

# Significance of resumption of excavations at Konar Sandal Hill

## Iranica Desk

The archaeological excavations that have resumed after a 16-year hiatus at the Konar Sandal Hill in Jiroft are of great significance to Iran's cultural heritage and should be viewed from a national perspective.

Mostafa Dehpahlavan, head of the Cultural Heritage Research Institute at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, highlighted during his visit to the site that Jiroft's potential in the realm of cultural heritage is so substantial that local communities can greatly benefit and actively engage in its protection and preservation. Therefore, it is essential to leverage the capabilities of non-governmental organizations and local entities and in-

volve them in administrative processes, IRNA wrote.

He noted that these excavations, led by Seyyed Mansour Seyyed Sajadi — one of our country's renowned and dedicated archaeologists — have resumed thanks to the continued efforts of the director of the Cultural Heritage Department of Kerman Province.

Dehpahlavan emphasized that the Research Institute is committed to ensuring the ongoing excavations at this remarkable and unique site, alongside its protection and restoration, while promoting its tourism potential. "We must join hands to ensure that excavations and cultural and historical studies of the ancient sites in Jiroft do not cease or suspend again."

He also mentioned that very

few museums around the world lack artifacts from Jiroft. A site with such global prominence requires sustained efforts and collaboration from all sectors of the country, including government support, to ensure that related research continues rather than halting after each resumption.

He stated that the foundation and potential of archaeology foster knowledge and awareness, contributing to enhanced community heritage literacy. Cultural heritage should be regarded as a cornerstone of national security, influencing domestic and foreign policy. Iran's civilizational heritage can foster soft power and influence while serving as a deterrent.

Dehpahlavan continued that the ancient site of Konar San-

dal and Jiroft represents a significant cultural and historical resource for the country — one that must be thoroughly excavated, protected, and promoted. This allows us to harness its material and spiritual potential for future generations.

He said that Jiroft can serve as an exemplary model of collaboration among provincial and local authorities in protecting historical and cultural assets, as there is a collective agreement on its importance and value.

"We must acknowledge that alongside urban development and national prosperity, we should not permit the destruction of our civilizational and national heritage. Cultural heritage must form the foundation of sustainable and resilient development," he concluded.



# Enchanting underwater world of Bandar Anzali's Grand Aquarium

The Grand Aquarium of Bandar Anzali, located in Gilan Province stands as a breathtaking testament to marine life and architectural innovation, boasting the title of the largest tunnel aquarium in the country. Spanning an impressive 40 meters, this aquarium offers an immersive experience for visitors, allowing them to explore the enchanting underwater world from a uniquely engaging perspective. Situated in the picturesque port city of Bandar Anzali, the aquarium contributes significantly to the city's reputation as one of Iran's most stunning tourist destinations. Bandar Anzali is renowned for its remarkable urban planning, blending natural beauty with sophisticated infrastructure, making it a vital center for trade and tourism in northern Iran. The city's strategic position as a free trade-industrial hub further enhances its appeal, attracting visitors both locally and from around the globe. Known as the Funtastic Aquarium

which opened its doors in 2017, it has significantly increased the popularity of the region, bringing prosperity and attention to this previously overlooked gem. Constructed with cutting-edge facilities and funded by an investment of several million euros, the aquarium is divided into two main sections: the aquarium itself and a complementary reptile garden. This thoughtful design ensures that visitors can fully appreciate the diversity of life both in the water and on land.

Within the aquarium, guests can revel in an extraordinary atmosphere, especially aquatic enthusiasts, as they encounter over 350 rare species of aquatic animals. Additionally, the aquarium is home to 200 species from five continents, showcasing the vastness and variety of marine biodiversity. The journey begins in the vibrant Amazon Rainforest section, characterized by stunningly designed rivers meandering through lush greenery. Here, visitors

will encounter various fish species typical of the Amazon, including freshwater eagle rays, parrotfish, and the striking Oscar fish. As you move through the exhibits, the next stop highlights the vivid colors and life of coral reefs, ultimately leading to an intriguing sea cave.

Continuing on, the aquarium features an impressive display of Caspian Sea fish, where visitors can observe fascinating species such as beluga and caviar fish. The adventure culminates in the thrilling section dedicated to carnivorous sharks, offering an up-close look at these magnificent predators.

The heart of the Grand Aquarium is undoubtedly its 40-meter tunnel, the largest water tunnel in Iran. This unique feature allows visitors to experience an extraordinary journey, where the first half showcases a variety of carnivorous fish, while the latter half reveals the graceful movements of herbivorous fish. On the second floor of the aquarium, a special space is dedicated to a diverse collection of birds and reptiles. Here, guests can observe various species such as crocodiles, bird-of-paradise, iguanas, and colorful macaws, adding another dimension to this already multifaceted attraction.

At the Grand Aquarium of Bandar Anzali, visitors can partake in the joyful experience of feeding fish, making their visit more interactive. The surrounding area is packed with additional recreational facilities, including a reptile garden, bowling alleys, multidimensional theaters, and commercial shopping zones. Furthermore, the aquarium features playful grounds and suites, providing



ample options for accommodation and entertainment.

For those seeking an adventurous escape, the virtual reality cinema offers thrilling experiences that transport visitors to distant, imaginative locales. Nearby, guests can browse a shop located close to the tunnel, where they can purchase unique souvenirs reflecting the charm of Bandar Anzali, including artisan marine handicrafts, souvenir oyster keychains, and delightful fish dolls.

The aquarium is also home to an amusement park, where visitors can engage with a variety of video games and rally simulators, ensuring there is something for everyone.

Photography is encouraged within the aquarium, though visitors are reminded that flash photography is prohibited. The use of flash can inflict serious harm

to the vision of aquatic animals and disrupt their natural behavior. The aquarium welcomes visitors every day from 11 A.M. to 10 P.M., with free admission for children under three years old, ensuring that family visits are accessible. Adjacent to the Grand Aquarium, a well-equipped restaurant serves an array of delicious seafood dishes, allowing guests to unwind and enjoy local culinary delights after their visit. If you find yourself in Bandar Anzali, taking the time to explore other attractions in this beautiful port city is highly recommended. Notable sights include the serene Anzali Lagoon, the historic Anzali Minare, the lush Bandar Anzali Forest Park, the culturally rich Bandar Anzali Museum Palace, and the bustling Anzali Fish Market, all of which contribute to the diverse and vibrant experience that this coastal city offers.

