



Official warns unapproved alterations could prolong UNESCO bid for Zanzan Bazaar

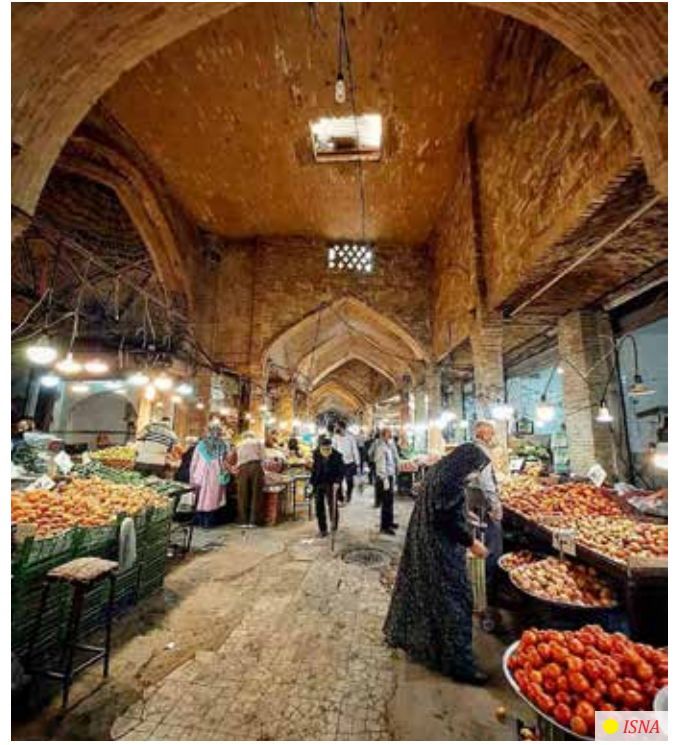
Arts & Culture Desk

Unauthorized and non-expert alterations in the protected zone of Iran's historic Zanzan Bazaar could delay its bid for UNESCO World Heritage status for years, a local official warned on Tuesday, citing concerns over the site's authenticity, infrastructure and conservation. Mehdi Baqeri, head of Zanzan city's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Office, told IRNA that Zanzan Bazaar, described as Iran's longest roofed bazaar, was "an unparalleled gem" at the heart of the city and represented not only an architectural complex but also the economic, historical and cultural lifeblood of the region. Baqeri said securing UNESCO recognition was a "complex and lengthy process" based on stringent Outstanding Universal Value criteria. He said the nomination faced key obstacles, in-

cluding UNESCO's requirements for preserving the site's physical integrity and authenticity. He added that the historic quarter also faces challenges in urban infrastructure and public services, noting that UNESCO applied strict standards for disaster management, fire safety, electricity, gas, sewage systems and waste management in historic areas. "As a living commercial complex, the bazaar requires safety infrastructure upgrades to measure up to international standards," the official said. Baqeri said decades of unauthorized changes in land use, structural interventions in shop units, the use of incompatible construction materials during restoration work and alterations in parts of the bazaar had taken a toll on its historical authenticity. To achieve World Heritage inscription, the site requires "vi-

sual clean-up and the revival of traditional restoration techniques," a costly process that also depends on the cooperation of all shopkeepers, he said. Baqeri noted that authorities were drawing up "a comprehensive management plan" covering not only the physical fabric of the bazaar but also its visual buffer zone and the impact of surrounding urban development. He said much of the bazaar was privately owned, making conflicts between shopkeepers' property rights and cultural heritage protection rules one of the biggest obstacles to the nomination process. "Reaching a win-win model in which businesspeople participate as the bazaar's principal custodians will take time and require careful engagement with stakeholders," Baqeri added. Located in the center of Zanzan,

the historic bazaar dates back to the Qajar era. Construction began around 1790 under the orders of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar and was completed around 1800 during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar. Covering about 15 hectares, the bazaar has long served not only as a commercial hub but also as a center for the city's cultural and social life, providing a venue for the exchange of ideas and the preservation of national and religious traditions. Its architecture, featuring caravanserais, covered courtyards, mosques and numerous bath-houses, has made it one of Iran's most significant tourist attractions and enduring examples of architectural heritage. The Zanzan Bazaar, which is listed on Iran's national register of historic monuments, has 56 entrances and alleyways, 940 shops and accommodates 51 categories of trade.



Iranian animation to hit Russian silver screen in memory of Minab kids

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian animated feature "The Legend of Sepehr" will be shown in Russian theaters from late August, with its Russian distributor preparing a special memorial event for schoolchildren killed in a US missile strike on a school in the southern Iranian city of Minab. The film, produced by Mehdi Jafari Jozani and directed by Emad Rahmani and Mehrdad Mehrabi, is due to be played across Russia after completing its domestic run in Iran and moving into international distribution, Khabar Online reported on Tuesday. According to the Russian distributor, the release has been scheduled for late August to coincide with the end of Russia's extended school holidays, a timing intended to provide a better opportunity for families and children to attend cinemas. The distributor said agreements, together with an



amendment to the distribution contract, have secured the film's theatrical and public exhibition rights for Russia and several countries in the region. Alongside the commercial release, the distributor said it was coordinating a special event dedicated to solidarity with and remembrance of the Minab

schoolchildren. Details of the event will be announced once arrangements have been finalized. The planned memorial follows the US missile strike on Shajareh Tayyebbeh School in Minab on February 28, which killed at least 168 people, including 150 schoolboys and schoolgirls aged between seven and 12. The attack has been remembered in Iran and beyond as despicable crime. The Legend of Sepehr is a family fantasy adventure centered on themes of family, responsibility, courage and standing up to darkness. It follows Sepehr, a courageous teenager, and his loyal companion Babo as they set out on a journey to save their family and homeland. The Russian-language version has been registered in Russian film databases under the title "Легенда о Сепере", while the film's trailer has been released on the Kinopoisk VOD platform.

