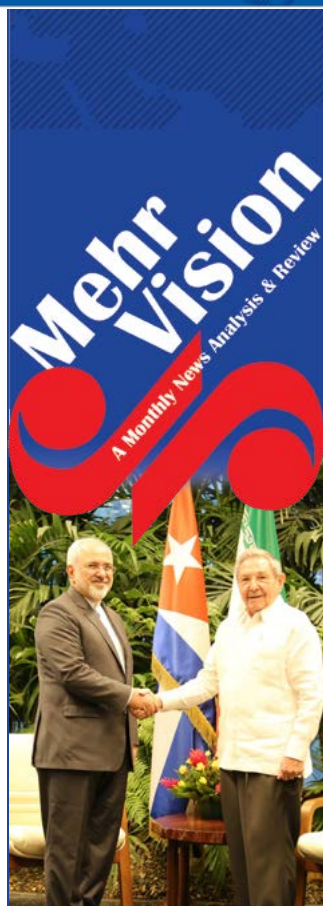


Persians in the Land of the Incas



Mehr Vision

□ **Managing Director:** Ali Asgari

□ **Editorial Board:**

Seyed Amir Hassan Dehghani,
Mohammad Ghaderi, HamidReza
Gholamzadeh

□ **Editorial Coordinator:**

Marjohn Sheikhi

□ **Contributors:**

Lachin Rezaian, Marjohn Sheikhi,
Parnaz Talebi, Maryam Khormaei,
Hossein Azari, Mohammad Ghaderi,
Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh,
Samad Habibi, Peyman Yazdani

□ **Art Director:** Mahboubeh Azizi

Phone: +98-21-43051350

Email: English@mehrnews.com

Address: No. 18, Bimeh Alley,
Nejatollahi St., Tehran, Iran

*Mehr Vision welcomes contributions by
readers which can be sent via email.*

Contents

Post-sanction Iran seeks to jolt economic ties with Latin America

3

West playing with fire by curbing Aleppo liberation

6

US seizure of Iran's money a tactic to goad Iran

7

Coup plotting: a US tradition

9

Turkey's 'Arab Spring' moment: No Sisi and no more Gulen

10

How to read world when UK departing from EU

12

Brexit vote adds to global uncertainty, volatility and risk

13

'US exerts heavy influence over UN'

15

Germany not to take Bush-style wrong reaction

16

World 'failed to accurately address' Palestinian issue

17

Economy

Bank Mellat to be reimbursed for reputational damage, loss of earnings

21

Thailand, Iran economies can be 'complementary'

23

Iran new potential market for Thailand

24

The wind carried him to the whiteness of the clouds

26

The Empty Doorway

28

Iran's Natl. Botanical Garden piece of heaven on earth

29

Look up! There is an art gallery above you!

30

Journalism, thrill of pursuing truth on perilous path

31

Olympic athletes now enjoy halal food

32

'Son of Desert' to explore Iranian central desert: planned for 2017

33

Persepolis threatened by drought, land subsidence

34

Bam Citadel to open to public after 13 years

35

Turkish GAP projects 'bane of environment'

36



News in Vision

37

Post-sanction Iran seeks to jolt economic ties with Latin America



By: Marjohn Sheikhi

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif kicked off his first Latin American tour to six countries on Aug. 21, aimed at jolting Iran's neglected economic ties with Cuba, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia and Venezuela.

Following the imposition of various trade and economic sanctions against Iran in a bid to force the country to abandon its peaceful nuclear program, the Islamic Republic began to seek for new trade markets in order to bypass the economic deadlocks imposed by the West and keep its ample commercial capacities alive.

Iran was grappled with the toughest case of unjust sanctions during the office of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the US hostility toward the country was at its highest peak. At the time where

the European Union and a number of major Asian countries refused to have economic cooperation with Iran under excessive pressure from the United States, it was perhaps inevitable for Iran to turn its eyes toward Latin American countries which had wearied of the American imperialistic attitude.

In late November 2009, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became the first Iranian president to have made a state visit to Brazil since the mid-1960s. The visit gained special momentousness at the time the Western side of the world had been 'hell-bent' on undermining every effort by the Iranian government in establishing political and economic ties with those other countries that had the chance and freedom of choice to not board the Anti-Iranian sanction train with the US administration at the helm. During Ahmadinejad's visit, dubbed by US Secretary of State as 'quite disturbing', Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula

da Silva publicly defended Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Ahmadinejad's Latin American tour then took him to Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Ecuador where the two sides conferred on all potential venues of cooperation.

The visits however came under criticism, not just from the United States which felt threatened and frustrated by Iran's continued attempts at maintaining political and economic links with other countries despite the West's best efforts in isolating it, as well as the fact that the development of Iran's trade and diplomatic ties with Latin America was seen by the US as Tehran's expanding influence in Washington's backyard and a threat to its national interests, but also from a number of political analysts inside the country who believed that investing in Latin American countries, due to the long distance, would not be 'economical' for Iran and that ➡

the country is in a sense spreading itself too thin. In foreign policy, too, they believed that Iran's top priority should be with promoting relations with neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey, instead of attempting to extend relations as far away as to Venezuela or Brazil with minimal impact on the country's core foreign policy issues.

Once President Hassan Rouhani took office in 2013, Iran's relations with Latin America seemed to dwindle, or at least go back several rows behind the forefront of the country's foreign policy priorities (most notably, the closing of National Iranian Oil Company's offices in Bolivia and Venezuela in 2014). It was the time where Iran was finally making tangible progress on its nuclear negotiations with the six world powers, and the United States had become directly involved in certain aspects of Iran's foreign policy. With the negotiations finally leading to a positive conclusion and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) signed on 14 July 2015 and coming into effect on January 16, 2016, Iran was now looking at a wider horizon of opportunities which the lift of sanctions offered.

While Iran has maintained its good political relationship with many countries in Latin America, economy-wise, the country has not fared so well. According to Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi, "there exist many areas for cooperation and joint ventures, but until now we have not been able to benefit completely from these capacities."

Now accompanied by a 60-person delegation consisting of business executives from the private sector, Foreign Minister Zarif will make his first trip to Latin America, specially aimed at bolstering economic ties. Zarif's trip began in Cuba on August 21, then will proceed to Nicaragua, Ecuador, Chile and Bolivia, and finally ending in Venezuela. The trip, as stressed by Takht-Ravanchi, has the potential to begin a new chapter in relations between Iran and Latin America, as various contracts in the fields of oil, energy, maritime, and transport are expected to be signed during the vis-



its.

According to Bahram Ghasemi, Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Zarif's trip to Latin America shows the government's attempts at facilitating a trade boom between Iranian economic agents with those in other countries and is consistent with the objectives of 'Resistance Economy' which includes among other tenets 'targeted promotion of exportable goods and services...as well as the promotion of foreign investment for export purposes' and increasing 'regional and international economic collaboration' as issued in a decree on Feb. 19 by Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Considering the fact that Latin America encompasses 30 countries with a total of 600 million populations, Iran's improved relations with this part of the world with its shared anti-US and anti-imperialist ideology will for certain open up many doors for meeting economic interests of both sides.

According to International Monetary Fund, trade between Iran and Latin America tripled between 2007 and 2008, rising to \$2.9 billion, and up to \$4 billion in 2013. Figures estimated Iran and Venezuela's bilateral trade at \$19 million in fiscal year 2013. The country invested \$1.1 billion in Bolivia's gas facilities during Ahmadinejad's administration, which helped greatly with the Latin American country's diplomatic ties with Iran as Bolivian President Evo Morales lifted visa restrictions and declared in 2008 that

the country's only embassy in the Middle East would move from Cairo to Tehran. Iran's exports of technical and engineering services to the region had previously helped tremendously with all-out expansion of economic relations and reducing the impact of US sanctions against Iran, therefore it is imperative for the country to follow up on the same path now that the nuclear case has been settled and there are more opportunities for investment and exports.

Meanwhile, Chile has reopened its embassy in Tehran, 35 years after its closure, and it is likely that Zarif's visit to that country and his meetings with senior officials of Chile would further expand bilateral ties and improve diplomatic relations to the level of ambassadors.

