New excavation season underway at historic Cheshmeh Ali site



Iranica Desk

The third season of archaeological excavations at Cheshmeh Ali Hill in Shahr-e Rey has begun under the direction of Hamidreza Valipour, a faculty member of Shahid Beheshti University's Department of Archaeology.

The 45-day excavation is being carried out as part of the university's five-year research program at the ancient site. According to Valipour, the latest season began on November 3.

Valipour, who heads the excavation team, told ISNA that archaeologists will continue working in previously opened trenches while seeking to reach older archaeological layers and investigate connections between the Neolithic, transitional Chalcolithic and Early Chalcolithic periods.

The team will also examine the possibility of identifying evidence of later cultural horizons, including periods associated with the emergence of writing.

Discussing findings from the first two seasons, Valipour said the excavations had uncovered settlement architecture dating back approximately 6,300 years, along with evidence of several phases of construction during the Early Chalcolithic period.

Other significant discoveries include seals, clay sealings, seal impressions, clay objects known as tokens, and evidence of metalworking. Further study of these finds could shed light on the economic and social structures of prehistoric communities in Shahr-e Rey and the Central Iranian Plateau, he said.

Valipour noted that despite Cheshmeh Ali Hill's importance to understanding the ancient history of the Central Iranian Plateau, the site has suffered considerable damage over recent decades as a result of urban expansion.

Alongside its research objectives, the excavation team is therefore emphasizing the protection of the site's archaeological remains and the establishment of a site museum at Cheshmeh Ali.

A proposed plan for the museum, together with an estimate of its costs, has been prepared and submitted to the Shahr-e Rey Cultural Heritage Department and city officials, Valipour said.

Fars Province set to lead Iran in registered natural heritage sites



IRNA

Iranica Desk

Seventeen natural heritage registration dossiers have been prepared in Fars Province, and their approval would place the southern province at the top of the national ranking for the number of nationally registered natural heritage sites.

Majid Salari, an official responsible for the national registration of natural heritage at the Department of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts of Fars Province, told IRNA that 74 natural heritage sites had been registered nationally in the province between 2011 and the end of 2025.

He said this year's program focuses on identifying and registering natural heritage sites across different counties of the province.

Salari added that ancient trees have been given priority because, more than other types of natural heritage, they are vulnerable to threats such as wildfires and illegal felling.

As part of this effort, 10 natural heritage dossiers have been prepared in Jahrom, three in Juyom and five in Abadeh, he said. The completed dossiers will be submitted to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts for assessment by the end of the current month.

Commenting on the age of registered natural heritage sites in Fars Province, Salari explained that the age of ancient trees is determined using methods designed to minimize damage to them. Consequently, the ages reported for these trees are estimates, and claims such as identifying a particular tree as the oldest in the country should not be made without thorough scientific investigation. He pointed to several notable ancient trees already identified and registered in the province.

Among them is a grove of ancient cypress trees in Rostaq, Darab, some of which are estimated to be around 1,400 years old.

An ancient jujube tree in Kazerun has also been identified, with an estimated age of approximately 1,200 years. Last year, another ancient cypress tree, located in Deh Sarv village near Shiraz, was registered with a similar estimated age, he added.

Regarding the benefits of national registration, Salari said registered natural heritage sites enjoy legal protection comparable to that afforded to historical monuments. This provides the necessary legal basis for pursuing cases involving their destruction or damage.

He explained that a conservation and management plan is drawn up for each site following its registration.

The first step is to inform local residents and communities living near the site about its national registration. An information board containing details about the site, including the estimated age of ancient trees, should also be installed at the location.

Further conservation and management measures are then implemented according to the specific conditions of each site, he said.

For example, suitable plant species, such as boxwood, can be planted around some ancient trees to establish a protective buffer while preserving the natural landscape. In areas where a site faces a greater risk of damage, physical barriers such as fencing may also be necessary.

Salari said continuous monitoring was another essential component of natural heritage conservation.

The condition of registered sites must be regularly assessed to identify potential damage caused by pests, determine whether trees require reinforcement and detect other factors that could threaten their preservation, he added.

However, Salari stressed that implementing these conservation programs requires adequate funding, warning that without financial support, many plans would remain on paper.

He noted that Fars Province had so far received no dedicated funding for the natural heritage registration process, while some other provinces had secured financial allocations for this purpose.

This funding gap, he said, represents a significant shortcoming for a province with such extensive natural heritage resources.

