

### Cultural diplomacy and the ambassador who crafts narratives

The South Korean ambassador to Iran appeared in Isfahan wearing a tie adorned with Persian verses in Nasta'liq script. His cultural diplomacy as an ambassador can be evaluated as highly expressive, instructive, and impactful. Kim Junpyo has consciously, through his cultural actions, fostered a sense of intimacy and cultural closeness between the two countries and demonstrated how important cultural diplomacy can be—even through cultural signs and symbols. The question now is: to what extent does Iran utilize this capacity and soft power of its own?

Kim Junpyo, the South Korean ambassador to Iran, who previously performed Persian songs such as "Jan-e Maryam" and "Porsoon Porsoon," this time during a visit to Isfahan Science and Research Park and several other centers, appeared wearing a tie featuring Persian verses in Nasta'liq script. This decision, following his past cultural actions, shows that the Korean ambassador is consciously—and likely with a specific plan—taking steps to connect with the hearts and social fabric of the Iranian people.

This small gesture is an example of what experts call "cultural diplomacy." Beyond speeches and negotiations, cultural diplomacy can convey intimate and informal messages, opening a window to the heart of a society. A tie with Persian verses is not merely an accessory but a symbol of respect for the host culture and an effort to build trust, establishing a kind of human connection with the target society. This choice by the Korean ambassador clearly shows how even small details, such as the type of tie worn, can be highly effective in international relations.

From this perspective, the Korean ambassador can be seen as a kind of content creator—not only an official representative of his government but someone who crafts narratives through the language of culture. Performing Persian songs and wearing a Nasta'liq-patterned tie are all part of an informal narrative that people can relate to. From this viewpoint, it can be said that public diplomacy is impactful when the audience forms a human connection with the ambassador and his actions, rather than merely observing the role of an official figure. Therefore, the most successful ambassadors today are those who go beyond protocol, craft narratives, and convey a story about their country to the world.

Of course, this action by the ambassador can also be examined from another angle: national branding. When a foreign ambassador utilizes the cultural elements and symbols of a country, it shows the world that this culture and art have international influence and credibility. Nasta'liq script, Persian music, and classical literature are all part of Iran's soft power, derived from a rich civilization—assets that, if used purposefully, can help create a cultural image of Iran on the international stage. Thus, by using a Nasta'liq-patterned tie, the Korean ambassador effectively highlighted this soft power and, without the need for official propaganda, attested to Iran's cultural strength. But why do such seemingly simple actions have such a profound impact? The answer lies in human connection. Communication psychology suggests that people are more influenced by emotional commonalities and shared symbols than by formal speeches and dry arguments. A tie, a song, or even a sincere smile can break down walls of mistrust, creating space for dialogue and interaction. Of course, it's worth noting that this approach is not unique to South Korea. There are many global examples showing that leaders and diplomats strengthen their connection with people by using cultural symbols and adopting the traditional attire of host countries.



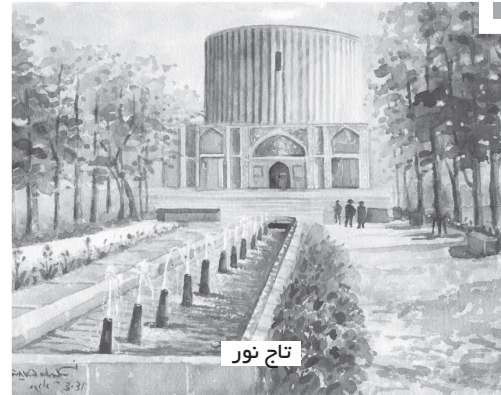
## Hamidreza Soleimani: Painter of Secrets, Guardian of Light, and Architect of Memories



نگهبان خاطرهها



دارالسرار سایهها



تاج نور

In the world of Hamidreza Soleimani, painting is not merely a representation of reality; it is a ritual for transcending it—a journey from surface to depth, from form to meaning, from color to mystery. His works are like windows into hidden existence, where philosophy, poetry, and memory intertwine, inviting the viewer to an existential reflection. In this article, we explore five of his works: Nahid's Nest, The House of Shadow Secrets, The Guardian of Memories, Crown of Light, and The Whisper of the Iwan—five fragments of light, each an independent world yet part of a larger metaphysical constellation.

