

National Handicrafts Exhibition opens in Ardabil



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The 16th National Handicrafts Exhibition opened in Ardabil on Tuesday to mark Government Week (Aug. 24-30), featuring artists from 30 provinces at the Ardabil International Exhibition Center, located next to Shorabil Lake. The opening ceremony included cultural and artistic programs. Mohammad Afshar, deputy director of handicrafts at the Ardabil Province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department, said at the opening ceremony that handicraft products from 50 fields are being showcased in 140 booths. He said the exhibition will run for four days through Friday, August 28, and visitors can tour the booths daily from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. Afshar said cultural programs

organized by the Mostazafin Foundation's cultural affairs department, as well as the participation of Basalam, which is holding educational workshops on marketing and promoting handicraft products online, are among the exhibition's side programs. He added that introducing and offering products made by handicraft artists and drawing public attention to the handicrafts sector are among the exhibition's main objectives. With a population of more than 1.3 million, Ardabil Province comprises 12 cities and is located in northwestern Iran, bordering East Azarbaijan, Zanjan and Gilan provinces as well as the Republic of Azerbaijan. Ardabil is considered one of Iran's prominent handicrafts centers. For generations, artists in different parts of the

province have created valuable handicrafts. More than 350 handicraft fields exist around the world, half of which are practiced in Iran. A total of 62 handicraft fields are practiced in Ardabil Province, making it one of the country's leading handicrafts centers. More than 30,000 handicraft artists officially work in 62 different fields across Ardabil Province. The province has exceptional potential among its artisans, while their national and international achievements demonstrate their considerable talent and capabilities. The handicrafts of every country represent an important part of its cultural, historical and social identity. Each form of handicraft is regarded not merely as a skill but also as part of a country's character and civilization.

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The Fourth National Festival of Iran's Ethnic Groups and Nomadic Tribes opened Tuesday evening at Ghalemeestan Park in Farsan, featuring dozens of booths offering handicrafts, souvenirs and local foods, along with artistic performances showcasing the culture, arts and traditions of Iran's ethnic communities to residents and tourists. The opening ceremony was attended by the minister of information and communications technology, representatives of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province in the

Parliament, provincial officials and a number of enthusiasts of local culture, according to Shabestan News Agency. The director-general of the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization said the festival began on August 25 and will continue through August 31 at Ghalemeestan Park in Farsan. Heydar Sadeghi added that the participation of artists and cultural groups from different parts of the country provides an opportunity to showcase Iran's diverse cultural and artistic capabilities and strengthen

ties among its ethnic communities. He said the festival, in addition to introducing the customs, traditions and achievements of Iran's ethnic groups and nomadic tribes, can help raise awareness of the tourism and cultural potential of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province at the national level and beyond the country's borders. Masoud Agashteh, executive secretary of the Fourth National Festival of Iran's Ethnic Groups and Nomadic Tribes, said a total of 170 booths have been set up for the event, offering handicrafts, traditional arts, souvenirs

and local foods to visitors. He added that 150 booths are dedicated to introducing and selling handicrafts and traditional artworks, while 20 booths feature local dishes and foods from different regions of the country. Referring to the participation of artistic groups in the cultural event, Agashteh said artists from Khuzestan, Lorestan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces, along with other participants, will perform and introduce music, rituals and other cultural traditions from their respective regions

Farsan hosts colorful showcase of Iran's ethnic cultures



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Ayneh Varzan village preserves rich legacy of history, craftsmanship

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Located about 60 kilometers east of Tehran on the Firuzkuh Road, beyond the city of Damavand, Ayneh Varzan is a scenic village with a history stretching back around 2,000 years. The villagers speak Tati, and the village is known as "Ein Varzan" in the Tati language. Ayneh Varzan lies on the heights of the mountains to the north and extends toward the foothills to the south. The village has long benefited from its abundant, ever-flowing water, which has supported agriculture and turned the area into a lush and fertile region. Among the village's historic structures is Imamzadeh Abdullah, an octagonal mausoleum crowned with a conical dome and listed as a National Heritage Site of Iran. Built of stone, mortar and plaster, the structure dates to the late Mongol period. Its interior features square and star-shaped tilework dating to the eighth century AH and reflecting the



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architectural style of the Mongol era, according to chn.ir. A carved wooden cenotaph stands over the imamzadeh's grave. An inscription in Nastaliq script on its exterior indicates that it was made and installed during the Safavid period. The valuable old wooden door of the shrine is now preserved at the National Museum of Iran's Islamic-era

collection, providing another example of the village's long tradition of woodcarving. The shrine is oriented north to south, with its mihrab on the southern side. To its east is a footwear area and prayer hall dating to the Safavid period. Its decoration features turquoise tiles arranged in the Mongol style. A centuries-old plane tree

also stands in the courtyard of Imamzadeh Abdullah. Estimated to be between 600 and 700 years old, the tree has long been part of village life, providing shade for residents during the hot summer months and evoking memories for the village's older inhabitants. Beyond its historical attractions, Ayneh Varzan offers

opportunities for nature tourism. Ayneh Varzan Waterfall, located on the slopes of Zarrin Kuh, attracts visitors willing to hike through the mountains to reach the sound of rushing water. The trail itself is part of the attraction, leading away from the village and into scenic mountain landscapes. The surrounding geography divides Ayneh Varzan into two sections, known locally as Bala Deh and Pain Deh. Mountains rise above the village, while a waterfall lies in a gorge in the heart of the mountains, overlooking a broad plain dotted with fruit trees and beehives. On the peaks surrounding the village, known as Zarrin Kuh or Zarineh Kuh, stands an old fortress called Nowzar Shah Castle. Local legends identify the plain below the area as the battlefield of the legendary heroes Rostam and Esfandiar. Agriculture is another important part of Ayneh Varzan's identity. Its gardens and farmlands produce grains, potatoes, beans and various legumes, reflecting the impor-

ance of water and fertile soil to the local economy. Traditional woodcarving is another distinctive feature of the village. Here, woodcarving is more than a handicraft produced for sale; it is an art deeply connected with local life. Traces of the craft can be seen in the village's historic wooden works. In the hands of local artisans, a simple piece of wood is transformed into intricate patterns and designs, giving a new form to an element of the surrounding nature. Ayneh Varzan, therefore, cannot be defined by a single waterfall or historic monument. Its identity has been shaped by the combination of mountains, water, agriculture, history and traditional craftsmanship. A visit to the village offers the opportunity to experience all of these elements in one place — from the shade of a centuries-old plane tree to a mountain trail leading to a waterfall, with an enduring tradition of woodcarving connecting the village's past with its present.