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Heyran Pass, a natural miracle in Gilan Province

Iranica Desk

Heyran Pass with amazing landscapes is an important route linking Gilan and Ardebil provinces and among the busiest in the country. Heyran village, extending in an area of 2,200 hectares, lies 30km from Astara, Gilan Province, hosts a large number of Iranian and foreign tourists throughout the year. The village leads to numerous picturesque spots and lush forests from one side and Astarachay River flowing on the border between Gilan Province and Republic of Azarbaijan from the other, ISNA wrote. The establishment of a cable car over Heyran Pass by the private sector has prepared conditions for tourists to look at this natural miracle from the sky in all seasons of the year. With many turns and bends, Heyran

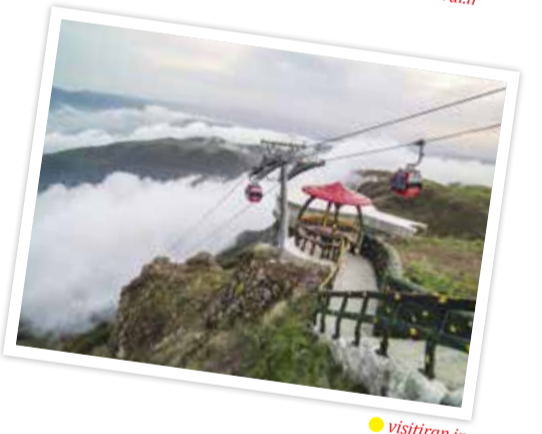
Pass plays a significant role in commercial transactions between Gilan and Ardebil provinces. However, since Gilan and Ardebil provinces are two popular tourist destinations of the country, there is usually heavy traffic on the roads, especially in the spring and summer. Governor Enayatullah Rezaipour told ISNA that Astara has a large number of tourism sites, all of which dazzle the eyes. He said that Astara is one of the most important tourist destinations in Gilan Province, having a significant potential for developing the region's tourism industry. He noted that Heyran Mountain Pass is among Astara's major natural attractions, the tourism infrastructures of which are expected to be enhanced in cooperation with the government and the private sector. Rezaipour said that the government

has carried out fruitful measures for developing the infrastructure of the region's electricity, gas and water sectors. The second tunnel of Heyran Pass, with a length of 2,200 meters, is presently under construction. The first thing that fascinates your eyes when passing through this road is the forest coverage that surrounds you. Bit by bit, you will also find green pastures that cuddle huts. In the meantime, grazing livestock or horses that go alongside it are added to the landscape to captivate a lasting image in your mind. Of course, not everything ends here. All these beauties on this passage drown in the foggy road to create a dream paradise for you, and the question might come to mind: Where did this fog come from at this altitude? In fact, the fog rolls in from the Cas-

pian Sea. One of the characteristics of this passage is that it is located at the border, and you will see an enormous forest belonging to the Hirkan National Park, located in Azerbaijan. Hirkan National Park, with an area of 40,358 hectares, opened on February 9, 2004 by the president of Azerbaijan, as a rich source of plants and animals. Because of the pass's location, most people who live there are engaged in farming and livestock breeding. However, the presence of attractive sceneries and the expansion of tourist spaces as well as the arrival of domestic investors offer a brighter future for the region. You can enjoy driving at Heyran Pass if you do proper maintenance on your vehicle and are proficient in driving. We advise you not to take this beautiful but dangerous pass without driving skills.



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Strategic water structures



One of the most important technical works of Xerxes' experts, for military purposes was a bridge constructed over the Hellespont strait. Xerxes was a Persian ruler who served as the, reigning from 486 BCE until his assassination in 465 BCE. In fact, Hellespont is the Greece name of Bosphorus or Dardanelles Strait. As there was a state by the same name in the past, Herodotus explained in detail about the construction of a bridge over Hellespont Strait in his history book. According to Herodotus' opinion, doing such an important technical affair was very great and considerable. There were about 700 ships in three to 50 rows, which stood beside each other. The ships were fixed by anchors and tied up with thick and strong ropes to one another. They covered the ships with ladders and spread earth on them. Some of the historians believed it had been exaggerated about the number of the ships. On the other hand, the strait between Sestos and Abydos Cities had the least width about 1,200 meters. If the average width of each ship as-

sumed three to five meters, the figures show the number of ships at the narrowest section of the strait would be 340 in one row and 700 in two rows. The schedule for bridge construction over Hellespont Strait and Xerxes' canal excavation had been studied by Iranian for many years and they had done all the measurements and provided all the necessary facilities for ship manufacturing, ropes etc. These kinds of activities were handed to different tribes that were living under sovereignty of Iran.

Moat excavation

The old people remember the moats, which were excavated around Tehran. Moat means a wide ditch, which is excavated around a city or a castle in order to prevent enemies' entry, or flood damages. Defensive moats were designed and constructed by Salmaan Farsi, an Iranian companion of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), for the first time. He was the first Iranian who accepted Islam and he became one of the trusted close companions of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Iranian had used water structures and canals for military purposes.

And there is no doubt Salmaan who lived about 1,400 years ago, knew the history of his country and the technical facilities which had been used before for military expeditions much better than us. One of the important battles, which made clear the fate of universal movement of Islam was the Battle of Moat. In the year 4 A.H. Muslims were informed that the Qoraysh army intended to attack Medina. They got worried because they were few and didn't have enough weapons. So Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and his companions got benefit from Salmaan's thought and knowledge and agreed to dig a moat around Medina. They finished the job in 14 days. So Qoraysh couldn't cross the moat and their slings were useless. Finally they had to return. Perhaps moat construction around castles and cities in Iran and Europe were imitated from Salmaan's thoughts during Middle Ages. If there was enough water, they would fill it up with water and install a bridge in front of the gate. During the night and dangers, they pulled up the bridge and cut the route.

The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter entitled "The Strategic Structures", from a book entitled, "Water and Irrigation Techniques in Ancient Iran", written by Gholam Reza Kuros and Majid Labbaf Khaneiki, published by Iranian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.