

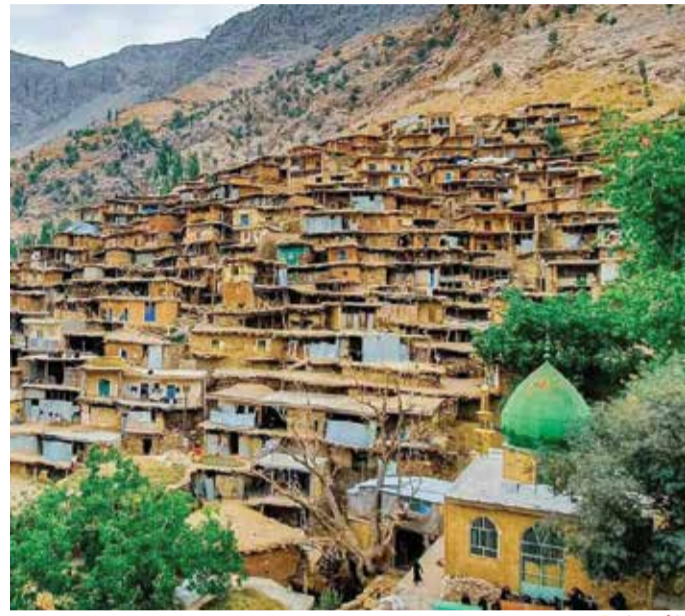
# Sar Aqa Seyyed village considered for national tourism project

## Iranica Desk

The historic stepped village of Sar Aqa Seyyed in Kuhrang, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, is being considered for designation as a national tourism project due to its distinctive architecture, historic fabric and exceptional natural and tourism potential, a senior cultural heritage official said. Farhad Azizi, Director General of National and World Heritage Sites at Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, made the remarks during a visit to tourism attractions in Kuhrang, according to [chtn.ir](#). "Kuhrang boasts unique landscapes and exceptional tourism potential," Azizi said, according to [chtn.ir](#). He noted that the main focus of the visit was Sar Aqa Seyyed village, where discussions were held on strategies for the pres-

ervation, development and sustainable use of the village's cultural and tourism assets. According to Azizi, officials reviewed ways to utilize local and provincial resources, as well as national financial support, to designate Sar Aqa Seyyed village as a national tourism project. He highlighted the village's distinctive architectural features and well-preserved historic fabric as key factors supporting the proposal. "Sar Aqa Seyyed is among the country's most significant and valuable villages," he said, adding that its development requires a precise, expert-driven plan based on a clear implementation framework. Azizi stressed that the objective is to leverage the capacities of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, Kuhrang and national support mechanisms to facilitate the village's recognition as

a national project. He added that preserving Sar Aqa Seyyed's architectural and historical heritage, while improving residents' quality of life and providing essential infrastructure, are among the initiative's top priorities. The official emphasized that, through cooperation among relevant institutions and provincial authorities, efforts will focus on overcoming existing challenges and taking effective steps toward the sustainable development of Sar Aqa Seyyed and the expansion of its tourism sector. The picturesque village of Sar Aqa Seyyed is one of the most captivating natural attractions in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province, nestled amidst the verdant Zagros Mountains. The stepped architecture, authentic traditional clothing, and customs of the rural inhabitants, along with



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its unspoiled and awe-inspiring natural surroundings, are some of the village's outstand-

ing features. In recent years, owing to the growing interest from nature enthusiasts, the

village has gained recognition, with even foreign tourists making their way to this area. With its limited amenities, this village is an ideal destination for those seeking tranquility in secluded rural areas. During the colder seasons, the village's population dwindles, while in warmer times, it sees an influx of tourists. Despite the area's potential for tourism, the residents lead traditional lives due to the limited facilities. According to archaeologists, Sar Aqa Seyyed village, like many others nestled in the mountains, served as one of the earliest human settlements, dating back thousands of years. Presently, the only historical record available for the village is a genealogy of the Imamzadeh buried there, indicating that a person named Isa and his relatives lived in this village over 600 years ago.

## New bronze museum planned in Lorestan Province

### Iranica Desk



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The head of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization of Lorestan Province has emphasized the historical and cultural significance of the renowned Lorestan bronzes, saying that the establishment of a dedicated bronze museum in the province would make it a unique museum in western Iran. Ata Hassanpour stated that, once completed and inaugurated, the museum is expected to become the leading museum in western Iran, showcasing the region's rich archaeological heritage, [ISNA](#) wrote. He noted that the cultural

sphere associated with the Lorestan bronzes extended beyond present-day Lorestan Province to include parts of what are now Hamadan, Ilam and Kermanshah provinces. This broad geographical distribution, he said, reflects the origins of the bronze artifacts in the Central Zagros region. Hassanpour pointed to two major archaeological sites — Sorkh Dom-e Lori in Kuhdasht and Sangtarashan in Khorramabad — as key evidence supporting the region's status as the birthplace of the celebrated bronzes. Archaeological excavations conducted before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution uncovered approximately 2,000 bronze

