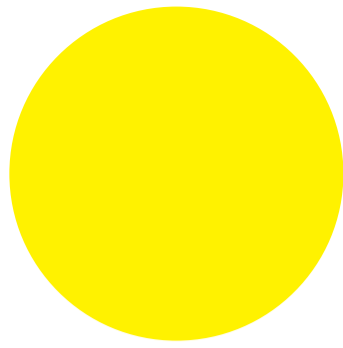


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Picasso's message of peace welcomes Nowruz visitors to Tehran museum



Timeless tribute to Picasso's legacy

By Saeideh Ehsani Rad
Staff writer

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA), widely regarded as one of the world's most significant modern art institutions, has once again opened its doors to showcase a remarkable selection from its treasured collection. Since the museum cannot always put its vast collection on display, the museum occasionally takes the opportunity to bring out its hidden gems under the guise of temporary exhibitions. The last time TMOCA rolled out pieces from its collection was in late November, during the 'Eye to Eye' exhibition. Over the course of three months, the event showcased works by 120 Iranian and international artists, drawing an overwhelming response from the public. More than 2,000 visitors flocked to the museum, making it one of the most well-received exhibitions in recent years. The latest of these exhibitions has placed the spotlight on Pablo Picasso, featuring over 60 of his works spanning different periods of his artistic journey. The exhibition, a rare opportunity for art enthusiasts, presents a series of 12 aquatints from Picasso's 'La Tauro-maquia' ('The Art of Bullfighting'), alongside several other key works from the TMOCA archives, including 'The Painter and His Model,' 'Open Window on the Rue

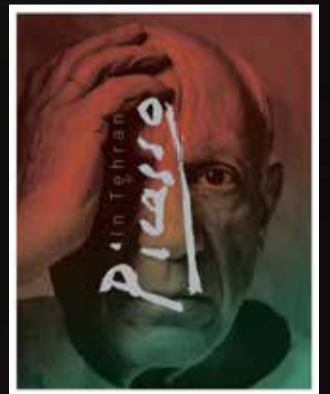
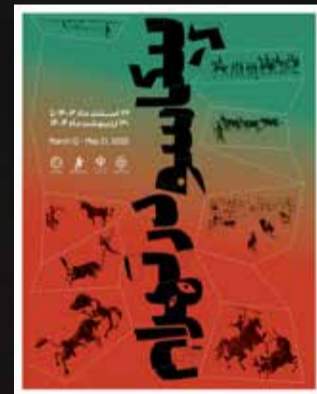
de Penthièvre,' 'Baboon and Young,' and multiple versions of 'Weeping Woman'. Complementing Picasso's works, the exhibition also brings together pieces by internationally acclaimed artists such as Georges Braque, Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, František Kupka, and Joan Miró, as well as Iranian masters like Bahram Dabiri, Bahman Mohasses, Jalil Ziapour, Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam, Mohammad Ali Shiva (Kako), Garnik Der Hacopian, Hannibal Alkhas, and Parvaneh Etemadi.

Nod to art history

Reza Dabirinejad, museum consultant and art heritage expert, stressed the importance of exhibitions like this in revisiting art history. "The museum has the privilege of holding outstanding works from both Iranian and international modern art. Showcasing them allows us to reflect on the evolution of art, both globally and within Iran," he explained. He further pointed out that periodic exhibitions serve as a valuable refresher for younger generations—especially students who were not around a decade ago to witness past displays. "Given the passage of time and generational shifts, these exhibitions provide an essential touchpoint for reintroducing and reinterpreting historical works. Museums are not just about preservation; they also play a crucial role in fostering an educational experience, help-

ing audiences engage with and better grasp the significance of art movements both nationally and internationally." Picasso, his contemporaries The selection of artworks was not random. As Dabirinejad noted, "We deliberately chose works from artists who were Picasso's contemporaries, such as Braque, Delaunay, Léger, Kupka, and Miró, to put his artistic journey into context. By doing so, we give visitors a clearer picture of the artistic and social movements that unfolded around him." Picasso, one of the defining figures of modern art, left a lasting impact not only on global art but also on Iranian modernists. Several Iranian artists, whether during his lifetime or posthumously, found inspiration in his work. Experts curated the exhibition to highlight these connections, drawing parallels between Picasso's various artistic phases and Iranian painters like Mohammad Ali Shiva (Kako), Jalil Ziapour, Garnik Der Hacopian, and Mohsen Vaziri-Moghaddam. "Some of these artists' works bear striking resemblances to Picasso's different periods, demonstrating the extent of his influence," Dabirinejad added. Museum diplomacy, Picasso's timeless message When asked why TMOCA chose to spotlight Picasso at this particular moment, Dabirinejad pointed to the broader role of museums in global dialogue.

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Veep: Iran not to take orders on use of nuclear technology

International Desk

Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said the country will not take orders from anyone for the use of nuclear technology. Addressing the inauguration of the new head of the country's Iranology Foundation in Tehran on Tuesday, Aref said the "essence of Iranian culture is the acquisition of knowledge, even in the most distant parts of the world." Aref said the Islamic Republic is steadfast in its independent nuclear policy. "We must use nuclear technology, like other technol-

ogies, to elevate humanity and solve society's problems. In this regard, we do not consult or take orders, and at the same time, we make it available to everyone," Aref added. Iran's nuclear program has been a source of tensions between Tehran and the West for many years during which Iran has been insisting on the peaceful nature of its nuclear activities while the West has been accusing Iran of deviation in its nuclear energy program towards, what they allege, military purpose. The western countries, led

by the United States, have imposed crippling sanctions on Iran during the years. In 2015, Iran proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with six world powers. However, the US, during the first term of the President Donald Trump, unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions against Tehran, which left the future of the deal in limbo. Now, after nearly 10 years since the signing of the

nuclear deal, Trump has expressed his interest in reaching a new agreement with Iran on its nuclear program. However, his language of threats and imposition of sanctions against Iran have made Iranian officials skeptical of negotiations with the US administration. Trump last month restored his "maximum pressure" campaign on Iran which includes efforts to drive its oil exports down to zero. Iranian officials have said that negotiations under pressure are not meaningful.



Iran's Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref addresses the inauguration ceremony of the new head of the country's Iranology Foundation in Tehran on March 11, 2025.
● IRNA

Senior official: So-called rights advocates biggest rights violators

Iran's deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs said that the so-called rights advocates are themselves the biggest rights violators for subjecting Iran to the most brutal sanctions.

Kazem Gharibabadi made the statement in the opening ceremony of an exhibition showcasing Iranian women's achievements in the capital Tehran on Tuesday, Press TV reported.

"Those who claim to advocate for human rights while they issue resolutions against Iran and criticize the human rights situation in the country are, in fact, the biggest violators of the rights of the Iranian people, as they have endangered the right to life and well-being of millions of Iranians by imposing unjust sanctions," Gharibabadi said.

"If these human rights advocates truly care about the human rights of the people of Iran, they should lift the unilateral sanctions against the Iranian people." Affirming that Iran remains strong despite economic pressures, he added, "These so-called human rights defenders do not even exempt food and medicine. But we are a great nation with vast capacities, and we are proud of our people. Based on national pride and effort, these threats and sanctions



Kazem Gharibabadi

have no impact on the Islamic Republic of Iran. If any other country had endured just 10% of Iran's sanctions, it would have collapsed by now."

Underlining that the Islamic Republic is determined to support and promote human rights, Gharibabadi said Iran is a victim of terrorism, with over 23,000 Iranian men, women and children having been killed by terrorists. Taking to task Western governments for harboring groups responsible for terrorist attacks on Iran, the senior official condemned the "politicization" of human rights and asserted that countries that have favorable political relations with the West enjoy immunity in

the face of international criticisms and rights resolutions.

"We are an independent country and we do not yield to any demands under pressure, and this is part of Iran's history. Iran is a country which enjoys a 7,000-year-old civilization and believes in religious principles and values," Gharibabadi said.

Iran has long been the target of Western sanctions, which have intensified under the administration of US President Donald Trump and its European allies.

The so-called "maximum pressure" campaign has significantly impacted Iran's economy and has been widely condemned as a form of hybrid warfare.

