

JUNE 2021

ISSUE
3

IRAN BUSINESS Trends

Premier English Language Business and Lifestyle Quarterly

JCPOA

Déjà vu or for real this time?

**Economy & Markets
Analyses**

**Iran's Relations with
Japan, Italy and
Switzerland**

**The Emergence of
Pre-loved Fashion**

**Iran's Volleyball
Wonder**

**Camel's 1st Musical
Collaboration with
an Iranian Band**

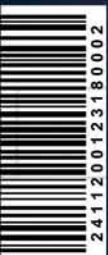
UP&COMING
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**Smart City
Demystified**



**EXPO
2020
DUBAI
UAE**



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Sarmad iron and steel complex began operating its rolling mill unit with nominal capacity of 450,000 tons of reinforced bars of 8 to 32 mm in December 2016. Currently, construction of wire rod mill with capacity of 400,000 T/y and steel making plant with capacity of 600,000 T/y are the two expansion project running in Sarmad iron and steel complex. Sarmad Iron and Steel Complex is located about 15km from Abarkooh road to Yazd in Yazd province. This centrality and access to the main ways of the country, as well as the absence of similar factories within a 100-kilometer radius, have made Sarmad Iron and Steel Complex capable of providing the need of steel artifacts in related industries in central provinces.

Rolling unit

The rolling mill of this complex started manufacturing all kinds of 8-32mm reinforced bars in the winter of 2016 using the latest technologies of the world from STG Company in Italy along with the cooperating of experienced experts and internal managers. Supplying the bulk of the billets required by this unit is from the Chadormalou Industrial and Mining Company. Using the reliable factories billets product and emphasizing the lack of using nonstandard billets and the use of high-tech technology, offers high quality products. Particular attention of the contractors and employers of the large and national projects in ordering our products in the major projects of Assaluyeh, Qeshm, Bandar Abbas, Shiraz province, etc. Confirms this subject. Along with the high quality products, the proximity of the factory to the North- South and East-West main roads has helped us achieve the goal the goals of developing non-oil exports. We are committed to providing quality and innovation for national production and economic development, so that we can build on the potential of our experts and native specialists to support Iranian labor and investment and create a flagship of self-sufficiently and prosperity in the steel industry.

Steel making plant (Expansion plan)

Based on the market demand of the country and Middle East region for a variety of steel Billets, as well as for ease of feeding the rolling mill, the company has started to build a steel mill with a nominal annual production capacity of 600,000 tons as a development project of its own.

The production of these billets will be 130 x 130 mm² and 150 x 150 mm².

The technology and major equipment of this project has been purchased from the world's top brands and companies. The physical progress of the project is about 30 percent and we hope that with the great efforts of experts in the year 2021 products of this plant will supply to market.





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Iran Investment Legal Insight;

Practical Review of Joint Venture Regulations

Definition of Joint venture

The term "Joint Venture" ("JV") is frequently used in the field of foreign investment, and in many legal systems investors employ this contractual framework to structure their investment plan.

To define the term, JV is a collaborative business arrangement in which two or more parties agree to form a partnership and cooperate in its management, resources, and benefits. The contracting parties may be natural or legal persons. These companies may be either public or private entities.

Types of JVs

Iranian law recognizes both registered contractual JVs (Article 107, Law on the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan of Iran, 2008) as well as unregistered contractual JVs in form of a partnership (Article 10 and 573 of the Iran Civil Code).

Parties can also use a corporate JV for their mutual cooperation. In this case, the corporation type chosen by the parties is regulated by the Iran Commercial Code or the Bill Amending the Commercial Code 1969 ("BACC").

Corporate Joint Venture:

A Corporate joint venture is a separate legal entity formed by its members to be the vehicle for operation of the joint business.

The most common legal structures used for the establishment of corporate JVs in Iran are Limited Liability Company (LLCs) and Joint-stock company (JSCs) as both limit the liability of their members to their financial contribution (share) to the business and provide organized rules governing these two structures.

Under the governing rules, members are protected from being held personally liable for any debts or legal obligations of the LLC or JSC and for the actions of other members whose activities may have gone beyond the scope of normal business operations.

Contractual Joint Venture:

When two or more legal entities or individuals plan to undertake a specific single project instead of a long-term continuing business, a contractual JV is a better choice. This form of JV allows for partnering together without establishing a company and only through concluding a contract while each participant retains its separate legal status. In various legal



systems, this form of investment has different names such as "joint venture", "partnership", or "consortium".

Contractual joint ventures are common in Iran. Such arrangements are recognized and enforceable under the principle of freedom of contract as sanctified under Article 10 of the Iran Civil Code ("Civil Code").

A JV's legal structure may vary depending on the parties' agreement.

A party to a JV agreement may be a foreign national. In case a foreign government wishes to become an investor in Iran, the contract must receive the approval of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, which approval is carried out on a case-by-case basis (Article 4 of the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act 2002 ("FIPPA")). Foreign persons investing in an Iranian company can also apply for protection under FIPPA. Major benefits provided by FIPPA are guarantees of access to foreign currency and its transferability (i.e. repatriation). Therefore, a foreign investor will be entitled to repatriate in hard currency both the profits of the investment (including capital gains) and the principal investment.



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Conneccting
Legal and
Financial

Advantages and Disadvantages

JVs offers several advantages such as the following:

1.Shared resources and responsibilities

As one or more parties enter into a JV, knowledge and expertise will be shared. This would enable them to work in large-scale markets. JVs can also help organizations with limited capacity to use the strength of another organization to scale up in the market.

2.lexibility for participating companies

Joint ventures are usually formed with certain defined objectives and not necessarily intended to function as a long-term partnership, thus considered to be a temporary contract between participating parties that dissolves at a specific future date or when the project is completed.

3.Shared business risk

Joint ventures also provide the benefit of limiting exposure to problems of other participating parties. A comprehensive, well-drafted Joint Venture Agreement can help minimize the risks and liabilities of the co-venturers.

Some would argue that there are also disadvantages to form a JV:

There is a risk that the expertise and investment level that each party contributes may not match. Furthermore, in some cases, there is the possibility that work and resources are not distributed equally.

Limitations

As a general rule, the JV structure can be used in every industry sector, except for those areas that are either under the complete monopoly of the government (such as main telecommunications networks, upstream oil production) or in limited instances where foreign majority shareholdings are not permitted. However, this has to be assessed on a case-by-case basis within a specific target industry or sector.

According to FIPPA, all foreign investors can establish a company or join a local company acquiring shares without limitation. However, foreign investors must obtain a special permit from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, Organization for Investment, Economic and Technical Assistance of Iran (OIETAI). It is important to note that according to the "Regulations on Acquisition of Real Property by Foreign Nationals 1948", the ownership of land of any type to any extent by foreign nationals is not permitted and shall remain effective within the framework of FIPPA.



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ANDRITZ

IRAN STEEL GENERAL SERVICES CO.

About the Company:

Iran Steel General Services Co. (Private Joint Stock Company) was founded in 1991 with the aim of providing commercial services, warehousing, distribution and sale of various steel products, especially for the subsidiaries of the National Iranian Steel Company.

More than 99% of the company's shares belong to the Steel Employees Support and Retirement Fund, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor and Social Welfare.

With more than 30 years of experience, this Fund has been operating in 15 provinces of the country and is a shareholder in 17 other subsidiaries, which are mostly active in the supply chain of steel, mine and mining industries.



The production and service plant of Iran Steel General Services Co. (ISGSC), which is one of the most advanced industrial units of its kind in the country, is located in an area of about 30,000 square meters in Shurabad Industrial Zone of Tehran, under roofed and open warehouses. The plant is equipped with modern steel sheet cutting and forming machinery (steel coil) and provides technical solutions and knowledge-based commercialized products and services such as for production of shutters and cast steel parts as well as manufacturing of auto parts to its customers in the industrial steel space. The Company is also active in:

- Transportation and loading of goods, warehousing, distribution of minerals, scrap and steel products;
- Marketing, export, import, and purchase and sale of raw materials and steel products;
- Procurement and supply of technology, machinery, tools and industrial and mining supplies; and providing quality control services for resistance measurement and strengthening of concrete and steel buildings.

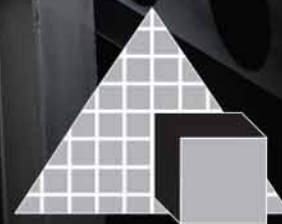
ISGSC's skilled technical staff and specialized and experienced personnel also meet the needs of most pipe and profile factories, shed builders, construction companies, civil plants, and home appliance manufacturers. The Company also provides packing and delivery services to its customers.

With an annual sale and distribution of more than 120,000 tons of products, the Company is currently active in the trading of supply chain of steel, Mine and Mining Industries for Mobarakeh Steel Company of Isfahan in Tehran province.

ISGSC is furthermore, the official broker of Technology Exchange Network and Nanotechnology Development Council, and serves as Presidential representative for Science and Technology for commercialization of technology and knowledge-based goods in the steel supply chain for Mine and Mining Industries.

This multifaceted company also provides consulting services in all economic, commercial, and service areas to its customer base where needed. Among distinguished accomplishments of ISGSC are:

- The first exporter of Sirjan Gol Gohar iron ore shipments to overseas
- The first exporter of Isfahan Zobahan H-Beams to Europe
- The first exporter of Isfahan Zobahan rebar abroad
- The first operator of mooring super heavy ships of mineral material pier in Hormozgan



**Iran Steel General
Services Co.**

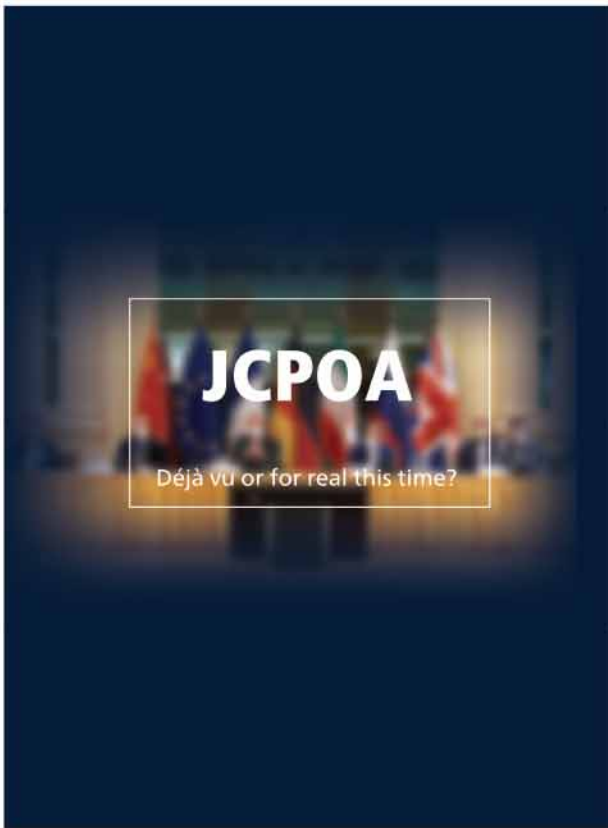


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On the Cover:

The theme of this issue of Trends is JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, which was reached in 2015 and implemented in 2016, only for the US to pull out of it in 2018 under President Trump!

The renewed hope for the deal to be resurrected under the new US administration of President Biden is great news to Iran's business community as well as to foreign investors, but to many international companies and large banks, it is all déjà vu, and many observers are skeptical about whether it will last and fully observed by all parties this time or crumble once again.



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Trends

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MESSAGE



Welcome to the 3rd Issue of Trends!

Iran has entered a hot summer this year, not only in terms of unprecedented high temperatures and dry weather, but also in terms of some very interesting developments that can set the course of the country's economy for years to come. These include the possible revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as well as the handover of the Rouhani government to a new administration of President-elect Raisi.

With regards to the JCPOA, the length of time it is taking to negotiate and re-implement the deal, reflects not only the magnitude of differences between the two sides, but also indicates that the parties want to make sure this time it will stick! Whether it will survive the next US President or not, we don't know at this point, but for the next 4 years, at least, we know that the Iranian economy can only benefit from the lifting of the sanctions. It can also help regional stability as Iran will be able to legally sell its oil and resume trade with the rest of the world without interference from the US and/or its regional allies.

As for the presidential elections, while the Rouhani government shall go down as one of the unluckiest administrations in Iran (having had to face the most controversial and unpredictable US President in modern history), it did its best to manage multiple crises from the unprecedented unilateral US sanctions to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The next government is, however, faced with the monumental task of reviving the economy and improving the lives of Iranians who have suffered from years of diminishing purchasing power and wave after wave of economic pressures. Yet with the right team, such a task is perfectly doable by President Raisi, as some of the most important sanctions may be waved soon and demand for oil is expected to surge in a post-Covid-19

era. Dubai Expo 2020 (now scheduled to take place in October 2021 due to the pandemic) could well be the best opportunity for Iran to be back in the international arena after years of isolation. With some 25 million visitors expected to participate in the 6-month event, it will be the perfect chance for Iran to engage its Gulf neighbors as well as attract international investors.

We have started to cover the event in this issue and will release at least one special edition of Trends, dedicated entirely to the Expo before it starts later this year.

The main theme of this edition of our magazine is Smart City. In this first part of a multi-series coverage of the topic, we begin with its definition, key components, and strategic importance and move onto some of Iran's initiatives and plans with regards to Smart City implementation in the country, starting with the historic but progressive city of Isfahan. We also feature the experience of other countries with Smart City, starting from Asia.

In our lifestyle section we have covered the ever more popular culture of preloved fashion as well as the first collaboration between an Iranian music ensemble and the legendary progressive British rock band, Camel, with a massive follower base in Iran.

Finally, while we were hit by unexpected events, most notably the Covid-19 pandemic which prevented us from publishing Trends on time (beginning of each quarter), we are committed to a real quarterly delivery mode from now on. Soon after, we will be moving to a bi-monthly cycle in order to better cater to the request of our audience who prefers a smaller volume with a higher frequency of our publication.

Enjoy!

Amir Cyrus Razzaghi
Editor-in-Chief

Aram Razzaghi
Chairman

Iran's Economic Outlook

By: Farid ATIGHEHCHI

In late April, at the end of an editorial in an Iranian newspaper, its author suggested that Iran should respond to Israeli sabotage of Natanz by attacking the nuclear site in Dimona, Israel. Less than a week later, a heavy missile was launched from Syria and landed a few kilometres off the very reactor, 200 kilometres into Israel. Iran allegedly threw a punch, meant to reciprocate. This came as the covert, unfriendly exchanges between the two countries were being dragged into an open arena. But these days both adversaries seem to keep the feud contained, and the risk of war has apparently ebbed before becoming real.

While Military contestations were being curbed, the overall economic activity, investment performance and consumption were brutally tested by the pandemic and US sanctions, and yet overall, the Iranian economy showed resilience once again. There is no mistake the toll of the sanctions and the pandemic have been heavy and have made life and business complicated but companies, including those in the so-called informal economy, are hiring.

Salary levels are rising –be it at a lower pace compared to prices. And despite sanction-induced shortages in some intermediary goods, almost everything is available in the market. Certainly part of that supply comes from stockpiles and inventories from before the sanctions but the risk of their complete depletion before finding substitutes or new sources seems low. The crude oil production is projected to rise to 2.8 to 3.5 million barrels per day before October 2021, according to the Eurasia Group.

And unofficial estimates of Iran's February 2021 oil exports are between 700,000 and a million barrels per day.

Here we review the key developments to watch and their culmination in the coming months. And we will examine how, against that background, different sectors within the Iranian industry are expected to operate.

What to Look Out For

The Lifting of Sanctions

The most significant development with an immediate impact is the lifting of the US sanctions. Earlier expectations of an interim deal in May suggested that the process would take until about October 2021. The removal of the sanctions would help the recovery of Iranian Rial as well as being a boost to government investment, net exports and consumption. Still, a big chunk of the economy, i.e. the parastatal entities, have previously been shown in studies to bounce back more slowly and as such they will slow down the overall GDP growth.

The Vaccinations

Between February and late June 2021, Iran vaccinated more than 5.3 million people in the priority groups with at least their first dose, only a little over 10% of whom having had both doses. The government has pledged to vaccinate all adults above the age of 18 by March 2022.

That requires administering about 12 million doses a month, which basically means the logistics, let alone supply, should outperform that of the current US efficiency by 40%. Either way, the impact of the pandemic is going to weigh on business activities and consumption for another year before it gets a chance to return to its pre-Covid-19 levels.

Rises in Consumer Prices

The government enacted interventions including the choreographed rise in the prices of food, public transportation, and housing, carefully sequencing each increase to moderate their impact. It also did not whittle down energy subsidies for the time being, despite the clear mandates that have been in the works which will kick in again sooner or later.

Higher Employment

At the same time, the rise in job offerings will support income although calculations using data published by the government suggest that about 900,000 people had already lost their jobs by the second quarter of 2020 mainly due to the pandemic. Therefore, new jobs may only get to compensate for losses incurred so far, not create net new employment.

There has been accompanying increases in salary levels with what may be, only partially, a push by the labour market, independent of and beyond the State's interventions. This might be high enough to raise disposable income in different populations. Future studies may reveal if this boost has helped alleviate an increasing wealth gap or is limited only to some income groups. Nonetheless, these developments seem to support the current level of consumption, inevitably still lower from before the 2018 sanctions. While the aggregate levels should hold steady, their growth, or decline, may be easier to see among different product categories and among different income groups.



The Presidential Elections

The campaigns for the presidential elections gave few coherent clues as to what the agenda and approaches of the next president is going to be.

Arguments about the fundamental arrangement of power are also gaining momentum, in a clearer expectation that they are imminent.

For the time being, the Parliament is fiddling with the structuring of the executive branch. However, such changes, and the leanings of the next president will not come into play for many months. The reality is that the result of the elections is of much less significance than the economic impacts of the public health issues and foreign policy, and businesses seem to discount the presidency in their calculations to some degree.

That being said, we can expect a healthy economic boom for the next couple of years as President-elect Raisi is expected to increase government spending and the potential revival of the JCPOA can only accelerate any such economic growth.

	2020e	2021f	
International reserves, accessible (billion USD)	4.0	12.3	These estimates are a fraction of total reserves, which in 2020 was estimated at about \$115 billion, to only show the accessible funds, otherwise restricted by current US sanctions. Baseline 2021 projections by IMF suggest they would increase to about 12 billion USD in 2021. In absence of any official figures from state authorities, some Iranian officials have previously stated the inaccessible funds amount to be about 20 billion USD.
Real GDP growth (%)	+1.5	+2.5	Estimation of the 2020 by the International Monetary Fund, IMF, shows a 6.5%pp improvement against its earlier projections. IMF projects 2.3% non-oil and 4.1% oil real GDP growth for 2021. Crude oil production (mb/d)
Crude oil production (mb/d)	≈2	3.8	While IMF projects 2.35mb/d, the Ministry of Petroleum has conveyed its plans to produce up to 4mb/d and Eurasia Group forecasts 3.8mb/d. Such an increase requires, as also noted by the Ministry, technological upgrades and a larger pool of resources including low-recovery wells. Iran is now adopting pumping systems that would help bring the recovery rates closer to the world averages.
Inflation	+36.5	+39.0	According to IMF and Iran's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance
Exports/imports of goods and services (billion USD)	67.8 / 72.6	85 / 77.9	IMF
Current account balance (billion USD)	-4.5	+7.9	IMF

Figure 1:
Key indices of Iranian economy in 2020 and 2021

Firms of Endearment

Regulator-Industry Tensions

Reviewing the regulatory scene gives us an idea, even if partial, of the changing business environment in Iran. After the JCPOA was signed in 2015, the total number of new regulations, from all regulation-setting state bodies, dipped down, except for those directly pertaining to exports, which took a steep rise in preparation for the negotiated, unblocked trade channels. But the US breach of their commitments and their besieging of Iran with extra pressure cut the country's access to parts of its foreign exchange reserves.

The impact was evident in a heated dispute between Iran and South Korea that saw the visits by Korean delegations, including for the first time since the revolution in 1979, the visit by the Korean Prime Minister.

Dispute over Iran's frozen funds in South Korea resulted in the first-ever visit by a South Korean Prime Minister after 1979



"As administering jabs to health workers continue, the government is rolling out an ambitious public vaccination program which already has started with the older population."

Iran's Economic Outlook

By: Farid ATIGHEHCHI

Between 2016 and 2018, the nuclear deal did not deliver any tangible benefits; and then came the U-turn in the US foreign policy towards Iran which prompted a wave of currency devaluation, inflation and recession. Consequently, by the end of 2020 the government and the Central Bank of Iran were already introducing regulations one after another to control the flow of goods and money.

This was most apparent in the control of imports and in the excessive interventions in the Tehran Stock Exchange. In the first quarter of 2021 there were more than 400 new regulations, 25 of which directly related to exports. In part, this was because of an expected structural change in the fundamental political arrangements in place.

High regulatory complexity since 2018 comes out of necessities to manage crises but it is also currently the most complicating factor for businesses.

These dramatic changes in the regulatory scene are indicative of the uncertainties the State and, in turn, the businesses face in their operations. The nuclear talks are still going on in Vienna in hopes to revive the JCPOA. However, reaching an agreement and then its implementation are both time-consuming and present many uncertainties. In the meantime, the combination of regulation complexity and rising taxes have evidently pushed some activities deeper into an informal economy.

Notwithstanding, the state also seems to have learned from previous experiences, especially those between 2006 and 2016, and has made successes in, for example, stopping subsidised foreign currency to end up in the imports of non-essential goods.

There is also the new administration which is expected to reinforce this regulatory complexity. But at the moment, that is not as much of a concern for the market as are the sanctions and vaccinations.

Overall, the ongoing pandemic and its impact on purchasing behaviour and supply chains, infused with the global isolation of the banking system have caused a sustained level of stress in securing manufacturing input. Access to these inputs and their additional costs remain a constant on the top grievances of manufacturers, as reflected in surveys by Iran Chamber of Commerce.

Sample Posted Job Vacancies

There are some faint signs of favourable developments nonetheless. Many new policies and arrangements evolved to secure current levels of trade and business. By early 2021, this transcendence was reflected in the 25-year deal with China –rather symbolically as it does not seem to be a sudden boost but a commitment to building on the current trajectory. Iran could potentially have more committed partners. The deal with the Chinese may well be a start to what could be a series of broader pacts with Russia, neighbouring countries and other cohorts –with more obscure examples such as the recent signing of a military agreement with Tajikistan suggesting the direction of these developments. Because of the significance of the dollar in the global economy, Iran still needs to get to a détente with the United States, but the impact of the sanctions has gone from crippling to manageable and their power as a threat is waning.

It is these adaptive behaviours, in addition to an optimism for a projected revival of the JCPOA, which is now contributing to a sudden recirculation of capital. Cash-flow problems are still prevalent in some sub-sectors more than others, but there is an increase in business activity. It could be traced, to some extent, by the increase of employment opportunities. When firms expect a persistent rise in business activity, the number of posted vacancies usually rise. Although there has been a lot of employee turnover during the last year and some companies are merely refilling previous posts or restructuring

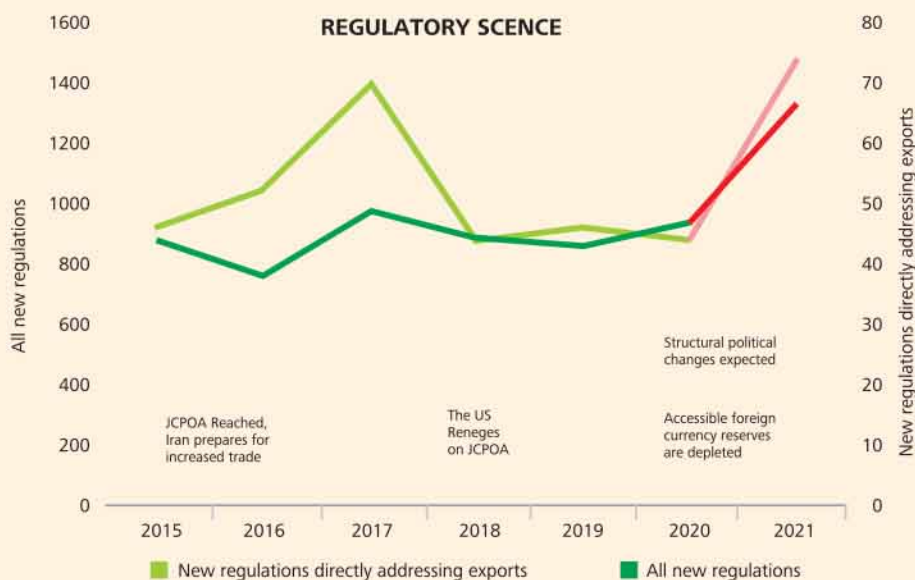


Figure 2:
Number of new regulations from all State and legislative bodies until the first quarter of 2021, also showing the current trajectory into later this year.

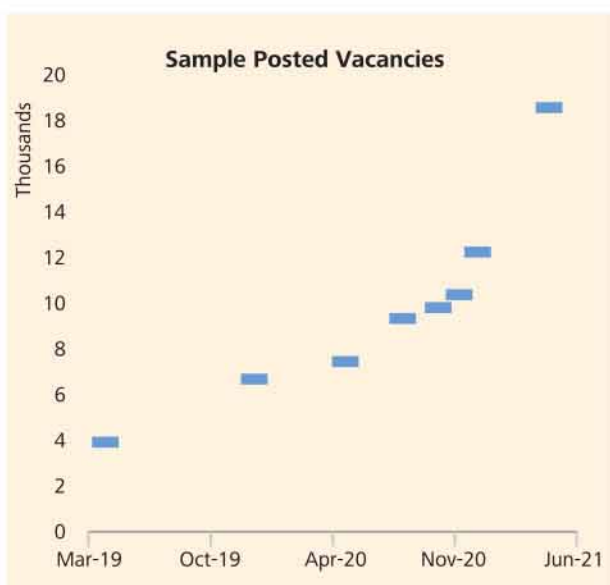


Figure 3: The number of posted vacancies on Jobinja, one of the largest job listing websites in Iran

their market positions, it nevertheless indicates a rise in activity. Taking a look at the number of jobs posted on “Jobinja”, one of Iran’s leading job listing platforms and popular with private companies, in April of this year, and while still months away from a public vaccination rollout, we can see that the number of listed jobs has jumped close to 20,000 – a five-fold increase compared to the first shock from the pandemic.

The number of posted vacancies rise when firms expect a persistent improvement in business activity. In our sample, job postings have multiplied especially since November 2020.

But this expectation of growth is not evident in all sectors. Investigating the performance of public companies shows which ones are closer to financial distress. Automotive, chemicals, banking and ICT (Information and Communications Technology) are either more afflicted or are more susceptible to cash-flow problems.

The reasons are different. For example, the banking sector did not suffer much from the pandemic, but it is not exactly in good shape after a sharp decrease in the economic activity, exacerbated by the rerouting of cash-flows from the formal system to the underground. The ICT sector’s problems seem to be mostly unrelated. Despite the uncomfortable situation with the supply of key equipment, the sub-sector of telecommunications seems to be mostly grappling with decreasing revenue-per-bit, fuelled by its own trend of technological and business model disruptions.

Base metals and retail find themselves in a different situation. Base metals are suppliers of intermediate goods to many sectors including the automotive industry and their upstream position helps them steer away from cash-flow problems but only as much as the pandemic indulges demand. At the other end of the value chains, retailers are also limited by demand while their supply has been available or substitutable.

Expected Reactions and Opportunities

Against this backdrop, the response of these sectors will vary. Those in better shape will attract more investment for earning growth and have the luxury to focus on competition, while others, whose revenue growth plans are stymied by cash-flow problems in their industries, will behave differently and try to just survive the current economic trends.

Different sectors are in different situations. Their responses will show in the mergers and acquisitions and in changes of board members.

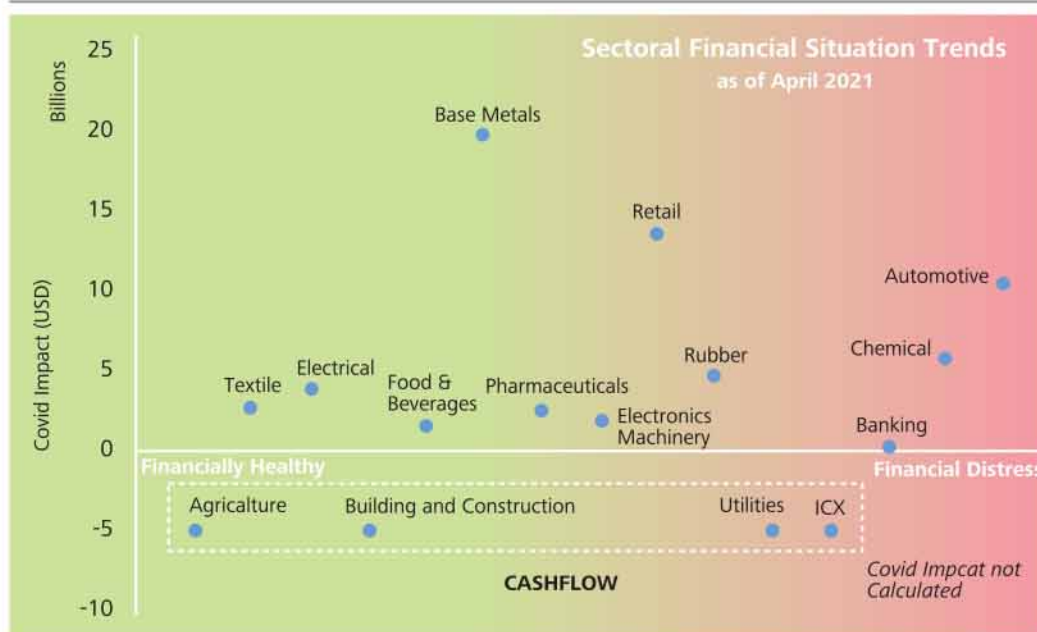


Figure 4: This is based on a preliminary modelling effort and presented as indicative. Covid-19 impact is based on estimated lost revenues as a result of disruptions in production, supply chain or sales. Cash flow estimate is based on stock price trends in Tehran Stock Exchange between November 2020 and April 2021.

Iran's Economic Outlook

By: Farid ATIGHEHCHI

Responses will be visible in the number of mergers and acquisitions and in changes of board members. This wave of mergers and acquisitions gradually picked up during the past two years, but the next few months will be critical for companies to forge new alliances and to build up resilience or recover. We expect companies more prone to capital problems, e.g. automotive, banking, chemicals, ICT and rubber, to exchange ownership stakes with other companies in their value chains who could help them improve their operations, find financing, secure inputs or offer access to other markets.

Firms with healthier financial prospects, e.g. agriculture, textile, electronics, food and beverage, construction and pharmaceuticals, would bring new faces with governmental backgrounds to their boards, but would also regroup in holding companies, where a central actor takes the responsibility to interface with the State.

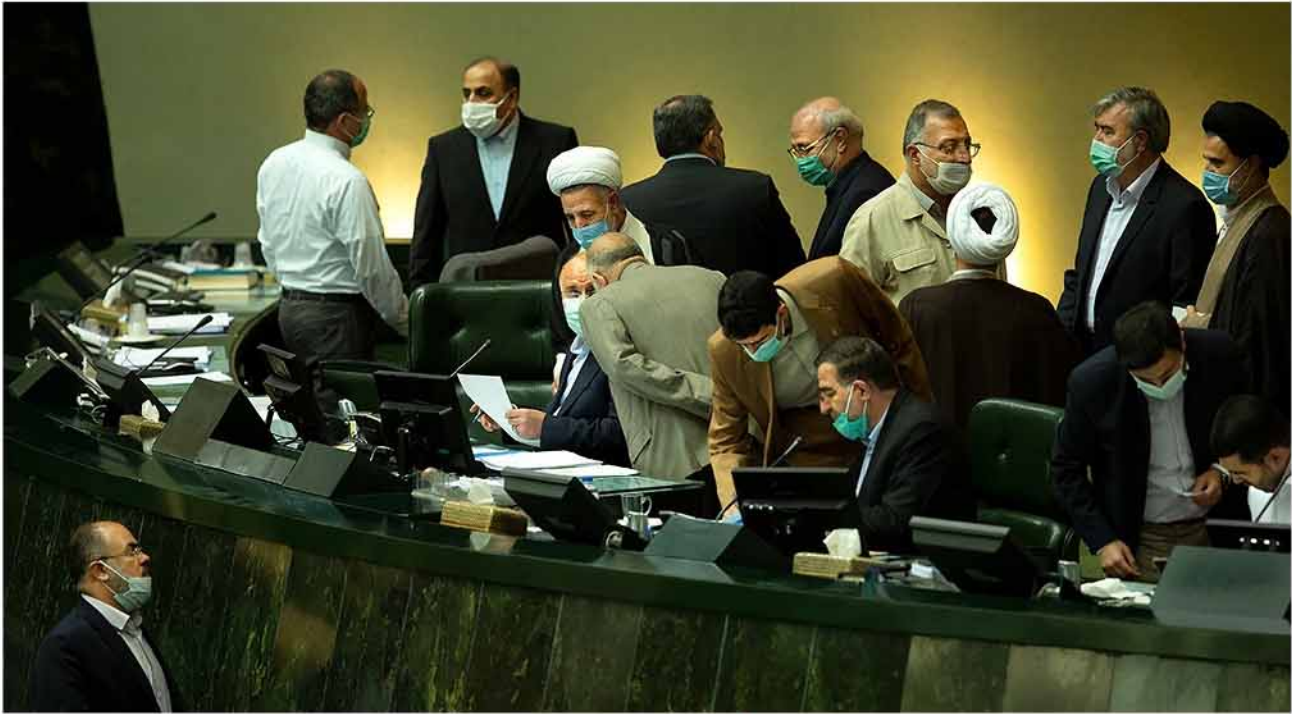
Firms with less severe cash-flow problems, would look for merger and acquisition opportunities to help their operational processes and may be hopeful for multiples in their post-money valuations.

long been striving to place itself among the market leaders, along with Saipa and Iran Khodro, but its sales is dwarfed by the two.

As established car players may be vulnerable now, private players like Bahman may be able to position themselves more favourably against the oligopoly. An impeached Industry Minister and two acting ministers later, Bahman only recently announced its Euro-6 engine production is operational and, according to the deal signed last year, it will sell the engines in numbers many times its own production of vehicles.

Companies in textile, agriculture, building and construction, base metals and rubber, on the other hand, would attract and allocate more experimental investments to develop options for the future.

Some companies within these sectors may, sooner than later, even opt for a focused approach and compete comfortably on costs or differentiation.



This understanding of sectoral differences could help highlight and develop opportunities. International players could fill the gaps as long as they appreciate the predicaments of each sector: Expectations, common in a normal, thriving environment may need to be replaced by relevant concessions or assets. For example, in many sectors the regulatory complexity holds the prospect of extra operational costs, so lowering transaction costs and prices could secure international companies better deals with Iranian prospects.

In the market, each sector would take different strategies as well. Automotive, chemicals, banking, ICT and utilities would focus on cost reduction. Pharmaceutical companies and the few automotive players would focus on influencing regulation and market dynamics in coordination with other players in their respective markets. Some of them may even find the opportunity to break into new niches as well. For example, Bahman Group, which is a large car assembler in Iran, has

The new Parliament is dealing with a large number of issues from this year's budget to cryptocurrency trading, Central Bank Independence and the legal structure of the Iran Chamber of Commerce."

