

# Qamishloo-Dalankouh added to UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Network

UNESCO officially added Iran's Qamishloo-Dalankouh Biosphere Reserve in Isfahan province to the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, bringing the total number of Iranian biosphere reserves recognized by the UN cultural agency to 14.

The designation was approved by the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme during a meeting held in conjunction with World Environment Day on Friday, Press TV reported.

UNESCO announced that 14 new biosphere reserves across 14 countries had joined the global network this year, increasing the total number of registered sites worldwide to 797 across 145 countries.

Biosphere reserves are internationally recognized areas aimed at balancing biodiversity conservation with sustainable economic and social development.

Established under UNESCO's MAB Programme in 1971, the sites are intended to serve as living laboratories for environmental management, scientific research, and community-based development.

Messages from Iranian officials, including Vice President and head of the Department of Environment Shina Ansari and Isfahan Governor Mehdi Jamalnejad, were also presented following the approval, describing the registration as a national accomplishment in protecting Iran's natural heritage and advancing sustainable development goals.

The inclusion of Qamishloo-Dalankouh is regarded as a significant achievement for Iran's environmental sector, highlighting the ecological importance of the region and its potential for sustainable development, scientific cooperation, and biodiversity conservation, according to environmental experts.

Located in northwestern Isfahan province, the Qamishloo-Dalankouh reserve spans nearly 875,000 hectares and covers parts of seven counties: Golpayegan, Khansar, Chadegan, Shahin Shahr and Meymeh, Najafabad, Tiran and Karvan, Fereydan, and Fereydounshahr.

The area combines mountainous ecosystems with steppe landscapes, creating one of the province's most diverse natural corridors.

According to Daryoush Gotalizadeh,

director general of the Department of Environment of Isfahan Province, the reserve integrates a wide range of ecological zones, including rocky habitats, mountain rangelands, seasonal waterways, and steppe ecosystems that are closely connected with the livelihoods and cultural traditions of local and nomadic communities.

In remarks published on April 14, Gotalizadeh explained that the reserve is designed around UNESCO's three-zone model of "core, buffer, and transition" areas.

The structure links several major protected regions, including Qamishloo National Park and Wildlife Refuge, the Dalankouh Protected Area, and the Setbeleh and Golestankouh no-hunting zones.

"The integrated framework could strengthen wildlife corridors and habitat connectivity while also improving scientific monitoring, coordinated land management, and conservation-oriented governance across the wider landscape," Gotalizadeh was quoted as saying by Mehr news agency.

He also pointed to the economic opportunities associated with the UNESCO



designation, particularly in the field of sustainable and community-based tourism.

"Expanding eco-tourism routes, supporting ecotourism, and promoting local cultural and natural attractions could help strengthen the local economy while preserving the region's environmental heritage," he said.

The official further emphasized the potential for international branding of local products such as honey, medicinal plants, handicrafts, and traditional textiles, noting that the initiative could help preserve added value within local communities and reinforce the link between environmental protection and sustainable livelihoods.

## Iran launches tourism investment push to fuel sector revival

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran will establish a dedicated Tourism Investment Support Headquarters and expand digital infrastructure in rural areas as part of a plan to accelerate tourism-led growth, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri said on Saturday, signaling a renewed push to strengthen the sector's contribution to economic development and cultural diplomacy. Speaking at separate meetings with tourism investors and Communications and Information Technology Minister Sattar Hashemi in Tehran, Salehi-Amiri said the government views tourism infrastructure and investment as key drivers of growth, national prestige and international engagement, CHTN reported.

"We believe tourism will experience significant growth in the post-war period," Salehi-Amiri said. "From today, we must prepare the ground for investment, infrastructure development and greater capacity to welcome visitors."

The minister announced the for-

mation of a Tourism Investment Support Headquarters within the ministry and said one day each week would be devoted exclusively to resolving investors' concerns and removing administrative hurdles.

More than 3,000 tourism projects are currently under development across the country, including 561 hotels under construction, reflecting what officials described as strong private-sector confidence in Iran's tourism potential. Ali-Asghar Shalabafian, head of the ministry's investment center, said 3,017 tourism projects were underway, with Tehran, Khorasan Razavi and Isfahan accounting for the largest share.