'Extremely deplorable': Araghchi raps US revocation of Iraq electricity waiver

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called the US decision to end Iraq's sanctions waiver for electricity import from Iran "extremely deplorable."

The Iranian foreign minister in a post on X said that Washington has decided to target the innocent people of Iraq "by attempting to deprive them of access to basic services such as electricity, especially ahead of the coming hot months of the year."

He added that Iran will stand with the Iraqi people and remains firm on its commitment to the Iraqi government to repel unlawful US actions.

The United States has ended a sanctions waiver that allowed Iraq to buy electricity from neighboring Iran, in line with US President Donald Trump's policy of exerting "maximum pressure" on Tehran.

In a statement released on Sunday, the US Department of State said the decision not to renew the waiver was made to "ensure we do not allow Iran any degree of economic or financial relief."

Such a waiver was introduced in 2018, when Washington reimposed sanctions on Tehran after Trump abandoned a nuclear deal with Iran negotiated under US President Barack Obama. Back then, Trump imposed sweeping US sanctions on any other country buying Iran's oil. The waiver was extended to Iraq as a "key partner" of the US.

Since returning to the White House for a second term as US president in January, Trump has reinstated his policy of exerting "maximum pressure" against Iran. The chairman of the Iraqi parliament's finance committee has warned



Abbas Araghchi

that any move by Washington to restrict power imports from Iran would cause Iraq's electrical grid to collapse.

The US has urged the Iraqi government to eliminate its dependence on Iranian sources of energy as soon as possible. Currently, approximately 80 percent of Iraq's electricity generation depends on natural gas, making the country heavily dependent on Iranian imports to sustain its power grid.

Three Iraqi energy officials who spoke to Reuters said the country has no immediate alternatives to compensate for the energy imported from Iran, which will cause a significant problem in providing enough electricity to meet domestic consumption. Many Iraqis have to rely on diesel generators or suffer through temperatures that exceed 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) during the summer months.

The US embassy in Iraq has asserted that electricity imports from Iran were only four percent of electricity consumption in Iraq.

But a spokesperson for Iraq's Ministry of Electricity, Ahmad Moussa, said that should gas imports also be forbidden, it "would cause Iraq to lose more than 30 percent of its electricity energy," so the government is looking for alternatives.

Iran heavily burdened by hosting Afghan migrants: UN envoy



International Desk

Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Amir Saeid Iravani said Iran has been shouldering a heavy burden for hosting Afghan migrants - a situation which worsened after the US's withdrawal from Afghanistan in

2021.

Amir Saeid Iravani made the remarks on Monday during a UN Security Council Briefing on the "Situation in Afghanistan."

"Iran's policy on Afghan refugees and migrants remains unchanged and rooted in humanitarian principles. For over four decades, Iran has sheltered millions of Afghans, carrying a heavy burden, one that became even greater after the US's reckless withdrawal in 2021," Iravani said.

He added that neighboring countries should not be left to bear this responsibility without support from the international community.

"Iran and Pakistan need sustained and meaningful assistance. The international community must go beyond rhetoric and take concrete action," the Iranian diplomat said. He underlined that legal Afghan migrants in Iran face no restrictions, and Iranian consulates issue 5,000 visas daily for Afghan migrants.

However, he said Iran will repatriate those who illegally enter Iran due to security concerns, including terrorist threats. Iran is hosting more than six million Afghans at an annual cost of 10 billion dollars.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Pezeshkian places premium on quantum technology for Iran's future

Economy Desk

President Masoud Pezeshkian emphasized the critical importance of achieving quantum technology for Iran's future, particularly in commercial, communication, and defense-security sectors. Speaking at a meeting of the Quantum Strategic Council on Tuesday, Pezeshkian stressed that targeted progress in quantum development requires a clear understanding of the country's existing capabilities and the global landscape, followed by strategic planning to achieve a competitive position in this emerging field.

The meeting, attended by key officials, reviewed recent programs and actions taken in the quantum technology sector. Pezeshkian highlighted the rapid global advancements in emerging technologies, including quantum, and underscored the necessity for Iran to keep pace.

He noted that the first step toward meaningful progress is assessing Iran's strengths and capacities while analyzing the positions of other nations in this domain. This, he said, should be followed by comprehensive planning and policy-making to secure a favorable standing in quantum technology.

Quantum technology, rooted in the principles of quantum mechanics, represents a transformative leap in computing, communication, and cryptography. Unlike classical computers, which process information in

binary bits (0s and 1s), quantum computers use qubits that can exist in multiple states simultaneously.

This allows them to solve complex problems at unprecedented speeds, with applications ranging from drug discovery and financial modeling to secure communications and advanced defense systems. Countries like the United States, China, and members of the European Union have heavily invested in quantum research, recognizing its potential to reshape global economic and security dynamics.

Push for quantum advancement

Iran has recently intensified efforts to develop its quantum capabilities, viewing the technology as a strategic priority. The establishment of the Quantum Strategic Council reflects the government's commitment to fostering innovation in this field.

However, challenges remain, including the need for specialized human resources, advanced infrastructure, and international collaboration.

Pezeshkian's call for a focused approach to education and research aims to address these gaps by concentrating efforts in top universities and research centers, rather than dispersing resources across multiple institutions.

Global competition, strategic implications

The global race for quantum supremacy has significant geo-



political implications. Nations leading in quantum technology are expected to gain a substantial edge in economic and military domains.

For Iran, developing indigenous quantum capabilities is not only a matter of technological advancement but also a strategic necessity to safeguard national security and reduce dependency on foreign technologies.

The government's push for a comprehensive quantum development document within two months signals a sense of urgency to align policies, investments, and research efforts toward this goal.

Pezeshkian also emphasized the importance of training a skilled workforce as a cornerstone of quantum technology development.

He called for avoiding the proliferation of scattered academic units in this field and instead focusing on educating talented students in a few top universities alongside major research centers. This, he said, would enable better planning and support for the advancement of quantum technology.

Additionally, the president urged the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology to collaborate with relevant agencies to finalize a quantum technol-



President Masoud Pezeshkian (C) speaks at the meeting of the Quantum Strategic Council in Tehran on March 11, 2025.

president.ir

ogy development document within two months.

This document is expected to outline the government's role in supporting the technology and provide a framework for decision-making and planning in this critical area.

Pezeshkian stressed that the proliferation of councils in science and technology should not hinder progress or delay decision-making processes.

Iran, Russia sign MoU to jointly manufacture microelectronics



The file photo shows recycled microchips and electrical components for gold recovery at the Petromax JSC waste recycling complex in Lobnya, Russia.

TASS

Iran and Russia signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to jointly produce microelectronic components, a new step in increasing cooperation in the technology sector.

The new agreement is part of growing cooperation between Russia and Iran in the technology sector.

Russia's Ministry of Industry and Trade signed the agreement with the Nano and Micro Technology Development Headquarters, a division of the Iranian Vice Presidency for Science, Technology, and the Knowledge-Based Economy, on Tuesday, the Moscow-based Kommersant newspaper reported.

The agreement will seek to establish sustainable production chains and explore new markets, and is part of growing cooperation between Russia and Iran in the technology sector.

Under the agreement, the Zelenograd Nanotechnology Center (ZNTC), one of Russia's leading firms in nanotechnology, will work closely with Iranian partners, focusing on the production of advanced nanolithography equipment, telecommunication multiplexers, and automotive sensors.

Anatoly Kovalev, general director of ZNTC, expressed enthusiasm about the new partnership, which he said is the company's first cooperation with Iran.

The products developed through this joint initiative are expected to be available in both Russian and Iranian markets.

Iran and Russia have been strengthening their ties through various collaborative efforts, particularly in the fields of science and technology. This partnership has evolved significantly over the years, with both nations recognizing the potential benefits of working together amid external pressures, including sanctions.

The recent memorandum of understanding (MoU) to produce microelectronic components marks a pivotal moment in this evolving relationship. By focusing on sustainable production chains and exploring new markets, both nations aim to leverage their respective strengths in technology development.