Speaking with businesses, many assert a positive outlook. Some, inspired by the resilience of the economy and the successes of recent localisation efforts, also hope their industries stick with strategic local productions

Crucial Decisions

Different sectors, and different sub-sectors within them, must develop a manifold of ways to survive, innovate and grow. Their success relies on many factors but to a large extent on the openness of the economy. Speaking with businessmen, many assert a positive outlook where, while direct foreign investments may remain scarce, it would take no time for Iranian businesses to reinvigorate cross-border trade. And while trade with the West is conditional to the outcome of the Vienna talks, routes to Eastern markets are already being established and reinforced. The level of uncertainty has decreased, and mid-term planning is much more feasible now. And perhaps most importantly, the market seems to assign a score of "manageable" to perceived risks in comparison to foreseeable rewards.

"Private businesses convene a session at Tehran Chamber of Commerce" to discuss the trend of economic policy complexity and how to navigate often-contradictory regulations. A member cites that during the past year there has been on average one new official memo regarding exports every two days."



Development in Chabahar was delayed during the Trump administration but the work is being picked up especially through a strategic cooperation with India."

Many are also hopeful that the involuntary commitment to value added domestic manufacturing sticks. That would see further emphasis on technology and capability upgrades, refusing a historical tendency to favour imports of finished goods.

Right now, politics, regulations, trade and market players and their uncertainties are in the open, and the status quo has already been challenged –both exogenously and by the State itself. Next few months, and how regulators, investors, politicians and businesses pick their next moves, could not only seal their individual outcomes but may also have a lasting effect on Iran's place and prowess in the global value-chains –and on the wealth and welfare of its people



Tehran Stock Exchange Overview

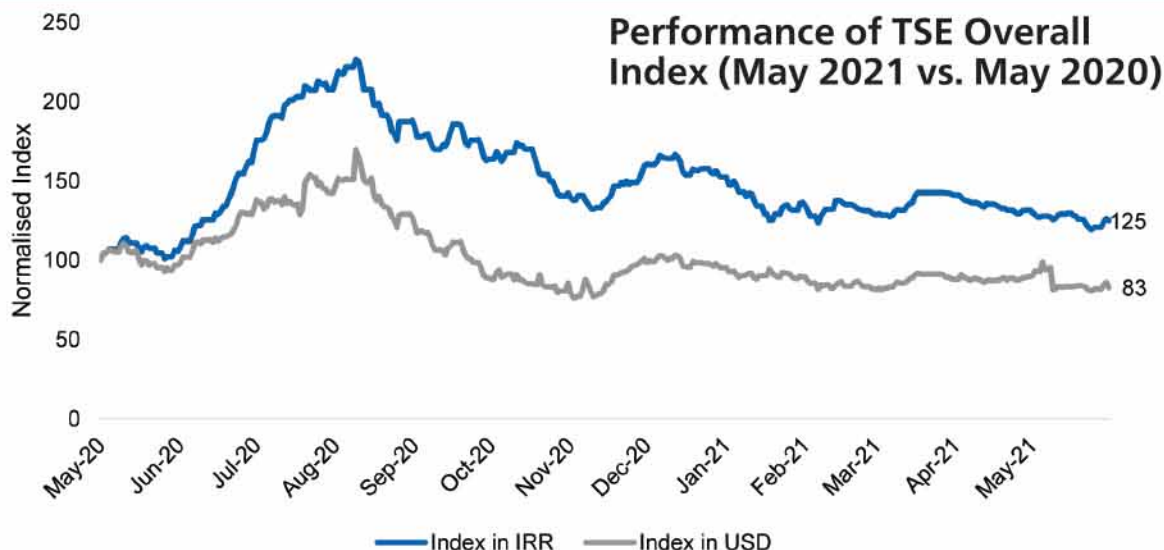


TURQUOISE
PARTNERS

Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) 2021

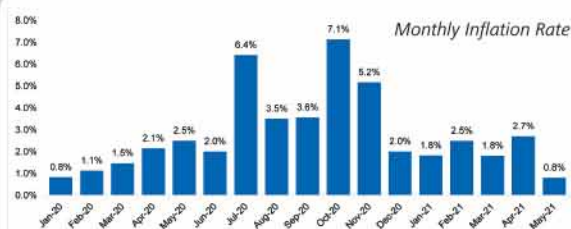
Tehran Stock Exchange continued its corrective pattern in the first six months of 2021, registering a loss of 13% in hard currency terms. TSE overall index declined 7% in April and 5% in May in IRR terms. The IRR exchange rate appreciated from

258,000 IRR per USD in December 2020 to 243,200 IRR per USD ending May 2021. The appreciation of the IRR stems from higher hard currency inflows to the country due to both higher commodity prices and more oil sales (mainly to China).



In terms of the best performing sectors on yearly basis, Basic Metals, Mining Ore, Chemical and Diversified Holdings led the way in May. Their related sub-indices surged by 56%, 44%, 32 and 22% respectively in IRR terms. This rise was due to a rebound in global commodity prices, boosted by demand from China. Steel prices in Iran rose by more than 10% over the course of the month, which in turn fueled an increase in

In the domestic credit market, the backdrop has improved as the yields of short-term government debt securities (T-bills) fell below 18%. Declining interest rates for listed debt securities have accelerated recently as inflation has showed signs of cooling down. The latest inflation readings showed that the monthly change of the CPI has fallen to 0.8%, the lowest level since January 2020. Money supply growth also plummeted to



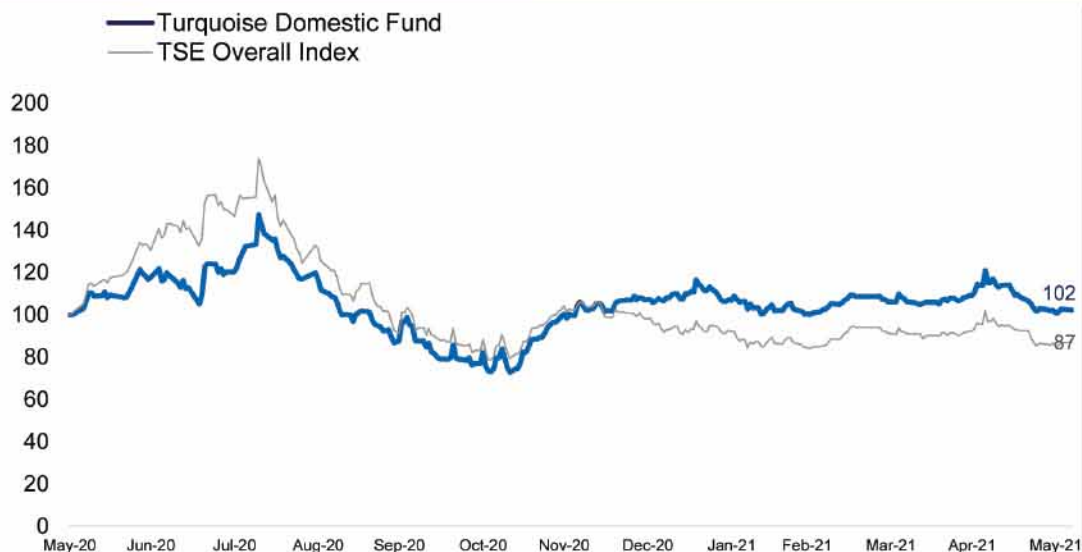
steelmakers' shares on the TSE. For example, Mobarakeh Steel Company – the first and largest listed company by market cap on the TSE – rose 9% in May of this year in market cap. Chadormalu Mining and Industrial Co., the largest producer of iron ore in Iran, was also among the top performers. Its stock price rose by 8% over the same period, reflecting the positive trend in global iron ore prices so far this year.

0.6% month-on-month in May 2021. According to the latest data released by the CBI this is the lowest it has been since April 2019.

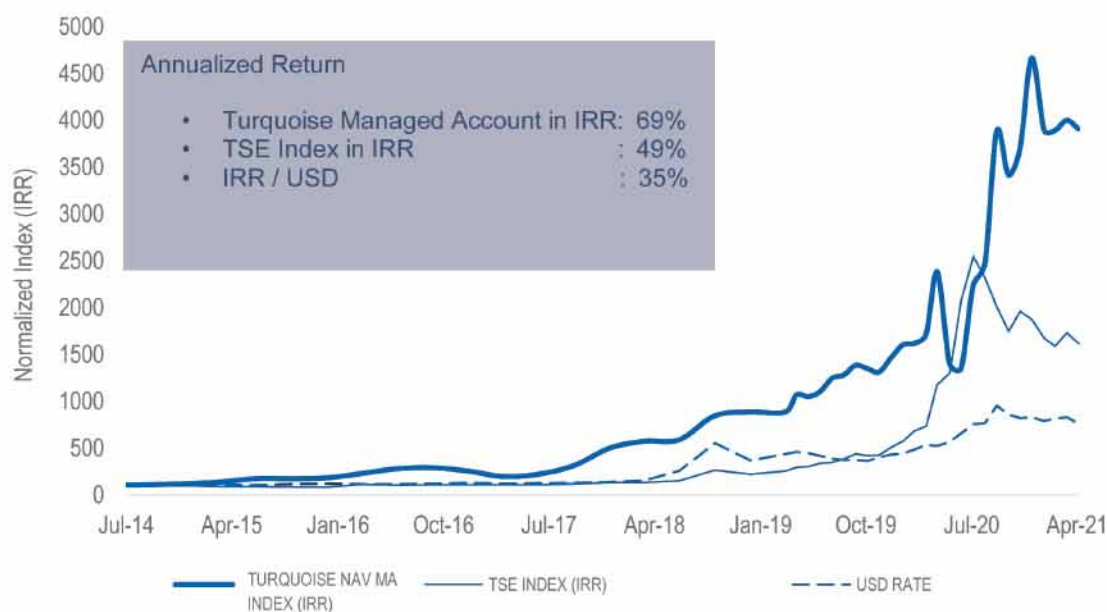
With the current prudent monetary policy, we expect the year-on-year inflation to fall below 30% by the year end. This would provide a more stable environment for equity investors in terms of the macro-economic situation.

Turquoise Partners : Local Asset Management Products

Domestic Fund (Movafaghiat) One Year (Rebased in USD)



Managed Account Performance vs. Benchmark (Rebased in IRR)



To obtain more information on Turquoise Partners products,
please contact us through our website:
assetmanagement@turquoisepartners.com

JCPOA: Déjà Vu or for Real This Time?



As the Vienna talks to revive the Iran Nuclear Deal or JCPOA draws to a close, there are many unanswered questions about its details, most notably which sanctions will be eventually lifted, when and under what conditions.

The fact that the talks have dragged for as long as they have is not necessarily alarming.

On the contrary, one can deduce that essential bones of contentions were discussed. Moreover, under a new deal, we can expect some of the hurdles in the previous agreement to be gone.

It is absolutely crucial that the parties – mainly the US and subsequently Iran – stick to a new enhanced treaty. Under the Trump Administration, the US was able to swiftly pull out of the JCPOA agreement, (and several other significant international commitments) as the Iran Deal was based on President's Obama executive order and not on congressional approval.



There is no guarantee that in 4 or 8 years and a change in administration, one is safe from another JCPOA 2.0 withdrawal scenario. At the time of writing this paper, it appears unlikely that the Biden Administration can secure the backing of the US Congress for an enhanced JCPOA deal, thus preventing such a snapback scenario. This could well be one of the reasons the negotiations were even more complicated this time; there are no assurances that the deal will not be breached once again by the US!

For many of the foreign investors and companies who trusted the signatory parties of the JCPOA agreement, in particular the US, this could result in an expensive déjà vu! We remember: After years of negotiations, a deal was signed in 2015. Initial jubilation in the streets of Iran and boardrooms across large and midcap companies around the world was soon replaced by realities on the ground, mainly by still inaccessible banking channels despite all promises and a signed agreement! This confirms that even if the banking channels are authorised (by the US, nota bene) to re-open under a new deal, banks, major ones in particular, will remain shy, unwilling or simply uninterested to facilitate payments with Iran in fear of unpredictable future economic consequences (penalties by the US Treasury). The profits a bank can make with Iran

transactions will never match the risk they might face in the US, be it legal, operational or reputational in nature. This business fearmongering was part of Trump's Iran strategy and somewhat successful. The authors of this article do not expect significant changes in available banking channels in the short term. Hence Iran transactions will remain complex, more expensive than necessary and mostly through third party or unofficial channels.

Many international brands who rushed to Iran after the initial JCPOA agreement was signed in 2015 were forced to suspend or decided to pull out after the US unilaterally withdrew from the deal. As a result, international investment projects were abandoned or stopped, investor monies lost, the Iranian currency collapsed from 34,000 Rials per USD in 2015 to 240,000 Rial per USD in June 2021, and inflation and unemployment rose dramatically. The poverty line across the



Iranian population including its middle class is sneaking up in unprecedented ways. On the positive side, with the closure of the Iranian borders to imports or the mandatory regulations for domestic manufacturing, local producers and brands prospered. The Iranian stock market was at some point in 2020 the world's best performing one in EUR terms, be it with a significant and steep downward correction later in 2021.

Some companies never left Iran, neither in 2009 nor in 2018. These international companies have established manufacturing plants and significant headcounts, becoming part of the Iranian economy, and, therefore, have stayed, to a large degree, immune from the devastating impact of sanctions. Supposedly they are subsidiaries of international companies.

In that case, they might adopt a stand-alone strategy where they will not receive from or return cash to head office or their international shareholders. Many of these companies with sales in Iran are long on Rial obliged to look for local investment opportunities in the stock market, private equity, manufacturing companies or real estate. The best hedge against the Rial inflation is real estate and investment in export focussed companies. With an updated JCPOA agreement in 2021, we see Iran

offering fertile ground for international mid- and large-cap companies with an Iran-based manufacturing strategy for local sales and reexporting to the surrounding countries of the Middle East and Central Asia's 400-million strong consumer markets. Labour and energy costs in Iran are still low by international standards.

Investors, traders and business opportunists constitute another segment tempted by a devalued currency and re-opened borders. We do not expect the industrialists and investors of 2015 to rush back for the reasons outlined. While the returns could well compensate for the challenges, doing business in Iran requires three key ingredients: time, money and good nerves – ideally all in abundance.





IRAN'S NEW NATIONAL BRAND: MAJESTIC IRAN

Creating a National Brand Project has been on Iran Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft agenda since the last quarter of 2018. To achieve this goal, a project was embarked to compile the strategic document for National Brand Identity. The decision makers, scholars and beneficiary organizations have made valuable contributions to the document compilation.

Iran has announced its new national brand 'Majestic Iran: A Different Experience' as the official slogan for Iran's tourism industry.

The main challenge with branding Iran as a tourism destination was to define Iran National Tourism Brand Identity and make a unity among various tourism potentials. The Simurgh was eventually selected as the visual identity of the National Tourism Brand.

By conducting the data collection on public opinion and experts viewpoints, "Majestic Iran: A Different Experience" has been ultimately selected as the slogan for the National Brand. Finalizing the National Brand slogan and the visual identity, Islamic Republic of Iran is planned to make use of this brand in the country tourism advertising campaigns and promotions. The brand is to be used by public and private tourism stakeholders' promotional products and brochures.



25,000,000

Number of people expected to visit Dubai Expo 2020

Dubai Expo 2020, postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic and now to be held between October 1st, 2021 and March 31st, 2022, is expected to draw the largest crowd ever for any world fairs, since the event's conception in 1851. This is the first time the Expo is being hosted in the Middle East with the next event scheduled to be held in Osaka-Japan in 2025.



4,320,000,000

Number of mobile Internet users in the world

In 2021, there are so far some 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide - 59.5 percent of the global population. Of this total, 92.6 % (4.32 billion) accessed the internet via mobile devices.

528,000,000



Number of entrepreneurs around the world

According to statistics from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), if you decide to head down the entrepreneurial route, you are part of a pretty sizeable worldwide club. GEM surveyed 65 different global economies and found entrepreneurialism to be alive and well, with an estimated 582 million entrepreneurs residing around the globe.

2,000,000,000

Number of users of popular messaging application, WhatsApp



The WhatsApp app usage penetration is particularly strong in markets outside of the United States and it is one of the most popular mobile social apps worldwide in 2021. In February 2014, social network Facebook acquired the mobile app for \$19 billion.

Iran's Presence at Dubai Expo 2020



Mohammad Reza Mowdoodi

Former head of the Trade Development Organization and the former head of the National Commercial Brand Commission of Iran



The World Expo event is the largest exhibition event in the world with a 170-year history and is held every 5 years in one of the member countries with a high capacity to host. The World Expo ranks third in terms of importance and attendance after the Football World Cup and the Olympics, and first in the world in terms of duration. The importance of the Expo is such that to host the event, countries incur heavy costs to create the required infrastructure and capacity, and consider the opportunity a privilege offering a golden promise for the future advancement of their country.

A recent example of such exuberance is the UAE which, since 2013 when it was announced the host of Expo 2020, has declared the day an official holiday and illuminates Burj Khalifa to honor the occasion. Iran has not yet taken advantage of this international opportunity and it is fair to say that the most important trade exhibition event in the world is still rather unknown here with few people having recognized its role and importance. In this regard, we had a conversation with Mohammad Reza Mowdoodi, the former head of the Trade Development Organization and the former head of the National Commercial Brand Commission of Iran, to get his perspective of this event at this time.

What is the significance of events such as the World Expo and especially Expo 2020 Dubai? Of course, we must note here that the 2020 Dubai Expo will take place in 2021!

Expo is in fact the largest gathering of the world community that allows participants to showcase their place in the world rankings of national values and prestige. In other words, every five years, countries around the world come together to show where they stand culturally, economically, scientifically, technologically, and on environmental issues, as well as what values they pursue, and what successful achievements have they achieved from the human perspective. In fact the World Expo is the Olympics of the national identity competition among countries. It is frankly an opportunity to redefine the culture, thought and approach of nations within the world community that can even impact the future path of human history.

I am curious to know your explanation of the last sentence you said before we continue to talk about Expo Dubai. What exactly do you mean by this phrase?

The World Expo has undergone profound changes throughout its 170-year-old history and as much as it has been a platform to introduce innovations to the world, it too has assimilated values important at national levels. At one time, Expos were just an occasion to showcase novelty products by participating countries, especially products that made fundamental contributions to the world community. For example, at the first World Expo, held in London's Hyde Park back in 1851, the telegraph was unveiled; and at the 1876 Philadelphia Expo, the typewriter was introduced to the world; at the 1900 Paris Expo, the diesel machine; and in 1964 in New York color television was unveiled. We should note that in periods such as the famines of World Wars I and II, the function of the Expo changed slightly, and it became more of a market for the direct supply of products that war-torn nations needed. But soon after the World Wars this approach was adjusted and the Expo was once again on its old track, so that today the slogans of the Expos best represent the mission of the event. For example, with the advent of the importance of climate and environmental issues, since the 1998 Lisbon Expo in Portugal whose motto was centered on water and its importance, the slogan of the Expos in 2000 Hanover, Germany, 2005 Aichi, Japan, 2010 Shanghai, China and the Milan (Italy) Expo in 2015 have been "Man, Nature and Technology", "The Earth's Wisdom" "Better City, Better Life" and "Nutrition of the Nature, Energy for Life" respectively. In other words, today Expos have become advocates of global and strategic environmental approaches in the world.

What is the slogan of Expo 2020 Dubai and why is it held in 2021 - and if we can return to the first question, what is its importance for Iran?

If I want to start from the end of your question, I must say that this is the first time in the history of the Expo that this event is held in the Middle East and in the neighborhood of Iran. Therefore, it offers a golden opportunity for Iranians, especially economic, cultural, scientific and environmental activists, to witness at a very low cost the largest gathering of countries and the unveiling of the latest approaches, technologies and achievements of human society. It should be noted that this Expo, with more than 196 participant countries, will host visitors in an area of 450 hectares in size. Each country will try their best to create a distinct and

progressive image of themselves for millions of visitors from all over the world, and lay the groundworks for attracting tourists, business partners and foreign investors. In particular, with a crowd of over 25 million people anticipated for this huge event, the record for visitors is expected to be broken at the Dubai Expo. That is why the UAE has spent billions of dollars to host this event and hopes to create one of the best Expos in the calendar of this global event. Of course, World Expos, as I said before, are held every 5 years, and normally the Dubai Expo 2020 should have been held last year, but due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, this event was postponed to 2021. The motto of Expo 2020 is "Linking Thoughts and Creating the Future".

and developing trust among nations is this active presence in international events. Therefore, if you are indifferent to these global events, you will be unable to establish trust with friendly states, or attract partnerships, and exchange cultural, economic and political knowledge and insights. We know that trust is a prerequisite for any interaction, especially business interaction. And trust is directly related to the brand, which means that if a person's or a country's reputation is tarnished or negative, the level of cooperation with it will suffer. On the contrary, a good reputation, recognition and prestige will increase the level of positive interaction and constructive communication. Basically, exhibitions, and especially events such as the World Expo, are an opportunity to redefine the brand and reputation



How has Iran used these opportunities to date and what have been its achievements?

So far, about 60 world expos have been held in the world, and as mentioned before, the first one was held in London in 1851 with architectural content, which coincided with the vice presidency of Amir Kabir during the Qajar period. Interestingly, Iran participated in this expo on the recommendation of Amir Kabir, and with only 25 countries present happened to be also highly praised by the Western media. But with the martyrdom of this symbol of intelligent development in Iran, our presence in the following periods became negligible. According to some documents, in later 19th century, and in 20th and 21st centuries, Iran participated in only three, four and again three events respectively, in most of which its participation lacked power and effectiveness.

What benefit can Iran get from this partnership of global nation states?

You cannot be part of the global value chain, if you do not have an active and constructive relationship with the world community and are unaware of global developments and achievements. Basically, exhibitions allow participants to learn about each other's advancements and are tools for promoting and developing trade, attracting customers and encouraging foreign investments. And so, one of the pillars of interaction

of a nation, and in such an atmosphere, the level of interaction, relationships and trust can be strengthened and enhanced. Therefore, if we ignore opportunities such as global expos, we will marginalize our future and be deprived of the beneficial results of developing relations and expanding the geography of global cooperation and participation. Let's not forget that Iran and our entrepreneurs and elites will have a golden opportunity to meet with 25 million visitors and 196 countries in one place at the Dubai Expo, and this is not an opportunity that is always available to everyone, and the cost of establishing this connection outside the Expo will be much higher.

How will Iran appear in this upcoming Dubai Expo period?

The world's expectations of Iran have always been very high due to its rich history and potential and actual capacities, but unfortunately a powerful and prominent presence in the Expo has not been seen in the current list of governmental priorities. Apart from Iran's presence in the first Expo, which was followed by European acclaim, before the 1979 Revolution, it was only at the 1967 Montreal Expo in Canada that Iran shined and the Iranian pavilion was admired by everyone. But after that, we faced a sharp decline in the quality and management of the Expos until Expo 2015 Milan, where for the first time after a long period Iran was able to gain visitors' admiration and attain a second-place ranking among

Iran's Presence at Dubai Expo 2020

participating nations. It is unfortunate that our government authorities, due to a lack of understanding of the importance of the Expo, do not allocate the necessary funds for the nation's commanding presence and promotion of Iran's cultural and commercial brand. It is this negligence that prevents the formation of economic alliances and treaties during the six-month period of the Expo and greatly increases the subsequent costs of market development and damages the chances of attracting foreign business partners and investors.

Why is there this indifference?

Perhaps the reason is the lack of awareness of our officials and people in power about the importance and position of the Expo. We know the importance and value of the Football World Cup and we spend millions of dollars on improving the quality of our football teams. Also, the importance of the Olympics is clear to many people and the authorities, and plenty of time and money are spent on team building and preparation for years and months at length. But the Expo, which has a direct and rather immediate impact on economic growth and trade development, is not a focus of anyone's

We believe that the more this capacity can be used to familiarize Iranian economic actors with international counterparts at this event, the lower the cost of market development and customer acquisition will be for us later.

Also, on Iran delegations' agenda is plans for holding an international conference to attract foreign investors and to introduce opportunities for favorable and commercially lucrative participation in a variety of projects in the country.

There are also various booths to acquaint visitors with capabilities of Iran's various industries like mining, oil and gas and wind and solar energy as well as tourism and knowledge-based industries. Each booth is tasked with production of great content and the mission to promote Iran's respective commercial brand for all to witness.



attention at all. In fact, it only seems to be allocated a minimum budget, and this has made our presence in the Expos less distinctive and influential and barely worthy of our rich history, culture and technological capacity. However, Tehran International Exhibition Company (TIEC), which is the official management team for Iran's participation in the Dubai Expo, is seriously determined to make Iran's attendance in this global event more effective. And despite the inadequate allocation and payment of budget (even less than the approved amount), the goal of TIEC is to show the world a different and more developed image of Iran, and to make the most of this golden opportunity.

Are there any events planned at the Dubai Expo 2020 for Iran to attract an international audience?

Yes, The most important of these is the extensive planning for sending business delegations and holding functional Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings with foreign counterparts at this Expo.





Iran's Pavilion-Milan Expo 2015



What is the role of the Trade Promotion Home in this?

Office of Trade Promotion (OTP) is the oversight authority for dispatching Iran's business delegations and is the organizer of specialized meetings (like B2B gatherings) at the Dubai Expo for Iran.

OTP will also be organizing the international conference on attracting foreign investment and it is responsible for producing the content for industry booths at Iran's pavilion. As such, OTP's mission is to create the most advantageous atmosphere for encouragement of interaction and development of constructive relationships among Iranian economic actors and foreign counterparts.

At the same time the Office of Trade Promotion must demonstrate an original, different and positive picture of Iran's real capabilities and industrial maturity to the world, and provide the grounds for promoting the country's commercial brand, which is a prerequisite for the development of trade and international participation in the country.

According to some documents, in later 19th century, and in 20th and 21st centuries, Iran participated in only three, four and again three events respectively, in most of which its participation lacked power and effectiveness.

Iran & Japan: Long History of Friendship and Economic Cooperation



**H.E. Ambassador
AIKAWA Kazutoshi**

With degrees from Colombia Law School and University of Tokyo, Ambassador Kazutoshi Aikawa is a career diplomat with a 23-years tenure at various capacities around the world, including Japan's Permanent UN Mission in New York, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Japanese Embassy in Washington as well as various roles in Asian and global organizations such as ASEAN, APEC and G8/G7. Beside diplomacy, Ambassador Aikawa has a deep appreciation for art and culture. This is his second tenure in Tehran, with the first one being Deputy Chief of Mission back in 2008.

Thank you so much for making time for this exclusive interview with Trends despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful... If you were to summarize the state of affairs between Iran and Japan, in terms of political relations as well as trade activities and cultural exchanges, how would you describe it?

First of all, I would like to thank "Trends" to give me this opportunity. Actually, this is my second assignment in Iran. I have a lot of fond memories from my last assignment in Iran. With a population of 80 million, and borders shared with many countries, there is no doubt Iran is one of the most important countries with great potential from geographic, historic and economic points of view. Time was too short for me to know all about Iran during my previous assignment which was from 2008 to 2010. I am very honored to work here this time as Ambassador.

The diplomatic ties between Japan and Iran date back to 1929, while the friendly and fruitful interactions between people of the two countries date far back beyond that and have more than 1200 years of history.

Japan and Iran celebrated their 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2019. In the same year, there were frequent reciprocal visits by key officials, including then Prime Minister ABE's visit to Iran in June of that year and President Rouhani's visit to Japan a few months later in December. The two countries also held various anniversary events throughout 2019, during which they reaffirmed their traditional friendly relations. Naturally, Japan will continue to enhance the friendly bilateral relationship with Iran.

The traditional friendship that has lasted for very long time and is continuing to this day is a great asset for both Japan and Iran. Tapping into this historical good relationship, we can further strengthen co-operation between the two countries, politically, economically and culturally, as well as in people-to-people exchanges. We feel this bilateral relationship has great potential.

Notwithstanding the current difficulties in business atmosphere in both countries, Japan regards Iran as one of its important trade partners. We hope business activities of Japanese companies can soon further expand in Iran. In terms of cultural and intellectual exchanges, both countries have strong interests, and each Embassy has held various cultural programs in cooperation with their host nation's organizations. In addition, we actively exchange foreign students to reinforce mutual understanding between our citizens and deepen our diplomatic and academic relations.

Iran and Japan have been industrial and trade partners for a long time and Japan has been quite involved in the development of some of our main national industries such as energy and petrochemicals, and consumer electronics. What has the history of the engagement of the two countries in these areas been like? Also, what is the trade volume between Iran and Japan today? What products and services are still being exchanged, if any? In the future, what sectors/fields could potentially be of interest to Japan and Japanese companies? Gas, transportation, renewable energies, agri-food sectors come to mind for instance.

Since 1929, when the diplomatic relations between Iran and Japan first started, the economic exchange between the two countries has continued to develop and expand in various areas, to the point that in 2008 the trade amount between the two countries reached \$20 billion. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 did not affect our business relations and in fact after the Iran-Iraq war (1980's), our engineering and industrial collaborations grew in new ways. Participation of Japanese companies in national projects, as well as investments and loans provided to Iranian organizations by Japanese government resulted in a variety of projects. From the beginning of the year 2000, Government of Japan along with the country's private sector have tried to promote opportunities for boosting the bilateral trade and cooperation between Iran and Japan despite the unfavorable situation caused by external factors. Until now, agreements for humanitarian aids and ODA (Official Development Assistance) have remained in effect. Moreover, under the ODA umbrella, Japan has been able to further expand our bilateral and traditional friendly cooperation by engaging in development projects that help strengthen the economic relations with Iran, while conforming to Iran's national development plans.

The diplomatic ties between Japan and Iran date back to 1929, while the friendly and fruitful interactions between people of the two countries date far back beyond that and have more than 1200 years of history.

What do you see as the biggest hurdles for doing business between the two countries? How are US sanctions, lack of data for investors and traders, and commercial domestic rules and regulations harming doing business between Iran and Japan? What do you see as post-sanctions opportunities and challenges between the two countries in terms of industrial cooperation and trade?

As mentioned, Iran-Japan economic relations have a long history. But alongside this history, there exist many challenges such as restrictions on trade due to sanctions, geopolitical risks, and disparities in legal/tax/accounting regulations. The economic relations between Iran and Japan are currently being sustained by private companies. They have kept their presence in Iran for a promising future. We expect improvements in business conditions in Iran and expansion of Japanese enterprise activities here.

Japan is world renowned for its distinctive brands from SONY and Panasonic to Toyota and Honda, and is home to industrial power houses such as Mitsubishi, Marubeni, Sumitomo and Mitsui. In your opinion, what makes the "Made in Japan" motto so exceptional? Is it innovation, creativity, design, or perhaps the Japanese work ethics and business culture?



When we say "Made in Japan", we mean a product made with Japanese standard of "quality", "safety", "durability" and "sustainability", which all together create "reliability" for the customer who selects a Japanese brand. And yet the manufacturing mechanism in Japan is still actively evolving. We believe there is still room for improvement in several areas of manufacturing and branding, such as cost cutting, efficiency and achieving flexibility in responding to the needs of world markets. Toyota cars, many of which you find on roads all over the world, are a phenomenal example of "Made in Japan". We believe that most Iranians have recognized what goes into the story of "Made in Japan" and therefore have a good impression of Japanese brands.

The theme of this edition of Trends is Smart Cities. How did Japan become a pioneer in so many areas of development of smart cities, in communications, transportation, smart homes and offices? Which government body and organization(s) are involved in the development of smart cities in Japan? What are some of the current and future initiatives to make mega cities such as Tokyo even smarter?

The importance of smart cities as a solution is growing due to the emergence of global issues including: first the increase and

surge in disasters caused by climate change; and second a need for measures against infectious diseases like the novel coronavirus and the guidelines for safe social interaction, etc.

Japan is advancing projects under the principles of Society 5.0 where we promote smart cities that widely use digital technology. Society 5.0 is an initiative that aims at building a human-centered society while solving social issues and simultaneously achieving economic improvement by using cutting-edge technologies that integrate the cyber (digital) and physical (substance) spaces.

Japan's strengths are the experience and know-how obtained through a variety of domestic and international urban development projects. For example, Japan has a track record of the world's best urban development projects in terms of disaster prevention, disaster reduction, and public safety. Japan is also a leader in environmentally symbiotic cities such as eco-cities, as well as transit-oriented development (TOD) cities with no traffic congestion, and is also a pioneer in development of the world's leading optical fiber and 5G infrastructures. In future these urban solutions will be an essential foundation for creation of new services and improvements in the quality of life in cities through use of digital technology. Pursuant to the "Integrated Innovation Strategy 2020", the Cabinet Office, together with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan have initiated the "smart city public-private

partnerships" with companies, universities / research institutes, local public organizations, and related ministries, in order to accelerate smart city initiatives through public-private partnerships. Japan is a developed country where we are facing urban challenges today that many cities around the world will face in future, such as rapid infrastructure aging and frequent urban disasters. As such, it is incumbent on us to utilize Japan's high technological and R & D capabilities to present solutions to various urban problems, create new value, and present smart city models to the world in an easy-to-understand manner. In terms of data utilization in the smart city model, so-called "Principles for Transparency and Trust" have already gained consensus from leading countries and major cities all over the world. "Joint Statement on Data Protection and Privacy in the Covid-19 Response" by United Nation also emphasized that health-related protocols should be used to protect personal and non-personal sensitive data and security of data in general.

The international standards for smart city have been deliberated by many international standardization bodies, not only at IEC and ISO levels, but also within the Joint Technical Committee 1(JTC1). Moreover, Japan plays an important role for ISO/TC268/SC1 (Smart community infrastructures) as the Secretariat of the Committee. Within this body, the idea of "City Resilience" and "Smart City" is one of the essential

Iran & Japan: Long History of Friendship and Economic Cooperation

elements to focus on. In keeping with this priority, in October 2020, the new working group (WG6) proposed by Japanese Industry Standards Committee (JISC) for "Disaster risk reduction" was established.

Based on openness and transparency as the central principle and concept of the whole project, Japan aims to build smart cities where all citizens and businesses can participate equitably. The operating system of Japan's urban cities that embodies this concept is an information coordination platform. The platform collects and manages all kinds of urban data on participating cities, thoroughly taking into account residents' perspectives, providing complex and personalized services as well as having data interoperability and distribution capability that can also be extended to other cities. Furthermore, Japan's urban operating system has the ability to expand easily in response to regional growth and technological development, allowing the system to be maintained and upgraded continuously and with agility. In this context, Japan's smart cities are oriented around free, reliable and rational norms. Under these guidelines, large companies are not allowed to monopolize data and likewise, states may not monitor data handling. This is the "originality of Japan" that complies with the DFFT (Data Free Flow with Trust) presented at the G20 Osaka Summit.



Are there any business delegations visiting either country any time soon, either in person or virtually? If so, in what sector(s) and when? Are there any major cultural/artistic or sports activities between the two countries planned for 2021?

With the Covid-19 pandemic spread throughout the world, every government across the globe has been forced to cope with this unprecedented situation as a high priority. This has led to some difficulties in face-to-face communication between countries, although there have already been numerous video conferences and webinars between Japan and Iran in 2020. So, notwithstanding all the obstacles, it has been possible to continue our communications online and we have been able to maintain and even strengthen the alliances among relevant organizations. With regard to major cultural/artistic or sports activities between the two countries, the Embassy of Japan in Iran has organized and supported various cultural, academic and sports events and activities here in order to promote mutual exchanges between Japan and Iran, to boost pro-Japanese sentiments among people of Iran and to further improve Iranians' positive image of Japan.

