



Pezeshkian says books offer Iran's 'way out' of present challenges

Arts & Culture Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian told a national book day ceremony in Tehran on November 15 that books remain Iran's "way out of problems", warning that societies fall behind when they abandon reading and the lessons of history. Speaking at Tehran's Vahdat Hall during the annual event marking Iran's National Book, Book Reading and Librarian Day, the president called books the "key to survival" in a fast-moving world, president.ir reported. He said Iran's present difficulties stem in part from ignoring the written record. "In times crowded with challenges, it is the book that carries the solution within," he said. A society that stops reading, he added, risks drifting away from global progress. Understanding earlier currents, he said, prevents error. "If we had kept the experience of those before us in front of our eyes, we would not face so many imbalances today," he noted, arguing that Iran has paid the price for overlooking its historical archive.

He warned that neglecting the environment and national resources carries its own repercussion. Nature "sends back trouble" when it is mistreated, he said, stressing that nations suffer when they fail to grasp the worth of their land, water or young population. Reading, he said, teaches how to confront such issues with precision rather than impulse. Turning to institutional reform, Pezeshkian said every public body needs a functioning evaluation system to keep pace with rapid global change. A "living organization", he said, is one that keeps learning. Translation of the best available sources and training staff continuously are essential for restoring efficiency and raising standards across government. He said librarians play a central role in guiding people toward the right material at the right stage of development, given the sheer volume of global publications. Public agencies, he argued, should maintain curated collections relevant to their missions and offer them to staff throughout their careers. Continuous reading, he said,



President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses the audience during a national book day ceremony at Vahdat Hall in Tehran on November 15, 2025.
● president.ir

nurtures a dynamic workforce. "There is no place where we can say we have arrived," he said, urging institutions to embed lifelong learning. The president conceded that Iran's current position "is not worthy of our people", but insisted the route upward still begins with reading. Books, he said, "can push us towards higher ground". He told librarians and publishers that their efforts leave a "lasting mark", while the government intends to draw up policies to strengthen organizational learning and improve the quality of publications used within ministries. Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Abbas Salehi, addressing the same audience, warned that non-academic reading in Iran has fallen sharply over two decades. Surveys, he said, show a long decline in voluntary reading, driv-



en by social pressures and the shift to visual media. The trend, he cautioned, is "a fundamental warning" for society. He called for a tighter link between schools and libraries, arguing that a thinking, skills-based school system needs

reading teachers and reading cultures. "Civilization is built in books," he said. Secretary General of Iran's Public Libraries Institution Azadeh Nazarboland said the nationwide library network, with thousands of service points and

staff, can underpin a modern learning society if managed with clear, targeted policies. She said new approaches centered on diversity and access are being developed to bring libraries closer to communities, schools and universities.

45 cine works from nearly 40 countries to feature at Fajr Int'l Film Festival in Shiraz



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The Fajr International Film Festival will open in the southwestern city of Shiraz on November 26 after a four-year break, bringing 45 films from 30-40 countries and nearly 200 industry guests to its new host city, festival secretary Rouhollah Hosseini said on Saturday. Unveiling the poster of the 43rd edition at a ceremony beside Sa'adi's mausoleum, Hosseini said the organizing team had "pushed hard" to run this year's event to full international standards, stressing that quality and subject matter remained the festival's central criteria, IRNA reported. He called cinema the modern heir to Iran's classical literary tradition, saying Shiraz had long

"fed poetry and enriched cinema". Nine Iranian titles made the final cut, with the rest drawn from overseas submissions. Hosseini confirmed that delegations from 30 to 40 countries were due in Shiraz, adding that two Iranian women directors feature among the participants. The festival will also convene specialized workshops led by foreign instructors, including sessions on poetic cinema, the thematic thread of this year's program. The event marks the first time the international strand of Fajr is held in Shiraz. Hosseini said provincial and national funding streams had been coordinated and pledged full transparency over support from Tehran. The key question, he noted, was whether Shiraz could shoulder an undertaking of this scale. "Everyone must pull together so this festival stays in Shiraz," he said, calling the inaugural year "crucial". Local officials argue the city is ready. Mehdi Ranjbar, head of the Culture and Islamic Guidance Department in Fars Province, pointed to new, state-of-the-art theaters and said no other Iranian city was better suited to host a festival whose main competition centers on poetic cinema. The 43rd Fajr International Film Festival will run from November 26 to December 3, across venues in Shiraz.

Iran wins UNESCO backing for heritage network, cognitive sciences chair

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UNESCO signed off on two major Iranian proposals that will plug the country into global research circuits in architectural conservation and cognitive science, Iran's National Commission for UNESCO said on Sunday. The Paris-based agency cleared the launch of the first UNITWIN network devoted to structural restoration and architectural heritage risk management at the University of Isfahan, and approved a new UNESCO Chair in cognitive sciences at the Tehran-based Institute for Cognitive Science Studies, IRNA reported. The UNITWIN program brings Iran for the first time into UNESCO's interuniversity architecture network. The Isfahan hub will be led by engineering scholar Mehrdad Hejazi, with Krakow's AGH University of Science and Technology named as principal partner.



The consortium spans 11 countries in Asia, Africa, South America and Europe and includes ten universities, two intergovernmental bodies and one state organization. The network was set up to deal with immediate threats to historic sites exposed to earthquakes, floods, storms and rapid climate shifts. Such hazards, Hejazi said, have already put the "structural integrity" of numerous cultural assets at risk. The platform will blend restoration strategies with crisis management and will follow

principles of sustainability and transparency. It will also hold international conferences, publish research and run specialist workshops for conservation teams. Institutions from South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Japan, Italy, Spain, Chile and North Macedonia will contribute to joint field studies and training programs. Iranian officials say African participation is central because the plan matches UNESCO's long-standing commitment to development partnerships with the

continent. UNESCO has also endorsed a new chair titled Cognitive Sciences for Education, Innovation and Human Technology Interaction. It will be hosted by the Institute for Cognitive Science Studies and headed by Hafez Hajikarim Jabari. The institute, founded in 1997, has become a leading center for interdisciplinary work across neuroscience, artificial intelligence, psychology, linguistics and clinical applications. The chair aims to expand research on human and animal cognition, train specialists and push new cognitive technologies into mental health and industrial use. The program will work with hospitals, universities and industry to turn laboratory results into practical tools. The institute called the approval a step towards positioning cognitive science as a "driving force" for future technologies and improved wellbeing.

Iran's 'Mitosis' awarded at Karachi culture festival

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Iran's short film 'Mitosis', directed by Raha Haji Zeinal, clinched an honorable mention for best film at the World Culture Festival Karachi in southern Pakistan, the event's organizers said on Sunday. The festival, now in its second year, has grown into Pakistan's largest cultural showcase. More than 1,000 artists from 140 countries converged on Karachi for a week of screenings, stage performances and exhi-

bitions spanning cinema, theatre, photography and visual arts, ILNA reported. 'Mitosis', written by Ali Safari and produced by Anahita Mogouei and Soran Karimi, has been making the rounds on the international circuit. It recently screened at the Norwich Film Festival in eastern England and at the Palooza Film Festival in Colombia. Iranian actors Mehdi Aboohamzeh and Farid Zangi lead the cast in the short film, which depicts, in the director's words, the "split-second choices" that reshape a life.