As maintained by Bahram Ghasemi, Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strategically supports a balanced outlook towards all countries and geographic areas, and strengthening relations with neighboring and Islamic countries as well as comprehensive development of relations with Latin American and African states have always been a priority of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy.

Zarif's six-nation tour, thus, in the light of post-sanction opportunities, is expected to usher in significant improvements for economic, industrial and technical cooperation with Latin America in the fields of pharmacy, dam building, housing, dairy industry, as well as oil and gas |



Politics

West playing with fire by curbing Aleppo liberation

By Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh

While Syrian Army siege over Aleppo is completed and the biggest city of country is expected to be liberated in near future, West and some Arab states try to hinder Assad government's achievement.

Aleppo is the biggest and second most important Syrian city after capital Damascus which was occupied by terrorists and Takfiri armed groups in 2012. Last week, Syrian Army and Russian forces cut the only border route to Turkey and completed their siege around the city in a significant achievement during more than 5 years of war with terrorists and Takfiris. The achievements of Syrian army and its allies, though, are not limited to this and they have been spending recent months gaining momentum on the battleground.

The imminent recapturing of Aleppo, and even the siege over the city, has improved and will increase Syrian government and Army's position and will drastically change the game in favor of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and his resistance policy. In other words, liberating Aleppo would pave the way for Syria – and Russia and Iran as its allies – to defeat Al-Nusra Front on one hand, and ISIL which is weakened both in Syria and Iraq on the other hand.

There are two evidence marking the significance of the ongoing developments in Syria. Split of Al-Nusra Front from al-Qaeda was a headline-making news for many media outlets, but did not surprise so many people. It is no secret that Al-Nusra has long been supported by states seeking removal of Assad both in region and outside the Middle East as so-called 'moderate' fighters who can fight Assad and Syrian Army to follow a regime change policy in the war-torn country. However, when it was clear that Al-Nusra is affiliated with Al-Qaeda, no more – at least direct

– support was possible; though they still managed to funnel supports in lower scale.

The idea was in fact raised more than a year ago by Qatar and some Persian Gulf states who suggested the group to split up with Al-Qaeda and they in return would provide the group with funds and supplies, according to a Reuters report in April 2015. The Arab countries had suggested the idea to get rid of notoriety and illegality of working with and supporting an Al-Qaeda-affiliated group. So in this way they could circumvent the international laws and work with the same terrorists who were once in allegiance with Al-Qaeda in order to use the terrorists to topple Bashar Assad and pursue their regime change plan in Syria.

Now, with the tough situation for Al-Nusra in Aleppo, the same scenario seems to be under way. Al-Nusra has split off from Al-Qaeda and voices of support for the group under the pretext of humanitarianism is being heard from west. Syria and Russia have considered three 'safe corridors' for nearly 250,000 civilians and one for the fighters who lay down arms to evacuate the city; Assad has also issued an amnesty verdict for 3 months for any fighter who lays down arms and surrenders to Army or releases prisoners captured by terrorists. Yet, the United States who has the group on its list of terrorist organizations, cast doubt on Moscow's intent where Secretary of State John Kerry claimed "it has the risk, if it is a ruse, of completely breaking apart the level of cooperation."

French and British foreign ministers were next to stand against the siege which can weaken terrorists in Aleppo after about five years, talking of possible humanitarian catastrophe despite measures such as safety corridors and distribution of warm food to the displaced taken by Syria and Russian forces. German FM Frank-Walter Steinmeier also joined the western officials to

oppose the siege. With Syrian Army and its allies' upper hand in the country's war on terror and renaming of Al-Nusra, western states and some regional Arab countries seem to be trying to rescue terrorists in Aleppo and prolong Syrian war.

It is also important to have an eye on the other side of Syria to understand the situation in Syria and find out another evidence the government is gaining the upper hand in the devastating war. Reviewing last few months in behavior of ISIL terrorist group shows that they losing the ground in Syria (and of course in Iraq as well) more and more and to keep their face, they have turned toward spreading fear by carrying out terrorist attacks in different parts of the world. Recent tragic events in Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany and France which were claimed by ISIL reflects the fact that they are trying to bully the world and hide their losses on the battle ground in Syria and Iraq.

By supporting terrorist groups – directly or indirectly – and curbing Syrian government's achievements, anti-Assad countries are playing with fire as they have put collapse of Assad government on the top of their agenda, while it negatively impacts their own security. Such terrorist attacks by love wolves or ISIL members across the Europe and other parts of world can happen again unless the Syrian government uproots the terrorists in the country and is 'truly' and 'honestly' helped in that way. Otherwise, the current policy of west in supporting so-called 'moderate' terrorists with their double-standards and impeding Assad's victory by engaging him in a prolonged war, will have no other result but more sporadic terrorist attacks in their lands.

Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh has done his MA in North American Studies and his focus has been on US policies towards the Middle East. He is also English Chief Editor of Mehr News Agency

Eric Walberg:

US seizure of Iran's money a tactic to goad Iran

Interview by Lachin Rezaian

Canadian journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia has said US action is truly alarming and clearly is part of a tactic of goading Iran, pushing it in an attempt to bring Iran to heel.

What looked to be a new window of detente between the US and Iran, following the signing of the Joint Comprehensive plan of Action on Iran's nuclear program has quickly turned opaque. A US decree was issued to seize \$2 billion in assets belonging to the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), holding Iran financially responsible for the 1983 bombing that killed 241 Marines at their barracks in the Lebanese capital, Beirut. The funds in question have been blocked since the civilian trial in the bombing began in 2011, but awaited the final legal touch to bless the blatant theft. This came when the US Supreme Court recently upheld the Congress bill, with the approval of President Barack Obama.

Canadian expert on the Middle East Eric Walberg elaborated his viewpoint on the issue in an exclusive interview with Mehr News correspondent Lachin Rezaian:

◆ Does the recent US court ruling question the credibility of the US justice system? Why would the US act in a way which can only undermine its nuclear deal with Iran, reached after years of talks, just as the Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA) implementation is under way?

This is truly alarming. It clearly is part of a tactic of goading Iran, pushing it in an attempt to bring Iran to heel. Either that or to undermine the deal. Perhaps Obama has had second thoughts about the deal.

The timeline is long and tortuous:

* In 2002, Judge Royce Lamberth entered default against the defendant (Iran) in a civil suit lodged by victims.

In 2003, he ruled that Iran was legally responsible for providing Hezbollah with financial and logistical support that helped the suicide bombers carry out the attack, and thus was guilty. Lamberth concluded that the court had personal jurisdiction over the defendants under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act, that Hezbollah was formed under the auspices of the Iranian government and was completely reliant on Iran in 1983, and that Hezbollah carried out the attack in conjunction with Iran's Ministry of Information and Security agents. Hezbollah, Iran, and Syria have continued to deny any involvement in any of the bombings. An obscure group calling itself "Islamic Jihad" claimed responsibility, and that the bombings were aimed to get the multinational forces out of Lebanon.

* In 2007, Lamberth awarded \$2.65 billion to the plaintiffs, an amount he wrote at the time "may be the largest ever entered by a court of the United States against a foreign nation." The judgment was divided up among the victims; the largest award was \$12 million to Larry Gerlach, who became a quadriplegic as a result of a broken neck he suffered in the attack.

* In 2008, the \$2 billion was secretly ordered frozen.

* In 2010, victims of the Beirut attack sued the Luxembourg-based clearing house and bank Clearstream for allegedly assisting Iran to move \$250 million in frozen assets out of the United States, prompting the open seizure of all Iranian assets at Citibank.

* In 2012, Lamberth ordered Iran to pay an additional \$813m in damages and interest. US Congress buttressed this decision with a special law that specifically directed the American bank to turn over its Iranian assets to victims' families.

* In 2014, Bank Markazi challenged the ruling.

* Now, in 2016 Judge Lamberth got the final word: the US Supreme Court



ruled that Congress did not usurp the authority of American courts by passing the 2012 law concerning the 2007 ruling.

The situation is clear: the US 'justice' system is not objective. The results of the long process show it serves US political interests over any concern for justice.

◆ Some Iranian officials have called the US court's recent ruling as 'international banditry'. How do you evaluate this?

President Rouhani has put it simply: "America's judicial system violated the principle of state immunity."

