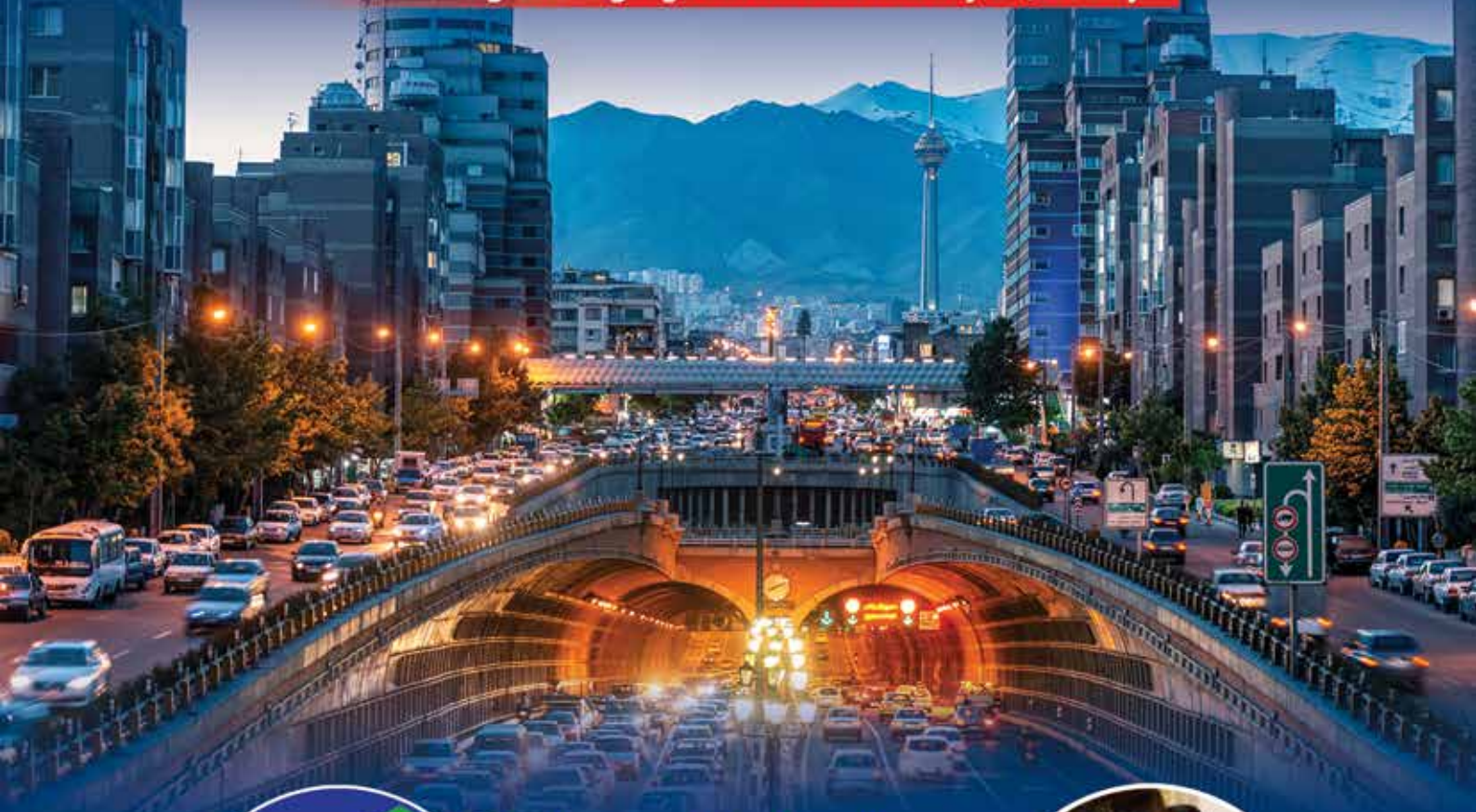


IRAN BUSINESS Trends

Premier English Language Business and Lifestyle Quarterly



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Poised for Future
Expansion of
Relations**
Exclusive Interview
with H.E Ambassador
Carlos Costa Neves



- **Iran Spain Chamber of Commerce Expands its Horizons: An Exclusive Talk with the president of Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce**
- **From Acting to Filmmaking: A Journey of Creativity Exclusive Interview with Niki Karimi**

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The Ragadid Complex has been launched and equipped for cultural and artistic usage since 2019, but its inauguration was suspended until January 2021 owing to social distancing limits created by Covid-19. This Complex, whose name is derived from Raga, an ancient city with remnants of numerous historical artifacts in southern Tehran, is comprised of art galleries, theaters, and multi-purpose conference halls, as well as separate spaces with advanced audio and video technology for seminars, workshops. The Complex also boasts specially designed facilities for scientific, cultural, and economic gatherings, plus an Artists' Cafe. With its various facilities and complete range of equipment, this collective can host a variety of functions such as auctions, expos, exhibits, and special events of new art media like installations, performance art, video art, various forms of digital art performances, conceptual art, and so on. Its movie hall and amphitheater, which spans 240 m2 and

can accommodate 104 people, is equipped to host all kinds of scientific, cultural, artistic, commercial, and other events and conferences, as well as art auctions and new creative media performances.

Together with the galleries and function spaces, the Artists' Cafe, which is an ideal venue for meeting visitors and art enthusiasts, creates a comfortable atmosphere for friendly, cultural, and art-related discussions.

Ragadid Gallery is unique and extraordinary because it was built with the design and display of a diverse range of works of art in mind, which allows its galleries and function halls to operate collectively as well as independently. As a result, Ragadid meets all needed standards for an art conglomerate in terms of space, lighting, division and separation of space, and functionality.



The Ragadid Art Gallery is made up of three separate galleries joined by a central hall (lobby). This arrangement provides the art community a unique facility to host a range of art events in several disciplines and styles, all with distinct purposes, and all at the same time.

Gallery 1 consists of two interconnected spaces of 22 and 17 m2 each, appropriate for medium to large paintings and visuals pieces, sculptures, and display of new and digital art media.

Gallery 2 is a 47 m2 homogenous space suitable for exhibits of small to medium paintings and visual artworks, as well as

showcasing of sculptures and performances of new creative media.

The last Gallery (#3) is a 43 m2 space with a high ceiling that can accommodate huge to extremely large paintings and visuals works, and a range of volumes and performances of new art media, as well as a variety of workshops and gatherings with diverse objectives.

The 45 m2 center hall and lobby is ideal for display of small to medium-sized artworks, graphics, and sculptures, as well as for holding of receptions workshops and gatherings.



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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.



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A Word with Behdad Najafi, Artist, Curator, and Manager of Ragadid Complex

On the Cover



Tohid tunnel is one of the longest tunnels in Tehran. Located in the southern end of Chamran Highway, it gives an amazing view of the Alborz mountains when one enters it from the south side.



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Editor-in-Chief & Chairman

MESSAGE



Welcome to the 5th Issue of Trends!

lot has happened since the last issue of Trends, most notably the war in Ukraine which has amplified the global inflation wave and supply chain crisis, with more pressure on the world's food supply expected as we approach the critical winter season.

In fact, at Iran Grain Conference 2022, held earlier in May, there was a stark warning about what the implication of a prolonged conflict in Ukraine could be for Iran - having to ration food supplies and perhaps even resort to importing essential agricultural commodities from the US sometime in January or February next year, something that the Iranian government is hesitant to do, but may not have a choice about, at the end.

Brazil, Australia, India and China are other major producers that Iran is talking to, in order to secure its supply of food essentials in 2022 and 2023. The biggest hurdle in buying even such non-sanctionable humanitarian goods from foreign suppliers, though, is the US sanctions on Iran's banking sector, which prevent foreign suppliers to transact with Iran.

On the JCPOA front, a lot of efforts is being made to revive the nuclear deal, which is still expected to be finalized and signed by all parties sometime this summer. While Iran has been preparing for a no-deal scenario for the past year, the country's leadership seems to have the political will to commit to a one, where the integrity, national security and economic interests of Iran are fully taken into account and respected. Foreign companies are already curious about business opportunities that may emerge from this game-changing development.

In this edition of Trends, we cover a variety of topics from existing banking channels available to foreign suppliers and traders interested in the Iranian market to Iran's top 5 post-revolution financial scandals.

We also have exclusive interviews with his excellencies the Portuguese Ambassador to Tehran and the Head of Iran-Spain Chamber (former Ambassador Taheri), as well as an interesting article about Tajikistan's Global Water Initiative as President Rahmon's landmark visit to Iran took place.

As for the Lifestyle section of the magazine, we have exclusive interviews with Niki Karimi, one of Iran's pioneering female actors and film makers, and Fariman, a multi-talented artist who sings in English. We also have interesting articles about sustainable fashion, arts, sports, literature and much more.

Enjoy...

Amir Cyrus Razzaghi
Editor in Chief

Aram Razzaghi
Chairman

Trends

Iran's Economic Outlook

By: Farid Atighehchi

Some Iranian assets frozen due to sanctions, have been released as a result of the Vienna talks and are halfway to reach Iran. The war in Ukraine and its spill over the Iran nuclear deal negotiations, developments in Russia’s relations with Israel and Turkey, and disruptions in the global wheat supply have Iran’s foreign policy machine overwhelmingly engaged. However, it might be naive to assume a sustainable détente is reachable between Iran and the United States without much fundamental compromise in either side’s foreign policy. The US is in no position to inflict any more pain than the existing but damaging sanctions, and Iran has no good reason to play anything other than hardball. Both sides remain adamant.

This way we get to have a rudimentary view of where threats and opportunities might be for improved production, and the general state of exports or imports.

The Background

It was some time around 1977 that Iran hired Arthur D. Little to prepare a report to support its argument for the need for nuclear energy in Iran, and an increase in the price of oil to about 11 dollars a barrel. But the West, especially the US market, found this proposal very unappealing and downgraded ties with the Iranian government. In the aftermath of that move, the US lost the kind of close military

IMF April Projections		2021	2022	2023	Second-/best MENA performer (2022)
Real GDP growth	yoy % change	4.0	3.0	2.0	9.5, Iraq
Nominal GDP	billion USD	1426.3	1739.0	1782.6	1040.2, KSA
Crude oil production	million bpd	2.47	2.76	2.78	10.62, KSA
Natural gas production	million bpd	4.33	4.46	4.60	4.7, Qatar
Crude oil exports	million bpd	0.71	1.00	1.02	7.8, KSA
Fiscal break-even oil prices	USD per barrel	306.4	268.9	390.1	34.4, Turkmenistan
Current account-balance break-even oil prices	USD per barrel	21.1	20.8	27.9	18.0, UAE
Consumer price inflation	yoy % change	40.1	32.3	27.5	2.5, KSA
Broad money growth	yoy % change	37.9	51.3	39.7	n/a
General government net lending/borrowing	% of GDP	-4.5	-4.0	-6.8	0.1, UAE
Total government gross debt	% of GDP	48.3	40.3	39.9	n/a
Current account balance	billion USD	28.6	60.8	36.2	203.0, KSA
Total gross external debt	% of GDP	0.7	0.6	0.6	n/a

The result is a protracted process that will not have much short-term impact on the Iranian economy. Of course, as many analysts are asserting, the removal of sanctions will lead to improvements in the current levels of exports, imports, welfare and eventually the nominal GDP. Nevertheless, the ultimate state of the economy will boil down to domestic policies rather than external factors. The reason is that the Islamic Republic of Iran has never been much integrated in the global system and friction with the West has unequivocally isolated Iran from the Western economies in recent decades. And while different political camps proclaim their opponents dependent on the West or the East, on the ground, Iranian tradesmen and businesses are more pragmatic than ideological, and conduct trade with whomever furthers their interests.

So economic motives, along with alignment of their interests with the state policies, will guide how Iranian businesses operate domestically and across borders. And as much as the market would like to anticipate good news of a détente anytime soon, it cannot. The opportunities for cross border business with Iran abound. However, beyond the sanctions, it is limited by policies inside the country. To get a better grasp of current public debate and the essence of the economy, let us review the state of production in the country and the political confusion and chaos that surround it.

intelligence cooperation it had with Iran, an example of which was the Project Dark Green aerial reconnaissance program run by the CIA and the Imperial Iranian Air Force against the USSR. But the narrative may be less about political values than the realities of the global-market suppliers and buyers. By 1980, a barrel of crude petroleum was 40 dollars. So, it is not far from reason to anticipate the US reneging on the JCPOA to have similar results for high costs in the West.

Discounting debates about the merits and dangers of being a nuclear threshold state possessing the technology to quickly build nuclear weapons without actually having done so, the need for clean, alternative energy seems to have had sufficient support in the realities of the Iranian market. For example, the steep increase in demand for electricity, rooted in the early 20th century rise in consumerism, forced the government to build the Karaj Dam by 1961 – a dam 180 meters high and 390 meters long, to the north of Tehran.

Such realities will eventually get reflected in how Iranian foreign policy, trade and businesses operate. And such economic understanding on either side of the border is necessary to get to new international arrangements that work. Iran has long been on top of the list of mid-income countries and despite growing class divide and Iranian Rial devaluation,



the country still boasts relatively high disposable income. However, international business presence in the country is anaemic, costly and unstable. These have made Iran a lucrative but elusive market.

While Iran continues to stay connected to the global system in export of oil and imports of goods, it defies many of the conventions and values that contradict its own tenets. Western businesses try to enter a market fundamentally governed by relation-based norms. The Chinese and the Russians are well-versed in navigating this arena but have ups and downs in their own background foreign policy that many a time keep them at arm's length from Iran’s domestic market.

Evidently, veteran businesspeople, with experiences in markets such as Iran, Turkey and India, understand this notion well. However, that does not necessarily determine their success in building necessary relationships and demonstrating the required acknowledgement of cultural peculiarities in a business environment such that exists in Iran.

And even then, before such relationships work, the market should also be welcoming of the products, and domestic competition should leave room for new entry. The Iranian state has reasons for favouring a good level of protectionism given how it finds itself at odds with global powers. So, the question of market entry for international companies, and its methods for doing so, are much decided by how effectively the state and the private sector would promote local production.

Disintegration and Decentralisation

The Supreme Leader of Iran recently gathered a number of the business tycoons in the country to emphasise “knowledge-based economy,” and employment and improvement of quality in production. Started more than a decade ago, the “knowledge-based economy” programme is supposedly intended to reward any company for going beyond assembly and into actual manufacturing production.

Discounting its history so far, from editorials in Kayhan to critiques in other publications close to the state, advocates are giving new meaning to the phrase. There are few perceptions of interest in their interpretation –and cues to the policies to come. They include, for one, a focus on upgrading technology but to a bare minimum.

Another is a wishful departure from the neoclassical notion of allowing growth to expand production of goods and services, vaguely but incorrectly resembling Marxist models of “exponential growth.” But at the end, these proponents of hard-line economies are aiming for cost savings, mostly through maintaining aging machinery and replacing primitive practices of production. They argue that joining the global value chains is not possible due to sanctions and other forms of outside threats and competition.

A recent parliamentary plan proposes a list of technological priorities to complete domestic value chains, especially in steel and food sectors, but also in livestock vaccines, pesticides, fertilisers, exploration and excavation machineries for lithium and silica, components for ECU in the automotive, turbine and extruders in the OGP, anti-explosion engines and automation systems in OGP downstream.

Despite such a wish-list, the overall political agenda is evidently far from innovation and specialisation in a few fields, but rather a marginal progress in a wider array of industries and products.

Another group, from among establishment’s top businessmen, claim to target the same goal but get there through fragmentation. Last year, the head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce expressed concern about the continued disintegration of manufacturing plants in saturated markets and urged his peers to break up their operations into smaller and more manageable enterprises.

However, the possibilities for such split-ups are limited. Without getting too technical, suffice it to say that a majority of industries in Iran and their markets are not at a point to be segmented into separate units because of poor technology and standardisation. It is interesting to note that the parliament seeks to prohibit government spending in select products and technologies seeking compliance with international standards.

The government policies and regulations are less about setting the course than implementing the top-level strategies pronounced by the Supreme Leader. Even then, the current cabinet members are visibly vacillating in their planning.

The probable outcome of these inclinations, the subsequent policies they promise, and confusions in the administration for implementing them, is that larger players may try to break down less profitable activities and leave it to small and medium enterprises (SME) while the government pushes for technological upgrade among SMEs. However, as this is not an organic evolution of the industry, we could expect the result not being scintillating further inefficiency in production and pricing, supply disruption, inferior quality and rising prices of products. It is possible that the state will not force but instead encourage industries towards disintegration – especially in the agriculture sector with the concern for food security. In the foreground of this outlook empty of consensus among top policy makers, is an unofficial misunderstanding between central and local authorities that could lead to unreasonable expectations and eventually disrupt the current modes of production at the micro level.

Production and Fighting Over Competitive Positions

The situation seems to open the possibility of higher returns for spending on taking over competitive positions. That would distract production from specialization and development of in-house competitive advantages because it makes more sense for enterprises to focus on trying to go after each other’s work, market share in imports, technological knowhow or, simply, the assets themselves.

As this infighting is less in advertisement and product development, safeguards against hostile moves remain more expensive than the offense itself. This can hamper domestic technology development while imports remain limited to basic technological licences. Subsequently, any growth in production will be costlier than any gains from improving efficiency and it will reflect on the GDP over the next few fiscal years. In April, IMF projected the real GDP growth of Iran to decrease from 4.0 in 2021 to 2.0 in 2023.

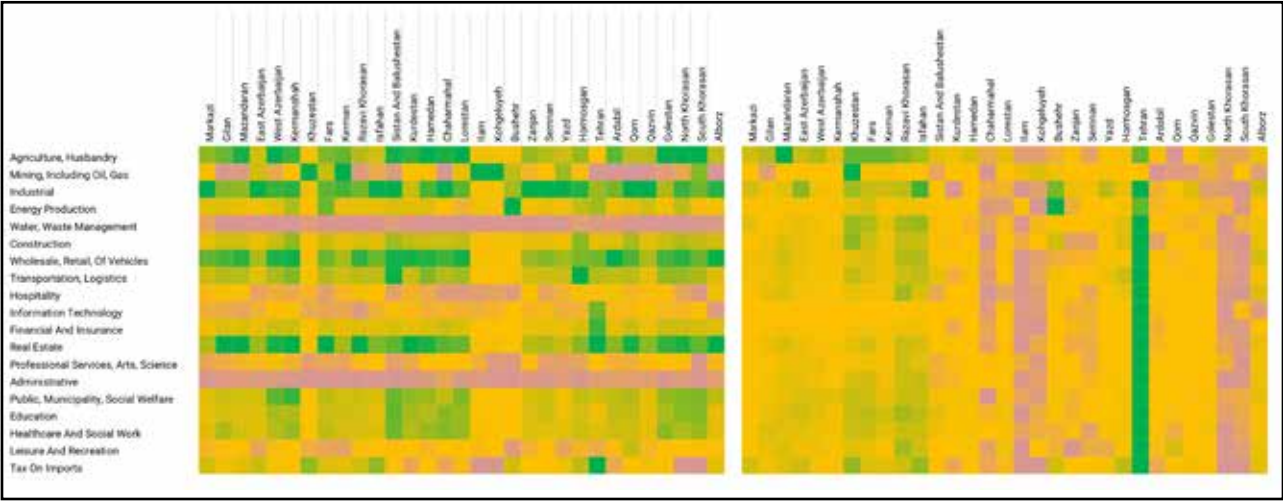
Iran's Economic Outlook

By: Farid Atighehchi

The Local and the International

The growing incremental changes expected to come in the power structure could lead to more infighting and heightened competition over resources during a time of disarray. At the top, the notion of reintroducing the position of a Prime Minister or a parliamentary oversight system is gaining momentum. As a prelude, the program of “spatial planning” which brings together policies for development and use of land with other local policies and programs, is already incorporated in this year’s budget. Beyond a very generic quota plan in the centre, resource allocation is set to be decided at the local level.

Despite the vast array of ethnic concentrations across the country, competition among state players at local and central levels would undermine any bottom-up economic development and specialization that should guide any “spatial planning”. There is much potential for setting up shop in geographically different areas other than Tehran. This idea is not lost on the conservatives and state-affiliated individuals. In a recent interview, one such businessman discussed with me their plans for a new manufacturing venture in their hometown with “a priority over profit for creating jobs,” in line with the Supreme Leader’s announced criteria. However, Tehran dominates the country in terms of GDP by making up about 28% of Iran’s total added value –and even up to 83% in some consumer and production sectors.



That initiative does not necessarily translate to competition between provinces because despite the perseverance and recognition of diversity of ethnicities across the country, some of the top tiers of local powers are fundamentally representatives of the central government in Tehran and are independent of local executive branches. This further causes friction over resources for production and could hinder variance of production from province to province. One question that is raised is whether this overall rebalancing of decision-making paradigm is in favour of a more competitive production, or does it simply decentralise the executive branch while keeping the state at an advantage over the private sector?

The answer partially points to supra-government economic powerhouses such as IRGC and unwavering monopolies held by such institutions and their affiliate individuals. Smaller, rather independent businesses would try and involve such entities directly in their ownership to protect themselves from possible unpredictable political changes as the “spatial planning” initiative.

Amid this chaos, the matter of productivity and efficiency has little room to take centre stage. Chances would be higher for innovation and growth where the market is more fragmented and has relatively low cash-flow problems. For example, some previous studies identified correlations between the sanctions against Iran and efficiency improvement and in one such study, unsurprisingly, that correlation was most strongly present in the well-distributed industry of non-metallic mineral production.

Figure 1 GDP heat map per province. Pink and green denote the lowest and highest values respectively. From the most recent data by National Statistics Organization in 2019. Left: across provinces. Right: across sectors.

A look at the heatmap presented here could be a starting point to work out what to expect in competitiveness in each province. Nonetheless, funding such ventures remains problematic. While established importers usually have enough cash-flow to place almost regular orders, most manufacturers and smaller businesses have barely hedged against Iranian Rial devaluation through investing in real estate, an illiquid asset that at the moment is in recession and is not expected to get to the upturn of its cycle for another two or three years. But for veteran or innovative businessmen that have not stopped operations, bartering contracts and arrangements are more than ever in use.

The issue remains that, throughout, forces are not in favour of efficiency improvement and all available data rather point to a probable deterioration in production for the foreseeable future. International companies should see this both as an opportunity and a threat: the threat is that direct sales in most products will face difficulties of cross-border money fund transfers and, in joint ventures, local production is going to be further and even prohibitively complicated. The opportunity is, where the issues of money transfer and safeguards against expropriation are economically resolved, there will be much lag in local supply to meet demand for imported goods to fill – only with cheap products, obsolete technology and strings attached.

Tehran Stock Exchange Overview

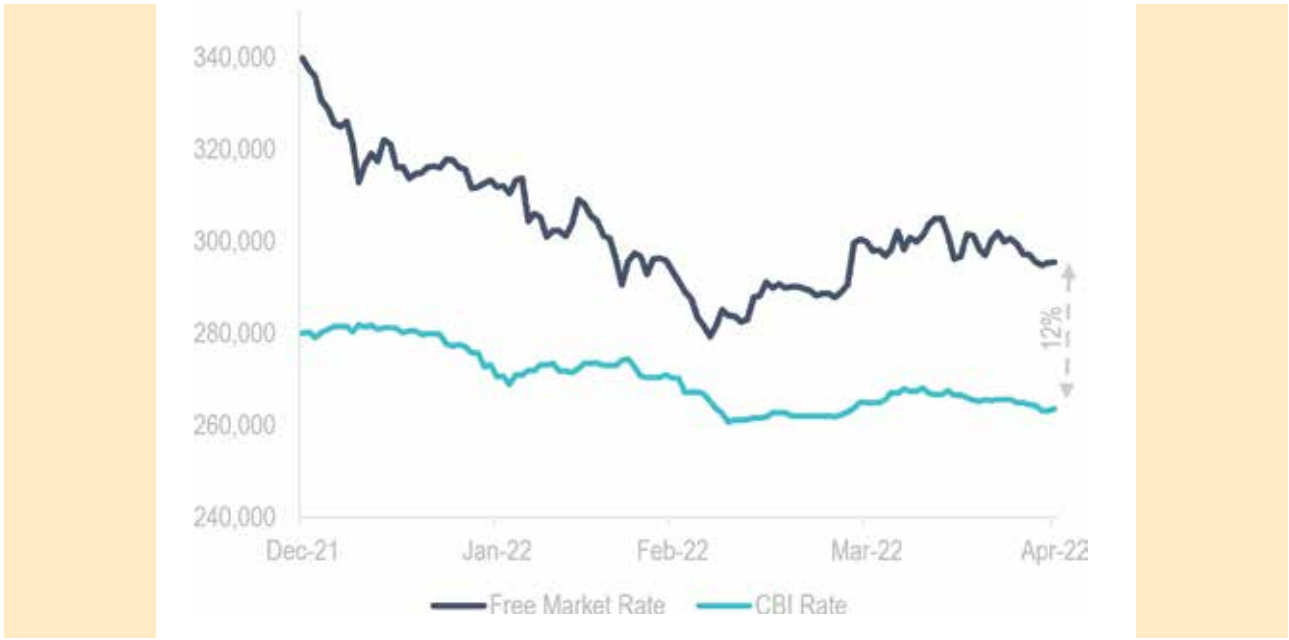


The Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) continued its positive performance for the second consecutive month in April. It was also the start of the Iranian calendar year and the market followed its usual historical trend of positive performance post the Norouz holidays. The TSE generated a positive performance of 6.9% in Euro terms, to push its year-to-date performance to 15.7%. In local currency terms, the stock exchange increased by 6.3%, taking its YTD Rial performance to 9.0%. The daily CBI market Euro rate fell by 0.5% against the Iranian Rial in April. This extended the Iranian Rial’s year-to-date appreciation to 5.9%. Rising global oil prices along with ongoing nuclear negotiations has limited IRR volatility so far in 2022.

Political developments over April did not resolve the sense of uncertainty for market participants. Nuclear negotiations with global powers stalled in April as Iran and the US were not able to agree on a variety of political issues, including the easing of some of the most biting sanctions on specific Iranian entities. While we are usually hesitant to make any such predictions, we remain cautiously optimistic and expect a compromise agreement to be reached at some point.

Sector-wise, the refined petroleum sector was the leading winner and generated a 17% positive performance this past month. This sector is benefiting from the ongoing boom in fossil fuel prices. We anticipate that oil prices could come under pressure in the short term. This is due to continued Covid-19 lockdowns in China and concerns regarding economic growth worldwide.

