



Poldokhtar County in Lorestan province is one of the emerging centers of nature-based tourism in Iran and has a bright and sustainable future. During a visit to the most important natural, historical and environmental centers of Poldokhtar county, including Khazineh Valley, Vali-e Asr Nature Park, and the wetlands on Thursday, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Reza Salehi-Amiri emphasized the Government's policy of achieving balanced territorial development, ILNA reported. He announced the start of a decision-making process and targeted investment for the sustainable exploitation of the natural and water capacities of the region. The minster described Lorestan province as one of the prominent origins of the history, civilization, and nature of the country.

**Poldokhtar's
Tourism Future
Bright, Minister
Says**

Lighting Operation of Belqeys Citadel to begin

Lighting operation of Belqeys citadel in Esfarayen county, North Khorasan province, will begin on Thursday with the aim of improving the night view, improving the visual effects and attracting more tourists.

Ahmad Dinari, head of North Khorasan Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, stated that with the follow-up of Bahman Nouri, governor-general of North Khorasan province, measures were done for the development of tourism infrastructure in Esfarayen county, Miras Aria reported. He clarified that the project has entered the implementation phase with funding from provincial sources and after going through legal processes and signing a contract with a competent contractor, and includes lighting the walls of the historical citadel of Belqeys city. Emphasizing the importance of the Belqeys citadel as one of the most prominent historical monuments in the northeast of the country, he stated that implementation of the lighting project will play an important role in better presentation of the monument, boosting longer stays of tourists, and boosting historical and cultural tourism in Esfarayen county. Dinari said that developing tourism infrastructure and improving historical sites are among the priorities of North Khorasan Cultural Heritage Department, adding that numerous projects are being implemented at the provincial level. Belqeys citadel is the second-largest mudbrick fortress in Iran after the UNESCO-registered Bam citadel.



Vivid Colors of Qashqai Carpets Enliven Black Tents

The vivid colors and distinctive designs of Qashqai carpets add visual richness to Siah-Chadors, the traditional black tents used by Iran's nomadic communities. Such an striking contrast, seen in only a few places worldwide, has drawn attention to the artistry and cultural value of Qashqai weaving.



Behnam Mohammadi Kashkuli, a producer and researcher of the Qashqai hand-woven carpet, referred to the origin of hand-woven carpets in the Qashqai tribe and said that the Qashqais were nomads, and until the 1950s, their economy was based on animal husbandry, and agriculture was

gradually added to it, Miras Aria reported. Since the 1970s, with the expansion of nomad education and training, more of them have settled in large cities. Until then, the living conditions in remote mountainous areas, the limitation of needed goods due to the lack of mass production and distance from the market, etc.,

used to meet these needs were the hair and wool of their animals.

They used goat hair to provide Siah-Chador (black tent), and they used the wool of other animals to prepare various types of bedding such as carpets, kilims, gabbeh, jajim, etc. Hand-woven products were mostly consumed within the tribal areas, but even during that period, they were sometimes exchanged with marketers and khans of tribes and cities in exchange for essential goods during migration. Also, some of the finest examples of these hand-woven products were given as gifts by Qashqai khans to other khans or politically and socially influential people, or were woven on their orders. With the entry of foreigners into the country and their visits to the Qashqai tribe, hand-woven items, especially carpets, attracted their attention and were gradually introduced to the market. He said media activities made tourists eager to visit the Qashqai tribe. Mohammadi Kashkuli added that of course, it must be said that at that time, carpets from other regions of Iran were known in the world. With the introduction of the Qashqai tribe, the hand-woven carpets of tribal women gradually found their fans, and their reputation spread among lovers of hand-woven carpets in the world. Referring to his father's role in producing and offering hand-woven Qashqai carpets, he stated: "The turning point in producing the Qashqai carpet was the initiative of my father, Haj Khalil Mohammadi Kashkuli.

He, who observed the market interest and the foreign tendency towards handmade Qashqai carpets, thought of mass production, especially the production of Kashkuli carpets. He had been officially initiating the introduction of Qashqai carpets to the market since the 1960s. When my father saw the market's reception of Qashqai carpets, he thought of mass production." "My father did not look at carpet production solely for the purpose of generating income. His actions were actually a facilitator for strengthening nomadic families and introducing the noble culture of the Qashqai tribe." He added: "Haj Khalil Mohammadi Kashkuli changed the dimensions of Qashqai carpets at the request of customers. Until then, Qashqai carpets were woven in small sizes due to their ease of transportation during migration and the limited dimensions of the black tents, but with the introduction of the market, carpets with dimensions of 9, 12, 24 meters, etc. were also woven. Gradually, the work reached a point where weavers from other Qashqai tribes, other tribes and villagers of Fars province also produced carpets on his orders, and at one point, about 400 weavers worked for him. During his working life, he produced and offered about 80,000 square meters of high-quality, durable and aesthetic carpets, and this was very influential in introducing the Kashkuli carpet as a work of art."