Having said that, due to Covid-19 outbreak around the world, as mentioned above it has become much more difficult to carry out in-person cultural events and academic/ sports exchanges as in the past. Because of the Covid-19 situation in Iran, the Embassy will be considering carefully whether it organizes the usual cultural events this year. On the other hand, our Embassy has increased its online cultural activities since the pandemic. After holding the "Online Japanese Speech Contest" as the first online cultural event last summer, the Embassy organized other such events like the "Logo Competition for Information and Culture Center of the Embassy" (January 2021) and "Online Japan Cultural Month" (March 2021). In addition, the Embassy periodically posts short videos describing different facets of the Japanese culture or clips introducing simple Japanese food items by the personal chef of the Ambassador. We have also started holding regular online briefing session since last February about studying in Japan. Fortunately, these new activities have been generating a huge number of favorable feedbacks, and we have seen a large increase in the number of followers of our Instagram account from 4,100 to over 11,000 in the last 6 months. The Embassy regards SNS and internet as an important tool for Public Diplomacy in Iran currently and plans to continue to be active in online events as well as in face-to-face exchange programs.



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Speaking about sports, the Tokyo Olympics is fast approaching with the world waiting to see whether it will go on with live audiences or once again be postponed -or at least modified - due to the Pandemic. What is your opinion on this?

The revised schedules and venues for Tokyo 2021 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which were determined last July at the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Session, will start with the Opening Ceremony on July 23rd this year. All parties involved are working together to prepare for the successful realization of the Games this summer. The Government of Japan will implement all possible countermeasures against Covid-19 and continue to work closely with IOC, Tokyo 2021 Organizing Committee and Tokyo Metropolitan Government, in preparations for holding a safe and secure Games program this summer.

As for the healthcare system, all residents have health insurance and they can visit health clinics anytime and anywhere at a low cost. Perhaps as a result, the number of acute care beds, CT scans and doctor visits are all higher than in other countries. On the other hand, in today's world where economic activities are sustained by the global flow of people, it is important to take measures to prevent the spread of infectious diseases in collaboration with the international community. The Government of Japan will proactively lead international efforts in collaboration with international partners and through providing assistance to other countries.

Under this provision, the Government of Japan has so far contributed an emergency assistance totaling \$27.5 million to Iran through international organizations for their efforts in fighting the virus. This aid includes technical assistance to medical personnel as well as donation of relief supplies to



Japan, unlike Iran and many other countries, did not suffer much from the Covid-19 outbreak. Do we know why? Was it because of Japan's experience in handling previous crises, the Japanese population observing social distancing and rules, or are there other explanations? What have been some of the lessons learnt in Japan from the pandemic? Is there currently any cooperation happening between the two countries on that front? How can we leverage each other's experiences to better face future pandemics?

The spread of Covid-19 is a serious problem affecting economies and lifestyles around the world. In Japan, infection cases and death by Covid-19 numbers are fewer than many other countries. It is assumed that the Japanese lifestyle and health care system may have contributed to this phenomenon. With respect to lifestyle, Japanese people have customarily worn face masks from before the pandemic and they take off their shoes inside the home. Hugging and shaking hands are also not common.

the medical facilities in Iran. In addition, under the "Supplementary Budget Scheme" of Fiscal Year 2020 of the Government of Japan, we decided to donate about \$7 million to Iran this February to respond to Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

As an attempt to share Japanese lessons learnt during the Covid-19 pandemic with Iran, a webinar about Continuation of Non-Infectious Disease Treatment and Hospital Management in Japan during Covid-19 pandemic was held in November 2020 with the cooperation of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Iran Office. The webinar was attended by numerous participants from the Ministry of Health of Iran, and medical universities and hospitals across the country. We hope to continue these kinds of cooperative programs in future.

Iran & Japan: Long History of Friendship and Economic Cooperation

Your previous post was in Washington DC and you had been in Iran previously for another diplomatic assignment before returning as the Ambassador. How do you view the current situation between Iran and the US? Are you optimistic about the future of the JCPOA? Based on the outcome of a possible resumption of negotiations, can we expect further improvement of economic activity between Iran and Japan in the foreseeable future, given the challenges including political climate in the US, the sanctions etc.?

Japan has consistently supported the JCPOA, as it contributes to strengthening the international non-proliferation regime and thereby to the stability of the Middle East. Japan strongly hopes that member parties of the JCPOA will return to full compliance with their commitments under the Agreement. We are not a party to the JCPOA, but if there were a role for Japan to play, we have performed our part and are still always ready to do what we can to support the parties to this end.

I myself, returned to Iran after ten years and am once again deeply impressed by the great potential of Iran in various fields. I am convinced that the relationship between Japan and Iran can expand further, and I will do my utmost effort to realize it with the cooperation of friends in Iran.



Once the JCPOA is fully restored and the stability of the region further enhanced, that scenario would certainly create a better environment to further boost the Japan-Iran trade as well. Japan and Iran have enjoyed a long and traditionally friendly relationship. Japan has maintained a good relationship with Iran even during very challenging times, and has continuously made meaningful diplomatic efforts towards enhancing stability in the Middle East.

The prime example of this close relationship between our countries is the visit by former Prime Minister ABE to Iran in June, 2019. His visit was made under a difficult situation at that time. Mr. ABE had cordial and tenable discussions with Dr. Rouhani and paid a courtesy call on Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei to find a way to ease tensions and create a path towards peace and stability in the region.

Our commitment to enhancing good bilateral relationship with Iran and to contributing to peace and stability in the Middle East remains unchanged. We will therefore continue our sincere efforts.

The international standards for smart city have been deliberated by many international standardization bodies, not only at IEC and ISO levels, but also within the Joint Technical Committee 1(JTC1).



H.E. Ambassador Dimitri Alexandrakis, Greece

Iran and Greece traditionally cooperate in many economic and commercial areas like shipping and tourism. But there is much more we can do together, especially in the area of tourism! Iran is a vast country blessed by nature: mountains, lakes, deserts, the Caspian Sea, the Persian Gulf. Iran has everything a visitor needs, plus four seasons all year round. And, because of a long history and the ingenuity of its great people, Iran has splendid monuments and works of art, poetry and literature: who hasn't heard of Iran's ancient masterpieces, its breathtakingly beautiful mosques and shrines for the famous poets and so much more. But Iran receives only around 8 million tourists per year. Greece receives about 30 million, three times our population! Greece has a rich experience in tourism from the 1960s and is ready to offer this tourism know-how to Iran in all fields: services, hotel management and infrastructure, tour organization etc. Iran deserves to be a really big tourism destination, especially for high-end tourists. A perfect area for Iran – Greece cooperation!



H.E. Ambassador Alexis Bandrich Vega, Cuba

The ties between Cuba and Iran, two countries under a genocidal regime of sanctions imposed by the US, are historical and are based on ties of brotherhood. We have both reaffirmed the will to promote economic, commercial and cooperation relations, placing them at the same positive level reflective of our political relations.

An excellent example is our cooperation to confront Covid-19, for which we are working intensively together on an agreement aligned with the clinical evidence of the Cuban vaccine candidate, Soberana 02. This synergy will allow faster progress in immunization against SARS-CoV-2 in both countries and will consolidate the relationships that scientists from both nations have sustained for decades in the pharmaceutical and biotechnological area.



H.E. Ambassador Carlos Costa Neves, Portugal

Portugal has proven to be a reliable and strategic partner for developed and developing countries confronted with various challenges. With a flexible approach, Portugal's competitive companies in the fields of Education, sea related economy, industrial equipment, environment, automotive industry, forest, health and Life Sciences and a unique environment for tech companies. Sourcing in Portugal and Invest in Portugal are much more than a trend.

In good time and supported by more than 500 years of economic and political relationship, we believe that new ties will be created between Iran and Portugal, much like those that already exist but having gained a new dynamic that will raise economic relations between the two countries to a higher level.



H.E. Ambassador Vika M. Khumalo, South Africa

South Africa and Iran continue to share a warm relationship founded in history and on mutual respect. Despite current obstacles, the Embassy of South Africa continues to identify new economic opportunities as well as new ways in which to enhance and deepen existing economic and political relations. Through its dedicated Trade Office the Embassy will continue to support and promote trade opportunities and synergies presented by both countries going forward.

Iran & Italy: From Industrial Cooperation to Cultural Exchanges



H.E. Ambassador Giuseppe Perrone

Giuseppe Perrone joined the Italian Diplomatic Corps in 1990 after graduating in Political Science at the University of Turin. As his first post, he served at the Italian Embassy in Algiers during the country's transition to democracy in the early 90s. After serving at the Italian Embassy in Washington DC in the late 90s, he was Counselor at the Diplomatic Advisor's Office of the President of the Republic in Rome. In 2006 he returned to Washington as head of the Political Bureau of the Italian Embassy in the U.S. and in 2011 he was appointed Consul General of Italy in Los Angeles. In 2014 he became Principal Director for the Mediterranean and the Middle East at the MFA HQ in Rome. In January 2017 he reopened the Italian Embassy in Tripoli whose activities had been suspended in 2015, and served as Italian Ambassador to Libya until 2019. Since June 2019 he has been the Italian Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful. If you were to summarize the state of affairs between Iran and Italy, in terms of political relations as well as trade activities and cultural exchanges, how would you describe it?

Political and economic relations between Italy and Iran have their roots in centuries of dialogue and fruitful interaction. Italy's history and geography make it naturally interested to project its influence in the larger Mediterranean region, where Iran plays a pivotal role.

From a political, economic and cultural points of view, this synergy has always allowed us to build relations based on mutual understanding and reciprocal respect.

Despite the current challenging economic and commercial scenario, Italian companies and financial institutions have continued to play a significant role in Iran. Many of them still continue to operate in Iran and have fulfilling partnerships with Iranian companies, building on a legacy of trust and an extended network of relationships.

Our cultural activities have been flourishing over the last year, notwithstanding the pandemic. We have worked out a hybrid strategy to present Italy and Italian culture to the Iranian public through virtual tools such as video-series, online programs, and live streaming of our events on social media.

As one of Iran's main traditional industrial and trade partners, Italy has been instrumental in the development of some of the key industries here, including energy, steel, machinery and so on. Please tell us about the history of business between the two countries. Also, what is the trade volume between Iran and Italy today? What products and services are still being exchanged, if any?

Do you see any major emerging trends/patterns- for example, expansion of trade beyond activities in traditional sectors such machinery, energy and steel?

Our two countries have a long history of cooperation. Italy has participated heavily in Iran's industrial development particularly through partnerships for the implementation of big infrastructural projects. Today Italy and Iran continue to



Photo by: Dr. Amirreza Farahbod

Despite the current challenging economic and commercial scenario, Italian companies and financial institutions have continued to play a significant role in Iran. Many of them still continue to operate in Iran and have fulfilling partnerships with Iranian companies, building on a legacy of trust and an extended network of relationships.

have two largely complementary economies. Italy has traditionally provided industrial equipment, technology and know-how to Iranian industries. On the other hand, we are a country largely dependent on the import of oil & gas. Italian and Iranian businesses find it very advantageous to work with each other in a cooperative manner and they continue to establish successful partnerships.

For example, we have recently hosted a two-day virtual business forum on agricultural machinery in cooperation with various business associations of both countries and with the support of Italian and Iranian Chambers of Commerce, which has been met with overwhelming interest by many companies within the two countries. Although the bilateral trade volume has recently decreased largely as a result of the impact of US sanctions, I am confident that, as conditions improve, we can rapidly catch up the lost ground and reach or even surpass the bilateral trade volume reached in recent years, which was worth around 5 billion euros, the highest figure in the European Union.

Iran is shifting from oil exports to domestic manufacturing and non-oil exports. Iran also has access to some of the biggest regional markets including Iraq. Would Italian companies consider Iran as a potential manufacturing hub in our region, if and when the sanctions are lifted?

The sanctions have had a negative impact on many of the Iranian companies. Have they also affected Italian companies dealing with Iran? What do you see as post-sanctions opportunities and challenges between the two countries in terms of industrial cooperation and trade?

Sanctions have had an important effect also on our companies, in many instances severely affecting their dealings with their Iranian counterparts.

We look forward to our trade and investment ties reaching their full potential once the sanctions are lifted, with the recognition that these ties are extremely beneficial for both countries and that they are based on a long history based on transformative projects and successful partnerships between Italy and Iran.

Italy is home to some of the world's most iconic brands from Ferrari and Vespa to Gucci and Armani, and industrial power houses such as Danieli and ENI. What do you see as the main success factors for the "Made in Italy" brands? Is it creativity, design, business culture...?



In July 2020, the Italian Embassy hosted a Business Forum entitled "Economic relations between Italy and Iran in the current context: non-oil sectors, SME's role, EU support" in cooperation with the Italian think tank The European House Ambrosetti and the Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

With about 800 participants among Italian and Iranian entrepreneurs and professionals, we discussed the new opportunities arising in both countries and in particular the role Italian companies may play in partnering with Iranian companies, as these redouble their efforts to increase non-oil production and productivity.

I think Italian companies can make a very positive and constructive contribution in the process of transition to the non-oil-based economy Iran is aiming for these days. That's why our companies look with great interest to the possibility of establishing new partnerships in Iran with local companies and continue to consider very seriously Iran's role as a natural manufacturing hub in the region.

Creativity is the main engine boosting our companies in world markets. In this respect, the Italian design has become their factory trademark, which incorporates an aesthetics made of lifestyle and taste for living.

I think Italian businessmen understand that products are successful to the extent they are attractive and capable of stirring people's imagination. That's why people around the world associate Italian products with quality, attractiveness, and style.

The theme of this edition of Trends is Smart Cities - smart communications, transportation, tourism, vehicles, homes and offices...? Are there any major initiatives going on in Italy in that regard and if so, which city or cities are leading it?

The Italian Government is committed to leading the transition towards smart cities and in general, a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way of living. "Smarter Italy" program was launched in 2019 by the Italian Ministry of Economic

Iran & Italy: From Industrial Cooperation to Cultural Exchanges

Development and its aim is to make 11 Italian cities and 12 smaller towns pilot cases for a major change in the approach to our social life. Smart mobility, protection of the environment, and the preservation and enhancement of our cultural heritage are the main factors driving this change.

Another major effort in this field is also our co-hosting of the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Among other events related to the Conference, Italy will host a very important program on September 28-30, 2021 in Milan under the title - "Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition". We will give younger generations from all over the globe voice, prominence and visibility during both the Milan PreCOP26 (September 30 - October 2) and the COP26 which will take place in Glasgow on November 1-12, 2021.

Italy, like Iran, was one of the first and main global epicenters of Covid-19 outbreak. What have been some of the lessons learnt in Italy from the pandemic? Is there currently any cooperation between the two countries on that front? How can we leverage each other's experiences and face future pandemics?



Our two countries were among the very first ones to be hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and have both paid a very heavy toll in human life. I think it's very important to understand that in order to be able to effectively deal with a pandemic of this magnitude a truly worldwide effort is needed. We are all interconnected. If one country fails in this fight, all of us will fail.

Pandemics take advantage of a globalized world. It is time to expand our research beyond national territories and make our resources and findings in the medical field more interconnected, share best practices and plan together for global responses against these common threats.

I should mention an important initiative, among the many we have promoted in this field, which has had a very broad impact.

It's an experimental theater series jointly produced by an Iranian and an Italian company, exploring the impact of COVID-19 on our lives with a very simple message: this pandemic affects us all much in the same way, we are all vulnerable to it and we're all bound together in the fight against it.

The Italian Embassy is one of the most active missions when it comes to cultural activities. Please tell us about the highlights of such activities in 2020. Are there any more planned for 2021, and if so, what would be some examples of what we can expect?

Yes, we were very active last year, notwithstanding the extremely challenging environment imposed by Covid-19, as we believe that Culture and Art are crucial tools not only to express creativity and imagination, but also to give hope and relief to humankind at times of hardship. Among all initiatives, aside from the theatre series I mentioned above, we also have two new and very successful video-series we launched in order to highlight the deep cultural bonds existing between our two countries.



One in the field of architecture and design with the title "Domus Eyes on Iran", explores the many stories focusing on Iran covered by Domus magazine over the past 70 years. Another one, by the title "From Tehran to Rome. A Journey through Art", deals with the world of fine arts. It features seven major Italian and Iranian artists whose background and training have been shaped in both countries and who best represent the cultural bridge which unites us.



175,000,000

Number of smart homes worldwide in 2021

A smart home is defined as a modern home where the appliances and devices can be controlled remotely by the owner, usually through a mobile app. Devices and smart home appliances can also be connected to other smart devices in the house, making smart home technology super easy and convenient.

59%

Of travelers used Apps and websites to choose their destinations

59% of families and travelers said their sources for information or inspirations to find where to go and what to do were travel websites like TripAdvisor and Expedia, etc... Also 10% said they use Instagram to find interesting destinations, 74% used search engines, 51% went on travel review websites, 30% used various social media such as Facebook, and 8% said they used blogs. Only 12% of travelers used traditional travel agencies!



23,140,000,000

The global market size of smart farming by next year

The global market size of smart agriculture is expected to grow from approximately 9.58 billion U.S. dollars in 2017 to 23.14 billion U.S. dollars by 2022.



Behind the Scenes of the Most Active Chamber of Commerce in Iran

Having spent his formative years in Switzerland and Iran, Sharif Nezam Mafi received his MBA with a concentration in Strategic Planning from Suffolk University in Boston. Sharif also received his Bachelor of Science in Geology from Northeastern University in Boston. During his tenure at American Express in New York he also became a certified Six Sigma Black Belt. He has worked in various capacities in Turkey, Pakistan, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Armenia with top tier organizations such as American Express, SGS SA, and Buhler AG. As the Founder and Chairman of the Board of the most active international Chamber of Commerce in Iran (Iran-Switzerland Chamber), Sharif has also been serving as a Managing Director and a Member of the Boards of Trustees at Mahak Hospital Charity Organization.



Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful... If you were to summarize the current state of business/trade between Iran and Switzerland, how would you describe it?

Thank you for having me today and congratulations on a great broad-based magazine. The current status of economic relationship between Iran and Switzerland is on life-support, meaning we are doing minimum basic transactions mostly in humanitarian fields and not where it should be as far as the potential it can have. Right now mostly pharmaceuticals, soft commodities and some food companies are doing the bulk of the business transactions while other Swiss entities which have factories and infrastructure in Iran are mostly struggling due to the difficult sanction-related situation. Having said that, I think the potential trade and business opportunity between the two countries is enormous considering they are complimentary economies.

Please tell us about the history of economic activities between the two countries. What is the trade volume between Iran and Switzerland today? What products and services are still being exchanged, if any?

The history of trade between the two countries dates back to the times of the Silk Road. But in contemporary times as Switzerland became the destination for banking and high end technology, Iranian businesses started to do serious work in the 60's and 70's with their Swiss counterparts in variety of fields.

These activities naturally all got impacted after 1979 revolution and again after the imposition of US sanctions. But Swiss companies always find Iran to be a great market for their products and services and affluent Iranians always found Switzerland to be a safe place for their banking needs, their children's education, and certainly for their holidays. Let's keep in mind however that Switzerland has always maintained a larger neutral role in contemporary Iranian history going back to the 1905 Constitutional Revolution.

Back then Iranian revolutionaries found a safe refuge in Yverdon-les-Bains where they published their revolutionary newspaper Sur-Esrafil. Even today Switzerland plays an honest broker part between Iran and the West by having continuous government to government dialogue in a variety of areas. Switzerland also plays a far larger role on political scene in Iran by representing the interest of the United States since 1979.

What do you see as the biggest hurdles on the way of doing business between the two countries (US sanctions, lack of information among investors and traders, Iran's business environment, commercial rules and regulations...)?

The biggest hurdles obviously is the banking limitation and inability of Swiss companies to repatriate their profits. Iran's cumbersome and ever-shifting regulations in particular regarding the IP rights is a hurdle but the biggest impact as I mentioned is the fear the Swiss companies have of potential punitive financial damages the US government could impose on them.



**Iran
Switzerland
Chamber of
Commerce**

Please tell us a bit about Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce? When was it established? What is its mission and vision, and what are the main activities of the Chamber?

On 4th of February 2014 the Iran – Switzerland Chamber of Commerce (ISCC), a nonprofit organization was established by Swiss and Iranian companies in Tehran. ISCC is a government recognized NGO focused on expanding economic and business relations between Iran and Switzerland.

Swiss companies always find Iran to be a great market for their products and services and affluent Iranians always found Switzerland to be a safe place for their banking needs, their children's education, and certainly for their holidays.

The main objectives of the ISCC are to:

- a. Facilitate new opportunities both in Iran and Switzerland.
- b. Provide guidance and assistance in recognizing and understanding cultural, social and governmental regulations in local markets.
- c. Promote industrial, technical and trade activities that will focus on expansion of trade, investments and technical collaborations.
- d. Provide a platform for:
 - i. Networking with the most experienced and recognized business leaders in the reciprocal local markets.
 - ii. Accessing government offices and regulators.
 - iii. Reporting and marketing through local media and the press.

What have been some of the Chamber's recent activities and events during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Iran - Switzerland Chamber reacted rather quickly to the outbreak of the pandemic marshalling all its resources in a three-pronged fashion: (1) to help member companies stay afloat and keep their businesses healthy; (2) to mobilize the business community to combat the pandemic; and (3) to help prepare for a safe, successful, and sustainable reopening of the economy. ISCC remains committed to help our members endure the hardship caused by the pandemic and return to work in a safe and sustainable way.

Please tell us about your membership program. Who can apply to become a member of the Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce and what services and benefits do they receive?

The Iran - Switzerland Chamber of Commerce is Iran's most active business chamber representing companies of all sizes across every sector of the economy. Our members range from the small businesses to leading industry associations and large corporations. We are not a simple economic chamber but rather an inclusive club of companies and professionals with a common goal and dedication to grow our individual and collective interest in variety of sectors.

Are you optimistic about the revival of the JCPOA? What would be some of the business opportunities between Iran and Switzerland if that becomes a reality? What would be some of the ongoing challenges if we go back to the original deal? Can you perceive any scenario when even the banking sanctions are terminated?

Yes, we are very optimistic about JCPOA Redux, knowing full well that this could improve the overall business climate. But we're also very aware that this could be a rather short-lived re-agreement if the Trump Republicans make a comeback in 2024.

This leads into your next questions, for which I think success of the current negotiations will open the door for more trade. But it will not make tremendous improvement in the investment climate in Iran as international companies demand a more long-lasting agreement with safeguards that can protect their investments, and terms allowing them access to international commercial mechanisms. The current format of JCPOA is not a bullet proof mechanism against the political changes in the United State thus making international investment rather a risky business.



On 4th of February 2014 the Iran - Switzerland Chamber of Commerce (ISCC), a nonprofit organization was established by Swiss and Iranian companies in Tehran. ISCC is a government recognized NGO focused on expanding economic and business relations between Iran and Switzerland.

Behind the Scenes of the Most Active Chamber of Commerce in Iran



UNICEF, Ministry Of Interior and Iran-Switzerland Chamber Of Commerce Campaign

Improving the nutritional status of vulnerable young children significantly impacts their growth. The COVID-19 Pandemic has reduced access to and the affordability of healthy diets which translates into less diverse meals particularly among vulnerable young children. As a result, one of the main areas of intervention to reduce the secondary impact of COVID-19 is improving food security for these beneficiaries.

Ministry of Interior and UNICEF Iran in partnership with Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce and its members are developing an effective intervention of Food Packages targeting under five children who are at risk of under nutrition in less-advantaged provinces.

Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce would like to invite member companies to join the national Campaign of "Stand with Us" via financial contributions and contributions in kind to support healthy eating in priority provinces in Iran.



IranGrain

"iranGrain" is the largest gathering of global grain and oilseeds community that are working and are interested in the Iranian market.

We have over 60 years of grain, oilseeds, and related industries experience within the organization with deep understanding of the market needs, governmental regulations and sanctions regulations. Our events and publications will fill the information void on the Iranian market and we hope our delegates will leave our events with more than they started with, whether that's a new contact, insight from one of our speakers, or the chance to share their ideas with fellow grain and oilseeds professionals. This conference is under the heading of "Iran – Switzerland Chamber of Commerce".

Target groups will be the following:

- Grains and oilseeds
- Exporters of grain products, including flour, pasta, pastry and chocolate, oil and oil products
- Suppliers of material shipping and storage technology, silo manufacturers
- Shipping and logistics companies
- Port companies, grains and oil seeds operators
- Inspection and audition companies
- Millers and cattle feed manufacturers
- Oil extraction companies
- Seed suppliers
- Companies active in the field of grains and grain products in Iraq and countries in the Persian Gulf region

Iran's market size is not comparable to any other in the region. So iranGrain gives companies in different countries a lot of opportunity to get in touch with establishing networking programs.



Women Entrepreneurship

- Women Entrepreneurship Program (WEP) at Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce has 3 core values: Commitment, Knowledge and Collaboration.
- Our Goal is enhancing knowledge and providing business opportunities for women to develop their entrepreneurial projects. We aim at inspiring, educating and nurturing businesswomen and women entrepreneurs in Iran to think globally and to act like world class business leaders.
- Our Mission is supporting women in their career ambitions by providing real business know-how via access to self-made professional leaders, and by creating a unique network of women who are successful in their respective businesses in Iran.

4 main activity fields:

- Women in Business (Educational classes, Q & A sessions, Webinars, and Networking Events)
- Women in Art (Art Exhibition in Geneva, WEP Art space opened on May 18, 2020)
- Women in Health (Workshops and Live streams for Health Awareness)
- Lead with WEP (Vocational and Educational Training for Students)

GoGreen

- GoGreen is a visionary, ethical, economical, and efficient goal to guide people in changing their lifestyles and everyday practices to emulate sustainable natural cycles, where all discarded materials are designed to become resources for others to use.
- GoGreen means designing and managing products and processes to systematically avoid and eliminate the volume of material and toxicity of the waste, conserve and recover all resources, and bypass burning or burying them. Implementing Zero Waste will eliminate all discharges to land, water or air that are a threat to planetary, human, animal or plant health.
- GoGreen aims to reduce waste & increase recycling of waste through corporate and personal participation and is supported by education, training & cultivation of "green" habits.

**STOP USING PLASTIC
WATER BOTTLES**



OUR ENVIRONMENT IS IN YOUR HANDS

Challenges and Opportunities of Iran Industries

Interview by: Reza TAEB



Hamid Reza Movassaghi

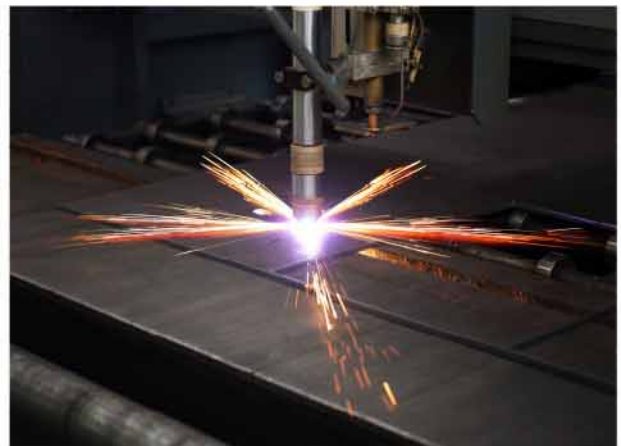
Hamid Reza Movassaghi, is Chairman of the Board of the Union of Traders, Producers and Tea Packaging Industries of Iran, Senior Member of Iranian Industrialists, and a senior member of the country's businessmen in the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Trade.

As a veteran businessman, craftsman and career professional who has recorded brilliant scores for his beloved country in his distinguished resume, please tell us what you believe are the potentials of our country in the field of trade, industry and mining.

Iran has a significant amount of potential for a country its size. From oil and non-oil mines and reserves to precious metals, various industries in agriculture and most importantly in the area of manpower, we have brilliant capabilities and talents. As you know, many Iranians have high-ranking positions in numerous outstanding hi-tech and financial companies and scientific organizations around the world, such as NASA. Another point that should be mentioned in terms of manpower is the perseverance, energy, genius and Alawi (descendants of Imam Ali) spirit of the Iranian people and their strong religious beliefs which, throughout history, have been a major part of the success of this country.

What do you know about the problems that the Iranian industry is facing at the moment? Do you see the source of the problems being domestic conditions or external issues? To what extent do the policies of Western nations affect our industries? What is the role of the government in improving this situation? Please explain the ways out of these problems based on your many years of experience.

For nearly forty years, we have paid an exorbitant price to keep Iran's independence and to avoid a pervasive need for Western aid. This important decision has been very beneficial for the country and the people. What I say here is not based on a political stance because I have no specialty in politics. Rather, I like to examine and explain all current issues from an economic point of view. Unfortunately, Iran has strained under pressure from a lot of sanctions in recent years, which have drastically diminished our ability to have problem-free economic interactions with different international communities. This fact has had direct and obvious effects on different aspects of our country such as its economy, various industries, production, trade, etc. Of course, the lack of a proper response to these conditions by the Iranian government and its lackluster role have not been without impact themselves. I personally believe that the domestic challenges that we are facing inside the country are no less than the effect of sanctions. But the way out of this crisis can be learned from other countries like Malaysia and to some degree from Lebanon. These countries were able to assign experts at crucial government branches to manage such economic predicaments and effectively made significant positive changes at crucial times. The presence of economists and experts at top government levels is one of the most important ways out of the current situation in my opinion.



With the imminent end of the current government, the new government plans will certainly be seriously hampered by this closure of factories for both economic reasons and the Coronavirus pandemic.



Recently as you know, the activities of some factories in various industries have been suspended. With your brilliant record in the construction and operation of various factories with a capacity of thousands of workers, how do you evaluate the way they can reopen and start operating again?

With the imminent end of the current government, the new government plans will certainly be seriously hampered by the current closure of factories due to both economic reasons and the Coronavirus pandemic. Nonetheless, a positive outcome from JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) negotiations will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the reopening

How much is the impact of the outbreak of Coronavirus on world industry and trade, especially in Iran's case? Will the shape and trading models change forever in the post-corona times?

Undoubtedly, this virus has affected all aspects of human life. The economy and various industries will face many changes after the Coronavirus era. In the West, to combat the virus governments distributed cash payments to their citizens to allow people to meet their financial obligations and to prevent them from leaving their homes. The lack of economic activity and production of countries will have a great impact in the future, which can be clearly seen in all countries' overall



and resumption of activities in factories. I am very optimistic that these negotiations will reach the desired result. In fact, the three-pronged lifting of sanctions, forthcoming new government and withholding introduction of immediate new laws by the coming administration can bring producers and industrialists back into action

What do you think are the most influential decisions of Iranian authorities in the last 10 years in the field of industry, trade and economy (both in the direction of progress and in the opposite direction)?

The decisions made by recent administrations have fallen short of addressing all deficiencies. But worst of all were the cash subsidies and the major economic surgery inflicted on the country in the last several years. Insufficient Extraction of natural resources and energy can be another problem in Iran. We must take real measures for the welfare of people, and people will help drive the country forward in return.

economy, trade, industry and so on. Of course, the Iranian people have an admirable tolerance threshold due to conditions such as sanctions, the experience of the difficult years of the Iran-Iraq war, and etc. In the post-coronavirus period, the forms of transactions and communications will change dramatically. The role of technology in human life is facing a new definition and the dependence of each of us on it is increasing day by day. For example, I personally have had a particular resistance to being in cyberspace. But in this period people in my circumstances were forced to expand their attendance and increase their activities online.

If there is an issue that we have not mentioned, we would be grateful if you express it at your discretion.

Primarily, I would like to thank you for describing the situation in Iran in various fields in your publication, you are conveying a true picture of Iran to the English-speaking world. Follow your current approach and refrain from political leanings. Just as I am not a political figure and I do not have a political approach to issues, you too can address various topics in your publication away from posturing and affecting an attitude. Also, please publish some contents about the pure character of Iranian people, the true nature of Aryans, peace and friendship, the Alawi essence and pure beliefs, the power of higher thought, great geniuses and so on.



Smart City

An aerial photograph of a city skyline at dusk. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The city is densely packed with buildings, many of which are illuminated with lights. A prominent red vertical line runs down the left side of the image, starting from the top of the title and extending to the bottom of the list.

- Smart City Demystified
- Iran's Smart City Initiatives
- Isfahan's Smart City Master Plan
- China's Experience in Smart
- City Development
- Smart Logistics

Smart City Demystified

By: NOBKA

Smart City is a term that has been increasingly used in recent years and generally refers to the application of new software and hardware technologies, as well as to the leading infrastructure in metropolitan management, with the goal of facilitating people's lives, reducing costs and optimizing resources. The purpose of the smart city is not only to use new technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence and machine learning, but also to solve or reduce real problems in urban life to meet the needs of citizens and make optimal use of available resources. A smart city is a city where specific processes, such as management of communication and information, are interconnected and new technologies such as IoT and artificial intelligence are used to improve operations. These services are often based on intelligent automation and infrastructure technologies and are designed to also manage public services such as energy management, water resources management and waste collection.

Smart city areas

With a variety of elements in an urban environment, there exist various domains in a smart city, including smart parking, smart buildings, smart lighting, smart businesses, etc., all of which can be viewed under this broad concept. Different departments within a smart city can be categorized under the following macro groups, and through new technologies, each department can be revamped and 'smartened up' for better all-around efficiency.

- **Transportation:** new software platforms, new means of transportation, parking management, traffic management and logistics management, self-driving cars, etc.
- **Security:** Security infrastructure, CCTV, cyber security, smart police and so on.
- **Economy:** innovative new businesses, smart tourism, smart retail, industrial IoT, optimization of production, smart tourism, smart financial and commercial exchanges, etc.
- **Governance:** open data, e-government, smart meters, developed infrastructure, energy management and smart grid.
- **Community:** smart health, entertainment, education, etc.
- **Green and clean:** smart homes, smart streets lighting, water consumption management, environmental resource



management such as parks, waste management, etc.

NOBKA activities in the field of smart city

With a focus on new technologies, in 2016 Nobka Company established its strategy targeting the development of smart city and IoT technology in Iran. The fundamental approach of the management team of the company from the start has been to develop and localize new hardware and software technologies. Nobka has achieved this goal by primarily investing in mature startups in those technologies as well as

providing financial and commercial support to other leading startups. Alongside these investments, the Company has also developed its technical team to meet these needs. In the last few years, the company has been able to participate in various areas of activity of a smart city and has succeeded in implementing diverse projects in the field. These include the manufacture and production of smart building products based on IoT wireless technology (smart lighting, smart switches and sockets and relays, smart home appliances, smart air conditioning), smart parking on the IoT platform (smart mechanical locks and IoT sensors), Intelligent irrigation systems (sensors and actuators), waste management, and intelligent lighting of roads and streets. Some of these projects have been the first of their kind in the country.

Nobka's mission is to provide the necessary technologies and infrastructure to make cities smarter and improve the quality of life by applying cutting-edge know-how and by supporting creative ideas and local startups. The goal is to have an impact on economic development and have an effective presence in domestic and international markets. Nobka, relies on their knowledge-based and creative sub-groups to enable cities and organizations expand their vision of smart cities by developing sustainable solutions, and through using best practices and custom solutions.

Nobka's team uses the latest technologies and designs in building smart cities. Nobka's vision is to create modern cities and build the necessary framework to achieve the desired quality of life for citizens and integrated businesses, as well as promote a clean and sustainable environment with optimal use of resources to preserve it for future generations.

