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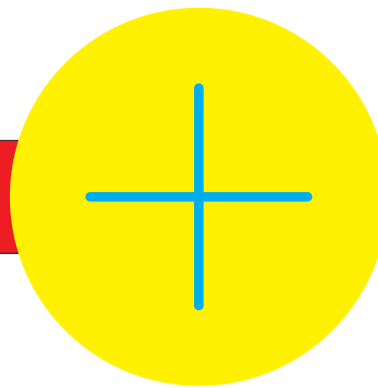
Islamic World Theater Union to be formed in Fajr International Theater Festival



In an interview with Iran Daily, the director of the international department of the 41st Fajr International Theater Festival said that the Islamic World Theater Union will soon be formed.

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Taft, a summer resort city in Yazd Province



Sarv-e Dota, Mobarakeh village
tabiatgardeshgaran.ir



An overview of Taft
IRNA

Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

The city of Taft is situated at the highest point of the central province of Yazd. Due to its location on the slopes of Shirkuh Mountain, it has a cooler climate compared to other cities of the province, thus it is known as a summer resort of the region.

The road extending from the provincial capital city of Yazd to Taft, which continues towards Abarkuh and Shiraz, is a busy and popular road, especially in the summer.

At the beginning of the road, on its left side, you can see some relatively high mountains. They are separated from other parts of the road by fences and warning signs. A part of the wide plain situated on the right side of the road has good vegetation cover. In this area, a large number of cypress, pine, and

olive trees have been planted to act as a barrier against the sandstorms that occur in the region.

A cycling route has been built between Yazd and Taft, which attracts many sports enthusiasts and tourists throughout the year.

Villages

In the middle of the route, there is a secondary road that takes you right into the historical Mobarakeh village. You can visit the village from top to bottom in a few minutes. Two tall cypress trees, called by locals Sarv-e Dota, are located at the end of its only street next to an old Zoroastrian fire temple. The 550-year-old trees are known as the symbols of the village.

There is so much silence and

peace throughout the village that, at first, we thought it was completely abandoned. But a little later we realized that the village had 20 households, some of whom lived in other places and occasionally visited their rural homes.

The historical Cham village, another Zoroastrian village of the region, is located at a short distance from Mobarakeh village. About seven to eight households live in the village. In the Zoroastrian fire temple of Cham village, there is a cypress tree, which is estimated to be 3,500 years old. The Shrine of Pir-e Rahgozar and Zoroastrians' Dakhmeh are other monuments located near the village.

But Cham village is not so quiet all year round. Ev-

ery year, on January 30, (10 Bahman) a ceremony called Jashne- Sadeh, a celebration of the birth of fire, is held by locals and Zoroastrians travelling to the village from various parts of Iran and the world.

Taft

After leaving this village, in 10 minutes we reached the city of Taft, which has a very interesting nature and urban texture. You can see numerous orchards and buildings which are surrounded by mountains. The pomegranate, almond and apricot trees of the gardens are very impressive.

The city is divided into two parts by a river, which dried up long ago.

Mohammad Taqi, a resident of Taft, said that unfortu-

nately the river has no water. He hopes that it would rain and snow so much in a way that allow the water springs of Shirkuh to flow again. He added that if the drought continues, the water wells of the city would dry up soon and that's when we will have to migrate to other cities, including Tehran.

Historical heritage

Shah Ne'matollah-e Vali Historical Complex, also known as the Imam Complex, is situated in the center of the city. The complex, which is considered the most important cultural and tourism center of the city, has several ancient monuments including a mosque, a husseinih (a place where Shi'a Muslims gather to observe religious ceremonies), a cistern, a bazaar and an old

school.

Nakhl Gardani Ceremony is a religious ritual which is carried out on the day of Ashura (the tenth day of the lunar month of Muharram) in the husseinih for commemorating the death of Imam Hussein (PBUH) and his companions. Nakhl (means palm tree in Persian) is a wooden structure used as a symbolic representation of Imam Hussein's coffin. Nakhl Gardani is the act of carrying the nakhl from one point to another, resembling the Imam's funeral. Sadri Garden is another cultural and historical heritage of Taft, dating back to the Zand Period (1750-1779 CE). The monument, with two wind-catchers, was built upon the order of Sadr-ul-Ulama about 400 years ago.

Tourism ministry to waive visa for 50 countries



Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ezzatollah Zarghami said on Wednesday that Iran is planning a visa waiver program for 50 states in the world unilaterally. Speaking about measures taken by Iran to enhance the tourism area, Zarghami stated that the country is advancing a visa waiver program for 5 groups from various states in a unilateral manner, IRNA reported.

He added that Iran's Ministry of Tourism divided the countries of the world into five groups and "we believe" that a collective alliance should be formed to cancel visas with a large number of countries.

Pointing to the existing problems in the unilateral visa waiver program, Zarghami rejected the criticisms that the visa cancellation needs to be bilateral.



A street performance of Fajr Theater Festival is held on its fourth day - January 24, 2023 - in Tehran, Iran.
LEYLA SADAT AQLI/ILNA