Free Market & CBI Market Rate of EUR/IRR



Performance of 10 Largest Sectors in Euro in April

Metal Ores Mining	-1%
Banks	2%
Basic Metals	3%
Diversified Holdings	5%
Overall Index	7%
Computer	7%
Auto	8%
Chemical	10%
Pharmaceuticals	10%
Telecommunication	15%
Refined Petroleum	17%

As a developing country, Iran is continuously making an effort to close the distance between its development and progress rate in various areas with that of the first world. But such objectives have failed to materialize due to a series of limitations stemming from its ideological and role-based approach often manifested in the form of opposing policies to Western interests.

Examples of such policies are the country's strategic role in the Middle East and Mediterranean region or its adoption of military or political policies opposing that of the neighboring Arab countries often with common interests, especially in regard to issues like the conflicts in Yemen, Iraq, and Syria.

Accordingly, Iran's struggle to achieve relevant economic and commercial infrastructure has proved impassable, and has ended up being the unfortunate title bearer of the country with the strictest sanctions in history.

The bulk of these economic sanctions led by Western industrial nations have targeted the country's finance and transaction channels. Western countries have long employed such methodology as leverage aimed at bringing Iran to the negotiation table, and they have pursued this objective by placing extreme pressure on the country's financial sector, essentially crippling its commercial and economic endeavors.

At first look, the obvious outcome of such economic pressure might only be visible in the country's banking and commercial insurance agencies' financial transactions. But a more in-depth look at the current situation reveals how these sanctions have created an unusual financial and debenture environment and, consequently, bred numerous fraudulent and unhealthy businesses. These deceptive businesses in turn have been taking advantage of the public's ignorance of financial matters, as people have been barred from participating in the world financial system for over 45 years.

This article puts forth the five biggest financial scandals and frauds that have taken place in Iran since the beginning of the sanctions, mainly due to the severing of the country's connection to the global economy and the international credit rating system.



AmirHesam Zonoubi

Five Biggest Financial Scandals in the Last 45 Years in Iran

AmirHesam Zonoubi, Chief Financial Analyst and Head of the ICEBERG Analytica Research Institute



Financial and Credit Institutions

Financial and credit organizations and any other establishment providing financial services or doing business in the money and credit arena in the developed world are obliged to submit their complete financial records to government or privately-held supervisory watchdogs and credit rating agencies whose task is to validate the accounts by creating a more transparent financial system and thereby preventing financial crises and systematized fraud. The 2008 Credit Crisis in the United States proved the necessity and importance of such supervisory and credit rating agencies. Given the wide range of options available to these financial institutions for the purpose of crafting leveraged or credit building products, creating pseudo cash or virtual currency, and issuing of securities, their supervision is of utmost importance, the most

By: AmirHesam Zonoubi

important reason of which is the safeguarding of their investors' assets by preventing such organizations from defaulting on their financial commitments.

Unfortunately, there is no bulletproof guarantee when dealing with such institutions. Even in developed countries, some financial companies have taken advantage of their credit ratings and financial power to create fiat currencies through debentures or bonds with unrealistic rates. Or they have conceived of financial vehicles at double or triple their available assets using non-existing warrants or guarantees through complex financial investment securities. Unfortunately, when the time comes to pay up these loans or show the true value of the assets the investment company owns, they default, and if they are a major financial institution with billions of dollars in default, they start a domino effect ultimately ruining the country's economy and causing a national financial crisis.

Iran, too, has not been spared such unfortunate events, and in the face of an unsupervised environment where there are no domestic or international credit rating agencies to investigate the financial transactions of such financial institutions and consequently ensure the transparency and legality of their activities and protect the consumers' rights, the country has seen an alarming number of default cases and social crises that have often resulted in huge financial scandals.

General Partnerships:

It was first in the 1990s that the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran, along with other governmental financial supervisory institutions, began granting licenses to companies as cooperatives and general partnerships.

Such licenses allowed these companies to participate in domestic and international financial investments through raising funds from the general public. In the early years of the initiative, the Central Bank's requirements and guarantees for certification of such companies were surprisingly arbitrary and irresponsible, and as such a great number of cooperatives and partnerships were registered in a short period of time. Each of these newly emerged general partnerships attempted to attract

investment from the public under a different guise and gimmick and with little effective oversight of their financial records, a massive financial crisis was soon created.

This crisis served as a waking call for the Central Bank, which decided to increase the required guarantees manyfold to prevent future systematic fraud by these so-called general partnerships. Interestingly, most of these newly formed companies were engaged in currency exchange activities and had nothing to do with the economic sector of the country.



Privately held Financial Institutions:

In the early 2000s, a great number of cooperatives that active in different kinds of commercial and economic operations managed to obtain temporary licenses as financial institutions from the country's Central Bank. Promising investors bogus monthly interest rates of 2.3 – 3.5 %, these institutions quickly amassed billions of dollars in assets. Eventually though, and after decades of being in operation and embezzling people's assets under the guise of investments, the Central Bank demanded these fraudulent institutions to surrender their financial records to authorities within a deadline.

As most of these so-called investment cooperatives were involved in the creation of fake currency and money, and were basically running a Ponzi scheme, this sweeping failure to comply with the Central Bank's demand led to the bankruptcy of almost all privately held financial institutions that had mushroomed

overnight. Moreover, as a result of this nationwide bankruptcy of sham investment companies, millions of Iranians lost their investments and with that, their livelihood.

This widespread public letdown in itself turned into an even greater social crisis as people tricked out of their investments now protested in mass in front of government buildings such as the presidential administration building and the parliament. These protests went on for years until a considerable inflation wave hit the country. Ironically, as a result of the high

inflation, the value of real estate and stocks held by the bankrupt institutions in various companies had increased significantly and had consequently boosted the value their overall capital. Seizing these assets as collateral, the Iranian government, with the backing of the judiciary branch, paid off the debt of these cooperatives with complete disregard to the rampant inflation, thereby effectively putting an end to the link between the protests and these financial institutions. This debt relief changed the nature of the default committed by these institutions from a social crisis to a categorical financial fraud case.



Pyramid Schemes

Goldquest first found its way into Iran in the early 1980s by concocting an international scam designed for selling gold coins for twice their actual value. Iranians were unfamiliar with such systematic pyramid schemes at the time, and millions fell in the trap. Goldquest was the first hoax company of its kind for the Iranian

government, and according to various watchdog organizations, the company alone managed to embezzle 12 billion dollars' worth of investors' money out of the country in just five years. This figure was astonishingly twice the amount of Iran's development budget at the time and the incident could be easily regarded as a terrible financial and credit blow to the country by any accounts. On top of such a daunting financial failure and social disturbances that resulted from people's involvement in such schemes, at the time and as a consequence of the Iran-Iraq war, Iran was also struggling with rife unemployment in the 1980s and 90s. Eventually the Iranian government took action and declared illegal any involvement with GoldQuest and other similar pyramid schemes that were experiencing a mushroom-like growth in the finance and credit sector of the country at the time.

Further, the government criminalized any type of involvement with unlicensed companies and even adopted the death penalty policy for the leaders of such companies. The decree proved effective for a limited, and thousands of offices involved in the scheme throughout the country were shut down through legal action. In this way the authorities were able to mitigate the situation and control the crisis to some extent.

In the years after GoldQuest, its leaders fled to neighboring countries and from outside Iran hatched similar schemes and attempted to execute other systematic frauds, schemes that unfortunately have proved popular among Iranians due to the country's poor economic situation and an existing unhealthy environment caused by strict sanctions. These pyramid schemes that started off as the sales of special offer products eventually culminated in Ponzi investment schemes in the 2010s.

Some of these fake projects claim to offer investment opportunities in innovative scenarios giving an alluring monthly interest rate of up to 8% in dollars, or they operate through robot traders in fake international financial markets. A major goal of financial operators working in Iranian organizations who conduct legitimate commercial and economical businesses is the raising of public awareness on the issue of fraudulent financial plays, and the implementation of stricter

legal regulations by the government against criminals. The reality is that luring of public capital toward unhealthy channels, especially given the increasing hype in the still opaque cryptocurrency market, hurts legitimate financial institutes most.



Online Gambling Sites

According to the Sharia law currently in place in the Islamic Republic of Iran, any type of gambling is against the law. A such, any attempt toward legalization of gambling services will be in direct conflict with the country's Constitution. Nonetheless, numerous illegal gambling structures have been formed in across the nation in the last 40 years, first in the offline world and then, beginning in the early 2000s, moving to the online world. These arrangements are often quite systematic and offer gamblers a chance to play casino games, as well as other sports competitions, both on domestic and international platforms. In the absence of any watchdog organization to conduct oversight and regulate the financial transactions of these illegal gambling websites, thousands of such sites have sprung up in recent years. Such networks operate outside of all international rules and regulations that casinos and gambling platforms must follow even in a country where gambling is allowed. Consequently these unlawful and unlicensed establishments inflict irrecoverable losses on their users with impunity. Such illegal activities include providing gambling services to minors, widespread cheating, and manipulation of the platforms in a way that the player is doomed to lose. These gambling sites that are often publicized by celebrities, internet influencers, and artists have become a major financial and credit problem. It is estimated that over a billion dollars' worth of capital is flown out of the country each year through gambling channels.

Symbol	Price	Volume	Open	High	Low	Close	Change
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0
1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	1000000	0



Forex Brokers and International Stock Market

Iranians, both as natural and legal entities, are barred from investment or trading in the foreign exchange and world stock markets. This restriction, in addition to lack of proper laws as well as any supervisory government

regulatory organization, has created a ripe environment for numerous international rogue brokers to enter the Iranian market and offer FOREX and world stock market services without any legitimacy or real connections to global markets. The trades offered by the majority of brokers active in Iran are not take place on legitimate global markets and are provided with arbitrary and inconsistent conditions to Iranian traders, effectively embezzling the people and pilfering country.

The criminal activities of such institutions with no credit and legitimacy which are created for the sole purpose of targeting hapless and gullible investors in developing countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria, culminated in several financial crises in the 2000s and resulted in legal action against them by FATA, Iranian Cyber Police.

Legitimate financial markets such as the FOREX are essential for the health of the Iranian economy and currency exchange companies need active connections to such institutions in order to mitigate and minimize their risks involved in foreign currency activities. But the sanctions imposed on Iran by the West discourage leading financial institutions from directly operating in Iran, making ground for fraudulent and dishonest institutions whose main profit comes from making pseudo transactions to instead infiltrate the country and literary feed off of the traders and investors' losses. According to unofficial statistics, over one million Iranians actively trade in the FOREX market and lose billions of dollars to such fake and uncreditworthy brokers. This financial exploitation is due to people's ignorance on the topic and their low financial literacy, as well as

By: AmirHesam Zonoubi



Cryptocurrencies and Decentralized Finance (DeFi)

This new global phenomenon that is barely ten years old and is the new international media sensation has found its way into the minds of Iranian people because of very obvious reasons, including the country's poor economy, low per capita income, and underpaid workforce. According to the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, over 18 million Iranians have become involved with the cryptocurrency sensation and its emerging sister financial technology tool, Decentralized Finance, thereby investing billions of dollars' worth of the country's liquidity in those markets.

Furthermore, according to the report released by Nobitex, a giant cryptocurrency exchange agency, the bulk of this investment has been placed not on top cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin and Ethereum but on other cryptocurrencies, commonly known as "meme coins", such as Shiba.

Meme coins neither have any proper financial application nor have been used to financially fund projects. The tendency for an astronomical shift in values that often accompany such cryptocurrencies has tempted millions of young people, who, according to official statistics, have a monthly income of below 500 dollars, to gamble their whole life savings on such coins.

This has created a terrible financial and credit environment for scammers to concoct numerous systematic schemes, such as creating valueless cryptocurrencies, which are then advertised by internet influencers, thereby easily finding footing among the common people.

All of this will eventually come back to bite the Iranian economy, which is already in terrible shape, continuously experiencing a negative growth rate in the last decade.



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Complexities of Doing Business under Sanctions



Baki Maneche

**Ferdowsi Legal
Law Firm**

Qualified in Belgium, Baki Maneche was successively based in New-York, Paris and Dubai before moving to Tehran in 2014. He has worked with international law firms in France, Belgium and the USA and has also been acting as general counsel for several corporations. Baki was instrumental in launching and developing the practice of Dentons law firm in Iran before founding Ferdowsi Legal with Jean-Charles Albitre. He is fluent in French, English, and Persian.

Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview. How do you assess the status of the JCPOA talks and what we can expect from them?

Reviewing the history of negotiations between Iranian conservatives and the US makes me believe, without any originality, in an optimistic outcome since both parties strongly need to reach an agreement even though they will always deny it.

However, my optimism must be tempered by deeply rooted difficulties, the main one being the broken trust. At this stage of the talks, I cautiously foresee a kind of agreement that may not address all the issues of the JCPOA. This said, everything remains possible except a military solution that I have never thought realistic even if the current talks fail.

In the best-case scenario of JCPOA revival, what would still be the hurdles on the way of doing business with/ in Iran, as in lack of information among investors and traders, Iran's business environment, commercial laws, rules and regulations...?

The main issues remain the same: The nonconformist Iranian business mentality after years of international isolation, and the lack of international banking channels due to economic sanctions and non-compliance with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Other elements, especially local regulations, are easier to overcome.

Please tell us a bit about Ferdowsi Legal. When was it established? What is the mission and vision and main activities of your law firm? Most importantly, how did you manage to survive and thrive during the Trump years in this country?

Ferdowsi Legal is one of the last foreign law firms still active in Iran with a full-time presence in Iran and the only one with resident European partners. We provide international companies with legal, tax and business strategy services in

relation to Iran. From the start, our model was to combine local expertise and European know-how thanks to a multicultural team on the ground.

We decided, during the difficult years of the Trump administration, to keep our firm and our foreign partners fully operational in Tehran instead of maintaining a kind of representative office managed from a European capital like others did.

Many foreign companies active in the agrifood, pharma or medical sectors, outside of the scope of US sanctions, maintained their activity in Iran and their trust in our services. This also explained our success despite the storm.

Please tell us what is new with regards to Ferdowsi Legal's activities.



Our firm covers legal, tax and market/business strategy. We have significant experience in the agrifood, medical and pharmaceutical sectors but also, among others, in energy and automotive industries. We can assist our clients in all aspects of carrying out business activities in and with Iran and the Middle East, and in deciding on the right investment structures or trade strategies. We obviously have an expertise in international sanctions laws and work with several prominent foreign law firms, including a renowned economic sanctions law firm in Washington, DC. We have also built a trust relationship with a European bank specialised in transactions with Iran for several years now.

Tell us more about this new banking channel? What industry sectors does it cover? How can companies use it? How safe and secure is it and are there any risks to companies who wish to use it?

First, we should point out that we are talking about a few banks that have been active for years in this market with a track-record of successful transactions from and to Iran, but only for companies of their respective country of origin. What has changed is that they have decided to extend their Iran related services to all European companies and even beyond leveraging on the expertise they gained in creating

legal, compliant, and efficient direct banking channels with countries under US secondary sanctions including Iran. Indeed, these few banks invested significantly in their compliance tools and their team dedicated to "difficult" countries. Concerning Iran, they comply with European and US regulations and focuses on the agrifood, medical and pharmaceutical industries, of course without any US Dollar dealing. Contrary to diplomatic initiatives like INSTEX or the Swiss banking channel, these few banks provide a direct channel with four main Iranian banks. They are even open to Iranian companies able to abide by the usual, yet very strict, compliance rules.

Has it successfully been used yet? If so, can you give us some examples? What costs are involved on top of normal banking fees/charges, if any?

They have been processing transactions from and to Iran for years now and with a wide range of clients (SMEs to international groups). The process is fully operational and efficient. Of course, you cannot expect usual bank fees considering their initial investment, the burden of compliance reviews and the risk they have accepted to take. However, these costs are designed to facilitate the trades based on a tailor-made assessment taking into account the



This mechanism will not be affected by a potential failure of the current talks since humanitarian trade would always remain out of the scope of sanctions. US regulations authorize the exportation and re-exportation of agriculture commodities, food, certain qualified medical devices and medical supplies to Iran pursuant to a general license covering also shipping and cargo inspection arrangements,

complexity of the transactions and, always, the margins applied in the given sector so that business remains viable. It will always remain much cheaper and safer than the risky grey mechanisms (sarafs, exchange middlemen, etc.) that no Western company would accept.

Why hasn't this been done before by other banks or financial institutions? If this is legal, why can't you name the banks behind the initiative? What has been Ferdowsi Legal's role, if any, in the launch of this new channel and what services do you provide to clients to facilitate this mechanism?

I believe that practically no other banks have done so much investment for transactions with difficult countries, with a dedicated team of experts and specific software. One of these banks is a specialist in countries under sanctions and has accepted to take the risks in developing this practice. They have their own communication channels and have strict control on their public visibility. I believe that business in or with Iran will still require confidentiality and low profile for years to come, whatever happens with respect to the JCPOA. Concerning the role of Ferdowsi Legal, we act as strategic advisors to our clients and as such we believe that it is our task to provide a comprehensive service package, including

facilitating trustful banking solutions. When something works, we must consider it for the success of our cases.

One can assume that even in the case of successful revival of the JCPOA, it will take months for regular banking channels to re-open to companies and even so, some banks may never return to the Iranian market, so this channel could be effective even with the JCPOA in place, correct?



insurance, financing, and payment! The scope for agri-food related goods is also very wide with exportation of food for humans, including raw, processed, and packaged food, animals, animal feeds, vitamins and minerals, food additives, supplements, bottled drinking water, seeds for food crops, reproductive materials for animals, etc. And many supplies to Iranian agri-food, medical, sanitation and hygiene industries are also legal. None of these businesses will stop!

Can we expect any investment from foreign investors, especially the Europeans, in a post- sanction scenario? If so, what sectors would such companies/investors be interested in and in what types of opportunities (trade, investment, M&A)?

We do not expect the same rush and interest as a few years ago. Trade within the Agriculture-Medical exemption will be a first test for foreign companies. Trust will require time to re-establish and Chinese as well as Russian companies might overtake their European competitors in such a scenario. Iranians are open to various kinds of strategic partnerships, including producing under license or within a joint venture. In such a configuration the European manufacturers will be able to produce locally, with lower costs, and to sell locally or even export in the region and/or Europe like some already do.

The Republic of Tajikistan Leads Global Water Initiatives



The strain on water resources is increasing globally due to rapidly growing demands and climate change. Sustainable management and sensible use of water could reduce some of that pressure, but expedient actions towards improvement of existing practices are lagging. Meeting the water requirements of a growing world population is largely associated with the need for water to grow food, together with access to safe water supply and sanitation getting increased recognition as an essential element contributing to public health, which became even more evident in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis. The shortage of clean drinking water - a current challenge for populations across the globe, is not a pure function of the physical scarcity of water.

A combination of factors, such as “business as usual” practices in the use, management and pollution of water in many places around the world undermine the achievement of poverty eradication, posing a threat to human well-being, economic growth and national security. Furthermore, climate change is exacerbating water security, by contributing to increasing variability in water cycles, thus inducing extreme weather events (floods, droughts), altering regimens of rainfall and intermittent streams, plus reducing the predictability of water availability, diminishing water quality and effectively threatening social, economic and environmental achievements worldwide with an increasingly adverse impact on demographic and migration patterns.

Today, global per capita freshwater availability is declining. Over the past four decades, this essential resource has dropped by 30 percent. According to the UN World Water Development Report (2018), by 2050, between 4.8 billion and 5.7 billion people out of the 9 billion world population will live in areas that are water-scarce for at least one month each year, up from 3.6 billion today, while the number of people at risk of floods will increase to 1.6 billion, up from 1.2 billion at present.

Depletion and degradation of freshwater supplies, driven by population growth and mobility, impacts of economic development, as well as lifestyle changes and unsustainable production and consumption patterns can only be reversed by deliberate and comprehensive interventions. Water resources and services are compromised due to lack of appropriate water institutions, inadequate capacity and investments, ambiguous jurisdictions, overlapping functions, fragmented institutions, lack of transparency and accountability, and deficiencies in necessary gray and green infrastructures. In such an environment, solving the problem

of the poor management and weak governance of water should be a top priority. Despite huge progress over the past thirty years in water related science and technology however, the capacity to implement these solutions, particularly in developing countries, is lagging behind.

Today, humanity is still grappling with the Covid-19 crisis, which requires rethinking of the value of water as an elemental resource, as water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) become essential to combat such public health threats. In the Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio Economic Impacts of Covid-19 report, the United Nations Secretary General points out that more than 50 percent of the world's rural population and more than 20 percent of the urban inhabitants lack adequate health care coverage. This is while 2.2 billion people lack access to water and 4.2 billion have little or no basic sanitation, thus being deprived of frequent handwashing, which is the most basic and effective preventative measure against many viral and communicable diseases. The Covid-19 crisis has brought forth the urgency to ensure sustainable access to basic handwashing for the 40 percent of the world's population currently with no access to water and sanitation, who are among the poorest and the most vulnerable.



To bridge the progress gap, the United Nations has launched the SDG (Social Development Goal) 6 Global Acceleration Framework. The Framework initiative emphasizes that there are many examples from around the world which prove that dramatic gains are possible and that some of the solutions are economical, effective and can be quickly deployed. The Framework initiative aims at delivering fast results at an increased scale. Coordinated by UN-Water, this initiative is determined by country demand and unifies the international community's support for countries in need to achieve SDG 6. Action by the Framework initiative is driven by five accelerators: financing, data and information, capacity development, innovation, and governance.

Mobilizing political will and commitment to address water issues worldwide plays a crucial role. Equally important are forward-thinking competency and a willingness to promote innovative ways to approach local, national, regional and international water cooperation in the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis.

Open discussions about the issues shaping water resources management today and public participation in decision-making, including, among others, involvement of women, youth, minorities, migrants, refugees and persons with disabilities, can stimulate cooperative solutions and actions. Promoting a culture of consultation and dialogue, increasing participatory engagement and partnership will further help to deliver benefits for all.

Tajikistan global water initiatives

The problem of access to water is increasingly growing in today's rapidly changing world. Today's global challenges, particularly climate change and population growth make the situation even more alarming.



Meanwhile, water is a powerful tool for cooperation and dialogue in support of sustainable development and promotion of safer and more resilient societies. There is, however, a need for more effective, integrated and coordinated actions, coupled with strong political will to address current shortcomings.

All stakeholders, including those in government, international organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia, should be engaged in this effort, paying special attention to the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people and leaving no one behind.

The Republic of Tajikistan, on the basis of a proper understanding of the growing water problems, as well as the importance of water resources for sustainable development, actively and consistently promotes the importance of water on the global agenda. Tajikistan possesses significant reserves of water resources and is a supporter of equitable and sustainable use of water through regional and international cooperation and believes that consistent promotion of water cooperation diplomacy is the only tool to solve problems in this area.

From its deep involvement in spearheading global water initiatives, it is evident that water has a special place in the foreign policy concept of the Republic of Tajikistan. In this regard, Tajikistan implements the right to use of water

resources based on whole regional interests, and built on the principles of good neighborliness, respect and mutual benefit as well as dialogue and cooperation for solving existing problems. (The Concept of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2015).

Since 2000, the Republic of Tajikistan has initiated the adoption of 6 UN General Assembly resolutions aimed at addressing water related issues. These initiatives have made a worthy contribution to a better understanding of the importance of water at a global level and given a high priority to addressing it for socio-economic development, environmental sustainability, peace and stability, and overall viable development.

Under its motto of “Turn Water into Cooperation” Tajikistan further advocates water issues on the regional and global agenda and solicits governments, UN agencies, international organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders for their support in order to ensure water security for future generations. In recent years, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan has

taken several initiatives at international levels within the UN with regard to the importance of water at global levels:

1. Proclamation of 2003 as the International Year of Fresh Water, proposed during the 54th session of the UN General Assembly (October 1, 1999). Based on this initiative during the 55th Session of the UN General Assembly the year 2003 was declared as the International Year of Fresh Water and the International Forum on fresh water was held in Dushanbe (29 August – 1 September 2003).

2. Initiative of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan on the proclamation of 2005-2015 International Decade for Action "Water for Life". In accordance with the Dushanbe Declaration on December 23, 2003, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution and declared 2005-2015 the International Decade for Action "Water for Life".

3. Declaration of the year 2013 as the International Year of Water Cooperation. In 2013 the international community recognized the UN General Assembly Resolution 67/204 on the International Year of Water Cooperation initiated by the Republic of Tajikistan. On February 11, 2013, the ceremony of announcing the International Year of Water Cooperation was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, in which the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan took part and addressed the gathering.



The Republic of Tajikistan Leads Global Water Initiatives

4. Proposal of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan to announce 2018 - 2028 years as the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development". On December 21, 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the relevant resolution and declared 2018-2028 the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development". This initiative was originally put forward by the Leader of Peace and National Unity - the Leader of the Nation, the President of the Republic of Tajikistan on April 12, 2015, at the World Water Forum in Daegu, Republic of Korea.

In June 2018 following the official launch of the Decade for Action in New York on the day of World Water Day (22 March) a High-Level International Conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028" was held on 20-22 June 2018 in Dushanbe with the participation of high-level representatives of the UN member states, international and regional organizations and other interested parties. During this Conference, a wide range of issues related to water resources was considered.

The results of the Conference gave a new impetus to the process of fulfilling the goals of the above-mentioned decade. In addition, the Dushanbe Conference, which took place on the eve of the next meeting of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (July 9-18, 2018), which addressed the Sixth Goal of Sustainable Development, became a timely and important basis for the development of specific recommendations to strengthen measures on the achievement of water-related goals and objectives. At the end of the Conference its resulting document – Dushanbe Declaration - was adopted.

Water Action Decade and the Dushanbe Water Process

In December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly declared the 2018-2028 period as the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development" (hereinafter Water Action Decade).

This declaration aims at supporting sustainable development and integrated management of water resources, while promoting cooperation and partnerships to support achieving internationally agreed water-related goals and

targets, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. On 22 March 2018, the United Nations Secretary General's Plan for the Water Action Decade was released during a High-Level Launch Event, convened by the President of the 73rd United Nations General Assembly. The plan outlined ongoing activities and capabilities of the UN system and international organizations and the operational setup envisaged to support Member States in the implementation of the Water Action Decade. In this connection, the Government of Tajikistan, with its commitment to continue providing a platform for policy dialogue, partnership and action at the global, regional and national levels, is organizing high-level international conferences throughout the Water Action Decade with the support of the United Nations and other partners. This series of events constitutes the so-called "Dushanbe Water Process". As part of this process, the First High-level International Conference on the International Decade for Action, "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028 (First Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference) was held in Dushanbe on 20-21 June 2018.

