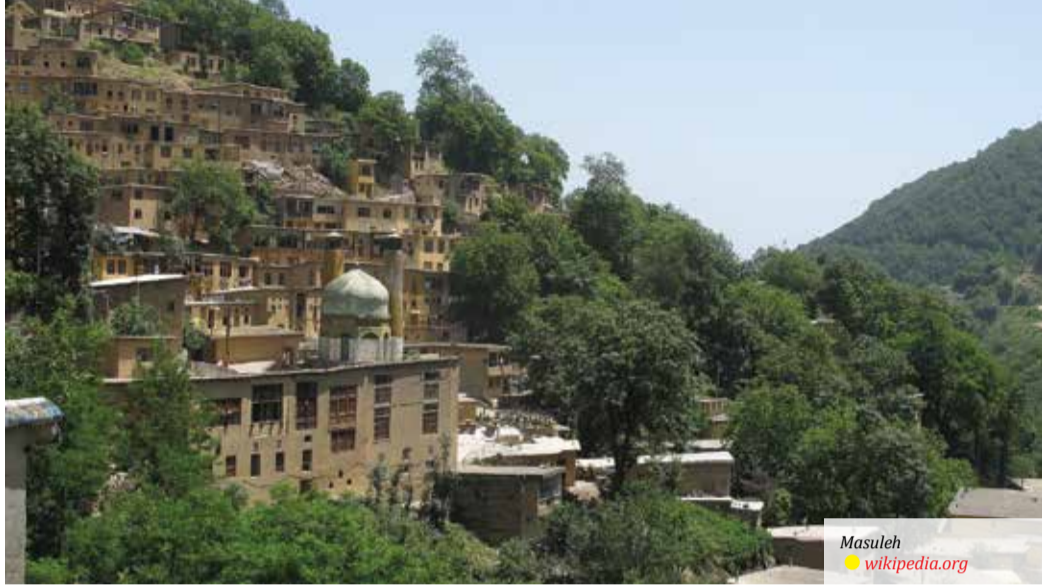


Masuleh, Gisum moving toward UNESCO status



Masuleh
wikipedia.org



Gisum Forest
nody.ir

Iranica Desk

Governor General of Gilan Province, Hadi Haghshenas, has expressed optimism that the historic town of Masuleh and the Gisum village will achieve UNESCO World Heritage status by 2027, highlighting Masuleh's thousands of years of history and its position as one of Iran's most significant cultural and historical treasures.

Speaking at a meeting convened to review the progress of the UNESCO nomination process for the historic town of Masuleh and the village of Gisum, attended by provincial officials as well as Parliament representatives from Fuman and Talesh, Haghshenas said that Masuleh, as a valuable civilizational and cultural landmark, has been on the path toward international recognition for several years. He described the site as a unique testament to Iran's rich heritage

and emphasized its importance as a symbol of the country's historical identity, IRNA reported. The governor noted that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, in close coordination with provincial authorities, is actively pursuing the finalization of the nomination dossier. He said ongoing efforts are focused on meeting all necessary requirements and ensuring that the groundwork is in place for the successful inscription of the site on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Referring to the nomination of Gisum, Haghshenas stated that out of 100 villages selected nationwide, only eight have advanced to the final stage of consideration for international recognition. Gisum, he noted, represents Gilan Province on this shortlist and is steadily progressing through the process toward global recognition.

He described the area as one of the province's most valuable natural and tourism assets, with considerable potential to attract visitors from around the world. The governor stressed the importance of close cooperation among all relevant government agencies in fulfilling the requirements of the nomination process. According to Haghshenas, organizations including the Natural Resources Department, the Department of Environment, the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development, municipalities, and local administrations have been instructed to take all necessary measures to accelerate the completion of the required documentation and infrastructure-related obligations. Haghshenas emphasized that there are no financial or budgetary obstacles hindering Gisum's nomination and pledged that all available provincial resources would be mobilized to

complete the dossier. He added that authorities remain committed to promoting the region as an internationally recognized tourism destination and ensuring that it receives the attention it deserves on the global stage. Describing the prospective inscription of Masuleh and Gisum as a major opportunity for the development of tourism in Gilan Province, the governor said that UNESCO recognition would undoubtedly attract greater interest from both domestic and international travelers. He noted that such recognition would not only enhance the visibility of the province's historical and cultural heritage but would also contribute to economic growth, cultural exchange, and the expansion of tourism-related opportunities throughout the region.

The governor also ordered the establishment of a special committee tasked with overseeing

the UNESCO nomination efforts for both sites and monitoring the implementation of decisions adopted during the meeting. He expressed hope that existing challenges and administrative obstacles would be resolved before the next review session, enabling officials to report positive developments and meaningful progress to the people of Gilan.

