

Chile announced that it will ask the British Museum in London to return the remains of a mylodon, an extinct mammal that lived in Patagonia about 10,000 years ago.

**Exclusive**

## Sun of Maybod's pottery art under cloud of forgetfulness

By Sadeq Dehqan & Leila Imani

The city of Meybod in central province of Yazd has been a prominent pottery and ceramic center in Iran since several thousand years ago.

In fact, abundant raw materials and rich soil of the region caused pottery-making to become the main occupation of the local people.

The remains of colorful potteries, unearthed in Narin Castle, dating back to Sassanid Era, showcase the ancientness of the art in the region.

Those interested in the Persian pottery can definitely recognize the indigenous designs of sun, fish and chicken on the earthenware produced in Meybod.

Their designs, inspired by desert atmospheres reveal the lifestyle, ambitions and desires of their creators.

The major number of the designs are colored with blue, green, yellow and slim black lines.

The pottery products of Meybod, which are well-recognized in the world, are also exported.

However, the condition of pottery making, which once was a prosperous occupation, is not presently desirable. A large number of workshops have been closed in recent years,



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putting the art on the verge of disappearance.

However, a limited number of workshops which are still operating in the city try to introduce the ancient art of local people to the travelers visiting the city.

Mohammadreza Aqaei is a

skilled and old potter maker who is active in his small workshop located in Meybod. The craftsman entered the occupation 50 years ago when he was seven years old and learned the job from his father.

He told Iran Daily that the pottery jars will never become



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old-fashioned. "If people can recognize the benefits of using the

earthenware, they will never put them aside. The pottery jars reduce the impurity of water and

make it lighter which helps preserve the health of people."

Referring to the record of pottery art in Meybod, he said the city's pottery and ceramic products had more than 160 designs, a large number of which have been set aside.

He said pottery makers who are active in the city have produced ceramics and traditional chinaware since the ancient time while there is no trace of such earthenware in other pottery producing centers of the country including Lalejin in Hamedan Province.

Aqaei noted that the clay used in pottery and ceramic making are brought to Meybod from Tabriz, Qazvin, Abadeh, Shiraz and Mashhad.

He stressed that a potter maker should first recognize the soil and know which type of clay should be used for making jar and which for bowl.

He said pottery-making was an age-old occupation in Meybod because the soil and clay of the region, with its relatively good adhesion, is suitable for the purpose.

"The clay should firstly be sieved to separate its limes and then left for several hours to stiffen. Afterward, it should be trampled properly to be prepared for pottery making," he said.

Aqaei used the potter's wheel, very artistically, to convert a ball of clay to various earthenware including vase, jar, sugar bowl, jug etc.

"The potteries should be left for a while to become rigid", he said adding then they should be refurbished to be placed in the furnace.

He showed a number of broken potteries which were placed in a part of his workshop and said any carelessness may cause damage to the ceramic objects and waste all efforts taken to produce them.

### Three Iranian handicrafts receive UNESCO prizes



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Three handicrafts of Sistan-Baluchestan Province received the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) prizes, said director general of the provincial cultural heritage, handicrafts and tourism department.

"The artworks are the three unique personal styles of two folk embroideries named after the local artists Maryam Ghaderi, Farangis Jamalzohi, and Gol-Bibi Jamalzohi," Alierza Jamalzohi told IRNA.

"Handicrafts made in the province are innovative high quality products with marvelous color combinations that have received Iranian national quality award," he added.

He stressed that Sistan-Baluchestan Province is among the country's top provinces in producing handicrafts, saying that a website will be launched in the future to sell the handicrafts in domestic and international markets.

Sistan-Baluchestan is Iran's southeasternmost province which shares border with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

### Delhi panic over toxic air ahead of Indian festival Diwali

Panic gripped the Indian capital Delhi on Monday as residents woke up to a blanket of thick grey smog ahead of Diwali, the festival of lights.

Visibility is poor as pollution levels reached 20 times the World Health Organization's recommended limit, BBC reported.

The air quality is expected to worsen in the coming days due to the use of firecrackers, experts have warned.

Indian cities regularly dominate global pollution rankings for the worst air quality.

The Supreme Court has restricted the timeframe for setting off firecrackers to only two hours during the day — but experts believe this curfew will be hard to implement.

Diwali, the most important Hindu festival in north India, celebrates the victory of good over evil.