The outcome of the Conference included recommendations to the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development with an in-depth review of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals – SDG 6. The Final Declaration of the First Dushanbe Conference confirmed the focus of the next conference to be on "Catalyzing water action and partnership at the local, national, regional and global levels" to achieve the goals of the Water Action Decade and other water-related SDGs and targets. In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemics, the Second Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference had to be postponed to June 2022. Taking into account the rapidly evolving development challenges, and the fact that the coronavirus disease demonstrated the crucial role of safe and affordable drinking water, and adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene which should be available, accessible, and affordable to all, as well as the importance of water for economic recovery, the Conference planned for 2022 will have a renewed focus on its intended targets for the water-smart recovery path in the post-Covid world.



Participation of the Leader of the Nation, President of the Republic of Tajikistan at the 4th Asia-Pacific Water Summit.

The importance at global level of the 2022 Second Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference was further reaffirmed through the adopted UN GA resolution 75/212, declaring it as the key preparatory event for the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028.



DUSHANBE WATER PROCESS

2nd High-Level International Conference on International Decade for Action "Water for Sustainable Development", 2018-2028



The Midterm Review Conference will take place from 22 to 24 March 2023 in New York and will be co-hosted by the Governments of Tajikistan and the Netherlands.

UN GA resolution 75/212 calls on the offer of the Government of Tajikistan to use the Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference in 2022 as a platform to support an effective preparation for the Midterm Comprehensive Review. The Conference in Dushanbe will also ensure linkages with other water-related meetings that may serve to provide input for the preparatory process of upcoming Midterm Conferences,

such as the high-level symposium on water during the UN Ocean Conference, Bonn Water Dialogue for Results, Asia-Pacific Water Summit and the ninth World Water Forum.

The Second Dushanbe Water Action Decade Conference is co-organized by the Government of Tajikistan and the United Nations and planned to be held from 6 to 9 June 2022. The Conference will be co-chaired by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

Iran and Portugal: Poised for Future Expansion of Relations



Carlos Costa Neves, Ambassador of Portugal

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 Portugal, in terms of political relations, as well as trade activities and cultural exchanges, how would you describe them?

Our countries have on an overall basis quite a constructive framework of relations, which is mutually acknowledged as such. We have political consultations once a year and our Foreign Ministers have been in touch several times over the years, including during the recent Portuguese Presidency of the EU.

Portugal being traditionally a trade country, I have to say that the current commercial exchanges are far from reaching our considerable mutual capacity, which is a permanent incentive to go after. During my meetings with the Iran Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Commerce of Isfahan we could identify some priority areas that I will mention further on.

On culture, despite the asset of an ancient history of more than 5 centuries of interrelation, we also have much to do. As an example, we have one of the first agreements on Culture and Sports signed by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The celebration of the five hundred years of bilateral relations a few years ago, was an important and symbolic moment. It was the reason for the visit of the Portuguese Secretary of State for Culture to Iran in 2015.

In October 2020 I had the privilege of participating in a seminar and excellent exhibition organized by the Iranian Embassy in Lisbon in cooperation with the National Archives of Portugal and our Diplomatic Institute.

It was also an occasion for bringing together Iranian and Portuguese historians, sharing views on our common legacy. Remnants of Portuguese castles can be found all over the Persian Gulf coast, from Kish Island to Chabahar. The past shows that we had conflicts, but we have also been allies at various times. The conquest of Hormuz at the time of Shah Abbas, in 1622, marked the decline of our presence in the Persian Gulf, while Safavid Persia regained its ascendant position in the region.

Carlos Costa Neves is Ambassador of Portugal to Iran since July 2020, having previously served as Deputy Head of Mission in the Embassy of Portugal in Madrid, Spain, as Consul-General in Luanda, Angola, and in the Permanent Representation of Portugal to the European Union, in Brussels. Meanwhile he has been, among other functions, diplomatic Counsellor of President Jorge Sampaio and Director for International Organizations in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

He has a Master's degree in Modern Literature from the University of Lisbon and a Master in International Affairs from the Diplomatic School of Spain.

Today, we must give value to these historical links, which are referred to in every symbolic moment in our bilateral relations, as was the case when I presented credentials here to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

But much more important is to develop current ties. In Lisbon there is a flourishing Centre for Iranology in the University of Lisbon. Here in Iran, I'm looking forward to negotiating a protocol for the creation of a Center of Portuguese Language in one of your top universities.

Are there any major cultural/artistic activities between the two countries planned for 2022?

An important connection between Iran and Portugal is that we are both countries of poetry. A culmination in our relations in the field of Culture has been the publication, just in February, of the bilingual edition of the "Rubaiyat" of Fernando Pessoa, the greatest Portuguese poet of the modern era, and one of the most important European literature figures of the 20th century. These verses were inspired by his admiration for the great Persian poet Omar Khayyam. The book is a magnificent example of a happy link between our two literary and poetic traditions showing, once more, that poetry can also forge connections between different peoples and nations. Some other translations of Portuguese authors are in the pipeline as well.

There is also a festival of Portuguese films in Tehran that we want to promote with the Portuguese "Cinemateca", maybe by the end of this year or at the beginning of 2023, and also another festival of Iranian cinema in Lisbon currently being planned.

These, like other initiatives, such as the commemoration of the 500 years of diplomatic relations or the presentation of the Rubaiyat of Pessoa in Lisbon and Porto, were also strongly supported by the Embassy of Iran in Portugal. Your ambassador in Lisbon is, indeed, an important interlocutor of mine. And this is a good way of working.

Please tell our readers about Portugal, its history, people, art, culture and economy as well as its touristic attractions. Portugal has been one of the most influential nations for centuries when it comes to world exploration and discoveries, as well as being a pioneer in maritime innovation. What do you contribute this extrovert quality of your country to?

Indeed. Our history is part of our identity and inspires the Portuguese. In my view the spread of language is one of the main legacies of that past. Portuguese language is spoken in nine countries on four continents. It is a language of culture, technology and business that is still expanding worldwide. Allow me to add some other pieces related to our portrait today. Multilateralism is one of the main pillars of our foreign policy. Perhaps for the same reason, the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, is a former Prime Minister of Portugal.



Porto-Image by Alejandro Piñero Amerio

Other Portuguese are also in charge of important international bodies, such as José Manuel Durão Barroso, former Prime Minister and also former President of the European Commission and the current President of GAVI - the vaccine alliance, or António Vitorino the Director General of IOM, the UN Migration body. My country is also pushing for solutions for some very relevant global challenges. Let me give you an example. In June of this year Lisbon is hosting, together with Kenya, the UN Ocean Conference. This is an area where we are particularly active since a long time ago. Part of the portrait of Portugal today is also conveyed by our successful bet on renewables. More than 60% of our energy comes from renewable sources.

On tourism we have an old tradition and a very competitive profile, combining cultural, leisure, gastronomic and ecological, just to give you a picture. Individual Portuguese cities and the country as a whole, have recently received several awards for tourism excellency, which is both a recognition and an incentive to do even better. This sector has been the largest exporting economic activity in the country, being responsible for 51.5% of exports of services and 18.6% of total exports, with tourist revenues recording a contribution of 8.2% in Portuguese GDP. Continued improvement of the adopted

tourism policy is based on five main pillars: valuation of the territory, boosting of the economy, enhancing knowledge about the country, generating networks and connectivity, and projecting Portugal (www.cantskipportugal.com/en/). As a result of our expertise in tourism, some Portuguese are on top positions of the hospitality industry. In Iran, for instance, Mr. Mário Candeias has been the Managing Director of the five-star Espinas International Hotel for several years.



Iran and Portugal: Poised for Future Expansion of Relations

Portugal is very advanced in several sectors including textile, agrifood, pulp & paper and fishery. These sectors are also not under severe sanctions. Why haven't we seen any cooperation in those industries between our countries? Is there a chance for Iran and Portugal to cooperate in such areas regardless of the fate of the nuclear negotiations?

You are absolutely right, we are advanced in those areas, but we also have challenging, flexible, technological and competitive companies in education, sea related economy, industrial equipment, environment, automotive industry, forest, renewable energies, tourism, health and life sciences and a unique environment for tech companies. Notwithstanding all these capabilities, I would like to include here a small note about the ZILS, Sines Industrial and Logistic

Zone, which is strategically located and is dedicated to the industrial, logistics and service areas.

Housing some of the most relevant companies in the country and located close to the deep-sea port of Sines, it has an industrial and logistical area (ZILS) connected to the roadway and rail transport network and the pipelines distribution network.

Portugal has proven to be a reliable and strategic partner for developed and developing countries. Sourcing in Portugal and investing in Portugal are much more than just a trend.

Regarding the Iranian market, the trade relations are ongoing but, as with any other European country, greatly affected by the economic restrictions worldwide. Non-sanctioned areas are by now not only a priority but also an opportunity to satisfy the needs of both markets in a mutually cooperative way.

Portugal has been one of the most popular destinations for Golden Visa applicants. What can you tell us about that? What differentiates Portugal's GV program from similar ones from other EU countries?

Portugal has been able to attract a wide array of foreign residents thanks to the many advantages it offers. Its warm climate, delicious food, high safety indexes and quality infrastructure provide an excellent quality of life for foreigners to settle in, especially when coupled with the welcoming nature of the Portuguese people.

There are many opportunities to invest in Portugal, including in its burgeoning tech sector. The several steps that have been taken by the Portuguese government to reduce bureaucracy also make Portugal an excellent place to settle and launch businesses. Finally, the strategic geographical position of Portugal is ideal for international-connected world citizens, granting easy access to all of Europe, and fast connections to the Americas and to Africa.

Portugal is ranked as one of the best manufacturing places in Europe. Are there any incentives and services for foreign investors to establish production facilities in Portugal?

Portugal has an assertive policy on attracting foreign direct productive investment. As we say, we are open for

investment, and there are valid arguments from the investors' point of view. I don't want to enter into excessive details but let me give you some figures without being exhaustive.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), among 68 nations, we are the second most open country to foreign direct investment (FDI). In 2021 we ranked in 20th in FDI Confidence Index and the EY European Investment Monitor considers Portugal as the 10th top destination for FDI in Europe. In addition to these very important stats, we are a safe country that ranks fourth in the Global Peace index and the European Commission Disaster Risk Management assigns Portugal the grade of Very low risk.

Also due to our location, history and culture, another attraction lies in the ability to establish a bridge with the other member states of the European Union and with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, which together represent a market of around 750 million people.

Something that also supports the attractiveness of the country lies in the strong focus on talent. We rank twenty-eighth in the global competitiveness index, among which the eighth place in the language skills stands out (5th in E.U.) as well as the 3rd highest rate of engineering graduates in Europe.

With strong broadband and telecommunications connectivity and an integrated transport system for efficient logistics, Portugal is placed as the 21st in the world with better infrastructure, accordingly to the World Economic Forum (2019).

All these factors lead Portugal to be an innovative country, that has boosted the emergence of unicorns. I believe that this, by itself, places Portugal on the radar of many investors. In addition, Portugal has an attractive package of investment incentives, and the new Investment Support Program (Portugal2030) is already underway.

The available incentives are divided into categories. That is, they can be granted on a financial, fiscal and job creation level.

The type of investment, especially when productive, the location, the creation of jobs, the innovative aspects of the projects and the export capacity, are all factors that support the relevance of the projects and determine the allocation of these resources.

AICEP PortugalGlobal is the Portuguese investment and trade agency that has a representation in Tehran within the Embassy, which at an early stage can best assist the setting up process but can also promote direct negotiation with the investors defining a global package that fully satisfies their mutual needs. The implementation and subsequent support are also provided by AICEP.

It is due to all these factors and others, that Portugal is ranked as one of the best places in Europe for manufacturing but also to research and develop, to create and innovate. Having Europe's largest conference on technologies (Web Summit), held annually in Lisbon, is just a reflection of Portugal's potential and proven capacity.

Are there any business delegations visiting either side any time soon? If so, in what sector(s) and when?

We've had some activity lately. The Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently conducted a virtual mission to the Iranian market and some entrepreneurs from Portugal have also visited Iran. The visit of the President of the Portuguese technological park, TagusPark, stands out, as it focused on developing solutions that respond to contemporary challenges in the areas of health, information, and engineering technologies among others. The signing of a protocol with Pardis Technological Park, during the 4th Tech and Innovation Meeting, represents a path forward and a positive sign that will allow both sides to aim for future synergies in these areas where Iran is also well-developed.



Football has been one of the great bridges between Iran and Portugal (our former charismatic and successful national team coach was Portuguese and one of our football stars is playing for Porto). What else can be done to use sports, especially football, as a diplomacy bridge-maker?

Sports diplomacy, as you correctly pointed out, is a relevant area and one of the important elements of my activities. Football is part of our positive image in Iran.

It is not unusual that people shout Ronaldo or Queiroz when I'm circulating through Tehran with the national flag on the official car.

Concretely, there is a possibility of future cooperation between our football federations, and maybe a visit by the Iranian football federation to Lisbon, which was supposed to take place in January, but couldn't materialize because of the recent changes in the direction of the Iranian Federation.

I was very pleased for being invited together with my wife to the decisive Iran/Iraq match and had the opportunity to celebrate with you the qualification event for the World Cup. A happy moment of my stay in this generous country. Allow me also to mention my visit to Isfahan, also to identify economic opportunities, which included a warm lunch

with the president of Sepahan S.C. football team, and a comprehensive visit to the installations of the club, where I could meet my compatriot Miguel Teixeira, the assistant coach of the team. Sepahan has several projects in mind with Portuguese clubs, and I was very touched to be invited to plant a tree in its grounds. I hope that it will flourish.

But it is not just football or Taremi. There are possibilities beyond football too – like in volleyball, another sport where Iran excels.

Some Iranian coaches, including female ones, are already working in my country. So, sports are indeed an important bridge between Portugal and Iran – and I hope that, as Portugal has qualified to the World Cup, we may play each other again, as we did in 2006 and 2018.

How do you feel about the JCPoA talks and results? How do you think it will be impacting relations with Europe?

Portugal and the EU are expecting a positive outcome. We were always supportive of the JCPoA and I do think that its revival will be very good news for our relations in the economic and commercial field, among others. The landscape is not irrelevant for businesspeople and even companies that never stopped to do business in the Islamic Republic of Iran are looking forward to new dynamics. We are receiving quite a lot of signals of interest in the Iranian market, and I hope that it will also be an opportunity for Iranian companies to do business in Portugal.



Iran Spain Chamber of Commerce Expands its Horizons



Mohammad Taheri, President of Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce



Mohammad Taheri, born in 1954, is the president of Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce and General Secretary of APEC (Association of Petroleum Industry Engineering & Construction Companies).

He served at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran from 1980 to 2009 where his diplomatic missions included Consulate General in Erzurum, and later in Istanbul, Turkey, and Deputy Chief of Mission of Embassy of Iran in Baku, Azerbaijan, and Iran's ambassador in Poland, New Zealand and Portugal at various times. Mr. Taheri has also served as Director of economic, political and ceremonial departments of Iran's Foreign Ministry over the years, and as Adviser to Dr. Kamal Kharrazi, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Taheri also served as Advisor to Dr. Nahavandian, the former president of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines, and also to the president of Iran & Portugal Business Council.

Mr. Taheri is a graduate of Tehran University in Agricultural Engineering and has earned his master's degree in the same field from University of Texas in United States. He also holds a master's degree in International Relations from Azad University of Tehran. Mr. Taheri has a PhD degree in International Relations from Warsaw University in Poland. He is fluent in English, Turkish and Persian.

What is the level of Iran-Spain relations? Is there currently any trade between the two? In which industries and how much?

Spain is one of the most attractive domestic markets in Europe with over 47million potential consumers and more than 70 million tourists who visit the country every year from all over the globe.

In addition, it should be noted that in terms of purchasing power, Spain is stronger than many robust and dynamic economies in the world.

Spain, as a member of the European Union, and with access to this large global consumer market with a total population of 500 million, can claim an essential economic position. Accordingly, Iran and Spain have fostered a meaningful level of relations between them to take advantage of their mutual strengths.

The presence of representatives in economic conferences and exhibitions of the two sides shows the deep desire of the private sectors of both countries for further mutual development and cooperation in economic platforms.

Considering the important capacities of Iran and Spain for bilateral economic cooperation, especially trade exchanges and cooperation in the fields of oil and gas, agriculture, tourism infrastructure and the fields of air and sea transport, both sides are aware of the need to improve and enhance their relations, and both nations seek to remove existing obstacles and set goals to achieve a position commensurate with these capacities.

While not so long ago, the volume of trade between Iran and Spain reached over 3 billion euros, currently the official and direct volume of trade exchanges between the

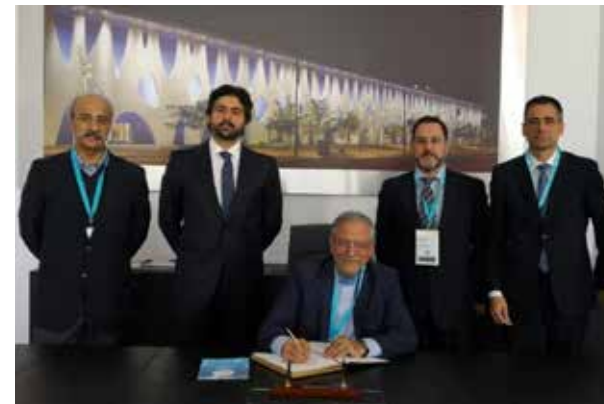
two countries is declared around 300 million euros. But this figure is not the actual volume of our trade relations. Some of the trades are indirect through other countries or through private companies outside official and governmental bodies, including the embassies.

Based on field research and review of reciprocal goods, including Spanish goods in Iran and Iranian goods in Spain, the volume of informal and indirect exchanges between Iran and Spain is generally about 700 million euros through our 15 neighboring countries. Trade between the two countries is mainly in the fields of agriculture and agricultural equipment, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, oil and gas equipment, and so on.

Under such circumstances, the Iranian private sector is ready and eager to increase both the trade of goods and services with Spain, and to welcome European investors in Iran, especially from Spain.

Most of the exports from Spain from 2017 to 2020 were primarily industrial products and technology, followed by agricultural products and equipment, consumer items, and in the fourth place was the category of beverages.

Iran's high-quality saffron was the number one import in Spain. Nuts and foundry products are in second and third place as far as export to Spain, followed by raw materials and semi-finished plastic products.



Please tell us about the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce and its field of activity.

The Idea of an Iran-Spain Business Council originally started in 2001 with the efforts of economic enthusiasts of the two countries. After some research by the Iran Chamber of Commerce and some background research by the embassies of the two countries, a founding board was established, and soon the Council's first general assembly was announced in 2003.

Iran-Spain Business Council officially started its activities after the election of its board of directors. As a non-profit organization, this Council intended to develop trade, economic and industrial relations between Iran and Spain, and in order to achieve its assigned goals, the Iran-Spain Business Council undertook necessary measures.

After several years of successful trade and diplomatic missions between the two countries, and based on the review of the Supreme Council which supervises the performance of the Iran Chamber of Commerce and its affiliates, the Council was promoted to the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce in 2016. This promotion was also according to the Iran-Spain Business Council's past performance records and its close undertakings with the Spanish embassy in Iran along with a number of Spanish companies doing business in Iran.

The total number of Iranian natural and legal members of the Chamber since its establishment is 610, of which 103 companies are active members.

Tell us please about the activities of the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the Covid-19 pandemic period, focused webinars have been held to examine Spain's business opportunities for post-Covid era.

Over the past 2 years, interested member companies have met with their Spanish counterparts through already existing platforms. Also, due to the cancellation of most of the Spanish exhibitions in the last two years and the lack of visas due to the epidemic, the available online exhibitions were identified and with the necessary coordination, the terms for online participation of interested people were established.

In addition, on the occasion of Spain Day 2021, Iran Trade Promotion Organization held a large Iran-Europe Business Webinar Forum with cooperation of Iran Trade Center (ITC) and the support of the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce, to create the necessary platform for trade and scientific and technological cooperation to increase Iran's non-oil exports.

Last year, the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce booked a pavilion from March to September 2021 at the Iran Chamber's virtual exhibition, and on this platform, the Spain Day Forum was attended with the participation of officials of both countries along with Iranian and Spanish companies.



How does one join the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce? What services do members get?

Membership is of three types: ordinary, observer and honorary.

Observer and honorary members can use the services of the Chamber but do not have the right to vote in the assemblies. Conditions for ordinary membership in the chamber, which entails voting rights, are:

- Completing the membership form
- Having a valid business card or a valid membership in one of the Chambers of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture

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Iran Spain Chamber of Commerce Expands its Horizons



- Payment of entrance and annual membership fees for the Chamber
- Acceptance of the context of the charter and the regulations of the Iran Chamber of Commerce

Non-resident natural or legal persons can become members of the Chamber, provided they obtain a letter of introduction from one of the Spanish Chambers of Commerce and after the approval of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Spain or the Spanish Embassy in Iran.

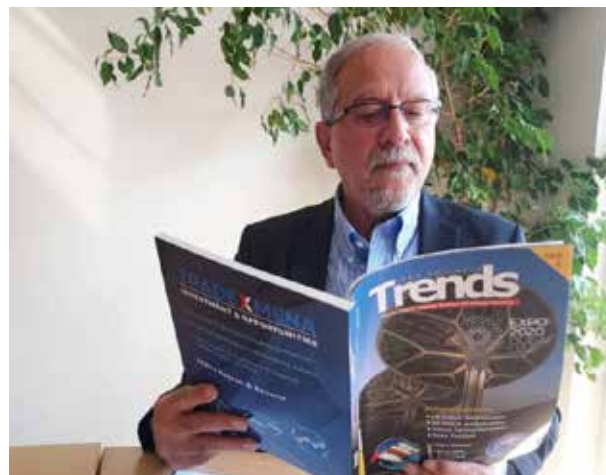
Services that members receive include:

- Business discussions including exchange of information and mutual consultations for more efficient trade between Iranian and Spanish companies
- Introduction of appropriate authorities, and Iranian and Spanish legal experts for signing of contracts and managing legal affairs
- Introduction of reputable Spanish companies to Iranian members according to their field of work
- Holding of business meetings between the two countries' trade representatives
- Holding of meetings with Iranian members for information regarding the duties of Iran's Trade Facilitation Commission, for doing business with Spanish companies
- Providing of membership certificates to Iranian members to present to the Spanish Embassy in Iran to facilitate necessary trade protocols
- Holding of exhibitions in Spain and participation in Spanish exhibitions by sending a delegation or having a pavilion in those exhibitions
- Financial advice according to the current circumstances
- Information and guidance about Transportation of goods
- Information and guidance about Tourism and investment in Spain
- Hosting of business meetings in Spain or Iran for delegations of either country
- Registration of Iranian members in exhibitions identified and requested by them
- Conducting of meetings and conferences with the goal of developing economic relations between the two countries
- Leadership of efforts to resolve disputes arising between natural and legal persons of Iran and Spain over trade matters through arbitration, and in case of failure, encouragement of the parties for resolution of disputes through the Arbitration Center of the Iran Chamber of Commerce
- Investigation of any problems of the members of the Chamber arising from trade matters, and referring them to the relevant internal and external authorities as necessary

What are the Chamber plans for participating in international exhibitions?

The Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce currently sends trade and exhibition delegations to 7 important Spanish trade shows in various fields on an annual basis as one of the effective methods for international marketing is participation in exhibitions around the world. And the fact is that Spain annually hosts the largest international and domestic trade fairs in various specialties and fields in which companies from all over the world, including Spain, offer their products and services. As such, the Chamber has decided to actively take part in these exhibitions and to interact with potential trade partners and customers from Spain and other participating countries.

The Chamber will select the exhibition and arrange a trade delegation according to the field of activity of the member companies, and consistent with export and import laws of the two countries. In this regard, the Chamber examines the goals and capabilities of the delegation according to the existing criteria, including but not limited to: qualifications for entering a foreign market, requirements for representation abroad, factors for identification and introduction of new products, branding, and familiarity with the host market.



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Please tell us about the important industries of Spain and the opportunities the Chamber sees for cooperation between the two countries.

Most of Iran's exports to Europe are made through intermediaries, so the published statistics cannot be accurate. All the same, the table below shows the number of Spanish imports of different products to Iran.

From just this table we can see that Iran has the potential to gain a significant share of the Spanish market.

It is hoped that through effective negotiations by Iranian officials, the conditions of our country's trade relations with other nations will be facilitated in a timely fashion and new models will be used to advance Iran's interests.

In the past, Iran's most important exports to Spain included saffron, steel and iron, nuts, plastic raw materials, granite and marble, and health care products. Looking at this table, we find that it is possible to develop this market further.

Tell us about Iran's potential and capacities (trade, investment, etc.) for more cooperation with Spain.

Iran can be a very good market for Spain to expand in various industries and products such as automotive manufacturing and spare parts, medicine and petroleum products, fertilizers and seeds and irrigation machines, textiles and shoes, cosmetics, new energy, especially solar and wind, livestock and poultry feed. The following is a list of potential areas of cooperation for the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce:

- Utilizing the power of large Spanish companies for new and semi-finished large projects of all kinds in Iran
- More efficient and direct cooperation between the two Chambers of Commerce for resolution of cooperation agreements already on the agenda, and to facilitate business activities of economic actors of Spain in Iran
- Using Spain's capacity to export Iranian products and services to Latin America
- Establishing a counterpart of this Chamber as the Spanish Iranian Chamber in Spain with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the two countries' respective Chambers of Commerce
- Concluding cooperation agreements to resolve any trade disputes
- Engaging leading forces in Iranian business community already active in Spain to expand relations between the two countries
- Concluding memorandums of cooperation between various economic organizations with common business specialties in Iran and in Spain
- Support for exhibitions in our respective countries
- Mutual cooperation between Iran and Spain for development projects in third countries using our human resources, machinery, and modern knowledge-based capacity
- Collaboration with respect to the rich recreational and historical capacities of the two countries for increase in tourism between Iran and Spain
- Maintenance and expansion of exports of traditional products and services including saffron, Persian carpets and nuts, while using leading-edge technology and standards, as well as further strengthening of the country's packaging industry for export purposes.

What are the biggest challenges facing Iran in this respect?

Offhand I can list some of the challenges, some to be resolved on a domestic level and others requiring mutual cooperation. But these are not insurmountable obstacles and can be addressed with determination.

- Inability of our domestic products to compete with foreign markets in terms of quality
- Customs, tariff and transportation issues
- Inadequate banking facilities including for export development purposes, as well as overall banking problems with transfer of funds for trade purposes or even opening of bank accounts in Spain for Iranian companies and individuals
- Lack of forward-looking and long-term policy approach
- Lack of attention to, and knowledge of, Spanish standards, laws and regulations
- Poor awareness of risks and costs of exporting to Spain
- Poor knowledge about Spanish markets and inadequate monitoring system of its conditions
- currency fluctuations
- Difficulty in visa issuance by Spain for Iranian

Tell us about the attractions of Spain for investors and businessmen.

