



In Case You Missed

Lar Cultural Festival in March

A weeklong festival in Lar to commemorate the ancient Larestan region has been scheduled to commence on March 10, 2009.

Organizers plan to discuss the philology and ethnology of Larestan during a two-day international conference, which will begin on March 13.

Located in Fars province, Larestan is bound to the north by Fasa



and Firouzabad, and extends to Bandar Abbas in Hormuzgan province, Mehr News Agency reported.

Coinciding with the Iranian New Year holiday (beginning on March 21, 2009), the event will attract tourists and introduce southern Iranian rituals and costumes, conference secretary, Behzad Moridi, said in a press release recently.

Visual arts, pottery artworks, handicrafts and calligraphy works will be displayed during the event.

Cities located in Larestan region, namely Bandar Lengeh, Bastak, Bandar Khamir, Bandar Abbas, Gerash, Khonj, Lar and Evaz, will host the program.

Folk music and plays in the Lari language will be performed and regional costumes will be worn during the event.

Esfandegan to Replace Valentine

Iran's national feast named Esfandegan will replace Valentine Festival on February 17, 2009.

In line with the government's policy to confront the western cultural onslaught, the Association of Iran's Cultural and Natural Phenomena has focused on holding Esfandegan National Feast since past two years, CHTN reported.

The association has publicized this ceremony by sending SMS messages and holding academic meetings.

The issue will be sent to Public Culture Council and, upon its approval, will later be sent to the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council and the President's Office for ratification.

Esfandegan is an ancient Iranian custom like Norouz and Mehregan that date back to several thousands years. Unfortunately, it has been forgotten and replaced by the foreign tradition of Valentine.

The feast upholds the tradition of forging friendship in all eras and between people from all walks of life.

Savojbolagh Plans

Exhibition of Rare Birds

Iran's Permanent Exhibition of Rare and Ornamental Birds will open in Savojbolagh in western Tehran province.

Amir Hossein Amir-Rad, the exhibition's managing director, said the exhibition will feature 5,000 birds and soon become operational in Savojbolagh, CHTN reported.

"The exhibition is among the best and biggest exhibitions of rare birds in the Middle East and only five such exhibitions exist in the world," he added.

The official pointed out that \$10 million have been spent on making the exhibition operational, including construction work and purchase of rare bird species.

"Only \$2.6 million of the above money have been re-



ceived in the form of bank loan," he added.

Amir-Rad pointed out that receiving the permit for setting up the exhibition site took five years.

"We are now facing problems with the Department of Environment and Iran's Veterinary Organization for importing rare birds. We hope that this problem will also be overcome with the help of vice president and other concerned officials," he said.

Eshkevar

Attractions Galore



In eastern Gilan, a mountainous area covered with forests and pristine wilderness attracts all lovers of nature.

Eshkevar dates back to ancient times and has a turbulent past. Situated along the Alborz Range, Eshkevar starts from the southernmost point of Roudsar and extends to the southernmost point of Ramsar. It is bound by Qazvin in the south, Amlesh and Roudbar Alamut in the west, the mountainous areas of Ramsar and Tonekabon in the east and the mountainous slopes of Rahimabad in the north, Eshkevar website reported.

> Historicity

In olden times, Eshkevar and Deilam had one ruler and were viewed as one entity. This situation continued till the rule of Safavids.

There are no credible information and documents regarding the sociopolitical history of Eshkevar in the pre-Islamic period. However, it is known that the people of Eshkevar and Deilam were Zoroastrians.

Tourist attractions of Eshkevar include Sefidab Tourist Resort, Sejiran Spa, Arous and Damad (literally meaning Bride and Bridegroom) Mount in Ziyaz Village, Kabiran Cave in Garmabdasht, Vadar Cave in Delijan, Sard-Darreh Cave in Shahjhan Village, Javaherdasht Summer Resort, Kakroud waterfalls, Nasser-ul-Kabir Mosque in Roudbarak, Sipol region, the beautiful Poloroud (or Pilardoud which in the local dialect means "big river") River, Samadabad lake and the tunnel in Shah Sefidkoush Summit in Mij Village.