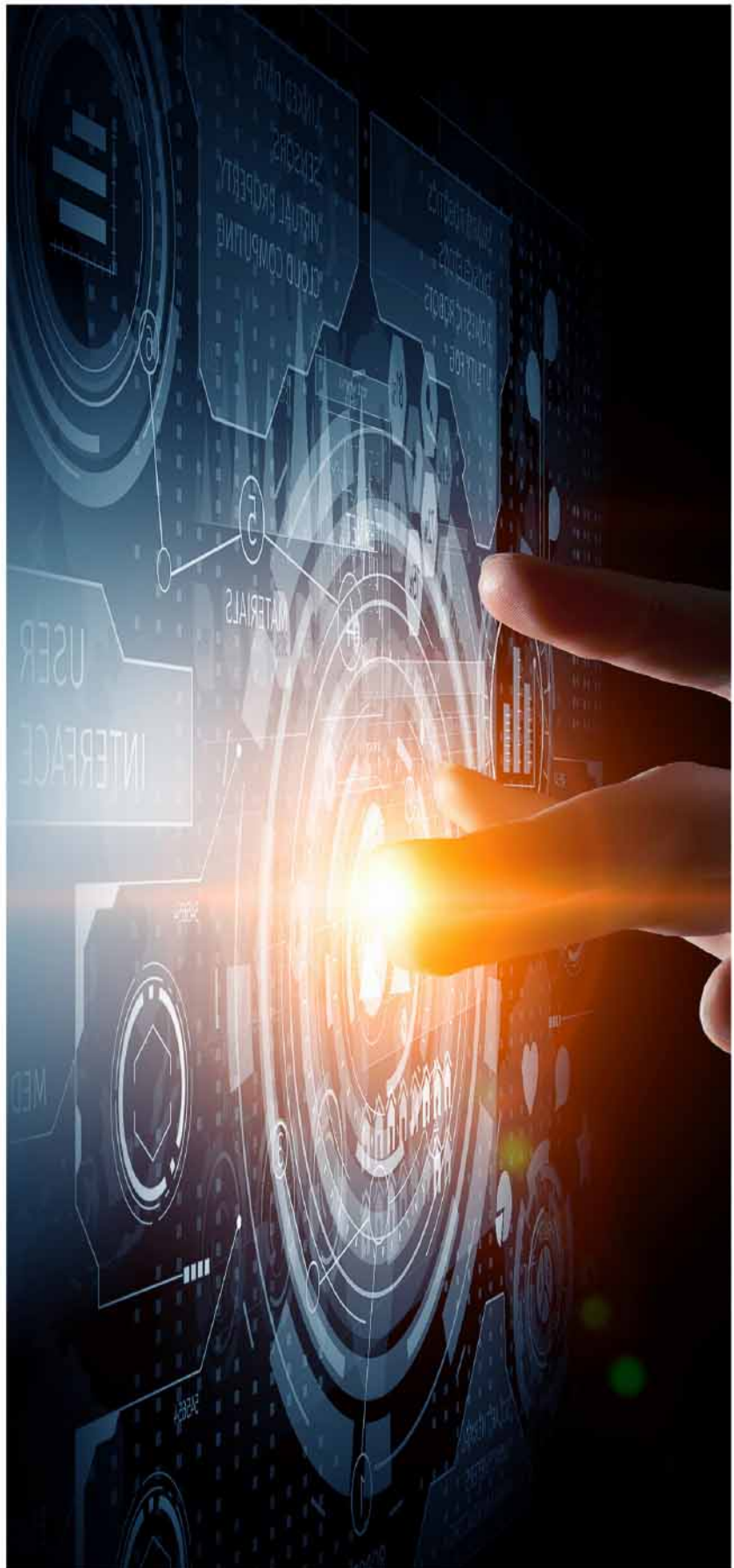
Smart city requirements

The success of smartening cities primarily requires the existence of well-codified and macro-governance programs, the support of governments, municipalities and the existence of necessary infrastructure. All planning steps should be carefully worked out with experienced consultants, both at the management level and at the technology level based on the needs and priorities of each city. Required infrastructure and solutions should be identified for each project. After creating and establishing the infrastructure and arranging the necessary facilities, the comprehensive program is divided into executive sub-sections and the service providers and manufacturers each complete a part of this puzzle. All projects and sub-projects must be in accordance with this macro program in terms of purpose, function and technology.

Smart city implementation in Iran

In Iran, smart urban planning projects have not yet been pursued and implemented in an integrated and coherent manner despite the existence of technological potentials and real-life challenges. In metropolitan cities such as Tehran, units and working groups have been established under the Municipal Information and Communication Technology Organization which have taken steps to provide electronic services to citizens. Among the topics of the smart cities, smart parking has also received a lot of attention and multiple projects have been implemented regionally, which are mainly related to payment methods. Also, some practical steps have been taken in open data for the operation of companies and the participation of citizens in solving urban problems. But this amount of movement is still small compared to developed countries and the scope of change is still very limited.

Due to the problem of water shortage in Iran, smart agriculture and smart irrigation systems need more attention and support from related institutions. In tourism too, considering the potentials of Iran, the capacity seems to be very ready and available. Also, with respect to urban issues, areas that can be pursued with higher priority and speed are reducing traffic, parking management, as well as smartening buildings and offices to save energy and reduce waste of resources. No doubt, as mentioned, all these projects must be devised and guided based on careful planning for which obviously a suitable infrastructure is required.



Iran's Smart City Initiatives



Mohammad Reza Mirza Amini

Mohammad Reza Mirza Amini is the Smart City projects Manager of Magfa Company and has been actively working in developing new businesses and implementing smart systems for more than a decade.

Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful. Please tell us about your organization and your own work related to Smart City initiative(s) in Iran.

The Center for the Development of Information Technology (Magfa) is one of the longest-established state-owned companies whose mission is to develop information technology in the country. Magfa operates in various fields such as messaging, national systems development, and e-government. Over the past decade, Magfa's strategy has been to move from the above traditional businesses to the development of new technologies and intelligence. Magfa activities in the field of new technologies can be classified into two categories: smart city and smart industry. Over the past five years, through extensive research and development activities, Magfa has created significant technological capabilities in artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, big data and data mining, enterprise integration, and blockchain.

What is the definition of a "Smart City" and what are the key components of it? What are the benefits to various stakeholders (people, government, industry, visitors/tourists...)?

Over the past few decades, humans have always sought solutions to reduce the problems and challenges of cities, especially in metropolises and megapolises, such as traffic, air pollution, injustice, recession, unemployment and environmental degradation. The simultaneous development of new technologies such as the Internet, large software systems, artificial intelligence, sensors and the Internet of Things, smart phones, geographic information systems, and social networks has led to the emergence of solutions to urban problems and the exploitation of new opportunities.

Smart city is an integrated and data-driven approach to urban development in order to connect the various elements of cities that have been developed in the form of separate silos and is an approach for managers to make decisions based on real and accurate data of the city. In fact, based on the analysis of urban data and continuous learning, the quality of urban management and development in smart cities has improved and the quality of life of citizens has improved as well. The smart city is a path towards the future development of the world's cities, the vision of which is the formation of a sustainable city. The most important parts of a smart city are smart economy, smart governance, smart transportation, smart citizen, smart living, smart environment, and smart energy, all of which seek to make innovations in their system and management through data management.

The most important beneficiaries of smart cities are the citizens

and residents of such cities, as these smartening strategies will improve their quality of life. Businesses can also facilitate and accelerate the process of innovating their services and products with the help of urban data and the development of various platforms. In addition, urban management can create dynamism in the city, reduce the operating costs of the administration and take advantage of new revenue-generating opportunities. The environment will also be better protected and citizens and businesses will be more involved in sustainable development.



What are the prerequisites for the implementation/development of smart cities (telecom infrastructure, government policy, private sector adoption) and which of the components are more important than others, if any?

The requirements for the implementation and development of a smart city are different in various cities of the world and in Iran.

Depending on the conditions and level of maturity of cities and their priority issues, different needs arise. In Iran in general, we can say that the first priority is the legal and structural requirements at the level of urban management, such as the realization of integrated urban management, legal framework of public-private partnership, data management and open data policy, urban economic independence and security considerations.

Next level is the development of an urban innovation system that supports the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the development of technology and knowledge, and provides the basis for private sector investment in urban infrastructure and public services. Underlying all these issues are the citizens, and serious programs must be provided to create a culture and involve them in urban issues.

Where is Iran with regards to the smart city development? Who is in charge of the master plan(s)? When did it all start? Which city (ies) are leaders in the implementation of the smart city concept in Iran? What are the future plans for further development of smart cities?

In recent years, there have been movements in the field of smart city development in Iran, which are mostly scattered and lack the necessary seriousness and mechanisms. Since we do not have integrated urban management in Iran and more than 50 different and diverse organizations independently provide services in cities, there has been practically no possibility of comprehensive planning and management of smart city development (in the true sense of the word). In some metropolises, such as Tehran and Mashhad, initial planning (in the form of a study plan) for the development of a smart city has been done by municipalities, but in fact has not been implemented. Of course, in cities such as Mashhad, Tehran, Tabriz, Yazd, Arak, Qom, Isfahan and Shiraz, projects have been symbolically defined and implemented, but due to lack of proper and operational definition of projects, have not been welcomed by the private sector and the public, and as a result have not turned into a steady stream. Magfa and the Austrian Institute of Technology also have a joint project underway to develop a comprehensive smart city plan for the port of Bushehr. This project seeks to identify the priorities of Bushehr city and formulate a strategy for creating urban transformation for it. The output of this project is a roadmap for the implementation of projects and smartening measures that will be presented along with a set of investment packages for selected projects and pilots.

In some upstream institutions and organizations such as the Organization of Municipalities and Rural Affairs, the Information Technology Organization, the National Cyberspace Center, and the Passive Defense Organization, policies have been implemented in this regard, but no tangible and usable output has been provided to users.

How do other components of the smart city initiatives (smart energy, smart buildings, smart health, smart cars, smart logistics...) fit into the greater concept? What are some of the initiatives in Iran with regards to each of them?

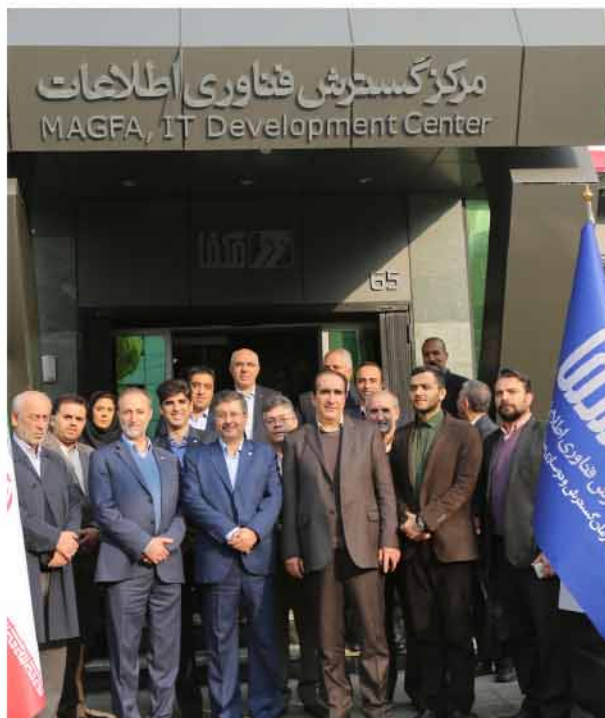
Other elements of smartening can also be placed under the concept of smart city, especially if their main activity is within the city limits. But this is not mandatory. Some topics such as smart energy, smart health, smart logistics, smart cars, smart industry, smart mining and the like are national and beyond the metropolitan issues and have their own trustees who seek to use smartening concepts in their field of work and they are not necessarily in the urban management ecosystem (public or private).

For example, projects such as connected vehicle technology (CVT), cases in the field of intelligent industry (Fourth Industrial Revolution), applications in the field of Internet of Things, intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and similar cases have been defined and implemented in the country (sometimes in Pilot format) but have not been extended to the whole country or major cities.

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the smart city initiatives in Iran? Is the crisis further pushing for faster implementation of smart cities or slowing it down? What are the opportunities and challenges for the roll out of smart cities after the pandemic?

The Coronavirus pandemic crisis around the world has accelerated smart projects and smart cities; For example, the provision of electronic and intelligent services has become very widespread. Intelligent systems have also helped government and municipal managers to reduce the risks and threats of Coronavirus, such as monitoring the circulation of infected people and carriers in cities and the whole country, and to provide the necessary analysis of human behavior with the help of artificial intelligence to improve management decisions and coronavirus Crisis Control.

This crisis in Iran further accelerated the development and implementation of e-services and e-government to reduce the number of people resorting to government organizations.



Systems such as masks also made it possible to track and monitor the condition of sick citizens. Remote work systems, remote meeting and virtual training systems were also greatly enhanced. In contrast, reduced travel and inter-organizational interactions reduced the possibility of defining smart city projects as well as their priority (sometimes labeled as fantasy projects), and as such hindered the progress of current projects.

What are the key current and future trends and developments with regards to smart cities (globally and in Iran)?

Certainly, the issue of smart cities is one of the serious future processes in the development of cities in different countries of the world, and it will gradually show its benefits and opportunities to managers and officials as we move forward. The development of infrastructure technologies such as the Internet of Things and artificial intelligence will be key issues in the field of the smart city. Also, serious attention to the development of smart citizens is one of the topics that is becoming a serious priority in most countries in the field of smart cities.

With the emergence of opportunities there are also threats with respect to smart cities, and therefore serious debates in the field of Data Governance, Open Data, and privacy of

Iran's Smart City Initiatives



Hamed Moaddab Shaar

Hamed Moaddab Shaar is the Vice President of Development and Technology of Magfa Company. He has a graduate degree in Master of Information Technology Engineering and Advanced Business Administration (DBA).

citizens are being formed and implemented, which in our country also require serious legislation and policy. Also the development of new business models (as opposed to the traditional and conventional models that we are familiar with and with which we have experience in Iran) and the practical realization of the frameworks of cooperation between the private and public sectors is one of the issues that will be seriously pursued in the future.

What are some of the key (current and future) projects you are working on right now with regards to the development of smart cities in Iran?

Bushehr Smart City Project is one of the serious and pilot projects in the country in the field of planning and implementation of Smart City, which is midway and requires more serious involvement and dedication of local managers to develop and achieve it. Serious and understanding negotiations have been held for the development of Arak Smart City, which is in progress. The design of the smart urban zone of Tehran has been done by Magfa and Magfa intends to act as a smart zone operator, and this project is going through its negotiations and executive and administrative steps. In the field of education and culture building of the smart city, Magfa has prepared and implemented a joint training course with the municipality of Tehran, which is also being put into action in some other cities in Iran.

Launching the Center for Excellence in Smart Cities of Iran is one of the most important measures of Magfa in creating interaction among the stakeholders of the smart city, and also a priority is sharing the knowledge created in this field between the experts of the smart city. This center is a member of the highly regarded center of organization for International Economic Relations (OiER), which is the director of the United Nations for Smart Sustainable Cities Development Program (U4SSC). Creating interaction between domestic and foreign activists of the smart city is one of the goals of launching this center of excellence in the country.

The upcoming elections are of much less significance than the economic impacts of the public health and foreign policy, and businesses seem to ignore the presidency in their calculations.

Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful. Please tell us about your organization and your own work related to Smart City initiative(s) in Iran.

I thank you for your attention to the issue of smart cities. As one of the pioneers in new technologies in the fields of information and communication in Iran, for over 5 years Magfa has tried to conceptualize these macro technologies in areas such as smart organization, smart city, and smart industry. These efforts have also included large applications of these technologies as a prerequisite for smartening in all aspects of governance, business, and lifestyle, and have yielded significant achievements in creation of the required infrastructure in different capacities for this purpose.

Please explain about the Center for Excellence in Smart Cities of Iran, and how did the idea of implementing it start?

As mentioned, Magfa has started its activities in the past several years as a pioneer in smart cities with a global standard approach in this category. During this period, which began with the Bushehr Smart City project with the joint collaboration of Magfa and AIT Austria, we encountered many conceptual, technical and operational complexities.

Main challenges we faced were in two areas.

The first was challenges we encountered at the municipal, urban management and operational structure levels of cities. Many major cities invited Magfa to enter into negotiations and partnerships to carry out similar projects. But there were problems. In defining the approach to the smart city, for instance, we noticed their positions and expectations were different and sometimes incorrect. The needs and priorities of cities were somewhat known to everyone due to municipal and urban management involvement, but what was lacking were new approaches to solving the existing problems. On the other hand, cities interested in the subject of the smart city did not have a big picture of where to start. The more important issue was that many cities believed that by implementing just one project, they would suddenly turn into a smart city, and this error in judgement made the gap of expectations very wide and complex.

Another major problem in realizing the smart city in Iran is the lack of budget and problems related to providing the required liquidity in implementation of projects. In this respect also, lack of business models in the implementation of successful smart city projects was a deterrent to these cities' desire to move towards becoming smart cities.

The second area of challenges of the project were institutions and executive mechanisms and technology for the smart city. There are private companies and technology and consulting enterprises that are eager to implement smart city projects in the country. In this respect, universities and scientific centers, consulting companies, and companies offering technological products and services are the three sides of this triangle. Each of these entities, based on their structure and obligations to their stakeholders, seeks to negotiate and define smart city projects in their own way. Naturally, the strategies of each can be different from the other. Municipalities, on the other hand, do not have a precise and necessarily correct approach (for the reasons mentioned in the section above), as is true in all parts of the world. In such an environment, naturally, every activity at the level of urban management and related to the smart city can become inconsistent according to the maturity of the project location (both in terms of management, technological, and operational and execution maturity, as

implementation will lead to success. These key factors are:

- Seeing realization of a smart city as a journey
- Mutual determination and coordination at city and provincial level
- Giving priority to local and provincial capacities
- Development of a specific approach to the smart city for each city
- Creation of a working executive model and reasonable scheduling for implementation of the projects
- Integration of technical projects for implementation
- Support and protection for investment of stakeholders during the projects

The combination of these 7 guidelines will give us a high chance for success in bringing smart cities to Iran.

Very well, explain about the goals and services of the Center of Excellence?



well as the sophistication of participation and investment, etc.).

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned challenges, the idea of creating the first center of excellence of smart cities in Iran with the aim of providing various services, creating partnerships, culture building, education and growth of technological and managerial space of smart cities was in fact created in Iran with the presence of all stakeholders.

Thank you very much for your explanation., So it seems development of smart cities in Iran has many challenges What are the solutions to counter these challenges in your opinion?

The fact is that the model of urban management for smart cities in our country is different from many leading countries. The scope of authority and operations of municipalities in Iran is limited. As you know, municipalities are referred to as local governors in many international smart city articles and research. Well, naturally in Iran, we have to redefine and update the description of services and duties and the position of municipalities in urban management. We have learned of several key success factors in carrying out smart city projects that we must follow. Then we can claim that our smart city project is correctly defined and the path drawn for

As I mentioned previously, this center of excellence aims to create a national network of smart cities in Iran with a synergistic approach, following three major steps:

- Development of cooperation of smart city stakeholders in Iran with international collaborators and networks with the idea of developing export of technical and engineering services in the field of smart city and benefiting from the expertise and achievements of global smart city authorities.
 - Technical and experimental improvement in the field of design, and implementation of smart cities based on international expertise obtained from such sources as the United Nations for Smart Sustainable Cities Development Program (U4SSC) and the Center for Excellence Smart and Sustainable Cities, as well as the capabilities of domestic technology companies and experts
 - Creating a Network of powerbrokers and participants in the field of smart city at the national level using common terminology, and promoting interaction between government and public institutions, businesses and scientific, academic and research centers
- Iran Smart Cities Excellence Center represents Iran in the United Nations U4SSC global program. More information is available on the Center's website at <https://smarttogether.ir/>.

Isfahan's Smart City Master Plan

Turning into a Smart City, Isfahan has come to the aid of social equality: Birth of a different generation of urban management. With more than two million residents requiring over 200 different services from their municipality on a daily basis, becoming a smart city is not only the most effective way to achieve social equality, but also the best way to be aligned with the developed cities of the world.

That is why the metropolitan management of Isfahan has highlighted the role of technology in various areas of transportation, urban services, outdoor spaces, etc. in the lives of citizens to better manage the city and provide more comfort and tranquility to its residents.

The first steps that the city of Isfahan took about 15 years ago was to digitize its services to citizens. Despite the positive results of this decision in the Isfahan over the last decade, the transition to a smart city, as unfolded in some other cities around the world, has put Isfahan city managers in uncharted waters in Iran.

The annual budget of the City of Isfahan, with a focus on making Isfahan a smart city, was approved by the Fifth City Council, and all related plans and documents for the 5-year development proposals have been submitted to city managers for implementation. The 5-year plan as outlined and approved, addresses the main concerns of the city's municipal managers, and as such, puts emphasis on quality of life for residents and visitors of Isfahan with less air pollution, less traffic congestion, and better city services.

For a better environment

Under the umbrella of the 5-year plan, all aspects of urban life, from environmental issues to development and construction activity, as well as transportation, are included with the priority given to access to municipal services in a simple and speedy fashion. With existing traffic congestion and air pollution problems already existing, the added coronavirus pandemic made the Isfahan city administration more determined to more quickly plan and implement measures to streamline municipal services such that many processes were simplified and unnecessary ones completely eliminated.

Actions were also undertaken by city managers to provide needed framework for residents requiring fewer trips outside their homes for daily needs.

City with a few clicks

The implementation of the "City with a few clicks" project with the possibility of providing 134 services without the need for residents' in-person attendance, provides a natural infrastructure advantage for the municipality through which it can organize and manage the development of services and address any system deficiencies. Currently, these services are available and accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, through the my.isfahan.ir system for all residents of Isfahan, so that their requests can be reviewed and processed with the least amount of need for their presence.

The services of this site are divided into 10 categories, which include urban matters, construction and building, contractor affairs and business and employment matters, environment and green space, transportation and traffic, urban spaces and public thoroughfares, accidents and violations, tourism and recreation and health, education and research and culture, communications, polls and surveys and cemeteries.



Under the umbrella of the 5-year plan, all aspects of urban life, from environmental issues to development and construction activity, as well as transportation, are included with the priority given to access to municipal services in a simple and speedy fashion.

Smart public transport

Improved public transportation services and their maximum use by residents and visitors of Isfahan was a consistent challenge that the municipality needed to address. As such, city managers turned to installation of intelligent development systems (AVL) and upgrade of electronic payment system (AFC) in 1,100 city buses in Isfahan in recent months. This effective measure efficiently reduced the gap between supply and demand in the transportation sector and eased the problem in a satisfactory way. Some of the improvements that the new AVL system provided include monitors in bus stops showing information about arrival times for buses, efficient streamlining of bus stops, one-way tickets in the city bus network using QR-code, better management of bus lines with respect to the distances between start and end of lines, and possibility of seeing all bus lines serviced in each station through the "Nesfeh Jahan" application, which have all

resulted in fuel efficiency and higher customer satisfaction. The municipal traffic enforcement authority was unable to monitor the traffic with the outdated systems in a city of 2.3 million residents. Under new plans, the traffic authority was able to install 580 smart traffic monitoring systems in Isfahan and increased its video surveillance cameras to 437 devices for 187 previously.

Increase of smart parking in Isfahan to 4-unit parking stalls, installation of 300 smart branches in city parks, installation of QR barcode reader (ASKIF) on 3,000 taxi to remove physical money and cash exchanges between passengers and taxi drivers and many other measures have been the other important measures undertaken by municipal authorities over the past few years to manage the city more efficiently, also to achieve their goal of making life easier for people.



Isfahan joins the network of smart sustainable cities. With respect to a system of governance, the municipality of Isfahan, by joining the global network of smart sustainable cities, has placed itself among the 200 cities that have planned the creation and development of their infrastructure based on smartening. Certainly the municipality of Isfahan can benefit from the knowledge and expertise of others on its smartening path by holding round table talks with cities which are further on this path of becoming smart cities.

China's Experience in Smart City Development



Tan Mingyuan

Tan Mingyuan of Neusoft Group is an architect for enterprise digital transformations and designer of ecological digital economy. He has participated in several national research projects of the Ministry of Science and Technology in China, and he is the architect and designer of a number of key smart cities in his native country.

Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful. Please tell us about your organization and your own work related to Smart City initiative(s) in China.

At Neusoft Group I provide consulting and construction implementation services for smart cities. Based on the inspiration of macro urban digital integration innovation, we also design new products and intelligent services for developing enterprises in urban market environment in smart cities. Digitizing of different aspects of life in smart cities will reduce costs, increase efficiency, improve quality of services and reduce depletion of local capacity and resources.

What is the definition of a "Smart City" and what are the key components of it? What are the benefits to various stakeholders (people, government, industry, visitors/tourists...)?

Our understanding of smart city has been gradually upgraded, and with this insight a new definition for a smart city has slowly developed. The basic idea is to use the Internet of Things, cloud computing, big data, artificial intelligence, spatial geographic information, 5G and blockchain and other new generation information technologies to promote a vision of urban planning, construction, operation, and management in these cities and provide universal services for the people. Smart cities provide a new model for industrial transformation, and creates a new way for efficient, orderly, coordinated and safe urban governance.

How did China become one of the leaders in the smart city development? When did it all start? Which cities are leaders in the implementation of the smart city concept in China? What are future plans for further development of smart cities? Is China helping other countries/cities with their smart city initiatives?

The Chinese government launched a large-scale pilot project of smart city back in 2012 and promoted the smart city concept to a national strategy in 2014. Once the smart city strategy was approved and begun in China, the pilot project and all aspects of the smart city related foundation and infrastructure activities quickly flourished.

There are currently hundreds of smart city pilot areas in China, but those who lead the implementation of the concept of smart city are mainly concentrated in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, and Yangtze River Delta, Beijing Tianjin Hebei, and the Chengdu Chongqing metropolitan areas. Maturity of the concept of smart cities in mainland China and mastery of their construction and development will certainly increase the ability of China for the construction of such cities in friendly countries with China.

What are the prerequisites for the implementation/development of smart cities (telecom infrastructure, government policy, private sector adoption) and which of the components are more important than others, if any?

The prerequisite for the development of a smart city is to build a new type of urban infrastructure, unify standards, and achieve intelligent application experience in key areas to do this it is important to unify the goals of the leading organizations. Next is to reach a consensus that digitizing and automating of applications and services will lead to higher productivity Smart city is a systematic project, which needs long-term and comprehensive planning and top-level design to achieve the overall effects of collaborative innovation.

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the smart city initiatives in China? Is the crisis pushing for faster implementation of smart cities or slowing it down? What are the opportunities and challenges for the roll out of smart cities after the pandemic?

With the expansion of urbanization and the resulting increase in population of cities, the new requirements of urban economy, resource utilization, quality of life, safety and epidemic prevention, as well as the current ecological environment and sustainable development issues, we have witnessed severe challenges faced by urban managers.

Smart city development can achieve scientific decision-making, proper urban management, rapid response, and can also enhance the competitiveness of a city. The onset of Covid-19 actually greatly bolstered the expansion of smart cities in China. Smart government, smart security, smart energy, smart environment, smart finance, smart building and smart transportation in our smart cities have led to the development of e-commerce, online entertainment, smart education, telecommuting, smart medical care, smart logistics and other automated areas where services and businesses have benefited.

But such sweeping advances also bring their challenges in data security and privacy protection.

Neusoft

What are the key current and future trends and developments with regards to smart cities (globally and in China)?

The process of global urbanization is still advancing with an irresistible trend. According to the prediction of the United Nations, the rate of global urbanization will double in 100 years from 1950 to 2050. For this reason, the best solution to realize the sustainable development of cities will be with advanced new generation of information technology. Through comprehensive long-term planning, and efficiency of multi-industry organizations working together, data fusion, collaborative development, green security, and innovation driven projects are integrated into smart city administrations to optimize functioning of urban areas. Also, for the success of the programs, an independent oversight is necessary to assess the mutual constraints of a number of contradictory and incompatible multi-industry groups so as to materialize the optimization of multi-objective decision-making and achieve a smart society.



Smart Logistics



AmirHossein Anvari

Senior Business Development & Retail Operation Manager at SPAR Iran

SPAR is the world's leading independent food retailers chain. The business started with one Dutch store in 1932 and now comprises more than 13,500 stores in over 48 countries on four continents. The development of SPAR has been underpinned by a set of values that have guided the organization since its establishment more than 85 years ago. At the heart of these core values is the commitment of SPAR stores worldwide to freshness, choice, quality and service. SPAR is an international group of independently owned and operated retailers and wholesalers who work together in partnership under the SPAR Brand to provide a high quality and value-for-money shopping experience for the communities they serve.

The SPAR mission is to ensure that it remains the world's leading "voluntary" (independent) food retail chain and that it continues to grow its brand, its presence and its partners. By working together with its retail and wholesale partners worldwide, SPAR aims to enhance their competitiveness, productivity and profitability at all levels.

What is the definition of "Smart Logistics" and what are the key components of it?

Smart Logistics offers public authorities' opportunities to improve dynamic traffic management and to improve enforcement (if needed) of local rules, for example in terms of accessibility of a city center (time of day, location and type of vehicle).

Apart from that, the applications of Smart Logistics offer business opportunities to logistics companies and their clients. For a company like ours, Smart Logistics solutions improve efficient transport and warehousing, but they also facilitate the (inter)connectivity between different logistics networks, for example for the exchange of transport orders between different parties and/or modalities. There are five elements of Smart Logistics for a - retail chain:

- Storage, warehousing and materials handling.
- Packaging and cataloguing.
- Inventory.
- Transportation.
- Information and monitoring.

What are the benefits/value to various stakeholders (traders/buyer/suppliers/retailers, government, industry, consumers...)?



I can simply list them here by no order of priority:

- Opportunities to share their views, needs and knowledge
- Build consensus through bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders through the sharing of needs, information, and ideas to harmonize the objectives of individual groups and reach common societal goals
- Influence the outcome by including the stakeholders in the process of risk assessment as well as in the processes of shaping, developing, identifying and implementing strategies

What are the prerequisites for the implementation/development of Smart Logistics (telecom infrastructure, software, equipment), and which of the

components are more important than others, if any, in your business?

Integrative logistics systems are the basic prerequisite in businesses like ours. Systems should be ready for the integration of technologies such as sensors, image recognition, voice control or assisted reality. To this end, the following holds true: No matter which systems and intelligent components interact, or how many manufacturers, retailers, service providers and carriers are involved, IT infrastructures are often the factors that tip the scales. Meanwhile, the cloud, smart sensors and intelligent algorithms create additional possibilities for comprehensive logistics networking.

How does smart logistics fit into the greater concept of Smart City? What about relations to other components of Smart City such as smart energy, smart transportation, etc.

Smart Logistics is a key solution to cope with the challenges in distribution of services in a city.

Smart Logistics can be defined as the combination of traffic management structuring and navigating flow for optimal use of traffic system and logistics management (organizing, planning, control and execution of the flow of goods and services) by effective usage of data.

How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the Smart Logistics initiatives?

Is the crisis hastening faster implementation of Smart Logistics or slowing it down? What are the opportunities and challenges for the roll out of Smart Logistics after the pandemic?

Covid-19 pandemic has had the following fallout which have adversely affected the Smart Logistics initiatives:

- Higher logistics demand
- Shortage of transportation capacity
- Disruption of logistics network
- Change of service mode
- Increase in operating costs and number of failed enterprises.

In the post-covid-19 era, by addressing the emerging problems, the supply and demand of the logistics industry will gradually recover from this predicament. In addition, although the pandemic has brought unprecedented damages to the logistics industry, it also provided opportunities for logistics innovation and transformation from different aspects, such as new technologies, new modes of services, and new policy environment. Therefore, according to the theory of modern logistics service system, we will observe the reformed trends of logistics industry in five aspects: logistics demand, logistics supply, logistics infrastructure, logistics of information-based society - , and logistics industry development.

What are the key current and future trends and developments with regards to smart logistics for companies?

Top 10 important logistics technology trends a company should be keeping an eye on in 2021 are:

- Artificial and Augmented Intelligence
- Digital Twins
- Real-Time Supply Chain Visibility
- Block chain
- Data Standardization and Advanced Analytics
- The Growing Importance of Industry Newcomers
- Increasing Investment into Logistics Startups from VCs and Enterprises
- Sustainability Powered by Technology
- Autonomous Vehicles
- Warehouse Robotics

Please tell us about SPAR's initiatives/projects/innovations in the smart logistics. What are some of the key (current and future) projects you are working on right now with regards to the development of smart logistics (globally, in Austria, in Iran)?

The existing SPAR warehouse located in the town of St. Polten had become too small to efficiently supply the growing number of SPAR stores in Austria. Recognizing that this would only become more difficult over time, SPAR Austria invested in a new state-of-the-art logistics



center in the area of Ebergassing (Lower Austria) in co-operation with the Austrian logistics supplier Knapp. The new facility is currently one of the most innovative and sustainable logistics centers in the world. Some of the technologies which have been incorporated are being used for the first time anywhere.

The objective- behind the new center of SPAR Austria is to achieve local supply delivery chain at the highest level, and therefore perfect processes must be applied to accomplish that. SPAR is a leader in innovation and has always invested in new technologies in the area of logistics. Innovation in all areas of maintaining the security of the supply chain and the support of SPAR retailers in their day-to-day work is an ongoing investment within SPAR Austria.

Right at the start of its construction in May 2015, it was clear that this logistics center would be a great example of the inclusion of many elements focused on sustainability.

As a result, the center was quickly pre-certified with the ÖGNI certificate in platinum by the Austrian Society for Sustainable Real Estate (ÖGNI). The official ceremony recognizing this achievement took place in the autumn of 2016.

Iran is increasing its potential for warehousing and logistics by purchasing a major share of one of the largest companies in the field of food distribution. Soon, all SPAR stores and its retailers in Iran will be serviced from the central warehouse and through the SPAR supply chain.

Daria Hamrah

Daria Hamrah Paytakht is an authorized distributor of smartphones in Iran. With a long history of distribution of Samsung mobile phones and wide experience in its after-sales service in uniquely equipped centers, Daria Hamrah intended to also provide after-sales services to meet the full spectrum of its loyal customer base needs.

Diligence in service and commitment to its customers have always been the focus of Daria's goals and values, and along with knowledge, skills and experience, this commitment has resulted in their exceptional quality of services at global standards. Creating a pleasant, unique and distinctive experience for its client base who would wish nothing less, Daria Hamrah is dedicated to keeping up with their expectations.

Likewise, as an official distributor of Samsung mobile phones, Daria Hamrah after-sales services is based on its long relationship with Samsung and in accordance with the criteria and standards of the company.

Daria Hamrah Paytakht, believes in its customers' rights in using the mobile phone guarantee and accordingly informs them of services they are entitled to under their guarantee plan. Unlike many of its peers, Daria Hamrah offers its terms and benefits of its guarantee under the "Charter of



DARIA

Customer Rights"

<https://dariahamrah.ir/guarantee/>.

With more than 40% of the market share of Samsung smartphones in Iran in the first three months of 2021, Daria Hamrah Paytakht has attained first place among the official importers of this brand in the country thanks to a dedicated team of professionals whose round-the-clock efforts adhere to the "Customer First" slogan, which happens to be the core value of Daria.

The company is poised to expand this market share by bringing added value to its customer base through optimum pricing, continuous improved before and after sales services, and increased advertising.

