



TMoCA to open foreign photo archive ahead of photography's bicentenary

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INTERVIEW

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA) will display more than 200 photographs from its foreign photo collection to mark the 200th anniversary of the invention of photography, the museum's director said, presenting a selection of global photographic heritage spanning from 1838 to 1980. Speaking to Iran Daily, Reza Dabirinejad said the museum had prepared an exhibition titled "This Face Remains" last year, dedicated to its collection of foreign photographs. The exhibition was designed as the museum's narrative of the world's photographic heritage, but its opening was delayed for various reasons, including the outbreak of war. "The exhibition will finally open this year, on the eve of Photography Invention Day (August 19) and to mark the

200th anniversary of photography," Dabirinejad said. "It will present a selection of works by photographers from different countries around the world." He said the collection features works from around 10 countries, with more than 200 photographs dating from 1838 to 1980 on display. The oldest work in the collection is a photograph by Talbot from 1838. The director added that the exhibition will open on Saturday, August 16, allowing visitors to explore part of the museum's valuable foreign photography archive, a collection that documents a significant chapter in the history of photography's development and evolution worldwide.

Six historic photo albums for first time

Dabirinejad also announced that six historic photo albums will be displayed for the first time as part of the exhibition. "These photographs were taken outside Iran and in-

clude images of people of Iranian descent," he said. According to the museum director, the works were captured by photographers from Russia, the Ottoman Empire, Japan and France, and date back to the Qajar era and earlier periods.

He described this section of the exhibition as particularly significant from both historical and visual perspectives, saying it provides an opportunity to showcase a collection of historic images of Iran recorded by foreign photographers alongside other works from the museum's photographic archive.

Permanent gallery planned

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art is also pursuing the establishment of a permanent exhibition space to display works from its collection, Dabirinejad said. He explained that the museum's exhibitions are currently organized mainly on a rotating and seasonal

basis, with new exhibitions held approximately every two to three months on different themes. However, the museum plans to create a permanent section in the future to showcase prominent and valuable works from its archive.

"The necessary follow-ups for establishing this section are underway, and we hope that, with the required conditions, regulations and facilities in place, we can add this permanent gallery to the museum's offerings this year and keep a selection of works from the collection on continuous display," he said.

Dabirinejad highlighted the importance of the TMoCA's collection, describing it as Iran's most significant museum of modern and contemporary art and one of the country's most renowned cultural institutions. The museum houses a collection of major works from Iranian and global modern art, with selected pieces periodically brought out of storage for public



Reza Dabirinejad
Iran Daily

viewing. He added that the museum's rich collection places it among the important repositories of modern art in Iran and the world, making it one of the pioneering institutions for modern art in the Middle East and West Asia. Before its establish-

ment, few museums in the region focused on modern art. The director noted that the museum preserves works by many leading figures in the history of modern and contemporary art, adding that one of its distinguishing features is that its col-

lection is not limited solely to Iranian contemporary art. "Unlike many museums in the country, the TMoCA does not rely only on domestic artistic heritage; it also represents part of the modern and contemporary art of the world," he said.

Post-war reconstruction lies in restoring nation's memory, identity, hope: Deputy minister

National initiative launched to protect cultural heritage after wartime damage



The photo shows the interior of the Golestan Palace in downtown Tehran which sustained damage in the wake of an Israeli strike on a nearby police station in March 2026.

● IRNA

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's post-war reconstruction should go beyond restoring damaged structures and focus on preserving a nation's historical memory, identity and hope, Iran's Deputy Minister for Cultural Heritage Ali Darabi said on Sunday as the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry launched the first academic pre-event of the national "Cultural Heritage and Crisis" congress at the National Museum of Iran. Darabi said the initiative was aimed at developing stronger preservation frameworks and documenting Iran's cultural heritage experiences following recent wartime damage to historical assets. The initiative seeks to turn wartime experiences into practical conservation strategies, focusing on documenting historical memory, strengthening social resilience and improving international mechanisms for protecting cultur-