> Sefidab River

This river is located about 25 km from Rahimabad. It originates from melting snow through a mountainous area. Various springs also pour into this river, which is ultimately connected to Poloroud River. Its water shines like clear skies and this is why it is called Sefidab (literally meaning white water). The flow of river under the shade of forest trees, along with the sweet and exhilarating songs of nightingales, enhances the beauty of the region.

Every year during the warm months, many people visit the area for sightseeing and drinking its pure water. Among the valuable moves made recently is construction of a road called Eshkevarat. This road, which currently extends up to 60 km from Rahimabad, enables tourists to enjoy a mountainous ride in addition to the unique sights of Sefidab. At any rate, this river, as a venue for promoting tourism, deserves

the attention of provincial officials.

> Arous-Zoomeh Mount

This mount is 1,372 meters above sea-level and belongs to the Jurassic period. Chakroud and Poloroud rivers meet in the south of Garmabdasht and Ziaz villages near this mountain.

It is rocky and offers an eye-catching grandeur for every tourist. With the passage of time, stone columns and ridges have been formed around the summit. The two stone columns situated next to each other



are known as Arous-Zoomeh (Bride and Bridegroom) Mount among the locals.

Based on local narrations, a man and a woman who loved each other escaped from their homes. When they were cursed by their parents, they turned into stones.

> Javaherdasht

A gem in the evergreen Gilan province, Javaherdasht is a beautiful region located 26 km from Siyahkalroud in the east of Gilan.

Untouched natural resources, large and green plains, clean air and unmatched serenity are characteristics of this unique region, which appeal to all domestic and foreign tourists. It has vast stretches of land covered with beautiful and colorful flowers. The sound of the little bells of sheep grazing in its plains is pleasing.

Residents in its vicinity cultivate potatoes. They are warm and hospitable.

On the southern side of Javaherdasht, the tall and magnificent summit of Samamous sticks out gloriously. Its altitude is 3,620 meters. In order to climb to the

summit, a local guide should help mountaineers and tourists so that they do not get lost.

There is also a bazaar in the area with shops and teahouses.

Every year, traditional wrestling matches (Gileh-mardi), tug-of-war contests and horse-back riding races are organized in this picturesque area by Gilan's Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Department and the private sector. These events bring many tourists to the area.

In the past, livestock breeders would flock to Javaherdasht in the beginning of spring and move to southern areas at the start of the cold season. But, at present, they take their livestock to highlands. This is important for improving the conditions of forests, rangelands and plains.

> Samadabad Lake

This lake is situated in Samadabad Village, which is one of the most attractive villages of Gilan province. The beauty of this lake makes Samadabad Village distinct from the other villages of Eshkevar. Its water flow does not decline throughout the year.

> Shah Sefid Kouh Summit

Bolour Mount (also known as Shah Sefid Kouh) is situated 3,431 meters above sea-level. Bolour in Persian means whitish color and the mountain has also been so named because of its color. It can be clearly detected from surrounding areas.

In the Gilaki dialect, objects that are transparent and white are called bolour. It is even a female name for girls with a light complexion.

Near the summit of this mountain is a shrine that offers a shelter to mountaineers and pilgrims. The shrine dates back to about 800 years ago. Locals believe that a visit to Imamzadeh Shah Sefid Kouh can help fulfill wishes and cure diseases.

Shadkhombar Spring at the lower section of the shrine, Bolour Lake and a large tunnel located 100 meters to the northwest of the mosque are among the famous and historical sites of this area.

In autumn, Eshkevar's weather is humid, in winter it's cold and in spring and summer it's cool. The main farm products of Eshkevar are hazelnut, walnut and borage.

Abdebouchal, Kiyarmash and Asiyab-Darreh villages have the most favorable climatic conditions among Eshkevar's villages.

Given its vast potentials, officials should create facilities and publicize to promote Eshkevar as a tourist spot.

