



## National event on family and popular culture underway

The secretary of the National Event of Family and Popular Culture said Saturday that the event is the country's biggest festival that celebrates family and culture. Farnaz Hooshyar Parsian, adviser and executive assistant to Iran's vice president for Women and Family Affairs, provided details on the event, saying it will continue for one year, ISNA reported.

# Shahrud, a heaven for nature lovers

### Iranica Desk

Iran is a four-season country, however since the country's lack of water is often discussed, the general perception is that Iranians live in the middle of a desert and are constantly facing drought and its subsequent problems. But in every corner of Iran you can find an amazing landscape and a pristine nature. The city of Shahrud, in Semnan Province, is the only place in Iran from various directions of which you can reach a mountain, a forest and a desert in 30 minutes, and a sea in less than three hours, IRNA wrote.

Shahrud, which is the second largest city of Semnan Province, lies on the route linking Tehran to the holy city of Mashhad. From the north, it is surrounded by the Alborz Mountains, and from the south, by the arid salty deserts. The river of Tash, after crossing this town, reaches the south deserts. The weather on its mountainous areas is cold, while it is somewhat temperate in other parts of the city. If you travel south for 30 minutes from Shahrud, you will reach a vast desert called Torud, having beautiful palm groves, the residents of which make a living from camel breeding.

And if you travel north for 30 minutes, you will encounter a forest like those spread across the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran. There is a cold and snowy region at a distance of one hour from the east side of the city, the climate of which is similar to that of Kurdistan and Lorestan provinces. In the city of Mojen and the Tash-e Olya village, located at a short distance from western Shahrud, you will encounter people wearing jackets and warm clothes in late July and early August. They have to turn on heating devices at night.

Cloud Forest (Abr Forest) is among the well-known natural attractions and one of the most extraordinary sights of Shahrud; it is a place where the sky seems to have approached the earth. The forest is one of the oldest in the world, dating back forty million years, belonging to the Jurassic period. It is a continuation of the lush forests of the north, and has an area of 35,000 hectares. One of the main features of this forest is its high altitude; as it has low temperatures in hot seasons. The average maximum temperature in this forest is 20°C, while the nights and early mornings are very cold.

Shahrud, with numerous green and old plane trees, has several beautiful parks which are among its well-known attractions. The oldest plane tree of the city, called chenar-e sookhteh, (chenar means plane tree) is located in the middle of a square with the same name. The tree has been registered on Iran's National Heritage List. A variety of animal and plant species live in the forest which is covered with clouds for most days of the year. All the valleys leading to the villages are full of fruit orchards. If you go there in the summer, various types of seasonal fruits

such as apricots, peaches and cherries will delight your eyes. Khaar Turan National Park, located in the region, consists of three major parts: a protected area, a national park, and a wildlife refuge. It is the second-largest protected area in Iran, having rare animal and plant species. The biosphere reserve of Khaar Turan National Park, known as the Africa of Iran, is the largest in Iran. No matter where you are in the country, you have access to at least one direct road to Shahrud. Moreover, the Shahrud railway is one of the busiest in the country.

A view of Shahrud  
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## Barakat Foundation, ICYF launch skill-learning initiative

In a move aimed at improving skill levels and fostering job creation among young individuals in Islamic countries, the Barakat Foundation and the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF) have signed a memorandum of understanding. The signing ceremony took place on Friday morning, July 21, in the presence of esteemed dignitaries, including the vice president of social affairs of Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order (EIKO), the CEO of Barakat Foundation, the president of the ICYF, and several senior managers from both organizations. The CEO of Barakat Foundation, Mohammad Torkmaneh, highlighted the foundation's role as a development institution that has

effectively empowered people through various measures. He emphasized that Barakat Foundation's activities have spanned over 16,000 villages across Iran's provinces, resulting in the employment of 1.2 million individuals. Job creation and economic empowerment, in line with the vision of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, have been key priorities for the foundation. Torkmaneh further revealed that Barakat Foundation has successfully established over 300,000 small and micro projects, with more than a thousand facilitators operating in different provinces of Iran. Notably, the foundation has invested \$100 million in knowledge-based companies present



in ten provinces, and a total of \$5.4 billion over the past 14 years through the executive headquarters of EIKO. "The decision to collaborate with

the ICYF was the result of negotiations that commenced a year ago. Thirty webinar sessions and one in-person meeting were conducted to establish the partnership,"

Torkmaneh said, expressing that the objectives outlined in the memorandum align closely with Barakat Foundation's goals, emphasizing the shared focus on poverty eradication across all Islamic countries. The CEO of Barakat Foundation emphasized that the memorandum primarily aims to facilitate the exchange of experiences. He highlighted the foundation's unique activities, which have set it apart from other countries. He also expressed readiness to combat poverty in Islamic countries and expressed hope for fruitful outcomes through diligent follow-up. The first step outlined in the memorandum involves organizing an event in Iran, which will

showcase the foundation's initiatives and the active participation of young people from Islamic countries. Taha Ayhan, the president of ICYF, stressed the importance of skill development and job creation for societies. He commended Barakat Foundation's efforts in these areas, particularly in terms of skills development and market access measures. Ayhan expressed hope that all young people in Iran would benefit from the collaborative measures. The memorandum emphasizes the significance of training programs for young individuals, aiming to assist them in finding suitable positions in the labor market.

### Arts & Culture Desk

The Press Service of the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation announced that tourists from certain countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, will be able to obtain electronic visas for Russia in less than a week. According to Russian news sources, the ministry stated that, as per the government's directive, citizens of European countries, Iran, Japan, Turkey, China, North Korea, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Bahrain, Kuwait, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Singapore will be eligible to apply for electronic visas, IRNA reported. As reported, the issuance time for Russian visas within this framework will be less than six days from the date of application. The ministry clarified that electronic visas can be obtained through the internet for tourists, guests, or business trips, as well

## Russia to issue electronic visas for Iranians, others



as participation in scientific, cultural, sports, and other events. According to the announcement, these electronic visas will be issued by a diplomatic mission or consular office of the Russian Federation, and foreign nationals will need to submit their applica-

tions through a special website of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Based on this information, electronic visas will allow tourists to enter Russia once and will be valid for a maximum stay of 60 days from the registration date.

### Arts & Culture Desk

The Iranian short film 'Fifty Thousand,' directed by Hamed Karivand, will compete in two prestigious international film festivals, in Tunisia and Panama. In Tunisia, 'Fifty Thousand' will be vying for recognition at the 5th edition of the Cinétoile International Short Film Festival, taking place from July 20 to July 25. This annual event, launched in 2018, is renowned for presenting a diverse selection of films, providing inclusive opportunities for participants of all backgrounds, with a particular focus on engaging young talents. Furthermore, the film will also feature in the esteemed Panama Series Festival, a short film festival held for the past two years in the picturesque landscapes of Central America's Panama. This festival serves as a portal to the

## 'Fifty Thousand' to compete in Tunisia, Panama



realm of innovative filmmakers from across the globe, offering emerging directors a fresh platform to showcase their creative prowess. The festival kicked off its activities on July 21, creating a vibrant atmosphere for filmmakers and enthusiasts alike. 'Fifty Thousand' narrates the poignant story of a young boy residing with his father

in a humble abode within the bustling city, as he confronts an array of challenges in his journey through life. The remarkable cast of this short film includes Farzin Rahmanpour, Mohammad Kianian, Elaheh Jaami, Mehdi Parhizkar, and Amirhossein Qalandari, whose compelling performances have added depth to the narrative.