With
18
Months
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داریا
DARIA

Once a Mahak Child, Always a Mahak Child

INTERVIEW

Mehdi Khajenouri is a graduate of Tehran International School, and has graduate degrees in International Management, Political Economy and Economic Development from the US. Having worked in the fields of finance as well as research and education in the US, Khajenouri returned to Iran in 2001 and continued his professional career at a few private companies in international project management and high finance involving complex transactions and huge amounts of funds. Although initially Khajenouri was drawn to MAHAK as a volunteer, he was soon awarded a position as its Deputy Managing Director. Later, after a short stint at the Iranian Business School (IBS), an international business school for post graduate studies in business and management and with networks with global institutions, Khajenouri returned to MAHAK in 2018 and is currently serving as its Vice President in Charity Affairs.



Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful. MAHAK is well-known and there is hardly anyone who has not heard of it, but please tell us about it to our readers; its history, founder, mission & vision, its current scope of activities and future plans.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to know more about MAHAK Charity and Hospital, its mission and activities. The Society to Support Children Suffering from Cancer widely known by its acronym 'MAHAK' was founded by Ms. Saideh Ghods along with a group of volunteers in 1991 as a non-governmental and non-profit organization dependent exclusively on public donations provided in the form of funds, as well as in-kind goods, services, and technical expertise. Ms. Ghods was mother of a child with cancer who had experienced many difficulties during her daughter's medical treatment. Spending all that time in hospitals and treatment centers, she witnessed desperate parents travelling often from disadvantaged regions of the country and struggling with financial obligations of paying for expensive medical care of

MAHAK has, over the past three decades, provided comprehensive services to children with cancer by providing the most advanced and effective diagnoses and treatment services as well as psycho-social support to the families of those children.

their children as well as a place to stay in Tehran for the duration. With a strong sense of concern, and paying heed to a calling, this determined lady was soon able to muster enough financial support and rally volunteer effort to bring together a small network of other benefactors to realize her dream. With public and university hospitals as the only specialized treatment providers for children with cancer, Ms. Ghods's work initially focused on providing moral support to the parents of sick children and financing a place for these families to stay during the treatment process. It didn't take very long before this initiative developed into MAHAK organization bringing together groups of parents whose children had cancer, thus facilitating limited therapeutic relief through sharing stories of journeys taken and hurdles overcome.

More volunteer support and fundraising efforts through auctions and bazaar sales paved the way for the Board of Trustees to be able to purchase a parcel of land in northern Tehran and build the first specialized children's cancer care center in Tehran.

MAHAK is probably the most admired charitable organization in Iran and among the most respected ones even on a global scale. Why is that? How is it managed and what practices are contributing to its success? Were these best practices taken from other similar organizations around the world or developed over time in-house?

MAHAK has always strived to function according to the most validated international standards and has always been open to have different aspects of its performance audited by international organizations which accredit global standards. This committed approach toward continuous improvement which is a result of constant study and research has made MAHAK an organization operating with diligence and according to quality standards. We believe that what differentiates NGOs from each other is not the sector they operate in but the level of value, trust and loyalty they create for their stakeholders, one step at a time.



Building on that success, MAHAK has, over the past three decades, provided comprehensive services to children with cancer by providing the most advanced and effective diagnoses and treatment services as well as psycho-social support to the families of those children.

Presently, MAHAK's services are extended to all 39 public and university hospitals throughout the country with dedicated pediatric oncology wards. In its 30 year of existence, this non-profit institution has supported over 37,000 children over 7,600 of whom are cancer survivors, with another more than 20,000 children still under monitoring and treatment.

MAHAK's motto is that no child with cancer and his/her family shall ever face debilitating hurdles on their path for treatment and support due to financial constraints. As such, MAHAK ensures that these children and their families receive comprehensive and integrated services across the country in accordance with national and international standards. Today this remains MAHAK's overarching mission with over 2,000 new cases being added each year.

These aspirations are achievable only by deploying the highest quality methods of service according to the most current national and international best practices as the uncompromised guiding principles. With that in mind, strategies are carefully crafted, policies are consensually derived, programs are designed through a professional division of responsibility infrastructure, and projects and current activities are outlined and implemented based on efficacy. Constructive feedback from all stakeholders such as families of patients, benefactors, employees and volunteers, national and international associations and experts also play a major role in this continuous improvement approach. Since national standards for assessing the performance of the community-based organizations are limited in Iran, MAHAK has always strived to identify with international standards and has voluntarily had its management and service delivery systems assessed. For this reason, MAHAK participated in NGO Benchmarking project conducted by the prestigious Société Generale de Surveillance (SGS) and received the highest accolade by achieving 97.5% score which ranked it as the top NGO in the world among 328 organizations gauged from all over the world.

Once a Mahak Child, Always a Mahak Child

INTERVIEW

Does MAHAK work with regional or international charities? If so, in what ways? Do Iranian doctors and donors contribute to your organization?

MAHAK has initiated partnerships with sister agencies and several international NGOs with similar goals and objectives. Some of these partnerships which have been developed at national, regional and global levels have decades of history behind them and serve as diverse platforms for sharing experience, keeping abreast of the most recent developments in the field, undertaking joint research projects and advocacy, and ultimately honing the processes which ensure the best service delivery to the primary stakeholders, namely the children with cancer and their families.

In the medical field, MAHAK has had numerous joint projects with renowned pediatric cancer care and research centers including St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (USA), Gustave-Roussy Institute (France), and Giannina Gaslini Institute (Italy) with the aim of continuously improving in the area of children's cancer treatment with a multi-disciplinary approach to services. Furthermore, as an organization with a staff of more than 850 and thousands of volunteers together with its scope of service provision both nationally and internationally, MAHAK has also strived to share its knowledge and experience in management with peer organizations. Having achieved the highest ranking among over 300 NGOs globally benchmarked by Société Generale de Surveillance (SGS) has strengthened this effort immensely. Moreover, we voluntarily had our entire project management system assessed based on Delta Assessment model by International Project Management Association (IPMA) and received the third score out of five based on its performance while only 10% of the organizations achieve this in the first assessment. Also, in collaboration with IPMA representatives, MAHAK organized a panel discussion for charities and NGOs from all over Iran, as well as members of the Iranian National Cancer Network and young project managers, to learn about the newly established sector of project management in humanitarian programs.

How does MAHAK support children with cancer? How do you decide which patient to accept? What types of medical and non-medical treatments do they get at your facility? What about their families - do they get any support from MAHAK and if so, in what way(s)?

Every child with cancer regardless of nationality, race, gender, creed or financial ability receives equal access to advanced cancer care services and facilities. MAHAK's support services representatives are present at all 39 public and university hospitals with pediatric hematology-oncology wards throughout the country in order to identify and register children with cancer and their families as soon as they get diagnosed with the disease. The amount of coverage depends on the financial means of the family, but on average over 90% of all expenses are covered by MAHAK. During a child's cancer treatment period, the family covered in the program may face various and unpredictable social and economic status changes, such as when a new baby is born in the family or the father loses his job, according to which the percentage level of financial support will be recalibrated.

Cancer is not a disease which involves only the patient, especially when it occurs in children. The parents and siblings of cancer-stricken children will also be adversely affected, and since MAHAK believes that parents should have no concern other

than their child's recovery, the scope of support services is not restricted only to the patient. Our team, including social workers and psychologists, offer professional services to entire families so children can go through the treatment processes more happily and with more hope. We believe that because of all the support they are able to get, both children and their parents can change their focus from staying alive, to the quality of their future lives together. Complimentary services provided to the children and their families range from schooling for children during treatment, visits and fun activities for them undertaken by artists and celebrities, periodic food and other care packages handed out to families, financial assistance to disadvantaged families to sustain a basic standard of life, and much more. Most importantly, 'once a MAHAK child, always a MAHAK child'. If any of our treated children ever face cancer recurrence, MAHAK will support them in any way possible regardless of their age.

One other item of interest is a group of parents whose children have had cancer and they have regular meetings with other parents who are new at MAHAK to help them brave through their children's treatment process with more optimism and serenity.

In its 30 year of existence, this non-profit institution has supported over 37,000 children over 7,600 of whom are cancer survivors, with another more than 20,000 children still under monitoring and treatment.



Given the sensitivities of your line of work (dealing with children with cancer) and the extra precautions it requires, how did you manage your operations during the Covid-19 pandemic? What were some of the measures you took above and beyond the ordinary ones such as wearing masks, using sanitizers etc.?

As you have noted, children are the most vulnerable group when we have pandemics, and they are even more at risk when they are cancer patients. That is why the ability of health organizations to respond with agility, to have a sharp focus on issue definition, and to come to a quick consensus in terms of a particular solution makes all the difference when we are faced with unforeseeable challenges.

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, MAHAK's number one priority as the only specialized pediatric cancer hospital in Iran has been ensuring the health and safety of children with cancer and their families.

Accordingly, from early on when Covid-19 pandemic was declared in Iran, we suspended visiting hours to the hospital and vigorously screened patients, their parents and the medical staff of the hospital for any sign of fever or respiratory symptoms. We also devised a new patient registration procedure via national courier services throughout the country for patients and families who are merely receiving support services. Moreover, we moved all hospital administrative offices to an adjacent building to avoid any physical interaction between the medical staff who are in direct contact with the patients in the hospital and the administrative staff who are not. At the next phase of the pandemic all administrative departments switched to remote working, with very few essential administrative staff coming to the office even today when the Tehran is not in Code Red.

As far as the community-at-large is concerned, MAHAK has been raising awareness about Covid-19 and its symptoms, advocated preventive actions and provided psychological guidance via social media. Also, in accordance with the strategy of social distancing measures announced by officials for stopping the spread of such pandemics, we have suspended or sharply reduced every chance of in-person interaction in our support services and fundraising offices, as well as for distribution and collection of donation boxes and reception of donors and visitors in our head office.

Following restrictions announced by health officials, we have reduced physical staff presence as the circumstances have worsened. Some employees have become quite efficient working remotely, a practice we intend to continue due to its added benefits of less time wasted for commuting and reduction of carbon footprint.

That having been said, providing treatment and support services for MAHAK patients and their families cannot stop even for a day. Therefore, in order to fund the related expenses and in response to the requests of MAHAK families, we relaunched our updated Farsi website to further facilitate the process of making online donations from inside Iran.

MAHAK's motto is that no child with cancer and his/her family shall ever face debilitating hurdles on their path for treatment and support due to financial constraints.

Has the pandemic changed your operations forever? If so, in what ways? Did donations to MAHAK increase or decrease (or remained unchanged) during the pandemic?

In fact, along with all the unavoidable changes that have happened, Covid-19 has also been a catalyst to reinvent the future of work for all organizations regardless of their field of activity. Some of the approaches which were accepted on a small scope before the pandemic, including remote working, have now gained universal approval and are even recommended until foreseeable future by institutions of various sizes and in all sectors including civil services and charity.

But as you stated, there are operations which have changed forever. As I mentioned before, MAHAK has designed an online portal to be in contact with families who are under support of MAHAK for their financial requirements or for their consultation meetings. This change has helped us have more access to families under our support while requiring less time and with fewer geographic restrictions.

As for all other businesses, organizations and charities, the pandemic affected the amount of donations that MAHAK collected as the scope of projects and the number of programs under the Corporate Social Responsibility activities were reduced. However, the customary expeditious decision-making strategy of MAHAK worked seamlessly once again. As a result, through thoughtful planning and practical measures there were no disruptions in delivery of medications and services to the children. As an example of one such measure, families who regularly commuted to Tehran to receive medications could send their prescriptions via messaging platforms so that the medications could be mailed or delivered safely to them. This had the positive impact of reducing the amount of funds normally allocated for travel expenses of patient families to Tehran and their related accommodation expenses. At this point, I would like to express my appreciation for the remarkable capacity and resilience of Iranian civil society refusing to withdraw their support for cancer-stricken children even in the face of some of the most difficult economic environments our country as ever faced, considering that public donations are the exclusive source of funding for MAHAK's operations.



Once a Mahak Child, Always a Mahak Child

Cancer is among the most unpleasant terms when it comes to medical conditions. It is even more heart-breaking when it affects children. How do you cope with the emotional side of your work? Does it impact your personal life? What about others (managers, doctors, nurses, service personnel)? What qualities does one need to have to work in such environment?

During the past 30 years, MAHAK has endeavored to work on this issue for the families and the society in order to eliminate all superstitions and unsubstantiated beliefs about this disease. MAHAK has strived to cultivate a logical point of view for everyone about better chances of curability of this disease if diagnosed early by providing patient families, donors and society-at-large with scientific facts and findings.

MAHAK has two main annual international childhood cancer awareness campaigns: One is to observe "World Cancer Day" and "International Childhood Cancer Day" in February of each year and the other one is planned and executed on the occasion of "Childhood Cancer Awareness Month" in September. MAHAK has strived to raise awareness and advocate childhood cancer issues including early symptoms, treatment challenges, etc. through engaging different sectors of society during these and other campaigns.



Regarding your second question, the response is resolutely in the affirmative. Dealing with such a challenging process of long-term treatment and support of patients and their caregivers is often difficult and frustrating especially in pediatric cases. All of us have children in our families and it is natural that we become more aware and sensitive about this issue. It is crucial for all of us however to employ this sensitivity in a positive manner to look for early signs and diagnoses which invariably result in less painful, less costly and more effective treatments.

Moreover, MAHAK's support services department works painstakingly to manage the physical and emotional effects of this disease on families of patients. In addition, in cases where MAHAK staff face challenges and crises by working in such an environment, they are also provided with psychological counselling services to manage their anxiety while at all times maintaining the quality of services offered to children and their families.

How can people (both individuals and businesses) support MAHAK?

MAHAK has designed various means for individuals, organizational benefactors and patrons to contribute financial support and in-kind gifts through its fundraising offices all over Tehran and Karaj. Alternatively, contributions can be made through direct deposit into official MAHAK bank accounts, or by selecting the charity option at select ATMs and payment services, ordering donation boxes to be placed in private (homes, small offices, etc.) and/or public spaces (commercial spaces, larger offices and workplaces, etc.), donating personal property, participating in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, and other means stated on MAHAK's official website, mahak-charity.org.

Patron can also fund the construction, purchase of equipment, and renovation of spaces at MAHAK hospital and charity locations where a department or equipment can be permanently named after the donor individual or family.

MAHAK has more than 1,000 volunteers with various specialties and backgrounds who help MAHAK in its planning and operations. In fact, helping MAHAK in realization of its mission is not limited to monetary assistances but can be effectively achieved by giving time and effort like so many entertainers, celebrities, psychologists, physicians, and social service providers currently do.

Moreover, as a community-based organization which relies exclusively on public support, MAHAK always welcomes novel approaches by individuals and groups for making meaningful contributions, and this interview printed in your esteemed journal will be one such contribution.

We believe that what differentiates NGOs from each other is not the sector they operate in but the level of value, trust and loyalty they create for their stakeholders, one step at a time.

Tell more about MAHAK's HLA (human leukocyte antigen) Typing Bank.

In 2017, MAHAK established Iran's first non-governmental registration center for donating hematopoietic stem cells and has succeeded in registering more than 8,000 samples so far. This Human Leukocyte Antigen (HLA) Bank was founded at the MAHAK hospital with the main goal of supporting children with cancer in Iran.

However, after joining other international HLA banks, it will help all the patients in need of organ transplants regardless of age or gender and where they live. Originally, all the samples were registered through saliva but since the pandemic, the samples are collected through blood test. I would like to invite all capable individuals and entities to register at MAHAK's HLA Bank and help us in any capacity to save more sick children and adults in future.

How can individuals and organizations support MAHAK in its awareness campaigns?

As I mentioned before, MAHAK has two main annual awareness campaigns in February and September. We always try to organize our efforts around different groups of people in terms of age, interest and profession to best attract and enlist their engagement. The voluntarily collaboration of individuals, groups and organizations highlights the fact that childhood cancer is a compelling issue not only for MAHAK or children with cancer and their families, but also for all members and strata of society on a global level.

The critical question may be: how can one turn this enthusiasm into positive action with tangible results? It is a fact that early detection of cancer in children (unusual growth of the skull, misalignment of the eyes, persistent diarrhea, etc.) and prompt diagnosis by a specialized medical center ensures a much higher chance of cure and survival while improving the quality of post-treatment life. For this endeavor, the collaboration of every individual is valuable for MAHAK. All of us need to spread the word and share crucial information and available data on our websites and through our official social media accounts as well as renowned professional global organizations such as SIOP (The Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology) and UICC (Union for International Cancer Control). As the old saying goes, "a journey of thousand miles begins with a small step."

Anything else you'd like to add?

I would like to reiterate that all the success and achievements of MAHAK have resulted from the care and patronage of the Iranian civil society.

I am referring to the caring people with hearts of gold who have generously and steadfastly supported MAHAK's little patients through thick and thin during the past 30 years. We at MAHAK believe that the sincere and unfeigned support of the ever-growing family of MAHAK will increase the survival rate of our children day by day, and we look forward to celebrating the eradication of pediatric cancer everywhere on the globe together with our caring and giving patrons and medical research collaborators.

MAHAK participated in NGO Benchmarking project conducted by the prestigious Societe Generale de Surveillance (SGS) and received the highest accolade by achieving 97.5% score which ranked it as the top NGO in the world among 328 organizations gauged from all over the world.



Trends Directory

One-Stop Guide To Iranian Businesses

Restaurants

Shemroon kabab- Persian

Location: Tajrish, Tehran,
Tel: 021 1775
Website: www.Shemroonkabab.com

Seyed Mehdi- Persian

Location: Andarzgoo, Tehran,
Tel: 021 1850
Social Media: @seyedmehdi.ir
Website: www.Seyedmehdi.ir

Negima- Cafe & Restaurant

Location: Khorasani St. (Gheytharie),
Tehran,
Tel: 021 2269 0150
Social Media: @negimarestaurant

Avli Restaurant- Greek

Location: Andarzgoo, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 23 10 06
Social Media: @avli.tehran
Website: www.Avli.ir

Matador Lounge-Spanish Restaurant

Location: Farmanieh, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 80 08 22
Email: ar_khorsandi@yahoo.com
Social Media: @matador.restaurant

Rebelan – International Food

Location: Tajrish, Tehran
Tel: 021 24 512
Social Media: @Rebelangroup

Boomi - International Food

Location: Fereshteh, Tehran
Tel: 021 2201 1950
Social Media: @boomipersiankitchen
Website: www.boomikitchen.com

Donutto - Bakery Shop

Location: A.S.P
Tel: 021 8821 8369
Social Media: www.donutto.cafe

Malls

Iran Mall

Location: Kharazi, Tehran
Tel: 021 29 29
Social Media: the_iranmall

Rose Mall

Location: Kharrazi highway, Tehran
Tel: 021 44 74 91 53
Email: info@rosemall.com
Website: www.rosemall.com

Services

One Die- Industrial company

Location: Savadkooh, Mazandaran
Tel: 011 4243 43 20
Email: Info@refahavaranzamand.com
Social Media: @OneDieCo
Website: www.refahavaranzamand.com

Dorsa Home- Furniture

Location: Golhak, Tehran
Social Media: @dorsahome
Website: www.dorsa.net

Services

Amirkhizi Carpet – Carpet Store

Location: Zaferanieh, Tehran
Tel: 0912 111 66 52
Website: www.amirkhizicarpet.com

Sheypoor- Onilne Retail Platform

Location: Tehran
Tel: 021 54 587
Social Media: @sheypoor
Website: www.sheypoor.com

Talkbama- Language Institute

Location: Andarzgoo & Saadat Abad St.
Tehran
Tel: 021 22 68 38 86
Social Media: @iamrezanayebi

Hotels

Shemshak Boutique Hotel

Location: Shemshak
Tel: 021 26 52 79 41
Social Media: @Shemshak_Boutique_Hotel
Website: www.Shemshakboutiquehotel.com

Mirage Hotel Kish

Location: Kish
Tel: 076 44 42 22 20
Social Media: @MirageHotelKish

House of Elephant

Location: Karimkhan Zand, Shiraz
Tel: 071 32 23 14 66
Email: houseofelephant57@gmail.com
Social Media: @house_of_elephant
Website: www.houseofelephant.com

Yakhchal House

Location: Hatef, Esfahan
Tel: 0913 905 0069
Email: info@yakhchalhouse.ir
Social Media: @yakhchal.house
Website: www.yakhchalhouse.ir

Moshir Al Molk Historical House

Location: Hatef, Esfahan
Tel: 0913 110 9181
Email: islamic.h.museum@gmail.com
Social Media: @moshiralmolk
Website: www.moshir-almolk.ir

Joybar Boutique Hotel

Location: Neshat, Esfahan
Tel: 0913 404 9157
Email: Joybarboutiquehotel@gmail.com
Social Media: @joybarboutiquehotel
Website: www.Joybarboutiquehotel.com

Beauty Salon

Niloufar Zand Beauty Salon

Locations: Elahiyeh, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 01 16 14
Email: nilou_zand@yahoo.com
Social Media: beauty_by_niloufar
Website: www.niloufarzand.com

Beauty Salon

Nita Beauty

Location: Velanjak, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 40 44 55
Mobile: 0912 040 9329
Social Media: nita.beauty
Website: nitabeautysalon.com

Beauty Time

Location: Zaferanieh, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 18 19 13
Mobile: 0912 029 3271
Email: beautytime1399@gamil.com
Social Media: @beauty_time.b.t

Hans Beauty Salon

Locations: Zaferanieh and Fereshteh,
Tehran
Tel Zaferanieh: 021 22 17 06 44
Tel Fereshteh: 021 22 04 32 27
Email: hansbeauty.secured@gmail.com
Social Media: @hans.beauty.salon

Devora beauty salon

Location: Elahiyeh, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 01 28 24
Social Media: @devorabeautysalon
Website: www.devorabeauty.com

Iranian Beauty Clinic

Location: 4 locations in Tehran
Tel: 021 75 900
Email: info@iranianclinic.com
Social Media: @iranianclinic
Website: iranianclinic.com

Art Galleries

ArtChive – Online Art platform

Location: Tehran
Tel: 0912 112 1329
Email: info@artchive.art
Social Media: @artchive.art
Website: www.artchive.art

Soo Contemporary Gallery

Location: Ferdowsi, Tehran
Tel: 021 88 80 98 08
Email: info@soocontemporary.com
Social Media: @soocontemporary
Website: www.soocontemporary.com

Dastan Basement Gallery

Location: Elahiyeh, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 02 31 14
Email: info@dastangallery.com
Social Media: @dastanbasement
Website: www.dastan.gallery.com

Londeville global art & collectables marketplace

Location: Saadat Abad, Tehran
Tel: 021 26 76 56 81
Website: www.londeville.com

Rahele Studio - Handmade Tiles & ceramics

Location: Tehran
Tel: +98 912 294 30 62
Email: kazempourraheleh3@gmail.com
Social Media: @raheleh.studio

High-End Jewelry

Goharbin Jewelry

Location: Valiasr St., Tehran
Tel: 021 88 77 73 01
Email: info@goharbin.com
Social Media: @k.goharbin
Website: www.goharbin.com

Zomorodi Jewelry

Location: Fereshteh St., Tehran
Email: ma@safaee.co
Social Media: @Zomorodi

Safaee Jewelry

Location: Aghdasieh, Tehran
Tel: 021 26 15 19 17
Email: ma@safaee.co
Social Media: @safaeejewelry
Website: www.safaee.co

Reza SADR

Master Gemologist & Professional at Int'l Gemstones & Jewels Business
Location: Tehran Saadat Abad
Tel: 021 8612 9298
Website: sadrjewelry.com

Ghazal SADR

Gemologist
Location: Tehran Saadat Abad
Tel: 021 8612 9298
Website: sadrjewelry.com

AB Jewelrygallery

Location: Tehran
Tel: 0912 215 5120
Social Media: @ABjewelrygallery

Gym

Power house – Women's Crossfit Gym

Location: Enghelab Sports Complex, Tehran
Tel: 021 26 21 63 90
Email: blockphilosophyir@gmail.com
Social Media: @block68ir
Website: www.blockphilosophy.ir

Hypoxy Slim factory

Locations: Saadat Abad, Niavaran & Jordan, Tehran
Tel: 021 88 68 89 91
Email: marketing@hypoxy.ir
Social Media: @slimfactory_hypoxy
Website: https://hypoxyiran.com/

Muscles Land

Locations: Niavaran, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 80 38 72
Social Media: @sarzaminazoleha

Interior Design

Mitra Ghorbani

Location: Elahiyeh, Tehran
Tel: 0912 243 37 41
Social Media: mitraghorbani_ir
Website: www.mitraghorbani.ir

Interior Design

Leila Kalali Home – Concept store

Location: ASP towers, Tehran
Tel: 021 88 05 06 67
Social Media: @leilakalalihomplus

Sarira Garden – Low Maintenance

Houseplants
Location: Tehran
Tel: 021 88 49 41 05
Mobile: 0935 776 5564
Email: sariragarden@gmail.com
Social Media: @sariragarden

Hossein Rezvani – Rug store

Location: Farmanieh, Tehran
Tel: 021 26 12 54 62
Email: nh@hosseinrezvani.com
Social Media: @hossein_rezvani_iran
Website: www.hosseinrezvani.com

Azadeh azizi

Location: Tehran
Tel: 0912 846 0912
Social Media: @azadehazizigroup.com
Website: www.azadehazizigroup.com

Clinics

Mehregan Dental Care

Location: Pasdaran, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 79 31 63
Email: info@drbasati.com
Website: www.drpezeshkfari.ir

Dr. Basati Dental Clinic

Location: Aghdasieh, Artesh, Tehran
Tel: 021 22 80 08 30
Email: info@drbasati.com
Social Media: @dr.basati
Website: http://drbasati.com/

Dr. Nejatian Pain Care Clinic

Location: Saadat Abad St, Tehran
Tel: 021 26 76 58 10
Social Media: @drnejatian

Dr. Afrashi – Dental Clinic

Location: Vanak, Tehran
Tel: 021 88 21 66 73
Social Media: @Dr.afrashi
Website: www.drafrashi.com/

Business

Turquoise Partners

Location: Niavaran Ave. Tehran, Iran
Tel: 021 22 70 62 38
Email: info@turquoisepartners.com
Website: www.turquoisepartners.com

Alo peyk

Location: Tehran
Tel: 021 41346
Email: support@alopeyk.com
Website: https://alopeyk.com/

Business

Hyperstar

Location: Bakeri Highway, Tehran
Tel: 021 4496 9705
Website: www.hyperstariran.com

Ara Enterprise Business Consultancy

Location: Saadat Abad, Tehran
Tel: 021 26 76 56 81
Email: info@araenterprise.com
Website: www.araenterprise.com

Andritz

Location: Amol
Tel: 011 442 042 04
Email: andritz@garmaelectric.ir
Social Media: @garma_electric
Website: www.andritz.com

Tradexmena

Location: Istanbul, Turkey
Tel: +90 21 22 44 25 51
Email: info@tradexmena.com
Website: www.tradexmena.com

Asia instrumentation

Location: Tehran
Tel: 021 22 65 02 95
Email: info@asiainstrumentsltd.com
Website: www.asiainstrumentsltd.org/

Giftamoon

Location: Fershteh St., Tehran
Tel: 0912 008 78 10
Email: info@giftamoon.com
Website: https://giftamoon.com/

HAMAYESH ARA

Location: Saadat Abad, Tehran
Tel: 021 26 76 56 81
Email: info@hamayeshara.com
Website: info@hamayeshara.com

Kavir Motor

Location: Shariati St., Tehran
Tel: 021 57 406
Website: www.kavirmotor.com

Arjan Capital – Trade Investment

Location: Tehran
Email: info@arjancapital.com
Website: www.arjancapital.com

Art Galleries

Fashion Industry Services

Athena Akhavan – Accessories Brand
Social Media: @athenvandesign
Email: Athenvandesign@gmail.com

Negare Official – Clothing Brand

Social Media: @negareofficial
Email: negareofficial@gmail.com

Cipal Fashion Festival

Social Media: @cipalfashionfestival
Tel: +989337454619
Email: cipalfestival.info@gmail.com
Website: www.cipalfestival.com

Panje Studio - Clothing Brand

Social Media: @panjestudio
Email: panjegrp@gmail.com

Trends calendar

IRANIAN HOLYDAYS in 2021

GREGORIAN DATE	IRANIAN DATE
	EVENT

	14 ORDIBEHESHT	17 ORDIBEHESHT	23 ORDIBEHESHT	24 ORDIBEHESHT	31 ORDIBEHESHT	7 KHORDAD
4	Martydom of Imam Ali	7 Friday	13 Fetr Eid	14 Friday	21 Friday	28 Friday

MAY

	14 KHORDAD	15 KHORDAD	16 KHORDAD	21 KHORDAD	28 KHORDAD	4 TIR
4	Friday	5 ● Anniversary of the Uprising Against the Shah	6 ● Martyrdom of Jafar Sadegh	11 ● Friday	18 ● Friday	25 ● Friday

JUNE

11 TIR		18 TIR		25 TIR		30 TIR		1 MORDAD		7 MORDAD		8 MORDAD	
2 ● Friday		9 ● Friday		16 ● Friday		21 ● Ghorban Eid		23 ● Friday		29 ● Friday		30 ● Friday	

JULY

	15 MORDAD	22 MORDAD	27 MORDAD	28 MORDAD	29 MORDAD	5 SHAHRIVAR					
6	Friday	13	Friday	18	Tasoo	19	Ashoura	20	Friday	27	Friday

AUGUST

	12 SHAHRIVAR	19 SHAHRIVAR	26 SHAHRIVAR	2 MEHR	5 MEHR				
3	● Friday	10	● Friday	17	● Friday	24	● Friday	27	● Arbaeen-E Hosseini

SEPTEMBER

9 MEHR		13 MEHR		15-16 MEHR		23 MEHR		30 MEHR		2 ABAN		7 ABAN		
1	● Friday	5	● Anniversary of Rasoul Akram's Deat/ Martydom of Imam Hassan Mojtaba	7	8	● Martyrdom of Jafar Sadegh	15	● Friday	22	● Friday	24	● Birthday of Hazrat Radsoul Akram	29	● Friday

OCTOBER

	14 ABAN	21 ABAN	28 ABAN	5 AZAR			
5	● Friday	12	● Friday	19	● Friday	26	● Friday

































NOVEMBER

	12 AZAR	19 AZAR	26 AZAR	10 DEY
3	10	17	31	
● Friday	● Friday	● Friday	● Friday	

DECEMBER

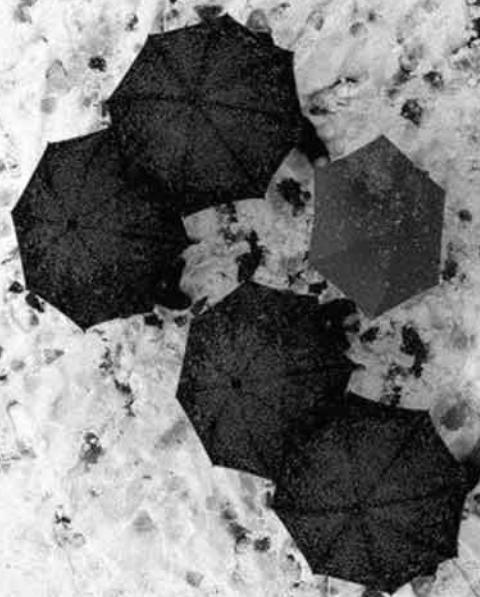
Trends calendar

IRANIAN EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS in 2021

<p>The 13th Int'l Exhibition of Exchange, Bank, Insurance</p> <p> 8 - 11 June  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>	<p>The 7th International Exhibition of Stationery, Engineering and Office</p> <p> 27-30 July  Tehran Shahr e Aftab Fair Ground</p>
<p>The 4th International exhibition of paper, cardboard, cellulose Products and related machinery</p> <p> 21 - 24 June  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>	<p>The 13th Floor Covering, Moquette, Machine Made Carpet & Related Industries Exhibition</p> <p> July 30 - August 2  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>
<p>The 18th Int'l Exhibition of Kitchen, Bath, Sauna & Pool Industries & Equipment</p> <p> 29 June - 2 July  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>	<p>The fourth specialized exhibition of The wood industry, machinery, tools and related tools</p> <p> 4-7 August  Tehran Shahr e Aftab Fair Ground</p>
<p>The 12th Int'l Exhibition of Stone, Mining, Machinery & Related Equipment</p> <p> 29 June - 2 July  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>	<p>The first specialized exhibition of industry, machine tools, industrial automation, instrumentation and industrial machinery</p> <p> 10 - 13 August  Tehran Shahr e Aftab Fair Ground</p>
<p>The 1st exclusive exhibition Eurasia Expo</p> <p> 9 - 12 July  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>	<p>The 21st Int'l Exhibition Of Building & Construction Industry</p> <p> 10 - 13 August  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>
<p>The 30th Int'l Exhibition of Home Furniture (Hofex)</p> <p> 20 - 23 July  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>	<p>4th International Exhibition of Industrial Kitchen Equipment, Fast Foods, Hotels</p> <p> 22 - 28 August  Tehran Shahr e Aftab Fair Ground</p>
<p>The 19th Int'l Exhibition of Accessories, Machinery, Wood, Equipment & Related Industries</p> <p> 20 - 23 July  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>	<p>The 29th Persian Handmade Carpet Exhibition</p> <p> 4 - 7 September  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>
<p>The first festival of tuning, camping, options, classic car collection, off-road, accessories and consumer</p> <p> 23 - 26 July  Tehran Shahr e Aftab Fair Ground</p>	<p>The 26th Intl Oil, Gas, Refining & Petrochemical Exhibition</p> <p> 7 - 10 September  Tehran Int'l Fair Ground</p>

Important note:

Please note that there may be changes (postponements/cancellations) as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.



Life

Style

Trends



Trends Lifestyle covers a wide variety of interesting topics such as: art, fashion, cinema, music, books, travel, sports, biographies and much more!
A big thanks to our knowledgeable contributors who wrote the articles or were interviewed on these subject areas.
We hope you enjoy!

Disclaimer:

The writing style of our content may differ from article to article and is based on subject matters as well as our contributors' diverse backgrounds and writing styles. Certain statements in our content may also be the personal opinions of our contributors and not necessarily those of Trends Magazine.

A Gallery with Opinion

“As an art gallery, E1 seeks to share with its patrons and guests the long hours an artist dedicates to each of his or her creations through trial and error, and all the moments of joy and sadness behind each work.”

E1 Art Gallery in northern Tehran opened its doors to art lovers in April of 2016 and set its goal to introduce and support up-and-coming young artists while showcasing the work of the masters before them. As an art gallery, E1 seeks to share with its patrons and guests the long hours an artist dedicates to each of his or her creations through trial and error, and all the moments of joy and sadness behind each work. For E1 Art Gallery, only then, and not just by purchasing a piece of art, can one appreciate the artistic soul blown into each brush.

Featuring and exhibiting the efforts and experiences of an artist have the additional benefit of motivating those artists and encouraging them to continue their creative endeavors with more enthusiasm and even higher ambitions. In that spirit, at the E1 Art Gallery, presentation and display of the works of an artist to a large audience also assumes this important role in the creative process by making the art public and visible to all.

The selection process of artwork for the E1 Art Gallery is carried out in collaboration with experienced and expert consultants. Most of the time, the performance background of an artist does not play a role in this decision and only the collection and its statement are examined.

Aside from considering the quality of the artwork, the selection committee has to match the artist and the pieces of art with the policy and goals of the gallery, also paying attention in the process to the needs and preferences of its audience. From early on, aside from exhibiting modern and classical Iranian art, the E1 Art Gallery has been an advocate for young artists and their work. Eventually, this support has led to the creation of a new space within the premises offering more facilities for display of young artists work in new media fields.



