

First Rafugari museum to open in Babolsar during Cultural Heritage Week

Iranica Desk

In line with the development of cultural heritage infrastructure and the support for the revival of traditional arts and handicrafts, Mazandaran Province has recently undertaken various initiatives to establish and strengthen specialized museums. In this context, and coinciding with Cultural Heritage Week (May 18-24), one of the province's key projects is set to be inaugurated.

The Director General of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Mazandaran Province announced that the world's first Rafugari Museum will be inaugurated in Babolsar, during Cultural Heritage Week,

according to chtn.ir.

Hossein Izadi emphasized the importance of this initiative, stating, "This is the world's first private museum dedicated to Rafugari, established with the aim of preserving the authentic art of Rafugari, introducing its role within Iran's carpet weaving tradition, and transferring the knowledge of master craftsmen to future generations."

He added that this center can become a hub for education, research, and cultural tourism in the province.

Izadi further stated, "In this museum, tools, historical artifacts, and traditional Rafugari techniques will be exhibited in order to enhance the cultural standing

of Mazandaran at both national and international levels."

Rafugari is one of the delicate and highly specialized branches of traditional handicrafts and carpet weaving. It involves the repair and restoration of damaged areas of handwoven carpets and textile works. This art requires precision, experience, and a deep understanding of carpet structure, colors, and patterns. Skilled practitioners of Rafugari use matching threads to reconstruct damaged sections in a way that leaves minimal visible traces of repair. Beyond its practical function, Rafugari plays an essential role in preserving the historical and cultural value of carpets and

textile artworks, effectively ensuring the continued life of this artistic heritage.

In addition, Rafugari is not only a technical craft but also a living expression of cultural identity and artistic continuity. It reflects the accumulated knowledge of generations of Iranian artisans who have preserved the aesthetic and structural integrity of carpets that often carry historical, emotional, and economic value. The establishment of a dedicated museum for Rafugari therefore represents an important step toward institutionalizing this knowledge, documenting rare techniques, and encouraging younger generations to engage with this highly specialized field.



IRNA

Semnan to tap transit traffic to boost tourism industry



jajiga.com

Iranica Desk

The head of the Association of Eco-Lodges and Traditional Accommodations in Semnan Province said the province's unique geographical location could help transform it into one of Iran's key tourism destinations by attracting at least 10 percent of travelers and pilgrims passing through its transit routes.

In an interview with ISNA ahead of National Eco-Lodge Day on May 21, Hadi Izadfar said Semnan Province possesses significant tourism potential.

He noted that the province is home to more than 1,000 historical monuments, around 900 of which have been nationally registered. In addition to its rich historical heritage, Semnan also boasts numerous natural attractions that could position it as a major tourism hub in the country.

Izadfar described the coexistence of diverse climates within the province as one of Semnan's unique advantages. Although widely known as a desert province, Semnan also benefits from mountainous landscapes and forest resources, offer-

ing considerable tourism opportunities.

He emphasized that more than 20 million pilgrims and travelers pass through the province each year, describing it as a highly valuable opportunity. "If we can attract even 10 percent of this potential market, the tourism industry could generate substantial economic benefits for Semnan Province," he said.

The tourism official added that many of the necessary conditions for tourism development are already in place, stressing that efforts should now focus on strate-

gies to attract at least one-tenth of travelers and pilgrims passing through the province.

According to Izadfar, Semnan has the potential to become one of Iran's leading tourist destinations. He added that expanding and completing tourism infrastructure would further boost the industry's growth in the region.

He also noted that six percent of Iran's total land area lies within Semnan Province and said tourism infrastructure has already been developed across various parts of the province,

creating opportunities for investors and tourism enthusiasts.

Izadfar called for greater support for tourism industry operators, particularly eco-lodges operating in different counties across the province, saying such support could contribute significantly to the growth of tourism in both Semnan and the country as a whole. He further announced that Semnan Province will host the annual gathering of Iran's eco-lodge operators in the city of Shahrud, with guests attending from across the country.

