

Zanjan Province excels in traditional handicrafts



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The northwestern province of Zanjan has secured the prestigious national seal of excellence in an array of traditional handicrafts. These include: *Malileh-kari* (filigree art), manufacturing copper utensils, *namad-mali* (felt beating), jewelry making, *pelas-bafi* (weaving specific patterns using metallic threads), *charuq-duzi* (weaving a type of traditional footwear), *giveh-duzi* (weaving a type of traditional footwear), engraving and embossing on copper and decorative stones, woodworking, making traditional instruments and knife-making, said the deputy head of the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Seyyed Mikaeil Mousavi added that a total of 11 handicrafts of the province, including nine *malileh-kari* works, one knife-making work, and one traditional instrument have proudly received the prestigious international UNESCO Seal of Excellence.

Referring to the process of awarding the National Seal of Excellence, he remarked that each year, the handicrafts of the province undergo provincial and national assessments. The process commences with the Cultural Heritage, Tour-



Charuq-duzi
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ism, and Handicrafts Organization issuing a call for artists to submit their artworks. Once the artworks are collected, experts evaluate them and choose several pieces to be further appraised at the national level.

Mousavi pointed out that in the past, the handicrafts were sent to Tehran for evaluation. However, for the past few years, regional assessments have been conducted on them. This means that the artworks created by artists from five to six provinces, located in a specific region, are collectively reviewed by experts.

He added that earlier this year, a call has been initiated by this organization for the collection of artworks crafted by the talented artisans of Zanjan Province. These exquisite handicrafts will

undergo evaluation in Tabriz, the capital of East Azarbaijan Province, in October. Following this, the chosen masterpieces will be sent abroad for further assessment by UNESCO.

Mousavi noted that the first criterion of this evaluation is the authenticity of the artwork. It should embody a national and regional identity, with patterns and decorative elements showcasing its unique originality.

The official added that the next parameter is the quality of the product. It means that the raw materials and components of the handicrafts should be of top-notch quality, and they should possess a perfect balance and captivating appearance.

He noted that innovation and creativity are other key evaluation

criteria, indicating that a successful work should possess both visual coherence among its elements and originality. Additionally, the work should demonstrate a strong presence in the market.

"Zanjan Province, strategically positioned along the vital east-west route, has become a highly sought-after destination for both domestic and international travelers. Throughout the year, tourists flock to the province from all corners of the country, enticed by its strategic location and diverse offerings. This influx of visitors has not only elevated the province's tourism industry but has also provided invaluable exposure for its flourishing handicraft sector. As a result, local artisans are finding increased opportunities to showcase and sell their

unique products," he said. Mousavi continued that there are currently 55 active branches of handicrafts in Zanjan Province, involving nearly 15,000 individuals who are busy working in this sector and earning income.

He believes that one of the finest and most significant handicrafts in the province is *malileh-kari*. The World Crafts Council officially recognized Zanjan, the capital of Zanjan Province, as the World City of Filigree in 2020.

"Eleven cities throughout Iran have been designated as world craft cities, placing our country among the top nations in the world in this regard," he noted.

Mousavi noted that around 200 artists are engaged in production of filigree works in Zanjan. Approximately two tons of filigree works are crafted each year in the city. A portion of these delicate artworks gets showcased and sold at prestigious international exhibitions, while the rest finds its way into the hands of enthusiastic domestic and international tourists. He said *malileh-kari* falls under the category of metalworking arts, where thin silver wires are used to craft decorative vessels like trays, sugar bowl, cup handles, brooches, etc.

Producing and making traditional copper utensils is another handicraft industry in the province. These products are utilized for both culinary and decorative purposes.



Knife-making
apochi.com



Malileh-kari
shopipersia.com

Astara's ancient tombstones transferred for preservation, study

Iranica Desk

In an effort to preserve and study the rich historical heritage of Astara, a city in Gilan Province, five ancient tombstones were relocated to Rasht, the provincial capital, according to the head of the city's Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department.

Hassan Kazemi told to ISNA that Astara boasts of numerous ancient cemeteries and mounds, some of which are adorned with tombstones dating back to the pre-Islamic era.

"However, these tombstones have suffered from their dispersed state and, as a result, a comprehensive and in-depth study of them has been lacking," Kazemi highlighted.

He said that recognizing the

significance of these ancient artifacts, the department has taken action to transfer some of the tombstones to a museum in Rasht. Following the completion of necessary administrative procedures and correspondence, the five selected tombstones, originally situated in an open area, have been successfully relocated. The move aims to ensure the proper conservation and understanding of these historical treasures as they shed light on the cultural, artistic, and historical values embedded within Astara's ancient past.

Kazemi exclaimed, "After undergoing restoration, refurbishment, and meticulous documentation, these magnificent stones will finally be unveiled and displayed in a prestigious museum

of Gilan Province, proudly representing the border city of Bandar Astara.

Astara is an Iranian port and border city with several tourist attractions. It is an economic center and the main city for domestic and international tourists on the western coast of the Caspian Sea. This city is the last border point between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

When you walk on the streets of this city, you will notice that the architects have used clay in the construction of house roofs. This type of roof has a decorative aspect; architecturally, it makes the house temperature cooler in summer than the pitch-insulated flat roofs.

Astara is located 75 kilometers from the city of Ardebil.



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Comprehensive plan for Hormuz Island announced

Iranica Desk

Head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Hormuzgan Province in southern Iran has announced a comprehensive plan for the island.

Hormuz Island is an Iranian island in the Persian Gulf, located in the Strait of Hormuz, eight kilometers (five miles) off the Iranian coast. With an area of 42 square kilometers (16 sq. mi), it is covered by sedimentary rocks and layers of volcanic materials on its surface.

As part of Hormuzgan Province, the island is sparsely inhabited, but some development has taken place since the late 20th century.

Mohammad Mohseni said the comprehensive plan for this island will determine the investment capacity and public services' ability for future tourists, who will choose this island as a destination, pointing out the island's natural and historical potential.

He said the purpose of this plan, which should first be verified by the island's governor, is to improve the island's quality of life and stabilize its population.

"Building infrastructures will cause new careers to rise and help enhance local life in the area," he added.

"This plan will help us use all of our capacities to the utmost and take a big step toward tourism development," he concluded.

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