The collaboration with the Zelenograd Nanotechnology Center highlights Russia's advanced capabilities in nanotechnology and microelectronics, while Iran's growing expertise in these domains presents opportunities for joint ventures that could enhance their competitiveness on a global scale. This initiative not only aims to meet domestic demands but also positions both countries to navigate international market challenges more effectively.

80m tons of Iran's port capacity unused: PMO

Economy Desk

The caretaker of the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO), while announcing the latest status of Makoran ports, said that the country's port capacity stands at about 295 million tons, but 80 million tons of this capacity remain unused.

Saeid Rasouli noted that to optimize capacity, the government and parliament, with the insightful guidance of the Leader, have taken steps toward realizing maritime-oriented development.

Rasouli, who is also the deputy minister of roads and urban development, talking to ISNA, stated that blue economy plays a key role in national projects as a macro strategy.

He added that boosting blue economy has become a necessity in the Seventh Development Plan and has been emphasized. Synergy among organizations responsible for coastal development can be very effective.

The official continued that capacity building in the country's ports has been aligned with the needs of maritime transport, and significant measures have been taken. Maximum utilization of these capacities should be prioritized.

Rasouli noted that very favorable capacity has been created in the country's ports, and to maximize its use, several key issues must be addressed. These include the country's import and export conditions and identifying solutions to increase maritime transport.

He said that the competitive capaci-

ty of neighboring ports can affect the country's transit and transshipment status. He emphasized the need to accurately assess the current situation in the region to actualize the potential capacity of the country's ports and to pay attention to modern maritime transport models, such as using large-sized ships and hub development.

Regarding the development of the country's commercial ports based on comprehensive plans, Rasouli said that market understanding is crucial in these plans. This has been considered in the 5-, 10-, and 15-year programs.

With the formulation of a comprehensive plan for the country's ports as a roadmap, all development plans in the ports will be implemented accordingly. The deputy minister of transport stated that the performance of ports in the oil and non-oil sectors, both in the north and south of the country, is about 210 million tons, with 70 to 80 million tons of unused capacity. Rasouli said that to develop and boost transit, favorable conditions must be created in the country's ports, and cooperation and synergy among other organizations, as well as the updating of their equipment and facilities, should be ensured.

Rasouli also noted that the goals for the country's ports are being implemented based on comprehensive port plans and prioritization.

During the Ten Days of Dawn (celebrating the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution), various development projects, mostly infrastructure-related, were inaugurated with the presence of the minister of roads and urban development.



IRNA

Regarding projects under study, particularly for the Makoran coast, the location of the Great Makoran Port have been determined, and coordination with the Ministry of Oil has been completed.

He expressed hope that with the special attention of the government and the formulation of a comprehensive plan and development programs for the Makoran Port, land acquisition for the Ports and Maritime Organization will be successfully completed, followed by investments by the organization.

Record broken for container transport

The chairman of the board of directors of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Group's container transport company announced that the record for container transport has been broken in the history of the group's operations despite sanction pressures.

Hamzeh Keshavarz stated that the container transport company, as the container shipping arm of the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Group, moved 100,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) more this year compared to the previous year (1402 in the Persian calendar), significantly improving the container transport record within the group. He attributed this achievement to the mutual trust between the company and cargo owners, adding that efforts by the shipping group and the container transport company are focused on expanding cooperation with customers and providing safe, regular, and cost-effective services.

In this regard, the official noted that the company has maintained steady growth in its operations over the past five years despite sanctions and related limitations. He highlighted that this year, the company has seen a 41% growth in operational performance compared to five years ago.

To be friend of US 'fatal': *Expert*

US keeping to Netanyahu's Clean Break plan



By Jeffrey D. Sachs
Renowned economist

S P E E C H

A packed house in the European Parliament on February 19, 2025, heard American Professor Jeffrey Sachs outline the cold realities of US power, and Europe's subordination to it. At an event titled "The Geopolitics of Peace," hosted by former UN Assistant Secretary General and current BSW MEP Michael von der Schulenburg, Professor Sachs warned the audience, "To be an enemy of the United States is dangerous, but to be a friend is fatal," and urged Europe to have a "real" and independent foreign policy — "A foreign policy that is realistic, that understands Russia's situation, that understands Europe's situation, and that understands what America is and what it stands for." What follows is a short version of his comments edited for clarity.

US foreign policy

When the Soviet Union ended in 1991, the view that we [the US] run the show became even more exaggerated. Cheney, Wolfowitz, and many other names that you will have come to know literally believed this is now a US world, and we will do as we want. We will clean up the former Soviet Union. We will take out any remaining Soviet-era allies. Countries like Iraq, Syria, and so forth will go. And we've been experiencing this foreign policy for now essentially 33 years. Europe has paid a heavy price for this because Europe has not had any foreign policy during this period that I can figure out. No voice, no unity, no clarity, no European interests, only American loyalty.

There were moments where there were disagreements and, I think, very wonderful disagreements. The last time of significance was 2003 in the lead-up to the Iraq war when France and Germany said we don't support the United States going around the UN Security Council for this war. That war was directly concocted by Netanyahu and his colleagues in the US Pentagon. I'm not saying that it was a link or mutuality. I'm saying it was a war carried out for Israel. It was a war that Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith coordinated with Netanyahu. And that was the last time that Europe had a voice. I spoke with European leaders then, and they were very clear, and it was quite wonderful to hear their opposition to an unacceptable war. Europe lost its voice entirely after that, but especially in 2008. What happened after 1991, and to bring us to 2008, is that the United States decided that unipolarity meant that NATO would enlarge somewhere from Brussels to Vladivostok, step by step.

NATO expansion

There would be no end to the eastward enlargement of NATO. This would be the US unipolar world. If you play the game of Risk as a child like I did, this is the US idea: to have the piece on every part of the board. Any place without a US military base is an enemy, basically. Neutrality is a dirty word in the US political lexicon.

Neutrality is perhaps the dirtiest word according to the US mindset. If you're an enemy, we know you're an enemy. If you are neutral, you are a subversive because you're really against us, but just not telling us. You're only pretending to be neutral. So, this was indeed the mindset, and the decision was taken formally in 1994 when President Clinton signed off on NATO enlargement to the east.

However, an understanding was reached that NATO will not move one inch eastward. And it was explicit, and it is in countless documents. Just look up the National Security Archive of George Washington Univer-



● EWAN WHITE/FINANCIAL TIMES

sity, and you can get dozens of documents. It's a website called "What Gorbachev Heard About NATO." Take a look, please, because everything you're told by the US about this promise is a lie, but the archives are perfectly clear.

So, the decision was taken by Clinton in 1994 to expand NATO all the way to Ukraine. This is a long-term US project. This is not due to one administration or another. This is a US government project that started more than 30 years ago. In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote The Grand Chessboard, describing the NATO enlargement eastward.

So, this project began in earnest in 1994, and we have had a continuity of government policy for 30 years until maybe yesterday, perhaps. A thirty-year project. Ukraine and Georgia were the keys to the project. Why? Because America learned everything it knows from the British. We are the wannabe British Empire. And what the British Empire understood in 1853, with Lord Palmerston [together with Napoleon III], is that you surround Russia in the Black Sea, and you deny Russia access to the Eastern Mediterranean. What you're watching is an American project to do the same in the 21st century. The US idea was that there would be Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Georgia all in NATO; That would deprive Russia of any international status by blocking the Black Sea and essentially by neutralizing Russia as little more than a local power. Brzezinski is clear about this geography.

And so, NATO enlargement, as you know, started in 1999 with Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Russia was extremely unhappy about it, but these were countries still far from Russia's border. Russia protested, but, of course, to no avail.



Netanyahu's idea was and is that there will be one state, thank you, it will be Israel, Israel will control all the territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and if anyone objects, we will overthrow them. Well, not Israel, exactly, but more specifically our friend, the United States. Now, the only wrinkle is that maybe the US will "own Gaza" instead of Israel owning Gaza. Netanyahu's idea has been around at least for 25 years. It goes back to a document called "Clean Break" that Netanyahu and his American political team put together in 1996 to end the idea of the two-state solution. You can also find that document online.