After the economic decline caused by the pandemic and the worldwide efforts of all nations to get out of it, Spain has gained a prominent position in the world. Note this statistic:

- 13th largest economy in the world in terms of GDP (Gross Domestic Product)
- 11th most attractive country in the world to attract Foreign Direct Investment
- 13th investor country in the world
- 11th exporter of commercial services

Spain has a modern knowledge-based economy. The country has become a center of international innovation consisting of a young, qualified, and active population. The country has worked hard, with full confidence and commitment to R&D (Research and Development) and has been able to equip itself with an advanced and progressive infrastructure.

Due to its attractive competitive environment, interesting opportunities have opened up for foreign investors in Spain in the fields with appropriate value-added and strategic prospects. These include ICT, renewable energy, biotechnology, environment, aerospace and automotive sectors.

In addition, companies operating in Spain can access not only the Spanish domestic market (an attractive and large market with 47 million consumers with high purchasing power), but also the markets of Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Latin America due to Spain's privileged geostrategic position, prestige and presence of Spanish companies in these regions. Spain is a country without oil and gas resources which can provide a valuable supply of funds for a nation. But Spain has been able to use its historical attractions and various celebratory observations to attract millions of tourists to its country every year and to create a huge source of income for its economy. The various tourist attractions in this country have made Spain one of the largest visitor destinations in the world.

The Spanish economy is also the fourth largest economy in the euro region. Of course, Spain has endured many ups and downs economically in order to achieve a relatively safe position in the world. To study the economy of this country, it is necessary to first take a brief look at its history and get acquainted with the historical events that this country has gone through.



Iran Spain Chamber of Commerce Expands its Horizons

Are you optimistic about JCPOA? How do you assess the prospects of Iran-Spain relations after the conclusion of JCPOA? Do you foresee a banking channel?

After the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2014, a transformation took place between Iran and the West, and a large number of businessmen, government officials, business delegations and investors from all over the world came to Iran, which in short term created relative economic prosperity.

For example, we had the visit to Iran of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of Industry, Energy and Tourism, and the Minister of Development of Spain with a 100-member delegation consisting of large Spanish companies. At the time, a reception was held by the Iran-Spain Chamber of Commerce with the attendance of the members of Spanish delegation, current and former ambassadors of the two

was a sign of Spain's good and expanded relations with Iran. Numerous applications were submitted for travel to Iran by businesspeople, and for signing of contracts with Iranian companies.

Spanish companies are looking to explore their own possibilities in Iran. This shows that with proper implementation and functioning of regulations and the removal of obstacles, the level of relations between Iran and Spain will return to its peak and the two countries will become valuable business partners in many fields.

existing opportunity and become a major supplier. If such a scenario becomes a reality it can create the conditions for improving the country's infrastructure by importing modern technology. After adoption of JCPOA and the lifting of sanctions against Iran back in 2014, the development of relations was promoted between Spain and Iran in all political, economic, and cultural domains.



countries, Iranian economic activists, and some contracts were also concluded in the fields of mining, industry, transportation, agriculture, and investment. With JCPOA in place, Spanish banks, including Ares bank, became active in currency exchanges between the two countries. So based on such an experience, the outlook of JCPOA can be very clear, and I am optimistic about that.

At present, given the developments in the region and Russia's invasion of Ukraine and, consequently, the problems in gas transmission, Iran, as the second largest holder of gas reserves and with its geopolitical position, can use the The visits of the foreign ministers of the two countries to the opposite side was the beginning of this development.

36 The presence of three Spanish ministers at the same visit

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iranGrain 2022 Conference Addresses Global Grain Supply Concerns



Sharif Nezam Mafi, Executive Director, iranGrain Conference 2022

Sharif Nezam Mafi is the Executive Director of iranGrain Conference and Chairman of the Board of Iran Switzerland Chamber of Commerce. Previously he has been the Managing Director of SGS in Iran, Managing Director of Buhler EurAsia, and CEO of Mahak Organization. He is currently the CEO of K+ Group of Companies.

Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview despite your busy schedule, we are very grateful.

If you were to summarize the iranGrain 2022 event, how would you describe it? Please tell us about the history of the event in the past and how it was conceived.

iranGrain 2022 conference, which was held on May 10 and 11, 2022 at the Espinas Palace Hotel in Tehran, was the largest gathering of grain professionals from across the world who are interested or active in the Iranian market. The conference was attended with over 800 participants from 25 countries. It was held in a new format which I think was a rather innovative approach. Each speaker was allocated just 15 minutes on each topic allowing ample room for a wide variety of topics and enough space for effective B2B meetings.

iranGrain has its start in 2020 as an annual conference and is registered in Tehran, Iran. Back then, a group of well-known agricultural industry experts, at the request of many within the industry, started iranGrain with the main purpose of organizing a new global grain and oilseed conference based in Tehran. Our aim this year was to bring to iranGrain 2022 conference a wider range of topics, some from within the industry but also to look at those outside the industry that over the next few years will be major influencers of Agri-Business. For iranGrain2022, our main focus was the war in Ukraine and how this catastrophic event could have devastating effects on the global grain supply, and in particular its impact on Iran's need for over 20 million tons of grain imports. We also took a look at grain forecasts both internationally and domestically and asked invited local policy makers to explain the possible changes in the grain market regulations in the coming year.

Whose initiative was this and what is the role of the Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce in it?

iranGrain was organized by Iran Switzerland Chamber of Commerce (ISCC) given this Chamber in particular is one of the most agile and flexible Chambers in Iran with the fewest number of bureaucratic levels of management that can hamper an efficient convening of such a major international event. ISCC was dedicated to delivering the most prestigious grain conference in the Agri industry calendar in Iran while ensuring that the neutral status of the Switzerland secures the presence, at the conference, of major international grain players, particularly the trading companies.

What was the general theme and agenda for this year's event? Who were the participating countries and key organizations and who were the keynote speakers? What topics were covered and what were the highlights?

iranGrain 2022 was the biggest annual meeting in Iran for the grain trade, making it the best place for participants to get real-time market intelligence and do business face-to-face. The event attracted exhibitors and delegates from millers, feed companies, traders and producers, as well as specialists from the finance, shipping, legal and technology sectors.

This year's event offered:

- 40 speakers over two days from 10 countries
- 600 registered participants
- Over 100 foreign delegates
- Representatives from the major international trading houses
- Foremost Iranian Government policy makers
- More than 10 hours of networking time built into the conference program
- A pre-conference networking
- Conference award ceremony and gala dinner



V.K. Chakravarthy
BUNGE - Director Middle East Markets



Who participated in the conference and from which sectors and at what level/position? What did they hope to gain from attending this conference?

The usual cast of companies and personalities of Who's Who in Iranian Grain sector were in attendance while policy makers from governmental organizations gave an overview of changes in subsidies structure of the commodities sector.



In particular, we made sure to target participants interested in Iran's main international grain trading partners such as those in technology and additives. At the same time, we also looked deep into the "total value-chain" of the grain industry making sure we had participation from logistics, storage, legal, and inspection industries that play a vital role in the market.

The executive team of iranGrain conference had a different way of holding this conference. We were all aware that our attendees had their own individual preferred methods of retaining new information. iranGrain paid particular attention to learning styles when building out an event strategy. Providing better learning experiences only increased our attendees' chances of boosting their engagement. To this end we made sure that each speaker was incorporating visual elements in his or her presentation, that they provided an ample amount of time for Q&A, and they distributed handouts after their talk.

The JCPOA is yet to be revived. Is the event attracting global companies in spite of the current no-deal situation? Are you optimistic about the nuclear deal despite the complications?

JCPOA, for all practical reasons, is not relevant anymore. The world has changed after Russia invaded Ukraine and I do not foresee the sanctions being lifted permanently anytime soon. Plus, international companies are much more sensitive to this new world reality with its 2 to 3 spheres of influence divided between US, Russia and China, where spatial region or concept division will exist within which these 3 powerful countries will have a level of trade, economic, military or political exclusivity. Consequently, we need to adjust to living and functioning as usual and at various fronts without banking on any foreseeable lifting of sanctions. Having said that, Iran's annual need for approximately 20 million tons of grains remains a reality that cannot be ignored.

As grain trade is ultimately a humanitarian exchange, iranGrain will remain one of the few conferences at which international actors in the grain sector and its secondary services will be able to work with relative ease, and in an ever-expanding consumer market highly dependent on international trade.

What other issues such as financing, banking transactions, logistics and supply chain management was discussed on the sidelines of the event?

The conference was designed in a way that it covered the full value chain of grains, starting from collection points of grains which include silos and storage technology, and moving down the chain to shipping, trading, banking, and financial service, and all the way to loading technologies, transportation, then milling or oil processing, and finally food production and packaging. In between we dealt with other services that are instrumental in the supply chain of grains, such as legal services, arbitration, inspection and additive services and products that were also covered in this conference. During several occasions, participants had numerous chances to set up B2B meetings and also mingle for networking. The final gala dinner afforded participants to part on a high note and, hopefully, with meaningful and productive talks planned for future business collaborations.

iranGrain 2022 Conference Addresses Global Grain Supply Concerns

What was the format of the event? Were there specialized panels and/or workshops?

The conference was formatted mainly around discussions led by technical panels made up of grain professionals from all domains of the industry that I mentioned previously, with individual talks in between the panel discussions covering the supply chain services and products. It was held in a new format which I think was a rather innovative approach. Each speaker was allocated just 15 minutes on each topic allowing ample room for a wide variety of topics and enough space for effective B2B meetings.

The technical panels were set up in such a way to ensure participants would get familiarized with Iranian government policies regarding the trade and business of grains and the country's domestic market conditions.

Our international panels and speakers also covered topics ranging from current global forecasts to changes in the trends that could impact the future technologies in this field. In particular, we discussed the global rise in energy costs and its effects on production. Climate change was also covered with the introduction of the latest technological innovations from mainly European companies.

What do you see as the biggest hurdles on the way of doing business with Iran, even in a sector such as agricultural commodities which, on humanitarian grounds, should be exempt from sanctions?

Theoretically humanitarian trade in grains and pharma is not sanctioned, but the extent of the theory stops there. In reality, we have restrictions on both of these sectors imposed by the sanctioning countries and exercised by sanction-compliant states. By not allowing a single legitimate financial venue to conduct humanitarian trade, the sanctioning countries have effectively made trades both more expensive and harder to execute. Yet, with a country of 85 million people and a GDP size that of Iran, it is hard to achieve the objectives of sanctions as initially designed.

As witnessed in iranGrain 2022 conference, international companies were well represented and eager to do business with their Iranian counterparts. It is my belief that sanctions in the current form will stay for the long term, but the world is now changing and we will be divided in the "sanctioned block" and the "not sanctioned block". It would not be a far-fetched reality to imagine the sanctioned countries build their own financial clearing systems around sanctions in the near future and interconnect their banking systems to one another.

Did the Russia-Ukraine conflict have a negative impact on the event? Were there representatives from either country at the conference?

There were companies from both countries represented in iranGrain 2022 but mostly they were from Russia as the main grain partner of Iran is Russia.

The conflict was discussed from grain trading point of view and not from its political aspects. In 2022 the Russian delegation was more robust than in 2020 and we witnessed

an active discussion on the Caspian Sea trade. Unfortunately, the Black Sea trade remains dormant due to the current regional conflict.

Talking about Russia and Ukraine, two powerhouses in the grain sector, how has the market been affected with the current war? How is Iran coping with the crisis? What countries are filling the gap? Do you expect the conflict to have a long-term impact on the price and availability of grains in Iran and worldwide?

Both countries combined produce 25% of the global grain supply and disruptions in Ukraine will indeed have a global



price impact. However, I do not foresee a supply shortage on global level, but one can surmise more complicated trade transactions from logistical and banking sector perspectives. Russia is starting to understand how to work under international sanctions and it will take a few months for it to adjust to the new world realities. But once that is done, I do not see a risk in grain trade with Iran so long as there is an increase in shipping capacities on the Caspian Sea and enough loading/unloading and storage capacities at the Caspian ports.

What are the next steps now that you have iranGrain Conference 2022 behind you?

As you are aware this conference was a brainchild of the Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce given the large presence of Swiss based companies in Iranian grain industry and the organizational team behind the Chamber. So as follow up to the conference, iranGrain 2022 will travel to Geneva and hold a two-day summit dubbed "iranGrain-Geneva Summit 2022" sometime in September of this year.

The summit in Geneva will build on the Tehran conference and give another firsthand and face to face opportunity to companies and individuals that are active this humanitarian field to better find synergies and build on potential market potentials.

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کوچینگ و مشاوره ویژه مدیران ارشد و صاحبین کسب و کار

جایی برای رشد واقعی کسب و کار شما

By: Reza Taeb



Saeed Mohammadi

Please introduce yourself and tell us a bit about yourself.

Before I tell you about my background, I must give you a brief introduction about myself: For a while now, I have had a big dream, and that is to change my country's economy by providing business enterprises of all sizes the skill sets necessary to grow by channeling their respective strengths into meaningful, sustainable and achievable business strategies. Having studied in various academic disciplines, and my years of teaching and managing various businesses, have convinced me that I need to have a purpose and mission in my life, otherwise life, at some point, will become repetitious. I am delighted to say that in the last few years, since I established my life's mission and started working on it, I have been a happier man by the day.

But if I want to introduce myself in a typical way, I will start by saying that I am 39 years old. I first studied engineering at university level and then I got a degree in management. I have published six books on management and personal development, and I am the founder of several brands in Iran. In the last couple of years, I have held some of the most attended educational seminars in Iran. I am also an instructor and consultant to senior managers of the largest private and public organizations in Iran. Another teaching position I currently hold is as instructor at one of the world's most prestigious international coaching, facilitating & mentoring centers. Let me give you an example of the importance of coaching and having the right person doing it. In my opinion, football has many similarities to business.

The Importance of Business Coaching for any Organization

Saeed Mohammadi is a successful coach for senior executives and big business owners. He is an instructor at a global leader around the world in coaching, facilitating and mentoring center.

Those who love football know that Barcelona, Real Madrid, Manchester United, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Juventus are the best football clubs in the world and attract the best talent from around the globe. They have the best goalkeepers, the best defensive lines, the best midfielders and the front lines to win matches. Having said that, everyone knows that it is not only the players who make a champion team as the important role of a team's manager, coach, psychologist and many other factors affecting a team's performance cannot be ignored. Now imagine if the manager and founder of one of these clubs said that they were the expert and wanted to be the head coach.

The fate of a team participating in a tournament with the manager as its coach is only one thing and will not come as a surprise: Elimination from the tournament!

I have worked as management consultant and coach with Iranian entrepreneurs and senior executives over the years and I have found that they are very hard-working and diligent. But unfortunately, they make similar decisions when it comes to areas of expertise instead of focusing on their personal proficiencies. There is another story I told the chairman of the board of one of Iran's largest industrial groups: When Jack Welch revived General Electric, he made an important decision. Jack Welch always said that "if we can't be the best in an industry, we have

to get out of it". This kind of thinking shows the management style of chief executive officer of a corporation and how he intends to run his company. I have very solid mentoring and management coaching experience in the food, construction, vehicle, education, banking, insurance, oil and petrochemical industries and in all these companies it's the management style at executive levels that determines their ultimate success, regardless of the sector or type of business. And just like for a football coach, the championship and success of the company I work with is the dream that gives me incentive to work harder.

Please define executive coaching and explain its effectiveness and importance. Is it a science or an art form?!

Regarding the definition of coaching, I would like to get help from a professional named John Whitmore, author of the book "Coaching for Performance". This book is almost the first serious book in the field of coaching that has been translated into various languages. In this book, coaching is defined as unlocking a person's potential.

In my opinion, coaching can be described as follows: A coach helps you break out of your mental and physical boundaries and move towards your established goals with a courage and creativity that you have never experienced before, while working with maximum resolve to achieve dazzling and extraordinary success. If all this happens, you have had a good coach by your side and you have experienced the coaching process.

One person who has researched the effectiveness of business coaching is an occupational psychologist and management expert by the name of Adrian Furnham, who has demonstrated, through numerous studies and specific tests that he has developed, that successful coaching in management and workplace is possible and can have meaningful results. Statistics from the Robinson Resource Group in Illinois, US, show that the return of investment in business coaching can be up to 700%, which at first glance may seem like an exaggeration but numbers don't lie! Statistics from other sources also show that about 70% of business owners who have used business coaching

services have experienced an increase in revenue of at least 3 to 10 times. Studies have also shown that 83% of the businesses whose executive branch has been coached in management, have been able to become the top brands in their respective industry. Increased job satisfaction and motivation, improved health of managers and reduced workplace stress levels, more free time and creativity are examples of the results of coaching of managers. According to the World Coaching Federation, 99% of those who have used these services are satisfied with having a coach by

You may also want to know what services I provide to my client companies. Here I must add that just like a football coach, I do my best to make my team (that is, the management team I work with) a champion and I do it in 3 ways:

1. Personal coaching of senior managers or members of the Board of Directors of the organization
2. Organizational coaching through a needs analysis of the corporation and its business
3. Training and implementation of coaching culture in organizations to achieve the desired results

organization. This only tells me that many at executive levels are still not even familiar with what someone like me can offer their business. Going back to the mission and purpose that I have determined for my life, I believe we should work to have an impact in the world. To do something great, you must bring an added value to your surroundings that is different and important at the same time. Your contribution to your world must be meaningful and effective with tangible results that can make you proud. You need to get your customers to say that this person or company has made my life better.

As an executive coach, I try to touch the heart of my customers. This will never be possible by producing products similar to my competitors. My ultimate goal is to make a difference in the organization I enter, and instead of looking at sales and profits, try to induce a sense of pride in the hearts and minds of each and every employee in a company, regardless of rank or position.



their side. The following are some of the benefits of coaching that I have personally observed many times in various organizations:

- Increased productivity
- Increased devotion and loyalty in employees and customers
- Better morale of management team and employees
- Increase in sales volumes
- Increase in general satisfaction across the corporate body

You may be interested to know how I achieve this amount of success for the organizations I work with. The answer is simple: I listen very carefully to the voices of managers, employees and customers. Of course, it sounds simple, but as you can imagine it is a difficult and complicated undertaking to implement.

What have you tried to achieve as a business coach? How do you assess the future of business coaching in Iran?

I see a bright future for business coaching in Iran because this practice of using an independent expert to provide an outside perspective for a business is still quite new among Iranian companies, and so it has room to grow. I have seen dozens and sometimes hundreds of people working in accounting, financial management, sales and marketing and human resources departments in companies that I have been hired at as a consultant and business coach. For these companies I am the first such coach although what I offer can be so vital and important for the

As a final point and as a business coach, I would like to say to all managers:

Being the largest and most talked about in business doesn't necessarily mean being the best. Today, new approaches must be taken to stay efficient and avoid ill-timed business growth. Coaching is not a skill that can be transferred, but a way of thinking and being that can be taught.

If you are starting a business or are a senior manager in a company, I suggest you learn the business approach that I coach and familiarize yourself with my principles. Learn to balance your life and business so you can enjoy your life more. Every day of your life you should be able to see the fruits of all that you have achieved until that point.

A New Perspective on Manufacture and Sales of Home Appliances



Shahin Nourbakhsh

Shahin Nourbakhsh, born in February 1982 in Tehran, has been involved in economic activity and business management with a variety of firms since his return to Iran from Beirut, Lebanon in 2015, including with companies like "Deerpa," "Ronika Group," "Tasmim Company", and "Aran" and "Krich" which are all enterprises active in trade of goods and services and in the manufacturing industry.

He originally studied political science because of his interest in politics and international relations. He then continued his education in executive and business management and began his doctorate in advanced business management in 2018, while simultaneously pursuing his career in management.

Currently Nourbakhsh's area of primary concentration is the manufacture and assembly of household appliances through Rah-e Sabz Aran Company, of which he is the CEO and Member of the Board. This conglomerate includes Pekol electrical household appliance goods and Crich household furnishings and furniture products.

Given that highly recognized and influential individuals in a society play an important part in a variety of domains of a country's flourishing of ideas, advancement of trends, and development of benchmarks in today's world, how well do you, as a top entrepreneurial and economic figure, fit in that capacity in this country?

When we talk about development and modernization, we imply a series of political, economic, and social processes that eventually lead to societal transformation and an analogous modernization. As a result, development is more than just economic progress. According to Wilbert Moore, a well-known American sociologist, modernization refers to the entire change of a traditional or pre-modern civilization into one that is equipped with a range of technology and civic institutions; a society that has a sophisticated and prosperous economy and is politically stable. Now, I don't want to comment theoretically, but in response to your question, I believe you are referring to the concept of economic growth which is preferable to the word "development", as it is a fundamental concept in the development process but is not synonymous with it!

To put it another way, the function of entrepreneurs and capitalists in an economic expansion is comparable to the role of gasoline in an engine: a primary role. As a result, if a country wishes to grow its economy properly, it must foster entrepreneurship. Because, in brief, recognizing relevant chances to expand output leads to job creation and, consequently, income for all and an overall wellbeing on a national level.

In addition to creating jobs, you have facilitated the introduction of numerous technologies into the country by starting a factory for the manufacturing of household appliances. Where did the concept for the production come from, and where is it now? What items do you make, and how do you plan the future of your business enterprise? What are your brand's competitive advantages in the Iranian market?

Home appliances have assumed a growing importance in the family consumption basket over the last 50 years. Although housing, food, healthcare, and transportation take a lion's share of this basket, advancing technologies in the

home appliance sector have made these household items an essential part of any family's home as they have become more streamlined, energy efficient and more user friendly. With the availability of appropriate technology, raw materials, and labor, Iran as a country has significant comparative advantages in this industry, as evidenced by the presence of old factories and brands in this field. However, industrial production in this sector, as in others, was severely harmed in the 1980s as a result of unrealistically low exchange rates and indirect government subsidies for imports. Currently, despite significant barriers to investment, particularly due to political reasons and sanctions, we have chosen to focus on this field of manufacturing within Iran and to prioritize technology transfer after carefully considering all elements of the situation.

Our approach is to pursue higher-quality items, better equipped facilities, and above standard after-sales service with reduced return of sold products. Overall, I can assert that our aims are in the upper echelons. Why this is a focus of ours stems from our appraisal of the country's economic conditions.

The reality is that the Iranian economy's severe slump has left no opportunity for intense rivalry among economic operators.

We must either relocate to new, less competitive markets or combine the efforts of entrepreneurs and investors in order to address domestic requirements while also creating circumstances for exporting.

As a result, our home appliance products, which will be sold under the PEKOL brand, will appeal to a more sophisticated and demanding audience. Such products and services will comprise a significant portion of our portfolio, if not all of it.

Where does Iran stand in terms of human resources and trained labor? Given the importance of human resources in various vocations and businesses, what kind and amount of training do you plan to offer to your employees?

Human resource management and its macro policies are inextricably linked to the issue of human resource quality. Understanding how to employ existing human resources is more vital than having them, which is unfortunately an

oversight in our society. I'm talking about ignoring the old topic of meritocracy where effort, talent, and achievement are prioritized over wealth or social class... It's a long discussion and I don't want to get into it now. But in terms of our businesses, our people resources are perhaps our most valuable asset and advantage. This is a reality that neither our ideas nor our riches can replace. With this fact in mind, we have attempted to make two directives. First: Abide by the idea of decision-making based on group acumen, which is absolutely sincere and without pretense in our business. Second: Giving employees the opportunity to take training courses for technical or middle management positions in line with the company requirements.

Employees get paid not only during the training period, but also for costs associated with the courses as we recognize that the company is the beneficiary of the expertise that these trained employees gain as they continue working with us.

As an economist, how do you evaluate the impact of the restriction on large Korean and other international companies entering the local home appliance market? How far has Iran progressed in the manufacture of household appliances? How close are we to meeting global standards currently?

The import ban will undoubtedly have a disastrous effect on the market, causing significant challenges in the industrial and manufacturing sectors, and will erode consumer trust. In general, we have not seen the emergence of a monopoly manufacturing industry anywhere globally or during any single period. Perhaps it is because only through competition can growth and advancement be achieved. With respect to our own country, one obvious example that comes to mind over and over is the unfortunate fate of Iran's automobile sector. The result of the ban on import of foreign cars was the advent of little competition to fuel product improvement and growth in our domestic auto manufacturing sector which lead to a deterioration of the quality of its cars, which in turn caused the sector to suffer losses in the tens of thousands of billions of Tomans. And I should note that as investors and participants in the home appliance manufacturing sector, we are no exception to this rule about banning of foreign goods. I also believe that a tiny number of our colleagues have a misunderstanding and perhaps a short-term mindset if they believe that this monopoly in certain industries would provide them with long-term benefits. Because it both undermines this growing but fragile business of domestic manufacturing, and it is also ethically problematic since we cannot regard lop-sided opportunity and lack of competition as "help" for ourselves while creating a monopoly for others. We shall all suffer as a result of it in the end.

At our company, we focus on our advantages in terms of workforce, energy prices, and raw resources in this business, and try to disregard import limitations. Moreover, in a competitive climate and hopefully with fewer political tensions, we can extend our relationships with better and higher-quality suppliers worldwide and import more advanced technologies. As someone who sees the industry's progress in terms of competitiveness and advantages of quality rather than the amount of output, I don't subscribe to the notion of self-sufficiency. Therefore, I talk openly and without apologies about the necessity for superior technology to enter the country to provide higher manufacturing benchmarks and move the dial toward international standards. In contrast, any import ban violates this concept.

One of the main worries that customers have while purchasing domestic items is after-sales support. How do we compare against other nations in terms of after-sales service? What plans do you have for improving these services?

This issue may be assessed from both a short-term and a long-term standpoint. Concerning its long-term dimensions, I would want to address the matter of competition and its significance in the industry's evolution, as I did in the previous question. You must demonstrate to your consumer that you have a more plentiful supply and variety than your opponent, in a competitive market. Then, price, quality, and service become its three key pillars.

As a result, one of the cornerstones of one's entrance into the competition is the service one gives (particularly after-sales service). Due to market's competitiveness, extremely excellent steps have been implemented in the sector of household appliances in recent years along with high standardization.

In the near term, an increase in the exchange rate, which would automatically limit imports and raise costs, will naturally lead to more efficient use of household appliances and an increase in the desire to repair rather than replace, putting pressure on the after-sales service industry.

