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Pezeshkian says reading can reshape society, improve governance

Arts & Culture Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that reading could change social attitudes and improve governance.

Speaking at Iran Book Week ceremony in Tehran, Pezeshkian calls for wider access to books and saying public officials had a duty to solve people's problems as Iran.

"Books helped readers draw on past generations' experiences, broaden their outlook and better understand society's challenges.

Reading, he said, encouraged people to examine their beliefs and behavior more effectively than commands or instructions. Books allowed readers to reach their own conclusions rather than resist views imposed on them.

Pezeshkian called for mobile libraries to serve villages, with collections tailored to the needs of local children, young people and adults. Books, he said, could help people learn from history and improve their lives.

Referring to the ethical lessons of the Shahnameh, Iran's national epic composed by Persian poet Ferdowsi (c. 935–c. 1020–1026), and works by Iranian poets and thinkers, he said literature could foster humility, compassion and tolerance while discouraging hostility and division.

"Accepting public office without working to solve people's problems was meaningless. Officials should study how earlier generations addressed challenges and adapt those lessons to current conditions," he added.

Pezeshkian urged government managers to read 'Up and Out of Poverty', a book by Chinese President Xi Jinping. He cited China's transformation over 40 to 50 years from a poor, underdeveloped country into a major regional power able to stand alongside the United States, saying Iran could also overcome its difficulties through knowledge and learning.

He praised librarians, writers, publishers and others promoting reading in cities and villages, saying they could change the thinking and behavior of future generations.



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian addresses Iran Book Week ceremony in Tehran, November 15, 2026.
AHMAD MOEINI JAM/IRNA

FM calls for tourism push to offset sanctions



Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Saturday called for tourism and handicrafts to be used as tools of economic diplomacy to boost foreign currency earnings and cushion the impact of sanctions.

Speaking at a meeting with officials from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts in Tehran, Araghchi said the Foreign Ministry must help reduce the impact of sanctions by mobilizing the country's economic potential while pursuing diplomatic efforts and negotiations to lift them.

He described tourism and handicrafts as key instruments of economic diplomacy and called for stronger links between Iran's border provinces and neighboring regions to expand trade, economic cooperation and tourism.

"Facilitating overland travel for visitors from neighboring countries could help unlock this potential," he said.

Araghchi pointed to Iraq as a major tourism market, saying about three million Iraqi pilgrims visit Mashhad in northeastern Iran each year.

He called for efforts to increase their numbers and encourage them to travel to other parts of the country.

He also urged Iranian embassies and diplomatic missions abroad to pursue economic, trade and job-creation opportunities to boost foreign currency earnings and exports.

"Diplomatic missions could help promote Iranian handicrafts internationally, expand overseas marketing and connect domestic producers with new markets," he said.

Araghchi also identified easier visa procedures, stronger engagement with target tourism markets and cooperation to secure international recognition for Iranian cultural heritage sites as areas for joint action. He said the Foreign Ministry was ready to provide comprehensive support for the cultural heritage ministry's plans.

Culture Minister Seyyed Reza Salehi-Amiri thanked Araghchi, the diplomatic service and Iranian embassies for safeguarding national interests and helping advance his ministry's programs.

$20m allocated for publishing paper: *Culture minister*

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran has allocated $20 million to buy paper for its publishing industry, the culture minister said on Sunday, as annual book purchases fell and publishers faced financial and wartime pressures.

Abbas Salehi said part of the funds had been released and some paper shipments had arrived, with more on the way.

"The government was supporting publishers despite tight financial resources," he said.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of Iran's 34th Book Week in Tehran, Salehi cited an annual survey showing that printed books remained the most popular format.

Some 57.8% of respondents read print books, compared with 12.7% who used electronic books and 15.2% who listened to audiobooks. Another 14.2% used all three formats, he added.


IBNA

The average annual book purchases fell to 8.6 volumes this year from 11 last year and only 12.2% of people who read books were library members, the survey found.

"Paper remained essential to the country's publishing sector and called for stronger public library collections to help address declining household spending on books," Salehi added.

He said 65 libraries had opened over the past two years, while 300 library projects remained unfinished nationwide. Completing them would add 300,000 square meters of library space.

The ceremony also marked the launch of 34 mobile libraries at Mashq Square in central Tehran.

The vehicles will serve 24 provinces. Six provinces, Bushehr, Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Qom, Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad, Golestan and Lorestan, received mobile libraries for the first time.

South Korean university marks 50 years of Persian studies

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran held a cultural week at South Korea's Hankuk University of Foreign Studies from November 9 to 13.

The week marks five decades of Persian language education and Iranian studies at the university through a series of literary, academic and cultural events.

The program in Seoul, South Korea's capital, brought together Iranian Ambassador Ahmad Erfanian, university officials, professors, students and alumni.

Erfanian praised faculty members and students for promoting Persian in South Korea, saying language education and cultural studies helped deepen mutual understanding and strengthen ties between the two nations.

Events included a Persian-language speech contest, a translation competition, meetings with graduates and an alumni gathering for the university's Persian language and Iranian studies department.

Students spoke about their motivation for learning Persian and their interest in Iranian literature and culture.

The closing ceremony took place on November 13 at the Korea Press Center in central Seoul.

Speakers included the head of the Persian language and Iranian studies department, the alumni association president, the head of the Korea-Iran Council and a representative of South Korea's Foreign Ministry.

A video message from South Korean Ambassador to Iran Kim Jun-pyo was also shown.

Three students were recognized for their translation work. An exhibition of handicrafts and events showcasing Iranian culture and cuisine were also held on the sidelines.

The university's Persian language and Iranian studies department was established in 1976.

Over the past five decades, it has trained graduates and promoted knowledge of Iran's language, literature and culture in South Korea.

The cultural week was organized by the department



and the university's alumni association, with support from South Korea's Foreign Ministry, the Iranian Embassy, the Korea-Iran Research Center, the Korean Association of Iranian Studies and the Center for Critical Foreign Languages Education (CFL).