



Fars Province reflects Iran's history, cultural identity: Minister

Arts & Culture Desk

Southern Fars Province reflects Iran's history and cultural identity, Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri said Sunday at the opening of the second Shiraz Expo 2026 and the first Shiraz Art Expo in the provincial capital, Shiraz. Salehi-Amiri highlighted the province's rich cultural heritage, historical landmarks and artistic traditions, describing Fars as the birthplace of prominent Iranian literary and artistic figures. He thanked the organizers for creating a platform to show the province's capabilities. Fars is home to numerous historical sites, including part of the Sassanid Archaeological

Landscape of Fars Region, a UNESCO World Heritage site. The property comprises eight archaeological sites in Firuzabad, Bishapur and Sarvestan, featuring architectural remains, palaces and urban layouts dating to the Sassanid Empire, which ruled from 224 to 651. Beyond preserving historical landmarks, Salehi-Amiri stressed the importance of supporting creative talent and strengthening the role of culture and the arts. He praised the province's creative young people and women active in the arts, describing them as valuable assets. He also called for better commercialization of products and easier export procedures,



Iranian Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Reza Salehi-Amiri speaks at an art expo in Shiraz, southern Iran, on October 7, 8682.

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while expressing hope that the exhibitions would lead to memorandums of understanding and contracts that expand cooperation. The exhibitions aim to present Iran's cultural, tourism and handicraft potential alongside its broader economic capabilities. Their lasting impact will depend on whether the event generates concrete agreements and sustained cooperation, helping translate cultural heritage into opportunities for preservation and development.



Children find place in the spotlight during National Children's Week

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Iran's Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults is offering free theater performances to working children and children from underprivileged areas of Tehran. during National Children's Week. The plays "Bastur", written and directed by Niloofar Rafiei, and "God's Cookies", written and directed by Arash Sharifzadeh, are going on stage for groups of children in Tehran on October 11 and 12, the Mehr News Agency reported. The initiative follows an October 8 performance in Qom, a city south of Tehran. The play "I Want to be Born", directed by Behnaz Mahdikhah, was staged for children from underprivileged areas of the province. Organizers



said some of the children were attending a theater performance for the first time. On Sunday, President Masoud Pezeshkian also addressed a ceremony marking National Children's Week, urging children and the wider public to stand together. He said no force or enemy could bend or defeat the Iranian nation's will. National Children's Week runs from



A scene from "God's Cookies" by Arash Sharifzadeh staged for underprivileged children in Tehran during National Children's Week.

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October 7 to 13 under the slogan "Children's smiles, the alphabet of the homeland". Its program guidelines emphasize children's participation, cultural equity and greater attention to children in underprivileged areas. They also call for better access to books, the arts, play and other cultural activities. The free performances are intended to give children greater opportunities to experience theater and participate in cultural life.

Disaster risk reduction must begin before disaster strikes



By Keyvan Akraminia
Natural hazards expert

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

October 12, Iran's National Day for Natural Disaster Risk Reduction, offers an opportunity to reconsider one of the most pressing challenges facing societies today: a challenge that can no longer be addressed simply by providing relief after disaster strikes. A substantial share of disaster losses stems from social, economic, structural and environmental vulnerabilities that develop long before a hazard turns into a crisis. Earthquakes, floods, droughts, storms and other natural hazards do not inevitably lead to disasters. What turns a hazard into a destructive event is the extent of a community's exposure and vulnerability, together with its level of preparedness. From this perspective, reducing disaster losses depends less on what happens when a disaster strikes than on decisions made years beforehand. Experience around the world has shown that investing in prevention, risk reduction and preparedness costs far less than compensating for losses after a disaster. Strengthening infrastructure, enforcing building standards, managing water and soil resources responsibly, preserving vegetation, developing early warning systems, educating the public, fostering a culture of safety and conducting regular drills can all significantly reduce the impact of disasters. A key element of disaster risk reduction is strengthening community resilience. A resilient community is not one that never faces a disaster. It is one that can identify risks, plan for them, respond effectively when an emergency occurs and recover as quickly as possible. Public participation is equally important. Public education should go beyond a few basic recommendations issued when disaster strikes. Every household needs to understand the hazards it faces, identify safe and high-risk areas in its surroundings, have an emergency plan

