

# Reading, awareness help people find 'common perspective': *President*

## Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the importance of reading and knowledge in bridging differences and fostering understanding among people, saying "reading and awareness lead us to a common language and perspective, and keep us away from conflict."

President Pezeshkian made the remarks at a national ceremony marking the National Day of Book, Reading and Librarianship (November 14), where he praised the efforts of all those involved in promoting book-reading culture in the country.

In celebration of the 32nd edition of the Iran Book Week, the Iran Public Libraries Foundation arranged various programs.

"Reading for Empathy" is the motto of this year's festival, which will run through November 20.

Pezeshkian referred to the direct connection between knowledge and

awareness and today's human life, saying, "God has linked the life of the earth to man, the life of man to science, the life of science to action, and the life of action to sincerity, which shows the importance of science. If a society reaches such a belief and faith, will it suffer from backwardness, poverty and trouble?" Pezeshkian also emphasized the significance of promoting book-reading among all walks of life, particularly the younger generation.

The president noted that if people want to create a world that is worthy of themselves and future generations, they must turn to books and make reading a part of their lives.

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, also spoke at the ceremony, emphasizing the importance of libraries in the Islamic civilization's scientific progress.

He noted that the Qur'an's first verses refer to the book, and that the path to civilization-building in Islam has been through knowledge and science.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (R) visits renowned Iranian writer and literary figure Mohammad-Ali Movahed on the second day of Iran Book Week in Tehran, Iran, on November 15, 2024. ● president.ir



Salehi pointed out that libraries have been the driving force behind the Islamic civilization's scientific progress, and that they serve as a means of extending the scientific life of individuals beyond their natural lifespan.

He also highlighted the importance of overcoming the limitations of formal education and the need for a lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Salehi also touched on the topic of the societal and civilizational impact of reading and libraries. He emphasized that if people want to create a society that values knowledge and awareness, they need to prioritize reading and libraries.

Mehdi Ramezani, the Director-General of the Iran Public Libraries Foundation,

announced that Iran's public library network has grown to 3,800 units with 7,500 cultural workers, ranking first in the region.

He also pointed out that libraries serve as a "third home" for people, providing a space for mothers and children, youth, and the elderly to access information, learn, and socialize.

Ramezani called on the president to prioritize the development of mobile libraries, complete unfinished projects, and establish libraries in cities that lack them.

He also requested that the president address the issue of librarians' livelihoods, which he described as a pressing concern.

## Iran, Russia advised to learn from past to create better future



By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer

Iranian and Russian scholars and experts emphasized the need for their countries to learn from their shared history and cultural heritage in order to create a better future, during a joint meeting titled 'Iranian and Russian Cultural Dialogue' being held in Tehran. Mohammad Reza Vahidzadeh, head of the Resistance Literature Faculty at Soore University and secretary of the joint meeting, told Iran Daily reporter "This meeting is part of a knowledge-enhancement program called 'Journey to Iranian Civilization and Art' hosted by the Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought."

A total of 11 researchers and academics from various Russian universities were invited to participate in this 8-day program, which includes 3 days in Isfahan and 5 days in Tehran. Vahidzadeh explained that the participants were selected from 40 applicants based on their scientific and experiential background. "We have been hosting these individuals for 8 days, and during this period, we will hold courses on Iranian philosophy, history, art,

literature, and architecture for the Russian participants."

'Iranian and Russian Cultural Dialogue' included a joint meeting between Soore University professors and students and the Russian guests discussed potential collaborations and exchanges.

Vahidzadeh added that the joint session featured speeches on topics such as "Russia's Interaction with Modernity in the 19th and 20th Centuries," "The Impact of Cinema on Public Awareness," "Carpet in Contemporary Islamic Art," and "Codicology and Historical Documentation in Persian Sources."

Semenyuk Alexander Grigoryevich, a professor at the Moscow Film School and a Russian producer, critic, and programmer, spoke about the influence of cinema on public awareness: "Cinema is not just a form of entertainment; it has the power to shape public opinion, making it a more influential art form than others."