**■ Nahid's hides**  
This piece stands as a visual

talisman, stood the border between myth and reality. Nahid, the goddess of water and love, is present not as a being, but as a magnificent absence. By removing the center and emphasizing the margins, Soleimani invites the viewer into a void where meaning resides. Half-ruined columns, stairs leading nowhere, and a sky seemingly awaiting the rain of awareness—all signal a world in transformation.

**■ The House of the Shadow of Secrets**

In this work, shadows are not mere absences of light but bearers of secrets. The classical architecture, with its tall columns and blue reflections, functions as a collective memory—a

memory in which every shadow is a recollection of something that has been, or perhaps never has been. Through watercolor and gouache, Soleimani blurs the line between reality and imagination; each drop seems like a whisper from a past that still lives.

**■ The Guardian of Memories**

The stone lion in the foreground, with its open mouth and fixed eyes, is not a symbol of power but the keeper of memories. Beside it, a human face with a questioning expression invites reflection on identity and memory. The calm pool, architectural reflections, and flying birds all signal the passage of time and the continuity of meaning. This piece acts as a mirror, not

reflecting the past but reconstructing it.

**■ Crown of Light**

In Crown of Light, Soleimani depicts light not as a physical phenomenon but as a metaphysical essence. Symmetrical fountains, flowers of the ing path, and a cylindrical structure all serve a ritual—a rite for entering the center of meaning. The work resembles a temple where every step is a question, and every glance an incomplete answer. Here, history, nature, and humanity converge in unity.

**■ The Whisper of the Iwan**

The final work, The Whisper of the Iwan, resembles a musical composition played with color and form. The central iwan

serves as a gateway inward, where architecture, garden, and sky engage in an endless dialogue. Autumn trees, antique lamps, and arched windows all contribute to a space where whispers are heard not by the ears but by the heart. With each work, Hamidreza Soleimani creates a world in which the viewer is not merely an observer but a fellow traveler. He is a painter of secrets—secrets that flourish not in clarity but in ambiguity. His works act as portals to self-discovery, memory, and light. In his world, art is not an end but the beginning of inquiry. He has always expressed that art, like white wings, is meant for attaining perfection: design your wings, fly when needed, and never become prey to darkness.

### 148 km of freeway to be inaugurated by late Mar. 2026



The Head of Iran's Construction and Development of Transportation Infrastructure Company said that out of about 200 kilometers of freeway planned for the current Iranian calendar year (began on March 21), 52 kilometers have already been inaugurated and 148 kilo-

meters will be ready for opening by the end of the year (March 20, 2026). Houshang Bazvand announced during a joint meeting with investors and project managers that the country is witnessing unprecedented acceleration in the completion and inauguration of

freeway projects in the current year. The deputy transport minister stated that by the end of the current year, a total of 198 kilometers of freeway will be inaugurated nationwide — a figure about 47 percent higher than the approved target.

### Iran war room chief highlights strategic readiness in meeting with lawmakers

In a meeting with members of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, the commander of the Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters outlined Iran's strategic readiness, emphasizing the Armed Forces' ongoing efforts to strengthen both defensive and offensive capabilities amid evolving regional threats. Committee members met with Major General Ali Abdollahi, commander of the

Khatam al-Anbiya (PBUH) Central Headquarters, using the occasion to honor the sacrifices of the Armed Forces and share their perspectives. At the opening of the meeting, Ebrahim Azizi, chairman of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, commemorated Iran's martyrs—particularly the fallen commanders—and said the purpose of the visit was to reaffirm the Parliament's full support for the Armed

Forces and to follow up on strengthening the country's defense capabilities. Major General Abdollahi outlined the mission of the Central Headquarters. He said its core responsibility is to focus on wartime planning and conduct strategic and operational assessments during crises. He noted that continuous evaluation of the Armed Forces' readiness is one of the headquarters' key duties. Given the

evolving nature of threats and the characteristics of future warfare, he said, the Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic are prioritizing enhanced defensive and offensive preparedness. "The enemy should know we are always monitoring them and remain fully prepared," Abdollahi warned. "If they miscalculate and act against the Islamic Republic, we will impose costs far greater than anything they expect to gain."

