



Iran's first Paleolithic World Heritage site UNESCO inscribes 60,000-year-old caves on World Heritage List

Arts & Culture Desk

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee on July 11 inscribed Iran's prehistoric Khorramabad Valley in the Zagros Mountains as the country's 29th World Heritage Site, marking the country's first-ever Paleolithic-era inscription. The decision was announced during the committee's 47th session in Paris. The site, located in western Iran's Lorestan Province, documents over 60,000 years of human history through a series of caves and rock shelters, IRNA reported. It includes five archaeologically verified sites, Yafteh, Ghamari, Kunji, Gilvaran, Kalder, and Gar Arjeneh, each offering clues into

the evolution of human behavior, from Neanderthals to early Homo sapiens. UNESCO experts called the cultural record "unparalleled" for its depth and continuity. The caves lie in the rugged karst terrain of the Zagros Mountains, along what scientists call a critical prehistoric corridor linking Africa with Eurasia. "This inscription gives Iran its first foothold in global Paleolithic heritage," said Sonia Shidrang, a Paleolithic archaeologist at Shahid Beheshti University and scientific lead on the nomination dossier. Shidrang's research at Yafteh Cave helped redefine the Baradostian tradition (ca. 40,000–25,000 years ago), revealing marine shell

beads, hematite pendants, and perforated deer teeth, early examples of symbolic behavior. "These are not just ancient tools. They speak of thought, memory, identity," she said. Her work was central to meeting UNESCO's "Outstanding Universal Value" criteria. The nomination involved years of collaboration between Iranian and international experts. John D. Speth, a University of Michigan anthropologist who co-directed excavations at Kunji Cave in 1969, welcomed the news. "This recognition is long overdue," he said. "Khorramabad preserves a record of Homo sapiens' dispersal and contact with Neanderthals, one of the world's most

compelling evolutionary stories." Beyond its scientific merit, the valley's inscription was celebrated in Iran as a diplomatic and cultural milestone. Minister of Cultural Heritage Reza Salehi Amiri described it as "a response to international misunderstanding" about Iran, adding that the move reflects a national commitment to history over hostility. "Even in difficult times, we choose to send the voice of culture, not the sound of explosions," he said. The region is also being positioned for broader tourism and investment. Ata Hassanpour, Director General of Lorestan's Cultural Heritage Department, noted that barriers to investment



have largely been cleared, calling the province "safe and ready" for both domestic and international visitors. With this recognition, Iran joins a select group of countries, including France, Spain, China, and Indonesia, whose prehistoric sites are formally part of

the global narrative of human origins. For archaeologists and cultural historians, Khorramabad Valley is now "a bridge across continents and species," as one official put it, bearing witness to tens of thousands of years of human endurance and innovation.

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President hails Mobarakeh Steel for building largest solar power plant in Iran



The first phase of Mobarakeh Steel's 600-megawatt solar power plant, with a capacity of 120 megawatts, was inaugurated on Thursday, July 10, via video conference by Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, with the presence of the Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade (IMT), the Governor-General of Isfahan, deputies of the Ministry of IMT, the representative of Mobarakeh in the Parliament, the CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Group, the Director-General of IMT in Isfahan, the Governor of Kuhpayeh, and a group of deputies and managers from the Mobarakeh Steel Group.

Iran's largest solar farm financed by Mobarakeh Steel

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian during the inauguration ceremony of the first phase of Mobarakeh Steel's solar power plant, expressed appreciation to Mobarakeh Steel for investing in the construction of the largest centralized solar power plant in Iran before issuing the official order to launch the plant. "I also thank Minister of Energy Abbas Aliabadi and Minister of IMT Mohammad Atabak, the honorable Minister of IMT, as well as the managers, contractors, and the Mobarakeh Steel team who took the lead in this project and made this investment," he added.