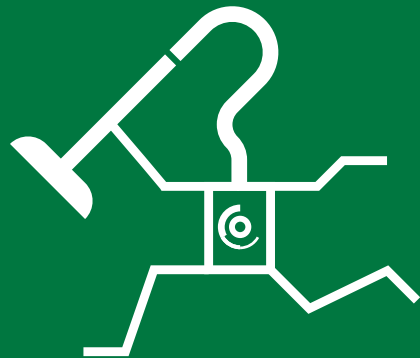
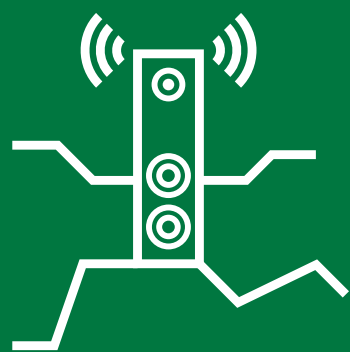
In this regard, we are doing our part, and have a huge strategy in place to provide suitable services and to maximize customer satisfaction, which involves both the supply of components and the provision of broad services.

Furthermore, we were one of the first companies to cover costs associated with repairs of components beyond warranty terms for clients, and to do maintenance under insurance policies whose premiums were paid for by our company. As such, our clients pay for no repair charges or else accept a very tiny fraction of probable damage losses, even when a product sustains physical damage which may not be covered by the original product guarantee.

Do you believe Iran has the capability of exporting home electronics to other nations in the region? What are the country's difficulties and opportunities? What elements will influence the event's execution?

In the right political environment, we may become a true exporter in the large-scale manufactured goods sector, and Iranian home appliances are one of the businesses with the potential to have the essential competencies in this sector, given the country's competitive advantages at a previous point in time. However, achievement of this goal has prerequisites that must be considered from both an intra-sectoral and macroeconomic standpoint.

Essentially, while it has its own position and benefits, the assembly sector is not synonymous with industrial production. Real manufacturing, in my opinion, has nothing to do with volume or even technological depth. Real production occurs only when I, as a producer, can export my product. From my perspective, the actual production indicator is the export capacity of a product. Because, in the worldwide market, you will face genuine competition, and you must answer the issue of why the consumer should pick your product or service over the many other options available to him, and furthermore to pay for it. Do you have superior quality or a lower price than your rival, and what else can you offer that your competition doesn't? The following topic falls into macroeconomic and political domains. Exports of goods are the foundation of international relations, and this fact cannot be isolated from the sphere of foreign policy and international diplomacy and viewed as an island on its own. Foreign relations, financial relations, transportation, insurance, and all of these political and logistical requirements must be discussed and resolved before a producer is able to market his goods in a competitive atmosphere internationally. We will not be able to expand and export unless we are a part of the global economy, even if we make adequate and competitive goods. There is no distinction between regional and global markets or between east and west. Economics has its own utilitarian and accounting logic and, thankfully or sadly, it is not founded on politicians' fantasies.



پکول

PekoL

By: Ghazal Mostafa



Thank you so much for giving Trends this exclusive interview. Please tell us about yourself and your background. How and why did you start the “We Are One” (Yeki Hastim) NGO? What in your own background prepared you to lead this organization?

I am Reza Abedini Sohi and I was born in 1980. My education and training are as a textile engineer, and I worked in this field for about ten years. During that time, I was running a textile factory which was actually our family business. Although our factory was in Iran, because of my personal interests in social responsibility, I went to Afghanistan and started a textile factory there with the help of the Afghan people. My aim was to help locals be independent and eliminate their need for importing goods.

As an individual, from a very early age, I have always loved traveling to different corners of the globe but due to work engagements I never had the time. So after ten years of working at our family business, I decided to quit my job and follow my childhood dream of traveling around the world. During these travels I saw many people and cultures close up which made me think about peace and about spreading the culture of peace. As a result, I decided to travel to different countries on foot because this way I would encounter more people with the opportunity to talk to them about peace face to face, to raise awareness about the importance of peace and its effects on their lives and their children's lives.

I travelled to many different places around the world. For example, I spent 6 months in Eastern Asia where I walked for approximately 300 kilometres. After that there was South

Spreading the Message of Peace and Equality from the Ground Up

Reza Abedini, born in 1980, is the founder of “YEKI HASTIM” (We are One) non-governmental organization.

Although he was active for over 10 years in the business world, Abedini left his professional life several years ago to pursue his personal interest of the “culture of peace” around the world. To spread his message, he went on long walks of hundreds of kilometers in various continents, among them spending 3 months in four countries in South America and another almost 4 months in eight countries in Africa. When not walking, Abedini was engaged in charity activities that involved world peace.

For Abedini children are both the builders and the inheritors of the world's future and as such, they are important and deserve attention. Based on this core belief, Abedini next started a movement he called “Children of Peace” for which he travelled the world over as its ambassador. Soon his message became a beacon of hope among a large group of his followers which in turn attracted the attention of large national companies who wanted to sponsor his charitable efforts. Having secured financial support from corporations, Abedini then expanded “Children of Peace” into an international social movement and called it “We Are One” (Yeki Hastim).

A few years ago, with endorsement of Abedini's Yeki Hastim campaign by the United Nation's Tehran branch and with financial support from Eghtesad Novin Bank of Iran, successful art exhibitions fundraising events were held with the participation of prominent Iranian artists and performers. Also, as the campaign drew more international recognition for social responsibility and citizenship, Abedini was invited by Samsung to be a torchbearer at the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea.

America where I covered about 500 kilometres in 3 months and Africa where I was for around 3 months and I walked 600 kilometres, and many other places. During these trips, I worked as a volunteer for numerous local NGOs and for me these opportunities served as a personal enlightenment.

After a while I realised this feeling was more of a social responsibility for me towards my surroundings. I realised that by doing this work I could find the true “Reza” and I could help build a better world starting with my own environment.

These travels caught the attention of the media and soon many people in Iran. And my trip to Africa caught the attention of the United Nations Headquarters in Iran. I was invited to work with the UN offices here and hold an exhibition on peace on International Peace Day. This exhibition became the starting point for the concept of Yeki Hastim (We Are One). Very slowly this personal campaign turned into a social phenomenon and companies, magazines, newspapers and the media

started to take interest in the campaign by promoting it. It didn't take long before this national interest in my personal crusade resulted in the actual formation of Yeki Hastim (We Are One) organization in the form that I had in mind. My teammates and I worked hard for it to have the right slogan with the right message.

We formed the campaign with the moto of “We are different, but we don't have differences - We Are One”.

It was after this that Yeki Hastim was approached by large corporations such as Pars Online and many others who sponsored my travels, and soon I became a fulltime social activist. Samsung company in Iran chose me to be one of the carriers of the Olympic Torch for the Winter Olympics in 2018 which were held in Korea.

That was a once in a lifetime and unique experience. After the Olympic games, sadly because in Iran there are many natural disasters, I found myself spending more and more time on my social responsibilities around the country where needed.



Although Yeki Hastim started as a personal mission, it is now a larger organization. How does it fit in the Iranian society as an NGO?

I started Yeki Hastim as a traveling campaign to spread a message around the world. But because we have experienced a lot of natural disasters such as flood and earthquakes around our own country, it has also assumed a very active role encompassing social responsibilities in Iran. This also proved to be a challenging effort for one person and that's why I decided to create an organization comprised of like-thinking people who could more effectively take on bigger and more demanding social projects around the country.

Yeki Hastim is now a charitable organization and officially recorded with the Iranian Welfare Organization under registration number 953 since 2019.

Being an official organization is important because we believe that countries evolve in a positive way when they have many different social organizations and NGOs. This is because first of all they can enable citizens to work together voluntarily to encourage social value;; secondly, they can do specialized work in different fields; and thirdly they can promote local initiative and problem solving.

What is the organization's mission and strategy? Which region(s) of Iran are you active in and what do you do there? Are there other NGO's you work with? Where do you get your funding from?

Considering the fact that we are a fairly new and young organization that was only established three years ago, we have tried to be an innovative and pragmatic NGO. We accomplish this goal by being present in the field. We also categorize our work in two parts, one being the short-term urgent help needed when there is a natural disaster by sending out food or hygiene supplies. And the second being our long-term infrastructural development projects such as building schools, libraries and health centers.

Currently the place we have chosen to work in is the south-eastern region of Iran, in an area called Jazmourian. This area is located in the south of Kerman province on the border of Sistan and Balouchestan province and it is an extremely poverty-stricken area.

The main work we are doing there is helping with the development of sustainable villages. We believe that in order for the country to progress we need to go to villages and start development from there. I am sure that when villages are developed and enhanced, the whole area will benefit and, better yet, this can have a lasting effect on the children and the future of the country as a whole. For this, we work hand in hand with other organizations on different levels, although in that particular region there are almost no other charities and that's why we haven't been able to team up with any other NGO's. As I said, we will succeed as a nation only when we can have developed villages in different impoverished corners of the country, so that the children and the people have an opportunity to live in developed



and progressive environments with the proper infrastructures needed to grow and improve as individuals. Having numerous such areas in different corners of Iran will help the nation as a whole to use its talents and move forward. We are hoping that we can reach our goal with the help of local people as well as benefactors around the country.

We receive donations from ordinary people and different companies which have Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on their agenda. We encourage companies to help fund us using their advertising budgets and we in return provide them with content that can be used as advertisement.

We appreciate that companies must promote themselves and their brands through their charitable donations to create brand-faithful customers.



What are the most important issues facing your organization today? What plans are in place or are being developed to address these challenges? What change or outcome are you seeking (or, what is the unmet need you are addressing)? How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected the organization and your activities?

As I mentioned earlier, one of our main interests is in working on the infrastructure of regions, which has long term results. Unfortunately, because people not living in the region are not emotionally invested in such programs, it is much more difficult to raise the funds needed, which is a problem. People seem to be more interested in short term issues with quick results, such as elimination of hunger and disease. When it comes to building playgrounds, schools or health centers, because these sorts of projects are time-consuming and don't seem urgent, donors are less willing to help. This is cause for concern as we have trouble finding necessary funds.

Part of our mission at Yeki Hastim is to create an atmosphere in which charitable donations become part of the culture of our people. We want to educate and remind people, companies and organizations that we all have a social responsibility towards the wellbeing and prosperity of our own country and our fellow citizens. We hope that day by day we can see this message and mindset flourish, especially among the younger generations and companies.

Another difficulty is traveling to the area where we are working as it is very remote, located approximately 1,300 kilometres from Tehran. In order to reach it we have to go to Bandar Abbas or Kerman and from there travel by jeep for 5 hours through unsafe dirt roads to reach the village and even change cars to get to the other locations. In general, these areas are extremely remote, and the climate is harsh. The temperature sometimes reaches 60 degrees Celsius in summertime, which takes its toll on the team members. There is not even one shower or proper toilet in the village and daily access to running water is for only two to three hours and this water is not even clean. All this makes it very tough for the team. Finding the building material needed for our work in the region is problematic, and plus,



filming and creating content for our social media sites is difficult as we have to take photographers and cameramen there which, considering the climate and the production cost, makes it almost impossible.



The Covid-19 pandemic caused major additional problems too of course as people became more dependent on aid, with the poor becoming poorer. At the same time because of the economic issues exacerbated by the pandemic, the companies that were helping our organization had to decrease their donations and this has naturally affected our work and our goals. We have set up projects to provide help to Sistan and Balouchestan province for Covid-19 which include sending much needed medical supplies and help to hospitals and health centers. Working hand in hand with other NGOs we were able to reach a zero-death day recently, and from being a black and red region of the pandemic in the country, the area is now gone down to the yellow level.

Today they have the lowest rate of Covid-19 and deaths in all across Iran and this is an accomplishment we are all proud of.

How have your programs improved, grown or changed over time? How do you use outcome data and feedback to improve programs and make decisions? How are you addressing your funding issues? What results are you after?

In order to reach our long-term goals, we are constantly learning new methods. For instance our team is trying to change the way people look at charities from a one-sided approach to a more interactive one. We want to get companies and organizations to



We are one in sorrow, happiness and in hope. Yeki Hastim!

provide large and meaningful donations so that they, and not individual people, are the main donors.

This is a very difficult task because it's at times difficult to show the result of our work which is not only building the infrastructure but also the soft part of making a difference at local cultural levels. But the lack of interest is not only from corporations and donors who are not from the area. We also have pushback from locals to get involved in our projects.

However, we are hopeful that as time goes by and we have more to show as far as the difference we can make, the better our reception will be both from the locals as well as donors of all sizes and amounts. We have been working for three years and we are very happy with the results to date.

What message do you have for the readers?



When we started out, we didn't even have an office. We would go to the houses of friends or volunteers, who would let us use their homes and residences for days while they were living there themselves.

Today we have our head office in Tehran, an office in Zanjan and employees who work full time on the projects. We hope to fulfil our goals with the help of people and get our voice heard. I ask the readers of this interview to visit our website and our page on Instagram, or contact our offices in Tehran or Zanjan to get any information they need. The help of individuals and companies, whether financial or just spreading the word, is much appreciated.

www.Yekihastim.com
@Yekihastim.ngo
+98 21 2275 3953 (Tehran)
+98 91 2136 2404 (Tehran)

Restaurants

Negima Café & Restaurant

Location: Khorasani St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 69 01 50

Social Media: @negimarestaurant

Asil Restaurant

Location: Qeytarieh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 222 00 169

Social Media: @asil_restaurant

Matador Lounge Spanish Restaurant

Location: Farmaniyeh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 80 08 22

Social Media: @matador.restaurant
Email: ar_khosandi@yahoo.com

Rebelan International Food

Location: Tajrish St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 24 512

Social Media: @rebelangroup

Boomi International Food

Location: Fereshteh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 01 19 50
Social Media: @boomipersiankitchen
Website: www.Boomikitchen.com

Business

Sarmad Iron and Steel Complex

Location: Nelson Mandela St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 26 29 10 63
Website: www.Sarmadsteel.com

Dadflamingo

Location: Mollasadra St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 44 75 22 09
Website: www.Dadflamingo.com

Turquoise Partners

Location: Niavaran St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 70 62 38
Email: info@turquoisepartners.com
Website: www.Turquoisepartners.com

Hamayesh Ara

Location: Saadat Abad St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 26 76 56 81
Website: Info@Hamayeshara.com

Kavir Motor

Location: Shariati St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 574 06
Website: www.Kavirmotor.com

TradexMena

Location: Istanbul, Turkey
Tel: +9021 22 44 25 51
Email: info@tradexMena.com
Website: www.Tradexmena.com

Business

Asia Instrumentation

Location: Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 65 02 95
Email: info@asiainstrumentsltd.com
Website: www.Asiainstrumentsltd.org

AraEnterprise Business Consultancy:

Location: Saadat Abad St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 26 76 56 81
Email: info@araEnterprise.com
Website: www.AraEnterprise.com

Andritz

Location: Amol
Tel: +9811 442 042 04
Email: andritz@garmaelectric.ir
Social Media: @garma_electric
Website: www.Andritz.com

Malls

Iran Mall

Location: Kharazi St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 29 29
Social Media: @the_iranmall

Rosha Department Store

Location: Farmanieh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 25 71 40 00
Social Media: @rosha.store

Services

Refah Avaran Mazand Company

Location: Savad Kooch, Mazandaran
Tel: +9811 42 43 43 20
Social Media: @onedieco
Email: info@refahavaranzamand.com
Website: www.Refahavaranzamand.com

Dorsa Home

Location: Gholhak St, Tehran
Social Media: @dorsahome
Website: www.Dorsa.net

Amirkhizi Carpet

Location: Zaferanieh St, Tehran
Cell: +98912 111 66 52
Website: www.Amirkhizicarpets.com

Iran Steel

Location: Shariati St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 297 50

Nobka

Location: Zarnegar St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 88 76 02 10
Social Media: @smartnobka
Website: www.Nobka.ir

Services

Darya Hamrah Paythakht

Location: Motahari St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 628 59
Social Media: @daria.hamrah
Website: www.Dariahamrah.ir

SPAR:

Location: Sarmad St, Tehran
Tel: +98 452 64
Website: www.Spar.ir
Iran Steel
Location: Shariati St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 297 50

Hotels

Mirage Hotel Kish

Location: Kish
Tel: +9876 44 42 22 20
Social Media: @miragehotelkish

Shemshak Boutique Hotel

Location: Shemshak
Tel: +9821 26 52 79 41
Social Media: @shemshak_boutique_hotel
Website: www.Shemshakboutiquehotel.com

House of Elephant

Location: Karimkhan Zand St, Shiraz
Tel: +9871 32 23 14 66
Social Media: @house_of_elephant
Email: houseofelephant57@gmail.com
Website: www.Houseofelephant.com

Yakhchal House

Location: Hafez St, Esfahan
Cell: +98913 905 00 69
Social Media: @yakhchal.house
Website: www.Yakhchalhouse.ir

Moshir Al Molk Historical House

Location: Hafez St, Esfahan
Cell: +98913 110 91 81
Social Media: @moshiralmolk
Email: islamic.h.museum@gmail.com

Joybar Boutique Hotel

Location: Neshat St, Esfahan
Cell: +98913 404 91 57
Social Media: @joybarboutiquehotel
Email: joybarboutiquehotel@gmail.com
Website: www.Joybarboutiquehotel.com

Beauty Salon

Niloufar Zand Beauty Salon

Location: Elahiyeh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 01 16 14
Social Media: beauty_by_niloufar
Email: nilou_zand@yahoo.com
Website: www.Niloufarzand.com

Beauty Salon

Nita Beauty

Location: Velenjak St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 2240 44 55
Social Media: @nita.beauty
Website: www.Nitabeautysalon.com

Beauty Time

Location: Zaferanieh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 18 19 13
Cell: +98912 029 32 71
Social Media: @beauty_time.b.t
Email: beautytime1399@gmail.com

Hans Beauty Salon

Location: Zaferaniyeh And Fereshteh St, Tehran
Tel Zaferanieh: +9821 22 17 06 44
Tel Fereshteh: +9821 22 04 32 27
Social Media: @hans.beauty.salon

Clinics

Mehregan Dental Care

Location: Pasdaran St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 79 31 63
Social Media: @mehregan.dental.care
Website: www.Clinic-mehregan.com

Dr. Basati Dental Clinic

Location: Aghdasieh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 80 08 30
Email: info@drbasati.com
Social Media: @dr.basati
Website: www.Drbasati.com

Dr. Nejatian Pain Care Clinic

Location: Saadat Abad St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 26 76 58 10
Social Media: @drnejatian

Dr. Abdollahi Orthodontist

Location: Dolat St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 2279 9232
Social Media: @ortho_trust
Website: www.Orthotrust.com

Dr. Kamali

Location: Parkway St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 72 147
Cell: +98912 159 22 22
Social Media: @drkamaliclinic
Website: www.Drkamaliclinic.com

Art Galleries

Art Chive Online Art Platform

Location: Tehran
Cell: +98912 112 13 29
Social Media: @artchive.art
Email: info@artchive.art
Website: www.Artchive.art

Art Galleries

Soo Contemporary Gallery

Location: Ferdowsi St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 88 80 98 08
Social Media: @soocontemporary
Email: info@soocontemporary.com
Website: www.Soocontemporary.com

Dastan Basement Gallery

Location: Elahiyeh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 02 31 14
Social Media: @dastanbasement
Email: info@dastangallery.com
Website: www.Dastan.gallery.com

Londeville Global Art & Collectables

Location: Saadat Abad St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 26 76 56 81
Website: www.Londeville.com

E1 Art Gallery

Location: Elahiyeh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 60 71 26
Email: e1artshop@gmail.com
Social Media: info@e1art.gallery
Website: www.E1art.gallery

High-End Jewelry

Goharbin Jewelry

Location: Valiasr St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 88 77 73 01
Social Media: @k.goharbin
Email: info@goharbin.com
Website: www.Goharbin.com

Zomorodi Jewelry

Location: Fereshteh St, Tehran
Social Media: @zomorodi

Safaei Jewelry

Location: Aghdasieh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 26 15 19 17
Social Media: @zomorodi
Email: ma@safaei.co

Ab Jewelry gallery

Location: Tehran
Tel: +98912 215 51 20
Social Media: @abjewelrygallery

Ghazal Sadr

Gemmologist
Location: Saadat Abad St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 86 12 92 98
Website: Sadrjewelry.com

Reza Sadr

Master Gemmologist & Professional at Int'l
Gemmologist & Jewels Business
Location: Saadat Abad St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 86 12 92 98
Website: Sadrjewelry.com

Gyms

Power House Woman's Crossfit Gym

Location: Enghelab Sport Complex, Tehran
Tel: +9821 26 21 63 90
Social Media: @block68ir
Email: blockphilosophir@gmail.com
Website: www.Blockphilosophy.ir

Muscles Land

Location: Niavaran St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 22 80 38 72
Social Media: @sarzaminazoleha

24Gym

Location: Elahiyeh St, Tehran
Tel: +9821 2620 4961
Cell: +98912 406 7006
Social Media: @24fuctionalclub
Email: 24fuctionalclub@gmail.com

Interior Design

Mitra Ghorbani

Location: Elahiyeh St, Tehran
Cell: +98912 243 37 41
Social Media: mitraghorbani_ir

Leila Kalali Home Concept Store

Location: ASP towers, Tehran
Tel: +9821 88 05 06 67
Social Media: @leilakalalihomepluse

Sarira Garden Low Maintenance

Location: Tehran
Tel: +9821 88 94 41 05
Cell: +98935 776 55 64
Email: sariragarden@gmail.com
Social Media: @sariragarden

Azadeh Azizi

Location: Tehran
Cell: +98912 846 09 12
Social Media: @azadehazizigroup.com
Website: www.Azadehazizigroup.com

Hossein Rezvani

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

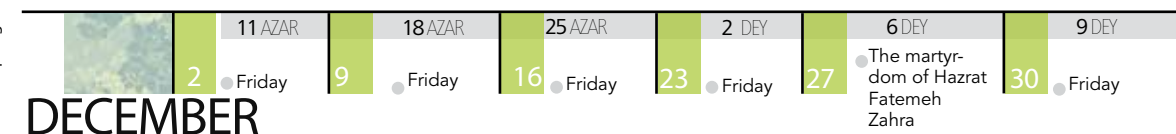
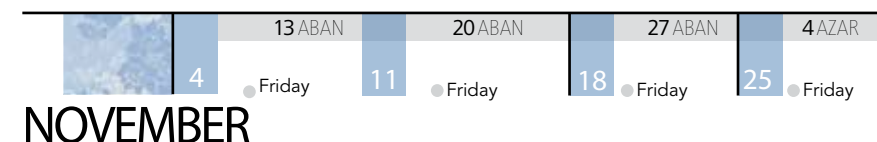
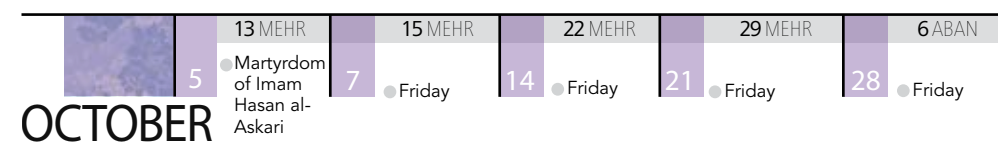
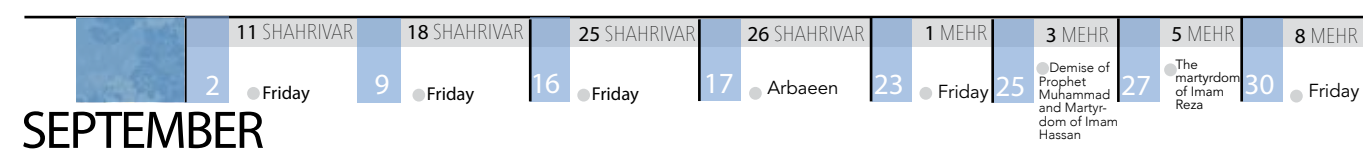
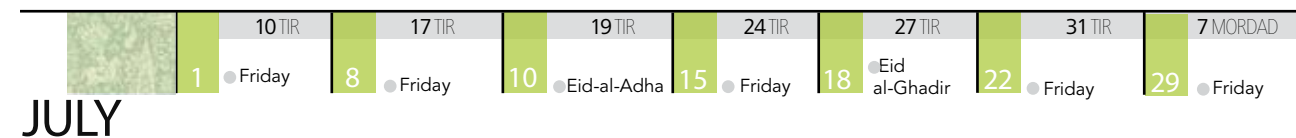
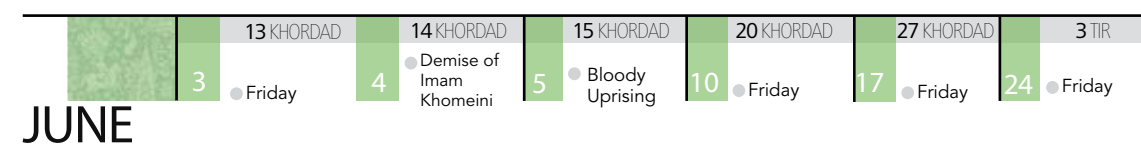
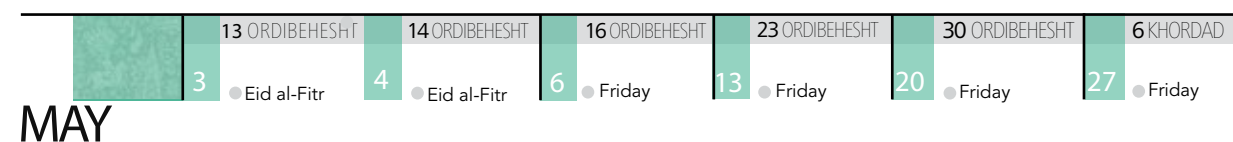
ZEEEN

Palladium Shopping Center, Moqadas
Ardabili Street, Tehran, Iran
Tel: 021 2266 8363

Email: hello@zeeen.ir
Social Media: @hossein_rezvani_iran
Website: www.zeeen.ir

Trends calendar

IRANIAN HOLIDAYS in 2022



Trends calendar

IRANIAN EVENTS & EXHIBITIONS in 2022

The 23th Int'l Exhibition of Medical, Laboratory & Pharmaceutical Equipment

24 – 27 May 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 1st Exhibition of Application

24 – 27 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 27th Int'l Tile, Ceramic & Sanitary Ware Exhibition

06 – 09 Jun 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 12th Int'l Exhibition Mother, Baby & Child

26 – 29 Jun 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 4th International Exhibition of Hotel Equipment & Services

02 – 05 Jul 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 22st Int'l Exhibition of Building & Construction Industry

22– 28 Aug 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 29th Persian Handmade Carpet Exhibition

03 – 06 Sep 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 21st Int'l Exhibition of Poultry, Livestock and Related Industries

15 – 25 Sep 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 9th Int'l Exhibition of Beverage, Tea, Coffee & Related Industries

01 – 04 Oct 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 22nd Tehran Int'l Industry Exhibition

01 – 04 Oct 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 13th Int'l Nanotechnology Exhibition (IRAN NANO)

21 – 24 Oct 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 29th Int'l Exhibition of Printing, Packing & Related Machinery

31 Oct – 03 Nov 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 17th Int'l Auto Parts Exhibition

31 Oct – 03 Nov 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 4th International laser - photonics Exhibition of Iran

20 – 23 Nov 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 6th Int'l Fisheries Industry Exhibition

20 – 23 Nov 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

The 17th Int'l Exhibition of Mine, Mining, Construction Machinery & Related Industry & Equipment

20 – 23 Nov 2022
Tehran International Exhibition Centre

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.