Then George Bush Jr. came into office. When 9/11 occurred, President Putin pledged all support to the US. And then the US decided around September 20, 2001, that it would launch seven wars in five years!

You can listen to General Wesley Clark on video speak about that. He was NATO's Supreme Commander in 1999. He went to the Pentagon around September 20, 2001. He was handed a piece of paper explaining the prospect of seven US wars of choice. These were, in fact, Netanyahu's wars.

The US government plan was partly to clean up [remove] old Soviet allies and partly to take out supporters of Hamas and Hezbollah. Netanyahu's idea was and is that there will be one state, thank you, it will be Israel, Israel will control all the territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, and if anyone objects, we will overthrow them. Well, not Israel, exactly, but more specifically our friend, the United States. That's been US policy until this morning. We don't know whether it

will change. Now, the only wrinkle is that maybe the US will "own Gaza" [according to President Trump] instead of Israel owning Gaza.

Netanyahu's idea has been around at least for 25 years. It goes back to a document called "Clean Break" that Netanyahu and his American political team put together in 1996 to end the idea of the two-state solution. You can also find that document online.

So, these are long-term US projects. It's wrong to ask, "Is it Clinton? Is it Bush? Is it Obama?" That's the boring way to look at American politics, as a day-to-day or year-to-year game. Yet that's not what American politics is.

After 1999, the next round of NATO enlargement came in 2004 with seven more countries: the three Baltic states, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, and Slovakia. At this point, Russia was pretty upset. This second wave of NATO enlargement was a complete violation of the post-war order agreed at the time of German reunification. Essential-

ly, it was a fundamental trick, or defection, of the US from a cooperative arrangement with Russia.

As everybody recalls, because we just had the Munich Security Conference last week, President Putin went to the MSC in 2007 to say, "Stop, enough is enough." Of course, the US did not listen. In 2008, the United States jammed down Europe's throat its long-standing project to enlarge NATO to Ukraine and to Georgia. This is a long-term project.

As you know, Viktor Yanukovich was elected as president of Ukraine in 2010 on the platform of Ukraine's neutrality. Russia had no territorial interests or designs in Ukraine at all. I know. I was there off and on during these years. What Russia was negotiating during 2010 was a 25-year lease to 2042 for Sevastopol naval base. That's it. There were no Russian demands for Crimea or for the Donbas. Nothing like that at all. The idea that Putin is reconstructing the Russian empire is childish propaganda. Excuse me. Yet the United States decided that Yanukovich must be overthrown because he favored neutrality and opposed NATO enlargement. It's called a regime change operation.

Maidan Revolution, its aftermath

Now, in 2014, the US worked actively to overthrow Yanukovich. Everybody knows the phone call intercepted by my Columbia University colleague, Victoria Nuland, and the US ambassador, Peter Pyatt. You don't get better evidence. The Russians intercepted her call, and they put it on the Internet. Listen to it.

At the end of 2021, Putin put on the table a last effort to reach a modus operandi with the US, in two security agreement drafts, one with Europe and one with the United States. He put the Russia-US draft agreement on the table on December 15, 2021. Following that, I had an hour-long call with [National Security Advisor] Jake Sullivan in the White House, begging, "Jake, avoid the war. You can avoid the war. All



World-renowned economist Jeffrey D. Sachs (r) addresses the European Parliament on February 19, 2025.
● THE CHINA ACADEMY

the US has to do is say, 'NATO will not enlarge to Ukraine.' And he said to me, 'Oh, NATO's not going to enlarge to Ukraine. Don't worry about it.'

I said, 'Jake, say it publicly.' 'No. No. No. We can't say it publicly.' I said, 'Jake, you're going to have a war over something that isn't even going to happen?' He said, 'Don't worry, Jeff. There will be no war.' These are not very bright people. I'm telling you, if I can give you my honest view, they're not very bright people. They talk to themselves. They don't talk to anybody else. They play game theory. In non-cooperative game theory, you don't talk to the other side. You just make your strategy. This is the essence of non-cooperative game theory. It's not negotiation theory. It's not peacemaking theory. It is a unilateral, non-cooperative theory if you know formal game theory.

So, we know what happened next: the Biden administration refused to negotiate over NATO enlargement. The stupidest idea of NATO is the so-called open-door policy, based on Article Ten of the NATO Treaty (1949). NATO reserves the right to go where it wants, as long as the host government agrees, without any neighbor — such as Russia — having any say whatsoever.

Well, I tell the Mexicans and the Canadians, 'Don't try it.' You know, Trump may want to take over Canada. So, the Canadian government could say to China, 'Why don't you build a military base in Ontario?' I wouldn't advise it. The US would not say, 'Well, it's an open door. That's Canada's and China's business, not ours.' The US would invade Canada.

Ukraine war, nuclear arms control

What was Putin's intention in the war? I can tell you what his intention was. It was to force Zelensky to negotiate neutrality. You should understand this basic point, not the propaganda claiming that Russia's aim was to conquer Ukraine with a few tens of thousands of troops. The idea was to keep NATO out of Ukraine. And what is NATO, really? It is the US military, with its missiles, its CIA deployments, and all the rest. Russia's goal was to keep the US away from its border. Why is Russia so interested in this? Consider if China or Russia decided to have a military base on the Rio Grande or in the Canadian border, not only would the United States freak out; we'd have war within about ten minutes. When the Soviet Union tried this in Cuba in 1962, the world nearly ended in nuclear Armageddon.

All of this is gravely amplified because the United States unilaterally abandoned the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2002 and ended the relative stability nuclear arms control framework by doing so. This is extremely important to understand. The nuclear arms control framework is based, in large part, on trying to deter a first [decapitation] strike. The ABM Treaty was a critical component of that stability. The US unilaterally walked out of the ABM Treaty in 2002. This blew a Russian gasket. So, everything I've been describing about NATO enlargement has occurred in the context of the US destruction of the nuclear framework. Starting in 2010, the US began to put in Aegis anti-ballistic missile systems in

Poland and then later in Romania. Russia doesn't like that. One of the issues on the table in December 2021 and January 2022 was whether the United States claimed the right to put missile systems in Ukraine. According to former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, Blinken told Lavrov in January 2022 that the United States reserves the right to put missile systems in Ukraine.

That's, my dear friends, is your putative ally. And now the US wants to put intermediate missile systems in Germany. Remember that the United States walked out of the INF treaty in 2019. There is no nuclear arms framework right now. Essentially, none.

When Zelensky said a few days after [the start of the war] that Ukraine was ready for neutrality, a peace agreement was in reach. I know the details of this because I talked to key negotiators and mediators in detail and have learned much from the public pronouncements of others. Shortly after the start of negotiations in March 2022, a document was exchanged between the parties that President Putin had approved, and that Lavrov had presented. This was being managed by the Turkish mediators. I flew to Ankara in the spring of 2022 to hear first-hand and in detail what happened in the mediation. The bottom line is this: Ukraine walked away, unilaterally, from a near agreement.

End of Ukraine war

Why did Ukraine walk away from the negotiations? Because the United States told them to and because the UK added icing to the cake by having Bojo [Boris Johnson] go to Kyiv in early April to Ukraine to make the same point. Keir Starmer turns out to be even worse, even more of a warmonger. It's unimaginable, but it is true. Boris Johnson explained, and you can find it on the web, that what's at stake here is nothing less than Western hegemony! Not Ukraine but Western hegemony. Michael von der Schulenberg and I met at the Vatican with a group of experts in Spring 2022, and we wrote a document explaining that nothing good can come out of continued war. Our group argued strenuously, but to no avail, that Ukraine should negotiate immediately because de-

lays will mean massive deaths, risk of nuclear escalation, and possibly an outright loss of the war.

I wouldn't want to change one word from what we wrote then. Nothing was wrong in that document. Since the US talked Ukraine out of the negotiations, perhaps one million Ukrainians have died or been severely wounded. And American senators who are as nasty and cynical as imaginable say this is a wonderful expenditure of US money because no Americans are dying. It's the pure proxy war. One of our senators nearby New York State, Connecticut's Richard Blumenthal, said this out loud. Mitt Romney said this out loud. It's the best money America can spend. No Americans are dying. It's unreal.

