

Iran seeks global recognition for its historic water heritage

Iranica Desk

A member of the Iranian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (IRNCID) has outlined the process for nominating Iran's historic water heritage for inclusion on the World Heritage Irrigation Structures (WHIS) list, highlighting the country's extensive potential in the field.

Mohammad Hassanli said more than 2,000 historic sites associated with water management and use have been identified across Iran. However, as each country can nominate only four sites a year, identifying, documenting and prioritizing this heritage is essential for stronger international representation, according to chn.ir.

Referring to the international standing of Iran's historic water structures, he said each country may submit four eligible sites annually to the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage (ICID) for review and evaluation by its Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.

Following assessment, selected sites are presented at the ICID's annual meeting and at the WHIS awards ceremony. The process not only provides international recognition for historic water-engineering heritage but can also help highlight Iran's lesser-known historical and tourism potential.

Hassanli said 12 Iranian sites have so far been included in the WHIS list. They include the Abbasabad Complex in Behshahr of Mazandaran Province, Baladeh Qanat



Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System
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and Kurit Dam in South Khorasan Province, Fariman Dam in Khorasan Razavi Province, Fazlali Khan Qanat in Qazvin Province, Moon Qanat in Isfahan Province, Naseri Canyon in Fars Province, Qaleh Hatam Bridge and Gerdab-e Sangi in Lorestan Province, Qasemabad Qanat in Hamedan Province, Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System in Khuzestan Province and Zarch Qanat in Yazd Province.

He said the preparation of nomination dossiers is undertaken by the youth section of the Iranian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage. After review and approval by the committee's executive board, the dossiers are submitted to ICID for evaluation. Regarding the sites nominated in



Zarch Qanat
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2026, Hassanli said four Iranian historic water structures were submitted and accepted for review despite difficulties caused by internet disruptions during the submission process. They

are the Siraf water structures in Bushehr Province, Shadorvan Bridge, also known as the Band-e Qeysar Bridge, in Khuzestan Province, Si-o-se-Pol Bridge in Isfahan Province, and Band-e Amir, a natu-

rally formed group of lakes, in Fars Province.

He stressed that the international designation goes beyond symbolic recognition, saying that international listings and awards can have significant economic and social benefits. With proper planning, he added, they could contribute to heritage tourism and the development of local communities.

Hassanli cited Fazlali Khan Qanat as a notable example. Located in Radkan village in Takestan, Qazvin Province, the qanat is approximately 30 kilometers long and features a distinctive cross-brick construction technique. It is considered an important example of Iran's technical knowledge and

architecture in underground water structures, and may date back to the Parthian period.

Fazlali Khan Qanat received the World Irrigation and Drainage Prize in Bali, Indonesia, in 2019 and was added to Iran's National Heritage List two years later, in 2021.

The example, Hassanli said, shows how international recognition of a historic site can complement national registration and conservation efforts. With a well-planned tourism program, such recognition can also help boost the local economy and create opportunities for restoration and preservation.

He emphasized that inclusion of historic water structures on the WHIS list is different from inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List and that the two systems should not be considered equivalent.

Explaining ICID's eligibility criteria, Hassanli said proposed sites must be more than 100 years old and fall into one of the designated categories. These include dams primarily used for irrigation, water-storage and diversion structures, waterways, and sites or structures historically or currently associated with agricultural water management.

According to the country's National Heritage List, more than 2,000 structures with characteristics associated with historic water infrastructure exist across Iran, while only four can be submitted to ICID each year.

He said the limitation highlights the need for a comprehensive program to identify, document, assess and prioritize the country's historic water structures. The selection process, he added, should not be based solely on age but should also take into account historical, technical, architectural, social, environmental and tourism considerations.

Fars set to launch new tourism platform

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The director general of Fars Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization has announced the imminent launch of a tourism platform for the province, saying the new platform will help tourists discover diverse and sometimes lesser-known routes across six areas of tourism: historical, natural, cultural, religious, health and sports.

Behzad Moridi said the Fars tourism platform is ready and will likely be made available to the public in early September once several technical issues are resolved, according to IRNA.

introduced to the public," Moridi said.