The case revolves around Iran's supposed guilt by association with Hezbollah, and Hezbollah's supposed perpetration of the 1983 bombing. Since the bombing was never solved, there is no case here. It is the US that is guilty in falling short in its security precautions.

Shortly after the 1983 bombing, President Ronald Reagan appointed a military fact-finding committee. The commission's report found senior US military officials responsible for security lapses and blamed the military chain of command for the disaster. It suggested that there might have been many fewer deaths if the barracks guards had carried loaded weapons and a barrier more substantial than the barbed wire the bomber drove over easily. The commission also noted that the "prevalent view" among US commanders was that there was a direct link between the navy shelling of the Muslims at Suq-al-Garb and the truck bomb attack.

When you are so universally loathed and occupying another country, you should be very, very careful. Israel knows that well. Former Mossad agent Victor Ostrovsky, in his 1990 book *By Way of Deception*, has accused the Mossad of ➔

knowing the specific time and location of the 1983 bombing, but only gave general information to the Americans of the attack, information which was worthless. According to Ostrovsky, then Mossad head Nahum Admoni decided against giving the specific details to the Americans on the grounds that the Mossad's responsibility was to protect Israel's interests, not Americans. Ostrovsky further claimed that among the high level officers of the Mossad there was a view that if the Americans "wanted to stick their nose into this Lebanon thing, let them pay the price."

The perpetrators of the bombing are still unknown, but the US insists it must be Hezbollah and thus, indirectly, Iran. Both have denied responsibility. Seizing the funds, given the inconclusive evidence and the security lapses of the occupiers, can only be described as theft. President Rouhani referred to the US Supreme Court ruling on seizure of Iran's blocked assets as "a blatant robbery and a major legal scandal for the US", saying the move is indicative of Washington's continued hostilities toward the Iranian nation. "They (the Americans) should be aware that the rights of the Iranian people cannot be violated and plundered," he said, adding, "No thief can take pride in his theft and think what he has stolen belongs to him."

◆ **Is the move in violation to the US obligations according to the Joint Comprehensive plan of Action (JCPOA)?**

Yes. Gholam-Ali Haddad Adel, who is also a member of the country's Expediency Council told the Tasnim news agency on Tuesday "The US administration's move to seize \$2 billion of Iran's blocked assets is definitely considered a breach of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)." He further emphasized that Washington has regarded the nuclear negotiations with Tehran as a tool for interfering in the internal affairs of the Islamic Republic and other regional countries. The parliamentarian went on to say that the US is trying to change Iran's behavior toward regional issues as well as its internal policy through putting the country under economic pressures.

120 member states of the Non-Aligned Movement denounced the US ruling, calling it a violation of Washing-

ton's international and treaty obligations concerning "the sovereign immunity of states."

◆ **What is the best reaction on behalf of Iran towards the issue? Is there any way to have that money back?**

President Hassan Rouhani says Iran will soon lodge a complaint against Washington with The Hague over a US court ruling that paves the way for the use of billions of Tehran's frozen assets. "The government will never allow for the money that belongs to the Iranian nation be easily gobbled up by the Americans."

Rouhani should ponder Canada's experience. Canadians know only too well about US creative accounting. Our irritant is the billions the US has charged as a tariff duty on Canadian softwood lumber, a problem which started in 1982 and remains unresolved, despite Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's predecessor, Stephen Harper, making a deal with his friend George Bush back in 2006.

Almost as if on principle, the US refuses to take any responsibility for its actions, let alone apologize, but, at least in this case, Uncle Sam gave back most of its ill-gotten gains. That is unfortunately the relevant precedent here for Iran. Let the theft stand, or try to get a European country to propose some kind of mediation, or try to get the US to settle the matter in the International Court of Justice, as President Rouhani is now doing, though the US, unlike Iran, is not party to the international court.

This is how Iran settled the US down in 1988 of Iran Air Flight 655, shot down by the US Navy (illegally) in Iranian waters, killing all 290 civilians on board. The perpetrator was clearly the US in 1988, though it did not formally apologize to Iran. In 1996, the US and Iran reached a settlement at the International Court of Justice which included the statement "the United States recognized the aerial incident of 3 July 1988 as a terrible human tragedy and expressed deep regret over the loss of lives caused by the incident."

As part of the settlement, the US did not admit legal liability but agreed to pay \$61.8 million, amounting to roughly \$200,000 per passenger, in compensation to the families of the Iranian victims. Even if there was a shed of truth

to the US claim concerning Iran and the Beirut bombing--there isn't--\$2 billion divided 241 equals \$11 billion. Simple math means Iranian lives are 'worth' \$200,000, but US and French marines \$11 million.

◆ **What international reactions can the court decree bring? And who will benefit the US decision?**

Only the relatives of the Beirut bombing victims and US pride are assuaged. Israel and Saudi Arabia are eager for continued strife between the US and Iran and putting the nuclear deal at jeopardy. In the meantime, Iran can only continue to work to renew its position in world affairs, proving its anti-terrorist credentials in its actions.

The Iranian parliament upped the ante with a bill this week calling for compensation for the US actions against Iran, including

- * US involvement in the 1953 coup that overthrew Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and reinstalled Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as king of Iran;

- * a coup attempt known as the Nojeh coup in 1980 shortly after the Islamic Republic was established;

- * US support for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein during the Iran-Iraq War, including the 223,000 victims and 600,000 injured during that war;

- * the deaths of 17,000 Iranian citizens at the hands of US-backed terror groups; spying against Iran; confiscating Iranian assets; and US support for Israel.

While there is little hope of the US government coughing up, the bill highlights to anyone interested in US-Iranian relations why the road to smoother relations will not be easy.

***Eric Walberg** is a Canadian writer specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. He is a graduate of Cambridge University and has lived in both the Soviet Union and Russia, and then Uzbekistan, as a UN adviser, writer, translator and lecturer. He has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s, presently for Al-Ahram Weekly and is a regular contributor to several globally-recognized websites, and a commentator on Voice of the Cape radio. His articles appear in Russian, German, Spanish and Arabic and are available at his website |*

Coup plotting: a US tradition

By: Stephen Lendman



Were US dirty hands involved in Friday's failed attempt to oust Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan from power?

Relations with Obama are strained. During Erdogan's March 31 - April 1 Nuclear Security Summit participation in Washington, no meeting between both leaders was scheduled, no White House invitation afforded.

He's more tolerated than welcome. Establishment organization Brookings invited him to speak.

Mayhem followed, his security guards making Washington look like Ankara, assaulting journalists covering his address, clashing with peaceful demonstrators outside the venue, protesting his crackdown on press freedom, other human rights abuses, war on Turkish Kurds and support for ISIS in Syria.

It's likely Washington prefers dealing with someone else in Ankara - whether

enough to want Erdogan forcefully toppled isn't clear.

America's deplorable history suggests possibly, ousting dozens of governments, assassinating leaders, crushing popular movements, slaughtering millions, imposing its will on other nations ruthlessly.

Imperialism works this way. William Blum's books and other writings documented it, saying US policies are "worse than you imagine."

"If you flip over the rock of American foreign policy (throughout) the past century, (here's) what crawls out:"

"invasions, bombings, (subversion), overthrowing governments, suppressing movements for social change, assassinating political leaders, perverting elections, manipulating labor unions, manufacturing 'news,' death squads, torture, (chemical), biological (and nuclear) warfare, (radiological contamination), drug trafficking, mer-

cenaries," police state repression, and permanent war on humanity at home and abroad.

"It's not a pretty picture," said Blum - "enough to give imperialism a bad name."

Hegemons make more enemies than friends. Longstanding US policy is consistent - bullying, intimidating, threatening or otherwise pressuring other nations to serve its interests or face its wrath.

US intelligence likely knew about plans to oust Erdogan, yet didn't warn him - perhaps because of direct or indirect involvement.

How the plot affects US-Turkish relations ahead remains to be seen. Will new leadership in Washington next year change current policies?

For now, things remain unsettled.

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III." |

Eric Walberg:

Turkey's 'Arab Spring' moment: No Sisi and no more Gulen

Interview by Lachin Rezaian

Canadian journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia has said Turkey's version of the social media fueled its very own "Arab Spring".

Canadian expert on the Middle East Eric Walberg believes that the role of Turkey's social media was decisive in mobilizing the broad public within minutes and to get them to the streets in support of President Erdogan.

