

In Case You Missed

Int'l Status

For Sri Lanka, Hawaii Sites

Sri Lanka's central highlands and a protected marine area in Hawaii, the only habitats of several endangered plant and animal species, have been added to UNESCO's list of world heritage sites, the UN body said on Saturday.

Sri Lanka's central highlands were deemed of prime importance because of the pristine forests that are home to the Sri Lanka leopard and other rare animal and plant life, Reuters reported.

The Hawaiian marine site, known as Papahānaumokuākea, is the habitat of the endangered Hawaiian Monk seal and rare birds. The site encompasses about 140,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean. Its isolated reef ecosystems are dominated by top predators like sharks.

"This feature has been lost from most other island environments due to human activity," said Tim Badman, a top adviser at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.

Badman's group is the advisory body to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee and makes recommendations to the committee based on its field research at the sites.

The UNESCO committee is meeting in Brazil's capital, Brasilia. On Friday, it declared Florida Everglades an endangered world heritage site due to pollution and water shortage.

US to Exhibit Royal Chinese Relics

The US is preparing to host a unique tour of exhibitions, displaying a collection of artworks and relics from China's Forbidden City for the first time.

The \$1.5 million exhibition of thrones, large-scale paintings and decor of Chinese Emperor Qianlong will arrive in the US in September 2010, AP reported.

The objects have been kept in a pavilion designed by Qianlong more than 200 years ago and will be under restoration until 2012.



Few people have entered Qianlong's courtyards since China's last emperor was forced out of the Forbidden City in 1924 and it will take until at least 2019 for the entire complex to be reopened.

"This garden is completely different from the rest of the Forbidden

City," said Nancy Berliner, curator of Chinese art at the Peabody Essex Museum in Massachusetts, where the exhibition will begin.

"The rest is formal, rigid, symbolic," she added. "This flows like walking up a mountain flows ... You're always finding surprises."

The show will also go to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Milwaukee Art Museum.

Qianlong was one of the most powerful Chinese emperors who ruled the country for six decades and expanded the Chinese borders.

Qianlong is famous for his refusal to expand trade relations with Britain when British emissary, Lord George Macartney, visited China in his time.

"We have never valued ingenious articles, nor do we have the slightest need of your country's manufactures," Qianlong wrote in a rebuke.

Executive vice president of the World Monuments Fund and a restoration partner with China's Palace Museum, Henry Ng, however, says Qianlong did not hate western products altogether.

Greek Tourism Reels From Fuel Shortage, Strikes

Disaster has struck Greece's crucial tourism industry at the peak of a summer season badly needed by its recession-hit economy with a national fuel shortage compounding weeks of on-off work unrest.

A strike wave against austerity policies, a violent May protest in which three people died in a firebombed bank and unionist action targeting cruise ships and flights have made for a calamitous season, operators were quoted as saying by AFP.

And additional disruption caused to tens of thousands of travelers by the fuel holdup caused by a trucker walkout could not have come at a worse time for a sector that makes up nearly a fifth of the troubled Greek economy.

"The situation is absurd ... We face a barrage of cancellations," said Andreas Andreadis, chairman of the Panhellenic Hotel Confederation.

The strike came as thousands of Greeks embarked on vacation with many of them unsure whether they would be able to return. The main Greek port of Piraeus that links the mainland with islands popular with holidaymakers has also been repeatedly blockaded by protesters this year while a work-to-rule action by air traffic controllers in late July caused widespread flight delays.

"The present situation is turning into a disaster for the country, the economy and tourism," the association of Greek tourism enterprises (SETE) said in a statement this week.

The fuel shortage was discouraging tourists from neighboring Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Serbia from driving to Greece, SETE added.

Diving Potential Unknown



Marine tourism, which includes various sports such as swimming, boat riding, jet ski riding, diving and beach volleyball, can attract many families during the summer vacation.

Hengam Island in Persian Gulf is one of the suitable sites for diving. Iravani, the head of Marine Technology Institute, who is in charge of diving at Hengam Island, said people are unfamiliar with the sport, CHN wrote.

