

Late president's literary initiatives

The deceased Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi was always trying to improve the conditions of the literary figures in the country and would turn up at ceremonies related to literature.

One of the characteristics of the president was his attention to cultural events and the issues and troubles of authors, poets, and others who make a living from writing in all its forms. In the three years he held the presidency, he turned up at the Book of the Year Award ceremony each year.

In early March 2022, when health guidelines linked to the COVID-19 epidemic were still being strictly followed across the country, the closing ceremony of the 39th edition of the Book of the Year Award and the 29th Iran's Book of the Year Award was held simultaneously with the presence of president Raisi, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance Mohammad-Mehdi Esmaeili, and other cultural caretakers of the country.

At the ceremony, the president pointed out that books play a very key role in political and economic analyses and said: "For this reason, paying attention to books and reading books is of great importance in the Islamic Republic." He went on to add that books and book reading are of huge significance in Iran. Thanks to such an approach, we're seeing more and more growth and success from educated Iranians in society and academic circles.

Best tool for understanding characters

Referring to the role of the book as a bridge between civilizations, president Raisi maintained in that ceremony: "The book is the best tool for understanding characters. If it were not for the works of Saadi, Hafez, and Avicenna, it would be very hard and even impossible to pin them down. Getting to know a culture and civilization goes hand in hand with getting to know the books, and through books and cultural works, we can share our culture with other countries."

On that day, the president also paid attention to the hardships of the livelihood of Iranian literary figures. "These days, many people who write well are living in difficult conditions. They should be supported."

Duty of protecting culture

The following year, at the 40th Book of the Year Award ceremony, the president touched on the protection of culture as the duty of intellectuals and stressed: "Books can keep a culture safe. It's up to intellectuals to safeguard this function and tradition. Books are the works that can protect a society's culture. You should always keep an eye on books. They're the best way to preserve the history, culture, and knowledge of the nation. Books give us a platform to pass on thoughts and science."

Pointing out the actions of his government in this regard, he explained: "One of the serious plans of this government is to focus on cultural issues. Dealing with economic and livelihood matters shouldn't take our eye off the ball when it comes to books and culture. That includes honoring authors and writers who were active in the book world. We should always double down on these efforts. Books are our way to know the great. The government should pave the way for the emergence of better writers in the book publishing field."



Elites of society

Two years later, president Raisi took part in the 41st edition of the Book of the Year Award ceremony on March 8, 2024, as well. The late president stated there that the perfect human being was the noble prophet of Islam, adding that through books and by looking at the life of the perfect human being and his precious parents, "we can see a role model to build our life upon".

Emphasizing that responsible writing should be promoted, he noted: "We shouldn't cash in on books, writing, and the transmission of knowledge. Of course, everyone has bills to pay, but books and the sharing of science, knowledge, and culture should be put on a pedestal."

The late president stated that some jobs in society always rely on the treasury or handouts and that the life of someone struggling in this regard should be provided for somehow. "But we shouldn't bring the book down to the level of a money-making medium," he said. "There might be some extra income involved, but that's not the point. Writing is one of those jobs that, although it's considered work, shouldn't be about making money."

Addressing the writers present at the meeting, he highlighted: "You are the elites of society and have your own responsibilities. We expect elites to safeguard society from cultural invasion and protect it against deviations. An intellectual isn't someone who leads people towards Western or Eastern thoughts."