"Fortunately for Erdogan, unlike in Egypt, the army was no longer the monolith it was in Kemalist days, headed by a ruthless general eager to crush the fledgling democracy," he said. Walberg underlined that Turkey's version of the social media fueled its very own "Arab Spring".

In an interview with Mehr News, Eric Walberg answers the questions on the issue:

◆ Who do you think are the main and real perpetrators of plotting attempted coup in Turkey?

The sense of disappointment, dissatisfaction, distrust of Erdogan has continued to grow since his decision to involve Turkey in the uprising in Syria in 2012, breeding and opening the doors to terrorists and refugees. The coup was a disaster waiting to happen, despite Erdogan's crack down on the military over the past decade.

He burned one bridge after another—Israel, Syria, Russia, the Kurds, the West. Just before the coup, he was finally realizing the failure of his moves, the need to staunch the flow of blood, refugees and hard feelings all around.

The coup's spark is believed to be a small fraction of the General Staff -- followers of the influential preacher Fethullah Gulen. They gambled on



other officers fed up with Erdogan joining in, and didn't expect the hundreds of thousands who turned out in the streets within minutes in support of the beleaguered president. The coup collapsed, but not before 60 deaths.

Erdogan has done much house-cleaning since coming to power in 2003, working to make Turkey immune to its Ataturk tradition of military rule. He purged the officer class following a mass trial of alleged conspirators in what was dubbed the Ergenekon terrorist organization, a spin-off of the CIA's Operation Gladio. He relied on Gulenists in the judiciary, not a wise move.

Over 500 people were arrested by 2011, most since acquitted, with many judicial documents exposed as fake, though Ergenekon and Gladio are not. The dubious Ergenekon investigation, and corruption investigations, also spearheaded by Gulenists, targeting the Erdogan's son Bilal, led to a crack-down against the Gulenist in 2013. The gloves were off, and Gulenists in the government had good cause to join with others disaffected with Erdogan.

But the "deep state" behind the coup is not just remnants of Ergenekon

along with Erdogan's Gulenist rivals. Labor Minister Süleyman Soylu told Haberturk TV, "The US is behind the coup attempt. A few journals that are published there have been conducting activities for several months. For many months we have sent requests to the US concerning Fethullah Gulen. The US must extradite him."

The journals Soylu was referring to are the American Enterprise Institute website, where "Could there be a coup in Turkey?" by Michael Rubin, appeared in March comparing Erdogan's fate to that of the overthrown Egyptian President Morsi. The other is the Washington Post, where an oped by former US ambassador to Turkey Eric Edelman called for Erdogan to "reform or resign."

Could the likes of Rubin and Edelman even be inciting allies-of-convenience ISIL to perpetrate terrorist bombings in Istanbul and Ankara, to give the restive military a convenient pretext to carry out a coup? Is the coup a neocon use of "soft power" to install a more amenable leader in Turkey?

◆ What do you think is the reason for early suppression of the coup? Why →

was the coup repelled immediately?

Fortunately for Erdogan, unlike in Egypt, the army was no longer the monolith it was in Kemalist days, headed by a ruthless general eager to crush the fledgling democracy. And social media played a decisive role in mobilizing the broad public within minutes, to get people to the streets. "There is no power higher than the power of the people," exhorted the president on national TV, as his followers fought the mutineers at the barricades. Turkey's version of the social media fueled its very own "Arab Spring".

◆ **What consequences, positive or negative, does the losing coup have for the future of Turkey, Erdogan's government and the Army itself?**

The future of Turkey still lies in Erdogan's hands after 15 years in control, but it's not a happy future. Looking back, the turning point in an already chaotic international order is 2011 -- the original Arab Spring. The charismatic Erdogan, up to that point, looked like the new face of the Muslim world, smart, savvy, bristling against the empire (both US and Israeli), trying to make peace with Turkey's bugaboo, the Kurds and their party, the PKK.

But, whether through hubris or bungling, these gestures collapsed. His "Zero Problems" policy with neighbours became anything but, leaving Turkey surrounded not by 'friends' but by enemies.

He abandoned first Muammar Gaddafi in Libya in 2011, and then his 'friend' Bashar Assad in 2012. Libya became a failed state, a haven for terrorists. Assad was pushed to use all his military strength against a motley gang of al-Qaeda clones and naive westernizers, to prevent a similar fate for Syria.

But Erdogan bet on the wrong horse. Assad had refused to take his friend Erdogan's advice to dismantle the Syrian state and hand over power to the opposition, dominated increasingly by al-Qaeda groups, now led by something that calls itself ISIL (Islamic State in the Levant), but is neither Islamic nor a state. Assad refused to

trust the West, which had held him in their sights from the start.

The Syrian uprising, unlike that in Tunisia and Egypt, was doomed, given the lesson of Libya and Assad's support by the military. It has been downhill for Turkey ever since. Russia lost patience with the mess the West had made, now supported by Turkey, and unilaterally moved to join Iran to support Assad and reverse the ISIL gains in a stunning display of targeted bombings, leaving the US et al speechless, and, finally, relieved, though ungrateful.

In a fit of peak, Erdogan had Russian planes shot down, a futile act, given his real crisis: Syrian refugees. The result of his own doings, they were pouring into Turkey--along with terrorists. Then, when ISIL lost Erdogan's implicit support, their suicide bombings moved to Istanbul and Ankara.

Erdogan's abandonment of Assad recaps the US undermining of the final Afghan leader Najibullah in 1992, paving the way for the Taliban and al-Qaeda, the ISIS of the day. Syrians are now living out a replay of the collapse of Afghanistan, complete with millions of refugees, a faux 'Islamic state', and western duplicity. The difference is, this time with Turkey on board the conspiracy, and Russia left to clean up the mess.

Remnants of Kemalists in the military will go, but this is not a pretty future. How could Erdogan get it so wrong?

◆ **Which factions and parties in Turkey could have taken advantage of the coup, which could not?**

The Gülen movement, once allied to Erdogan, now fingered behind the coup, has lost bigtime. Its many schools and all its assets have been seized, and its members arrested. The coup has broken its back.

Given the heaven-sent reprieve last week, Erdogan is already reinventing himself, returning to the 2003 promise of "Zero Problems" with neighbours. He apologized to the Russians, quickly settled the stand-off with Israel, and renounced any desire to reach accommodation with the ISIL groupings. He

is even sending out peace signals to Egypt's Sisi, though there will be no palling it up with Egypt's coupmaker.

Perhaps the long-suffering Kurds, his most important neighbours, will give him a window of opportunity, despite his intransigence there. In 2013, even as Erdogan was launching the attack on the Gülen movement, that bleeding wound on Turkish society looked like it might finally be healing. After tentative olive branches on both sides, Abdullah Öcalan spoke out from jail, appealing to his militant followers the PKK to lay down their arms or take them to northern Iraq.

The Syrian and Turkish Kurds have proven to be the only reliable local groups who have the grit and will to fight ISIL, pitting the fuming Erdogan against even his western allies, now anxious to end the Syrian nightmare any way possible. The coup is a timely clarion call to cooperate against the common foe, ISIL. Erdogan, the Kurds, the Russians, the Iranians, and--belatedly--the West have been pushed onto the same page.

The failed coup couldn't have come--and failed--at a better moment. Erdogan was eager for a military coup in Syria against its president. Instead, he got his own coup. But, he has been given a reprieve. Can Erdogan use it wisely? The Turks like to say, "No matter how far you have gone on a wrong road, turn back."

Canadian Eric Walberg is known worldwide as a journalist specializing in the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. A graduate of University of Toronto and Cambridge in economics, he has been writing on East-West relations since the 1980s. He has lived in both the Soviet Union and Russia, and then Uzbekistan, as a UN adviser, writer, translator and lecturer. He has written for al-Ahram Weekly (Cairo), and is a regular contributor to Dissident Voice, Iranian and Turkish news agencies, and is a commentator on Voice of the Cape radio. His books include *Postmodern Imperialism*. You can reach him at <http://ericwalberg.com> |

How to read world when UK departing from EU



By: Amir Saed Vakili

The community of European countries provides the most prominent instance of actual harmony among individual sovereignty and collective solidarity shoulder to shoulder.