Khosroabad Palace to become 'premier museum' after renovation

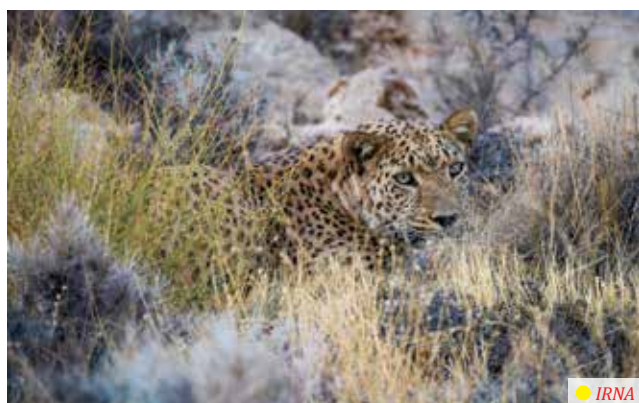
Arts & Culture Desk

Iran plans to turn the restored Khosroabad Palace in the western city of Sanandaj into "one of the country's premier museums" after conservation work is completed, a senior cultural heritage official said on Tuesday, as authorities continue to repair damage to historic sites following the recent war with the United States and Israel. Leila Khosravi, director general of museums at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, made the remarks during a visit to the western province of Kurdistan, where she inspected museums and historical monuments as part of a nationwide program to assess their condition, monitor their status and review their conservation needs, ISNA reported. Khosravi said the historic Khosroabad Palace had gone through significant restoration work and was scheduled to become one of the country's premier museums once the project is completed, allowing it to play a greater role in showcasing the history, culture and identity of Sanandaj. She said the palace was among dozens of historical sites damaged during the recent war involving US and Israeli attacks on Iran, with most of the damage affecting



architectural decorations, orosi windows and wooden structures. "Given that a significant number of the country's museums are housed in historical buildings, some architectural elements and display cases were also damaged. However, thanks to measures taken by the ministry, historical and cultural objects were transferred to secure storage before any damage occurred, and fortunately none of the cultural and historical artefacts or properties in Kurdistan province were damaged," Khosravi said. She said restoring orosi windows, architectural decorations and wooden structures should top the list of priorities. The ministry would also support the province's museums by upgrading and standardizing storage facilities, improving controls for the preservation environment, including temperature and humidity, and providing the funding required for conservation work.

Khosravi said the ministry also planned to fortify protective infrastructure at museums across Kurdistan province by reinforcing security equipment, updating protection systems and supplying surveillance cameras to improve the safeguarding of historical artefacts. The Khosroabad Palace Museum in Sanandaj, the capital of Kurdistan, was built in 1808 by Amanollah Khan Ardalan, the then governor of the province. The complex goes back to the Qajar era, although parts of the building feature decorative elements in the Zand style. The palace served as the seat of the Ardalan Kurdish ruling family and is regarded as an important symbol of Kurdish heritage in the region. It functioned at times as a political and military headquarters but was used mainly for official ceremonies and celebrations, including the wedding of a daughter of Qajar ruler Fath Ali Shah to Amanollah Khan's son. Covering about 6,000 square metres, the palace is regarded as one of western Iran's most distinctive historic buildings, featuring elaborate plasterwork, brickwork and tile decorations. It was added to Iran's National Heritage List in 1977 and now operates as a museum and tourist attraction.



Train driver hailed for saving Iranian leopard with quick action

Social Desk

The Department of Environment (DoE) praised the "responsible" action of a train driver whose swift response prevented a passenger train from striking an Iranian leopard trapped inside a railway tunnel in the northern Savadkuh region. The DoE described the driver's move as a "valuable demonstration of responsibility, commit-

ment to wildlife conservation and respect for environmental considerations" throughout the country's rail transport network. It said the rescue of the endangered animal showed that transport infrastructure development and the protection of the country's natural heritage could go hand in hand. The department also called for continued cooperation to strengthen environmental safe-

guards along Iran's transport corridors and expressed hope that broader collaboration would provide stronger protection for valuable wildlife species, particularly the Iranian leopard. A video that went viral two days ago showed the train driver's timely response saving the life of an Iranian leopard after it became trapped inside a tunnel on the Savadkuh railway line. After spotting the leopard on

the tracks, the driver applied the brakes and reduced the train's speed, giving the animal enough time to leave the tunnel safely and preventing a collision. The Iranian leopard is one of the country's flagship wildlife species and is under the threat of extinction, while transport routes, including railway lines, are regarded as among the factors putting pressure on its habitat.