He explained that the cultural tourism section includes literary, artistic, event, food and clothing tourism, reflecting an anthropological and ethnographic approach. It introduces numerous routes in Shiraz and other cities across Fars and provides visitors with guidance on how to explore them.

The historical tourism section, he added, guides tourists to historical sites and routes across the province, including the Achaemenid Route, Sassanid Route and Southern Civilization Route.

The section also includes museum tours and historic-fabric tours,

been mapped.

"We are currently defining multiple routes that would be worthy of and befitting the name of Fars and Shiraz," he added.

Commenting on a proposal to select Hafezieh and Sa'dieh in Shiraz as pilot sites for board-based management of heritage attractions, Moridi said he wanted to offer "an internal critique within the discourse."

He said public and multifaceted participation is inherently valuable and that association-based and council-style management can, by its nature, contribute to development.

"However, as many experts have emphasized, it is the way this work is carried out that raises concerns," he said. "Many of the problems that previously existed in association-based and board-of-trustee structures could become challenging if the implementation of this approach is accelerated."

The official said tourism in Shiraz could move beyond merely a verbal interpretation or even a lived experience toward a deeper search for meaning.

"Few people have visited Shiraz without experiencing the city or walking through Hafezieh, Sa'dieh, the holy shrine of Shah Cheragh or Eram Garden," Moridi said. "But with the help of the media, the city can also unlock other layers of tourism."

"Our tourism approach is moving toward meaning-oriented tourism and, subsequently, toward transcendence," he said. "No robot will ever be capable of accessing or experiencing this layer of tourism."

with multiple routes mapped for exploring the historic districts of Shiraz and other cities in Fars.

Referring to the status of Fars Province and Shiraz as the third major shrine destination of the Ahl al-Bayt in Iran's religious tourism, Moridi said pilgrimage routes to revered Imamzadehs have also



Hafezieh
● alibaba.ir

He said the platform is different from similar services previously available, adding that its main mission is to define multiple tourism routes and corridors across the six sectors.

"These six areas have been expanded, and within each one, multiple tourism routes have been

Traditional weaving preserves centuries-old craft in Ilam

Iranica Desk

Moj, a traditional handwoven textile featuring large checkered and geometric patterns, is made from hand-spun wool produced by nomadic communities and villagers in western Iran.



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Farzad Sharifi, director general of Ilam Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization, described Moj Bafi as one of the most authentic handicrafts of the Kurdish regions of western Iran, saying the centuries-old craft has long been intertwined with the lives of nomadic and rural communities in the area. Speaking to ISNA, Sharifi said Moj is a handwoven textile with large checkered and geometric designs, with both its warp and weft made entirely from hand-spun wool. The textile is

woven on a traditional loom and is commonly produced in navy blue, dark blue, yellow and red.

He explained that Moj Bafi workshops generally produce two types of products. The first is the Janamaz, or prayer rug, which is typically woven at around 100 by 150

centimeters. The second is Moj, which is usually made to order and consists of four panels, each measuring two meters in length. Their width varies from 45 to 75 centimeters depending on the thickness of the yarn. Describing the history of Moj Bafi, Sharifi said that in the past, among self-sufficient nomadic and rural families in the region, making these traditional bed coverings was an important household activity during periods of leisure and gradually developed into a form of domestic industry and

art. Wool was readily available because of the region's livestock-based economy, while the weaving loom was simple and primitive in design. He added that weaving generally takes place throughout the year, although activity intensifies from late spring through early winter. The greater the number of motifs incorporated into a Moj, the more shuttles are required during the weaving process, making the work more time-consuming and labor-intensive.

Sharifi said the quality of Moj is traditionally assessed by the number of shuttles used simultaneously in the weaving process. The greater the number of shuttles, he explained, the fuller and more intricate the design, and consequently the higher the artistic value and quality of the finished piece.

He noted that Moj Bafi has undergone changes in recent years as Moj textiles have increasingly taken on a decorative rather than purely functional role. These changes have affected their size, shape, raw materials and patterns.

In Moj Bafi terminology, each color used in a design is associated with a shuttle, while each point where different colors intersect is also counted as a shuttle.