The distinguishing line for the European Community begins from the point that the very fundamental values spring concrete norms and rules which ensure the community's progressive integrity. To continue the transcendence, the European glory of unity allows continuous eminence of the standardized as well as systematized values, based on participation of the public. To illustrate, the recent survival story of Greek in the Community and the issue of sharing asylum-seekers in the Europe introduce us "responsive interdependency" as a sort of typically European basic value.

The value of responsive interdependency, apart from its dominant economic aspect, is originated by the regional cooperation and aimed at fairly distribution of common goods, which explain why the members prefer interdependence rather than independence generally; i.e., why the communal self-determination is more benefited in comparison with personal self-suffi-

ciency. The responsive interdependency plays as guardian of objective elements of the Community, while the prevalent values and relative mechanisms, themselves, create necessary adequacy of the European interdependency. Undoubtedly, many issues dictate some values and impacts to members of the European Community and such the developments can be analyzed politically, economically, and legally.

From political point of view, it seems that the European Community will be changed to a more correlated entity, albeit less powerful. I mean, on the one hand, the EU will be confronted with some scattered movements to withdraw from the Community by other members. Consequently, main country-leaders of ideology of European unity such as France and Germany will be significantly faced with more challenging campaigns which may approach to get rid of the EU. On the other hand, smaller countries like Scotland and Northern Ireland will take some distance from their traditional parent-country to remain more loyal to the EU. Nonetheless, the EU states will be more committed to keep united which can be construed as a resistance to survive European identity.

In the economic scale, the EU will

hear bad news on financial as well as capital market for a while. Negative mental consequences of the UK withdrawal from the European Community affects investments and degrades dare of traders to establish a kind of constant and regular business. Money value in the Europe will drop considerably and many of bilateral commercial arrangements between the UK and other EU members will be captured by uncertainties and instabilities. Such a trend will make the US wealthier and bulk of capitals will flow to the United States. Of course, the UK is not an exception. It will suffer, too, painful economic constraints for years.

In the view of legal issues, while the UK is intended to keep separated from global powers, it might be inevitable for the UK to go up to the US feet gradually. It seems logical to the UK authorities to maintain their influence on international initiatives. Universal groupings to decide on international matters, particularly in the forum of the United Nations will be changed dramatically. The EU is undivided now and to reach agreement between permanent members of the UN Security Council seems more difficult. Even Iran, after sanction relief era, should be more conservative about the way which tries to foster its financial as well as commercial relations with the UK which is no longer follows the EU policies.

To sum up, I would like to read the world at least up to 2020 under these lines: the European value of responsive interdependency brings a more consolidated EU which is more weakened economically, but is stronger in adherence of European identity. The EU architecture will be reconstructed by less powerful European countries which are placed at the same level adequately. The United States will play more effective roles at the stage of political as well as economic and financial matters. The US needs more endeavors to obtain European accompanying for most of its international ambitions.

Dr. Amir Saed Vakili is a professor of international law and lawyer who has written and translated dozens of papers and books on international law, human rights and constitutional rights |

American analyst Dr. Steinbock: **Brexit vote adds to global uncertainty, volatility and risk**

Interview by Lachin Rezaian

A recognized expert on international business told Mehr News that the UK referendum will foster substantial economic uncertainty, market volatility and political risk, which could lead London and Brussels back to the negotiating deal.

Whatever the Brexit outcome is, the UK referendum will increase global economic uncertainty, market volatility and economic risk, said Dr Steinbock. He stressed while no final Brexit outcome will happen overnight, all scenarios will prove costly.

Following is the full text of Dr. Steinbock's interview to Mehr News Agency:

◆ **How do you think of the idea "Britain outside the European Union"? What are the positive and negative connotations? What are the immediate results till now?**

In the past weeks, I have been on a multi-country tour in Europe, including the UK. The referendum outcome was hardly a surprise. It reflects UK's economic malaise following the global crisis, the European debt crisis, and the Britons' ambivalence about the EU, the euro and integration.

In the short-term, most economic implications of the Brexit would be mainly negative. In April, the UK Treasury estimated that an exit could cause an almost 10% loss of GDP, substantial plunge of household wealth, falling exports, rising prices and possible recession. Other reports have repeated similar points. However, most Brexiteers, despite their ambivalence about quality jobs and economic stagnation, were motivated by concerns about immigration and security – that is, political and social issues, not just economic concerns.

Unlike Germany, Brussels has urged London to exit soon, but that requires

the UK government to trigger the Article 50 of the EU Treaty, which would start a formal withdrawal process. In turn, UK Prime Minister David Cameron has indicated that a new PM must oversee the Article 50 process. So what's likely to follow next are tough discussions in the next EU Summit on June 28. It will parallel with a UK parliament debate which must rule on the new petition that considers the referendum outcome non-binding. As Slovakia takes charge of the EU presidency on July 1, it must deal with the Brexit talks. However, the defining moment belongs to the UK Conservative Party conference in early October when a new prime minister should trigger the Article 50 process.

◆ **How do you predict the consequences of Britain's exit from the European Union in its domestic and foreign policies?**

The UK referendum demonstrated that most Britons (52%) are currently for a Brexit. However, most members of the parliament favor pro-EU views (almost 70%). In the UK, the sovereign is the Parliament, not the government. So the question is, will the UK follow the views of its citizens or its MPs.

As I predicted prior to the referendum, the UK referendum will foster substantial economic uncertainty, market volatility and political risk, which could lead London and Brussels back to the negotiating deal; to a still another referendum; a different deal; or an eventual Brexit. Despite the referendum outcome, all these options are still viable. If, on the other hand, the Brexit would not undermine the EU, further integration would occur in a more rigid and protectionist bloc dominated by the policies of the largest European economies, particularly Germany and to a lesser degree France.

In the case of an eventual Brexit, the UK would have more geopolitical flex-



ibility than within the EU, or with the US as a critical EU ally. But it would also have less global muscle.

◆ **What are the impacts of Britain's vote to leave the EU on other European countries as well as the US?**

In the medium-term, much depends on how London would rebuild its global engagement. It could retain its membership of the European Economic Area (EEA), like Norway. Or it could opt for a negotiated bilateral agreement, such as that between the EU and Switzerland, Turkey and Canada. Or it could choose World Trade Organization (WTO) membership without specific agreement with the EU, like Russia or Brazil.

In light of the likely spillover channels (trade, investment and financial linkages), Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands – Europe's traditionally open, free-trade economies – would be most exposed to the UK spillovers. In contrast, Russia and Eastern Europe, along with France would be least affected by adverse spillovers.

Economically, the US would be significantly more vulnerable to financial-market volatility than a trade breakdown. From the US perspective, an adverse scenario could mean credit tightening, impaired trade finance, and reduced lending by European banks. Politically, the transatlantic relationship would take a hit because Washington would lose its most important ally within the EU.

◆ **Is there also possibilities that other EU members would seek to leave the European Union, following Britain's move?**

In the short term, much depends on whether Brussels can contain the economic uncertainty, market volatility and political risk. In the UK, the referendum has energized the pro-EU Scotland, which might try to stop the Brexit and, if that fails, could seek 'Scotexit' – that is, divorce from England.

In Western Europe, the Brexit outcome is likely to support Euro-skeptics in countries that have an unfavorable view of the EU, including Greece, where living standards have plunged; France, where President Hollande's pro-EU socialist government is under fire from both left and right and the National Front's Marine Le Pen is the likely President in 2017; and Spain where the leftist Podemos and anti-system movement have grown into a major political force before the impending elections.

If a Brexit will happen eventually, the UK is likely to reassess many of its existing trade, investment, financial and geopolitical ties, even if the substance of its foreign relations is likely to prevail. In the near-term, a Brexit would have a significant impact on many of UK's economic partners. In light of the likely spillover channels, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands – that is, Europe's open, free-trade economies – would be most exposed to the UK spillovers. In contrast, Russia and Eastern Europe, along with France, would be least affected by adverse spillovers.

Internationally, the UK's greatest trade, investment and financial partners would be most exposed to adverse spillovers, particularly its former colonies, Hong Kong and Singapore, South Africa, as well as the US, Canada and Australia. In turn, the US would be significantly more vulnerable to financial-market volatility than a trade breakdown.