and learn essential skills such as first aid, firefighting and safe evacuation. Schools, workplaces, neighborhoods and families are four vital links in the chain of community preparedness. Effective disaster management also requires coordination across institutions. No single organization can manage a major disaster effectively on its own. Cooperation among government agencies, emergency services, municipalities, healthcare facilities, the armed forces, law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations, the media and the public is essential to reducing casualties and damage. Clear operational plans, a proper division of responsibilities, emergency communications and joint exercises are crucial to making that cooperation work. Climate change, uneven urban development, population growth in hazard-prone areas and ageing infrastructure have made disaster risks more complex. Policy must therefore move beyond a purely reactive approach towards comprehensive risk management. Under this approach, hazard identification, risk assessment, vulnerability reduction, preparedness, response and recovery form an interconnected chain. Iran's National Day for Natural Disaster Risk Reduction serves as a reminder of a fundamental truth: while hazards cannot always be prevented, many of their devastating consequences can be reduced. Investing today in understanding risks, reducing vulnerabilities and improving preparedness can substantially lower the human and economic costs when disaster strikes. Disaster risk reduction is not the responsibility of a single agency or group. It is a national and social responsibility. A safe society does not wait for disaster to strike before trying to repair the damage. It recognizes risks in advance, prepares for them and strengthens its resilience. This day should be more than a date on the calendar. It should prompt a fundamental question: if a major disaster struck today, how prepared would Iran be?

Hafez's antidote to modern echo chambers



By Reza Gerami
Research of classical Persian poetry

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

October 12 is more than a date on the Iranian calendar. It is an occasion to rediscover a thinker whose significance has not diminished over the centuries but, remarkably, has only grown sharper. While history often gathers dust on the shelves of the past, Khwaja Shams al-Din Muhammad Hafez of Shiraz remains astonishingly alive. Yet to celebrate Hafez merely as a poet of love and mysticism is to overlook the subversive brilliance of his work. A closer reading reveals a rare truth: here was a 14th-century intellectual who anticipated an affliction of our digital age and perhaps even offered an antidote to it: the tyranny of certainty. We live in an age of echo chambers. Modern algorithms feed us content that confirms our existing biases, narrows our horizons and encourages us to retreat into rigid, self-satisfied intellectual enclaves. We are constantly pressed to take sides, apply dogmatic labels and reject anything that gives rise to doubt. In this binary world of "us versus them",

Hafez stands as a powerful counterpoint. His poetry champions intellectual fluidity. One of the less discussed dimensions of Hafez's work is his opposition to totalizing narratives. Throughout his Divan, he appears in the guise of the "rend," an irreverent, unconventional figure who moves through the grey areas of life. The rend is no preacher speaking down from a pulpit. He is a provocateur who delights in exposing the hypocrisy of those who claim to hold the keys to absolute truth. When a hypocrite lays exclusive claim to virtue, Hafez does not respond with a direct argument. Instead, he offers a poem that ensnares the reader in uncertainty. His method might be called semantic subversion. He deliberately crafts verses whose meanings resist a single, fixed interpretation. Is he speaking of divine love or earthly wine? Is he praising the beloved or criticizing a corrupt religious figure at the head of a mosque? He refuses to provide a definitive answer, because he understands that when every question is settled, thought itself begins to die. By denying readers the comfort of simplistic moral conclusions, Hafez compels them to undertake one of the hardest tasks of all: independent thought. That is why his work remains an ever-changing mirror. Hafez refuses to act as a spiritual

master who tells us what to believe. Instead, his poetry invites us to come to terms with the discomfort of not knowing. This approach, the way of the rend, was precisely what Johann Wolfgang von Goethe recognized centuries later. In Hafez, Goethe found more than a master of beautiful verse. He found a kindred spirit who understood that the human soul is too vast to be confined within any single ideology. Goethe's West-Eastern Divan was his own attempt to draw on this Hafezian freedom, treating ambiguity not as a weakness but as a gateway to a broader understanding of humanity. In a world bombarded by voices demanding that we choose a side, Hafez invites us to the tavern, where sinners and saints sit side by side, united by the knowledge that they are all searching for a truth greater than the self. Today, Hafez deserves to be celebrated not merely as a master of rhyme, but as a defender of the radical idea that doubt is a virtue. Amid the pressures to conform, the best way to preserve our humanity is to remain open, keep asking questions and never stop searching. In Hafez's tavern, we are not followers; we are explorers of ourselves. Perhaps that is the most revolutionary lesson a 14th-century poet can teach us.