

International delegation explores Mazandaran’s tourism potential

Iranica Desk

CEOs of tourism companies from Russia and Turkmenistan, accompanied by a group of influencers from Kazakhstan, spent three days touring Mazandaran Province to explore its natural, historical, and recreational attractions, according to Mehdi Es’haqi, Deputy Head of Mazandaran Province’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization. Es’haqi said the visit aimed to introduce Mazandaran’s diverse tourism potential to international industry leaders and assess opportunities for joint investment. He added that the tour was part of a familiarization (FAM) trip organized under the “Mazandaran: The Green Gateway to Iran” initiative, ISNA reported. During their stay, the delegation visited several key destinations across the province, including Savadkuh, Babolsar, Behshahr, Amol, and Chamestan. They toured scenic northern railway routes, the Barenjestanak recreational complex, Mizban forest lodge, the shrine of Imamzadeh Ebrahim in Babolsar, the UNESCO-listed Abbasabad Garden in Behshahr, the Miankaleh International Wet-

land, and Elimalat Forest Park. Es’haqi noted that the visit received positive feedback from local tourism stakeholders. He emphasized that the participation of representatives from Russia, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan signals a significant step toward fostering regional tourism cooperation and strengthening Mazandaran Province’s role in cultural and economic exchanges among the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). He highlighted that continued international initiatives of this nature will enhance Mazandaran’s global profile while showcasing its wealth of natural and historical attractions to a wider international audience. Mazandaran Province attracts millions of domestic tourists annually from across Iran. Its stunning natural landscapes and cultural richness draw both domestic and international travelers, with thousands of foreign visitors exploring its diverse attractions each year. While Mazandaran offers scenic beauty year-round, autumn reveals a particularly exceptional charm. The ancient Hyrcanian forests erupt in an array of vibrant colors, with towering trees creating a mesmerizing canopy that refreshes the senses. Mazandaran is home to

dense Hyrcanian woodlands, hundreds of kilometers of coastline, a pleasant climate, and more than 3,000 recorded cultural and historical sites, securing its position as one of Iran’s top tourism hubs. The province holds 80 nationally registered cultural heritage sites, including historic architecture, traditional customs, and regional cultural practices. Nearly 40% of these registered sites consist of historic buildings. Additionally, Mazandaran hosts 15,000 religious endowments, 361 shrines, and over 8,000 religious structures, including mosques, tekies, and hosseiniehs. The province’s forests are especially renowned for their autumn foliage. The colorful beech, hornbeam, and poplar trees cast luminous yellow and deep brown shades, amplifying the natural allure and drawing nature lovers from near and far. In the Savadkuh region, towering and dense beech trees rise so high they appear to support the sky. Beneath them lies a natural carpet of golden and crimson leaves—an enchanting sight that peaks in autumn and offers a breathtaking landscape year-round. The Abbasabad Lake, part of the Alimestan Forest, located 52 kilometers from Amol, is another

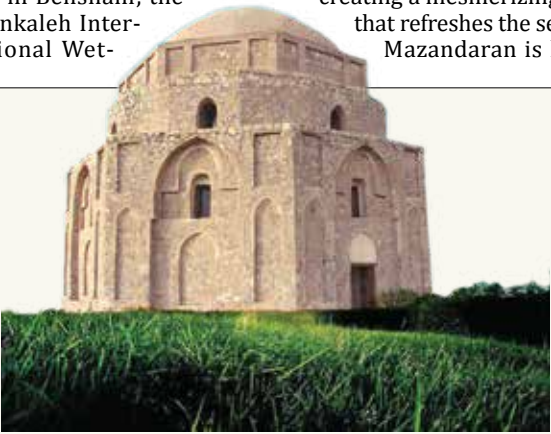


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natural treasure. With its pristine landscape, diverse wildlife, and valleys often shrouded in mist, it provides a surreal and peaceful escape. A trip through this dreamlike forest offers an unforgettable experience and lasting memories. Abbasabad Lake, part of the Abbasabad Cultural and Recreational Complex in Behshahr,

is also a seasonal highlight, especially in autumn when its surrounding trees turn brilliant shades. Other scenic autumn destinations across Mazandaran include Javaher Deh village, and the 2000 and 3000-meter peaks of Tonekabon. Visitors can also enjoy Telar Forest Park, located about 15 kilometers from Qaemshahr.

This tranquil woodland is an ideal setting for a leisurely walk or picnic. Sisangan Forest Park in Nowshahr stands as one of Mazandaran’s most famous attractions, renowned for its stunning variety of tree species and spectacular display of autumn colors that captivate visitors year after year.