Moreover, several EU economies - including Italy, France, Sweden and Belgium, Netherlands - have already expressed willingness to hold a UK-style EU referendum. If anti-EU forces will win in these countries in the coming months, future history will see the UK referendum of June 24 as the beginning of the end for the EU.

◆ **Do you think London will change policies regarding its relations with other countries, especially in terms of trade and economic ties? Is it possible for companies in Britain considering relocation due to the uncertain market conditions caused by Brexit?**

In the Middle East and North Africa, the most exposed economies would be Qatar and Turkey. A medium impact would also be felt in the Gulf (UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait) and the Middle East (Israel, Lebanon, Egypt). The UK exposure of Saudi Arabia is relatively lower. Conversely, if a Brexit will eventually take place, some non-European economies could become beneficiaries if the UK must seek new trade arrangements outside Europe.

In the case of a Brexit, most EU-related financial institutions would leave the UK. On the other hand, a continued EU membership would force the UK to conform to EU's financial sector rules,

which London's City would like to avoid. Certainly, a Brexit would also require most multinationals that operate in the UK to reassess their location benefits, as well as EU's likely geopolitical evolution in the medium-term.

◆ **What about the policy of other countries regarding London? Will they also switch theirs, being concerned over an imminent unstable situation, like China which rely on Britain's market to access the EU?**

Unlike the US, China is significantly less exposed to the Brexit. London has a historical "special relationship" with Washington, which is broad and deep in terms of economics, politics and security; China doesn't. China's new trading Silk Road initiatives enter Europe through Southern and Eastern Europe, not the UK. And as Beijing has only begun critical financial reforms, it is not vulnerable to British portfolio flows or bank claims in the way that the US is. In turn, China's largest trade partners are the US, Japan and South Korea, not the UK.

Nevertheless, China is indirectly exposed. In relative terms, Hong Kong – China's Special Administrative Region – may be the most exposed country in the world to the Brexit.

It is true that, in the past few years, relations between the U.K. and China have steadily warmed, from Chinese investment in British power and high-speed rail to London's role in Chinese financial markets and regulation. In spring 2015, the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was dramatically boosted by the UK's participation. In turn, President Xi's state visit to the UK in October 2015 heralded deals worth over \$60 billion.

However, in the final analysis, the UK's eventual Brexit would be a great economic and political loss to Washington, but only a temporary and partial setback to China.

***Dr Steinbock** is the founder of the Difference Group and has served as the research director at the India, China, and America Institute (USA) and a visiting fellow at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (China) and the EU Center (Singapore)*

'US exerts heavy influence over UN'

Interview by Marjohn Sheikhi

Joe Stork, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division, told Mehr News that the US has a very long record in influencing the UN decisions by having cut off funding to particular UN agencies and threatened others.

The UN report, released on June 3 and covering the period from January to December 2015, documents the beginning of air strikes by the US-backed, Saudi-led coalition in Yemen on 26 March 2015. According to the report, intensive aerial bombardment took a devastating toll on the civilian population and 'grave violations against children increased dramatically as a result of the escalating conflict.' The report lists the Saudi Arabia-led coalition for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals, maintaining that 60 per cent of child casualties (death of 510 children and 667 more injuries) were attributed to Saudi Arabia.

The report, obviously, ruffled the feathers on Saudi Arabia's sensitivities of its rights record at home and abroad, and prompted the Arab state to pressure the UN into removing the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition from the UN's blacklist on children's rights violations. The pressure and threat to de-funding several UN programs by Saudi Arabia caused the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to cave in – in what Amnesty International called an 'unprecedented' and 'unconscionable' move – and announce that he was 'temporarily' removing Saudi Arabia from the blacklist. However, Saudi diplomats to the UN were quick to describe the change as an 'irreversible' moral victory, Amnesty reported.

When asked whether he finds the UN chief's stance on this issue credible, Joe Stork, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division, said Ban Ki-moon has made a strong statement in this regard; "one can argue whether Ban responded in the best way to the ultimatum by Saudi Arabia and other states to cease funding UN humanitarian programs if his of-



fice did not remove the Saudi coalition from the 'list of shame,'" he said, adding "There is every reason to think it was a serious threat – consider Saudi decision to cut off all assistance to Lebanon after that country refused to join Saudi in cutting diplomatic relations with Iran a few months ago."

The UN Secretary General said removing Saudi Arabia from the blacklist was 'one of the most painful and difficult decisions' he had had to make, citing the prospect of countries defunding UN programs for the reason he had caved in to pressure from the Riyadh regime, who is actually chairing a UN human rights panel. In Stork's opinion, what Ban did – "publicly calling out the Saudis and making totally clear that he felt forced to make that decision – this was a strong statement and a good decision."

"Remember it was not just Saudi Arabia but its other GCC friends who made the threat to cut off funding. So of course the threat was serious," he stressed.

While this was the first time the UN has ever removed a country from such a list, the international organization had backed off from including Israel in last year's report as a regime responsible for the death of hundreds of children and injury of thousands in the 2014 armed conflict in Gaza. It makes one wonder, when Saudi Arabia with an assessment of 1.1% share of UN funding in current year and an average of about 0.8% share in the last decade can so easily have its name cleared off from a blacklist, where does that leave a country like the United States with 22% share of the funding.

Can anyone believe that these funds and contributions have not affected other UN decisions in regard to Iran's nuclear program or the Palestinian issue?

"The US has a very poor record when it comes to this sort of thing, having cut off funding to particular UN agencies and threatened others," Stork said. "And the US campaigned heavily (and successfully) one year earlier to keep Israel off that very same list."

One year has passed since the Saudi regime launched airstrikes in Yemen, and more than 9,400 people have been killed and at least 16,000 others injured since the onset of the aggression. The war is still continuing and apparently, the UN has failed to take decisive measures to bring Saudi Arabia to halt its aggression in Yemen. When the most representative inter-governmental organization of the world in charge of maintaining international peace and security finds itself in despair for performing its duties, what else could be done to stop the ongoing senseless war and suffering in Yemen?

Stork said while the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has done a good job of documenting Saudi (and other) violations in Yemen, "decisive measures" are the purview of the Security Council, where the permanent members often stand in the way of serious measures – like how the US has protected Israel.

"And the Security Council permanent members have a terrible record when it comes to supporting the Secretary-General – just look at the dispute with ➡



Morocco a few months ago over Ban using word "occupation" to characterize status of Western Sahara," he added.

Belkis Wille, the Yemen and Kuwait researcher with Human Rights Watch, also

believed that "the decision to remove Saudi Arabia from the blacklist, particularly as it was the leading contributor to the maiming and killing of children in Yemen during 2015, will have a lasting effect in terms of the UN's credibility in reporting on human rights in Yemen."

Wille, who is responsible for researching abuses and conducting local and international advocacy on human rights issues affecting Yemen, further added that "it will be very hard for the UN to restore any kind of trust and objectivity into its reporting after this."

Joe Stork, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa division, is a general expert on human rights issues in the region. Author

of numerous books and widely published articles on the Middle East, he has lectured widely at universities and public forums around the world. Stork served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Turkey and holds an M.A. in International Affairs/Middle East Studies from Columbia University.

Belkis Wille is the Yemen and Kuwait researcher with Human Rights Watch. In 2009, she documented alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity with the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights in Gaza. Wille received her bachelor's degree from Harvard University, her graduate diploma in law from City University London, and her LL.M. in human rights and humanitarian law from the University of Essex |

German MP:

Germany not to take Bush-style wrong reaction

Interview by Hamid Reza Gholamzadeh

According to a German MP Munich shooting will not have considerable impact on the country as an open society.

In an interview with Mehr News Agency, German-Iranian MP Omid Nouripour has shared his views with the news agency on Friday shooting spree in Munich which claimed 9 lives before the attacker killed himself.

Here is his answers:

◆ **There has been no evidence so far that the attacker was a lone wolf; can you comment on possible reasons behind the attack?**

I wouldn't rule out any possible background for the moment. Jihadi-terrorism, right-winged-terrorism, mental illness: everything is imaginable. But there are some facts indicating he wasn't an ISIL (DAESH) member.