E1 Deux is a space with a different approach at the heart of the Gallery. It is founded on the belief that contemporary art in Iran is still going through a trial-and-error period, and it is experimenting in the realm of cutting-edge interweaving of genres and abstract shapes. This is a space where all clichés and old routines are forgotten, and both the artist and the art enthusiast can revel in new concepts, interpretations and presentations of art. It is where connections between body, mind, experience, performance and artistic expressions go hand in hand with events and social changes happening around, and where the ever forward moving contemporary art is created.

E1 Deux proudly seeks to exhibit the works of modernist and “deconstructive” artists of Iran who belong to the fourth generation of its contemporary art scene, and who interpret their body of work in a variety of modern forms, including conceptual art, video art, performance art, and digital art.

E1 Art Gallery holds special exhibitions in addition to its regular shows as part of its annual programs. Occasional group shows in collaboration with charities such as Daheshpour Charity and Ifa Crowd as well as an exhibition for the benefit of working children are among these special programs each year. E1 Art Gallery also holds an annual commemoration of the late artist Abbas Kiarostami in the month of June, in the period between the anniversary of his birthday and of his death. Aside from supporting art and artists, all the earnings of E1 Art Gallery are donated to charity and humanitarian activities.

Although these annual events were held for three consecutive years from 2017 to 2019, they all had to be temporarily suspended with the outbreak of the pandemic in early 2020.

In the meantime, the E1 Art Gallery did not stop all its activities during the pandemic when the government imposed new rules for social gatherings, thus limiting exhibitions and gallery openings. With a history of charity and community work, E1 soon organized two calls for action in its role as a promoter of art for social welfare. The first such call was organized in April 2020 for the appreciation of the dedicated medical staff at the forefront of the fight against the coronavirus during the epidemic. A number of works submitted by several artists were donated to the intensive care unit of hospitals where patients infected with the coronavirus were being treated and cared for. Tehran Hospital under management of Professor Minoo Mohraz, head of the Iranian Center for HIV/AIDS and a member of the national committee for the fight against coronavirus, and Nikan Hospital were two of the hospitals which were recipients of these artworks by E1 Art Gallery.

The second call to action was related to a video art project to address the limitations on in-person exhibits during the pandemic.

As social networking platforms such as Instagram have expanded to encompass bringing together people with similar interests and have turned into main drivers of social communication, E1 decided to post online videos of artists' collections for public viewing on both their website and Instagram. Such videos were usually shown on monitors in regular gallery exhibitions and making them available on the Internet was simply another way of displaying the artwork.



To create excitement and better participation by artists and increase viewership, a trio of judges from the United States (Golnar Touski and Gelare Khoshgozaran), and the Netherlands (Baharak Dehghan) were tasked with selecting the top three artists whose prize was solo exhibitions at the Gallery once pandemic restrictions were lifted. The goal was to encourage artists to continue their work and stay active in this period of global sluggishness by providing them with a virtual platform to display their art, and in a way to observe the effect of current conditions on their work.

E1 Art Gallery hopes that by continuing such efforts, the fourth generation of talented and gifted Iranian artists in visual arts will be introduced to the national and global audiences.

Featuring and exhibiting the efforts and experiences of an artist have the additional benefit of motivating those artists and encouraging them to continue their creative endeavors with more enthusiasm and even higher ambitions.

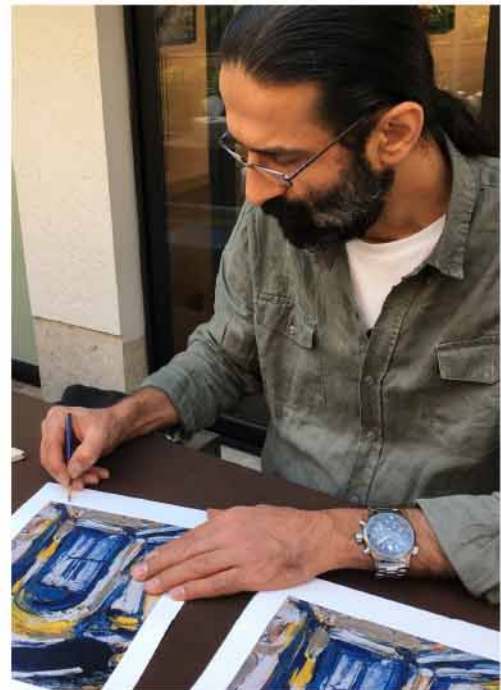


Iranian painter Fereydoon Omidi was born in 1967 in the city of Roudbar, in the Caspian region of northern Iran. From an early age, Fereydoon was drawn to painting, experimenting with different mediums from oil paints, watercolors, graphite pencils and so on. After graduating from high school, Fereydoon pursued his passion at the Art School of Azad University in Tehran, majoring in Graphic Design. Experimenting and fine-tuning his own style of painting, he continued his education and received his Master's degree in 1998 and started to teach at the university while pursuing his painting projects.

Art as A Way of Life

Fereydoon
Omidi

A R T I S T



Fereydoon's love of painting and appreciation for all forms of art is a way of life for him. For Fereydoon, art provides a path to a better quality of life through refinement of the human spirit. He is an "experimentalist" using various tools and mediums to give form to his thoughts and imagination on the canvas.



Fereydoon believes that modern calligraphy should be considered an independent art form and has come along this medium with Persian modern painting techniques to create a new way of looking at this area of artistic expression.

Always trying to perfect his art and his methods, he uses large amounts of oil paint on canvas to transform standard letters of Persian alphabet into intense and decorative forms that, at the beginning, shock and appall the viewer, but gradually excite and entertain her, and play games with the viewer's perception through repetition and rhythm of his bold lines. Fereydoon "designs" his paintings and creates art that connects with its surroundings through a synergy influenced by current events.

Calligraphy and script writing are abstract elements for Fereydoon. In fact, Persian alphabet resemble symbols and this aspect of their character is best demonstrated through "Siah-Mashgh" which is a calligraphic practice of filling a page through repetition of a single letter or word.

Fereydoon uses this linear form of repetition on a single surface to create a visual motion with its own rhythm. The rhythm of repeating letters, words or lines of script establishes a motif, and the correct application of paint in specific colors and amounts adds to the depth and dimension of the work itself. The prolific of Fereydoon Omidi includes over 25 solo shows, and over 50 group exhibitions 22 of which were outside Iran.



Fereydoon has had two solo exhibitions in 2016 and 2019 at the E1 Art Gallery, and a group exhibition at the same gallery curated by Fereydoon Ave. Several of Fereydoon's pieces have been sold at the much acclaimed Tehran Auction in recent years.

Behrooz Majidi

ARTIST



Behrooz Majidi, born in 1990 Mashhad and a graduate of architecture school with a master's degree, is one of Iran's promising artists. Since 2017, Majidi has been a full member of the Visual Arts Association in Tehran.

Majidi's paintings are an expression of what he has felt and absorbed from different realms of existence and the disintegration of these spheres of being on canvas with the help of color touches of the brush.

These faint touches of color are always the main actors of Majidi's paintings, although they may happen accidentally or upon the will of the artist. But they always help him express his inner pathos through texture, form, color and mass. His art works are inspired by repeated experiences of realms of existence and they are recreations of those shattered realities. Although he himself admits it's not easy to follow which art style and movement he follows in his work, his paintings have an affinity with the Expressionist style. Expressionism is a late 19th- early 20th century modernist art movement which typically presents the world solely from a subjective perspective, distorting it radically for emotional effect in order to evoke moods or ideas.

Majidi's main medium of painting is acrylic on canvas.

Majidi has had his artwork represented in many galleries and exhibitions, most notable of which are in the Palazzo Bastogi Museum in Florence, Italy in 2018, and most recently in two consecutive solo painting exhibitions at E1 Art Gallery titled "Surrounded Sphere" in 2019 and "Surrounded Sphere 2, the City" in 2020.





At the beginning she experimented with different materials, but soon Arad turned to soft fabrics and materials that better served the implementation of her ideas and concepts.

Arad's first collection of cloth sculptures were a number of small forms narrating the concepts of gender and gender identity, as well as violence and power. In terms of structure, they were made of pieces stuck together with irregular stitches. Although this first collection remained private and was never shown in public, it led to Arad's first solo exhibition at the Etemad Art Gallery in January 2016 in Tehran.

The Etemad Art Gallery exhibition was titled "Bi Mari" and included several large sculptures and arrangements. As the title

her ideas by writing and designing them on paper at first, and then cultivates them by searching and studying visual sources, all the while tweaking her sketches and slowly making decisions about the best material to use for a piece. Due to the oversized dimensions and minute details of her artwork, the process of making each piece is very long.

Arad's last exhibition was called "To Live" and was held at E1 Art Gallery in February 2021. The collection included large sculptures and arrangements, and it was a return to the original elements of concepts, words, human condition, disease, etc.

The composition of chromosomes that contain human genes are narrated in that collection in a context that represents



Arefe Arad

A R T I S T

Arefe Arad was born in 1983 in Sari, Iran, and is a painting graduate of Art and Architecture School at Azad University of Tehran.

Arad started sculpting in a classroom environment in 2009 with an emphasis on classical sculptures.

of the exhibition implied, the collection included bodies that transcended the natural definitions of femininity and masculinity, with an ambiguous state of being between a man and a woman and caught in an identity confusion.

These unconventional, ripped and patched "bodies" represented the grim attempt of trying to bring out a new identity, a narrative of a condition where subjects experience uncertainty and suffering and watch themselves collapse.

For Arad everything is a source of inspiration, including the universe, simple

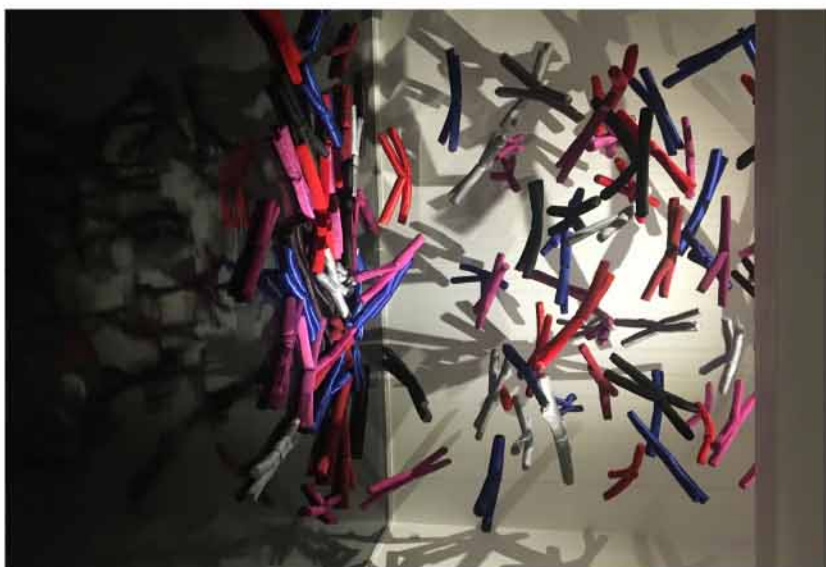
words and basic concepts. She composes the unconventional reality: the genes have departed from their normal form and have disrupted their structure by creating abnormalities.

Arad has grand ideas for her artwork, and she gravitates toward creating art that completely fills out a space.

She is passionate about her sculptures and hopes that artists like her who create large-sized artwork are supported by being provided appropriate platforms for display of their work which happen to be larger than average.



*"To Live",
E1 Art Gallery 2021*



UP & COMING ARTIST

World's Profundity beyond Material Values

Schiller Dabir ARTIST



“My own inner feelings and spiritual path are what influence my art. I see the world and its profundity beyond material values.”

Schiller Dabir started studying arts in high school majoring in graphic design and continued her studies in art history at the New Sorbonne University in Paris (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle - Paris 3). She lived primarily in France but since she was so fond of Iran, she kept up her life between the two countries immersing herself into the history and art of both France and Iran. Over the years, all the details that she saw and learned about these two beautiful countries inspired her in many ways.

Tell us about yourself and your background.

My grandmother lives in Paris and because of that side of my family I started living between Iran and France during my high school years. During my stays in Paris, my grandfather and I would go to art galleries and museums together and spend plenty of time enjoying such environments. That was how from a very young age I started learning about the history of art and the art world and gradually nurturing my artistic sense with an open mind.

At what age and how did you start painting? Who and what inspired you to become an artist?

Back when I was a young child I used to draw on my dolls and that counts for something I guess. And then of course, my grandfather was my biggest inspiration through it all as we spent so much time together in art galleries. It's safe to say that somehow he introduced me to this magical world of arts.

How do you describe your paintings in general? What do they mean?

From a very young age I was fascinated and inspired by van Gogh's art, especially his Portrait of Dr. Gachet. That was the first painting and style I ever tried to replicate. Then, as I got older, I was introduced to the sublime world of spirituality. So the mixture of these two impressions helped me create my own signature style in painting. My style is inspired by a mix of spirituality together with creation and human beings. My paintings are mostly female nudes with a touch of masculinity as a symbol of power in ancient world. Each of them is created based on my mental state and feelings at the time of painting them. So they are very personal and have a sentimental value to me as each of them represents a different phase in my life.

Do you follow a specific style of art (such as cubism, realism, expressionism...)?

Since I was always a fan of van Gogh, you can see simple touches in my work that represent impressionism combined with realism.

What inspire you to paint? What and who influence your art?

My own inner feelings and spiritual path are what influence my art. I see the world and its profundity beyond material values, which can't be described in any way other than through artistic expression.

Who are some of your biggest idols in art (especially painters)?

Vincent van Gogh and Salvador Dali are two painters I admire most. The statements they make through their art and the life they each lived inspire me a lot.

How do you market your art (online, exhibitions...)?

I never think about selling my art as I consider each piece as personal and therefore can't put a price on. But you come to a point where you have to embrace your art also as part business. That's why I started selling some of my paintings only to people who truly understand and value art.

Why do you think Iranian artists are suddenly successful and so much in demand globally?

It's not that Iranian artists are now in demand suddenly. Iranian artist like Kamal-ol-Molk and so many others have always enjoyed fame and have been in demand from a long time ago among connoisseurs everywhere. But recently, all artists from around the world become quickly famous as there is no limit on where they are located because of social media.

Please tell us about your upcoming projects (including exhibitions etc.)

I'm planning on two exhibitions: the first one is going to be in Tehran and the second one is going to be in Saint-Honore district in Paris.



The Prologue to "Pre-Loved Culture"

By: Ghazal MOSTAFA

The Cambridge Dictionary best defines the word pre-loved as "not new, but having been used before." Like most people however, you may be more familiar with words such as second-hand, used, or pre-owned to refer to an object that is not brand new. This rather new adjective was first recorded in an Ohio newspaper in 1972, in an advertisement for a 'pre-loved home'.

There's no specific noticeable difference between similar words in physical condition; a pre-loved item is exactly the same as a second-hand one, but pre-loved is the most positive term to describe it.

The main reason for choosing it over the others is to convey the simple fact that someone else has previously enjoyed and valued the item (now you can too!) rather than the fact that it's been used by someone else or it is tainted or worn out.



One of the biggest advantages of pre-loved shopping is avoidance of contributing to the 'fast fashion' cycles. These shoppers want to draw attention to the actual importance of shopping consciously and also bring more awareness to ecological impact of apparel production.

into the manufacturing processes of all types of goods. It is stated that worldwide, in the past 15 years for instance, the average number of times a garment is worn before its trashed has decreased by 36%.

This growing concern should lead shoppers not only to reduce their consumption of nonessential items like clothing, but also to buy more quality garments with a longer useful life over cheap, disposable ones.

The fashion industry has selfishly adopted a linear model of fast fashion policy which encourages consumers to buy twice as much clothing as necessary. The worst part is that consumers are only wearing these purchases for half as long! Which also makes the industry (and us) accountable for a quarter of the global carbon budget in the next 30 years! Not to mention that it is estimated that 108 million tons of non-renewable



Undoubtedly one of the biggest advantages of pre-loved shopping is avoidance of contributing to the 'fast fashion' cycles, which are fashion trends that are "knock offs" of high fashion brands and easily fade away in a short period of time. Such thoughtless clothing operations, which are tools of mass production contractors, face a lot of backlash for their treatment of laborers who work in harsh conditions and are paid abysmal hourly wages. Pre-loved shoppers also have a growing concern

over wasted resources and the tremendous amount of throwaway goods. These shoppers want to draw attention to the actual importance of shopping consciously and also bring more awareness to ecological impact of apparel production.

The era of being a conscious consumer started years ago when there were no more secrets left on fast fashion's growing footprints on the extensive CO2 emissions and the water usage that goes

resources are used every year to produce our clothing.

The wave of enticing consumers with low prices (and of course poor quality) to buy in excess was embodied by brands like H&M and Zara and emerged in the early 2000s. To boot, many details of the history of fast fashion brands' exploitations to flood the markets with such rather inferior quality goods have surfaced on the internet in recent years. This information has justifiably enraged

the social and environmental activists around the world who have put the spotlight on the poor treatment of garment workers and the environmental pollution and waste generated mainly by mass production of clothing.

Coronavirus crisis also pushed us to a place where we needed to rethink our shopping behavior and larger impacts of it, changing our mentality about which brands we choose to support and what values we stand alongside. A recent McKinsey study indicates that 63% of consumers care about a brand's stance on sustainability standards and its supply chain.

Overall, in the past three years reselling of clothing has grown 21 times faster than the actual retail apparel market. Also, the number of shoppers who prefer to buy from environmentally friendly brands has noticeably increased. This means customers are considering a higher place for sustainability in fashion and resale industry instead of cheaply made clothing pieces that are meant to be discarded after one season (or less!), this mindset has led to reduction of overstock.

According to a new report, the U.S. secondhand clothing market is projected to more than triple in value in the next 10 years – from US\$28 billion in 2019 to US\$80 billion in 2029 – in a U.S. market currently worth \$379 billion. As such, while fast fashion is expected to continue to grow 20% in the next 10 years, secondhand fashion is poised to grow 185%. Millennials and Gen Z are leading the path with a reported record of a 45% growth in buying second-hand in the past two years.

Under current consumer trends and following the above statistics, it is important for the reader to consider the fundamental reason behind the rise of resale culture in recent years. Using second-hand - or shall we now say pre-loved?!- goods no longer carries the social stigma that it used to have, such as perceiving it as worn out and tainted. Today's consumer appreciates a pre-loved item with an open heart perceiving it as vintage, authentic and unique. This new trend in the consumer attitude makes these purchases even more valued over time compared to the cheaper trendy, low-quality pieces offered by fast fashion.

The online resale platform which is one of the major categories of the



secondhand clothing market and which has become very fashionable in recent years has its own strict rules based on condition or brand of the item for sale. Although there are various online seller options, those specializing in contemporary high-end pre-loved designer fashion, vintage or retro fashion are currently the most popular ones. (Some may also refer to these as used luxury goods). The popularity of the current pre-loved market is undeniable, and according to Retail Insider citing ThredUp, by 2023 the retail outfits sector is projected to

more than double to \$51 billion. As an example, Forbes Magazine forecasts sales of non-traditional luxury items, like high-end sneakers, tripling from their 2019 figure of \$2 billion to \$6 billion by 2025. It is important to note that sellers of such articles of clothing use expert consultants to price each piece as it could get tricky sometimes, often with the one-of-a-kind expensive designer items.

This new wave of fashion consciousness is providing consumers a way to push back the linear model, hopefully replacing it with a circular system. We are aiming to close the loop!

It is stated that worldwide, in the past 15 years for instance, the average number of times a garment is worn before its trashed has decreased by 36%.



The phenomenal mind behind "Erfan Mous"

Erfan Mousavi, one of the leading accessories designers in Iran's fashion industry, was born in 1993 in Isfahan and raised in Tehran. He has a bachelor's degree in Graphic Design and visual communications from the University of Tehran and currently he is doing a master's degree in accessories design in Instituto Marangoni in Italy.



How did you get involved in fashion and textile industry?

Ever since I was a kid I was interested in fashion magazines, garments and anything related to style and fashion. Back in the days, I always used to draw outfits and dresses and my hobby was to use pieces of fabrics or scarves for draping and creating volumes and silhouettes. I was also fond of any handicrafts associated with garments and fashion. When I was 16 I was planning to go to London to take a one-year art foundation course which is a program that bridges the gap between majoring in art and design at secondary school level and college undergraduate level courses. I intended to then continue my education in fashion design, but these plans didn't pan out because of some family issues. So I ended up taking the university entrance exam in Iran and got admitted to the Graphic Design School at the University of Tehran, in the Faculty of Fine Arts.

During my Bachelor's degree years, I pursued my interest in fashion by attending nonacademic courses in fashion design, sewing and pattern making.

When was the first time you thought about making scarves? And how did you start "Erfan Mous"?

For my final thesis at the end of my undergraduate Bachelor's degree, I decided to do an interdisciplinary project between graphic design and fashion design. The title I chose for my thesis was: "Designing scarves by utilizing contemporary Persian typography". By that time, the only person who had worked on using Persian typography on garments was Nima Behnoud who had only used traditional calligraphy elements for his creations.

But my idea was to use contemporary typefaces as visual elements. After presenting my collection I got a lot of positive feedback and so I decided to mass produce these designs and turn it to a commercial project and that's how I launched "Erfan Mous" in 2016.

What inspires you to design? What and who influences your art? How do you describe your brand's character in general?

I'm mostly inspired by pop culture and I use nostalgic and recognizable icons and elements in my designs. I use symbolism and surrealism in my designs and I am very much inspired by the chaos in metropolitan cities like Tehran, London, Tokyo and etc. I don't know what exactly goes on in my brain but I'm sure there's something funny going on there! And maybe that's the main source of my creations! I cannot recall of any role models right now but I have a lot of muses like Sofia Loren and Grace Kelly who have mesmerized me by their magnificent beauty. Overall, I can describe my brand's character as playful and whimsical.



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only certain symbols and images associated with the brand are repeated. The most distinctive one of these is the words "erfanmous original" text written on the side of the scarves in Persian.

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The phenomenal mind behind "Erfan Mous"



How do you develop your brand? Does your brand have a signature symbol? And how do you describe your brand's signature?

Initially my intention was to use the potentials of Persian typography in my designs. At that time using text and letters in scarf design was not a widespread practice among Iranian designers and brands and that's why I was drawn to it. But soon the idea became a fad, and the concept was copied and duplicated so many times that I decided to change the theme and create some hip and unusual designs instead. When I first started my new designs, they were considered outrageous and quite socially objectionable. But all I wanted to do was to give my designs a personal



touch and that's how I came up with a brand identity that is quite simple and minimal, as only certain symbols and images associated with the brand are repeated. The most distinctive one of these is the words "erfanmous original" text written on the side of the scarves in Persian.

In your opinion, does Iran have a distinct and mature fashion industry that covers the production of clothing from raw material to final product?

I believe Iran has a lot of notable designers, but the fashion industry is very weak because of many factors. There are institutional constraints and requirements for instance that impact all aspects of the fashion industry from design to production and sales. Many Iranian designers must work privately under these conditions. Overall, the Iranian fashion industry cannot be compared with that in other countries because businesses anywhere need support from the establishment to get a foothold and survive, but that is a challenge we face here.

What are the opportunities and obstacles for Iranian designers? And how do you evaluate Iran's market for national products?

I think the most important opportunity for a designer in Iran is that here the fashion industry is still new and evolving and if you have innovative ideas there is not much of a competition for you. On the other hand, lack of proper training, basic materials and technology, production facilities, exhibitions, and many other difficulties are challenges for an Iranian designer. The final creation of some brands in Iran is quite admirable in terms of quality and design and there is definitely an effort to improve even more on all fronts, but I believe there are still a lot more to be accomplished.

What are you working on now, and what are your plans for the future?

Right now, as I mentioned, I am studying accessories design and I'm looking forward to expanding my brand by adding new product lines and also working with retailers outside of Iran.



Ghazal Rajabian

In 2010 Ghazal Rajabian, a Computer Engineering graduate, made her most life changing decision and became a fashion designer. Her ingrained familiarity with the world of fashion design was a product of her mother's background in other facets of fashion like textiles and dressmaking. That year she decided to take all the required courses in design and fashion and follow in her mother's footsteps. The following year, in the fall of 2011, Ghazal came out with her first collection of winter overcoats and jackets in a group exhibition. The success of her designs at the exhibition paved the way for Ghazal to finally launch her own brand and open a fashion design studio soon after.

In the Ghazal Rajabian design studio, all pieces are handmade and share a common sense of simplicity and minimalism. Bringing elegance and at the same time keeping the wardrobe comfortable makes the brand suitable for all tastes. Looking deeper into each piece, one can see the attention to details where simplicity and quality converge. According to Ghazal, the brand's priorities are three-fold: the quality of fabric, design and fine tailoring which together deliver a high-quality product

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DESIGNERS



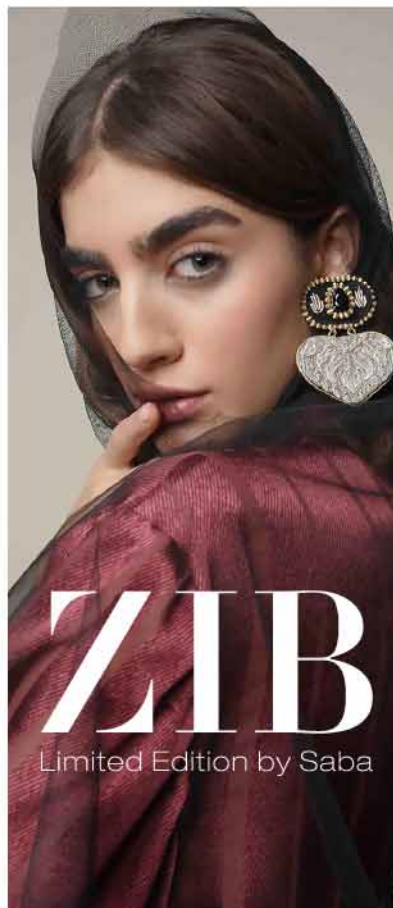
with a long life. Ghazal knows that for her customers flashy pageantry is not a priority: what they seek is superior quality mixed with elegance and luxury in clothing which she delivers to them. The brand introduces two collections each year, one for spring/summer and another for fall/winter and each has new selections to offer for the season.

Ghazal
Rajabian



Saba Azimi

Saba Azimi founder and creative director of Zib, is an Electronics graduate for whom art has always been a part of her life. Despite the artistic environment at home and the encouragement she enjoyed from family, her love for mathematics drew her to study Electronics when it was time to go to college. Saba, however, had been pondering the idea of Zib since her teens in early 2000's. Finally in 2010, Saba bowed to fate and officially launched her line of jewelry under the brand name of "Zib" which aptly means beauty and grace in Persian. At first the brand started with statement necklaces, but as it expanded, earrings and bracelets were added to its collection. Today, the unique character of Zib is enhanced by the variety of colors of its pieces which sparks a playful feeling of joy when matching them with clothing styles. Zib is reflective of Saba's charming personality mixed with her training in the fields of logic and mathematics which results in a pleasing symmetrical aesthetics in her designs. Saba explains this blending of opposites in her designs through the evolution of the modern woman for whom motherhood and emotional sensibility has evolved and fused together with confidence and power over time.



Zib is all about mixing materials, including pearls, antique fabrics such as "zarbaft termeh", delicate velvets, silver and brass, and not limiting itself to preconceptions. Adding Persian ancient handicrafts such as "sermeh douzi" in her designs together with metal yields a modern effect to the pieces. Creating these extremely detail-oriented pieces are both time consuming and intricate. Each piece is a limited edition and goes through an elaborate production process. Zib has established itself as a noteworthy brand and has international presence with limited stocks in Canada, Australia and Europe.



Photo provided by: Artware Boutique

Gelareh Taskini

Gelareh Taskini, fashion design graduated from University of Science and Culture, founder and creative director of Glareta jewelry brand, is an Iranian designer. Her handmade pieces became an overnight success.

As her sentimental designs evolved around using Persian antique fabrics and upcycling them. Glareta is a modern brand with a cultural infusion, which shows the connection between heritage and modernism.

Glareta
unique jewels

Launching her first collection in February 2019, the brand found a quite top spot between accessory brands. The industry welcomed her as her emerging creative ideas that has a taste of Persian culture in it with open arms.

Glareta has a specific collection for every season. The designs are one of a kind and cannot be restocked. Each collection is followed by a beautiful editorial to introduce the collection.



Azalea Nazemi

Born and raised in Tehran, Iran, Azalea Nazemi pursues with dedication her long-term passion of revolutionizing the art of shoe making. Azalea started designing her own shoes from her very early college days at the Art University of Tehran, where she studied clothing and textile design.

To better grasp the origins of the region's folklore costume styles and to learn traditional shoe making techniques, Azalea traveled to several neighboring countries to master cutting-edge design approaches. After years of practice and apprenticeship, she finally established her own brand, AZALEE, where she brings to life her original creativity combining modern shoe fashion trends with inspirations from her traditional Persian heritage.

In creating her shoes, Azalea rarely follows the conventional design options from the conceptual point of view. Innovativeness and originality in design come first for her and being bold and daring is an important part of this journey of artistic creativity. According to Azalea, her most creative designs are inspired by a trial-and-error approach when working with a variety of material. In her sketches, she brings together an approach on life and fashion. Committed

AZALEE

to making state-of-the-art handcrafted shoes, Azalea utilizes the best traditional shoemaking techniques and her unique craftsmanship can easily be spotted in her products.



Life behind the Camera



Foad Faridzadeh
DIRECTOR

Foad Faridzadeh is an award-winning Television, Film and Commercials director and content creator. Born in Tehran, Iran, Foad spent most of his young adult life on sound stages in Iran and the United States. Foad has worked on numerous projects ranging from multi-million-dollar Hollywood features (Burning Bright, Shadow People, Operation Endgame, Lady Gaga's Marry The Night, and many more) to festival shorts, documentaries, commercials, and music videos. As a director, creator, executive producer, creative director, and production supervisor on various projects, Foad has an intimate understanding of every single aspect of the film industry. Beside in Iran, Foad has directed original content in other countries including the United States, France, Italy, Mexico, Bulgaria, UAE, and Afghanistan.

Foad is managed by Cyrena Esposito at Red Letter Entertainment and represented by BUCHWALD Agency for TV, Film, literary and commercial directing. As a director/content creator, he has filmed many national and international television commercials for clients such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Pontiac, Godiva, Ethan Allen, GUESS, Pentax, Pfizer, Alkaseltzer, Coors Light, Dior, Olay, Secret's Resorts and many more.

Additionally, Foad has served as a director, creative director, and producer for many prestigious production companies and agencies such as Nice Shoes, Quietman, Red Feather Films, Dream Riders Studio, MediaVision Creative and MainStream Media.

Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview. Please tell us about yourself and your background. When and how did it all start? What drives you in this rather competitive industry?

Thank you for the opportunity given to me here. Let me think... I was about 7 years old when my brilliant sister Leily was born. To keep my mind occupied, my father, Mehdi, a filmmaker in his early career, dropped me off at my grandma's house and lent me his fully loaded 8mm camera. He said, "This camera was my best friend in many difficult times, I think it can be your good friend now too." He left promptly to attend to my mother in the Mehr Hospital.

Six Popsicles and half a day later, I began building myself an airplane from the leftover popsicle sticks and before you knew it, I was running in circles in my grandma's backyard, around her ever blue swimming pool, next to the swing hanging between two tall oak trees and wild berry bushes, and of course the Pomegranate tree! After a while I went back into the house and grabbed my dad's camera to film my flight test only to realize that my fingers were in the frame while holding my freshly glued airplane. To resolve that issue, I took a copper wire from the gardener's shed and tied one end of it to my fixed lens and the other to my popsicle stick airplane. There! Hands free I ran around like a maniac filming my dangling plane, lost in the moment, unaware that I was making my first film.... When my parents and new born sister arrived

home, I gifted my masterpiece to my mother. On many occasions I would follow my father into many of the iconic film and television sets as he was overseeing the productions of HEZAR DASTAN, KOOCHAK-E JANGALI and what have you. My infatuation with horses and horseback riding often landed me as an extra in the films. I honestly can't count the number of times I roamed the Shahrak Ghazali on horse, riding from one set to another, as if time were a linear road and I was a passenger whizzing through time on the back of a stallion.

My parents are artists at heart and always nurtured me with plenty of care and attention to detail in every aspect of my life. I was surrounded with books, classic films and music for as long as I can remember. My mom was a successful photojournalist. She influenced my perspective in observing with admiration whatever I was looking at. My father used to watch films with me and afterwards we would discuss them in depth. When my dad brought home a UMATC machine (bigger brother to a VHS player) honestly my life changed. The first film I ever watched was "The Black Stallion" and being so infatuated with horses, I watched and re-watched that film so many times that the machine broke! Later my father brought me a film by Akira Kurosawa titled "KAGEMUSHA," The Spirit of a Worrier. My God! That film had thousands of horses galloping from one side of the screen to the other, engaged in the most intense battles, mixed with dynamic environments that made the scenery so authentic

How hard was it for you to start? What roadblocks did you face when you were starting your career? Is it easier today to raise funds or get the attention of studios/production companies, compared to when you started?

While attending the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York, I got a chance to direct and produce short format clips for various Latino TV Stations and a few nonprofit media organizations just to get a taste of what's possible out there for me.

Later while attending the NYU film school in New York, I got my break to work on a few high-net-worth Hollywood feature films as a technical director and eventually as a Post Supervisor. The experience was truly remarkable in shaping my directorial strength. Eventually, I got my real break after serving as a PA (Production Assistant) to Johnnie Semerad. Johnnie is a highly regarded commercials director. After a short period of time, I was able to gain his trust and began directing spots in some of his projects.

The biggest challenge for me has been the process of constantly reinventing myself. It's relatively easy to find a niche and stick to it, and of course you'd be recognized for just that one particular skill in the industry. However, to establish myself as a versatile, prolific visionary, I needed to stay absolutely focused on my craft. Often people won't take a chance on just an ambitious artist if the track record doesn't match the vision. It's also usually very difficult to rally enough financial support to materialize an abstract idea or desired outcome, therefore I began investing in my own vision. And honestly, it has been paying off from the get-go. I used to shoot commercials on spec and then sell them to agencies, but eventually I turned enough heads to gain the respect of some of the moguls in the commercial/ advertising world to trust me with their multi-million-dollar projects, and that's the ultimate outcome one can ask for.

Just to give you an idea of how the filming industry operates, I worked tirelessly for three long years just to get my current amazing manager, Cyrena Esposito, to sign me up as her client. I am these days in the process of reinventing myself in the long format narrative feature films and TV series. If I ever get a tattoo it will be the: "Naborde Ranj, Ganj Moyassar Nemishavad..." (No Pain, No Gain!)



My journey into narrative filmmaking started with me directing national and international commercials, but one particular director of this medium who really shaped my career was Michael Schrom.



Life behind the Camera

Which movies and/or directors have inspired you the most? Who are your favorite actors, directors, cinematographers today?

The first film I ever saw in the theater was E.T. I think my spirit flew next to ET on that bicycle. My Gosh, if Spielberg knew how profoundly he impacted a kid's imagination thousands of miles away in Iran, I bet he'd make a sequel to that film. LOL The Film, Television, Theater, music and the rest of the multimedia industry is so enmeshed to my personal life that I honestly cannot distinguish one from the other. I must say that after watching The Shinning, Spartacus, Barry Lyndon and of course, 2001: A Space Odyssey, I knew exactly what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

I have been blessed with having a family that fully supports me in my endeavors. Additionally, the invaluable guidance and mentorship of a few industry legends such as Robert De Niro, Jane Rosenthal, Mark Amin, Kurt Ostergaard, Cyrena Esposito, Barry Navidi, Jerry Franklin and Peter G. Kelly have given me the focus I needed to soar towards my dreams.

professionalism of such a cinematic genius deeply and positively impacted my craft as a director and above all as a human being. I will quote my father, Mehdi here: "The more you have experienced, and the more you have mastered your craft, the more you will be like a fully fruit bearing tree with its branches weighed down to the ground".

