

Handicrafts to boost tourism industry: Minister



IRNA – Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, Ezzatollah Zarghami, emphasized the importance of the handicrafts industry in strengthening the country's cultural identity and contributing to tourism.

Zarghami made the statement during his visit to the handmade carpets, handicrafts, and tourism section of Iran Expo 2023, also known as the 5th Export Potential Exhibition of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on Monday.

According to Zarghami, handicrafts exports are among the organization's top priorities, and holding exhibitions like Iran Expo 2023 is beneficial in promoting the industry's capacities and facilitating export conditions.

Iran, Bangladesh to screen joint work soon

IRNA – A joint production of Iran and Bangladesh 'Fereshta' aka 'Beautiful Lies', directed and produced by Morteza Atash Zamzam, is set to be screened and participate in international festivals after completing post-production stages of editing and sound.

The social drama was shot last year in the cities of Dhaka and Ghazipur, with the presence of Bangladesh superstars Jaya Ahsan and several other Bangladeshi actors including Bairam Fazli, Mokhtari, Mobarekh, Atiya Pirali, and Kavas in key roles. The film has garnered attention from the Bangladeshi press and is likely to be presented as Bangladesh's representative for the upcoming Oscars. Produced by Image Cinema and Maximum Bangladesh, 'Fereshta' explores the complexities of truth and lies in relationships.

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Iran, Bosnia to expand library cooperation

Iran's library network is the largest in the Islamic world, with 3,800 public libraries, followed by Türkiye, which has 1,200.

Arts & Culture Desk

During a meeting between library officials from Iran and Bosnia, the two sides emphasized the need to expand their library cooperation.

Head of Iran Public Libraries Foundation Mehdi Ramezani and Head of Gazi Husrev-beg's Library in Sarajevo Osman Lavich discussed strategies for deepening their collaboration, according to IRNA.

Ramezani expressed optimism about reaching a common strategy to advance cooperation, stating that he hoped to serve as an intermediary link between Gazi Husrev-beg's Library and the libraries of Iran.

He also believed that the signing of a memorandum of understanding would mark the beginning of extensive cultural collaboration between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Furthermore, Ramezani expressed Iran's readiness to improve and promote the identity of the Persian department of Gazi Husrev-beg's Library. Explaining the scope of Iran's library network, Ramezani noted that it is the largest in the Islamic world, with 3,800 public libraries, followed by Türkiye, which



has 1,200. He also highlighted the impressive number of manuscripts kept in Iran's public libraries, which exceeds 10,000, adding that the central library of Tabriz is the main center for preserving these manuscripts. Ramezani said, Iran's public libraries offer much more than just books and study halls, noting that they provide over 60 educational, cultural, social, and artistic services.

The University of Sarajevo

has a special chair for learning Persian language and literature in the Faculty of Philosophy. Ramezani further added that university students and professors collaborate extensively in the area of Persian manuscripts, and their latest joint project was the creation of the Persian-Turkish encyclopedia. Ramezani also mentioned that an international conference on Ahmed Soudi, the only commentator of 'Bustan,' 'Golestan' by Per-

sian poet Sa'adi, and Divan Hafez, was held in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lavich acknowledged the significance of digitization in the digital age, especially in meeting the needs of university students. He stated that all of their sources, journals, publications, and manuscripts have been digitized, and made available for free to those who are interested.

He also proudly noted that they were the first country in the Balkans to have dig-

itized all old manuscripts and publications, adding that currently, 300,000 people use their services. Lavich stressed the significance of collaboration in the field of manuscript restoration between his library and Iranian officials. He mentioned that his library has amassed 15 years of experience in manuscript restoration, but recognized the need for Iran's cooperation due to Iran's greater expertise and experience in this area.

Elamite carvings in Izeh under threat

EXCLUSIVE

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's rich cultural heritage is at risk due to natural and human factors that threaten the country's historical monuments.

Among these sites are the Elamite carvings located in the open-air relief museum



in Izeh, southwestern Iran, which have been in a state of decline due to natural elements and human aggression. The sculptures boast diverse relief motifs from various Elamite periods, some dating back to circa 2,700 BC, and hold significant cultural and historical value. Despite efforts to protect the city's cultural patrimony, including inclusion on the temporary list of UNESCO in Iran since 2006, exploiters, illicit excavators, smugglers, cultural heritage ignorant individuals, and natural occurrences continue to pose a significant threat to these valuable works.

Activists' concerns

Mojtaba Gahestooni, a cultural heritage activist, has expressed concern about the deteriorating state of the Elamite petroglyphs in Izeh city. He explains that these works have been disfigured by natural elements such as light, sun, wind, rain, and human factors like mud, stones, and aggression. The most prominent case of human aggression is the vanished figure of "Kul-e Farah", while partially destroyed reliefs of Shivand petroglyph and

a defaced carving in Shekaft-e Salman serve as other examples. The petroglyphs, enlisted in the national works list, include the "Shekaft-e Salman" relief, but are now in a dismal state with deep cracks, fissures, and some even disappearing entirely. Gahestooni urges the authorities to take prompt action to preserve these valuable cultural heritage sites.

Ayapir, a website that covers Izeh cultural developments, had previously prioritized observation, protection, exploration, restoration, and tourism plans, but management changes and a lack of resources have resulted in some troubles for the website. An instance of negligence can be seen in the case of Bajul, an ancient relief that was left unattended in the Izeh Cultural Heritage Department for several years. Additionally, a museum that showcases historical artifacts, which was inaugurated in recent years, is in poor condition and remains closed for the majority of the year.

Actions taken to preserve cultural heritage

According to Gahestooni, the office of registration, preservation, and restoration of heritage should focus on protecting the region's historical monuments.

This institution has repeatedly urged the authorities in Khuzestan Province to take more decisive action in removing obstacles to the global registration of these historical monuments. The Elamite petroglyphs are of immense cultural and historical significance and need urgent protection and preservation to ensure their survival for future generations. Iran and Italy have collaborated to protect the historical reliefs of Kul-e Farah and Khunag Azhdar by conducting archeological excavations, 3D scanning, and laser studies. These measures have been implemented to prevent unscrupulous activities and ensure the preservation of these important monuments.

Mehdi Faraji, the admin of Ayapir, says that Khunag Azhdar's location has suffered from soil excavation for construction purposes, resulting in some land subsidence. He highlights the historical significance of Khunag Azhdar and points out that the premises of key carvings, such as Shahsavari, Kul-e Farah, and Shekaft-e Salman, along with the Taq-e Tavileh historical site, have been officially designated and approved by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism. In addition, a survey has been

conducted to evaluate the restoration needs of important structures in Izeh, and proposals have been presented to the provincial authorities, with funding expected to be allocated for the restoration work in the near future.

Preservation of cultural heritage sites in Izeh is not just the responsibility of the cultural heritage officials, but requires the cooperation of all organizations, institutions, and local residents. The cultural heritage department also needs proper equipment and tools to do their job, as the current level of cooperation and coordination is deemed insufficient. Conservation measures have been taken, such as replacing damaged canopies and repairing damaged structures, but there is still much work to be done.

The government and private sector should allocate more resources toward the restoration and preservation of Izeh's cultural heritage sites. Additionally, raising public awareness about the importance of preserving these sites is crucial in ensuring their long-term survival. Without these efforts, these priceless artifacts and monuments could be lost forever, taking with them a vital part of Iran's rich cultural history.