> 3,000 km Coasts

Although the country boasts of 3,000 km of coasts and natural assets, diving has not gained its deserved status.

"Hengam is one of the scenic islands of the coun-

try," she said, calling it a small paradise. "Given my experience in teaching industrial diving, I decided to show these beauties to the people. I believe spending time in nature will bring enthusiasm and purpose to someone's life," he said.

Hengam Island is the country's best resort to see equatorial species, as countries like Maldives have taken advantage of such potentials and created facilities such as hotels for serving tourists.

Maldives is a group of coral islands in the Indian Ocean to the west of India and Sri Lanka.

> Learning to Dive

Baharlou, who works in a travel agency and conducts diving tours on Qeshm Island, said, "We have signed a contract with a diving school and arranged a

five-day diving tour for tourists."

> Kish Attractions

Kish Island was ranked among the world's 10 most beautiful islands by the New York Times in 2010. It is considered the third most visited vacation destination city in the Middle East, after Sharm el-Sheikh and Dubai.

Foreign nationals wishing to enter Kish Free Zone from legal ports are not required to obtain visas prior to travel. Valid travel permits are stamped for 14 days at the Kish International Airport upon arrival.

Kish Karting Track is one of the largest in the Mid-



dle East and one of the first of its kind in Iran.

A great array of water sports are also on offer in Kish such as snorkeling and scuba diving courses, jet skiing, diving cruises, water skiing, sea skiffs, cruises to other islands around Kish, parasailing, jet boat rides, cruise fishing boats, pedal boating, banana boat rides and windsurfing.

In spite of these huge diving potentials in the coastal areas of Mazandaran province, Oman Sea and Persian Gulf, marine tourism is lagging because of official neglect and poor investment.

Water sports are unknown to most Iranians while they can be a dynamic source of recreation and generate jobs and revenues.



Tehran Building Manifests European Architecture

The architectural style of Tehran's Singer Building can help researchers study the early trend in European architecture.

This unique monument is located at No. 150, Makhberoddoleh Intersection, Sa'di Street, Tehran, CHN wrote.

The building was constructed during the Pahlavi I era when many foreign companies such as German Singer Sewing Machine started work in Iran.

Russian architect Nikolai Markov, who had designed two prominent buildings of Baharestan Teachers' College and Alborz High School in Tehran, helped build Singer Building.

He used the common architectural style of Europe in building the monument and designed it as per the neoclassical model, which reflected the classical architecture of 16th century.

It can help researchers study the developments in European architecture. Therefore, it is con-



sidered a unique building.

A monument with an azure dome, Singer Building has two entrances: the entrance for cars is closed as well as the main door are closed. Visitors can only enter the building

through the yard. It used to be the office of Germany's

Singer Sewing Machine Company in Tehran until the late 1970s.

Singer Monument was abandoned following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Then, it was ceded to the private sector and converted into a warehouse.

Brick and travertine stone have been used in the monument that has a mosaic floor covering, while the doors and windows are made of wood.

Climatic factors and air pollution have adversely affected the monument. Also, vibrations from the subway passing close to the monument have caused small cracks in this monument.

Sassanid Ruins Discovered

Iranian archeologists have found the remains of a Sassanid structure and ruins of a palace, which they believe belong to Afsharid ruler Ashraf Afghan.

Excavations at Isfahan's Ashraf Mound have unearthed Sassanid tiles and earthenware dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries.

Ashraf Mound is one of the most significant historical sites in Isfahan, which is believed to have been one of

the oldest residential areas of the region since the pre-Islamic era.

"The find is a very important one because there has not been much information about the region before the 10th century," Alireza Jafari-Zand, the head of the 17-member archeology team, told CHN.

"The excavation project is difficult because Isfahan has not been relocated throughout history and the ancient

city lies under the modern one."

According to Jafari-Zand, this is the first comprehensive excavation conducted at the site and is expected to last for about ten years.

"The project aims to gather information about the history of Isfahan, reveal the historical values of Ashraf Mound and prepare the ground for turning it into a site museum," he said.