Reading Room

A forward-looking perspective on written heritage



By Akbar Irani
Head of Institute for
Written Heritage

This year, Iran finds itself in one of its most sensitive historical periods, a situation and crisis that few had anticipated on such a scale. Naturally, cultural and artistic institutions, like other organizations and state bodies, have also faced significant challenges and setbacks. This is largely due to serious disruptions in the country's financial and economic cycles, as well as a decline in state revenues. As a result, government support for the cultural and artistic sector has been uneven, and it is perhaps unprecedented for cultural and artistic communities to face such difficulties. The 19th of Iranian month of Ordibehesht (May 9) is officially designated in Iran's national calendar as "National Documents and Written Heritage Day". Each year, it coincided with the Tehran International Book Fair; however, during the COVID-19 pandemic and again in the current period, when holding in-person exhibitions has not been possible, this commemoration has not been observed in its usual form. Written heritage — the intellectual legacy of Iranian scholars and thinkers throughout

history — is among the treasures that has long been a source of national pride and a forward-looking reference for the future. The use of past heritage to better understand a country's future is a practice common to all nations with deep historical roots. Societies without such roots are either forced to rely on or appropriate the historical legacy of others, or to turn to sources lacking cultural and historical value.

Iran, with its long historical continuity both before and after the advent of Islam, possesses a vast corpus of manuscripts and written records, from stone inscriptions and epigraphs to later paper-based works. These texts carry the intellectual legacy of great thinkers whose ideas eventually reached far beyond Iran, influencing parts of the Western world. Approximately 500 to 600 years ago, works such as Avicenna's *The Canon of Medicine* and Al-Razi's *Al-Hawi* were printed and taught, while algorithms derived from Al-Khwarizmi's work were widely adopted and used. The importance of this written heritage and its impact on global knowledge is therefore undeniable. National Documents and Written Heritage Day provide

an opportunity for holders of manuscripts and custodians of archival materials in libraries and institutions to report how many manuscripts they have restored, acquired, or received. It is rare to go a month without encountering individuals in possession of historical documents or manuscripts.



Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Mehraneh Charity Hospital Museum in Zanjan, where a large collection of documents from the Mirzaei family dating back to the Qajar period—including the reigns of Fath-Ali Shah, Naser al-Din Shah, and Mozaffar al-Din Shah—is preserved. The history and culture of Zanjan are reflected in these documents, some of which have already been studied and published in newspapers and are currently being researched

and deciphered.

This situation exists, to varying degrees, in all cities, and the infrastructure for digitization is also available. In the future, greater attention should be given to facilitating researchers' access to these sources, and academic theses should increasingly focus on

manuscript studies, textual research, and critical editing. Over the years, the movement for manuscript revival has advanced steadily despite financial constraints and challenges. We now see numerous master's theses and doctoral dissertations devoted to these topics, shedding light on different aspects of Iranian history. These works, once identified and published, bring great intellectual satisfaction when introduced in academic journals.

One of the valuable initiatives undertaken last year by the Institute for written heritage was the publication of documents related to the delimitation of Iran's western borders, compiled by Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan Nazem-ol-Molk Marandi Yekanlu. From the late reign of Mohammad Shah Qajar until 1309 AH, he served for over fifty years as one of the senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Despite decades of administrative and intellectual efforts in defending Iran's territorial integrity along the western and northeastern borders, he remains a relatively unknown figure in modern historiography.

Fortunately, thousands of documents related to Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan's diplomatic efforts are preserved in the Political Science Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, covering both western and eastern Iran. These materials are accessible and were also displayed in an exhibition held during the conference "Azarbaijan, Diplomacy, and Territorial Integrity." At this conference, more than thirty scholars presented papers at the University of Tabriz. It was the first time such a large number of historians gathered in Tabriz to discuss diplomacy and border issues

in honor of a shrewd and capable statesman, Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan Nazem-ol-Molk Marandi Yekanlu.

He devoted more than fifty years of his life to serving in the four-border commissions involving Russia, Britain, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran, using logic and argumentation to defend Iran's rights, surveying vast territories, and ultimately contributing to the recovery of approximately fifty kilometers of Iranian land. Azarbaijan has been home to courageous figures such as Baqer Khan and Sattar Khan, and now Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan is being introduced as a figure who, through the power of writing and reasoning, defended the homeland and affirmed Iran's rightful claims.

Iranian libraries currently hold approximately 700,000 identified manuscripts, though the actual number is believed to be higher and continues to grow as new items are discovered. These manuscripts are evenly divided between Arabic and Persian texts. Globally, a vast number of Arabic and Persian manuscripts exist, many produced within the Iranian cultural sphere by Iranian authors.

This article was originally published by IBNA.