That is he shot himself at the end without taking innocents with him. This is not DAESH-style. Other example: on a video you can hear him talking about his "treatment" and being bullied now for seven years. This is not the DAESH-narrative of heroism.

◆ **With this incident and train attack - for which ISIL claimed responsibility - what consequences are imaginable for German society? Are we going to see a police state? Emergency situation? Or anything else?**

ISIL wants us to overreact. They want us to shut our open societies and to shrink our civil rights. Then it's easier for them to argue that western societies in general are opposing Islam. This is why our reaction is so decisive. 9/11 was not such a success for Al-Qaida than the Bush's wrong reactions were. So we have to react smartly, carefully and thoughtfully.

◆ **Germany was a pioneer in addressing migrant crisis. It might be too early to judge, but does the public opinion still support this humanitarian view?**

There are more than 8 million people in this country being engaged in charity-work for refugees. Frequently and volunteering. They are not shouting at social media all the time. We shouldn't think the loud haters on Twitter are the majority in Germany.

◆ **What measures can or should be taken by govt. and security bodies to**



prevent further incidents and improve situation?

The way the Munich police handled the situation yesterday, far from spreading fear, is the right thing to do. Also our government should take every measure necessary to protect the people without creating the illusion that there's 100% safety possible. Open societies are vulnerable.

◆ **Considering good points you mentioned about necessity of smart reaction and hospitality toward refugees, (and some rare misbehavior in social networks), what German people can do?**

It's not a fight against Islam, it's a fight of democratic citizens of any faith against extremism. We need the solidarity of democrats.

Omid Nouripour is an Iranian-German politician, a member of Alliance '90/The Greens and a member of the German parliament |

Anti-Zionist rabbi:

World 'failed to accurately address' Palestinian issue



Interview by Payman Yazdani, Mohammad Ghaderi; edited by MNA English desk

Rabbi Weiss believes Zionism is systematic desecration of the true laws of the Judaism; it has been advertising violence, discrimination, and occupationism.

Jewish religious scholar Rabbi Yisroel Dovid Weiss, a spokesman for 'Jews against Zionism' sat earlier in May with Mehr News International Service in an interview about the Zionism and its multiple dimensions, the corrupt nature of the Israeli regime which Rabbi Weiss believed violated the fundamental rules of the Judaism.

Rabbi Weiss emphasized that the world had systematically failed to address the issue of Palestine in an environment devoid of mutual vituperation and accusations of supporting violence to anti-Zionist Jews who cared what had been happening in Palestinian lands. The mainstream media, Rabbi Weiss believed, had succeeded in having the world believe that Palestinians were hostile to Jews and that this has been a land without people and saved for the Jews.

◆ **We have seen anti-Zionist sentiments**

in western countries. What is your analysis of this?

Our Rabbis always said Zionism is really the work of the Satan. It does not make sense when the United Nations founded a Jewish state when they just created to make democracy in the world. The majority of people living in Palestine are Muslims. How they make such a state, everything defies logic, they were given the control of the Jewish community that did not want them, their 68 years of imprisoning of the Palestinians, so we believe this is the work of the Satan, and therefore, USSR disappeared overnight, we believe rebellion against God will not be successful. We, as the Jewish people believe that state will end and it has to end, we pray to God to end it without any bloodshed and any suffering. We can draw upon a little logic that for many years, the mainstream media was in the hand of the Zionists. They were able to show the world it [Palestine] is a land without people and that Muslims hated the world. They were able to tell the western world that were ignorant of the Muslim community, ignorant of the Middle East, and whatever the Zionists said was accepted. But now we have the Internet, the alternative media, different agencies and ways that are wreck-

ing through this law, it breaks through the barriers, people now distribute and share what you say, and that has opened the eyes of the people, that the propaganda that Muslims hate Jews and so should suffer because they are stubborn people is false. I think that helps a lot in creating sympathy we have.

The Zionists themselves are troubled about this, and just recently in California, the Zionists have put out the publication of Hasbara (meaning 'plain explanation'). They have faced big problems in universities, because the young people start to be more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. So, statistically, they said check this out. Instead of debating who is right, right away they start asking: do you support Hamas, do you support Hezbollah, thus the minds of the people start shifting from supporting Palestinians. In University of California in Irvine three weeks ago, a Zionist rabbi raised the question in the Q&A (and it was the first question) and asked me 'do you support Hamas?' I questioned him back 'you are concerned with Jewish bloodshed, aren't you?' 'Where were you before?' 'Are you concerned with the scope of bloodshed?' 'How many Jews destroyed their souls because they are not religious, because of what Zionism assumed, because they tried to transform Jews? Were you concerned about Jewish people? We don't condone violence, we are not talking about that. They are trying to trick people so that they stifle the voice of opposition and discredit anybody who opposes them. This is the common approach that they try to disqualify us. The fanatics ridicule, dismiss and estrange Jews. We have large communities and when it comes to basic law, they have to come to us. They have no choice. When certain religious issues happen they have to come to Jewish communities to resolve them. But they discredit anybody who stands in opposition. We are children of the holocaust, we lived it. But we're not



going to use the holocaust to oppress the people. That's the Zionist ploy to use the holocaust again in such a way as their modus operandi. They use the guilt of the holocaust to trick the world to help and support them to have a state. The majority of my family were killed in Auschwitz, and we, the entire anti-Zionist community, understood that the punishment of the Nazis would be by the hands of God, but to take the Jews' blood that was spilled to rebel against God and make a state, that's a second holocaust.

◆ **What do you think the duty of Muslims and other anti-Zionist groups against the anti-human atrocities of the Israeli regime should be?**

I can humbly say that we are stating mere facts and are not prophets and would not definitively tell people what to do. If you want to prescribe medication for a certain type of sickness, you have to diagnose it first. And so, we have to first diagnose what the issue is before trying to solve it. The issue in my opinion is that the world wants to portray this as a Jewish-Muslim conflict, a religious conflict, which serves as a major basis for the Zionist regime and leads to Arabs' contempt of the Jews. Unfortunately, the world is delinquent in being outspoken and clarifying that the conflict is misdiagnosed. In other words, the Arab world should have stood up and written the historic truth of how Jews flourished in Egypt and even Iran and all the Arab

lands until today and the personal anecdotes of how we lived together in peace, then the world will start to identify that something has gone wrong, that what the Zionists are saying about the root of the conflict is not the truth. The world needs to step back and ask, what is the problem? But it keeps on buying that this is a religious conflict and something should be done to remedy. You are in a quagmire, what to do about Palestine? Two religious groups who are fighting, could not live together, so you should think of a second solution. Nobody likes to give a man a strong medication like chemotherapy, but you find no choice and do whatever that you can. Look at the Jerusalem, we see large Jew communities going to New York where the largest anti-Zionist communities are living; so, why can't we live together? I would like to meet Iran's Leader in order to tell him that the world should see and we should talk. I went to Gaza and we met Ismail Haniyeh. He embraced us, but they would not write nothing about this back in the US. We held a press conference with some Muslim groups and we said nothing against Jews. Therefore, it is not a religious conflict. That is the issue which needs to be clarified to the world that the Muslim groups should keep on saying that we don't have a religious conflict.