I am blessed to collaborate with men and women who are far superior to me in many aspects of my personal and professional mannerisms. Michael Schrom introduced me to John McCabe, another gifted, hardworking artist and commercial cinematographer that I've had a privilege of collaborating with for over two decades now.

Aligning myself with creative geniuses has often led me in the direction where I get to discover more of my untapped potential. For the past 20 years I've been learning and working alongside Mevlut Akkaya, an international producer and director residing in NY. He initially introduced me to Mahmoud Kalari, and of course Mahmoud needs no introduction. It's incredible how one's craft can improve when such seasoned veteran artists willingly offer their expertise to promote a whole new generation of artists.



I bow on my knees for many iconic film directors such as Stanley Kubrick, Akira Kurosawa, Orson Welles, Steven Spielberg, and the list goes on... Of course, my journey into narrative filmmaking started with me directing national and international commercials, but one particular director of this medium who really shaped my career was Michael Schrom.

I must acknowledge here that I take my hat off to Michael Schrom every time I see his incredible work. He made food a character in his spots with such attention to detail! He creates a beautifully intense experience in what he produces which is genuinely revolutionizing, and that, for you, is the masterful craft of Michael Schrom.

I also worked as a creative director on Lady Gaga's Marry the Night (Short Feature Music Video) in collaboration with Darius Khondji, and that was one of those experiences that one day I'll have to write a book about. The humility, patience and



How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the film industry? What obstacles did directors and production companies face during the crisis? Do you see permanent changes in the industry as a result?

This is an interesting question only because media streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon and Hulu had already taken the traditional means of distribution, studio productions and Television Networks by the storm. The truth is Covid-19 only expedited the transitioning process in favor of the streamers and networks that had built momentum to transition into the online platform. In reality, these days many industries are shifting to a whole new realm and the entertainment industry is not an exception. During the late 70's and early 80's many of the legendary directors, producers and actors found themselves at the apex of a demanding industry, hungry for a new wave of artists and creative content. In the same way I believe this global disaster has presented a rare opportunity to a whole herd of creative talent to have access to a much larger audience than previously anticipated. Similar to the cable networks, the streamers need to constantly add new

Please tell us about the most important projects you have done so far. What is/are the project(s) that you are most proud of in your career so far?

Ah! The best is yet to come! But in a nutshell, I consider myself sentimental when it comes to the projects I've directed thus far. Every one of them is near to my heart and dear to me. They represent the transitional stages I experienced while achieving a better version of myself. That being said, in 2019 I directed my first Opera Production, the Giovanni Bottesini's comic opera, ALI BABÀ (1871) reconstructed and conducted by Anthony Barrese at Opera Southwest in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The production was selected as the #1 "must watch" Operas in the US.

To me that was the ultimate theater production that genuinely challenged me as a director working with an ensemble of 90 performers and highly regarded Opera singers with only three weeks of intensive rehearsals. Frankly, without the trust and encouragement of my agent Scott Kaufman, I'm not sure how I would have accomplished the project. Of course my creative



content in order to continually engage their current viewers while simultaneously attracting new audiences. That being said, due to the wild spread of this life-threatening virus, the work force has already begun adopting seemingly strange and new protocols that previously no one dared to even imagine. I think the giant studios are mostly threatened by this sweeping transition, while the smaller, more nimble production houses have the advantage of navigating this new territory with more ease.

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director and conductor Anthony Barrese and the full support of the Opera Southwest production played a key role in allowing me to carry off my vision. I must say also that the Iranian SHAHRZAD series and the incredible performances from Ali Nassirian, Shahab Hosseini and Taraneh Alidoosti really inspired me to render this lost Giovanni Bottesini's treasure in an immersive setting of 1940's Tehran.

Relying on my past experiences, I designed an enticing, mid-century LED set, inspired by my good friend and talented architect Iman Ansari.

The simple yet elegant scenic design spearheaded by Richard Hogle in combination with the lighting design work of Daniel Chapman added the accent needed to specially matchup with the digital artistry of my good friend and gifted digital artist Ehsan Sakkaki and transform this opera into a modern performance that took the audiences back into the 1940's of Tehran, Iran.

Being an Iranian/American, what do you think about Iranian cinema? Do you personally like (pace, concept/content, acting, directing...) the award-winning pictures that have emerged in the past 2 decades?

One way of seeing it is that necessity is the mother of innovation, and the Iranian cinema industry is no exception. From its conceived origins with the Dokhtar-e Lor/Lor Girl, 1932, produced by Ardeshtir Irani and Abdolhossein Sepanta to Dariush Mehrjui's The Cow, Abbas Kiarostami's Taste of Cherry, Ali Hatami's Hezardastan, and Ebrahim Hatamikia's The Scent of Joseph's Shirt followed by the most exemplary and contemporary directors' works such as Asghar Farhadi's The Salesman and Shahram Mokri's Fish and Cat, and many more I am unable to list here, the Iranian cinema has served as the humanity and the arts ambassador to not only entertain its audiences worldwide but also to uphold and uplift mankind as a whole.

Of course, we should be thankful to the rich culture of Iran and the Persian literature that we have inherited. But what inspires me as modern director is how these legends of Iranian filmmaking pushed – and still push - the cultural, religious and governing boundaries in their everyday lives to express their artistic vision to the best of their abilities.

What have been some of the factors contributing to the Iranian films worldwide success? What are the opportunities and challenges for the Iranian cinema today?

Unfortunately, while Iranian films hold their own in the Cinema and Arts world, the domestic market has failed radically in producing compelling quality content. To me it feels as though the governing laws intend to dumb-down the society as a whole by producing shallow and exaggerated content that somehow only entertains the masses in the least creatively challenging ways.

I'm sorry if I sound arrogant, but I feel the Iranian domestic film industry has intentionally and systematically saturated the market with very petty issues as a form of entertainment. But our culture is rich with incredibly imaginative characters and stories that can both entertain and educate our country as a whole.

We have a rare & magnificent literature, from our intoxicating Persian poetry to many of our folklore fairytale books such as The Conference of the Birds (a Persian poem by Attar), The Panchatantra (an ancient Indian collection), the Book of Kings (The Shahnameh of Ferdowsi) and many, many more original stories that will enhance the Iranian intellect while having success on the International markets.

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What is your favorite Iranian movie of all time? Which actors and directors do you admire the most and why?

Oh Dear! I can't just name one! From Leily Ba Man Ast to Ejareh Neshinha, Mehman e Maman, Davandeh, Gozal, Az Karkheh to Rhein to Ghesehayeh Majid and many more and of course I cannot in good conscious abandon Kolah Ghermezi va Pesar Khaale. My childhood character is forged by these and many more incredible films, directors, actors and even the crew members. It would be unfair of me to name any one in particular, especially when this mesmerizing medium is purely a labor of love produced in collaboration with a whole ensemble of people.



Can you tell us more about your upcoming project(s)?

While I'm attached to direct two back-to-back features films, I'm in the middle of pre-production for one of my originally developed Mini-Series in collaborations with Miss Atousa Jam, a rare gifted human being in my creative and professional life. One of the best parts of my new ventures, is that I am able to collaborate with my sister, Leily Faridzadeh.

Leily is an incredible business attorney and an extremely talented screenwriter. It's thrilling to sometimes just sit back and appreciate her presence in this capacity.

Do you have any advice for Iranian young film makers out there?

Dare to dream and stay focused. Explore your weaknesses and insecurities and never get comfortable in your own safe zone. A profound, yet simple phrase has shaped my conviction and determination in pursuing my imagination into reality and that phrase is: "WHAT IF?"

SAM GHARIBIAN IRAJ NOZARI MITRA HAJJAR AZITA HAJIAN MOHAMMAD SADEGHI HOMAYOUN ERSHADI BAHRAM HEYDARI MAHMOOD ARDALAN AMIR ALI DANAEI LEILA OTADI
PAYAM INALOUIE JOOBIN RAHBAR NICHOLAS GUILAK AND NIKI KARIMI MOHAMMAD MOTEVASELANI INTRODUCING: SARA AMIRI AZ "LALEH"

IF YOU WANT TO STOP ME
YOU GOT TO CATCH ME FIRST

DRIVE
LALEH
BASED ON A TRUE STORY
A FILM BY ESSY NIKNEJAD

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ESSY NIKNEJAD
PRODUCERS: PARVANEH PARTOW & TOORAJ MANSOORI
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: TOORAJ MANSOORI
EDITOR: HASSAN AYUBI
MUSIC: EHSAN BEYRAGHDAR
PRODUCTION DESIGNER: IRAJ RAMINFAR
COSTUME DESIGNER: BEHZAD ADINEH
SOUND DESIGNER: ESHAQ KHANZADI & ERFAN YAZDI

 DFC A DFC PRODUCTION



Write, Shoot, Edit, Repeat!

Ali Tasdighi Visual Effects Designer

With the help of great people such as Abbas Kiarostami, Bahram Beyzai, Sohrab Shahid-Saless, Amir Naderi, Majid Majidi, Asghar Farhadi, etc., Iranian cinema was able to demonstrate its potential in prestigious international festivals. These experts of the movie industry understood the language of film and were able to make the most of the indigenous and colorful culture of Iran and showcase it to the world in the best way with the language of cinema.

Ali Tasdighi who is born in 1983, began his career in the movie industry in 2007 as an assistant for visual effects at the Avaye Nafas studio belonging to Pejman Bazeghi and Mastaneh Mohajer.

For the next 4 years Tasdighi worked as an assistant to Hadish Shamloo, and later became a visual effects designer. In 2014, as the majority of films were digitalized and the need for digital color correction for films and DCP (Digital Cinema Package) rapidly grew, Tasdighi set up a digital laboratory with Farhad Ghadimi under the name of Seera Studio to do color correction and to provide technical support and final technical output for film, in addition to visual effects.

Tasdighi's film work has been nominated in several international film festivals including: Threadbare Mitten International Film Festival (2020), Unprecedented International Film Festival (2020), Bali International Film Festival (2021) and Reading International Film Festival (2020).

What is your work in the film industry and how do you define visual effects?

Visual effects include computer work performed on films after production. Visual effects are a set of tasks that cannot be done in the real world and on the filming set. They may not be cost-effective for example, as when in a scene a high model car explodes, and visual effects are used for financial or practical reasons. Imagine if a character in a movie is shown in a car as it explodes. This is obviously not possible to do in real life on a movie set and this is where visual effects come not play. Hollywood movies like Transformers or Justice League and

Internet and through distance learning and the virtual world.

Do you work in other fields of art?

Yes, not professionally but I also do photography and painting, sometimes carpentry. For example, I made most of my office and home furniture and artwork myself. I also do a special style of combining digital and acrylic painting, in which I first photograph the subject, then digitally paint on it with a computer, then print the picture on canvas and finally paint on the printed canvas with acrylic.

I have recently entered the world of NFT (Non-Fungible Tokens) ART, which



Godzilla vs. Kong are not possible in the real world. Certainly, for many reasons, Iranian film industry, like some of its counterparts in Europe, does not make full use of the breadth and complexity of visual effects in terms of genre and subject matter.

What courses have you taken to become a visual effect designer?

At the beginning, I was a student of my dear mentor Hadish Shamloo, but after he passed away in 2011, I self-trained on the Internet and with educational videos, which was not easy to access at that time. So sometimes I just had to go through trial and error phases. I have to say that almost everything I have learned since the beginning has been from the

converts my digital paintings into tokens at digital auctions and sells them.

Where should people who are interested in visual effects start?

There are classes and schools for training in this professional field, but I really do not know what their quality and educational standards are.

One definitely needs guidance, and I suggest those interested in this field choose reputable online classes and workshops and try to learn from watching the instructional videos that are available on the Internet. The Internet is a great educational resource. You just need to learn how to get the best use from different online resources.

How many film projects have you worked on?

I have worked as a visual effects designer and colorist in more than 50 movies and 20 series and I am proud to have worked with prominent directors such as Masoud Kimiaei, Tahmineh Milani, Parviz Shahbazi, Kambozia Partovi, Farzad Motamen, Alireza Amini, etc.

Name the best Iranian film in which visual effects played a significant role in your opinion?

I really liked the visual effects of "A Hairy Tale" (Maskhare baz) movie written and directed by Amir Homayoun Ghanizadeh and starring the one and only Ali Nassirian, with Reza Kianian, Hedieh Tehrani and Saber Abar. This movie also won the 2019 Fajr Film Festival prize for visual effects by Javad Matouri.

Where and with what film did you enter the world of directing?

In 2019, I made my first short film called "Tardid" starring Pejman Jamshidi and that was when and how I entered the world of filmmaking.



I have recently entered the world of NFT (Non-Fungible Tokens) ART, which converts my digital paintings into tokens at digital auctions and sells them.

terms of hardware, manpower and maybe even in terms of the expertise of people who have not yet worked with the big visual effects projects. Consider for example the movie Transformers: the ligaments of the characters in the movie are made in 3D, and may have been formed by putting more than a thousand pieces of metal together.

If a team of 10 people in Iran want to only make these 3D parts, it will take them more than 3 months to model the parts of each of the ligaments. Now consider several ligaments, 3D scenes, animation, rendering, composite and so on, and such a film with our ability will take years. Or as another example, rendering a frame of a King Kong movie with our facilities may take more than 1 month. That means 1 second of a movie like King Kong will take 2 years to create. So we have a long way to go to reach that capability and output.

What has been the effect of Covid-19 on Iranian and world film industry?

Undoubtedly, the pandemic, like other professions and businesses, had a huge influence on this industry. Closure of theatres sent people involved in movies



Tardid was nominated for various prestigious festivals. I made my first feature film called "13 years old" the following year, and that film is produced by Farhad Ghadimi and is still going through post-production stages. My close friends Ali Sartipi, Jamal Sadatian, Hossein Farahbakhsh, Mehran Modiri, Alireza Amini, Soroush Sehat, Mani Baghbani, and a few others who saw the film in its rough cut stage gave me a lot of positive feedback.

They all loved the film and thought it was better than my first film. This positive reaction of people whose opinion I value encouraged me to start a new work whose script has been completed and we are already in the pre-production stage.

In your opinion, what is the reason for the brilliance of Iranian cinema in the international arena in recent years?

With the help of great people such as Abbas Kiarostami, Bahram Beyzai, Sohrab Shahid-Saleh, Amir Naderi, Majid Majidi, Asghar Farhadi, etc., Iranian cinema was able to demonstrate its potential in prestigious international festivals. These experts of the movie industry understood the language of film and were able to make the most of the indigenous and colorful culture of Iran and showcase it to the world in the best way with the language of cinema.

What is the position of Iranian film industry in comparison with world cinemas as far as visual effects?

Iranian cinema and of course many other parts of the world are very different from Hollywood. In Iran and even Europe and many developed countries in the field of film production, facilities and capabilities are not comparable to Hollywood, in home. But at the same time, the advent

of VODs (Video on Demand) gave new life to the industry. Today number of viewers of streaming networks such as Netflix in the outside world and companies such as Namava and Filimo in Iran, have grown exponentially and in a way they have saved the film industry. In Iran people love going to the movies and there is traditionally a healthy market for films. For example, in today's money, the Eagles movie (a 1984 Iranian film) sold over 258 billion Tomans, and the Kani-Manga movie raked in about 179 billion Tomans.

How do you see the outlook of this field?

In Hollywood today, movies are made with unreal characters and you can hardly tell if they are real or fake, thanks to visual effects. It may not be out of the question that in the future all feature films will be made in small studios and even without an actor.



Camel's First Music Collaboration with an Iranian Band

CAMEL



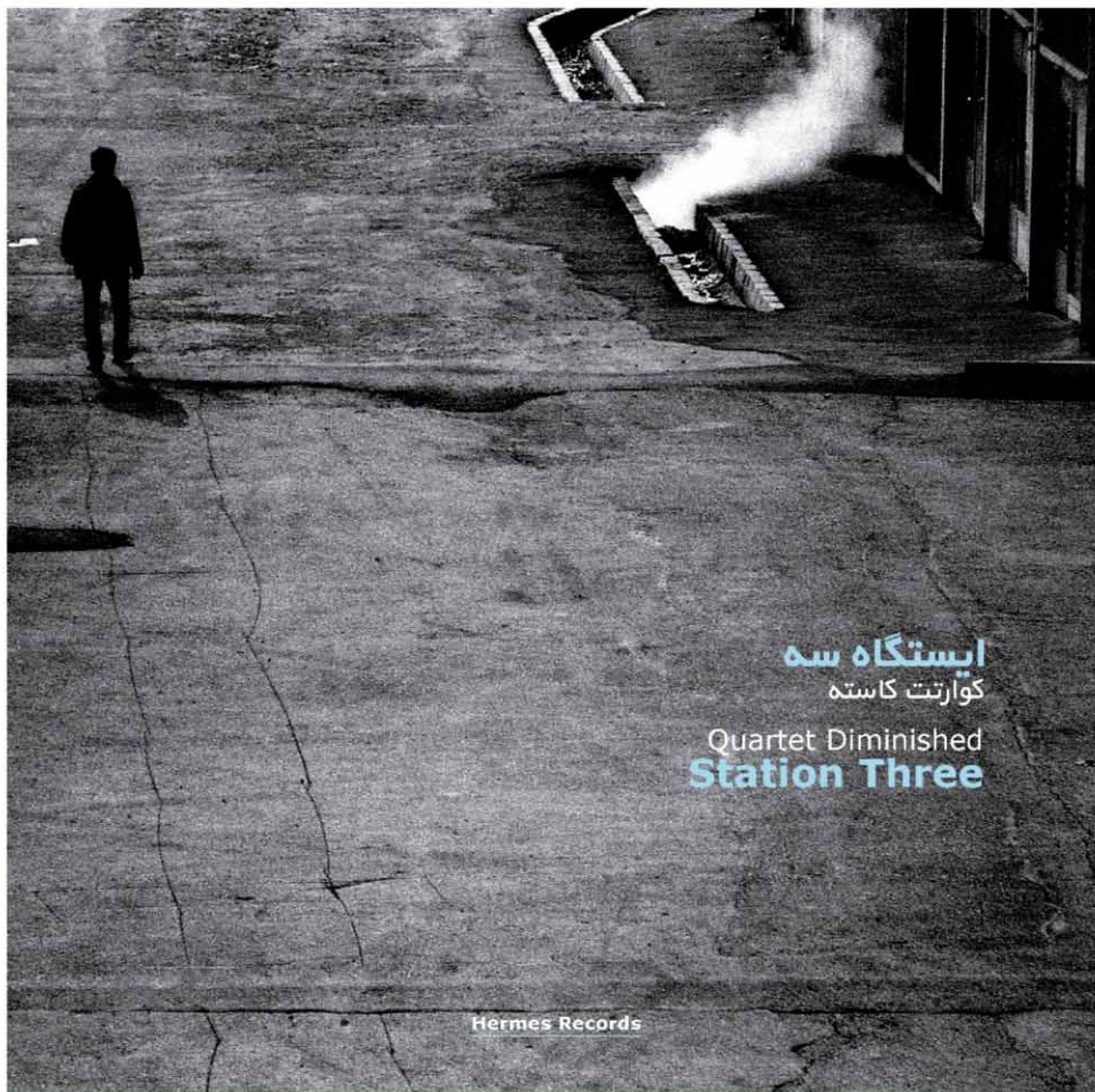
hermes
records

Station Three, the third album of the famous Iranian band "Quartet Diminished" has been released. Over the 10 years since its inception, the group has released only three albums all of which have been produced with meticulous passion. Aside from their fame and following among Iranian lovers of progressive jazz and rock music, Quartet Diminished has also gained a respectable audience at international level with performances in France, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Turkey, Georgia and Slovenia over the years. Even more impressive, the Band was proud to compile their second album in France jointly with the collaboration of the Iranian producer Ramin Sadighi (Hermes Records) together with one of the world's jazz and contemporary music legends, Manfred Eicher (ECM). In this new album by Quartet Diminished, we can listen to Colin Bass, the bass player of Camel, one of the most famous Progressive Rock bands in the world, performing and even singing in one of the tracks! The backstory is that in 2018, when the two groups Camel and the Quartet Diminished performed in Istanbul

around the same time by coincidence, Colin Bass was fascinated with the Quartet Diminished music and offered to collaborate with them in a future album.

The recording of the Station Three album was completed just before the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in Tehran, and its editing and production stages were completed during the quarantine period. Hermes Music Publishing, which has joined the recent revival of Vinyl records for gramophones, recently released this album in digital, CD and Vinyl formats. The Quartet Diminished Band was formed in late 2012 by Ehsan Seddigh.

The Band's music is based on both individual and collective creativity of its members and its format ranges from local rhythm to free compositions. They tend to create works that reflect their current view of world music. The Quartet Diminished weaves its path from 1970s music to local sounds, and from twentieth-century avant-garde music to contemporary jazz music and creates an audio experience through an improvisational art form.



ایستگاه سه
کوارتت کاسته
Quartet Diminished
Station Three

Hermes Records

**The Quartet Diminished Band
Members:**

Ehsan Seddigh: Electric Guitar

Mazyar Younesi: Piano

Soheil Peyghambari: Clarinet and
Soprano Saxophone

Rouzbeh Fadavi: Drums and Percussion

Guest Artist: Colin Bass



The Role of Nutrition in Ancient Civilizations

By: Dr. Kourosh RESALATI



The growth of villages, cities and urbanization has brought many changes with it in human nutrition. The first communities and cities arose in ancient Egypt, Iran, Mesopotamia (now southern Iraq), western Asia and Greece. Early urbanites considered agriculture and animal husbandry as necessity and used a variety of products for their nutrition. Iran is the first country in the world in terms of geographical location and diverse climate in which early humans were engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. (Two experts and archaeologists, Arthur Keith and Dr. Ernst Herzfeld, have proved in a book called Iranian Industries that agriculture and civilization began on the Iranian plateau.)

Excavations carried out in some parts of Iran, such as Shushtar, Damghan, Persepolis and Kashan's Sialk Archeological Hills, show that the history of agriculture in Iran is more than 6,000 years old. The history of nutrition in Greece also shows that in ancient times the Greeks ate more plants and in the upper classes, consumption of mutton and poultry, fish and dairy products was also common. Abundance of olive oil had also boosted the use of this product in meals with bread and other foods due to the numerous olive trees in the region. In ancient Rome, people were fully engaged in agriculture and the average person mostly consumed grains, legumes, fruits and some vegetables with cereals considered as a main fare. Meat and poultry consumption was largely limited to the Roman aristocracy.

As the Roman Empire grew and its army expanded its reach into farther corners of the world, the nutritional habits of Roman people, especially the aristocracy class, changed. With each conquest of foreign lands, Romans came into contact with inhabitants of those cities and villages and their local foods and nutritional habits. Soon they took with them the new indigenous food culture back to Rome.

From history books we have learned that Romans, especially the aristocracy and the rich resorted to extremes in the use of nutritious and delicious foods, while ordinary people consumed a simple diet. Interestingly, the first cookbook by the name of "Deipnosophistae" by Athenaeus was published in an early third century AD, which attests to the special appeal of cooking and food for the Romans. This cookbook, which one would imagine could be found only in the kitchens of the affluent aristocracy,

Records show that physicians in ancient Iran, Greece, and China also prescribed special diets as an important element of treatment of their patients.

southern Mesopotamia and is now kept in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul, Turkey. Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi, a 10th century Iranian physician who is known by many as the father of science of nutrition and children's diet, has various dietary recommendations in his book (Hifzosseha).

Despite the great importance of the field



describes how to prepare meat and vegetable dishes and introduces different cooking methods from conquered lands. There exists another curious mention in the annals of food, this one a child's diet written on a tablet. This tablet, whose origin dates back to 1900 BC was originally found in the Sumer region in Predictably, throughout history religion and tradition have also played an important role in people's diet and foods. Different religions at different times have gone into great explanations of what to eat and what foods to refrain from, and local traditions have given detailed guidelines for nutrition during pregnancy, breastfeeding and even fasting.

of nutrition in preserving human health throughout history, until almost the end of World War One, there was no official organization or institution working in this field.

In 1917 the first association of nutritionists by a group of nutrition experts in America was founded. The association first published the Scientific

Today, scientists have noticed that populations (with no health preconditions) who observed a healthy diet and lifestyle fared better during the coronavirus pandemic.

Journal of Dietitians in 1925 and gradually expanded the scope of its activities in food service management for nutrition centers. Graduates of this field, called dietitians must use all their information and knowledge to help establish and improve human health. Nowadays diet therapy is essential in both modern and traditional medicine and people around the world spend millions of dollars to maintain their health and fitness by following a healthy diet and using nutritional supplements and

dinner?" But panic buying and disorder in the food supply system made it more difficult to find some food items and imposed more difficulties on families. For many people, unemployment and loss of income also has made buying food even more challenging. Times like this, parents may choose to prepare food using processed foods as the fastest and least expensive way to feed the family, while healthy, inexpensive, and acceptable food alternatives are also available. Here are five ways to help feed

foods. Canned fatty fish such as sardines and salmon are rich in protein, fatty acids, Omega-3s, and a variety of vitamins and minerals. These foods can be eaten cold in sandwiches, salads or with pasta or eaten cooked as part of a hot meal. Canned vegetables, such as tomatoes, have fewer vitamins than fresh produce. However, when fresh or frozen vegetables are not easy to find, canned vegetables can be a good choice. Dry foods such as beans, legumes and grains such as lentils, chickpeas, and rice all contain nutrients. These tasty and relatively inexpensive foods have high satiety and can be stored for a long time.



vitamins for health and fitness and to fight obesity or for weight loss. As such, the term diet-therapy means the use of a balanced diet not only for patients but also for healthy people. This means that healthy people too should use a proper diet to avoid malnutrition and stay in perfect health. Therefore, all people at any age and any occupation who need help with myriad of health issues have the option to observe the basic principles of nutritional facts under the supervision of physicians and nutritionists. In summary, water and food are the basic human needs from birth and human health depends on healthy nutrition and mobility.

Today, scientists have noticed that populations (with no health preconditions) who observed a healthy diet and lifestyle fared better during the coronavirus pandemic.

For this reason the section below briefly reviews a number of best-practices and principles of health and proper nutrition: Today, the outbreak of coronavirus is making life more difficult for families around the world. With the closure of schools and kindergartens, many parents these days are forced to stay home and care for their children, work full time and take on other responsibilities. One of the daily challenges for the family has always been "What food should I make for

your children in order to plan a varied and nutritious diet that can support their growth and development as well as establish healthy eating habits.

Five tips to maintain a healthy diet:

1. Eat enough fruits and vegetables: buying, storing and cooking fresh vegetables poses a challenge for families especially when parents are advised to limit their exposure outside the home. But the important thing is to make sure you put enough fruits and vegetables in your child's diet if possible. Therefore, whenever it is possible to get fresh produce, be sure to get and consume them. Fruits and vegetables can also be used frozen, which preserves more nutrients and flavor. You can use vegetables to make a variety of soups, stews and other dishes. Once you've prepared a dish you can freeze it if possible and heat and consume it in no time when needed.

2. When fresh produce is not available, you can substitute canned or dried produce: It is always best to use fresh produce, but when they are not available, there are other healthy alternatives that can be easily stored and used in cooking. Canned legumes such as beans and peas can provide large amounts of nutrients to the body and can be stored for long periods of time, sometimes for months or even years to be used in a variety of

3. Save healthy snacks: Children need to eat one or two snacks during the day in order to be active throughout the day. Instead of giving children salty or sweet snacks, use healthier alternatives such as nuts, cheese, yogurt (preferably plain, non-fruity yogurt), pieces of fruit or dried fruit, hard-boiled eggs, or other healthy choices. These foods are nutritious and filling and help build healthy eating habits throughout life.

4. Limit processed foods: Since it may not always be possible to buy fresh food, try to reduce the amount of processed foods in your shopping cart. Ready-to-eat foods, ready-to-eat and packaged snacks and desserts often contain large amounts of saturated fatty acids, sugar, and salt. If you have to buy processed foods, pay attention to the nutrition label and try to choose items that contain lower amounts of these substances (the amount of sugar, fat, and salt in the food label should not be red). Also, try to avoid sugary drinks as much as possible and drink plenty of water instead. Adding pieces of fruit and vegetables such as sour lemons, cucumbers, or berries (such as strawberries or white berries) to the water is the best way to add a pleasant flavor to it.

5. Try to make cooking and dining a fun and meaningful activity on your family to-do list: Cooking and dining is an interesting way to create healthy daily habits, strengthen family relationships and create fun activities. If possible, ask children to help you prepare food. Younger children can help with washing or tidying up food stuff, while older children can take part in more complex activities, such as helping you set the table. Try to eat as much as possible with the whole family at a certain time, creating such a habit can be helpful in reducing children's anxiety in these stressful situations.

Iran's VollyBall: Rising to the Top

Saeed Rezaei, has 35 years of experience in playing volleyball in Iran and the honor of earning various awards. He started his career in 1986 with mini-volleyball and membership in the national teams of youth and adults, and the Asian Volleyball Championship.

Rezaei later went on to participate in the world and Olympic championships and played in Iranian clubs for 18 years and won second and third places with his teams.

Rezaei's championships also extend to Asian clubs with Iran's Paykan team, as well as two records for best defender on the tour in Asia at a time when Iranian volleyball was not in today's top shape. The turning point in his career was being invited to play in the Italian Serie A League with Lupi Santa Croce team as a legionnaire in 2001 at a time when very few players from Iran played in other countries.

Rezaei has a master's degree in physical education and is currently teaching at university-level as a Ph-Ed professor. Aside from his 10 years of coaching experience, and 25 years of continuous presence in the world of volleyball, Rezaei earned the highest coaching rank of the World Federation with a 3rd level international volleyball coaching degree. Rezaei has reaped many honors during his long volleyball career, among which are the following:

- **Championship of Peykan Club team in the Iranian League, Asian**
- **Championship as a member of Omid Team, participation in world**
- **Championships with the National Student Team and placing as the Asian runner-up, three years**
- **Coaching for the national men's team and repeated participations in the World Cup and Asian**
- **Championships, qualifying for the 2020 Olympics, as well as winning a bronze medal in the Continental**
- **Cup with the National Volleyball Team.**

Thank you all so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview... If you were to summarize the state of Iran's volleyball, how would you describe it?

Iranian volleyball is one of the best group team sports in the country and is considered one of the top 8 teams in the world.

This success has been achieved over a 30-year period through proper talent search, long-term management, and expert foreign coaches.



How did Iran become a significant player in international volleyball? What were some of the key milestones achieved and who was responsible for the success? (Government, volleyball federation, coaches, players, sponsors...)

The success of volleyball in Iran and the respect it has gained from international opponents, stem from the team's relentless efforts and wins in various Asian and world competitions and leagues. The global prestige that Iran's volleyball team enjoys also comes from its extensive experience and the many trials and errors through which the team earned universal stature. Also, with focus and long-term vision of the

federation, the team prepared for qualifying games and various challenging world competitions. Not to be underestimated is the invaluable role that sponsorships played in ironing out any financial roadblocks and laying down favorable conditions for the continued success of the volleyball team to become a reality.

What does it take for Iranian volleyball to maintain its world ranking and achieve even higher status?

A look at the conditions and records of the top teams in the world will show that if a team has been able to remain in the elite rankings of the world for many years it has been because of proper support and planning. So, like other world-class leagues, we should start providing this support from youth team levels and let it become the foundation for the adult team.

I should here emphasize that the preparation of youth teams should be based on international standards to allow us to climb to even higher levels of performance in future and to advance our position globally.

The impact of sponsorship on all sports is also very important, and that surely applies to volleyball. Since volleyball in Iran has recently been nationalized and there is no longer any financial impetus for sponsors in a system that does not properly address this shortfall, the situation has become more difficult. Despite all the problems, there are still a few sponsors that have contributed a lot to this sport. Kalleh Club, for instance, has played an important role in this regard by identifying young talents and investing in and training them for many years so that a few of these youth are currently playing for the national team.

What are the key events of the next 2 years for Iran's volleyball?

The Olympics is one of the most important competitions for the Iranian volleyball team, and it will be an exceptional opportunity for the national team legionnaires who have had the experience of participating in many international competitions to show their potential. Fortunately, this generation of players is in full maturity as far as skills and will have the chance to achieve the best results by using their experience and conditioning. However, given the age of these great players, this may be the last match they will have in the international arena.

How has volleyball been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic considering the proximity between players in on the court? When can we expect for things to go back to normal?

Given the circumstances created by Covid-19 and the postponement of competitions last year to 2021, the most important and sensitive competitions ahead are the League of Volleyball Nations hosted by Italy and more importantly the Olympics, to which Iran will be sending a select group of young

What are the opportunities and challenges of volleyball in Iran for the next decade?

One of the important challenges of Iranian volleyball is that for many years unfortunately very few changes have been made in terms of players on the team. There are various reasons for this of course, such as public opinion as well as the high expectations from the team. Other countries have always started injecting younger players into their national teams as a priority in their long-

In addition to physical characteristics such as height and agility, there are other personal skills that are important in spotting talent for volleyball. Information processing intelligence, attention to detail as well as focus and a few other personality attributes are also important for a volleyball player. A volleyball player's understanding of teamwork and the ability to control anger during a game will be revealed in practice sessions and will make it possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of players. Also, important parameters in selecting



players. The Covid-19 pandemic and the conditions to which it gave rise affected all sports, and volleyball was no exception. As a result, we have been away from world matches and competitions for over a year now. In the meantime, due to the pandemic, the League matches within the country were held under controlled conditions and with the least amount of risk for the athletes' health. This helped the players to have an opportunity for proper and timely treatments and recovery in case of injury.

What has been the financial impact of the pandemic on sports industry in general?

The spirit and soul of the game of volleyball and its allure are intertwined with the spectators and its fans. And with the pandemic and the absence of spectators in competitions at all levels, followed by diminished advertisements and the financial issues that were naturally created as a result, this sector has also faced problems. As such, we've witnessed reduced budgets and a downsizing of staff in clubs, as well as, unfortunately, a decline in the quality of competitions.

term plans and preparing the new generation to replace the previous one. Unfortunately, this practice has happened much later for the Iranian national team and has taken place only in the last 3 years with addition of a small number of young players to the league, which has posed inevitable challenges for us. Naturally, with the departure of experienced players, a significant decline will occur. But we have a chance to compensate for the slump by planning, training, and participating in tournaments to increase the experience and confidence levels of our young players.

We must learn from the past and not forget this fact: In order to create strong support for experienced legionnaires in the future we must inject younger players at the right time into the national league in order to always maintain a strong team and achieve top ranking in quality games.

How can parents or school coaches spot talent for volleyball? What are identifiable traits besides obvious physical characteristics such as height?



and training a player are visual and auditory memories, competitiveness, and attention to the team's goals. Talent search and training should start at 8 to 10 years of age, with more hardcore training continuing in the years between the ages of 14 and 15. Finally at 18, the selected few should be on the right track to put their intelligence and ideal physique on the volleyball court ready to perform at high levels.





Mrs. Farideh Shojaei was born on August 31, 1956. She has a Ph.D. in Sports Physiology and was a faculty member of Islamic Azad Medical Sciences University for 32 years. Her career background includes: Member of the Women's Committee of the Asian Football Federation, Vice President of Sports Development of Islamic Countries, Member of the Sports Medicine Committee of the Federation of Islamic Countries, Head of Nutrition Committee of the National Olympic Committee, and she is currently the Vice President of the Basketball Federation.