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Emergency restoration begins on Jabalieh Dome in Kerman

Iranica Desk

The emergency restoration of the historic Jabalieh Dome in Kerman Province has commenced following approval by the Technical Council and is being carried out by a qualified contractor, according to the deputy head of Kerman Province’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Organization. The announcement comes amid recent reports circulating on social media alleging improper restoration practices at the site, ISNA wrote. Farnaz Farahi-Moqaddam confirmed that signs of moisture damage and environmental erosion prompted the issue to be raised in the Technical Council, which approved urgent restoration measures. “The last major restoration of the Jabalieh Dome was carried out in 2012, but recent technical assessments indicated that continued erosion could cause serious structural damage and even pose a safety risk to visitors,” she explained. Farahi-Moqaddam added that following thorough monitoring and technical evaluations, emergency restoration work is now underway. “The restoration workshop is fully active. Initial phases are being conducted using traditional plaster, and in the final stage, the mortar will be carefully matched to the original color and texture of the structure,” she added. The Jabalieh Dome, also known as the Gabri Dome, is a historic stone-and-gypsum structure dating back to the Sassanian era. The octagonal building is one of the most iconic remnants of early Persian architecture in the region.

Craftsmen restore ancient Lenj-building tradition in Persian Gulf

Iranica Desk

The construction of one of Iran’s last wooden Lenj (traditional fishing boats) in the historic port of Bandar Kong in Hormozgan Province has finally been completed after a 12-year hiatus and numerous challenges, and the large vessel, with a capacity of 600 tons, has now been launched. According to Ali Pouzan, director of the Gouran Boat Manufacturing Open-Air Museum and a prominent advocate for southern maritime heritage, this milestone emerges at a critical time when traditional Lenj-building in southern Iran is nearing complete extinction, chtn. ir wrote. The project began 12 years ago in the workshop of the late master craftsman Abdullah Ebrahimi. Work was halted repeatedly due to financial constraints, rising material costs, and the lack of official support. However, Pouzan noted that, thanks to the perseverance of Ebrahimi’s heirs and project partners, the vessel was ultimately completed using traditional, entirely manual methods — without engineering plans, relying solely on the indigenous knowledge passed down through centuries of hands-on experience and oral instruction. He also lamented that most of the master craftsmen involved in the project have since passed away. Pouzan revealed that only two wooden Lenjs of the original Iranian tradition remain operational today — one in Kong and another at the Guran workshop. This stark figure underscores the urgent threat of extinction faced by this centuries-old craft. He added that one of the main obstacles is access to suitable timber. Historically, teak wood was imported



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ed from India or Malaysia, but today such imports are prohibitively difficult and expensive. As a result, fiberglass and metal Lenjs — which are cheaper and quicker to construct — have largely supplanted traditional wooden vessels, discouraging investment in the latter and pushing many skilled craftsmen out of work. Constructing a large wooden Lenj requires more than 200 cubic meters of timber and typically takes between one and two years, while a fiberglass boat can be completed in just a few months. This vast difference in time and cost has made it difficult for traditional builders to compete in the modern market. Pouzan emphasized that traditional Lenj-building is not merely a craft but a vital part of Iran’s intangible cultural heritage, and that its survival depends on structured training programs. In the

past, Lenj-building knowledge was passed down directly within families — fathers teaching sons through hands-on practice in workshops. Today, however, the closure of most workshops has severed this chain of transmission. He believes that unless formal training in Lenj-building is introduced into technical and vocational institutions in southern Iran, within a decade there will be no one capable of building a wooden Lenj from start to finish. One proposed solution, Pouzan said, is the establishment of a permanent coordination council — including the Cultural Heritage Organization, Ports and Maritime Organization, free economic zones, industry stakeholders, and the Hormozgan Chamber of Commerce — to strategize the preservation and revitalization of the industry. He stressed that UNESCO’s recognition of Persian Gulf Lenj-building as Intangible Cultural Heritage offers a key opportunity to mobilize financial and educational resources. He further highlighted the need

for establishing living museums and training workshops in ports such as Kong, Laft, and Guran. In countries like Oman and the UAE, traditional Lenj-building workshops have been successfully integrated into tourism and vocational training sectors. Pouzan expressed confidence that Iran has similar potential — pending strategic cultural and economic policymaking. Experts emphasize that traditional Lenj-building extends far beyond a mere technical skill — it has historically been a cornerstone of the economy in southern Iranian ports. For centuries, maritime trade in the Persian Gulf was closely linked to the construction and maintenance of dhows, supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of families. According to Pouzan, the decline of this industry has had a direct and profound impact on coastal communities. With the cessation of Lenj construction, the entire network of related occupations — including carpentry, painting, sail-making, and even local transportation — has vanished. In the past, constructing a single Lenj could provide employment for dozens of individuals over several years. Today, that economic capacity has been entirely lost. He highlighted the creation of a living Lenj-building museum as a key strategy to preserve this traditional knowledge. He noted that educational demonstration workshops could be established in the ports of Kong and Laft, as well as in the village of Guran, enabling tourists and researchers to witness the Lenj construction process firsthand. Such a center would not only help revive traditional skills but also create new economic opportunities through cultural tourism.