Now, just to bring us up to yesterday, the US-Ukraine Project has failed. The core idea of the project all along was that Russia would fold its hand. The core idea all along was Russia can't resist, just as Zbigniew Brzezinski argued in 1997. The Americans thought the US surely has the upper hand. The US will win because we're going to bluff them. The Russians are not really going to fight. The Russians are really going to mobilize. We'll deploy the economic "nuclear option" of cutting Russia out of SWIFT. That will destroy the economy. Our sanctions will bring Russia to its knees. The HIMARS will do them in. The ATACMS, the F-16s, will do them in. Honestly, I've listened to this kind of talk for more than 50 years. Our national security leaders have spoken nonsense for decades.

I begged the Ukrainians: stay neutral. Don't listen to the Americans. I repeated to them the famous adage of Henry Kissinger, that to be an enemy of the United States is dangerous, but to be a friend is fatal. Let me repeat that for Europe: To be an enemy of the United States is dangerous, but to be a friend is fatal.

Trump administration

Let me end with a few words about President Donald Trump. Trump does not want Biden's losing hand. This is why Trump and President Putin are likely to agree to end the war. Even if Europe continues with its warmongering, it won't matter. The war is ending. So, please, get it out of your system. Please tell your



MUNICH SPEECH | 2007

We are seeing a greater and greater disdain for the basic principles of international law. This is extremely dangerous. We have reached that decisive moment when we must seriously think about the architecture of global security.

VLADIMIR PUTIN
President of the Russian Federation



The photo shows Russian President Vladimir Putin speaking at the Munich Security Conference in 2007. Parts of his speech are quoted in the photo.



Trump does not want Biden's losing hand. This is why Trump and President Putin are likely to agree to end the war. Even if Europe continues with its warmongering, it won't matter. I know this prospect of a negotiated peace has been met with sheer horror in these chambers, but this is the best news that you could get. I've tried to reach out to some of the European leaders. I've said, 'Don't go to Kyiv, go to Moscow. Negotiate with your counterparts. You're the European Union. You're 450 million people and a \$20 trillion economy. Act like it.'

colleagues, 'It's over.' It's over because Trump doesn't want to hold on to a loser. The one that will be saved by the negotiations taking place right now is Ukraine. The second is Europe.

Your stock market has been rising in recent days because of the "horrible news" of negotiations and potential peace. I know this prospect of a negotiated peace has been met with sheer horror in these chambers, but this is the best news that you could get. I've tried to reach out to some of the European leaders. I've said, 'Don't go to Kyiv, go to Moscow. Negotiate with your counterparts. You're the European Union. You're 450 million people and a \$20 trillion economy. Act like it.'

The European Union should be the main trading partner of Russia. Europe and Russia have complementary economies. The fit for mutually beneficial trade is very strong. By the way, if anyone would like to discuss how the US blew up Nord Stream, I'd be happy to talk about that too. The Trump administration is imperialist at heart. Trump obviously believes that the great powers dominate the world. The US will be ruthless and cynical, and yes, also vis-à-vis Europe. Don't go begging to Washington. That won't help. It would probably spur the ruthlessness. Instead, have a true European foreign policy.

So, I'm not saying that we're in the new age of peace, but we are in a very different kind of politics right now, a return to great power politics. Europe needs its own foreign policy, and not just a foreign policy of Russophobia. Europe needs a foreign policy that is realistic, understands Russia's situation, understands Europe's situation, understands what America is and what it stands for, and that tries to avoid Europe being invaded by the United States. It's certainly not impossible that Trump's America will land troops in Greenland. I'm not joking, and I don't think Trump is joking. Europe needs a foreign policy, a real one. Europe needs something different from, 'Yes, we'll bargain with Mr. Trump and meet him halfway.' Do you know what that will be like? Give me a call afterward. Please have a European foreign policy. You're going to be living with Russia for a long time, so please negotiate with Russia. There are real security issues on the table both for Europe and Russia, but the bombast and the Russophobia are not serving your security at all. It's not serving Ukraine's security at all.

This American adventure that you signed on to and for which you are now the lead cheerleader has contributed to around 1 million Ukrainian casualties.

On Middle East, China

On the Middle East, incidentally, the US completely handed over foreign policy to Netanyahu 30 years ago. The Israel lobby dominates American politics. Please, have no doubt about it. I could explain for hours how it works. It's very dangerous. I'm hoping that Trump will not destroy his administration and far worse, the Palestinian people, because of Netanyahu, whom I regard as a war criminal who has been properly indicted by the ICC.

The only way for Europe to have peace on its borders with the Middle East is the two-state solution. There is only one obstacle to it, and that is the veto of the United States in the UN Security Council, at the behest of the Israel Lobby. So, if you want the EU to have some influence, tell the United States to drop the veto. In this, the European Union would be together with around 160 other countries in the world. The only ones that oppose a Palestinian state are basically the United States, Israel, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Argentina, and Paraguay.

The Middle East is a place where the European Union could have a big geopolitical influence. Yet, Europe has gone silent about the JCPOA and Iran, and around half of Europe has gone silent over Israel's war crimes and blockage of the two-state solution.

Netanyahu's greatest dream in life is the war between the United States and Iran. And he's not given up. It's not impossible that a US-Iran War will also come. Yet Europe could stop it — if Europe has its own foreign policy. I'm hoping that Trump will end Netanyahu's grip on American politics. Even if not, the EU can work with the rest of the world to bring peace to the Middle East. Finally, let me just say with respect to China, China is not an enemy. China is merely a great success story. That's why it is viewed by the United States as an enemy because China has a bigger economy than the United States (measured in international prices). The US resists reality. Europe should not do so. Let me repeat, China is no enemy and no threat. It is a natural partner with Europe in trade and in saving the global environment.

The full article appeared on ScheerPost.



Then-US assistant secretary of state Victoria Nuland (l) and then-US ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt (c) greet Ukrainian President-elect Petro Poroshenko in Warsaw, Poland, on June 4, 2014. Poroshenko replaced Viktor Yanukovich following the 2014 Ukrainian revolution.

WIKIMEDIA

AFC Champions League Elite:

Duran, Ronaldo send 10-man Esteghlal packing, fire Al Nassr into last eight

Sports Desk

Colombian striker Jhon Duran struck twice and Cristiano Ronaldo found the net from the spot as Al Nassr defeated Persian Gulf Pro League club Esteghlal 3-0 in the second leg of their AFC Champions League Elite last-16 tie in Riyadh's Al-Awwal Park on Monday.

The victory saw the Saudi heavyweight join Al Sadd, which beat Al Wasl 4-2 on aggregate, in progressing to April's quarterfinals in Jeddah.

Having missed the first-leg goalless draw in Tehran, Ronaldo returned to the starting lineup with Duran and Sadio Mane providing support from the flanks.

But it was Esteghlal who had the first shot on target in the second minute when Mehran Ahmadi cut into the box from the right, but his tame effort was comfortably gathered by Al Nassr keeper Bento.

Al Nassr gradually took control, repeatedly targeting Ronaldo with crosses into the box. The breakthrough came in the ninth minute when Duran capitalized on Seyyed Hossein Hosseini's careless pass, calmly lobbing the ball over Esteghlal's keeper.

Hosseini denied Ronaldo's 18th-minute free-kick, but the five-time Ballon d'Or winner's persistence paid off when he intercepted Raphael Silva's poor back pass and found Mane inside the box with a sublime back-hill touch, before the former Liverpool striker was brought down



Al Nassr's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates his goal during a 3-0 victory over Esteghlal at the AFC Champions League Elite last 16 at Al-Awwal Park, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 10, 2025.

● AFC

six-yard-box to strike home into the bottom left corner.

"There is not much to say, we conceded two goals at the beginning of the match, then one of the players was sent off which made the match difficult for us, and Al Nassr deserved to win," head coach Miodrag Bozovic, who was in charge of the Blues bench for only a third game, said after the game.

"Al Nassr handled this match correctly, and the match ended early after the two goals and the red card.

"We had a negative thing in this match, which was losing tackles, and whoever loses tackles always loses the match," added the Montenegrin.