Please begin with yourself, how many years did you play basketball, in which teams and tell us about the championships you've won?

I started playing basketball at Asadi High School and soon joined Taj Club's youth teams where, I initially trained in the Afsar team, then moved to the Deihim team. In a short while, I became a fixed player in the main Taj Club team and played in the center post for many years. Our team was always in the finals and competed against the Azmayesh and Ararat and Irana teams, and we were the runners-up in competitions most of the time. After the 1979 Revolution, I played for a period in the Persepolis team but then I competed for the Azad University club team, and I became a champion with this team. I also coached both basketball teams of the Azad and the Medical Sciences universities to championships for a number of years. Before the 1979, I was also a football player on the Taj team for a short period and I also won a badminton championship after the Revolution.

Has the growth of women's basketball in recent years been commensurate with that of men? Or since your membership in the Federation, and given the existing problems, is there a policy for the development of women's basketball in terms of issues on the court and related statutory regulations that to some extent meet the expectations of countless fans of women's basketball?

Certainly because of the problems that women basketball players have had in the past and the fact that the focus of the basketball federation has always been on men in all categories, we have seen a lot of difference between the two groups. But today, with management and planning and to some extent the change of attitude of the officials, and of course the heartfelt interest and serious efforts of young girls, these differences will become fewer and the gap will hopefully close.

Is there a special program for the beginners' category to discover talent from schools and basketball academies and create strong national women's teams from among those groups?

Yes, Iran's women's basketball federation has a strategic program to search and identify talent for national teams. Based on the federation's goals, once such qualified young women with a preferably tall stature are identified, they are admitted to a program that trains them for elite levels putting them on track to join national teams. I should add that these candidates are selected with the help of specialists in anthropometry, which is the study of the measurements and proportions of the human body. Also, once admitted to the training program, their personal strengths and weaknesses are assessed and specific training plans are designed for them to best prepare them for success on the basketball courts.

Where do our women basketball players stand in 5- and 3-person games compared to other countries?

Although they faced many obstacles, our women were able to demonstrate their strengths in 3-person games at international levels and that success helped propel our teams forward. So much so that last year our young women ranked 6th worldwide and qualified to participate in the Asian and World Championships, the Jakarta Asian Games and the Argentine Youth Olympics. They even earned the championship of West

Asia and won third place in the Universiade Championships, which is also called the World University Games. In the 5-person basketball, they earned third place for the first time in official competitions in West Asia. But given these remarkable developments, Iranian women's basketball is still a long way from Asian and world basketball levels. Because some of the best teams in the world, such as Australia, China and Japan are in Asia, FIBA Asia has turned its attention to Group A teams.

And as Iran is in Group B Asia, we have not had a plan to or participated in a competition for about 4 years. Also, due to financial constraints, we have not participated in tournaments and friendly events lately, and the danger for the gap with Asian and world teams to increase is there.

Do Iran's Ministry of Sports, the National Olympic Committee or other public and private institutions provide the necessary support to the women's sector?

Fortunately, in recent years, the Ministry of Sports and the National Olympic Committee have paid more attention to women's sports, and with the presence of Dr. Farhadizad, Deputy Minister of Women's Sports, attention to women's sports, including basketball, has increased. This in turn has led to growing public encouragement and interest and helped these young players achieve their goals. Also, with the support of Dr. Salehi Amiri and Ms. Taherian, respectively President and Vice President of Iranian National Olympic Committee, we are witnessing a golden age in girls' sports in the country and if this continues, the barriers, challenges and weaknesses will lessen and will be replaced by strengths and opportunities.

Given that you have been managing different categories of sports in Iran for many years, and have served as vice president of women in the country's football, golf, and basketball federations, what do you see as the problems and strengths for women's sports in our country?

Surely passage of time and the positive change in the attitude of officials, together with progress in sports sciences have made a constructive difference in women's sports in Iran. What has been shown decisive is the supportive role of officials, especially the president of the federation, as well as the role of guidance and planning for the sector. And also the fight put up by women which

altogether have shaped the strength, or in their absence, the weakness of girls' sports in Iran. Resources and sponsors, television broadcasts, advertising, media, etc, are also very important. I personally believe in having a foreign coach. Female coaches in Iran are good and up to date in theory because they take the necessary courses and coaching trainings along with men, but their practical coaching experience and bench side know-how, especially at international levels, is not as strong and requires time. Hiring an ordinary foreign coach is not helpful because in this case Iranian coaches are better, and of course having experienced foreign coaches who can certainly make a difference requires a lot of sponsors and money, and there lies the problem. To address this issue, the best approach in my opinion, is to use, where possible, the knowledge and expertise of male coaches in the country who have been more successful in these sports.



What factors are important for the growth and development of our country's sport of women's basketball?

The general popularity of basketball in the country and the positive attitude of the officials towards this sport have distinguished this sport. Increasing the number of players, having proper leagues, being able to watch girls playing basketball on Instagram and Aparat are some of the factors that can further enhance the standing of this sport among its followers. Other factors are attracting foreign players, making plans based on short-, medium- and long-term goals, creating an appropriate platform for discovering and cultivating talent, and paying attention to the foundations and the framework of this attractive sport.

After many years of efforts by our basketball Federation and Iran's National Olympic Committee, the World Federation accepted the hijab of women in Islamic countries, and

this led to the presence of our women in the world, Asian and the international competitions. What is your opinion on this, and what do you think about the presence of national 3-and 5-person teams as well as participation of Iran's Bahman women's team in West Asian competitions for the first time in 42 years?

As I said, the simultaneous lifting of the hijab ban in international arenas with the flourishing of 3-person basketball in the world was a good thing that helped our girls' performance to be showcased.

The runner-up position of Bahman team in West Asian club competitions and winning the third place of the 5-member national team in West Asia for the first time definitely motivated our girls and increased their incentive to continue working hard and succeeding in the future.

What is your opinion about the championship of Bahman team in the two seasons of the country's women's premier league?

Bahman team's championship was due to many factors like the strong management and coaching of Ms. Tayerpour, the integrity, loyalty and effort of its players, and use of foreign players in a timely and fruitful manner.

Also important for the team's winning performance was the professional bodybuilding program they trained in, and the coaching of male trainers for the team. Becoming the runner-up in West Asia for the first time also helped of course. In addition, the club's attention to the overall wellness of the girls and their continued encouragement, the championship reward they received, and seeing the team on the city billboard in Tehran were all part of what propelled them to success.



Given that women's sports are less sponsored than men's and the cost and amount of women players' contracts is much lower than the men's league, what do you expect from industry owners, and private companies?

Men's sports usually get more attention the world over and this is true in almost every sport. In Iran, due to the lack of television broadcasting, and less media attention and consequently less financial support, this difference is even more visible. But with the global approach to gender justice and the pressure of sports organizations on federations and federations' requests for sponsors to invest in men's and women's teams in the league, this problem may be resolved to some extent.

"It should be noted that the above interview was conducted before sending Iran's women's 3-person national team to the Olympic qualifier games held in Austria and Hungary.

Unfortunately, our national team did not qualify to participate in the Olympics and handed over the games to rival teams."

Regarding our national 3-person basketball team that has critical games ahead of it to qualify for the Japan Olympics, what teams will they play against and in which countries?

Our girls' national 3-person team is facing a difficult task to get the quota. In the event in Austria, 20 of the best teams in the world are present. From this first event, three teams will advance to the Tokyo Olympics.

At this stage, Iran plays in the same group with Japan, Ukraine, Turkmenistan and Australia. In the second event in Hungary, only one team will go to the Olympics from among Hungary, Japan, the Netherlands, Italy, Chinese Taipei and Iran.

The winning teams from the Austria and Hungary events will succeed to the Japan Olympics making up 8 3-person teams together with the teams of Romania, Mongolia, China and Russia who have already qualified for the Olympics.

Diving Deep into the Realm of Social Media



Ensieh Afzali THERAPIST

Ensieh Afzali is an educational expert and has a Master degree of Psychology. She has built her career as a schema therapist for cognitive behavior and as a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) practitioner.

With the fast-growing connectivity comes the addiction to our mobile phones and toxicity of social media. How is all of that affecting us? Mentally and physically?

Use of the internet and cyberspace and such has increased in today's world and this phenomenon has contributed to an increase in communication and interaction among people. Admittedly there are many positive aspects to this virtual world, but its incorrect and insidious use creates challenging side effects most common of which is internet addiction. This addiction, in turn, is the underlying cause of many psychological disorders reflected in users' behavior and personal identity. And if these psychological conditions persist, an individual can lose touch with the reality in which one had previously existed. Consequently, the norms and rules with which that person could once relate become worthless and impervious, only to be replaced with elements and beliefs that can be defined solely within that virtual world. The result is a polarity of one's identity and personality which can endanger one's mental health.

This virtual social interaction that has replaced the former means of verbal communication has, as you have described, had dire consequences for the young generation. Can you please expand on the effects of social media on the young minds?

These days cyberspace has immersed teenagers and young adults in its colorful realm such that there are no signs of former group pastimes and games. As such, young people find a troublesome refuge in cyberspace where its passageways are awash with thousands of menacing threats. Although the internet provides opportunities for scientific discoveries and social connectivity, its reckless use by young

adults has led them to an isolated existence. Such false and frivolous identity creates an illusory image for teenagers and further encourages them to seek an even more ubiquitous presence on social media portals such as Facebook and Viber and other chat apps. Research and data show that social connectivity through the internet is frequently limited compared to old fashioned and real personal relationships, and that in the long run it oftentimes results in an individual's social isolation, depression and deteriorated mental health. Studies also reveal that these individuals lack real social relationship skills and generally suffer from higher vulnerability and diminished mental health and wellbeing.

How much is social media affecting human connections/relations? What about the impact on partnership and marriage?

Excessive use of the internet causes feelings of social alienation, loneliness, estrangement from family, and ultimately a feeling of anguish which altogether result in a mental state called social isolation. This alienation and the loss of social support are the two variable dimensions of social isolation.

Under such circumstances, fostering and encouraging each member of the family for the proper and correct use of the internet assumes a more profound importance. Before any member of a family attempts to connect to an internet site and begin their web browsing and online chatting and such, it is imperative that they each understand what they should do and what actions to refrain from in order to enjoy its countless benefits and avoid becoming victim to its many harms to.

As the communication technology is comprised of opportunities as well as risks, and as we witness an almost daily increase in users' gravitation to virtual platforms, creation of a cultural

framework for appropriate use of these internet environments becomes more critical. But regrettably, to date in Iran we have not yet established the proper protocol for use of the internet and its ancillary virtual communities such as chat rooms. Until we institute a macro vision of internet access based on informed and prudent rules of use in our country, from which it seems we are years away, we can foresee a dangerous road ahead for a service that can conceivably be a tool for information and intellectual growth.

In fact, we can justifiably argue that in the absence of a defined and focused policy for use of the internet, this potentially beneficial and stimulating global network service can turn into something destructive and harmful for family relationships. The capacity of deceit incited by the internet within a family setting can lead to break up of a marriage, and disintegration of relationships between couples, and even between parents and children. The internet has numerous positive aspects like educational features, communication services and such. But alongside such qualities, depending on the user's habits, it can have adverse effects as well. Excessive use of the computer can jeopardize the physical development and social progress of teenagers and young adults. The internet has assumed a special status in the social framework of people's lives and has impacted even the most basic aspects of social and family institutions. Studies confirm that as spending time on the internet is a time-consuming habit, it can have serious adverse repercussions for social and family relationships.

Have there been studies on the effects of the internet on individuals and their relationships? What have they concluded?

As reported by the New York Times, a Carnegie Mellon study to determine the social and psychological effects of the internet on 169 individuals in 73 family units who used the service only to stay connected during a one-year period, showed the following results: Higher use of internet was directly correlated with a decrease in relationships of participants with other family members in the home environment, as well as in person contact with their social network of friends, producing an increased sense of loneliness and depression among those taking part in the study. Researchers concluded that what the participants lost by using internet as a medium of

connection was primarily the higher benefits of physical presence of each other. Another recent and more comprehensive study by Stanford University confirmed the connection of social detachment and the internet but could not answer the central question regarding the role of the internet in causing feelings of loneliness and despair. Contrary to the Carnegie Mellon study which was centered on the psychological and emotional aspects of the subject, the Stanford research was an effort to depict a broader picture of internet usage and its potential effects on the general public. According to the Principal Investigator of the Stanford research project, the tsunami of internet underscores the social isolation seen in the United States and how it can lead to the nightmare of a computerized world devoid of human touch and emotion.

a monitor, the higher the rate of such disorders. These experts add that increase in use of electronic monitors and higher exposure to online media correlates directly with a lower sense of social acceptability and higher feeling of loneliness and communication difficulties.

Furthermore, they report that certain social networking websites and online multi-player video games contribute to lower degrees of health among users. So I would say putting limits to use of our electronic devices, be it our smartphones, tablets or gaming boxes, other than for educational and work purposes, should be limited to as little as possible, with a maximum limit. It's important that we develop healthy habits of use for our devices and become good role models for the younger members of the family too.

and this may cause sleep disorders. Also, as your brain is unable to enter its rest zone due to the effects of the screen light and certain hormonal secretions, you may experience excessive tiredness and fatigue preventing you from falling asleep.

The continuation of this sleep deprivation can have detrimental side effects such as memory loss, lack of concentration, ennui, irritability, and many such disorders in the long term.

Consider that spending disproportionate amount of time in the virtual platforms can have irreparable side effects for one's body, mind, mood, and personality. So, it is important to devote a proper amount of time to socialize with family members and friends, and for reading, family games and sports on a daily basis to ensure a healthy and happy life for ourselves.



How can we control our screen time and prevent disorders such as obsessive behavior?

Feelings of isolation, despair, anxiety and low self-esteem are all likely complications of excessive use of the internet for children and young adults. Experts in the field believe that too much time spent on the internet can adversely affect child behavior. They maintain that parents should not allow children to spend more than 4 hours a day in front of a monitor, be it computer, TV or for video games. Child psychologists claim that young people who spend a lot of time in front of a screen suffer from higher rates of mental distress, anxiety and depression, and that the more time spent in front of

What are some of the solutions and techniques to reduce addiction to our mobile phones and social media?

One should set a 4 -hour limit for daily use of a mobile phone or internet and take a 10-minute break every 30 minutes. During those breaks, give your eyes and hands/fingers some much needed rest and do exercises, examples of which you can find online, to prevent injury to your eyes and hands. At least one hour before bedtime, stop using your mobile, tablet computer, laptop, etc. The blue light emitted from the screens of these devices send a signal to your brain that it is still not time for sleep and that you should remain awake. So immediately after setting aside your device, your brain is not ready for sleep

Research and data show that social connectivity through the internet is frequently limited compared to old fashioned and real personal relationships, and that in the long run it oftentimes results in an individual's social isolation, depression and deteriorated mental health

70,000,000

Barrels of oil a year to make the world's polyester fiber.

Approximately 63% of textiles are derived from petrochemicals, with polyester being the most widely consumed synthetic fiber. Nearly 70 million barrels of oil are used each year to make the world's polyester fiber which takes over 200 years to break down. While synthetic products may be cheap to purchase, there are hidden costs to our earth, our health, and future generations.



2.4 HERTZ

Humming noise of Mars and scientists are not sure why!

Under its frigid, dusty surface, Mars is humming. The quiet, constant drone periodically pulses with the beat of quakes rippling around the planet, but the source of this alien music remains unknown. Earth has many steady background hums, the most prevalent of which comes from the slosh of oceans and the crash of waves against the shore. But at 2.4 hertz, Mars's drone is a higher pitch than most naturally occurring hums on Earth, which tend to fall below 1 hertz.

%34

Percentage of adults who still sleep with a comfort object

No need to hide that teddy bear from your infant years in your closet the next time you have an adult sleepover; the odds are good that he or she has a comfort object, too. A study conducted by Sleepopolis and OnePoll reported that 34 % of adults still sleep with a stuffed "comforter" such as animal, blanket, or other sentimental objects.



100

Number of times each second that lightning strikes Earth

Cloud-to-ground lightning bolts are a common phenomenon, about 100 striking Earth's surface every single second, yet their power is extraordinary. Each bolt can contain up to one billion volts of electricity.



25,000

Years ago an ancient coronavirus swept across the East



According to a new study the COVID-19 pandemic, which has now claimed more than 3 million lives, has revealed just how vulnerable we are to new viruses. However, as new as this threat seems, humans have been battling dangerous viruses since the beginning of time. An ancient coronavirus may have infected the ancestors of people living in modern-day East Asia back 25,000 years ago and for millennia afterward.

100,000,000

Fans tuned into an online concert

More than 100 million fans have tuned in to watch a virtual BTS concert. Called Map of The Soul ON:E, the online concert by the South Korean boy band also known as the Bangtan Boys, was created as a way to connect with fans, after the group had to cancel their world tour this year because of coronavirus.



The Art of Making Artisanal French Ice Cream

DISCOVERY

REPORT

Niloufar Lari

Niloufar Lari, owner and founder of MIIV Ice Cream, has a good story to tell about why and how she started her "ice cream business" back in 2015:

"It all started with my two little girls' insatiable love for ice cream, and my desire to give them the ice cream of my childhood: a healthy ice cream without artificial flavors or colors and sweeteners. Following the old saying that "living well begins with eating well", my aim was to make a quality ice cream in the style of traditional handcrafted European ones. Luckily around the same time, the famous French chef Mr. Jean Marie who is a Master Ice Cream maker (a true "Maitre Glacier") was delighted when I asked him to come to Tehran and teach me the art of making French Ice Cream. I flew him to Tehran exclusively and made his stay as pleasant as possible and everything available for him. And so, I was able to learn first-hand the "art of making artisanal French ice cream" from one of the few remaining chefs in the world who still make ice cream the old-fashioned way from recipes that are handed from one generation to another.



We also make sorbet at MIIV and our ingredients for it are just as simple and high quality: lots of fresh, organic fruits (over 70%), mineral water, and pure cane sugar.

Great care and attention go into the preparation and making of each flavor of ice cream. Taking no shortcuts, we slow cook our ingredients following the Bain-Marie technique of French chefs. Each flavor goes through an "aging" process of 12-24 hours to mature before it is churned into ice cream and later frozen. Absolutely no pre-mixed ice cream bases, artificial flavorings or colorings are used as we, at MIIV, are

the taste of pure ice cream as they were so used to artificial flavorings and overly sweet tastes. Our lemon sorbet is still on the sour side for some, but those who have gotten to know MIIV can't eat any other ice cream, and once they open a pint of MIIV ice cream it's hard for them to stop before finishing the container!

In 2020 we celebrated our fifth anniversary at MIIV where we have come a long way in turning our vision of quality ice cream into reality of an affordable luxury that comes in 20 delicious flavors - with more new ones to come! As a women-run business and with attention to every detail in making the MIIV ice cream and sorbets, my dedicated team and I work with love and passion to create the perfectly smooth and creamy brand of ice cream that MIIV has become famous for.



I started MIIV in Tehran not as an ice cream shop, but rather a production lab with a focus on quality. To begin with, the MIIV ice cream uses only premium ingredients such as the best fully ripe fruits from organic farms around the country. Other ingredients of our ice cream are fresh farmers' milk and cream, free-range eggs and vanilla beans directly from Madagascar. Chocolate used in MIIV ice cream is premium Belgium chocolate and the cocoa is Dutch cocoa from The Netherlands.

committed to creating a fresh, organic product. The challenge for us at the beginning was to re-acquaint our customers with

The challenge for us at the beginning was to re-acquaint our customers with the taste of pure ice cream as they were so used to artificial flavorings and overly sweet tastes.



Iran's Largest Center for Books, Science and Entertainment

DISCOVERY

Welcome to Iran's largest center for books, science and entertainment! Browse and roam through the Book Garden!

You are here at Tehran Book Garden where the most massive collection of books and science-related hobbies can be found under one roof in one of the biggest bookstores in the world. Irrespective of your age or taste, you can find your favorite niche in a corner of this structure composed of three floors and four separate spaces namely Baharestan, Khialestan, Negarestan and Sarvestan. The variety of facilities offered at Book Garden will spice up your visit, turning it into an exciting and fascinating experience. You can swing by the Adults', Children's or Teens' bookstores, or visit the theater and music complex and even pay a visit to one of the various gardens of science or family-oriented recreational centers. In simpler terms, at the Book Garden one can "explore, experience and learn" all at once. Tehran Book Garden is a place where you can:

Travel to the world of science and recreation:

Teens Science Garden: This is the vastest science park in the country with three galleries and approximately 40 amazing scientific and educational tools where you can experience flying on a real airplane or shoot laser guns or even lift a car with one hand.

Robotics Club: Apart from roaming in the world of robots and getting acquainted with AI and computer programming, here you can also experience cutting-edge technologies such as 3D printers. At the table of creativity and entertainment you could also enjoy tech games such as robot soccer.

Biology Club: Enjoy exploring the astonishing world of biology in one of the few educational and recreational centers in the field of life sciences. This is the place where you can see genuine laboratory equipment and experience working with them on your own.

Escape Room: This is an exciting group brain teaser. Enter one of the two rooms namely "Stranger" and "Pharaoh's Curse" and solve the riddle of each room with the help of clues.

Travel to the Children's World:

Land of Fekrbazia: First amusement park in Iran designed based on the Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences that broadens this notion into 8 types.

Your child can experience over 25 mind games in 5 separate sections offering nature games, mystery games, construction games, endeavor games and sound games. In the Land of Fekrbazia your children can discover and develop their talents on their own. **Children's House:** Revolving around physical and movement activities -for relieving pent up energy, fighting boredom and cheering up kids, this place is equipped with all types of recreational facilities, toys and a ball pool. **Robokids:** Have an adventure in the first interactive amusement park in Iran. You can accompany, talk and make friends with Arsu, an android, or engage in



games of car battle, interactive sand games and trampolines, exciting slides, and other forms of tech hobbies and adventure.

3- Travel to the World of Books, Culture and Art:

Stores:

* **Adults' Bookstore**

The biggest books and cultural products store in Iran

* **Children's and Teens' Bookstore**

The biggest children's and teens' book and cultural products and stationery store

* **Art Products Store**

Beautiful Iranian handicraft and art products

* **Stationery Store**

All types of stationery for all age groups

Cinema Halls:

* **Book Garden Music and Theater Complex**

Two separate fully equipped halls with a capacity of 250 and 100 individuals each for performing plays and concerts with a sound recording studio

* **Book Garden Cinema Complex**

One of the biggest national cinema complexes encompassing 10 fully equipped theatres with the seating capacity of 1300 individuals

Cafes and Restaurants: Different cafes and restaurants specialized in all types of burgers.

Well-being and Services:

* **Lamkade** (reclining zone for relaxation and leisure)

* **Nostalgic Statues**

* **Mother and Baby room**



* **Khialestan**

An imaginative atmosphere to browse through in a 60-meter corridor with two conveyor belts and powerful projectors

* **Nashr-e-Shahr Publication Center**

Publication and distribution services with modern equipment for digital and offset publication

Offices and Education

* **Colleagues Club (Research Desks)**

An open place for collaborative work for the purpose of research and study as well as carrying out team projects in the public area of Tehran Book Garden

* **Paradise Hub**

A place for collaborative work within private office spaces of Tehran Book Garden

* **Conference Hall**

A conference hall with the seating capacity of 140 individuals for holding conferences, workshops and educational courses

From Ruegen with Love

By: Claudia FREY

REPORT



Claudia Frey was born in Stuttgart, Germany in 1951. She graduated with a degree in microeconomics and later worked as a manager for market information at Frankfurt-based VDMA for 40 years. She loves traveling and Iran is the 54th country she's visited.



Rügen is the largest island in Germany. Located off the Pomeranian coast in the Baltic Sea, it has a population of around 77,000 inhabitants. That number easily multiplies manifold with German and international tourists visiting during the summer season. Located in the former GDR, the island only became an accessible attraction for everyone after reunification in 1989/90. Today it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Germany. Rügen has a maximum length of some 51 km and a width of 43 km. The shape of the island provides a huge coastline due to its peninsulas, numerous lagoons called Bodden and open bays.



Shortly after the first lockdown in 2020 had ended, my sister, brother-in-law and I met in Hamburg to drive another 300 km north-east to the island of Rügen for a seven day vacation. Since the month of June was in between school breaks in Germany, the place was not yet overrun by tourists, but the huge number of RVs in the area proved that the pandemic had considerably increased demand for those types of vehicles.

We stayed at a campground in Breege, located on a small stretch of land sandwiched by water – and with the less pleasant side effect of indigenous insects and mosquitoes to share the salty and healthy air with us. Breege was our starting point for daily excursions around the island:



Cape Arkona is considered the Northernmost point of the island. It offers stunning chalk cliffs and views both from land and sea. The cape is dotted with two lighthouses – the one brought into service in 1828 now houses a registry – and a naval navigation tower.



Beach life with swimming, sailing, rowing, wind and kite surfing and snorkeling is popular all over the island – weather permitting. Beach life has a long standing tradition in historic seaside resorts such as Sellin, Binz, Schaabe or Putbus. First bathing facility opened in 1794. These locations proudly present the traditional resort architecture with classicist spectacular, bright white buildings, which sprang up during the 19th century. Their sea piers are famous. The resorts are connected with the beautiful, romantic hinterland by a traditional narrow gauge railway using steam locomotives, called Rasender (racing) Roland.



Not far from the cape, and still north of the island, is where you find Jasmund National Park currently listed as a UNESCO world natural heritage site. Ancient beech tree forests – the original colonizers of Europe – inspired romantic painters; these have never been used for forestry purposes and now present a dynamic mosaic of open areas, thickets and woodland. The King's Chair - a chalk cliff – is Ruegen's main landmark.



The main landmark in Stralsund is the extraordinary brick Gothic city hall dating back to 1278. Its remarkable facade has the sole purpose of displaying the city's wealth. A newer attraction located at the historical harbour is the fantastic OZEANEUM, an aquarium which primarily displays sea life of the North and Baltic Seas.



Ruegen is famous for its beautifully romantic alleys with some trees over 100 years old. Trees are also the attraction of a so-called Treetop Path:

With a length of 1,250 meters one moves at eye level among the treetops of beech forests, meandering at a height between 4 and 17 meters, past information and activity stations.

Ruegen is connected to mainland by ferries, a bridge and a causeway which cross the Strelasund and lead into Stralsund, one of Hanse's (the medieval Hanseatic League) famous cities along the coast. Founded in 1234, this old town is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

A Land to Fall in Love With

By: Mazda RAHIMI



Mazda Rahimi

PHOTOGRAPHER

Mazda Rahimi, was born in Iran in 1965, graduated with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and works as a photographer for natural and historical sites and places. Rahimi believes one can tell stories through pictures, and nature photos will allow the viewer to step into the photographer's shoes and imagine the scene as if they were there too. Providing this window into the natural world for those who may be unable to access it themselves is a wonderful avocation according to Rahimi.



Lar National Park is a protected area in Mazandaran and Tehran provinces, in northern Iran. This 30,000-hectare (74,000-acre) park is located in the Central Alborz Mountain range, at the foot of Mount Damavand, the highest peak in Iran (5600-meter or over 18,000 feet) and the highest volcano in Asia. Lar National Park has been designated a national park since 1976 and was declared a protected area in 1982 by the Iran Department of Environment. Since 1991 hunting in the park has been prohibited. The Lar National Park has many permanent rivers and some seasonal streams that flow into the Lar Dam Lake. This abundance of water allows for a diverse range of species of animals and plants to live in the Park. Some of the wildlife in the Lar National Park include rams, wild goats, brown bears, tigers, wild cats, and golden eagles. Brown trout, which is one of the rarest species of fish in the world, can be found in a few rivers in the park. The vegetation of Lar Park is also breath-takingly beautiful and quite unique. The best way to go to Lar National Park is by the Haraz Road from east of Tehran which leads to the eastern entrance of the Park. Another way to reach the Park is through Garmabdar Village in Rudbar District of northern Tehran province.



Lar National Park is open from early May to mid-August. It is at its most beautiful in May and June when the area's grasslands are covered with wildflowers. Then again, if you travel there in the last part of spring, you will find the grasslands covered with meter high poppy plants in full bloom. The flower-covered plain, with mountains in the background, create amazingly spectacular views, one of the best sights being view of the highest peaks of Iran that can be seen from Lar Park. It is also possible to obtain fishing permits for the Park during this period. There are many walking tours for visitors and nature lovers during open months of Lar Park. These tours allow visitors to experience three or four day walks in nature, staying in tents with local nomads, learning of their tribal cuisine and baking skills. Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you. The goal of life is to make your heartbeat match the beat of the universe, to match your nature with Nature. The vast land of Iran covers a superbly diverse natural topography, ranging from magnificent beaches in the northern and southern shores stretching for miles to mysterious arid deserts in the middle of the country. Iran is truly a hidden gem in Western Asia, which is barely recognized and valued.

Nature has amazing positive effects on one's both physical and mental health; it increases vitality and resilience, relieves stress and inspires creativity, even strengthens immunity and increases one's energy.



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One Woman, Many Efforts

By: Atoosa JALALI

My collaboration with Bagh-e Fereshteh (Fereshteh Garden) Charity started in 2017. When I entered Bagh-e Fereshteh, the building was in a pretty bad shape and needed an overall reconstruction. With the help of funding from charities, we were able to reconstruct the 2200-meter building completely. After complete renovations, which took about 2 years, I was asked to become a member of the board of directors of the Hamyaran Foundation, of which Bagh-e Fereshteh was one of its centers. Once I became a member of the board of the Foundation and was also elected as its Vice Chairman. Bagh-e Fereshteh Charity center has 70 girls all of whom are physically disabled. This center shelters its resident girls 24-hours a day and seven days a week.



Additionally, training classes in sewing, embroidery, cooking, etc. are offered at the center for the benefit of its residents. This is a private charity supported by public donations.

The Hamyaran Charity organizes annual gatherings and exhibitions, in which works of arts, from paintings to handicrafts made by the girls of Bagh-e Fereshteh are exhibited and sold. All profits from these sales go directly to the individual producers of the artwork. But most importantly, these annual programs are a way to make these beloved girls come in contact and get connected with the outside world, and provide their spiritual support to join the community when they are ready.



NGH
MITRA GHORBANI
ARCHITECT

 MitraGhorbani_ir

A portrait of Mitra Ghorbani, an architect, wearing a blue patterned headscarf and a red and white patterned jacket. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a textured, reddish-brown wall.

Mitra Ghorbani

ARCHITECT

“

Mitra Ghorbani was born in 1981 in Tehran and has a degree in architecture. In addition to her professional work, Ms. Ghorbani is the Vice President of the Board of Directors of several charities. She is also a pioneer in the art of architecture with 15 years of experience in the field.

Mitra Ghorbani Architecture Group Company is active in Tehran real estate market, and with an expert team of professionals, carries out major projects from design to execution and interior decoration. In Ms. Ghorbani's opinion, architecture is a complex result of several different elements: the client, the essence of the project and the history and context of the site, all of which vary with each individual project. She has always been interested in research works and has combined her architectural practice with academic education and historical information. According to Ms. Ghorbani, architecture is a field in which, although many women have ventured, the list of famous architects has historically not included many women's names. For many years, this field was male dominated and practically no women had an active role in it until the end of the 19th century.

The Pritzker Prize, known as the Nobel Prize in Architecture, has been awarded to a woman only once in its forty years and that was in 2014 to Zaha Hadid, the famous architect. But with all the hurdles on the way, the growth and success of women in the field of architecture cannot be dismissed. In Iran, architecture is one of the favorite fields of work for women and the number of female students in this field is more than men.

”

میترا

Happy Mind, Happy Life!

Interview by: Atoosa JALALI



Delaram Mahboobin, marketing manager of Happy Life Energy Drink, one of the better known distributors of energy drinks in Iran, was born in 1988.

Delaram studied Molecular Biology as an undergraduate student followed by MBA graduate school.

Please tell us about the history of energy drinks in Iran if you can.

The first energy drink brand to start operating in Iran was Hype and that was around 2014, but then Red Bull arrived and was able to quickly establish itself with a huge amount of marketing in the country. With Red Bull Worldwide Marketing in full gear, Hype also started marketing extensively and successfully moved forward along Red Bull's footsteps.

After the ban on imports and the suppression of black-market goods, Hype turned to importing its raw materials and producing their products inside Iran. This move was very helpful to Hype's bottom line as its competitors were importing the finished products and this gave a significant price advantage to Hype energy drinks.

How do you see the FMCG industry in Iran?

FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) means goods that are more popular and quick to consume. Due to the sense of loyalty and appeal they instill in customers, sales of these products has been increasing in Iran. Perhaps another reason for the growth in sales of FMCG is the existence of an appropriate retail market in Iran.

What do you think is behind the popularity of energy drinks in Iran?

The popularity of energy drinks began with the Red Bull brand. Everywhere we looked, there was a Red Bull ad and it was sponsoring teams and sporting events. With its widespread publicity soon all those who needed more energy for daily activities or sports and were not interested in the taste of coffee turned to energy drinks like Red Bull. Gradually energy drinks became part of the lifestyle of ordinary people.

How much has consumption of energy drinks increased in Iran? What percentage?

As research and statistics have just started in Iran on this industry, the exact number has not been determined yet, but we do know that the consumption of energy drinks is 4 times that of other beverages.

Where and how did your cooperation with this industry start?

After finishing my undergraduate studies, I worked as a product sampler at Hype, and later I transferred to the sales department in the company. Working in a new capacity, I realized sales and marketing was what I enjoyed and wanted to pursue more seriously, so I left the company and started studying toward an MBA. After I got my degree Hype asked me to go

back and work for them. So it's been about 8 years that I have been working in the marketing and market management department at Hype. My entry into the job market started with the Hype family which has given my life a very good direction.

What are the best brands in Iran's energy drink market?

Among energy drinks, Red Bull is in first place in sales and public acceptance due to its very good branding and excellent aroma and taste according to market studies. Based on sales records, Hype energy drinks come second due to strong branding, and third place goes to Life.

Do energy drinks really affect athletes' performance?

According to research on energy products, these products have a positive effect on the performance of athletes. Energy products, from bars to drinks, contain caffeine, sugar and Vitamin B all of which rapidly increase metabolism and give the body that extra energy when it most needs it, and for athletes, help improve performance.

Who is your toughest competitor?

There are many emerging brands in the current market, but due to the strong market share and brilliant history of Hype in Iran, it does not have a tough competitor. One can even say that Hype determines the price and sets the standards for the market, but maybe we can consider Life and Sunich drinks as competitors of Hype brand.

Can Iran export such products? Is it in your plans?

Iran is very active and serious in the field of food exports and certainly has the ability to export energy drinks. As such, many Iranian beverage companies contemplate export of their products overseas, and the Hype Group is no exception.

How do you see the future of energy drinks in Iran?

I believe that energy drinks will be around for a long time. Their mode of consumption and their ingredients may change, but energy drinks have become a part of people's lives and cannot be stamped out. At the same time, companies that have just entered this industry should be aware that key to their future success is having a distinctive feature and offering something new about their drinks and other products. Overall, given that energy drinks have proven to be health wise harmless to the public, we will witness the continued growth of this industry.





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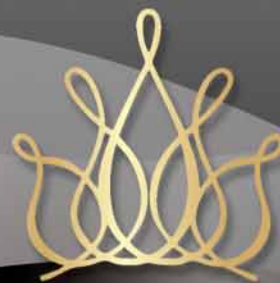


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