objects from these sites. According to Hassanpour, the artifacts originated from two prehistoric temples dating back around 3,000 years. He emphasized that a particularly significant aspect of the discoveries is that the bronzes were recovered directly from their original archaeological layers and are preserved in the region where they were found — a rare circumstance in Iran that adds considerable value to both the artifacts and the proposed museum. The official also highlighted the presence of copper and tin deposits in the mountains of Lorestan. These minerals were the primary raw materials used in bronze pro-

duction, providing further evidence of the region's longstanding role as a center of bronze craftsmanship. Hassanpour expressed hope that the establishment of the bronze museum would help the province gain greater recognition for its cultural and historical heritage and strengthen its position as a major cultural and tourism destination in western Iran. He added that the project would represent a significant cultural achievement not only for Lorestan Province but for the entire western region of the country, with the potential to become one of Iran's leading centers for heritage tourism and archaeological research.

## Mysteries surround 1,500-year-old Zij-e Manijeh

### Iranica Desk

Roughly 15 kilometers before the ancient city of Sarpol-e Zahab, Kermanshah Province, just below a mountain pass that appears to embrace the sky and overlooks what seems like a paradise-like landscape, lies a village that has for centuries hosted a mysterious and enigmatic historical structure at its heart. Locals in the region each recount different legends and romantic tales about this monument. Some say that when Farhad fell deeply in love with Shirin and began carving through Mount Bisotoun to reach her, his rival Khosrow Parviz, enraged by the love story, had Farhad killed and later exiled Shirin to a palace near Sarpol-e Zahab — believed by some to be this very structure, which has now become a historical monument. However, the name of the monument somewhat distances it from the tale of Shirin and Farhad. The site is known today as Zij-e Manijeh, and for this reason some locals associate it with another romantic narrative — the tragic story of Bijan and Manijeh from the *Shahnameh*. According to this version, the site is believed to have been the place where Manijeh stayed for

a time after Bijan, son of Giv, was rescued from a deep and dark pit in which Afrasiab, the Turanian king and Manijeh's father, had imprisoned him, until he was saved by the hero Rostam.



Although these two stories remain local oral traditions, others argue that the word "Zij" refers to an astronomical table or observatory, suggesting that the structure may have functioned as a Sassanid-era observatory around 1,500 years ago. However, the building's unique architecture makes this claim difficult to verify. The presence of an ancient paved road nearby, along with another mysterious and still-unexplained structure known as

Taq-e Gara, and a historical spring, has led some researchers to suggest that the site may once have functioned as a caravanserai. Regardless of the various interpretations, what is clear is the

monument's distinctive architecture — including entrances, arches, dome-like ceilings, and construction materials consisting of rubble stone and gypsum mortar — all of which suggest that the site was likely a large palace or mansion dating back to the Sassanid era, possibly used as a winter residence by kings in this warm region. According to [ISNA](#), Zij-e Manijeh, also called Manijeh Castle, is a large complex featuring a grand hall connected by mul-

tiple corridors. In its eastern and western sections, there are several rooms, though the original number remains unclear. Some believe there were once around 30 rooms on each side, while today only about



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13 to 14 remain intact. Located along the Kermanshah-Sarpol-e Zahab road in a strategically important area surrounded by other historical remains, the monument stands as a magnificent Sassanid structure that has endured for more than a millennium and a half, overlooking the changing fortunes of the region. One of the reasons this site is considered significant among the province's historical heritage is its remarkable state of

preservation. Despite being over 1,500 years old, it remains one of the best-preserved Sassanid-era structures still standing. Even the 2017 earthquake in Sarpol-e Zahab, which caused widespread destruction in the

region, did not damage the monument, further highlighting its structural strength. Given its favorable condition and the presence of scenic mountain passes and other historical sites in the surrounding area, the monument has strong potential to become a major tourist attraction in the province. In past years, proposals were even made to develop it into a Sassanid-style hotel through private investment, but the plan was never realized,

leaving the site largely overlooked. The head of the Sarpol-e Zahab Cultural Heritage Department also believes that Zij-e Manijeh could play a greater role in regional tourism, although he emphasizes that the best use for the site would be its conversion into an eco-tourism accommodation facility. He notes that achieving this requires the development of infrastructure to attract investors. Mozafar Gholami said that parts of the site were turned into a garden before the victory of the Islamic Revolution and stressed the need to acquire and integrate these areas into the monument, which would require substantial funding. He added that due to the monument's age and the gradual deterioration of some sections over time, restoration work has been carried out in several phases, although funding has been limited and insufficient, underscoring the need for greater financial allocation. Gholami further noted that Zij-e Manijeh is an important yet relatively unknown Sassanid monument in Iran, registered on the National Heritage List in 2005, and that with proper investment it could become a major tourism hub in western Iran.