The result wrapped up a dreadful campaign for the two Tehran archrivals at the revamped Asian elite clubs' competition, underlining the widening gulf between the Iranian club football and its Middle East rivals.

Persepolis – the dominant force of the Iranian top flight for nearly a decade – failed to progress to the knockout phase after finishing ninth in the west zone's 12-team table in the league stage. The two Iranian clubs managed a combined three victories across 18 games in the competition, suffering eight defeats in total.

by Zobeir Niknafs, with the Portuguese captain slotting home the spot-kick for his seventh goal in this year's competition.

Things went from worse to worst for

the Tehran Blues in the closing stages of the first half when Ahmadi elbowed Mohammed Al Fatil and was sent off for a second booking after a VAR review.

Esteghlal had Hosseini and the wood-

work, on a couple of occasions, to thank for avoiding a humiliating scoreline in the second half, but Duran still settled the tie in the 84th minute after collecting substitute Angelo's pass inside the

'I was destroyed': Qasempour on painful loss to Sadulaev at World Championships

UWW – "I've thought about it a lot. Of course, it's in the past and thinking about it won't change anything. But I've thought a lot about why I made a mistake in those four seconds and I could have managed the wrestling differently and finished it very easily."

Kamran Qasempour stares at the empty walls of the interview room as he recalls the heartbreaking and shocking 5-3 loss to Abdurashid Sadulaev in the semifinal of the World Championships last October.

The images of Qasempour holding his head in hands after the loss went viral on social media. Sadulaev was praised for his champion mindset and his ability to script a remarkable late turnaround. Qasempour was consoled by his fans, who urged him to not lose heart.

Those comforting words felt hollow at that point and Qasempour felt "lost."

"The reality is that the fighting spirit and the feeling I had on the first day of the competition caused all those feelings to disappear and I was destroyed. I couldn't control myself and I just wanted the competition to end and go back," Qasempour says, with his voice

breaking as he recalls his thoughts. For five minutes and 55 seconds, Qasempour controlled the 92kg semifinal against Sadulaev, a two-time Olympic champion known for his must-win attitude. A loss would have reinforced the belief that the Sauldaev aura was fading. A win for Qasempour, a two-time world champion at 92kg, would make him only the third wrestler to beat Sadulaev.

But with five seconds remaining, Sadulaev snapped the Iranian down, spun behind, then managed to fling him to the mat for a 4-point takedown.

"It was also very difficult for me to come to terms with the loss," Qasempour recalls. "After the match, I felt very bad and didn't sleep all night. I was awake from the intensity of thought and pressure, and it was very difficult for me. Due to the pressure I was under, I took four painkillers after the match."

A few hours of sleep was never going to be enough for Qasempour to return for his bronze-medal bout against American David Taylor, which he lost 6-2. Four months have passed since that day in Tirana, a city Qasempour returned for the

Muhamet Malo Ranking Series last week and captured the gold medal. Though not the World Championships and there was no Sadulaev in the field, Qasempour managed to bring a smile on his face as he stood on the podium. However, memories flashed back.

"When I was going up to the podium [after winning gold], I thought again that I could have been standing on the Worlds podium a few months ago, not this tournament," he said. "But that's how sports are, and if professional athletes want to continue their path, they must know that winning and losing are part of sports."

Qasempour did take comfort from the messages he received. Yet, he is unable to move on from those five seconds of lapse in concentration.

"People gave me a lot of good energy and praised me constantly, which shows the kindness of the people," he says. "But what I wanted didn't happen and the result wasn't as I wanted. It would have been better if it ended with a good result."

As the new Olympic cycle begins, Qasempour wants to make amends. There will be many pit stops before he can be at



Iranian Kamran Qasempour (front) concedes a late takedown against Russian Abdurashid Sadulaev during their 92kg semifinal at the World Championships in Tirana, Albania, on Oct. 30, 2024.

● UWW

his first Olympics and he wants to capture every gold medal that comes his way.

"There are three more World Championships left before the Olympics [in 2028]," he says. "The World Championships are very important to me, and

after that, it's the Olympic medal that I want to have in my medal showcase. In the year leading up to the Olympics, I will make the decision and compete in a weight class so that I can participate in the Olympics."



● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

Iranians head to Karate 1 PL in Hangzhou

Sports Desk

Iranian men's and women's teams left Tehran on Monday night for the second series of the 2025 Karate 1 Premier League – starting Friday in Hangzhou, China.

Former world bronze medalist Sara Bahmanyar will head-

line the Iranian female kumite squad, chasing a second -50kg gold medal at this year's event following her triumph in January's season opener in Paris.

Joining Bahmanyar in the women's team are Fatemeh Sa'adati (-55kg), former Asian champion Atousa Golshadnejad (-61kg),

and Mobina Heidari (-68kg), with Fatemeh Sadeqi looking to add the female kata prize to her Series A gold in Tbilisi in January. In the men's draw, Ali Meskini (-60kg) Mahdi Khodabakhshi (-84kg), reigning Asian gold medalist Saleh Abazari (+84kg) will represent Iran across different kumite events.

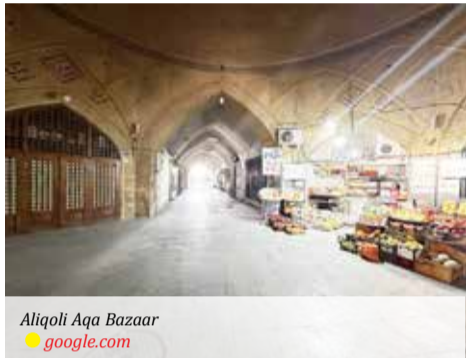
Experience living history in Isfahan's bazaars

Iranica Desk

Isfahan, a city celebrated as a living museum of historical treasures, offers far more than its iconic landmarks like Imam Square (Naqsh-e Jahan Square), the Grand Bazaar, magnificent bridges, and opulent palaces. It also boasts an impressive collection of local bazaars, each possessing a distinct urban identity that reflects the specific characteristics of its surrounding region. These bazaars, tangible manifestations of Safavid urban planning that continued to evolve through the Qajar era, stand as a valuable legacy, vividly illustrating the dynamic urban life of those bygone periods.

*Among these, Aliqoli Aqa, Bidabad, Dardasht and Hassanabad bazaars emerge as the most historically significant markets. Intimately nestled within the hearts of neighborhoods that share their names, they showcase exquisitely designed *chahar su* (intersections), gracefully crowned with towering domes. These intersections serve as welcoming guides, leading visitors through captivating rows of shops. Today, these shops function as vital centers for both the production and sale of local handicrafts, while also continuing to diligently meet the everyday needs of the local residents who depend on them, IRNA wrote. Exploring Isfahan's smaller historical bazaars provides a valuable dual perspective, revealing both the lively hustle and bustle of neighborhood residents engaged in purchasing their daily necessities — highlighting the bazaars' enduring vitality — and the exquisite display of handcrafted goods carefully curated for the enjoyment of tourists.*

Distinct and independent from Isfahan's expansive Grand Bazaar, these smaller ones reside within the very core of the city's ancient neighborhoods, adding to their unique charm. Their appeal as prominent tourist attractions lies in their compelling showcase of urban planning and architectural design, deeply embedded within the rich historical fabric of Isfahan. This experience is further enhanced by the presence of adjacent mosques, traditional bathhouses, and historical water fountains, all thoughtfully opened to welcome and accommodate visitors.



