

War damage spurs urgent conservation efforts at Golestan Palace

Iranica Desk

The director of Golestan Palace UNESCO World Heritage site announced that after urgent safety measures are completed to remove immediate risks and stabilize the structure, plans for full restoration will begin following a detailed damage assessment under stable conditions.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, Afarin Emami, director of the Golestan Palace complex, emphasized that immediate full restoration is not currently possible. She said the first priority is emergency protection and stabilizing the building to prevent secondary damage, mehnews.com reported.

She explained that threats such as roof damage caused by impacts, rainwater infiltration, and the entry of birds or urban animals must be addressed quickly before any comprehensive res-

toration work can begin.

As a first step, roofs and windows have already been covered as part of the initial emergency protection process. However, because some hidden structural damage may exist, a more precise technical assessment is now required to guide the next phase of emergency measures.

Emami also announced that joint meetings of the Strategic Committee and Technical Committee are now being held weekly, instead of every one or two months as in the past, due to the urgent circumstances. Experts and veteran specialists are attending these meetings to speed up and improve decision-making.

According to her, a comprehensive coded damage survey is expected to be completed within about 10 days. This will help determine priorities for conservation work, including identify-



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ing unstable sections, detached decorative elements, and how they should be stabilized or re-located.

Regarding the palace's histor-

ical objects, she said around 90% of the items have been properly packed and transferred to secure storage. Only objects considered too risky to

move remain on site. Fortunately, none of the artifacts suffered serious damage. Only a few branches of chandeliers were damaged by the blast wave and

can be repaired.

She added that the explosion in the Arg Square area particularly affected architectural decorations, especially wooden elements. The damage is scattered throughout the complex, but more severe in areas such as Shams-ol-Emareh and the Marble Throne Hall.

Emami stressed that a significant portion of hazard-removal work has already been completed to prevent further deterioration. However, final cost estimates may change once the full damage assessment is finished.

On the reopening date, she said no exact timeline can yet be announced, since it depends on factors such as funding, stable conditions, and broader decisions by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. However, the complex may reopen gradually in phases, possibly even while restoration work continues.

Over 4m use ecolodges amid war

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More than four million people were accommodated in ecolodges during the third imposed war, with villages playing a significant role in terms of both the number of visitors and the length of their stays.

Speaking to IRNA, Seyyed Mostafa Fatemi, Director General for Domestic Tourism Development at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, said that during the conflict triggered by Israel and the US, many travelers moved to villages in high-demand provinces such as Mazandaran, Gilan, and Ardabil, IRNA reported.

help preserve the culture and identity of villages while also promoting rural traditions, reverse migration, handicrafts, and local cuisine.

Fatemi added that during crisis situations such as the recent war, ecolodges demonstrated a different function by serving as safe shelters for people who had relocated from cities to villages. He said these accommodations effectively acted as a form of cultural and security-oriented passive defense, helping preserve part of the tourism cycle while providing a secure environment for citizens.

The tourism official also addressed accommodation costs,



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He said that when free accommodations — often offered to friends and acquaintances of ecolodge managers — were also included, these lodgings experienced an average occupancy rate of around 60 percent.

Fatemi noted that in addition to the northern provinces of Gilan, Mazandaran, and Ardabil, southern provinces and even provinces directly affected by the war were also able to host guests in ecolodges.

He described ecolodges as a successful model in Iran, saying they

stating that 3,900 ecolodge units are currently active across the country, with the highest number located in Mazandaran Province. He explained that lodging prices vary from province to province depending on standards, the type of services offered, climate, and seasonal demand. He also said that companies operating under the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts are responsible for developing and implementing accommodation standards for such establishments.

Behdeh village emerges as key cultural tourism destination

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Nestled in the quiet hinterlands of the Persian Gulf and surrounded by mountains that bear witness to centuries of life and perseverance among southern communities, lies a village where history and culture unfold amid untouched natural landscapes. Behdeh village, located in the central district of Parsian in Hormozgan Province, stands as a unique blend of heritage and environment.

Behdeh, which was ranked sixth in national evaluations of Iran's designated tourism villages, is today recognized as one of the most important cultural tourism destinations in Hormozgan Province. It is distinguished not only by its natural setting and traditional architecture, but also by a rich collection of historical sites and ancient rituals, forming a living repository of civilization in the Persian Gulf hinterlands, according to chtn.ir.

With a history spanning several thousand years, Behdeh preserves traces of human settlement from pre-Islamic eras through the medieval Islamic period. Situated along ancient trade routes in southern Iran, the village has long been home to communities that adapted to harsh environmental conditions and developed innovative ways of life suited to the region.

Within its fabric, the imprint of southern Iranian vernacular architecture is clearly visible. Traditional homes built from local materials, narrow alleyways, and climate-responsive structures designed to cope with heat and water scarcity together reflect a valuable model of southern Iranian lifestyle and culture. At the heart of the village, atop a mountain bearing the same name, stands the historic Kalat-e Behdeh Castle. This en-



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during stronghold has guarded the region for centuries. Its remains, dating from the Sassanid period to the early Islamic era, highlight the area's strategic importance. The site was officially registered as a national heritage monument, and has since been recognized as one of the most significant historical attractions in Parsian. Its elevated position overlooking the village and surrounding plains demonstrates the builders' advanced understanding of defensive architecture.

The existence of such structures in mountainous terrain reflects the engineering ingenuity of past societies in securing water resources and ensuring safety in difficult landscapes. The Dilav well, carved directly into rock, is considered a remarkable example of traditional water management technologies in arid regions.

Behdeh's heritage is not limited to the fortress alone. Numerous surrounding sites

each narrate a part of the region's cultural and historical identity. Among them are Hasht Berkeh, meaning Eight Ponds, is an ensemble of ancient cisterns built to collect and store rainwater — an example of indigenous water management knowledge in southern Iran's dry climate.

The archaeological site of Beratesh is another important location, preserving evidence of ancient human settlement. Additionally, the presence of the ancient Charo tradition — linguistically linked in Middle Persian to sarooj a type of mortar — suggests that early inhabitants were familiar with advanced construction techniques and durable building materials.

Engineering ingenuity is further reflected in structures such as the Faryab Water Mills, which harnessed flowing water to grind grain. Likewise, the Giri Konar Tunnel represents another engineering marvel, designed to channel rainwater and manage flood flows, showcasing traditional expertise in water control and resource utilization. Together, these structures

demonstrate that the inhabitants of this region not only adapted to harsh climatic conditions but also developed creative solutions to maximize the use of natural resources.

The combined presence of these historical and natural assets has positioned Behdeh as one of Hormozgan Province's leading cultural tourism destinations. Its recognition among Iran's top tourism villages further underscores its significant potential in the tourism sector.

Behdeh is more than a village; it is a living narrative of history, culture, and human resilience. From the ancient fortress to water reservoirs, mills, and hydraulic tunnels, every element reflects a long tradition of indigenous knowledge and traditional engineering.

Preserving and introducing this valuable heritage is of great importance not only for the local community but also for Iran's broader cultural and historical legacy. Today, Behdeh has the potential to become a major cultural tourism hub in southern Iran, telling the story of thousands of years of life in the hinterlands of the Persian Gulf for generations to come.