By: Ghazal Mostafa



From Acting to Filmmaking: A Journey of Creativity

NIKI KARIMI

Born in 1971 in Tehran, Niki Karimi is one of the most famous and internationally acclaimed actors and filmmakers in Iran. She began her career as an actress with films such as "Sara" by Dariush Mehrjoui, for which she won the best actress awards at the "San Sebastian" film festival and in "Nantes" film festival in 1992. After that, Karimi continued her acting in more than 25 films over the years, which brought her accolades over the years both nationally and internationally, such as awards at "Taormina" Film Festival in Italy, "Cairo Film Festival" in Egypt and "Fajr Film Festival" in Tehran, and Best Actress awards at the Iranian Film Society.

In 2001, expanding on her career as an actor, Karimi wrote and directed a documentary named "To have or not to have" about infertility which was the beginning of her career as a filmmaker. She won her first award as a director in Iran's Rain Film Festival for her documentary, which was produced by renowned Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami. She also worked as Director's Assistant for Abbas Kiarostami from 1992 to 2007.

In 2004 Karimi made her first feature film, "One Night" which was nominated for the 2005 Cannes Film Festival and was later shown in numerous international film festivals. After this directorial debut, Karimi said that acting no longer satisfied her and that she wanted to direct more movies. In 2006, she made her second feature film "A few days later" which premiered at "Rome Film Festival", and which won the Rotterdam festival's Hubert Bals Fund for Best Script. Karimi's third film as director, "Final Whistle" (2011), won three awards at the Vesoul International Film Festival of Asian Cinema in Vesoul, France and the Mannheim Film Festival award for Best Film. In 2015, Karimi's "Night Shift" won the Jury award at Iranian Fajr International Film Festival for Best Screenwriter, Director, and Producer.

Karimi's fifth feature-length film "Atabai" is a 2020 romantic drama film written by Hadi Hejazifar and directed by Niki Karimi. The film was screened for the first time at the 38th Fajr Film Festival and won five nominations in Best Film, Best Director, Best Actor in a Supporting Role, Best Cinematography, and Best Original Score categories. The movie was also shown at the Cambridge Film Festival in the United Kingdom. According to the festival's website: "Lauded director Niki Karimi takes us into a world of tradition, hopes and expectation. [...] With its intertwined use of Azerbaijani and Farsi languages, alongside the fabulous landscapes of northwestern Iran, this film brings a fresh perspective to Iranian cinema and seeks to build bridges between generations and communities."

"Atabai" screened at the 40th edition of the Cambridge Film Festival in competition section. The Cambridge Film Festival is the third-longest-running film festival in the UK. The movie had been also selected to take part in the 14th edition of the Asia Pacific Screen Awards.

Karimi has also recently been on the jury for more than 20 renowned film festivals, including Karlovy Vary Film Festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival, the Locarno International Film Festival, Thessaloniki International Film Festival, and Berlin Film Festival and also the 60th Cannes Film Festival.

How would you describe the current state of the Iranian cinema, both inside and also outside of our borders?

Inside our country, movies are being made at a reasonable rate and almost 70 movies are released every year. Despite censorship and all the things that are going on, the industry is alive and keeps going forward and the artists are busy making movies. But it may not be the same for the Iranian cinema outside of the country. There's the matter of sanctions, and because of that, foreign companies are not present in Iran. So, unfortunately, we do poorly in the international market.

You are well-known to our audience, but please tell us more about how you began your journey in the movie industry.



Like any other actor, I followed my passion and began by starring in movies. That's how I got more and more attached to this industry. My main interest was literature. So, I used to make documentaries from time to time. I was a bookworm since my early days and it was my hobby. I saw cinema as a successor to my childhood passion. After that, maybe I realized that acting wasn't enough for me. So, I started making movies too. I have also kept myself busy with things like photography, translation, etc. in these last few years.

In your opinion, what are some of your achievements as an actor and a director?

I never sought achievements. I just did what I loved, and I believe all of us in this world are looking for something that we love so that we can follow it. Because it's an instinct.

We get more and more excited about what we do every day. The fact is, I managed to share my visual ideas with the viewers and that's probably a part of what I've achieved.

How was it like working with a giant of Iranian cinema, Abbas Kiarostami? Was he easy or tough to work with?

What are some of the valuable take-aways you got from working with him?

I worked closely with Mr. Kiarostami for 12 years and I always remember our friendship, when people talk about him. We had a mutual understanding and interaction with each other, and I can say that his style of filmmaking changed after we met.



When two intellectual and world-conscious people have a conversation, their impact on each other is huge, and it's a great opportunity. I learned a great deal from him at a certain period and this exchange and awareness led us to learn a lot from each other.

I always had my own idea about cinema and for instance, a movie like "One Night", was based on my own style from the beginning. But we all share a collective self-awareness and unconsciousness full of stories and all... and I can say that Mr. Kiarostami and I had a number of shared interests.

What makes Iranian movies attractive to foreign audiences? Is it just curiosity or is also about the substance (the humanistic nature of the post-revolution Iranian Cinema)? Iranian movies, despite being among the most successful international movies when it comes to awards, have not yet

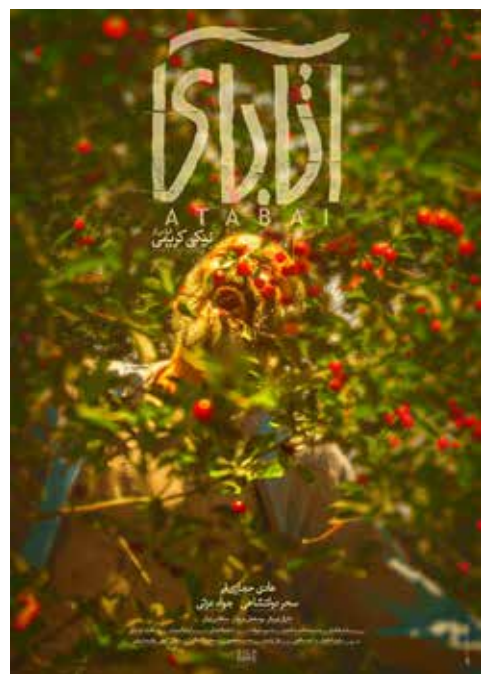
seen huge commercial success. Why is that -is it the pace, the setting, lack of visual effects, marketing and distribution...? How can it be changed?

Pain and suffering exist all around the world and humans are dealing with social issues such as equality, freedom, etc. But I believe these are nothing but words and after all, art is the consequence of some sort of misery. Someone who's never taken this path of pain and misery, and hasn't seen the world, doesn't have many ideas to suggest and to share with an audience. The reason that the Iranian cinema has some amazing movies is this maturity and our sufferings and civil issues to some extent. Every artist and filmmaker have experienced these issues in our society and can share their perspective with their audience. On the other hand, cinema results from consciousness and awareness which we observe and enjoy. There are multi-national(bi-racial) directors who have a good understanding of cinema. But Iran's rich culture, and poetry, and our unique experiences allows our cinema to have a special flavor. However, when a foreign movie is shown at different festivals, it is appreciated by all. So, it's not limited to the nationalities and the main thing is creativity and purity. I think the sanctions, the poor planning for the international markets, and the lack of international cooperation including foreign actors and etc. are some of the main reasons that we don't see an Iranian movie become a blockbuster.

Tell us about your latest production, "Atabai". It seems to be a unique project from many aspects, including cinematography and the prominent use of one of Iran's main ethnic languages (Azeri)! Tell us about the journey from concept development to making/producing and now distributing it. What has been the feedback in Iran and in the international arena?

But I wanted this movie to be made in another city. That's why we had to focus on a different environment in our country with different languages and dialects. I can say that Atabai is an independent and personal project and we managed to surpass the financial problems with great hardships and finally make the movie. I covered most of the finances myself. Because it was personal for me. I consider it as an independent and compact project, and we were fascinated by the feedbacks and how people connected to it.

By: Jean-Michel Frodon



ATABAI

By
NIKI KARIMI

The Fifth feature film directed by Niki Karimi does not only confirm her qualities as a filmmaker, already very visible in her previous works but too often underestimated because of the author's fame as an actress. This new film represents a real breakthrough, important in more ways than one for contemporary Iranian cinema. Based on the screenplay by Herself and Hadi Hedjazifar, who also plays the title role, Niki Karimi's film achieves several simultaneous and coherent artistic gestures, but on different levels.

Atabai is thus, first of all, the portrait of a man, but a portrait "in hollow", where the main character, who once bore the name that gives the film its title, is neither a hero nor an anti-hero, but a (male) human being all the more alive and endearing because he is composed by touches, through his acts and his lack of acts, the gaze of others, and memories that do not always correspond all together. The script, but even more so the way of filming, makes room for a person inhabited by memories and anxieties, desires and dreams, and who can never be defined by a single explanation or a single character trait.

This very rich human figure, which gains in mystery as the film progresses, thus becomes in the very movement of the projection a multi-faceted mirror in which multiple personalities are refracted, with in particular a very rich range of finely drawn female figures, and a sensitive attention to different generations as well as different social classes. These qualities are obviously also carried by the interpretation, in the center of which the writer-actor finds the ways to exist in these games of darkness and contradictory flashes. But the other characters, including the most "secondary", benefit from a presence that reinforces that, strong but never stabilized, of Kazem / Atabai. These characteristics allow Atabai to achieve this miraculous result: a truly feminine film whose main character is a man.



CINEMA

Above all, as much as the humans, the film offers a particularly powerful and moving presence to the landscapes, thanks to the magnificent images but also to its capacity, very sensitive for a foreign spectator, to make perceptible the attachment of the Iranians to the garden,

In this, Atabai not only testifies to Niki Karimi's talent as a filmmaker, but also to her inner freedom that enables her to go beyond the mere illustration of an already rich and moving story, and to make her film an invitation to every viewer.



in all its dimensions, the most material as well as the most poetic, of this place sung by the greatest artists in Persian language. Here again, the film's strength lies in the fact that nothing is stated in a frontal manner, but that little by little the viewer is made aware of this relationship between human beings and a space that is at once natural, highly elaborate, a bearer of memory and possibly also of the future.

This astonishing combination of lightness and deep emotion, which can sometimes give way to violence, death, and the darkest acts, is deployed thanks to a surprisingly subtle and adapted mise en scène. Indeed, the way of filming as well as the organization of the story unfolds in successive layers, giving access to situations that echo each other without completely completing each other, leaving a large space for the spectator to invest his own emotions.

The delicate touch in the directing is not only of a remarkable elegance, it participates in the process of invocation that allows painful memories to make way inside the present, for what is absent in the actual world. One can speak of cinematographic writing in the most ambitious sense, regarding the composition of the frames, the camera movements, the use of light, the presence of sounds.



By: Ghazal Mostafa

Fariman Takes Us on a Musical Journey & Says Big Dreams are Made of This!

Fariman is an Iranian pop singer, songwriter, and performer. Born in 1985 in Tehran, Fariman started his career as a self-learner in early 2000s. He taught himself the piano, guitar and drums in his teens, and started performing as solo singer at the age of 20.

In 2010, he released his first single track "They won't understand" and its musical video featuring professional make-up artists and imported costumes. Since then, he has become increasingly known as the first artist based in Iran who can sing fluently in English and independently produce his own songs and musical videos. His most successful tracks are "Stay with me", "Toro ba hameye khoobiat" (You with all Your Goodness) and "Begoo ba man mimooni".

In 2020 Fariman started his own line of fashion by designing hoodies, t-shirts and hats for his fans with a "Smile" logo, as an encouragement for his fans to be happy and to never give up.

Fariman has so far released 27 tracks, reaching millions of fans on his social media platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Spotify, SoundCloud).

Thank you for giving Trends this exclusive interview. We are very grateful. Please introduce yourself and tell us a bit about your background.

Thank you for this opportunity to tell my story. I am an Iranian pop singer, songwriter and music producer based in Tehran. Since my childhood, I have had a special interest for Western pop, rock, R&B and hip-hop music.

In early 2000s I started my career as a self-taught artist by rearranging the melodies of my favorite international pop singers, such as Michael Jackson, The Beatles, and Eric Clapton, whose extraordinary voices and delicate musical notes have been a primary source of my inspiration.

I learned acoustic guitar, piano, electric guitar and drums in my teens, and started songwriting and singing when I was 20. It took a lot of courage to embark on this journey, as from the very beginning I had to rely on my own intuition and creativity in order to become an artist, and a professional one at that, without any guidance or teacher.

You began playing music at a young age; what drew you to music? When and how did you begin your transition into a musician? What skills did you learn that helped you in your singing career? Who inspired you to make music?

Going back to my childhood, I can definitely say that my passion for music started from an early age, when I was a kid. Thanks to my father, who was a big fan of great international artists such as Bob Dylan, Bee Gees and Pink Floyd, music always filled our house.

As soon as we could manage getting a new audiocassette or musical videotape, I would enthusiastically watch it ten or even hundred times, until I had a good grip on every bit of it, and then I would start recreating it from scratch, with little or no instrument available to me.

Any source of music that came into my hands was a brand-new world, a discovery that I undertook on my own, on a daily basis and in complete seclusion.



That's why today you can feel many influences in my music, from a distinctive Western taste to the new age Iranian pop music. Since there were no master classes nor institutes where I could study music at that time, I had to rely on my own learning skills and take my clues from anything I could find around me. I used to find the chords and notes in my favorite songs only through listening with my own ears, without any written notes, and play them over and over hundreds of times until I would become perfect in them. That's why up until the present day I can emphatically claim that I have never had a music teacher in my life, and that I have learned all my current performance skills all on my own, including singing, songwriting, music production, as well as playing the piano, and the acoustic and electric guitars.

How did you learn to sing/write/play the instruments? What was the first instrument which you learned to play?



As I have mentioned, there were no sources from which to learn Western music in Iran 20 years ago. The first musical composition that I learned was a very simple song by John Lennon, made only by three or four chords, called "Working Class Hero". After listening to it a few times, I managed to find the chords by myself on a very obsolete guitar that we had in my house. It took me two years to learn guitar; as soon as I had mastered it, I went on to discover another amazing musical instrument, the piano. Just like the guitar, I learned to play the piano and later other instruments, such as electric guitar and the drums, by experimenting different musical instruments that were at my disposal, and by trying to find the melodies I was listening to just by playing them.

How would you describe the music that you typically create with respect to style, genre, etc.? What kind of a singer would you classify yourself as?

Generally speaking, I can consider myself first of all as a pop singer, but for me there has never been any borderline in terms of musical styles or genres, so that's why the listener can feel today so much variety in my music in a single track.

MUSIC

I never let the style categories limit me, and I am always following what my feelings are telling me, so that the final result depends just on my mood when I'm creating that piece of music. But overall, I can describe myself as an Iranian pop singer.

What are the essential qualities that make a good singer? Do you see yourself as having a mission as a music artist?

I think that an artist's principles, life perspectives and vision are the top three ingredients that make him or her an international legend, which is unfortunately very rare in the music industry in Iran.

It is quite common that our musicians nowadays make songs without any specific vision, as they just try to make music for getting to the top of the charts and make a fleeting fame for themselves, and as a result after a very short time they fade away from the scene.

My mission as a music artist is to change the same old repeated style of music that has been going on for decades in Iran and to make the world know more about my country and its music.

I am also striving to open the door for new generations of artists and show them that there are opportunities for Iranian artists to break into the international music industry and that they can make themselves heard in every corner of the world. But in order to do so, they have to believe in themselves and have a strong vision for their art.

As a producer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and vocalist involved in all aspects of a project, can you tell us more about your songwriting process? Do you usually start with a melody and let the lyrics come to you? Or is it the other way around?

Each artist in the world has his or her own way of creating music, and there is no specific method that you should follow in order to make a song. It's completely up to your feelings and your mood of the moment.

By: Ghazal Mostafa

MUSIC



Fariman Takes Us on a Musical Journey & Says Big Dreams are Made of This!

Sometimes I write the melody, no matter where I am, whether I'm sitting behind the piano, walking on the street or taking a shower. As the next step, I write the song over my melody and then start the arrangement. After the musical base is ready, I sing the vocals and send it over for mix and mastering to my friend Masroor Sheidaei. This process of course can sometimes be a very long and complicated one. But sometimes I improvise: I make a musical bit which is a demo, a sort of arrangement of the atmosphere at a specific moment I'm living through. Over that atmosphere of the bit I've made, I start to write the melody and the lyrics. And the song is magically created over a day or so.

What/who is your main inspiration?

My inspiration is good and pure music. No matter the style, by whom it is written, and what his or her background.

In terms of the overall composition of the music you've produced so far, what is your favorite song and why? What is your favorite song to perform?

So far, one of the greatest songs I've ever made, which had millions of listeners, is called "Toro ba hameye khoobiati". Besides the huge success of the song, I have a special feeling about this musical production because the story behind it is a true story. I took a lot of inspiration from my private life to write the melody and the lyrics, and the song – just like I was mentioning before – was magically written and fully composed just in one hour. To this day, I have not been able to make anything like this again. That's why it is so special to me, and I like to sing it as my first song whenever I am performing.

Tell us about your upcoming collaboration with the legendary Italian singer Al Bano. This will be the first and biggest collaboration between an Iranian independent pop singer and an Italian legendary pop singer. Please tell us more about the project.

First of all, I am so honored and humbled to announce that this is the first time in history that a musical collaboration between an Iranian pop artist and one of the greatest singers from Italy takes place. The song is about life after Covid and how we will restart our lives anew and go back to normalcy with the help of each other, and regain our hopes and motivation for creating better days ahead - for us and for the next generations.



Musical Collaboration between Fariman & Al Bano

Besides the joy of singing with not only one of the greatest singers in the world, but also a great human being, whom I've always called Maestro, this incredible collaboration taught me a key lesson – the more you grow in the music industry or in this world, the bigger your heart shall become. So, working with Al Bano brought me this incredible message, that I will preserve forever in my memory and for the rest of my days. I am also grateful to the Italian Embassy in Tehran and its cultural office for their moral support in this project.

Do you have any hobbies or interests outside of music? If so, what are they?

My hobby and interest besides music certainly lie in sports. I'm currently actively committed to many different sport activities such as ping pong, running and weights training, and I am almost every day in the gym. And of course, besides sports there is cooking, which is the other side of a healthy life for me. I never took drugs, drank alcohol, or smoked in my life, and these unhealthy habits are to this day far away from my nature. Practicing sports, cooking with healthy ingredients, and eating at home are for me like a meditation, they help empty my mind and spur creativity.

What is one message that you would like to give to your fans? What was the best piece of advice you ever got from another musician? What advice would you give for someone who is just starting their career?

I hope that my music and my vision, as well as my lifestyle, which I'm trying to maintain at a good level as much as possible, can have a positive impact on my fans' lives, and especially make them understand that you have to fight for your dreams and that you should never give up while facing difficulties, going against the current or encountering failures. Never think about what you don't have in life, focus on what God already gave you, on your ability, and try to develop it. Try to improve every day and work hard on yourself. Then I'm sure you're going to achieve everything you've dreamed about.

One piece of advice I've got from a professional in music is that if you want to be successful you have to buckle down, which means that there will be a lot of sacrifices, work and pain, if you want to become a successful musician. Well, I can say I've lived with this advice my whole life and I'm still sticking to it.

What's your greatest wish? What are you trying to ultimately accomplish with your music?

I hope one day I will be granted the biggest honor and privilege for me to become the Ambassador of the Iranian music in the world, so I can make a bridge between Iran and the outside world, share Iranian values, its historical heritage, and its beautiful and profound culture across the borders. In this way, I would like to make the friendship deeper between Iran and the rest of the world.

Because I do believe that music or art in general can be the greatest common language in the world and the biggest diplomacy tool available to us.



“One piece of advice I've got from a professional in music is that if you want to be successful you have to buckle down, which means that there will be a lot of sacrifices, work and pain, if you want to become a successful musician. Well, I can say I've lived with this advice my whole life and I'm still sticking to it.”



Shervin Ranjbar

Shervin Ranjbar, MSc Textile Engineer, MA Fashion entrepreneurship, Textile technologist and fashion entrepreneur.

Green is the New Black: What is Slow Fashion and Why is it Becoming a Pop Culture

If you follow the fashion trends, you must have heard a lot about sustainable and ethical fashion in the last few years. You may even accept this trend and try to be a sustainable consumer. But what does “sustainable fashion” truly mean? What’s special about it? Is it for everyone? Does sustainable fashion mean to wear patch work and mended second hand garments? How to fit in this mega trend without looking under dressed and very casual?

This article will give an overview of the definition of sustainable fashion, the values which sustainable fashion stands for, and offers some practical steps on how to become a more conscious consumer by taking a few crucial steps which can be adopted effortlessly on a day-to-day busy lifestyle. It’s time that “fast fashion” is replaced by “slow fashion” by environmentally conscious consumers of the clothing industry.

What is sustainability?

In the charter for the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) sustainability is defined as: “the integration of environmental health, social equity and economic vitality in order to create thriving, healthy, diverse and resilient communities for this generation and generations to come. The practice of sustainability recognizes how these issues are interconnected and requires a systems approach and an acknowledgement of complexity.” “Sustainable practices support ecological, human, and economic health and vitality. Sustainability presumes that resources are finite and should be used conservatively and wisely with a view to long-term priorities and consequences of the ways in which resources are used. In simplest terms, sustainability is about our children and our grandchildren, and the world we will leave them.”

Why is sustainability important?

“The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests” (THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development 2015).



What is a sustainable fashion brand?

Sustainability of every business is defined by 3 pillars: economic, social and environmental factors. A good business model is one which focuses on these 3 factors and does not consider the profit as the only bottom line (Chaldek, 2019). A sustainable business strategy is aimed at addressing some of the most important global issues identified by the UN, such as:

- * Climate change
- * Income inequality
- * Depletion of natural resources
- * Human rights issues
- * Fair working conditions
- * Pollution
- * Racial injustice
- * Gender inequality



Is sustainability a fashion trend?

The 17 development goals introduced by the UN created a strong trend among the nations. Because it addresses and measures a series of important global issues which need prompt action to be able to sustain the living of human kind on this planet. This strong call to action by UN, embedded into different industries and each industry set targets to

accommodate the required steps toward achieving these goals. Fashion industry along with a few other industries are the main focus. Textiles, if not garments, have always been a key element of global commerce and the social and environmental impact of the fashion industry is very considerable. Fashion is the second pollutant industry in the world. Beside that, garment manufacturing is a very labor intensive industry which means that the main cost of garment making is labor. Therefore, the fast fashion strategy to deliver goods as cheap and as fast as possible to consumers, is targeting the labor. Fast fashion brands force the manufacturers to lower the cost of the garments and relevantly, the factories, reduce the wages and force laborers to work faster to deliver the goods at lower cost.

Due to the importance of social and environmental impact of the fashion industry, the UN has introduced “The UN Alliance for sustainable fashion” which is an agency designed to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals through coordinated action in the fashion sector.

Fast fashion is currently overconsuming available resources and creating a lot of waste. Also, across the supply chain, many workers are employed under unfair work conditions. Low wages make it difficult to maintain the bare minimum lifestyle. Harassment, workplace bullying, low wages, unpaid sick leave and no annual leave, long hours shift, unsafe work environment which causes long term health issues, are just a few problems face by this workforce.

In April 2013, Rana Plaza collapsed in Bangladesh. This 8-story building accommodated 2,200 registered workers who were manufacturing garments for 5 big international brands. This incident claimed the life of 1,127 of them and was recorded as the deadliest incident in the fashion industry. Based on the investigation released later, this building did not meet required health and safety standards and there was no legislation and regulation to monitor it.

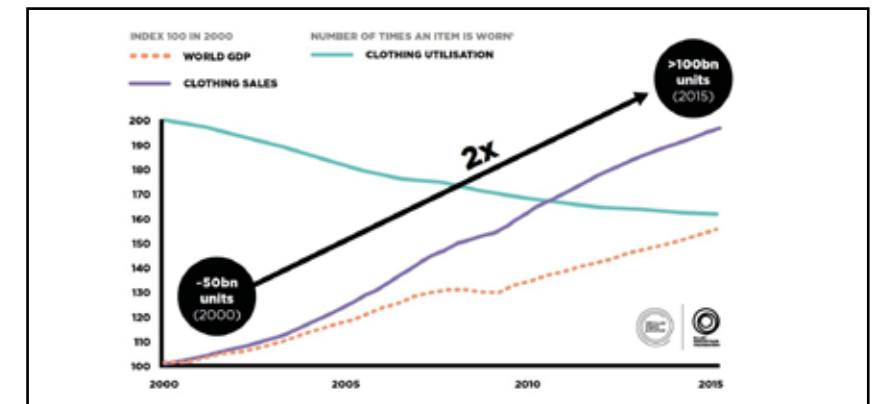
Since this incident, “fashion revolution movement”, a not-for profit global movement with members in over 100 countries around the world, started

asking brands “who makes their clothes” and began encouraging them to take responsible action towards their own supply chains.

The Rana Plaza incident along with the 17 UN development goals, have inspired sustainable and ethical practices in the fashion industry. Nowadays even fast fashion brands are forced to show transparency in their supply chain to convince their audiences. Ethical and sustainability practices are not fashion trends to fade away after a season or two. They are a strong call to global action across all industries to save our planet. There is no planet B. We only have one planet to live on and pass to generations to come and studies show that with current practices, life cannot be sustained on this planet for long. The graph below shows that in the last 15 years, our garment consumption has been doubled, while the lifespan of a garment has been reduced by half. This means that we buy clothes

twice as much as we used to buy 15 years ago and wear them 50% less before throwing them into rubbish bin. As countries become richer and the global GDP grows, this pattern may undoubtedly accelerate. In a similar pattern, the graph below shows how fiber manufacturing industries are coping with the garment consumption growth. Natural fiber production capacity cannot be increased much because there is a limit on the capacity of farms and lands. After all, we only have one planet, right?

To meet the increasing global demand for cotton, growing of food crops are replaced by cotton crops, because cotton can be double cropped and is therefore more profitable. Due to world population growth and higher food demand and the limit of available land for agriculture, this pattern is not sustainable as using more land to feed the fashion industry needs will lead to shortage of food and hunger.