Aliqoli Aqa Bazaar
● google.com

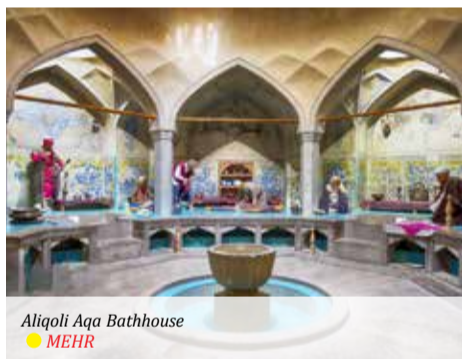
Aliqoli Aqa

Aliqoli Aqa is recognized as one of the most beautiful and comprehensively designed local bazaars in Isfahan, serving as a cherished relic of the Safavid era. Its stunning and elongated *chahar su* gracefully guides visitors through rows of shops extending in all directions, many of which have remarkably maintained their original functions and purposes. Some diligently supply the essential needs of local residents, while others proudly offer a diverse array of handicrafts and unique antiques. In addition, the Aliqoli Aqa Bazaar prominently features a large and historically significant *saqqakhaneh* (public drinking place), adding to its cultural richness. A visit to this exceptional local bazaar is simply not complete until you have had the opportunity to approach the historic entrance of the Aliqoli Aqa Mosque, beautifully adorned with elegantly swaying willow branches. Adjacent to the mosque lies the Tomb of Abu Mas'ud Razi, also known as Abu Mas'ud Khanqah, celebrated for its exquisite and rare mosaic tiles dating

back to the ninth century AH. Furthermore, immediately adjacent to the Aliqoli Aqa Bazaar, you'll discover a beautiful historical bathhouse bearing the same name. This bathhouse has been thoughtfully repurposed and now serves as the Anthropology Museum of Isfahan, adding yet another layer of cultural depth to the area.

The Aliqoli Aqa Bathhouse showcases stunning seven-color tilework and intricate *moaraq* (mosaic) styles that date back to the Safavid period, while its captivating wall paintings preserve remnants from both the Qajar and Pahlavi eras, offering a fascinating glimpse into different periods of Iranian history.

When you visit the Aliqoli Aqa Bazaar, you'll encounter a remarkable collection of historical and aesthetically pleasing features, all thoughtfully commissioned and built by a prominent and influential figure of the Safavid era named Ali Qoli Aqa. His vision and patronage have created a lasting legacy that continues to captivate visitors today.



Aliqoli Aqa Bathhouse
● MEHR



Bidabad Bazaar
● neshan.org

Bidabad

The Bidabad Bazaar derives its distinctive name from the neighborhood in which it is strategically located — a neighborhood that, long before the bazaar's establishment, was widely recognized and admired for its abundance of massive and remarkably sturdy willow trees. Before one even enters the bustling atmosphere of the market itself, the historically significant Seyyed Mosque comes into view, standing as a testament to the area's rich cultural heritage. This exceptional mosque is widely regarded as the finest example of Qajar-era architecture and tilework in the entire city of Isfahan. It was meticulously constructed by a prominent and influential cleric who resided during that era.

The Seyyed Mosque boasts an impressive architectural design, featuring four grand *ivans* (vaulted spaces that open onto a courtyard) and a stately clock tower that adds to its overall grandeur. The mosque is also adorned with extensive and intricately detailed tile decorations, in which the color red is prominently and pur-

posefully used to embellish depictions of vases and scenic landscapes.

The construction of the Bidabad Bazaar is believed to be roughly contemporary with the construction of the Seyyed Mosque, suggesting a period of significant development and architectural innovation in the area. The owners of the shops, in addition to diligently supplying the daily necessities of the neighborhood residents, also actively engage in the sale of locally produced handicrafts, contributing to the preservation of traditional arts and crafts. Furthermore, some of the rooms within the bazaar are specifically designated as handicraft workshops, providing a dedicated space for artisans to practice their skills and create their wares.

The Bidabad and Aliqoli Aqa bazaars are conveniently located on the same axis, allowing tourists to easily and seamlessly access one from the other, further enhancing the overall visitor experience and encouraging exploration of the area's diverse cultural offerings.



Seyyed Mosque
● tashimnews.com

Dardasht

Dardasht is widely considered to be one of the oldest and most historically significant neighborhoods in Isfahan, boasting a remarkable array of historical monuments and landmarks that attest to its rich past.



Dardasht Bazaar
● google.com

However, the local market of this vibrant neighborhood stands out as one of its most captivating and beautiful features, inviting tourists to immerse themselves in the heart of the city's historical and ancient fabric. The initial construction of this bazaar is believed to date back to the Deylamite and Seljuk periods, indicating a long and storied history. However, what we observe of it today is primarily reflective of the architectural styles and influences of the Safavid and Qajar periods, showcasing the evolution of design and craftsmanship over time. Within this vibrant bazaar, visitors can discover a wide selection of Isfahan's renowned handicrafts, including intricately designed *qalamkar* fabrics, known for their distinctive patterns and vibrant colors. The bazaar's path eventually leads to the Dardasht Minarets, architectural marvels that stand as testaments to the region's historical significance, as well as the tomb of Sultan Bakht Agha, a revered figure in local history. The two beautiful Dardasht Minarets are the surviv-

ing remnants of the grand gate of a once-magnificent school that flourished during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Al-Muzaffar, showcasing the architectural splendor of the era.

The outer surface of the dome of the tomb of Sultan Bakht Agha is adorned with exquisite decorations consisting of turquoise and lapis lazuli tiles set against a backdrop of meticulously arranged bricks. This intricate design, in its harmonious connection with the Dardasht Minarets, presents a visually pleasing and captivating tableau that showcases the glory and architectural achievements of different historical periods. The Dardasht Bathhouse is yet another historically significant and visually spectacular building within this vibrant bazaar and is thoughtfully open to welcome tourists and visitors. This bathhouse, also known as Aqa Mo'men, was originally constructed during the reigns of Shah Safi and Shah Abbas II by a person of the same name, highlighting the role of individual patronage in the creation of these cultural landmarks.

Continuing along the path of the Dardasht Bazaar, visitors will eventually reach the Atiq Jaame Mosque, a site of immense historical and cultural significance that is also proudly registered on the World Heritage List.



Dardasht Bathhouse
● borna.news



Hassanabad Bazaar
● imna.ir

Hassanabad

Hassanabad Bazaar stands as one of the oldest and most historically significant covered markets in Isfahan, representing a vital part of the city's cultural heritage. It served as the southern gate of Isfahan during the eighth century AH. Among the ancient and well-preserved sections of this historic market, a long *chahar su* still stands as a testament to its rich past. However, due to urban development and the construction of modern streets and residential buildings, it has become physically separated from the continuous and interconnected structure of the bazaar.

This historic structure extends all the way to Naqsh-e Jahan Square, establishing a vital connection between these two significant landmarks. It also features a number of caravanserais and chambers, many of which now serve as workshops and sales outlets for local

handicrafts, contributing to the preservation and promotion of traditional arts and crafts. The Rahimeh Khatoun Caravanserai, located within this market, is a particularly noteworthy site, serving as a dedicated space where talented handicraft artists create and showcase their diverse range of handcrafted goods.

Within the Hassanabad Bazaar, visitors can also discover the revered shrine of Imamzadeh Ahmad, a cherished relic from the Safavid period, along with a beautiful *saqqakhaneh* (public drinking fountain) situated adjacent to it.

Researchers have identified a total of 19 local bazaars in Isfahan up until 1971, based on careful analysis of historical documents. However, by the 2000s, this number had decreased to 15, highlighting the challenges faced in preserving these vital cultural and economic spaces in the face of modernization and urban development.