al heritage during conflicts, IRNA reported. Darabi said cultural heritage had become a "subject of war" during what he described as the "third imposed war," as he addressed experts, researchers and cultural officials at the event titled "Post-war Requirements: Protection and Restoration of Cultural Heritage." He said attacks on Iran's cultural and historical assets had caused material and intangible losses, with 149 historical sites and museums, including five UNESCO-listed sites, affected. At the same time, he said, cultural resilience and public participation demonstrated that heritage remained a source of national cohesion and identity even during crises. "Cultural heritage is not only a collection of historical monuments; it is part of a society's collective memory and social capital," Darabi said. "Even in the most difficult circumstances, it can preserve unity, strengthen resilience and renew hope."

He said the ministry's responsibility was to expand specialized knowledge, develop practical protection frameworks and record Iran's experience in managing heritage during emergencies. The first pre-event is part of a broader program of 12 academic gatherings planned throughout the year with the participation of cultural institutions, research bodies and scientific organizations to create a coordinated national approach to heritage protection. Darabi said recent conflicts had underscored the need to examine the two-way relationship between war and heritage. "The question is whether heritage influences war and its dynamics, or whether war shapes heritage," he said, adding that Iran's experience showed cultural activity continued even under severe pressure. He pointed to historical examples, including the establishment of heritage institutions during the Iran-Iraq War and the registration of the ancient Khorramabad archaeological site on the UNESCO World Heritage List during the recent 12-day conflict, alongside the approval of Iran's national cultural heritage strategy.

Darabi criticized the international protection system for failing to provide effective safeguards for heritage during conflicts and called for reforms to strengthen preventive and deterrent mechanisms.

"When some states disregard their obligations under international conventions and institutions remain only observers, Iran must take an active role in improving global heritage protection frameworks," he said. Drawing lessons from South Korea's post-war reconstruction, Darabi said rebuilding heritage required more than restoring damaged structures. He highlighted five key lessons: Preserving historical records before reconstruction, conducting detailed assessments before restoration, engaging younger generations through new technologies, transforming damaged sites into cultural and economic opportunities, and preserving selected war scars as historical evidence. He said tools such as three-dimensional scanning, drones, photogrammetry, digital twins, artificial intelligence and virtual reality could help safeguard and document heritage for future generations. "Real reconstruction is not only about building new structures," Darabi said. "Nations recover when they rebuild their cities while also restoring confidence in the future, respect for the past and their historical memory"

Indonesia seeks broader cultural exchanges with Iran



Arts & Culture Desk



Indonesia's Culture Minister Fadli Zon called for expanded cultural exchanges with Tehran during a meeting with Iran's representative at the 11th BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting in Bhopal, India, on Saturday, urging a renewed push to deepen ties in literature, cinema and heritage cooperation. Zon said his understanding of Iran's rich civilization was shaped by a previous visit to the country, praising the hospitality of the Iranian people and describing cultural relations between the two nations as "always at a good level." "Today, we need to rebuild, strengthen and expand these relations with a new outlook suited to current circumstances," Zon said, IRNA wrote. The Indonesian minister expressed interest in increasing his country's participation in cultural programs with Iran, particularly the Tehran International Book Fair, which he described as an opportunity to further connect the two countries through publishing and literature.

Indonesia's Culture Minister Fadli Zon (R) gives a gift to Iran's Deputy Culture Minister Mohsen Javadi during a meeting in Bhopal, India, on August 8, 2026.

● IRNA

During the meeting with Mohsen Javadi, Iran's deputy culture minister for cultural affairs and the country's representative at the BRICS gathering, officials also discussed joint film productions, cooperation on preserving and restoring historical heritage, and expanding collaboration in tangible and intangible cultural industries. The two-day BRICS Culture Ministers' Meeting opened in Bhopal on August 8 under the theme "Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability." The event brings together culture officials from BRICS member states to discuss cultural cooperation frameworks. The BRICS cultural meeting runs through August 9, ahead of the group's 18th leaders' summit scheduled for mid-September in New Delhi.