Salehi-Amiri identified the Makran coast and marine tourism as among the country's foremost investment priorities, adding that support packages and incentives had been prepared to attract new capital and expedite project implementation.

In a parallel effort to broaden tourism's economic footprint, the ministry and the Communications Ministry are drafting a joint program linking high-speed

internet, rural tourism and handicrafts to job creation and reverse migration.

"The future of rural development depends on connecting local economies, tourism, handicrafts and modern communication technologies," Salehi-Amiri said. "Employment and connectivity are the two wings of rural development."

He said strategies centered on "one eco-lodge in every village" and "one family handicrafts workshop in every village" would help generate sustainable employment and revive local economies.

The minister noted that around 4.7 million travelers visited Iranian villages during the Nowruz holidays this year, describing the trend as evidence of growing demand for authentic cultural experiences, nature-based tourism and rural lifestyles.

"If we effectively link employment, tourism, handicrafts and communications infrastructure," he said, "Iran's villages can emerge over the next decade as dynamic centers of living, production and investment."

## Zayandeh Rud revival rekindles Isfahan tourism

Social Desk

Water has returned to the historic Zayandeh Rud, and Isfahan authorities expect the river's revival to help draw visitors back to one of Iran's foremost cultural destinations, Governor General Mehdi Jamalnejad said on Saturday as officials reopened gates at the Zayandeh Rud Dam. Jamalnejad said the river would carry water intermittently over the next three months under a planned release program, restoring a defining feature of the central Iranian city and breathing fresh life into its tourism sector, IRNA reported.

The renewed flow has transformed the cityscape, reviving the river that has long served as a cultural and historical emblem of Isfahan. Beyond its environmental benefits, the governor general said, the return of water is expected to



boost public morale, encourage social interaction and enhance the visitor experience across the city.

To capitalize on the development, provincial authorities have rolled out incentives aimed at attracting domestic travelers. Hotels and accommodation centers are operating at full capacity and offering special discounts, while additional tourism, shopping and visitor services have been prepared to support an anticipated rise in arrivals.

Jamalnejad invited travelers from across the country to visit Isfahan and communities along the Zayandeh Rud corridor, describing the com-

ing months as a rare opportunity to witness the river's renewed vitality and the city's celebrated architectural landscape. Known for its UNESCO-listed heritage, grand Safavid-era monuments and renowned handicrafts, Isfahan remains one of Iran's most visited destinations.

The river's return will further strengthen the city's appeal, helping tourism-related businesses benefit from increased visitor spending. Jamalnejad said historical sites, cultural venues and tourism infrastructure were fully prepared to receive domestic and international visitors, adding that no restrictions were in place for travelers.

"With the Zayandeh Rud flowing once again, Isfahan is ready to welcome guests with all its cultural, historical and tourism capacities," he said.

## Tehran calls on ILO to spearhead global action against war

Social Desk

Iran's Minister of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare Ahmad Meydari urged the International Labor Organization (ILO) to take the lead in preventing armed conflicts, telling the 114th International Labor Conference in Geneva that war poses the gravest threat to workers, social justice and human dignity worldwide.

Addressing delegates via videoconference, Meydari said wars destroy jobs, fracture families, devastate communities and place

workers across the world at risk.

He called on the ILO to move beyond documenting the human cost of conflicts and play a more active role in preventing them, Tasnim News Agency reported. Invoking the ILO's founding principles and the Declaration of Philadelphia, he said peace and social justice remain the twin pillars of workers' welfare and global prosperity.

Meydari proposed that the ILO Director-General convene a special conference next year under the theme "War and the

Workers of the World", arguing that the international labor body should mobilize its full capacity to confront what he described as the greatest obstacle to decent work.

"Wars may begin against oppressed nations, but their flames ultimately engulf everyone," he said, warning that workers on every continent ultimately bear the economic and social consequences of conflict.

The minister also praised trade unions that have condemned what he described

as aggression and acts of terror against Iran, saying labor organizations should remain on "the right side of history" in defending peace and workers' rights.

Drawing parallels between the suffering caused by war and other social injustices, Meydari said the international community must show the same determination in opposing conflict as it does in combating child labor and discrimination against women.

He called for global solidarity, urging governments, workers and employers to



unite against war and what he termed "war capitalism", saying indifference to conflict ultimately threatens humanity as a whole.