

Ojabeyt Palace in Kelardasht reopens as archaeological museum



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The historic Ojabeyt Palace in Kelardasht, dating back to the early Pahlavi period, has been converted into an archaeological museum and returned to the public after years of waiting, following sustained efforts by the government. According to Mehr News Agency, Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, made the remarks at the official opening ceremony of the complex on Thursday, attended by provincial officials and members of the cultural community, according to ISNA.

Salehi-Amiri described the project as a step toward redistributing the country's cultural and identity-related heritage. He said that after several decades, the palace and its historic museum complex had been returned to their "original owners" — the people of Kelardasht — through the efforts of the president and with the support of the presidential executive affairs office. He called the opening of the archaeological center a gift from the government to the historical memory of the Iranian people. The minister said the historically and archaeologically significant complex,

which houses unique discoveries from the Kelardasht and Ramsar, is being presented for the first time as a standard palace museum to residents of the area, Mazandaran Province and the Iranian public. According to Salehi-Amiri, the museum can serve as a platform for tracing Iranian identity and strengthening national self-confidence. Highlighting the region's archaeological and historical wealth, the minister described Kelardasht as one of the ancient centers of settled civilization on the Iranian plateau. He said artifacts discovered by archaeologists and experts

and now displayed at the museum date back more than 4,000 years. Among the objects on display is the renowned Kelardasht Golden Cup, along with a collection of valuable gold and other ancient artifacts. Salehi-Amiri said the finds testify to the presence of artistic, creative and distinctive communities in the region more than 3,000 to 4,000 years ago. He stressed that scientific archaeological excavations and efforts to trace Iran's historical heritage would further highlight the country's place in the world's civilizational history. "Believe that Kelardasht was

once home to artists capable of creating the Golden Cup with such delicacy," he said, adding that systematic exploration, identification and presentation of Iran's historical heritage could contribute to a greater understanding of the achievements of Iranian civilization in the contemporary world. The minister also described the development of tourism as a key driver of sustainable economic growth in the region. Calling on economic actors and private-sector investors to consider Kelardasht as a strategic investment destination, he said tourism infrastructure projects in the area could offer

significant economic returns while also helping the public gain a deeper understanding of the region's rich heritage. At the end of his remarks, Salehi-Amiri announced that the doors of the Ojabeyt Palace Museum were now open to the general public, academics, researchers and scholars. He emphasized that the valuable complex and many of the nationally significant artifacts transferred to the museum belong to the people, adding that safeguarding and preserving the collection would be a shared responsibility between the local community and specialized institutions.

Haj Aliqoli Salt Lake reveals changing face of desert

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Across the vast expanse of the earth, Haj Aliqoli Salt Lake offers a constantly changing story of the connection between land, water and light. At times, its orderly hexagonal patterns reveal a landscape shaped by nature's ancient geometry; at others, following rainfall, the salt lake turns into a vast mirror, embracing the boundless sky. This desert landscape is a geological wonder, shaped by the forces that have transformed the earth over millennia — a place where the boundary between reality and dreams seems to disappear amid shimmering light and salt crystals. Haj Aliqoli is more than a desert. The raised ridges and salt cracks across the landscape resemble the hands of an old man, their wrinkles telling stories of years spent beneath the sun and of endurance. Ridges formed by salt crystals have created irregular polygons stretching into the distance, producing a remarkable and mysterious geometry across the earth. The beauty of this landscape is intensified when it meets a rain-filled sky. Amid heavy, dark clouds and fading light, a seven-colored rainbow emerges above the horizon. It appears like a bridge of hope and renewal between the thirsty earth and the generous sky, casting a delicate spectrum of color across the dry salt flats. As daylight gradually withdraws from the desert and the sun, emerging from behind patches of gray cloud, casts its golden rays across the landscape like a shining crown, beams of light stream

from the heart of the sky toward the earth, offering the salt flats their final traces of warmth and brightness. The ground, covered with a carpet of polygonal shapes and natural grooves, rests beneath the soft, slanting light. It is as if the endless desert floor has risen in silent respect before the