Grigoryevich highlighted the cultural similarities between Iran and Russia, emphasizing the need for both nations to rely on their own cultures and resist Western cultural influence. "Unfortunately, authentic Iranian and Russian



Russian professor Semenyuk Alexander Grigoryevich (R) addresses the audience during the Iran-Russia joint meeting titled 'Iranian and Russian Cultural Dialogue' in Tehran on November 13. ● MOBINA ABDOLLAHPOUR/IRAN DAILY

cultural elements are disappearing from our films, and it's essential for our filmmakers to return to their roots. Collaboration between Iranian and Russian filmmakers is crucial in this regard."

Shahriar Zarshenas, a professor at Soore University, discussed modernity in Iran and Russia, "Both countries share similarities in their approach to modernity. In Russia, the 19th century was a critical period, with two opposing currents: Western modernism and a return to authentic Russian culture. Peter the Great was a key figure in introducing modernism to Russia, while Fyodor Dostoevsky represented the opposing current."

Zarshenas continued, "In the second half of the 19th century, the Western-oriented modernist movement gained power in Russia, leading to the Bolshevik Revolution. Similarly, in Iran, we experienced a pseudo-modernism that ultimately led to the Islamic Revolution. After the Soviet collapse, Russia began to return to its authentic culture, and we must learn from our past and work together to create a better future for our countries."

Olga Mikhailovna Yastrebova, a manuscript expert and researcher at the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, spoke about codicology, "Manuscript studies reveal a country's culture, historical heritage, and national characteristics."

Yastrebova explained that, until the 15th century, all European books were handwritten, but with the invention of the printing press, printed books became widespread. "In Europe, the transition from handwritten to printed books happened relatively quickly, but in Islamic countries, including Iran, the adoption of printed books was slower due to the prevalence of calligraphy and the respect for handwritten manuscripts."

Yastrebova added that, as a result, many Islamic art and cultural works were presented in handwritten form until the early 20th century. "For example, the 'Shahnameh' of Ferdowsi was first published in India using lithography, and the text was based on 17 handwritten manuscripts. This printed version was discovered by Italian scholars in 1987."

Yastrebova also noted that the scope of Persian manuscript publication extends beyond Iran's current borders, with many Persian manuscripts written in Central Asia, modern-day Turkey, India, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Iraq.

Polia Liubimova, another Russian cultural researcher, discussed the topic of carpet in contemporary Islamic art, "Carpet is an element that connects different cultures, as it contains elements of each nation's culture and art. In Islamic countries, carpets feature Islamic and folkloric elements." Liubimova noted that the history of carpet is closely tied to Iran, and from the mid-20th century, carpets began to be recognized as artistic and museum-worthy, rather than just functional items.

## Iran scores double victory in cultural heritage recognition



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Iran has scored a double victory in the field of cultural heritage, with Esfahak village in South Khorasan Province being registered as one of the world's best tourist villages by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and the traditional Isfahan dish, Khoresh-e Mast (a stew made from yogurt), receiving international recognition from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a subsidiary of UNESCO.

"We are proud to announce that Esfahak village, which was severely damaged in the 1978 Tabas earthquake, has been recognized as one of the world's best tourist villages," said Reza Salehi Amiri, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts, adding that the village was selected from among 150 villages worldwide.

This achievement follows the registration of Kandovan village in East Azarbaijan Province last year, bringing the total number of Iranian villages

registered with the UNWTO to two.

Meanwhile, the traditional Isfahan dish, Khoresh-e Mast, has also been registered globally. According to Mojgan Izadi, head of the Tourism and Handicrafts Commission of the Isfahan Chamber of Commerce's, the dish has received an international geographical indication from WIPO, a subsidiary of UNESCO.

"Khoresh-e Mast is one of Isfahan's culinary attractions, and tourists visiting the city are eager to try it," said Izadi, emphasizing the importance of registering traditional foods as intangible cultural heritage. The registration of Khoresh-e Mast and Esfahak village is expected to boost Iran's tourism industry, with Izadi stressing that food is an integral part of a region's cultural identity and can be a major tourist draw. "Food is a significant part of our cultural heritage, and registering our intangible cultural assets can revitalize tourism," she said.