### Iranian industrialists discuss expanding economic relations with Spain

In a recent meeting of the Industry and Mining Committee of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA), private sector representatives hosted the head of the Spanish Embassy's Economic Office in Tehran. During this meeting, the capacities and opportunities for commercial cooperation between companies of the two countries were reviewed. During this session, in a dialogue between Iranian private sector representatives and Iñigo Gil Casares, both sides emphasized laying the groundwork for expanding economic relations between the two countries amid the international environment for Iran. They also deemed greater interaction between the two countries' chambers of commerce essential for identifying trade opportunities and introducing reputable companies. Hervik Yarijanian, Chairman of

the Tehran Chamber's Industry and Mining Committee, began the meeting by referring to the longstanding political and economic relations between Iran and Spain. He mentioned the recent visit of an Iranian trade delegation to Catalonia and noted that during the negotiations, an agreement was reached to draft a cooperation memorandum between the Tehran Chamber and the Catalonia Chamber. Hessameddin Hallaj, Deputy for International Affairs and Trade Development of the Tehran Chamber, referred to the interaction between the Tehran Chamber and the Spanish Embassy's economic section in recent years. He noted that the outcome of these interactions, under current conditions, would accelerate the development of economic relations between the two countries in the absence of international tensions.

He emphasized that during the sanctions period, some European countries that were at the forefront of sanctions against Iran remained among Iran's trade partners, demonstrating that economic cooperation can continue even under tough sanctions. The head of the Spanish Embassy's Economic Office in Tehran, referring to the closeness of the two countries in some areas, including the temperament of business owners, stated that with the signing of the JCPOA, Spain was among the first countries to rapidly initiate economic relations with Iran. Iñigo Gil Casares emphasized that the Spanish Embassy's economic section in Tehran is committed to advancing economic relations between the two countries and their enterprises. However, he noted that there are several general obstacles to trade between the two countries, including the lack of direct banking and



monetary exchanges, which have diminished trade relations between Spanish companies and Iran. He expressed hope that with the easing of political tensions and the lifting of sanctions, the environment for economic cooperation between the two countries would become secure and expanding. The head of the Spanish Embassy's Economic Office also stated that companies and economic actors of the two countries can be kept up-to-date on cooperation through specialized webinars, online

conferences, and direct visits by Iranian private sector representatives to Spain for dialogue with its economic sector. Following this, members of the committee and representatives of companies and associations present at the meeting discussed potential areas of economic cooperation between Iranian companies and the Spanish market. They also exchanged views on fostering interactions through the Tehran Chamber and the Spanish Embassy's economic section.

### Iran, Russia discuss stronger cooperation against money laundering

Iran and Russia have held talks on expanding bilateral and multilateral cooperation to combat money laundering and terrorism financing, according to the Iranian Embassy in Moscow. Kazem Jalali, Iran's ambassador to Russia, met with Yuri Chikhanchin, head of Russia's Federal Financial Monitoring Service (Rosfinmonitoring), to discuss enhanced coordination between the two countries as well as within the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism and Financing of Terrorism (EAG), a regional body affiliated with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Chikhanchin thanked Iran for its initiatives and active participation in EAG meetings and expressed readiness to exchange expertise and provide technical guidance aimed at increasing Iran's engagement with member states. The EAG, one of nine FATF-style regional bodies, held its forty-third plenary in Minsk with 35 delegations from 18 countries and more than 15 international organizations. Chikhanchin was selected as the group's next Delegates at the 43rd plenary meeting of the EAG approved a technical assistance package for Iran, marking a notable step in the country's engagement with regional and international financial-crime bodies. Iranian representatives participated in both plenary sessions and specialist workshops, taking an active role in discussions on strengthening regional cooperation and upgrading national AML/CFT frameworks. One of the key outcomes was the endorsement of a program designed to support Iran in addressing identified gaps in its anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing systems. The package includes technical exchanges, joint training workshops and specialized advisory support offered by EAG member states. Officials said the decision reflects growing confidence in Iran's efforts to enhance transparency and align with global standards. Alongside the plenary, a dedicated conference on the use of advanced technologies in combating financial crime brought together delegations from Russia, Belarus, the UAE and Kyrgyzstan. Iranian experts presented domestic innovations in data analysis and inter-agency cooperation, which participants described as effective and replicable examples for the region. The summit also featured the announcement of results from EAG's annual competition for best financial-crime analysis, with Egypt's National Bank taking first place and entries from Russian and Tajik banks receiving distinction. Iranian financial institutions engaged in the event's side activities, a move the Financial Intelligence Unit plans to expand in future sessions to deepen Iran's professional footprint in regional AML/CFT cooperation. During the closing session, delegations acknowledged Iran's active participation across technical and regulatory discussions, noting its contributions in supervisory, judicial and operational fields. The meeting concluded with a collective call for stronger regional coordination and continued collaboration with Iran under the EAG framework.