IMT Minister: Mobarakeh Steel's solar park, symbol of national will toward sustainable development, use of clean energy



Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade Mohammad Atabak, stated during the inauguration, "This project will enhance access to energy and goes beyond electricity production. The Aftab-e Shargh (Sun of the East) solar

power plant by Mobarakeh Steel is a key step toward reducing dependence on fossil fuels, cutting greenhouse gas emissions, and strengthening national energy

security, building a cleaner future for the next generations." Emphasizing that this project, with a final capacity of 600 megawatts, is a symbol of national determination for sustainable development and the use of

clean energy, he added, "In the first phase, a 120-megawatt capacity has come online thanks to the efforts of engineers, workers, and managers of the Mobarakeh Steel Group, in collaboration with Daneshmand Engineering Company and the project's contractor." He noted that about 40% of the equipment used in this power plant has been localized, reflecting the country's domestic engineering and technical capabilities. According to the minister, the project is being inaugurated in the year designated by the Leader of Islamic Revolution Seyyed Ali Khamenei as the "Year of Investment for Production" and will benefit the Isfahan Province. Beyond electricity production, the plan also aims to increase employment at Mobarakeh Steel, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, cut greenhouse gas

emissions, and enhance energy security.



Mobarakeh Steel imposes no pressure on national power grid: CEO

During the commissioning of the first phase of the 600-megawatt solar power plant, CEO of Mobarakeh Steel Group Saeed Zarandi expressed gratitude for the support of the Minister of IMT, especially during the recent 12-day imposed war and the backing provided to the industry. He also thanked all officials who supported the industry under such tough conditions. "Before discussing today's inauguration, I must appreciate the managers and workers of Mobarakeh Steel who, even during the 12-day imposed war, tirelessly and valiantly continued their production efforts, maintaining sustainable output," he said.

240 megawatts of Mobarakeh's solar electricity to come online by October

Zarandi stated on the sidelines of the inauguration of the first phase of the country's largest solar power plant, "The total investment for this project was 305 million euros. Today marks the start of the first phase. Also, about *50 trillion rials (approx. \$100 million) has so far been invested in part of the second phase." "During this time, power outages and energy imbalances created serious challenges for Mobarakeh Steel. We hope that through the measures we've taken and by using solar energy, we can

move toward green steel production. This strategy is among Mobarakeh's core goals and is a promising achievement for the nation," he added.

Over \$2.3b invested by Mobarakeh Steel to protect environment

Zarandi emphasized that during this time, they developed and implemented various strategies and approaches, "despite the difficulties, we gained valuable experiences." "Mobarakeh Steel aims to operate on a global level. In all fields, especially in environmental areas, it has consistently acted as a responsible company and has made many investments. To date, the company has invested over \$2.3 billion in the environmental sector and has set a goal to produce green steel with the lowest possible carbon footprint. Thankfully, today we are witnessing the fruition of another great achievement," he added.

DoE chief: Government focused on developing green energy, Mobarakeh Steel on frontline

Shina Ansari, vice president and head of the Department of Environment (DoE), speaking on the opening of the first phase of Mobarakeh Steel's 600-megawatt solar power plant, stated, "The 14th administration's focus is on the development of clean energy, and Mobarakeh Steel is on the front line of this effort." "One of the government's key strategies to tackle energy imbalances and protect the environment is the expansion of renewable energy, especially solar power plants," she added. According to Ansari, the 600-megawatt Aftab-e Shargh solar power plant by Mobarakeh Steel aligns perfectly with this strategy and is consistent with the upstream policies and the objectives of Iran's Seventh De-



velopment Plan. She expressed hope that after the first phase comes online, the other phases will be completed on schedule. "The full implementation of this project can play a significant role in reducing fossil fuel consumption and cutting greenhouse gas emissions," Ansari added.



Governor-general of Isfahan: Mobarakeh Steel contributed greatly in launching seawater transfer pipeline to Isfahan

Governor-General of Isfahan Mehdi Jamalinejad also expressed appreciation for the CEO and employees of Mobarakeh Steel Group for launching the Aftab-e Shargh solar power plant. He emphasized, "it's important to note that Mobarakeh Steel has also made remarkable efforts toward the operation of the seawater transfer pipeline to Isfahan." "July 10, water from the Sea of Oman reached the Isfahan refinery, and in about a month, it will reach Mobarakeh Steel, this will greatly benefit Isfahan's industry. The province has 10,000 active industries, making up roughly one-tenth of the country's industrial base. These industries stood firm and resilient during the 12-day imposed war," he added.