Contributes \$2.4 trillion to global manufacturing

Employs 300 million people worldwide across the value chain (many of them women)

Is responsible for an estimated 2-8% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions

Around 215 billion liters of water per year are consumed by the industry

Annual material loss of US \$100 billion due to underutilisation

Textiles account for approximately 9% of annual microplastic losses to the oceans



Rana Plaza in Bangladesh

production capacity of man-made fibers such as Polyester and Nylon has been increased to cope with the global market demand. However, this approach led to another problem because man-made fibers are not biodegradable. They become waste and create environmental pollution. They release micro plastics and toxic chemicals which can contaminate water, soil and air. Recycling textile waste is complicated and expensive. It requires a complete supply chain to collect, sort and recycle the textile waste. Currently many countries don't have facilities, resources, required legislation, knowledge or the financial power to recycle textile waste. Consequently, textile waste is dumped in nature and contaminates landfills and oceans.

This is how our hunger for mindlessly shopping eventually comes back to hit us like a boomerang. For example, we are currently facing a crisis caused by fast fashion in countries like Chili. It is estimated that almost 100 billion pieces of unsold items go to landfill each year. These unsold items are almost 15 times more than the world population. (For more information check out "the price of fast fashion" by France 24 on YouTube).

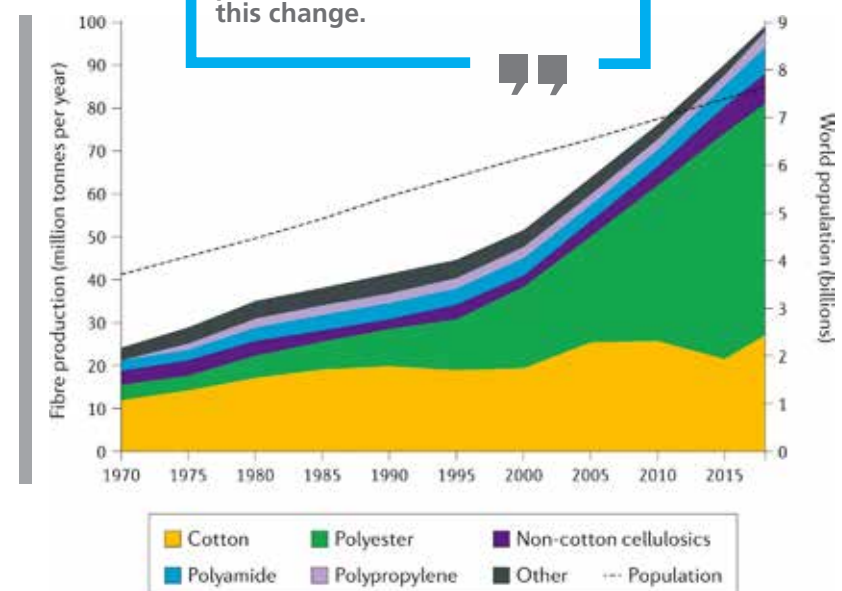
How to become a sustainable consumer?

To make the story short, we cannot afford to continue with our current lifestyle. We need a change, and we need it now. The more educated we are, the more we understand our power as consumers to enforce this change. So, we need to make sure our purchasing power is used wisely to make a change, to have a better impact on people's lives, and to have less footprint on our planet.

The United Nation social and environmental goals cannot be achieved without the participation of all global citizens. We are all in the same boat and we need to make sure our choices are empowering communities, disadvantaged people and saving the only planet we all live on.

We need to understand our important role. The more disposable cash we have as a consumer, the greater role we play and the greater impact we can have to change the fashion industry. There are some little steps we can start with as listed below:

We cannot afford to continue with our current lifestyle. We need a change, and we need it now. The more educated we are, the more we understand our power as consumers to enforce this change.



FASHION

* Don't buy out of boredom. Don't consider shopping as entertainment. Spend this money on life experience. Learn new skills, spend it on fun activities, adventure, trips and so on. These activities help you to enjoy and experience life without leaving so much waste behind while creating jobs in the tourism and entertainment industry. Study shows that life experience activities would increase happiness in people.

* Prior to buying a garment you like, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I need it?
2. Where do I wear it?
3. Do I have clothes and accessories to match it with?

Do not buy clothes if you don't need them. Do not buy clothes hoping that someday, somewhere you will wear them. Always have a range of core items with classic and ageless style in your wardrobe to go with almost everything. Like a high quality black dress, a couple of neutral color shirts and blouses. A pair of good Jeans, a well sewn black suit and a handful of nice scarves/jewelries for the final elegant touch. This will help you to match new items with your current garments easily and use the most of your wardrobe.

* Do not buy low quality garments. Invest on your garments and buy a better quality. This will make you look more elegant. Bare in mind people may only see you once and your outfit says a lot about you. That is the truth whether you like it or not.

* Buy from local brands and manufacturers. You create jobs for your community everytime you buy local. Beside that the supply chain is shorter and the carbon footprint is less. So "Buy local and empower your community".

* Appreciate artisans' artwork and buy from them. These artworks make your outfits unique while you help traditional craftsmanship survive. Use these items as signature of your outfit.

* There is no such thing as "buy one and get one free". There is always someone somewhere paying for your free items. Either an underpaid labor or the environment.

* Remember, if we buy less from fast fashion, they will be forced to make less. So the environment won't pay for their profits.



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Designing Bags One at a Time

Lilet Simonian

By: Dr. Koroush Resalati

Lilet Simonian was born in August 1984. She holds a bachelor's degree in architecture, and passed business management's courses. With fifteen years of managerial experience, Simonian has moved on to a new enterprise and now takes pride in more than four years of expertise in the field of bag design and manufacturing. She established the "Once" handbag design brand in 2018 and continues working on it to date. The curiosity that led to the design and development of her works was, from the start, rooted in Simonian's choice of architecture as a field of study. Long before getting into the fashion industry, Simonian studied design of a different kind and gained academic and technical experience in artful conceptions. The "Once" brand concept is built on the introduction of a new and distinctive design, the use of the best materials (natural leathers), and excellent quality and finishing of handicrafts.

Which design style have you adopted in your works?

My design style is "minimalist." The simplicity of minimalist art fascinates me because it allows me to communicate my message in the simplest way possible by producing details. The function of applications is the most significant problem in this style, not the femininity or masculinity of the objects. Minimalists develop a simple message and can alter their designs at any time. Neutral and mild tones are used in products and designs to appeal to a wide variety of tastes.

Who are your customers? Are you just in the business of selling women's products? Or do you operate in the realm of males as well?

Our custom designs appeal to a majority of consumers: buyers who are interested in our works as well as the quality and originality of the materials. This concept of uniqueness of a design is completed by providing a viewpoint that differs from the general public's definition of aesthetics. As I previously stated, minimalist designs are gender-neutral, and many of them have gender-neutral uses.

Did you choose a target market in the domestic sector, or were you aiming to expand to foreign markets from the onset?

We had a worldwide strategy from the beginning. The products designed and made since the second collection have been shown in Canada, the United States, Switzerland, and the United Arab Emirates, and the Once team is now striving to broaden its product presentation to worldwide markets.

Has your participation in fashion, clothes and apparel exhibitions, both inside and outside Iran, brought your products closer to global markets?

Domestic design exhibitions serve an important role in bringing designers' work to the public's attention. These exhibitions attract company owners in the fashion and creative industries from across the world. I also feel that by continuing to exhibit at these fairs, additional possibilities to access foreign markets will open up.

What materials and raw resources do you use?

Our collection's products are all manufactured from the best quality genuine leather, and non-recyclable polymer materials that have not been used.



How many hours do you spend on design and manufacturing during the day? What do you like to do in your leisure time?

For me, the design and manufacturing process is a full-time job, and because the leather industry and production work in Iran are traditionally male-oriented, I frequently encounter odd problems in the workplace, which I may become engrossed in for hours at a time. In my spare time, I exercise, study, and socialize.

Aside from books about fashion and design, I'm fascinated by writings and debates on Philosophy, and the majority of the books I have read in the previous few years have been in this genre. Japanese culture and literature fascinate me too, and I have lately begun studying this topic.

Have you seen other domestic and international rivals upgrading their products? Do you think that monitoring rivals who make similar products may help to improve product quality?

I am unaware of any of my industry competitors due to the market demand for exclusive designs and the development of new design styles on the one hand, and the relative handful of designers in my sector on the other. In my field, all groups or persons are my coworkers with whom I have a pleasant connection.

How important is advertisement in the introduction of new products?

Advertisement is the initial step in being visible, but it does not result in a customer base until a product, idea, or work is noticed. Utilizing efficient advertisement channels inside the target demographic is unquestionably a strong and efficient strategy. In this industry, our country is growing by establishing channels of introduction and concept stores.

Any message for the readers?

There is always a potential for failure if you're trying to execute a new idea, but if you do not do it, you have failed before you even start! Those who put their thoughts into action are undoubtedly successful in some way.

A "concept" has no economic value unless it is "executed," as we all know. So, if you have a concept and a slim chance of putting it into action, it is worth the risk and market evaluation for that concept.

We have a vast market, particularly in Iran, with demand in every industry, and if a concept is handled with a certain level of quality and direction, it will almost certainly produce positive results.

Large enterprises are the consequence of their founders' tenacity, patience, and perseverance.



Please introduce yourself and tell us a bit about yourself. What first led you in the direction of fashion design?

I am Hani Anvar Salar, born in September 1986 in the historical city of Amol along the Caspian Sea. I am a graduate of University of Isfahan in Materials Engineering with a major in Industrial Metallurgy, and I have a Bachelor of Architecture from Noor University. I am also the owner of Anvar Salar clothing brand. Around the end of my primary school in Amol, my family moved to Isfahan where I continued my education all the way through getting my university degree. After graduation, I enlisted for military service and once I had completed my 2-year service I was able to travel abroad and spend a few years outside Iran pursuing my other interests in foreign products and import opportunities. Those years abroad allowed me think through my ideas and to develop a well-planned clothing brand under my own name, and eventually establish the Anvar Salar company in Iran.

Tell us more about your brand identity.

“Sur Mesure” or Made-To-Measure in custom clothing is the practice of making garments to fit a particular person and is considered of superior quality compared to a ready-to-wear garment. Made-to-Measure luxury clothing was first introduced in France around the 1910s. It has since spread professionally around the world, especially in the United Kingdom and Italy. In my opinion, today Italy and the city of Naples are the cradle of Made-to-Measure clothing in the world, and in this connection, Britain and Italy are the largest producers of highest-quality wool fabrics that are traditionally used for custom made garments.

What are the characteristics of a Made-to Measure garment?

Custom Made articles of clothing, have always been adopted by the more sophisticated echelons of a society. In the custom made process, the choice of fabric and design, as well as the small details of the garment that may normally be less considered, reveal the difference between these and ready-made clothes. Basically, sophisticated and fashion-minded customers are looking for the distinctions and



Hani Anvar Salar

Custom-Made Men's Luxury Clothing for the Refined Tastes

differences that make these Made-to-Measure clothes more in demand for such people. For example, a custom made suit that is sewn according to the anatomy of the individual's body has far more features and visual appeal than ready-made models.

As a leading entrepreneur, what factors do you consider as the reasons for your success?

I have always had a special interest in formal, classic clothes, especially suits. I even had this interest during my childhood and teenage years, as I enjoyed wearing classic suits. This long held passion of mine became the kernel around which I grew my personal interest in creating a distinct design complementary to my version of classic taste in clothing. Of course, it helped that when I finally returned to Iran, I found a need for Made-to-Measure clothing with an impressive and

attractive brand. That's how I founded the Anvar Salar clothing brand in 2017.

In your opinion, what factors have caused the Anvar Salar brand to be a talking point?

When I started in this profession, all my thoughts and efforts were on improving the quality of my goods, including the quality of the fabrics being used and of the sewing, so that I personally had very careful supervision over the production of the clothes. Our overall superior services to our customers have also been very effective. In my opinion, in today's world, customer services should be even more luxurious than the actual luxury goods you offer. The combination of all these are the factors that have made this brand popular among its customers.

As a luxury and celebrated brand, what approaches to tailoring does Anvar Salar have?

The approach that Anvar Salar uses in its Made-to-Measure section has its own special and unique features. According to the technical background of the suit itself, there is a very narrow border between “bespoke” and made-to-measure. I must add here that bespoke, which is an older method of suit tailoring, is sewing from scratch and is entirely based on a customer's specifications with far more attention dedicated to minute details and with multiple fittings during the sewing process. This is different from Made-to-Measure which is based only on using different fabrics of high quality with assorted colors and several times of fitting. This important issue is still not observed in Iran when we talk about these two different approached to sewing of custom clothing. At Anvar Salar, we make every effort to maintain our superior standards. The bespoke product we offer is completely different from the ready-made brands in terms of sewing, design, and fabric quality. We try to convey this message to our customers that the suit you will be wearing is not made for anyone else, and you can wear it with full pleasure and for a long time. We usually design each person's clothes according to their personality, body anatomy, interests and everything that gives them a sense of pleasure and comfort. Naturally, this means that every time our tailors sew a garment, a new original model is created.

What are your export prospects and strategy? How do you “export” you brand?

In recent years, due to sanctions, Iranian brands in all industries have become self-sufficient and by necessity they have attained the basic qualities for globalization, and the clothing industry has not been an exception to this process. Many underground workshops that used to produce clothes with fake foreign brands have had to rebrand themselves and enter the market with their own distinctive label in a wide price range. In Iran, the main problems in export are the lack of self-confidence of producers and the absence of proper representation of Iranian goods in Iran's neighboring



countries. Also important for export of clothing is a general policy and appropriate training, which in my opinion should be formulated and guided by the government. The Anvar Salar business policy has been based on exports since its inception, which unfortunately has been postponed due to sanctions. We are currently consulting with the countries of Oman and the UAE to be able to establish VIP showrooms in those countries for prominent individuals, businessmen, and those who have special interests and tastes in line with the Anvar Salar bespoke brand. Under this strategy, design, measurements, and fittings will happen locally with the customers, but all sewing is done by the top Iranian tailors in Iran. The Anvar Salar globalization strategy has been in the works from the beginning, and we have always had an established policy and approach to have a worldwide presence for our products and services.

What does the Anvar Salar line of clothing include?

Anvar Salar line of clothing is for men only. Today, custom made items by Anvar Salar include all types of suits, coats, men's shirts, jackets, men's pants, denim suits and jackets, jeans, all kind of waistcoats and vests, denim overcoat as well as all items selected and ordered by our customers.

What are the main challenges of the fashion and clothing industry?

This line of business and profession has many challenges, but Anvar Salar has been able to offer a new generation of marketing and services to meet the basic needs of its customers.



For example, we must meet with our clients several times for each item of bespoke, from ordering to fitting which may be a few times, and lastly for the delivery of the product. But we have been able to streamline the whole process and provide our services at the customer's convenience, with respect to time and location of each visit and fitting. In other words, the tailor and design consultant go to the customer with several choices of fabric and with a pattern book and follow up in the same manner for the required fittings and finally the delivery. As you can imagine, our services are very popular with businessmen, lawyers, doctors and those professionals who are very busy. The next challenge in our profession is the lack of qualified tailors in this class, and as such, Anvar Salar strives to provide training for young tailors in Iran and abroad in order to continuously maintain its production line with up-to-date techniques and according to global methods.

What differentiates you from other designers and Made-to-Measure tailors?

The Anvar Salar quality of service and the way we treat our customers make us stand apart from our competitors. The quality of our fabrics and our impeccable sewing and tailoring techniques and processes attract many of the country's prominent social figures, and our unparalleled service seals their loyalty to the Anvar Salar brand. But perhaps the most important aspect of working with our distinguished clientele is that we never misuse their names in our advertising —which is the red line of Hani Anvar Salar!

Looking back, how do you see the journey you have experienced? What has brought you and the Anvar Salar brand this far? Do you have a final word for our readers?

All my efforts during my years in business have been based on honesty and fairness. Another important rule in my life is the special respect I have for all my colleagues, and this deference has created a kind of loyal relationship between us, which, thanks to all my professional friends, has also played an important role in the growth of Anvar Salar.

I also do not consider myself a pioneer in this profession and believe that I still have a long way to go.

As far as a specialty effect, the Anvar Salar line of luxury dress shirts which are created with accurate measurements of the anatomy of a client's body, includes natural oyster buttons, and various styles of collars and sleeves. Also, by embroidering the name of the customer on the cuffs, or anywhere on the shirt that the customer prefers, we create a gift of sorts for our esteemed customers, of a lasting and high-quality souvenir. For your interested readers' information, the Anvar Salar Showroom is located in Farmanieh district, where our customers can visit by appointment and enjoy all our amenities. Today, the services provided by Anvar Salar in the bespoke department are completely in line with modern European standards.

Anvar Salar has also recently started a ready-made clothing line and our new store will soon open in Saadat Abad Opal Shopping Center in northern Tehran. Customers can now make an appointment at the Made-to-Measure department through the Anvar Salar website, and also take a look at the choices in styles and fabrics on this same portal.



Custom-Made
Men's Luxury
Clothing for the
Refined Tastes

Instagram: AnvarSalar

Website: AnvarSalar.com

Phone: 021 2842 9223
021 9103 1998

Phone: 00 902 004 0111
00 902 005 0111



UP & COMING
DESIGNERS

A Fashion Pioneer Inspires the Lablanche Clothing Brand



Arezoo Nabaei

Arezoo Nabaei founder of Lablanche clothing brand, was born in 1989 in Tehran, Iran. She is a graduate of Allameh Tabatabaee University in management.

From an early age, Arezoo was designing tiny dresses for her dolls, and perhaps laying the foundations of her future career in fashion!

After finishing her university education in Iran, Arezoo went to Cyprus where she took courses in fashion design to pursue her real passion. Upon her return to Iran, she started the Lablanche brand here.

Arezoo's brand is about combining different cultures into her designs and meeting her customers' needs with various tastes and sizes. For her, size does not matter as she believes all women's sizes should be fashionable, even plus sizes.

Arezoo's inspiration comes from the first Iranian fashion designer, Zinat

Jahanshah who lived over 100 years ago during the Qajar dynasty. At the time, she was a pioneer in this field, having left Iran to study fashion and tailoring in Switzerland and France. She even established a women's clothing boutique in Tehran, surely a first of its kind.

Power and independence of this woman has encouraged Arezoo to be creative and dynamic in her designs. There are numerous professional fashion designers in Iran, each with new ideas tailored to the limitations of clothing imposed by social norms of the country.

In this crowded field, Arezoo believes that the world of fashion is endless. But to succeed, she knows that she will have to continuously innovate and experiment with new ideas in order to keep her brand fresh and her client base happy.



Lablanche

A Word with Behdad Najafi Asadollahi, Artist, Curator, and Manager of Ragadid Complex



Behdad Najafi

How would you describe the current state of the Iranian art scene, both inside and also outside of our borders? What are the opportunities and challenges? What are the new trends and developments?

Generally, art and all the activities and businesses relating to art are flourishing in Iran. This growth trend within our social environment is driven by two factors. One is the popularity of art as a profession among people, especially the young generation. And the second factor is the germane art market with its remarkably increasing demand for art and artworks as an important component of the daily lifestyle in Iran. The number of art galleries, art institutes and schools, and private studios are multiplying every day and meanwhile we are looking at a market with a growing number of exhibitions, auctions, art expos and other art-related events all around the country.

A growing market in such an environment has its own pros and cons in all the categories of goods and services. On one side the demand will increase, and on the other side the competition will intensify among suppliers. This is exactly what is happening to the art market in Iran at the present time. In my opinion, artists who want to be successful in this growing market should focus on creativity in their production and on personal branding for their marketing communication. They should also have a serious look at our economy and management methods as the basis of their art business strategy, and furthermore, consider the guidance of expert consultants in this field a necessity. I would also like to add that the global demand for the artworks of Iranian artists is quite gratifying, and many of our artists have a strong presence in international exhibitions and are successfully selling their artworks in those markets through different sales channels.

What can you tell us about the commercial/business side of Art?

I believe that general rules of economy, management and business are the same in the commercial side of any activity in all the sectors and therefore they are applicable in the business side of art too. An artist should consider his artwork as a product or service which of course has its unique and exclusive characteristics.

As a result, when a piece of art is going to be presented to the market through an exhibition, auction, art expo, in the artist's studio, or even by online means all the business rules and economic equilibriums like supply and demand, marketing and communication planning and such

should be employed and benefited from in developing art business strategies and plans to move forward accordingly.

Tell us about your partnership/collaboration with Ragadid. What experiences can visitors expect when walking into Ragadid?

I am both a creator and curator which means I create artworks, as well as plan and hold exhibitions. My main art field is painting and after that, photography and installation art.

I have always participated with my own artwork in exhibitions I have myself curated and managed, and I also actively take part in many group exhibitions and events held in other galleries and venues. Professionally and officially, I am the director of Ragadid art gallery and plan and manage the exhibitions and art events with my team of experts.

Ragadid is one of the largest and most advanced art gallery spaces with a special multi-segmented structure that provides us with many options and solutions when holding exhibitions and events. It can actually be described as a galleria with 3 different galleries and a main lobby. It also benefits from a venue with 104 seats which is suitable for auctions, seminars, conferences, and other events.

I think visitors will have an unforgettable and unique experience of all the exhibitions held in Ragadid due to size and structure of the gallery, number of the artworks and the service we provide.

One of the unique points of Ragadid gallery which is also supposed to be its core competency is the visiting days and hours which are 7 days a week from 8 am to 8 pm. Ragadid is never closed, and the timetable of the exhibitions will always offer visitors many artworks on show.

What's next for Ragadid, such as art fairs, events and so on?

Our next event is an exhibition of paintings and sculptures called "Sheida Nebesht" which technically means "Enchanted Chirography". The exhibition is mainly a showcase of Calligraphy with a deep look at the usage of handwritten lettering, text and scripts in Iranian visual art scene.

This event will be followed by a series of exhibitions (group & solo) in different fields, with a special look at contemporary art forms like installation, video & digital art, auctions and expos, workshops and any other activities which are demanded by the art market and which also helps promote art and artists in our society. Our next event is an exhibition of paintings and sculptures called "Sheida Nebesht" which technically means "Enchanted Chirography". The exhibition is mainly a showcase of Calligraphy with a deep look at the usage of handwritten lettering, text and scripts in Iranian visual art scene.

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The Ragadid Complex located in the Enghelab Sports Club in Tehran was inaugurated on Sunday, January 16, 2022, with an exhibition of works by the masters of Iranian visual arts, in order to introduce and put on display the services of this complex to the art community and to pay tribute to its pioneers, educators and contributors. "Mahan Gozin" exhibition, the first in a series of exhibitions to be held under this title in future, was held in Ragadid Complex, and was a joint collaboration of the Khanesh Institute and Faradid Honar Cultural Institute. Its curator was Behdad Najafi Asadollahi and Saeedeh Arian acted as the artistic director of the exhibition.

The first Mahan Gozin exhibition showcased 47 paintings and 8 sculptures by 52 prominent masters and artists of Iran.

According to Najafi Asadollahi, himself a painter and artist of new art media, Ragadid Complex will be where various exhibitions in fields of visual arts such as painting, photography, sculpture, illustration, miniature, calligraphy and such, along with related art events, will be held continuously and regularly, of which "Mahan Gozin" was the first of its kind. In addition, the Ragadid Complex has capacity for holding exhibitions of new art media, including installation, performance, video art and digital arts, based on which planning for future exhibitions are underway. Najafi goes on to add that the first phase of the Mahan Gozin art event was the result of 3 months of teamwork, including the development of a strategy and an artistic plan, invitation of artists and selection of their works, assortment, installation and graphic design services and photography of artworks on display. As stated by Najafi, honoring and inviting all veteran artists is on the agenda of the Complex, but since the existing capacity and current facilities do not allow inviting all first-rate artists to the exhibition at once, in the following phases of the "Mahan Gozin"



Overview of "Mahan Gozin" Exhibition

on going art event series, notable Iranian artists will gradually be invited in order to include all such masters over time.

According to Najafi, the next exhibition in the Ragadid complex, called "Sheida Nabesht", which will be held while the next "Mahan Gozin" exhibit is being planned, will be featuring mainly the works of masters and artists in the field of calligraphic painting with an approach to the use of writing in contemporary Iranian visual culture. The display location of the works in "Mahan Gozin" exhibition in different halls of Ragadid Complex was based on the creation techniques of the artwork, the background of the artists and the dimensions of the presented works,

and a specialized team at the exhibition had supervised all stages of the processes. The selection of each work had been the responsibility of the invited artists, and in some cases, with input from the curator and the artistic director, certain adjustments had been made in accordance with the exhibition space.

The statement of the "Mahan Gozin" exhibition stated: "We have lived in a time when it is a great act to breathe in the realm of art beyond why and how. Anyone who has not started to wane in the struggle against adversity and inaction, embraces and creates his individuality, and is the pride of our time."

Behdad Najafi Asadollahi is a PhD Business Management graduate who is currently studying art. He is the son of Ms. Mansoureh Haji Baba Tabrizi, the founder and owner of the Tabriz Anthropology Museum. Najafi's father is a silk screen printer in the Iran Screen Production Unit, the first international producer of flags in Iran. As such, since his birth, Najafi has been nurtured in a cultural and artistic environment with color and painting, and his daily life has been intertwined with art, color and form.

Saeedeh Arian, the artistic director of the exhibition, said: "The selection of works and the invitation of artists to the "Mahan Gozin" exhibition have been selective, and we have considered a wide range of criteria." According to Arian, artists' professional background, history of their exhibition activities, and their participation in national and international art communities have all been decisive in selecting artists for the exhibit.

Regarding the exhibition, Saeedeh Arian added: "'Mahan Gozin" was held to support art and artists and holding other "Mahan Gozin" exhibitions on a seasonal basis is on the agenda of the Khanesh Art Institute, as we continue to host prominent Iranian painters and sculptors."





An Influential Young Figure Shines in the Realm of Culture

Please introduce yourself and briefly explain your field of activity.

I am Mohammad Reza Zhaleh, I was born in 1990 and I am proud to be the son of a martyr. I entered the theater world in 2005 without any background and with the aim of learning. The reasons for my interest in this field were my fascination with the works of a director of a local cultural center, and the fact that I wanted to hang out in the theater and to observe people who came and went there. My first assignment, as a teenager, was in 2008 as a stage manager in a series called "Sarai".

In the next project at the theater, I was again offered to be the stage manager in a series similar to Sarai series by the name of "Mazrae-ye Pedari" (Father's Farm). But the director had seen my acting elsewhere before and that's why they also gave me a role to play in the series. This second series in which I had a role became very popular and people were impressed by how a young boy with little experience could actually perform in front of the camera. I've also appeared in movies including "The Sign of Angel", "Riding in the Dust", and "Father's Farm". Altogether I have acted in 10 to 15 movies and series until 2018. After my time in movies, I moved on to cyberspace and started creating internet content.

