



## In Case You Missed

### Algerian Minister Tours Perspolis

Algeria's Culture Minister Khalideh Tomi said she learnt about the grandeur of Iranians when she visited the Perspolis.

According to IRNA, she added, "The people of Algeria have a positive perception of Iran, especially the historic and cultural city of Shiraz, by reading different books. They realize that Iranians are a great people and have an ancient history."



Historic buildings in Shiraz and other regions are evidence of Iran's ancient civilization.

Tomi said that she came to Iran upon an invitation by Islamic Culture and Relations Organization (ICRO) and Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad Hossein Saffar-Harandi.

"I was interested in seeing Iran. I came to Iran to bolster bilateral cultural bonds and hold Algeria's Cultural Week in Iran."

### Foreign Envoys to Tour Qazvin

Ambassadors and representatives of 17 countries will tour Qazvin province in order to become familiar with tourism capabilities and potentials of the province, Head of Public Relations and International Affairs Directorate of Qazvin Governor-general Office said.



Ali Reza Baba told IRNA, "Ambassadors from Germany, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, South and North Korea, Sudan, Libya, Guinea, Bahrain and Gambia accompanied by representatives of the Economic Co-operation Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations Public Information network will go to Qazvin During one-day trip to Qazvin, the envoys will tour Alamout region and also the famous Hassan Sabbah Castle."

Before their tour, the foreign group will meet Qazvin's governor-general to become more familiar with the province.

Upon introduction of Qazvin as a developing tourism hub by the UN, a large number of tourists visit the province every year.

### Dubai Exhibits

#### Health Tourism Abilities

Secretary of Iranian Health Tourism Society (IHTS) said that for the first time Safir-e Arya Health Tourism Development Company attended Arab Tourism Market (ATM) 2008 on behalf of IHTS.

Speaking to IRNA, Ali Jabbari added, "The company attended the exhibition to help promote Iran's health tourism."

"IHTS has been established to attract health tourists and the society comprises of specialized companies, as well as treatment centers and tour and travel agencies."

Noor Ophthalmology Center, Laleh Hospital and Khodadoost Ophthalmology Hospital are three institutions that participated in ATM 2008.

# Arak Rug Art of Powerful Hands

Arak province has a long history in carpet weaving. According to historical evidence and local situation of this province, carpet weaving in certain parts, like Sarough, Farahan, Saraband and Moradabad dates back to ancient times.

According to Caroun website, after the Sassanid era, the carpet weaving was neglected for many centuries. Due to such negligence and also because of continuous wars in central regions of Iran, no authentic information on establishment of big workshops and important carpets is available.

In the middle of Nassereddin Shah's reign, Arak rugs had a perceptible presence, so rugs of this region were known all over the world.

As Arak is near Qom, Kashan, Isfahan and Hamedan, designers and weavers of Kashan, Kerman and Isfahan have directly taken part in reviving Arak carpet weaving some native patterns of those regions can be seen in Arak rugs.

In 1875 (during Nassereddin Shah's era) for the first time, Tabriz businessmen exported products from Arak and its counties.

Historical references show that people of Arak were experts in preparing dyes, dyeing and weaving carpets until the beginning of the 20th century. In Europe, fine rugs of Iran are known as "Sarough" (after a region in Arak).



Arak rugs are categorized in three groups: Mahal, Moshkabad and Sarough, which are all influenced by a rug named "Sarough".

There are many different reasons for the high quality of Arak rugs, including numerous native sheep. This wool has all specifications which are required for carpet, like long crimp, thickness and fine elasticity, as well as softness.

#### > Dye and Color

While using colorful dyes in rugs has a positive impact, it must be mentioned which Arak rugs had become well-known for its colors.

Most ancient rugs of Sarough with its famous milky color, Farahan rugs with splendid blue color and Moshkabad rugs with its famous wool have been exported to world markets and now are found in museums and private collections.

Traditional natural and herbal dyes are mostly used in Arak. Cochineal, a colorful insect, which is used as a dye, or azure, which is extracted from cobalt or mine stones.

All of these colors, Farahan's blue, Moshkabad's azure or Sarough's milky-red, are well-known in this region. Green and yellowish cream colors obtained from rich compounds of herbs and walnut shell, vine leaf, pomegranate shell dyes, each has a valuable share in dyeing. Fame of well-known "Sarough Rug", like other ancient rugs of this region, is attributed to the use of traditional herbal dyes.

#### > Weaving

If top marks are given to design, dye and use of basic materials in quality and desirability of ancient rugs, the next important parameter will be correct and adequate weaving to preserve reasonable standards of size and knots.

#### > Designs and Images

Apparently, fame of traditional herbal dyeing has been the main reason behind attractiveness of Arak rugs. It would be naïve to relate weaving of the past to limited dyes (though of best quality). Most attractiveness and fame of ancient Farahan region and Sarough, even Arak rugs is found in local characteristics, as well as design patterns and pictures of such rugs.

In the era of Fathali Shah until the end of Nassereddin Shah's rule, existing rugs had complete regional and local identity. Those known as ancient Farahan and Moshkabad rugs are not related to today's Arak rugs which have monotonous and conventional images.

Certain traditional images, like fish, paisley, corner-medallion and a pattern belonging to Shalle weaving "Almond", which come from Kerman or Kashan, on relatively coarse rugs--and also existence of some special images in ancient rugs of Khamseh, Saraband, Liliyan, Sarough and Moshkabad--signifies that in the central Iran and near an area called Arak today carpet weaving has been very popular.

#### > Particularities and Materials

Arak rug is coarse and well-known for its native-regional characteristics and based on the use of wool, dye, plain and mostly rustic designs. It is noteworthy that coarse rug is thick with long and resistance piles that make it suitable for elasticity. Such quality of Arak rug makes it suitable for cold and mountainous regions of Markazi province.

The basic characteristics of Arak rug are that it uses native wool, hand-spun yarns, local dyes and traditional dyeing methods.

Ancient rugs of Moshkabad (in Markazi province), are well-known for their durability all over the world. It goes without saying that the fame of Arak rug is attributed to dyeing methods and making use from basic designs. However, the most important characteristic of Arak rug is related to making use from long and elastic wool. Such quality is seen in quality rugs of Sarough type (Farahan region).

Wool used in these rugs is mostly fine Iranian wool with long, thick and special crimp which is spun by hand or by common spinning wheel.

Such kinds of wool have been supplied from Sabzevar, Boroujerd, Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari, Hamedan and Kermanshah regions which have the best quality rugs.

## 2,000 Islamic Era Artifacts to Be Exhibited

Project manager of renovation of the Islamic section of Iran National Museum said that some 2,000 artifacts of the Islamic period will be put on display in the museum.

According to Fars news agency, Mohammad Hassan Khademzadeh added, "The Islamic section of the museum was closed down for a while due to air conditioning problems. The problems have been removed, but the section is not ready yet."

He noted that the contract for renovating the Islamic section of the museum has been concluded with the Historic Works' Renovation and Exploitation Fund.

"Renovation of the Islamic era museum consists of a few stages.

In the process of renovation the viewpoint of potential visitors must be heeded. This is why from 12,000 historic items belonging to the Islamic period, 2,000 items have been selected to be showcased," he noted.

Khademzadeh said that the historic works of the early Islamic period, Seljuks, Ilkhanids and Timurids will be showcased on the second floor of the museum and the Safavid and Qajar works on the first.

"In the past only 1,000 historic items were put on display in the museum. We are determined to increase the number of displayable items so that visitors have a better perception of the Islamic period," he noted.