

Tehran Book Fair opens online

President commends books as humanity's living memory

Arts & Culture Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian on Saturday marked the launch of the seventh Tehran Book Fair with a message describing books as "the living memory of human history and civilization" and a lasting embodiment of human wisdom, experience and knowledge. In his statement, Pezeshkian called books a shared heritage through which nations think, engage in dialogue and illuminate their path forward. He said the international book fair reflects society's respect for knowledge and the exchange of ideas. Citing humanity's turbulent past, the president said societies that have successfully navigated crises, wars, extremism and the

darkness of ignorance are those that have placed books, learning and rational thought at the center of their social and cultural life. He warned that in today's unstable global environment—where violence, extremism and domination threaten national security—there is a greater need than ever to promote reading. Sustainable peace, he said, is not forged through destructive power or the shedding of innocent blood, but through knowledge, justice, ethics and mutual understanding among nations, with books serving as the foremost language of such values. Pezeshkian also paid tribute to writers, researchers, translators, publishers and cultural figures, thanking organizers for staging

the event. The seventh Tehran Book Fair, featuring 2,296 publishers, officially opened online on Saturday, May 16, and will run through May 23 under the slogan "Let's Read for Iran." In addition to domestic participants, a number of digital publishers and platforms are taking part, alongside 19 foreign publishers or literary agents. Held virtually—a format tested in previous editions—the fair is framed as an effort to support the resilience of the publishing industry during wartime conditions. The online platform enables readers to access books around the clock with just a few clicks. Books are being offered with a 25% discount—comprising a

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15% publisher reduction and a 10% subsidy from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance—on purchases up to 20 million rials (\$11), with the 15% publisher discount continuing beyond that threshold. Foreign publishers are also offering discounts ranging from 10% to 50% depending on publication year, in addition to a 10% government subsidy. Orders will be delivered free of charge via postal services, and buyers will have access to customer support for their purchases.



Iranian documentary project wins top prize at DocsBarcelona

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The documentary project No Friend but the Mountains, directed and produced by Yasser Talebi, has won the Best Project Award in the industry section of the DocsBarcelona, ISNA reported. The film offers a poetic portrayal of the final days of life in a world on the brink of disappearance. Set deep within the forests and mountains of northern Iran, it unfolds amid mist, snow, the sound of cattle, and the ever-burning fire of an

old cabin. The narrative echoes themes of love, solitude, erosion and the enduring bond between humans and a homeland that is gradually slipping away. In a statement, the jury said the decision was unanimous, praising the project for its clear and compelling storytelling. They noted that the film explores generational change while presenting a multi-generational story of care, love and conflict. Its central characters, the jury added, are portrayed as both vulnerable and resilient, with relationships that



reveal deep layers of affection and tension. DocsBarcelona is considered one of Europe's leading documentary platforms. This year's edition hosted 62 independent projects from 30 countries, alongside more than 700 industry professionals and guests.

Iran unveils Minab Fund at Cannes Film Market

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's cinema sector is attending the 2026 Cannes Film Market (May 12-20) with a new initiative titled the "Minab Fund," introduced by the Farabi Cinema Foundation. The proposed initiative is aimed at backing feature films, documentaries and short projects about the schoolchildren in Minab, who were killed on the first day of the US-Israeli war against Iran, while also promoting Iranian works on this theme at international events.

Meanwhile, the Iranian Independent Filmmakers Association (IFMA) announced its fourth consecutive presence at the Cannes Film Market. The association's booth is hosting filmmakers, industry professionals, journalists and representatives of international festivals. The IFMA pavilion aims to provide a platform for networking, information-sharing and discussions on the current state of Iran's independent cinema. An opening gathering was held on May 13, bringing together guests and industry peers for



an informal reception. The Cannes Film Market, also called Marché du Film, is an annual marketplace for films and one of the world's largest film markets that is held annually in conjunction with the Cannes Film Festival in France.

