

Iran opens first three-story bridge in NW

Sareyn bridge, a turning point for tourism in Ardebil: *Zarghami*

Arts & Culture Desk

A three-story bridge, the first of its kind, was inaugurated on Monday in Iran's northwestern Sareyn County, in Ardebil Province.

The bridge is expected to boost tourism in the region known for its natural beauty and hospitable culture.

Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Ezzatollah Zarghami, inaugurated the bridge, emphasizing its potential to draw visitors. "The Sareyn bridge, with its height, length, and mountainous setting, offers a unique attraction and is a turning point for tourism in Ardebil," he said.

Several suspension bridges have been constructed in the province, including in Meshginshahr, Hir, and Azna, to boost tourism but this is the first three-story bridge. The minister highlighted the bridge's role in creating new tourism opportunities, similar

to the successful 'Ardebil 2023' event, which continues to bear fruit. He predicted that images of the bridge would go global, attracting international attention to the region.

The construction of the bridge involved a significant investment of over \$4.1 million from the private sector, and an additional \$4.1 million are planned for further development of the surrounding area and accommodation facilities.

He emphasized the importance of bringing joy to people, which is one of the necessities of today's society, and how this project contributes to that goal.

The minister also highlighted the potential for the bridge to transform the surrounding villages, stating that a new design is needed to accommodate the expected influx of tourists.

He expressed confidence in the region's ability to cater to tourists, given its well-known hospitality and natural attractions.



Iranian short film 'Until Mina' sweeps awards at US festivals



Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian short film 'Until Mina,' written, produced, and directed by Mehdi Arhami, has been racking up awards and nomina-

tions at various American film festivals. The film, which marks Arhami's second directorial work, garnered critical acclaim and multiple accolades. 'Until Mina' recently scooped

up the Best Film award at the 20th Accolade Global Film Competition in the US. It also took home the same honor at the 13th Best Shorts Film Festival in San Diego. Plus, the short film has been nominated for Best Film at the 7th Boston International Film Festival, which will take place in late September. The film has also been selected to compete in the 10th Shimla International Film Festival in India, chosen from among 1,600 submissions. The festival aims to showcase the best of world cinema and foster a taste for quality filmmaking among young audiences, while also providing a platform for independent filmmakers. 'Until Mina' tells the story of a young girl who, due to harsh

economic circumstances, finds herself working in a mortuary. With a compelling narrative and strong performances, the film has resonated with audiences and critics alike. The cast of 'Until Mina' includes Zahra Behrouzmanesh, Marjan Khaksari, Behrad Selahvarzi, Delsa Khoroush, Saeed Salemi, Raheleh Heidari, and Touran Ramezani. The film is being internationally distributed by RH Film, introducing Iranian cinema to global audiences. 'Until Mina' continues to make waves on the festival circuit, with additional selections at the 7th Asia Short Film Festival in Milan, and the 2nd Taiga International Film Festival in Russia.

Iran, Iraq to run weekly pilgrim trains



Iran and Iraq agreed to a weekly train service for pilgrims traveling between Tehran and Karbala. This announcement was made by Mohsen Tabatabaei, the Director General of Planning and Passenger Services of the Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (RIA), Mehr News Agency reported. According to Tabatabaei, passengers will travel by train from Tehran to the Shalamchek sta-

tion, where they will go through customs and then be transported by bus to Basra. From Basra, Iraqi trains will take them to the Karbala Railway Station. "A train will depart from Tehran to Karbala every Saturday, and we can increase the frequency if demand grows," Tabatabaei said. This agreement between Iran and Iraq will facilitate easier travel for pilgrims wishing to visit the holy city of Karbala.

Caspian Sea Day

Littoral states urged to address pollution for sustainable development

Social Desk

On Caspian Sea Day, an international conference hosted by Turkmenistan emphasized the responsibility of littoral states to protect the sea from pollution. Ali Mojtaba Roozbahani, Iran's ambassador to Turkmenistan, highlighted the importance of balancing economic development with environmental protection in the region, IRNA wrote. Roozbahani addressed dele-

gates at the conference, titled "The Caspian Sea - Cooperation for Sustainable Development," emphasizing the Caspian Sea as a shared heritage and a source of friendship and prosperity for over 270 million people in the region. He likened it to a "valuable divine gem" that needs to be protected for future generations, just as their ancestors had safeguarded it for them. The Tehran Convention, a frame-



work for protecting the marine environment of the Caspian Sea, was cited as evidence of the priority given to environmental protection in the region. Roozbahani also noted the potential impact of industrial activities, cabling, transportation, and hydrocarbon extraction on the sea, stressing that neglecting commitments to combat pollution threatens the very life cycle of the area. Iran offered to host the 7th con-

ference of the parties to the Tehran Convention in Tehran, underscoring its commitment to the environment and the agreements made between the littoral states. The conference, held in the Avaza tourist zone, brought together representatives from the Caspian Sea countries and international organizations to discuss environmental challenges and explore avenues for cooperation and sustainable development in the region.