and Christianity indebted to Zoroastrianism.
9. During the Achaemenid empire the official language was Aramaic. The Sassanids revived old Persian and made it the official language of their empire. But then a new script called Pahlavi had also developed. The best known ancient literature of Iran is the Zend Avesta, which contains the work of Zarathustra.