Virtual Book Fair keeps reading within reach



By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

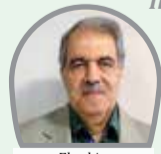
INTERVIEW

As Iran's publishing industry and book market have grappled with multiple challenges amid the fallout from the 40-day war, the seventh Tehran Book Fair has kicked off online. The event seeks to make up for part of the gap left by restrictions on holding the fair in person. Over the past decades, the Tehran Book Fair has been more than just a marketplace for books. As the country's largest cultural event, it has played a key role in promoting reading, fostering connections between publishers and audiences, and generating cultural momentum across society. Now, with in-person events constrained by various considerations, the virtual edition offers easier access to books through digital platforms. Cultural officials have described this edition as part of efforts aimed at "supporting the resilience of the publishing industry during the imposed war," un-

derscoring the growing importance of sustaining the production and distribution cycle of books.

At the same time, some publishing insiders say the recent uptick in bookstore visits and book purchases signals a renewed public turn toward reading in difficult and turbulent times—where books can serve as more than just cultural goods, but as companions in moments of hardship.

In the following interview, Ebrahim Karimi Zanjani, head of the Publishers and Booksellers Union, discusses different aspects of the virtual Tehran Book Fair, the level of public response, its impact on reading culture, and the current state of the publishing industry.



IRAN DAILY: Given the current situation—war, economic pressures and other challenges—how do you assess the decision to hold the book fair virtually?

KARIMI: Any effort related to publishing, distributing and making books available—through whatever platform or

means is possible—is naturally viewed as a positive step by book enthusiasts. The virtual fair, as in previous years when it ran alongside the physical event, is fortunately still in place. While it is regrettable that an in-person edition could not be held under these circumstances, it is hoped that readers will make the most of this opportunity and purchase the books they need, especially given the subsidies and discounts offered by the Ministry of Culture and publishers.

Considering that the fair has traditionally been held in person with strong public engagement, could the absence of a physical edition this year undermine its trajectory or credibility? Can the virtual format replace it?

It can certainly serve as a partial substitute, but not a complete one. That said, this opportunity should be used to step up outreach and public awareness efforts, ensuring that the necessary conditions for public participation are in place, as in previous years. At the same time, audiences can still visit bookstores during the fair period. Those who would typically browse and select books in person at the exhibition can now turn to bookstores instead—searching for and purchasing

books directly there.

The book fair has also functioned as a cultural festival that promotes reading. Can its virtual version have a similar impact?

Holding the fair in any format or platform can be influential in this regard. It is encouraging to see that in recent months, visits to bookstores and book purchases have increased. The reasons may require further examination, but in practice, there has been a noticeable rise in demand, particularly in general and children's books. At the same time, online book purchases have also grown. This is a positive development and should be welcomed. It would be even better to gradually move toward a model where the book fair serves primarily as a venue for showcasing and introducing books, and as a space for interaction among cultural figures—authors, translators and publishers—while actual sales are carried out through bookstores, with readers obtaining their books from these outlets.

How do you assess the reported rise in public interest in books in recent months? Could it be linked to the war and tensions, with people turning to

reading for solace?

Books are the best companions, especially in solitude or under difficult and exceptional circumstances. The increased inclination toward reading may well be linked to the particular conditions experienced in recent weeks. At the same time, it is encouraging that despite all challenges—including rising costs and the higher price of books—the cultural community has shown such interest toward reading and purchasing books.

What is your view on the incentives offered this year to encourage book purchases at the fair?

A subsidy has been provided by the Ministry of Culture, alongside discounts offered by publishers, bringing the total reduction to 25%. In addition, buyers do not pay for delivery. Notably, the publishers' share of the discount has increased this year, even as their costs have risen compared to previous years due to wartime conditions. It is hoped that stronger public response and higher sales will help offset this burden. Given the increased public interest in books, it is expected that turnout for book purchases at this year's fair will remain strong, as in previous years.