Hassanabad Bazaar
● imna.ir

Iran's science, tourism ministries ink cooperation agreement

Minister: Universities central to national identity, civilizational development

Arts & Culture Desk

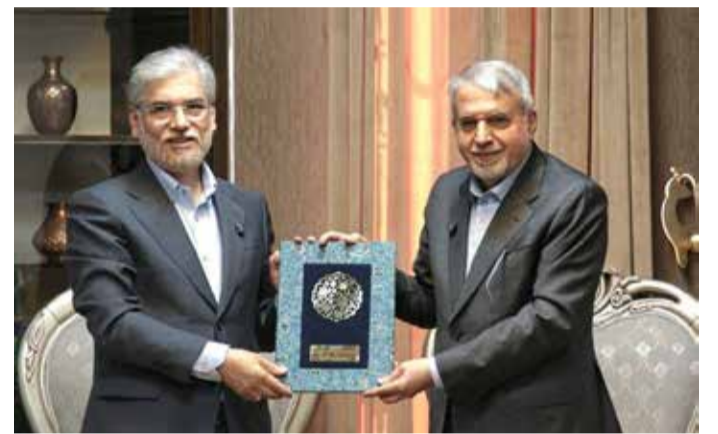
Iran's Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts and the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology have signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance collaboration between cultural and academic institutions. During the ceremony, Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri, emphasized the vital role of universities in fostering civilization and national identity, IRNA reported. He called for stronger collaboration between the two sectors, stressing that this partnership is essential for achieving shared goals. The agreement aims to harness

scientific, educational, and research capacities to elevate cultural heritage, tourism, and handicrafts while transforming their preservation. It establishes a framework to integrate scientific, technological, and cultural efforts to safeguard national heritage and promote creative industries. The memorandum outlines efforts to engage students and academic elites in protecting cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage, apply scientific methods and innovative technologies in preservation, and support research and theses on Iran's history, culture, and civilization. It also highlights the role of scientific associations and cultural student organizations in national and international programs,

fostering creative industries, and strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems within the sector. Both ministries will collaborate on scientific, cultural, and entrepreneurial events to promote sustainable tourism, organize technological businesses, and utilize new technologies for heritage preservation. They also pledged to host events honoring national traditions like Nowruz. Salehi Amiri reiterated that universities are central to strengthening national identity and emphasized the importance of joint festivals and conferences as tools to achieve this goal. He highlighted the potential of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute and universities working together to ad-

Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts, Reza Salehi Amiri (R), and Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Hossein Simaei Sarraf, hold the agreement signed on March 10, 2025, aimed at strengthening collaboration between cultural and academic institutions. ● YJC

vance research. Minister of Science, Research, and Technology, Hossein Simaei Sarraf, stressed the significance of universities in promoting national identity and called for increased collaboration. He noted that under the Seventh Development Plan, vocational training is set to increase by 40%, with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage as a key partner. Sarraf described strengthening a sense of national belonging



and understanding Iran's heritage as a fundamental necessity. Starting April 4, 2024, scientific and cultural trips will be launched nationwide to deepen students' appreciation of their identity. He also announced free access to historical sites and museums for students and faculty, initiated by Salehi Amiri, as a model for future university-heritage collaborations.

Minister calls for urgent library expansion to revitalize reading culture in Iran

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Abbas Salehi, underscored the vital importance of expanding libraries during the 21st anniversary of the establishment of the country's public library system. Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 13th Razavi Reading Festival, Salehi said, "If we want reading to not become a thing of the past, we must take library development more seri-

ously with the support of both public and private resources." Salehi added, "Reading in our country does not reflect the culture and civilization of Iranians, and positive changes must occur in this area," IRNA reported. The minister stressed the need for better access to books, pointing out that the economic conditions have led to a decline in cultural consumption within households. "The cultural consumption basket of families

has decreased in recent years," he said, adding that the share of books in household consumption dropped from 0.18% in 2017 to 0.10% in 2023. Salehi elaborated on the repercussions of this trend, saying, "If this gap in access to books is not addressed, reading will face serious challenges." He emphasized that libraries serve as a crucial second source of access to books, particularly as families are increasingly constrained by their bud-

Salehi revealed that there are only 49 million books in Iran's public libraries, describing this figure as inadequate. He advocated for a serious commitment to enhancing library resources, adding, "If we want to cultivate a nation of readers, we must focus more on securing library resources." Comparing Iran's library infrastructure to other countries, Salehi noted that there are approximately four libraries for every 100,000 people in Iran, while countries like Russia have

61, Italy 21, and India 11. "To prevent reading from becoming a relic of the past, we must take library development more seriously with the help of public and private resources," he emphasized. The minister called for making libraries more appealing, indicating that over 50% of those who enjoy reading do not visit libraries. "Improving libraries involves various strategies, and we must eliminate obstacles," he added.

Picasso's message of peace ...

"Museums don't operate in a vacuum; they respond to the times. Selecting Picasso for this exhibition was a deliberate decision—a form of 'museum diplomacy' aimed at fostering cultural exchange. By exhibiting Picasso's works, TMOCA extends an invitation to the world, signaling that art remains a universal language for peace and understanding." He emphasized that many of Picasso's works, such as 'Guernica,' 'Weeping Woman,' and 'Dove of Peace,' were deeply influenced by war, conflict, and human suffering. "These pieces remind us of the hardship and turmoil that past generations endured. Unfortunately, similar tensions persist today, as world leaders and political forces continue to stir up instability. Through this exhibition, we are sending a subtle but firm reminder of the value of peace. This isn't just about showcasing artwork—it's about reigniting an essential humanitarian message."

Excitement of a full Picasso collection

One of the standout aspects of this exhibition is its comprehensive approach to Picasso's work. "Although some of his pieces have been displayed individual-

ly over the years, never before has such a vast collection of his works been exhibited together in Iran," Dabirinejad noted. After careful consideration, curators decided to bring out a diverse range of Picasso's works, including sculptures, oil paintings, artist books, and an extensive selection of prints. "Picasso was a master of utilizing every available medium—at a time when artists lacked today's digital tools, he turned to printmaking, handcrafted editions, and multiple reproductions to ensure his work reached a wider audience," he explained. This strategy has allowed museums across the world, including TMOCA, to house and share his art with the public. One of the most remarkable inclusions in this exhibition is a set of four artist books, three of which are being unveiled for the first time. Among them is 'La Tauromaquia,' featuring 26 intricately designed images, a reflection of Picasso's Spanish heritage and the country's deep-rooted bullfighting culture. Dabirinejad believes this exhibition offers a broader perspective on Picasso's career. "Most people immediately associate Picasso with Cubism, but this showcase

demonstrates the incredible breadth of his artistic experiments over different periods. It offers visitors a chance to see him in a new light—as an artist who never stopped pushing boundaries."

Layered narrative experience

This exhibition serves as a golden opportunity for visitors, particularly art students, to gain deeper insight into Picasso's work. As Dabirinejad put it, "Seeing Picasso's artworks sheds light on the social backdrop and the artistic evolution he lived through." The curators have aimed to craft a narrative-driven showcase—not only chronicling the artist's life and societal influences but also unraveling the unique story behind each piece. Every artwork carries its own weight in meaning, shaped by the circumstances under which it was created. This layered, contextual storytelling goes beyond mere technique; it enriches the audience's grasp of the cultural and social dimensions behind the artist's work. One key aspect of museum pieces—especially contemporary art—is that we have a wealth of surrounding information that

helps us frame their significance. That's why this exhibition has taken a twofold approach: Showcasing both the intrinsic narrative of the artworks and their broader historical and artistic context. From a research standpoint, the exhibition team pulled out all the stops to ensure scholarly rigor. As Dabirinejad explained, "With the help of scientific advisors, we aimed to bolster the exhibition's research dimension." Every museum exhibition goes through a meticulous process: First, identifying the artworks, then conducting extensive research and documentation. Throughout this preparatory phase, experts undertook a series of scientific and technical preservation measures to ensure the pieces were displayed in their best possible condition. Criticism often arises when artworks appear in exhibitions with visible damage, dust, or creases—raising concerns about poor conservation. However, it's a given that delicate artworks naturally undergo changes over time due to exposure to humidity, temperature fluctuations, and other environmental factors. To counteract this, museum professionals constantly work behind



the scenes to preserve and restore these pieces, ensuring they remain in optimal shape for both display and long-term conservation.

Crown jewel: Picasso's masterpiece

When it comes to housing an exhibition of Picasso's works, preservation is paramount. Dabirinejad emphasized, "The moment an exhibition featuring collection pieces kicks off, safeguarding them becomes our top priority." With only a few exceptions that couldn't be displayed in Iran, the museum made a concerted effort to bring out every Picasso work

in its collection. This extensive showcase includes 66 pieces, with one of the standout attractions being 'The Painter and His Model,' a signature Picasso masterpiece making its debut in this exhibition. Running until May 21, the exhibition is expected to draw in waves of visitors, especially during the Nowruz holiday. "We believe that with the enthusiasm of artists, critics, and the media, this exhibition will be a gateway to showcasing Iran's rich cultural and artistic heritage on a global scale. Judging by the buzz already surrounding it, a tremendous response is on the horizon."