But I had a rocky start as my first video didn't have a very encouraging reception on the Internet, which made me stop creating content and I basically left the social media platform for a while.

During the years I was acting, around 2009, I entered the world of writing and wrote my first book. I have written a total of 6 books so far that I am planning on making public as audiobooks through my own company by the name of Zhaleh.

My first book which got a permit for publication is called "Yazdegerd and the Third Millennium". This story can also be turned into a screenplay, so I'm hoping that it can soon be released as a play in theaters for the public.

The first of my books which I presented in audiobook format was called "The Sorrows of Love". The book was well received by the public and it had good sales. But unfortunately, for various reasons and contrary to my expectations, financially for me it was not very profitable. That experience prompted me to start my own firm, which I called "Zhaleh Company". After going through the long processes of getting the required licenses and permits and registering the company, I feel like it's a child of mine which I have cared for and raised. These days I also am back to creating content on the Internet, and the combined content that I produce is rarely seen anywhere.



The book I am interested in and recommend is "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho, and a movie I highly enjoyed was "Perfume: The Story of a Murderer", the 2006 movie by the German director, Tom Tykwer.



Which one of your fields of activity are you most interested in? What activities do you spend most of your time on?

I see myself as an ordinary person who loves writing and so I prefer to be known as a writer. I can also name Paulo Coelho as a writing legend whose writing captivated many people and, with his eloquent and expressive pen, inspired them to read books.

Unfortunately, cyberspace and other media have done a lot of damage to people's cultural tastes, and so one of my aims is to provide content that is more meaningful and worthwhile and to raise the quality of such social media exchanges.

Please tell us about the history of voice acting in Iran and how it has changed over time.

In Iran we had voice acting only for television in the past, and the artists who performed it, had a decent income from their performance.

Over time, as other spaces, such as social media were created, a smaller percentage of people continued watching television, and on the other hand, due to the economic reasons, working for television lost its financial advantages as the TV voice acting pay did not keep pace with the increase in cost of living.

This diminished role is coupled with the advent of cyberspace and social media as well as open sources of information today. As a result, people are more informed and look at things with a broader understanding of issues. These days, those artists who used to be unfairly promoted by behind-the-scenes hands have lost their value and influence for the wider audience out there.

Who are your favorite artists? Who inspired or helped you start your career?

The first person who inspired my life was my father. He was a musician and a writer, as well as a great poet. My father used to spread the energy of his poems in the space around him and the type of his audience did not matter much for him. My father lived in the style of Shams and associated with friends like Hossein Monzavi.

I am proud to have friends like Alireza Chalouk, Mehrdad Ahangari, Ardavan Esfandiari, and Hamed Masoumi, who all helped me in difficult situations and taught me to be patient.

What is your favorite book? What about your favorite movie? Also, what do you have to tell those who prefer audio books?

The book I am interested in and recommend is "The Alchemist" by Paulo Coelho, and a movie I highly enjoyed was "Perfume: The Story of a Murderer", the 2006 movie by the German director, Tom Tykwer.

For friends who are interested in audio books and who also wish to hear my voice, I invite them to visit Zhaleh Company's website and download the books on the site.

Mr.Zhaleh

Be Healthier with Maysam Shafiei

Salemtar Bashim (Be Healthier) is the 10-year effort of Maysam Shafiei and his team to reach a simple and permanent formula for having a beautiful body, being healthy and most importantly having better vibes! In a society where the per capita rate of exercise is very low and, in some cases, it seems impossible to get people involved in a healthier lifestyle, Salemtar Bashim is proud to announce that more than 15,000 people have joined its body and mind health campaign since its inception - which is a brilliant record!



@ MaysamShafiei
@ Salemtarbashim.ir
Salemtarbashim.com

Maysam Shafiei

Maysam Shafiei, has a master's degree in exercise physiology with a great deal of academic knowledge and 20 years of experience in advanced training as an international coach. Maysam has employed his expertise to effectively integrate sports and medical services into the community and has introduced the concept of "being healthier" in an all-inclusive and focused package which was recognized in Iran as the best sports campaign of the year in 2020.

Salemtar Bashim and its team run a brand-new formula!

According to Maysam, one of the first issues that the team at Salemtar Bashim explored was all the hurdles that kept the public away from regular exercising, a healthy diet, and generally a healthier lifestyle. They examined climatic conditions, cultural roots, community structures, social traditions, influential genetic and psychological questions, and the results of their research was data that led to an applicable process tailored to specific environmental and social situations.

As a consequence of such an in-depth study, when visiting the Salemtar Bashim team, people are offered some of the most diverse possible methods in achieving a healthier lifestyle - strategies that remarkably work on an individual basis.

To achieve such a healthy lifestyle, each person is examined by the Salemtar Bashim team from several angles upon arrival, and the results of the assessments are recorded in the form of personal reports in their file in order to integrate all available information over time and provide the best roadmap and reach optimum results.

In order to better advance these studies and identify the

determining factors and dimensions in an individual's physical and psychological health, a division called SALEMMED has been established. This division includes a group of the best physicians in various specialized fields - such as General and Sports Medicines, Cardiology, Orthopedics, Psychology, Nutrition, and Physiotherapy - who examine the results of a participant's oversee and all the information contained in the medical records of an individual.

The importance of personalized services in Salemtar Bashim

In the Salemtar Bashim database, each person has a specific medical sports record based on their different requirements.

All services of the Salemtar Bashim team are determined according to these requirements and needs, along with a tailored diet, and personalized 24/7 counseling services and support.

Setting your goals according to " Salemtar Bashim "

The most important matter after carefully examining the physical and mental condition of an individual, is setting real and measurable goals, which is planned in the form of a process called the "individual goal cycle" and is recorded in the participant's personal profile and can be viewed and measured by the individual and their coach.

In this process, participants check their path to their individual "goal" in full detail every 25 days.

An individual's "goal" in this context is that person's best physical condition in terms of physical appearance and health, as well as their ideal mental condition.

Providing a roadmap and turning it into a lifestyle

Once all the components determining the capacity and exercise goals of an individual are established considering all the details related to his or her psychological, physical and genetic factors, a roadmap will be prepared and presented for implementation.

This is exactly where the most critical part of the team's mission begins, which is to turn all the details of a profile into everyday habits of an individual with the aim of achieving a healthy physical and mental lifestyle. To put it simply and clearly, the object of the goal is for participants to do daily exercise and meditation, to drink an adequate amount of water, and to follow a healthy diet and lifestyle.

The success Salemtar Beshim strives to achieve through different strategies is cause for celebration with the realization of each milestone on this path to success.

General Overview

It should be noted that services of " Salemtar Bashim " are personalized according to individual needs on regular basis. The Salemtar Bashim campaign is designed with the aim of eradicating unhealthy habits from a person's lifestyle and replacing them with positive habits in the form of a comprehensive program including diet, exercise, meditation, medical consultation and dedicated support.

This process will continue until participants reach their individual goals with all the desired specifics and the new habits become their second nature. Salemtar Beshim also provides services like Salem Live which is created for people who want to only exercise with the team. Online training sessions are also designed to significantly increase the physical strength of participants and the combination of various exercises have an all-around beneficial effect with the goal of increasing muscle mass and reducing the percentage of fat on the body. This approach excites people because of the physical results they can see in their bodies in a matter of a few sessions.

Other services of Salemtar Bashim include Salem Diet, Salem Offline, Salem Special and similar programs which are tailored around participants' special needs and requests. Details of these services and exercise and diet programs are available on the Salemtar Beshim website (www.salemtarbashim.com). Team consultants are ready to answer all the questions and enquiries at any time of day or night as being informed about a healthy lifestyle helps to achieve healthy, happy and energetic communities, which is the main goal of Salemtar Beshim.

To communicate its goals and in order to inform the general public, Salemtar Beshim team educates participants in a meaningful and poignant manner on topics such as "biological age" as follows:

For decades the biological age has been used across the globe to gauge a human body's general health. Biological age is also used to assess the aging process more accurately and to track any damage or infirmity of body parts over time. The difference between biological age and chronological age demonstrates itself when a 50-year-old person is physiologically similar to a person who is only 40 years old, due to his or her healthy and active lifestyle. The opposite can also be true, of course, when a person can look or feel much older than their actual chronological age. This is true even for twins with identical chronological age who may be biologically younger (or older) because of their physical activity and health. The question is ...

How many candles did you blow on your birthday cake this year? What do you think is your actual age? The same number?



Many of us answer: "Yes, the same number. Does it make a difference ?!"

Maysam believes that it certainly makes a difference! Just refer to their explanation in the previous paragraph!

According to Maysam, the age noted on your identity card is irreversible: this number represents the number of years, days and hours you have lived, and this number has nothing to do with how you choose to live. Every human being begins to age from birth, but everyone can slow down their aging process and achieve a younger biological age later in life, even up to 20 years younger, which may seem like a miracle. Maysam contends that by making the right decisions, you can lower your biological age compared with your ID age, or alternatively increase that number through your lifestyle and wrong choices. He wants to remind everyone that the younger the biological age compared to the age on one's birth certificate, the healthier one's body will look and the better one's quality of life will be.

Maysam says that previously people believed that they could not play a role in the process of aging. But today, research has shown that in addition to internal factors such as genetics, some external factors such as diet, exercise, stress, sleep, smoking and other factors will affect our biological age.

So how can we find our biological age?

In this regard, Salemtar Beshim team has imported the cutting-edge InBody970 device to create a new standard for body composition analysis. This high-quality body composition device accurately and precisely measures the biological age of individuals by examining the parameters affecting an individual's health circumstances.

The InBody970 reports have the most diverse and useful data among other InBody devices as it measures abdominal fat and body water and provides personalized outputs that show how one's body composition compares to others of the same age, weight, height and gender. This information helps Salemtar Beshim experts offer the best age-specific advice at global levels to individuals who seek to learn how to create a foundation for long-term health.

Salemtar Beshim exercise and diet programs are a revolution in healthy lifestyle being offered to all Iranians regardless of gender or age.

By : Dr. Kourosh Resalati

Time to Look at the Political Upshot of Football



Football, otherwise known as soccer in North America, with an estimated 4 billion fans is undoubtedly the most popular and the most played sport in the world, and as such, should be considered as a social phenomenon. Perhaps no other discipline can be found that is so tied to people's daily lives. Regardless of your religion, sect, tribe or place of residence, as a fan of football, you can understand this common language. You can be happy or cry with it. Wherever you are, there are people on the other side of the world with whom you can identify and connect. But this is just one side of a football coin. Hostility is known as the opposite side of this mutual understanding. In addition to its components of empathy and unity, football is a multidimensional phenomenon. A phenomenon that in any society takes the color and smell of that community and shows the indigenous culture of that region. Our social disintegration can be reflected in the framework of a game of football.

The excitements and conflicts of football for the people of South America, including Argentina, Colombia, and Uruguay, are echoed in the reporting and analysis of world-renowned sports reporters. This game inspires the spirit of life for the ardent football fans of Brazil.

Football reminds Celtic and Glasgow fans of the old roots of their hostility. It reminds Barcelona fans of centuries of Spanish domination all over the world and the usurpation of their national symbols by their foes. For the Argentines, it is a symbol of the British invasion of the Falkland Islands, and for the Iranian people, it shows the dark side of our relationship with the Arabs.

This common language, in addition to friendships, also narrates resentments. This strange phenomenon, which has taken on the color and smell of trade, politics, culture and art, cannot be interpreted only from the perspective of sports. "Separate football from politics" is advice we hear from officials and managers these days. But is it possible to examine and interpret a social phenomenon with this amount of emotion, excitement and impact in society separately? When political, religious and national aspects of football, in addition to its element of social unity, keep all enmities alive, then Argentines, harboring deep animus rooted in their colonization by Britain, consider Maradona's goal as hand

of God avenging the humiliation inflicted by England. The British and Germans are still at loggerheads over their historical animosities, and their matches are always emotional and exciting. In the Spanish league, Athletic Bilbao and Barcelona are still symbols of the liberation and civil rights movements. Pan-Iranianism and pan-Arabism are prevalent in club and national matches between the countries of the Persian Gulf when the fire of these hostility in football is rekindled. Sometimes racism is added to this mix and the gap in relations deepens further.

In all these cases, the shadow of politics remains on football, and politics cannot be seen and interpreted separately from football. Are exchanges of money between different countries to win the hosting rights of international, continental and world competitions and their political propaganda and suppression of World Cup opponents a non-political behavior? Can we overlook exploitation of workers in Qatar to build stadiums and hotels for the 2022 World Cup and FIFA's indifference to it, the absence and powerlessness of colored people in managerial and coaching positions, and thousands of insults to black players in prestigious leagues in Europe, England, America, and Asia, as apolitical? Is not the refusal of attendance of our country's athletes in matches against Israeli athletes a political stance? Then again, we

have the full-out happiness of the Iranian football fans for winning against Australia to reach the World Cup displayed in the expression of their joy in the streets across the country while forgetting general economic and livelihood problems to show a national solidarity that can be only compared to a political win.

So how do we separate football from politics and consider it a separate phenomenon? The fact is that the absolutism and sanitization of football as a mere sports phenomenon is unrealistic. In fact, no event or phenomenon is pure in and of itself. Sport is no exception as it has become a commodity and has been deeply commercialized in today's world environment. Institutional sports leagues are also further fueling this issue on a daily basis. It is time to look at sports, especially football, and these money-making engines through a different lens, and to consider their beauty together with their unfavorable aspects. The agitated atmosphere after the match between Persepolis and Al-Nasr is a terrible example of the fusion of sports and politics. The exuberance of the Saudi players on the pitch and the reciprocal response of



fans sitting in front of the Parliament and the Ministry of Sports, demanding the impeachment of the Minister of Sports on suspicion of supporting a particular team. They even try to influence the relocation of CEOs and the board and play a role in the fate of their favorite teams and leagues. For these reasons the political dimensions of a phenomenon called football should never be forgotten.



Russian and Belarusian athletes will be barred from the Olympics and other international sporting events over the war in Ukraine.

Mehdi Taremi, the Iranian player, are both equally and deservedly deplorable. A vast majority of football fans saw Zidane's red card in the 110th minute of the 2006 World Cup for his headbutt of Marco Materazzi in the chest, which incidentally lead to Italy winning the World Cup that year, as a political call by creating the worse memory of Zidane's career as well as an unexpected loss for the French national team. The Argentine referee, Horacio Elizondo had not personally witnessed the headbutt, and gave Zidane a red card only after the fourth official had informed him, which created this political interpretation of his call. Hundreds of other cases can be cited that showcase the fascination of football for the world over and which clearly demonstrate the impact of football on politics. But the function of football should be described as a friendship creator rather than an enemy maker. With a perfect game of football, all the bitterness of those combative moments can be erased. At the same time, it is simplistic to imagine that you can be friends with someone only if there is no animosity between the parties. Like an old scar that is clawed anew, hostilities multiply with each football match and continue to live stronger than before. A local example is the long-standing rivalry between Persepolis and Esteghlal football teams and the countless instances of fanaticism and enmity of some of the fans of these two teams. We can all remember these

Football, of course, is not the only arena where politics and sports intersect. In the sensitive circumstances of the current war between Russia and Ukraine, we are also witnessing political intervention at the highest levels in sports in the past several years. As a result of Russian aggression in Ukraine, Russian athletes and various sports federations of Russia have been banned from the Olympics, World Championships, and international competitions for an indefinite period of time by the International Olympic Committee, FIFA, UEFA and other federations. Moreover, all medals, responsibilities and honorary accolades of sports federations for one of the most powerful presidents in the world, Vladimir Putin, were abolished overnight or completely annulled!



A Brief History of the Argo Factory



Argo Factory, a once active beverage factories in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s, was one of the first industrial plants in Tehran. The factory, with its distinctive architecture of tall chimneys and its unique geographical location in the city center, was neglected for years. And abandoned for past forty years, it had turned into a dilapidated building. But Argo Factory's fate was tied to a much brighter future, and all was not lost for it.

The factory started its activity as a beverage factory in the 1930, but the history of the building goes even further back. According to evidence uncovered by "Tehran's Cultural Researches" team, the building had previously operated as an iron making factory, although establishing a definite date for it was not possible.

The Argo plant is located in the old part of the city and is of great importance in terms of "Tehranology". During the period that the factory was in operation, there were very few industrial plants in the area, which made the conservation of this building to facilitate the chronicle and study of the region's industries more important.

According to available evidence, former owners of Argo Factory were influential businesspeople and had a great impact on development of the areas around the factory. Political conditions of the country also had direct repercussions for the operation of the factory and the

fallout can be seen in the transformation noticeable in the surrounding areas.

With the expansion of the city and the surge in development of residential areas during the mid-Pahlavi period, the operation of this building was stopped and it was forced to relocate to outside the city and a more industrial zone. After the relocation, the building was utilized as a retail store offering Argo products. The Argo Factory store was operational until one year before the Iranian Revolution in 1979 at which time it shut its doors. The building remained abandoned until 2016, when the Pejman Foundation, a Tehran-based organization focused on support of artistic and cultural events, purchased it with the aim of transforming the industrial space to a cultural one.

In line with its ambitious goals of creating an exhibition space and a cultural center, the Foundation decided to renovate and revitalize the Factory's building. Rehabilitation and temporary re-opening of this building began in October 2016 and soon three exhibitions were held in the semi-renovated space of the factory that same year.

In the winter of 2018, a more comprehensive restoration and renovation of the building began under the supervision of architect Ahmadreza Schricker (ASA North) at the request of Pejman Foundation. The emphasis of

the restoration was on preserving the originality of the Argo Factory building with special tribute to the old city fabric of Tehran, making it an ideal venue for the 'Argo Museum-Gallery'. Pejman Foundation hopes that with a new functional purpose for the old building, the cultural impact of the structure in the region will be better felt this time around.

Introducing Pejman Foundation and its role and activities

Pejman Foundation began its activities in 2015 with a focus on contemporary Iranian and international art. Throughout recent years, the activities of Pejman Foundation have expanded beyond building its collection and its grant and sponsorship programs. Through the organization of workshops, lectures, and panel discussions, invitation of international experts, its artist exchange programs, as well as its support for cultural research and publications, Pejman Foundation has become a creative hub for art practitioners and initiatives in Iran and abroad. Today, Pejman Foundation supports art and culture through a vibrant program of exhibitions, talks, and events at its multiple locations including the Argo Factory and the Kandovan Building.

Argo Factory activities and examples of its successful programs

Argo Factory is a non-profit cultural institution, housed in a former beverage manufacturing plant in Tehran. Argo Factory is part of Pejman Foundation's constellation of sites. Argo Factory was one of the major beverage manufacturing factories in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s. The construction of the building itself dates back to early 1920s as one of the first industrial plants in Iran. In spite of its unique architectural features – high smokestacks and strategic geographical position at the heart of the city – the factory was taken for granted for many years, and it eventually turned into a tumbledown building for almost four decades. In 2016, Pejman Foundation acquired and restored the Argo Factory and turned into one of its multiple functional sites.

Past Art Exhibitions held at the Argo Factory

"Elsewhere" Exhibition
Interactive VR Installation by
Hayoun Kwon and Balthazar
Auxietre
Curator: Emad Aleebrahim

Pejman Foundation: Argo Factory was proud to present "Elsewhere," an

interactive virtual reality installation by artists Hayoun Kwon (South Korea/France) and Balthazar Auxietre (France), and curated by Emad Aleebrahim. With the use of VR technology, the artists sought to create poetic illusions based on human memories and establish a direct and reciprocal



connection between the audience and the artwork. In this interactive installation, and through use of VR headsets, the participants had the chance to immerse themselves in complex experiences. These were personal experiences not happening in front of images but physical ones taking place inside those poetic compositions! The exhibition was set up as "installations" within empty spaces – which the curator called "time capsules" – and every virtual reality experience was confined to one of these spaces. While waiting to be immersed in these VR illusions, participants were able to take part in the experiences of the group before them through a different medium and from the "outside world". "Elsewhere" was made possible through the generous support of the French Embassy in Tehran and was supported by Samsung.

"Video at Large" Exhibition
Selection of videos from the
collection of Paris Museum of
Modern Art (Musée d'Art Moderne
de Paris)
Curators: Odile Burlaux and
Jessica Castex

At the invitation of the Pejman Foundation: Argo Factory, the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris presented the exhibition "Video at Large" based on a selection of videos from its collection. The project focused on large format images and the immersive display surrounding them.

Video art has always been directly linked to its specific arrangement, which lends itself to the theatrical nature of a moving image and its encounter with the public. Likewise, in the dark room space, the visitor occupies a central place. In this context, the films of Philippe Parreno,

to provoke an active participation of the body: the viewer becomes an actor. Technological innovation is one of the factors in transformation of the artistic practices. From digital insertions (David Claerbout), to morphing (Christian Boltanski) all the way to the recent experiences of virtual reality and



augmented reality, a transformation of the status of the image – alive and no longer representing – has taken place, questioning the limits of reality.



The impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Argo Factory's activities and future plans

Argo Factory, like many other businesses, was forced to postpone many of its exhibitions and future plans due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Border restrictions prevented artists and curators who collaborated with the Pejman Foundation from traveling to Iran and present their work and this disrupted all prior arrangements. However, installation of the exhibitions were organized where and when possible with digital tools (virtual tours, filming and video sessions). Difficulties in preparations were not limited to the pre-production stage of the exhibitions; even after the opening and execution of the exhibitions, any one of them would have to be suspended for a period of time due to the limitations imposed by Covid-19 Control headquarters. These delays invariably postponed the closing of the exhibitions and, as a result, hampered the formation of future plans.

By : Reza Taeb

A Pop Singer Who Connects with the Young

Keyvan Shahbaz was born in 1997 in Tehran. He started playing piano instructed by masters such as Jamshid Rahmani and Yalda Samadi and later continued his music education in the fields of singing, songwriting and composition. But his professional life as a musician started with a music group he created and his collaboration with the "Navaye Sepand" Cultural and Artistic Institution. Shahbaz's interests lie in pop and R&B styles and their combination with electronic music. In a conversation with Trends Shahbaz said: "My passion for music started at a young age in 2006 as I learned playing the piano. As I showed some promise in piano playing, I was encouraged by my family and friends, and needless to say this gift of music was also strengthened with teachings of prominent masters in this field over time, this artistic flair led me to songwriting and composing and singing, and I was able to further improve my music skills by taking courses in music, composition, singing, songwriting, as well as through listening to and studying works of different artists in various fields."

Shahbaz believes that the Iranian music market is competitive and challenging just like in other countries and says: "The atmosphere of the country's music industry is still unfamiliar for many of the artists just entering this field. But thanks to the good work done by some producers and involved institutions, music industry in Iran has flourished in recent years. Also, apart from any cultural and artistic role this artform plays, music has assumed a social dimension in Iran. Another thing to note is that the country has an audience with a wide range of taste in pop music which makes finding a single music style to convey its feel and quality to a broad fan base more difficult."

Keyvan Shahbaz

Instagram: Keyvan_Shahbaz

This pop singer to the country's young generation pointed to the growth of the Iranian music market compared to the past, and added: "Nowadays the opportunity for new talent and creative artists to grow is much more available than before. I my hope is that there will be brighter and better opportunities for artists to come forward, and that a platform will be provided for each and every one of them to show their musical gift to their audience."

Shahbaz, who strongly believes in the positive impact of social media on the growth of artists, goes on to say: "Due to the existence of new platforms on the web with easy access to an audience, artists can easily find and attract their followers. So this virtual space has had a positive and significant impact on my work."

With the pop style as his main form of music, Shahbaz, explains: "My music has no specific target with respect to its audience, but due to its modern lyrics and content and performance style, it is often attractive to the 10- to 25-year-old crowd."

This pop singer talks about the notion of success as a final observation: "Success occurs when an artist really connects with the audience, and it is more about the quality of a musician's work than the quantity. A song or performance has a direct relationship with the audience and their feelings. My team and I do our best to produce music at our listeners' level and to communicate as much as possible with our fans, and the public in general".

MASOOD ZAKERI PHOTOGRAPHY

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Zula is a Free to Play Online First-Person Shooter game developed by MadByte Games in 2016. Shortly after its initial release, the Iranian game developer, Sourena Games, localized and officially released the title in Iran in Farsi.

Despite the initial solo development by MadByte, Sourena Games has taken an active part in the development of the game, co-developing a plethora of new content with MadByte. This new wave of content chiefly includes new Maps and a selection of Melee and Ranged weapons.

ZULA

Ever since 4 years ago, Sourena Games has been hosting massive tournaments like the Zula League, that have been the most important and perhaps of sole note steps in jumpstarting the Iranian Esports scene. Zula tournaments are currently the most organized and popular Esport events that are hosted by a publisher.

During these 4 years of events, over 20,000 players have participated in these tournaments in more than 1500 teams. They have been awarded a sum total of 4,000,000,000 IRR as prizes for these tournaments, a groundbreaking record for Iranian Esports.

Through producing and publishing local content and games, and through increasing the general engagement of the Iranian public with Esports, Sourena Games seeks to acquire more of the Iranian PC Gaming market share.



ZULA.ir

The involvement of the Publisher with Zula's development has no doubt resulted in a desirable outcome. Not only for the fact that this localized version of the game includes the aforementioned new content, which creates an experience that cannot be had with the foreign versions of the game, but also for the fact that locally available servers within the borders of Iran allow the players to play with lesser latency and lower internet bills.

This is all without mentioning the benefits of the punctual and diligent customer support provided by Iran Zula team in Farsi, providing the client with a smooth experience throughout their time with the game. This capacity is of crucial importance to a massive online game like Zula. In the latest update of the game that was released this spring, the Iranian user can participate in the widely popular battle royale mode. The availability of vehicles such as cars and boats, as well as the low hardware requirements of the game, has made Zula's Battle Royale mode a primary contender in all Iranian competitive Esport scenes.

After 5 years, Iran Zula has succeeded in attracting 3 million participants and a peak of one million active players, showing immense potential in the Iranian PC Gaming market.

Zula's amazing and profound success has indicated a massive potential PC Gaming market in Iran that was almost entirely untapped until now. However, we believe that this market is still untapped to a large extent, and can be fostered into a colossal and lucrative entertainment business sector.

Years of sanctions and isolation of the Iranian entertainment sector from the global entertainment industry has artificially created a massive demand and a vacuum for these products, and if any entity were to fill that demand, the growth experienced will be unprecedented in the history of media.

Zula is the first testament to this fact, and despite limited resources and tough situations, it has experienced a meteoric rise into the mainstream. Far from its true potential, with the availability of powerful servers, better and larger Esports infrastructure and strong marketing, Zula can feasibly achieve even upwards of 10 million active players.



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