Zarand, City of Iranian Festivals

Zarand, in Iran's Kerman province, has become the first city in the country to officially publish a calendar of its national tourism events in the past eight years. According to IRIB, Head of Zarand Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department Mohammad Eslami said that the first calendar was unveiled in 2018, and since then, people have been informed about upcoming programs and occasions before the start of each year. He added that 20 cultural, artistic and tourism events have been planned for 2026, one of which will be held at the national level, namely the national meteor festival and market, and the other programs will be held at the provincial, national and regional levels. Emphasizing the importance of public participation in tourism sector, he said: "I believe that until the citizens of a region become tourists, we cannot expect to attract foreign tourists." Eslami added: "The festivals we defined were for this purpose, people from each village and region partici-

pate in organizing the programs, and an average of 5,000-15,000 people attend each event." Referring to the role of festivals in boosting the local economy, he said: "These events have so far created about 40 direct jobs in the field of handicrafts and local products. Many breadwinner women have achieved a stable income by presenting their products at festivals without receiving loans or administrative support." Emphasizing the role of cultural events in strengthening the social vitality, Eslami said that the continuous holding of festivals in different regions of Zarand has increased social interactions, public participation, and created a happy and dynamic atmosphere across the county. "These events, focusing on the people and local culture, have provided opportunities for social cooperation and strengthened the sense of belonging to the city and the village, and have brought positive feedback from social and executive institutions." He added: "Introducing different regions of Zarand and

creating social demands have also been side effects of these events. When a festival is held in a village, the presence of people makes the relevant departments take action more quickly to improve the conditions of that area." Pointing out that Zarand has been named as the city of festivals in Iran and at times the capital of festivals in the country, he said: "Our events cover a variety of areas, from historical and natural tourism to ritual, religious and culinary tourism. We just need to find an inspiration to invite people to attend the programs, and fortunately, the reception has always been impressive."



Perspective



Qasr-e Shirin Needs Decades of Archaeological Work

Iran's western county of Qasr-e Shirin requires up to a century of archaeological research due to the number of historical sites dating back to the Sassanid period, a senior provincial heritage official said. Siavash Shahbazi, head of the preservation and restoration group for historical buildings and sites at Kermanshah province's Cultural Heritage Department, said past archaeological discoveries show Qasr-e Shirin was a major center for pre-Islamic rulers. "Based on archaeological findings so far, Qasr-e Shirin was one of the areas that attracted the attention of kings before the Islamic era," Shahbazi told ISNA news agency.



He said the county hosts multiple Sassanid-era sites, including the Palace of Khosrow, Ban Qal'eh stone tower, the Chahar Qapu fire temple and the Shah Gadar canal, a Sassanid water supply system. "If archaeological work were to be carried out comprehensively in this county, it would require many years," he said. In 2007, the Historical Ensemble of Qasr-e Shirin was placed on UNESCO's tentative list for World Heritage status. The ensemble includes architectural and urban remains from the late Sassanid and early Islamic periods, such as the Palace of Khosrow, the Chahar Qapu monument, Ban Qal'eh and the remains of a Safavid-era caravanserai, according to the nomination file.

Siraf Historic Port Dossier Submitted to UNESCO for World Heritage Review



Iran has formally submitted the nomination dossier for the historic port of Siraf to UNESCO for review and possible inscription on the World Heritage list, the deputy minister for cultural heritage said. Ali Darabi said the dossier was officially sent to UNESCO following approval by national expert bodies, adding that Siraf was selected for nomination due to its historical role as one of Iran's most important commercial ports from the Sassanid period onward and its position in connecting the ancient country to the Indian Ocean and open seas. "Siraf played a central role in international trade networks of the ancient world and symbolized Iran's economic power, seafaring capability and cross-regional interactions," he said. He said the site contains more than 5,000 rock-cut spaces, which he described as one of the most distinctive physical features of the historical ensemble. Darabi said the Grand Mosque of Siraf, dating back to the first century of the Islamic era, holds a significant place in studies of early Islamic architecture due to its design and structural features. The official also highlighted the port's stepped architectural layout, shaped in harmony with the area's natural topography, reflects human adaptation to the environment. Darabi also cited the presence of more than 150 active water wells that have continued to supply water for centuries as evidence of advanced engineering knowledge and water management in the historic port.