However in the last few years, celebrations have seen air pollution rise to hazardous levels after many firecrackers were set off.

Many have taken to social media to share their concerns as

well as post dramatic photos of the city to show the extent of the problem.

On Sunday, the pollution level in the city dipped and was categorized as 'poor'. But a sharp spike in smog on Monday morning — which recorded a reading of 365 on the Air Quality Index (AQI) — has effectively put the city's air in the "hazardous" category.

Authorities in Delhi have warned residents to stay indoors as much as possible and have started to shut down construction activity in the city.

The Indian capital is the sixth worst place in the world for pollution, according to World Health Organization (WHO) data.

Air quality in the city worsens every year in November and December as farmers in the neighboring states of Punjab and Haryana burn crop stubble to clear their fields.

The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), an emergency government initiative to try and improve conditions, has also been launched around Delhi. It bans activities like rubbish burning to try and improve air quality.

### Wanted: An Australian energy policy to kickstart A\$25b investment

Constant changes in Australia's government have convinced the country's power companies that its political leaders will never craft a coherent and long-lasting national energy policy that is needed to keep the lights on.

Years of energy policy flip-flops are holding up billions of dollars of investment in new generation and transmission even as Australia looks to prevent a repeat of blackouts suffered over the past two years. The lack of reliability is occurring even as the country pays some of the highest electricity costs in the industrialized world, Reuters reported.

With six different prime ministers and a change in the ruling party since 2010, Australia's power companies have been whipsawed between competing political visions for the country's energy markets, particularly over the type of power generation and whether to address carbon emissions.

"Changes of government in Australia have led to vastly different energy policy environments due to the absence of bipartisan consensus

on what the appropriate energy mix should be and to what extent climate change should be tackled," said Peter Kiernan, an energy analyst at the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The policy vacuum is occurring at a crucial time for Australia.

As much as A\$25 billion (\$18 billion) will be needed for a mix of wind and solar farms, hydroelectric power, batteries and transmission lines as well as natural gas-fired power to keep the lights on, the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) said.

Yet investors tired of the flip-flopping are hesitant to back projects amid the uncertainty.

"Twenty-five billion dollars is a lot of money to put at risk when we don't really know what the rules are going to be," said Sam Magee, head of commercial for EnergyAustralia, Australia's third-largest power producer.

New Prime Minister Scott Morrison assumed leadership of the ruling Liberal party after Malcolm Turnbull was ousted as coal supporters in the party thought his National Energy

Guarantee (NEG) policy favored renewable energy.

On Oct. 23, Energy Minister Angus Taylor revived some but not all of the NEG policies. He also invited generation developers to apply to the government to underwrite projects for so-called firm power capacity such as coal-fired plants and firm capacity which includes solar or wind projects tied to back up power sources such as batteries or standby hydroelectric sites known as pumped hydro.

To address blackout concerns, the government proposed instituting a retailer reliability obligation that will require power retailers and big energy users to line up enough power to meet their needs if the market operator identifies predicted shortfalls that have not been filled in advance.

It also launched a plan to introduce 'default power prices', effectively a price cap, to keep a lid on household electricity prices which have soared 56 percent over the past 10 years.

Price caps may be popular with consumers, but not for financiers and

developers of new capacity.

"We continue to caution against a return to price regulation as it will stifle investment right at the time we need it to maintain a secure electricity supply for customers as we replace aging coal plants and transition to a lower emissions future," Origin Energy, Australia's top power retailer, said in emailed comments.

Carbon policy was absent from Taylor's proposals which will create more uncertainty for investors.

The shifting carbon policy of the past decade has deterred investment in natural gas and coal-fired power stations. The opposition Labor party has called for a 45-percent cut in carbon emissions by 2030. The NEG contained a target of 26 percent but that was dropped after the plan failed.

Australia's biggest power producers, led by AGL Energy, Origin Energy and EnergyAustralia, owned by Hong Kong's CLP Holdings, all have gas-fired and pumped hydro projects awaiting final sign-offs which partly



REUTERS

hinge on what the government does next.

Yet, more uncertainty is likely as the Liberal-National government is expected to lose to the Labor Party in the next elections, due by May 2019.

The power producers themselves are accepting of a lower carbon future

but need more certainty for their plans to replace Australia's ageing coal-fired power plants over the next 20 years, said the EIU's Kiernan.

"For this to occur, however, requires implementation of policies that are durable and able to last beyond one election cycle," he said.