

Iran to expand tourism on Abu Musa Island amid UAE claim

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran announced several new projects on Abu Musa Island, southern Hormuzgan Province, including a large tourism center, sports facilities, and housing developments.

This expansion follows the UAE's recent claim on Abu Musa, which Iran firmly rejects as it considers the island an "inseparable" part of its territory.

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, revealed plans to establish a 30-hectare tourism center on Abu Musa.

This facility will offer recreational and accommodation options for both locals and visitors, making it easier for Iranian citizens to explore the island.

Salehi Amiri explained that military cooperation has helped open areas for development, stating, "Abu Musa is an inseparable part of our land, and we are working to make it accessible to everyone."

The minister also highlighted broader regional efforts, noting that nearby Chabahar and the Makran coasts are undergoing significant development. A private company has invested \$72.5 million in a major tour-

ism project on the Makran coast, aimed at transforming the area with access to open waters, green spaces, and natural attractions.

On the sports front, Iranian Minister of Sports and Youth Ahmad Donya Mali, emphasized Abu Musa's potential for beach sports.

During his recent visit, Donya Mali announced that sports facilities are set to open by the end of the current Iranian year (March 20), with sufficient funding already in place to ensure timely completion of dormitories, swimming pools, and other facilities.

In addition to tourism and sports, Iran's Ministry of Roads and Urban Development (MRUD) is launching a housing project on Abu Musa.

Deputy Minister Arsalan Maleki stated that construction on 110 residential units will soon begin, providing homes for locals and applicants from other areas of Iran.

This announcement came shortly after the UAE reiterated its claim to Abu Musa and two other Iranian islands in a joint statement with the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the European Union.



Maleki clarified that construction on Abu Musa is fully permitted under Iranian law, remarking, "The MRUD is legally bound to expand housing on Abu Musa." Plus, the popular Qur'an recital event, 'Mahfel,' is set to

take place on Abu Musa on November 1, featuring hosts from Iranian television and various artists. This cultural event underscores Iran's dedication to fostering a connection with Abu Musa while advancing the island's infra-

structure. Iran strongly maintains that Abu Musa, along with Greater and Lesser Tunb, are historically and legally part of its territory, a position it reiterated in response to the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and EU statement.

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Reza Salehi Amiri speaks on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran on October 30, 2024. ● ISNA

Iranian films to be screened at Sulmona Int'l Film Festival in Italy



The 42nd Sulmona International Film Festival in Italy will feature several Iranian short films and animations. The festival is set to take place from November 6 to 9, 2024, in the city of Sulmona, ISNA reported.

According to reports, the festival will present short films such as 'Sheep,' directed by Hadi Babaeifar, 'Decision,' by Negar Ibn Ali, and 'Steak,' by Kiarash Dadgar, in the international short film competition.

In addition, the animation 'In the Shadow of the Cypress,' directed by Hossein Molyemi and Shirin Sohani, will be shown in the short animation category. The short animation 'Tomorrow,' directed by Aryasb Feiz, will be featured in the children's section of the event.

The Sulmona International Film Festival focuses on the world of short films and aims to discover and showcase works by emerging directors each year.

Iran-UK arts, crafts show 'Songs of Big Ben' opens virtually

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A unique online exhibition, 'Songs of Big Ben,' showcasing visual arts and crafts from Iran and the UK, opened on October 29.

The exhibition, which will run until November 5, presents 47 works by 37 artists and aims to go beyond traditional visual experiences.

The 'Songs of Big Ben' exhibition was organized by the Luminart Art Group,

the Iranian Center for Creative Tourism, and Roma Pulse, with Mina Aalipour as the curator.

Aalipour explained that the artworks were carefully selected for their immersive qualities. "If you pay close attention to these pieces, it's almost as if they have sounds of their own," she said.

Aalipour also shared that a virtual reality tour has been created to enhance the online experience, describing it as

a "souvenir and gift from our team to the artists."

Artists featured in the show include Ali Khosravani Dehkordi, Alma Ghasemi, Amir Reza Ganjifard, Atefeh Niliyani, Avishan Behroozi, Elaheh Ramezani-Zadeh Kermani, Elaheh Pour Aminaei, and several others.

Songs of Big Ben is accessible on Instagram, on Telegram, and through a virtual gallery on Artsteps.



Breaking taboos under...

Although the public had expected the introduction of Sunni ministers, as promised by President Masoud Pezeshkian during his election campaign, this expectation was not met. Nevertheless, Pezeshkian has vowed to make up for this in other government positions. Now, for the first time, native governors have been appointed for Khuz-

estan, Kurdistan, and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces, representing their respective Arab, Kurdish and Baluch ethnic groups. The presence of minority groups and ethnicities in executive positions is not limited to this list, as capable individuals from these groups have also taken on responsibilities in lower management ranks. President Pezeshkian has dubbed his

administration the "Government of National Unity," striving to bolster internal cohesion by appointing competent managers from various political factions, ethnicities, minorities, women, and youth. It appears that under the banner of national unity, the president has managed to shatter a 45-year-old taboo, lifting the "Do Not Enter" sign for Sunnis in high-level executive positions.

This broken taboo has not been met with any overt opposition from other branches of power, and has instead been welcomed, with experts and elites noting that it helps to heal social rifts. This new experience should be taken as a good omen, and we should be hopeful that, under the umbrella of national unity and consensus among governing bodies, political factions,

and elites, other self-imposed taboos stemming from incorrect assessments, misinterpretations, or even benevolent considerations that do not serve national interests or citizen rights will also crumble. These taboos have deprived the people and the political system of opportunities and capacities, and breaking them will be a shot in the arm for the country.