Highlighting the province's broader tourism and historical potential, Haghshenas pointed to recent improvements in transportation infrastructure, noting that Rasht's Sardar Jangal International Airport has reached a satisfactory level of development in the field of air transportation. He said that the number of weekly flights operating through the airport has increased to 80, reflecting growing demand and improved connectivity.

The governor further stat-

ed that the airport currently handles an average of 11 to 12 flights per day. He noted that a direct flight route between Rasht and Baghdad was launched last week, while direct flights to Istanbul are scheduled to commence on June 10. According to Haghshenas, the new Istanbul service has already generated considerable public interest and is expected to strengthen the province's international connections.

Haghshenas underscored the importance of transportation infrastructure in supporting sustainable tourism growth. He said that the expansion of air travel routes and improved accessibility can play a crucial role in showcasing Gilan's historical, cultural, and natural attractions to a wider international audience, while also contributing to the province's long-term economic and tourism development goals.

Veteran Rafugar warns of challenges facing carpet restoration

Iranica Desk

In the world of art, some create, while others bring creations back to life. For Hamidreza Akbari, a renowned carpet restorer, known as Rafugar, and founder of what he describes as the world's first Rafugari Museum in Mazandaran Province, every knot tells a story and every repair is akin to a surgical operation. In an interview with chnt.ir, Akbari reflected on a lifetime devoted to preserving one of Iran's most treasured artistic traditions.

He said his journey into the world of carpet restoration began in 1978 in the narrow streets of Tehran's District 7. At the time, his family lived in a rented house, and while his father worked tirelessly to support the household, the young man spent his days watching him weave intricate carpet panels featuring Qur'anic motifs.

"Those scenes were my first art classes," he recalled. Later, after the family moved to Firouzabad, near Varamin, his father expanded his work, weaving large carpets and entering a new stage of professional craftsmanship. Akbari said his father not only taught him the basics of carpet weaving but also recognized his talent at an early age, chnt.ir wrote.



chnt.ir

"When he saw that I could accurately fill in the patterns and colors of a carpet design, he told me I had talent but needed to pursue a more specialized profession if I wanted to advance," Akbari said.

That advice proved decisive. In 1989, after leaving school, he was introduced by his father to a master Rafugar in Rey, south of Tehran, where he began formal training in the highly specialized craft of carpet restoration.

Akbari draws a clear distinction between an artist and a Rafugar. "I have deep respect for all artists, but there is a subtle difference between the two," he said. "An artist creates something new — a painter produces a

painting, a weaver creates a carpet. A carpet restorer, however, is a re-creator. We give new life to carpets that are on the verge of destruction."

He argues that carpet restoration is more than a traditional handicraft.

"If I want to be precise, carpet restoration is similar to medical science," he said. "Our work is surgery on the body of a carpet. We operate on its structure and weave to save it from certain death. The restorer is the surgeon of this art."

Despite the cultural significance of the profession, Akbari believes the field faces serious challenges in the modern era. "The first challenge is that the profession has become less



arias.ir

attractive to younger generations," he said. "Carpet restoration requires immense patience, precision and concentration — qualities that are increasingly difficult to cultivate in today's fast-paced digital world."

Economic concerns pose an additional obstacle, he added. Inadequate wages and limited career prospects have made it difficult to attract young people to the profession.

"If we fail to make this path attractive and sustainable for future generations, we risk losing this knowledge and skill altogether," he warned.

For aspiring restorers, Akbari emphasizes the importance of apprenticeship under experi-

enced masters.

"This is not a profession that can be learned from books alone," he said. "You must learn its principles and foundations directly from a master craftsman."

Reflecting on his own experience, he recalled spending months as an apprentice before gradually mastering the trade. "The path was not easy," he said. "Everything I have achieved is the result of learning from master craftsmen and gaining experience through years of practice."

The story highlights a profession that extends far beyond repair work. Carpet restoration serves as a form of cultural preservation, safeguarding centuries of artistic heritage and

national identity. As Akbari describes it, if carpet restoration is indeed a form of surgery, then those who practice it are the surgeons entrusted with preserving one of Iran's most enduring cultural treasures.

Persian carpets have long been recognized as among the most celebrated expressions of Iranian art and craftsmanship, admired worldwide for their intricate designs, technical sophistication, and cultural symbolism. Many antique carpets held in museums, private collections, and historic buildings require specialized restoration to preserve their artistic and historical value. Experts warn that the decline of traditional restoration skills could pose a serious threat to the survival of these irreplaceable works for future generations.

For Akbari, preserving the craft is not merely a professional responsibility but a cultural mission. He believes greater institutional support, improved training opportunities, and increased public awareness are essential to ensuring that the knowledge of carpet restoration continues to be passed down to younger generations. Without such efforts, he cautions, a vital link in the chain of Iran's artistic heritage could gradually disappear.