breathe in the clean air of the salt lake, leave behind the noise of the world and become immersed in the endless silence of the salt flats. In this tranquil setting, the person opens their arms to embrace the landscape's vastness, peace and sense of freedom. In the final minutes of the day, the sun disappears behind the

force. A spectacular purple bolt of lightning, like a vein of light, tears through the dense clouds and reaches toward the horizon. In a fraction of a second, the sudden flash transforms the silent night across the salt flats into a vast hall of light, color and grandeur. Below, the salt pools and wet desert floor reflect the celestial dis-

expanse above. The white salt crystals, resting in the absolute silence of the earth, become mirrors facing this endless celestial spectacle. Toward the end of the night, the grandeur of the sky is framed by a striking diagonal arc stretching across the heavens. A dense band of luminous dust and countless

toward the farthest point of the horizon. On either side, shallow water and glittering salt crystals create a profound sense of calm beneath the vast sky, as if the road were a bridge between the patient earth and the boundless expanse of the cloud-filled heavens. At the end of the road, a small, solitary silhouette can be seen where the earth meets the sky, emphasizing the smallness of human beings in the face of nature's scale and simplicity. Above the unbroken line of the road, the sky is covered with soft, luminous patches of cloud. Haj Aliqoli Desert is not merely an expanse of salt, water and earth. It is a landscape that reveals a new face with every passing hour. At times, beneath the rain, it shelters the sky in its shallow waters; at others, under the heat of the sun, it breaks into thousands of crystalline polygons; and at night, it records galaxies, lightning and streaks of light in its silent mirror. Here, nature is neither still nor voiceless. It is alive and telling its story — a story of transformation, endurance and a grandeur hidden within the simplest elements of the world. What we saw across this landscape was an image of the sky reflected in water, a splash of color across salt, the silent movement of the wind and the wonder of human beings confronted by the vastness of the earth. In its silence, the desert invites us to pause and observe a world in which, for a brief moment, the boundaries between water and land, night and light, solitude and freedom disappear.



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magnificent display of light and fallen into deep solitude. Here, at the boundary between day and night, the horizon forms a straight, seemingly endless line, reminding visitors of the boundless scale of creation. Around sunset, when distant mountains are immersed in a halo of golden and purple light, a person stands in the heart of the desert with arms outstretched. Bare feet on the wet, polished surface convey a sense of direct connection with the earth. In this scene, the boundary between land and sky fades into the deep blue of the background. The backlit scene captures a profound pause amid the rush of everyday life — a moment to

dark mountain ranges, leaving its last glow like a ribbon of molten gold along the horizon and across the edge of a patch of cloud. The warm orange light creates a dreamlike contrast with the cool silver and deep-blue tones of the approaching night. Across the shallow pools of the salt flats, the warm light dances on the surface, creating bright patches of reflected sunlight among the ripples and salt formations, resembling golden scales. The mountains stand in the distance like steadfast guardians, while the lake, calm and silent, records this symphony of light and darkness in its watery memory. Amid the darkness of the desert, the sky suddenly reveals its full

play. A narrow dirt road, drawn like a line through the darkness, emerges under the brief illumination. Here, at the meeting point of the roar of the clouds and the silence of the salt flats, the desert reveals a vivid, powerful and majestic face of untouched nature. As midnight approaches, the sky over Haj Aliqoli unveils one of its deepest secrets. The Milky Way emerges from the endless darkness like a dense river of luminous dust and countless stars, filling the desert sky with an almost mythical grandeur. Far from night pollution and the noise of cities, the sky here appears so clear and close that it seems possible to reach out and pluck a star from the boundless

stars rises above the silent hills on the horizon and extends toward the heights of the sky. In the foreground, a calm, mirror-like pool of clear water from the salt lake completes the celestial spectacle. Bright stars reflected on the polished surface shine like candles in absolute darkness, blurring the boundary between the earth and the galaxy. Here, the salt-covered earth is no longer dormant; in a deep and poetic silence, it appears to embrace the sky in its entirety, creating one of nature's purest scenes. A narrow dirt road, straight and unwavering like a drawn line, divides the white expanse of the salt flats in two and leads the eye