Ilam's Cham Jangal holds promise for nature tourism

Iranica Desk

The village of Cham Jangal in Sirvan, Ilam Province, has considerable potential for developing nature tourism, thanks to its oak forests, natural landscape and scenic views of the Seymareh River. However, rising water levels in the Seymareh Dam reservoir have damaged and submerged parts of the village's pomegranate orchards and agricultural lands.

Located in the Rudbar Rural District of Sirvan, Cham Jangal lies alongside the Seymareh River, approximately 11 kilometers from Lumar. With its pristine natural surroundings, oak woodlands and picturesque river views, the village is among Ilam Province's lesser-known destinations with considerable potential for nature-based tourism. Nevertheless, rising water levels in the Seymareh Dam reservoir have put some of its agricultural land and pomegranate orchards at risk.

Talking to ISNA, Lida Mirzaei, head of Cham Jangal's Village Council, said the village enjoys



a distinctive natural setting.

"Situated in the highlands and close to the Seymareh River, the village offers visitors beautiful panoramic views of the river and the surrounding landscape," she said.

Mirzaei noted that the village is particularly attractive in spring, when its hillsides become lush and green. The oak forests and scenic views of the Seymareh River create picturesque landscapes for both residents and visitors.

These natural attractions, combined with the village's mountainous terrain and rich vegetation, provide considerable opportunities for developing tourism and attracting nature enthusiasts, she added.

The mountains surrounding Cham Jangal are among the area's main natural attractions. Their natural vegetation, oak forests and beautiful views of the Seymareh River make them suitable destinations for tourists and outdoor enthusiasts, Mirzaei said.

She also highlighted one of the village's best-known attractions: a natural formation inside a mountain resembling a cave, from which remarkably cool air flows during the summer.

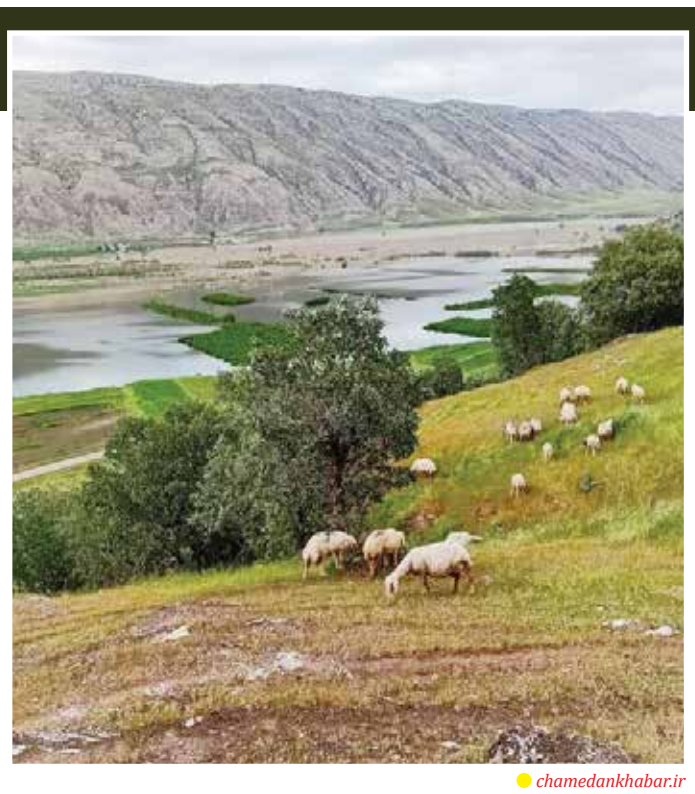
The unusual feature has attracted both local residents and tourists, particularly during the warmer months, when visitors come to enjoy the cool air and the area's natural beauty, she added.

Turning to the local economy, Mirzaei said agriculture and livestock farming are among the main economic activities supporting the livelihoods of Cham Jangal's residents.

Wheat, barley and rice are among the village's principal agricultural products, while livestock rearing has long been a traditional occupation in the area. Given the availability of agricultural land and water resources, there is considerable potential to expand farming and animal husbandry, she said.

Mirzaei also pointed to infrastructure shortcomings, noting that although some village roads have been asphalted, others remain unpaved and require groundwork and surfacing.

She stressed the need to improve the village's appearance through better street management, the development of green spaces, tree planting and the installation of public and sports amenities.



chamedankhabar.ir

Enhancing the village's visual appeal through cleaner surroundings and attractive public spaces in keeping with its rural character could play an important role in attracting tourists and improving residents' quality of life, she said.

However, Mirzaei identified the Seymareh Dam project as one of the village's main challenges, explaining that part of its land lies within the dam project's designated area. Rising water levels in the reservoir have already affected some of the village's agricultural lands.