

# Golestan Palace hosting Amir Kabir Memorial Hall



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Golestan Palace in Tehran, the historical residence of the Qajar dynasty, was established during the rule of Shah Abbas Safavid (1571-1629 CE). The government citadel, registered on UNESCO's List in 2013, was in use for 130 years during the rule of the Qajar dynasty. Mirza Taqi Khan Farahani, better known as Amir Kabir, was Nasereddin Shah's prime minister, and one of the most prominent figures of the Qajar dynasty. He published Iran's second newspaper and made extensive efforts to make a change in the way of governance and adapt it to the conditions of the times. The Amir Kabir Memorial Hall was inaugurated in the Talar-e Almas (Di-

mond Hall) of Golestan Palace in May, following a three-day conference held to commemorate this outstanding figure. The hall is located in the southern section of Golestan Palace, next to the wind tower building. It is called Diamond Hall because of the exceptional mirror works which resemble diamonds. Afarin Emami, head of Golestan Palace's World Heritage Site, said that based on the strategies adopted by the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, museums should not be just a place to display cultural and historical objects anymore. "Efforts should be made to convey to visitors the stories behind the artifacts and increase their knowledge about them,"

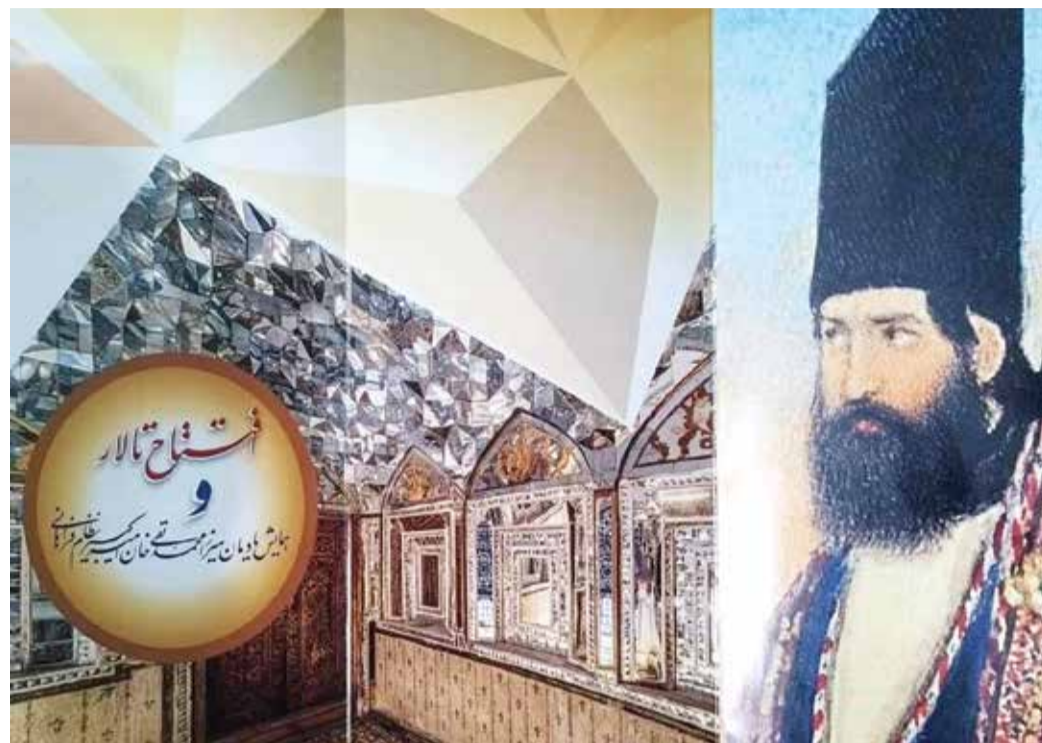


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she said. She said that studies conducted on various sections of the palace indicate that no perfect place is available for narrating the tales of the Qajar period. Thus, setting up a museum for

the purpose is seen as a necessity. Emami noted that the establishment of a museum is no easy task; it requires a set of actions. "We decided to create a museum that deals with

the cultural, political, social and artistic aspects of the Qajar period," she said. "However, since it is a time-consuming process, requiring a comprehensive work plan and an adequate budget, we selected



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Almas Hall to serve as a pre-museum for the purpose, and named it after Amir Kabir." Before the main museum is launched, various events will be held in the hall. Emami observed that Almas Hall is among the oldest sections of Golestan Palace, which was used during the tenure of Amir Kabir and the nearest one to his office. The stucco and mirror works of Almas Hall, which is to keep its original name, were restored during a renovation project to prepare it for hosting the museum. Some antiques, which were previously collected and displayed in Almas Hall, were transferred to other parts of the palace to make it an exclusive place for an Amir Kabir memo-

rial. Emami noted, "A number of scholars, university professors and history experts participated in the three-day conference held on the occasion of the opening of the memorial hall. The results of their research will help us complete the museum in the near future." In addition to the photos of some documents, a page from a book entitled, 'One Thousand and One Nights,' is among the most important objects showcased in the hall. In this book, which is not directly related to the Qajar period, Sani al-Molk, an Iranian painter, book illustrator, miniature and lacquer artist, has used the images of the famous characters of the Qajar era, including Amir Kabir and Nasereddin Shah.

# Choqa, a symbol of Bakhtiari culture

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The clothing of Bakhtiari men, known as *choqa*, dates back 2,700 years. The long sleeveless cloak was first used by the Medes. Moreover, this clothing is depicted in some petroglyphs and sculptures belonging to the Sassanid era. Choqa is a tunic made of delicate sheep's wool. Its special characteristic is

that it provides warmth in the winter and coolness in the summer. It covers the upper part of the body, from the shoulders to the knees, and is impermeable. All *choqas* have similar patterns with black and white stripes. Some believe that these

patterns are inspired by the Choqa Zambil Ziggurats, an ancient Elamite complex in Khuzestan Province. Others believe that it is inspired by the battlements of Persepolis. Such battlements are also seen on the crowns of Iranian kings.

To make a medium-sized *choqa*, about one kilogram of cotton yarn and one kilogram of raw wool is used. Bakhtiari men attend weddings and other important ceremonies in their *choqa*. The hand-woven garment is an important part of Bakhtiari culture and tradition.

In an interview with ISNA, Deputy Head of Lorestan Province's Cultural Heritage Tourism and Handicrafts Organization Abbas Hamzei said that efforts are underway to register *choqa* on Iran's National Heritage List. Traditional skills of weav-



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ing the *choqa* was registered on Iran's National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2015. He said that 2,000 people are working in the handicraft workshops of the province, adding that woven fabrics constitute a major part of the artworks produced in the province.

The official said that *siah chador-bafi* (black tent-weaving), *sabad-bafi* (basket-weaving) and *qalamzani* (engraving) of Lorestan Province have been registered nationally. He said that 90 handicrafts are being manufactured in Lorestan Province, 50 of which are indigenous. Hamzei said that the orga-

nization will support the establishment of handicraft markets in the province, pointing out that this will not only help attract tourists but also generate job opportunities in the region. "Sustainable jobs can be created in the handicraft sector with the lowest cost," he concluded.

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