

# **Empowering the Youth of our Homeland: Information Technology and the Internet for Education in Iran**

SCIENCE AND ARTS FOUNDATION

<http://www.science-arts.org>

7:00 pm, Monday, September 25, 2000

Medical Science Building  
University of Toronto  
1 King's College Circle, Room 2172  
M5S 1A8, Toronto, Ontario

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At the dawn of the third Millennium, an extraordinary technological revolution, dramatically illustrated by the rapid development of the Internet, is unfolding in our planet which is radically changing the way human beings live, communicate, develop interests, learn, research, produce and trade. It has had a massive impact on the new generations in the West: Computers and the Internet have brought about an explosion of perspectives for tens of millions of children and youth who can use this new medium and technology as a natural part of their daily lives in order to realize their full potential.

In contrast, this gigantic process is sharply accentuating the gap between the developed and the developing countries by producing a deeply uneven and divided world of the digital haves and the digital have nots, with its striking consequences in terms of global inequality in the years ahead. However, information technology, and in particular the Internet, has created for the first time in human history an empowering tool to eradicate effectively the roots of underdevelopment. The basic precondition is to make the new technology available and integrated consistently at an early age in the education of the hundreds of millions of the children in the third world.

The Science and Arts Foundation (SAF), which was set up as a non-profit-making educational charity on 1st March 1999, aspires for such an ideal future world.

SAF's first campaign has been in Iran, where school children and university students have shown their outstanding talents in recent years by a series of spectacular successes in International Science Olympiads and other major international competitions such as the RoboCup. Information technology can enable the youth in Iran to realize their full potential towards the highest degrees of scientific, technological, cultural, social and economic progress. By acting now, this vision is within our reach.

In this talk, full details will be presented on how SAF has provided, in its first year of activities, well-equipped computer sites and Internet access for 18 model state schools nearly all in deprived areas of cities such as Tehran, Shahre Ray, Varamin, Isfahan. These are the first schools in the country to go on-line. SAF has also set up a School Information Centers at Sharif University in Tehran ([www.schoolnet.sharif.ac.ir](http://www.schoolnet.sharif.ac.ir)) and is now setting up similar centers in Isfahan, Rasht and Tabriz. These centres provide Internet access to schools, train teachers in information technology and the Internet, download major educational and cultural Websites around the globe for use of school children in Iran. They will also be used to organize Internet based collaborative projects between schools in Iran and the rest of the world in scientific, environmental, cultural and artistic areas. The first such international collaboration began in August this year when teachers from Hedayat School (near Abu-zar Square, Tehran), one of SAF's first projects, joined the International Education And Resource Network ([www.iearn.org](http://www.iearn.org)). Finally SAF's overall program of activities for the next two years will be outlined.