Zionism is a flawed political movement that is really illegal and is a recent creation and that's where the problem started. Hammering to solve the issue,

to re-evaluate the problem would not solve the problem. The solution seems to be quite simple; when South Africa kept saying 'it's impossible, it's impossible' and then they stopped the apartheid even though they were afraid the blacks would kill the whites and all the things and they had such a high pressure not from the politicians and not the United Nations (UN). The UN recognized South Africa as an official nation-state and who stood up against them was Nelson Mandela [which was labeled as], the terrorist. But eventually the grassroots, the people did everything including the boycott to put pressure on politicians to stop the regime. The world keeps saying you can't keep on supporting Zionism, it's not just right. In Gaza, they keep on saying that we have elections and Hamas won the elections and got the control. Then, everybody started saying they are going to knock bombs but in fact they are not going to admit the legitimacy of the state. Imagine Germany would have won World War II and they would have taken over the French underground or the French resistance. Then the French resistance would have said enough, enough, we can't take it anymore and German's would say OK we'll stop. We'll stop because we are not getting anywhere but it's not enough; you will have to make a public speech and say we recognize Germans and Nazis as the proper rulers of the land. So they are demanding Gaza that the people in

Gaza will have to say Israel is legitimate. Not only stop bombing, not only stop the resistance, but also they claim that Israel is legitimate. Where is humanity in that? Why is that right? And that's why they are able to continue occupation of Gaza because the world keeps on saying they deserve what's coming to them because they are so stubborn because they don't want to go along with the world democracy or peace. Nobody steps back and says "why should they recognize the occupation of them?" This is all because the Zionists are leading the conversation and are telling everybody how they have to think. This is against the logic and against humane way of thinking. But it's not being put in that perspective. We do not condone violence, we have a different history, and we do not have arms. Instead of talking about violence,

is very careful to call them Zionist, but that the world should be basically saying we've had a wrong story here, it's not about religion and we have lived together in peace and working on that system; again I would say reluctantly, because there is a great rabbi, Rabbi Moshe Dov Beck, now in his eighties, he is a great man, he always says "you may say that I'm wrong in my logic, and you say that's the case the whole logic when we talk about Zionism maybe wrong; he says we should talk about the solution, because the fact of the problem is that definitely the problem is Zionism not the religion; we do hope humbly that I would feel that if we go this form about being careful to differentiate between Judaism and Zionism and you know then you would be able to approach the problem and the issue but the way it is working today you can't.

they don't step back and say how dare you? They advertise into the world that come and visit the whole city, the basis of all religions, come visit, and then they go and make a remark which is against every religion in the center of Judaism; you see it's full of hypocrisy, falsehood.

In question of ISIL for instance, they don't have the morals that dictate us what to do. We know we have to follow the Torah, you can't kill and are not allowed to steal, everything is taught to us. They have made the Rabbinate system, they have their law system which is not Jewish at all, that is a secular system that is considered blasphemy by Jews. You have to go to Torah. If you're living in Iran you have to follow the law of the country. If a Jew and a non-Jew has a dispute, you go to law system but if two Jews have problem they have to go to Jewish court because it's called blasphemy. And then make a Jewish state and they made a law system that's blasphemy in enough itself to make the whole law system and that's not good enough they made a rabbinate and a chief rabbi, why? They made that for window dressing. They made a new language, we have a language called 'old Hebrew' that is a Bible and they made a new language called 'modern Hebrew,' why did they make it? Because they need to test the religion. So it's all facade and false. They don't care that the Jews die and we have a lot of stories they really don't care, they are happy, there is a bomb in France because then Netanyahu comes marching in France and says ok everybody come to the Palestine, come up to Israel, because we are safe, even the Jews in France who are not so religious and maybe Zionists said you go home. They have a win-win situation, they agitate, create hate of Jews, anti-Semitism, and then they are happy that Jews have one way to come to us, where Jews got killed it's ok. All the Jews have to leave almost every Arab land, because we distrust everything, they are happy, because they created this. They would prefer to sacrifice the whole Zionism in order to have the control over the land, they don't care whether it's Jew or Arab, they beat, and they assassinate. Any group who would help them, they would welcome |



we should speak about the roots of the mentality that if we should knock Hamas, we stifle them, they are going to be quiet, would they? You cannot oppress people, it would never go forever, and they would not vow allegiance to the Jewish state. But how that could be expected! It's wrong! And it's the world that just keeps on dancing to that tune.

You asked about Muslims and what they should do. I think they really should concentrate on defining what the issue is that they have to come up with; the issue is not the Jews; the Jews are typical to Zionists; here in Iran the leadership

◆ **And what's the reason that the Israeli regime or Zionist regime is supporting some terrorist groups like ISIL in Syria and the region?**

It's all one narrative, one story. We have God who dictates how morals [should be]. The fact that these phonies, these heretics- purely heretics- they eat pig, they don't keep the Sabbath, openly desecrates the Sabbath, they have the gay rights parade, in the center of a religious community and they say [religious Jews], how you dare to demonstrate against that? You know you have to accept other people,



Economy



Sanctions expert:

Bank Mellat to be reimbursed for reputational damage, loss of earnings

Interview by Mohammad Hosein Azari

Sarosh Zaiwalla, Senior Partner of Zaiwalla & Co., has announced that Iran's Bank Mellat will receive what is fairly owed to it to compensate for the many years of reputational damage and loss of earnings it has suffered.

Bank Mellat, Iran's largest privately-owned bank, has been fighting a legal battle since 2009 against sanctions that it said were wrongfully placed on it by the European Union and the UK Treasury over alleged links to Tehran's nuclear program.

Led by Sarosh Zaiwalla, a lawyer for the Iranian bank at Zaiwalla & Co. Solicitors, the bank challenged the European Council's assertion that it engaged in conduct that supported Iran's nuclear program and ballistic missile programs. It initially won a case before the EU's General Court, which ruled in January 2013 that there wasn't enough evidence to support the European asset freeze on the bank.

Bank Mellat was unlawfully sanc-

tioned by HM Treasury and after the UK Supreme Court dismissed HM Treasury's appeal, the Bank is pursuing a damages claim against the HM Treasury to the tune of US \$4bn in the UK Courts.

On 10th May, the HM Treasury had applied to the Commercial Court to determine three preliminary issues relating to heads of losses under which Bank Mellat can claim its losses falling under those heads as damages.

It was the first ruling in favor of an Iranian company since international sanctions were lifted on the Islamic Republic last month as part of a nuclear deal with world powers.

Mr. Zaiwalla has described the judgment as the first big legal success for an Iranian corporation challenging the sanctions regime and predicted it could open the door to others.

In an interview to Mehr News, sanctions expert Sarosh Zaiwalla, answered the following questions on the issue:

◆ **Why did the Bank Mellat sanction pop up? Why was it an abrogation of the international law?**

The case of Bank Mellat is a long running case, which began seven years ago in 2009 when the UK government issued notification prohibiting dealing with Bank Mellat. This decision of the government was challenged by Bank Mellat in the London Court. In June 2013, my firm had a breakthrough in the case when a Judgment by the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom held that the sanctions imposed by the UK government on Bank Mellat, in 2009, were both irrational and unlawful. The UK Supreme Court then asked the London High Court to assess Bank Mellat's losses, which the bank can claim as damages for its unlawful listing by the UK government. The bank has now commenced a claim in the London High Court claiming USD 4 billion damages against the UK government. The trial of this claim will take place shortly.

The subsequent positive court judgment of the Supreme Court, follows a victory in the European Court in January 2013, where the European Court of Justice said there was no evidence connecting Iran's largest private bank to the government's →

nuclear programme.

◆ **What is the stature of our Bank Mellat foreign trade and what impact did the sanction have on its revenues?**

Bank Mellat has claimed in the English Court that it has suffered substantial damages because of the UK government's actions. It is the bank's position that it has suffered substantial losses as a result of the government's listing of Bank Mellat.

◆ **When and how do you expect the US\$4 billion damages to be cleared by HM Treasury?**

The next scheduled hearing to decide on the compensation for Bank Mellat from HM Treasury is scheduled for October 2016. We are quietly optimistic that the bank will receive what is fairly owed to it to compensate for the many years of reputational damage and loss of earnings it has suffered.

◆ **You have deemed the law case as 'a crucial victory for Bank Mellat'. What are the significances of this major**

legal victory?

The Bank Mellat case clearly shows the world that even in the world of sanctions, the rule of law still applies in the Western world, particularly in the English Court. The UK Supreme Court judges showed great independence and courage to hold the UK government's conduct as both unlawful and irrational.

Regardless of international politics, Europe says there must be a reason to curtail the rights of an entity or individual. The EU court held that the EU Council was wrong in its designation of the bank as the bank did not fit the EU's criteria for sanctions. The message that this shows to the world outside of Europe is that there is a true independence of the EU Court, which is willing to fight against its sister institutions. Unlike cases we are seeing from the US, we can see that true justice can be sought and delivered from the European courts.

◆ **The case was an interesting example of the difficult terrain of court 'interference' with essentially politi-**

cal decisions. How would you evaluate the stance and decision taken by the Supreme Court?

The United Nations Treaty on International Human Rights, which every member of the United Nations has signed, no country is allowed to interfere with the property rights of any individual without due process. This makes it essential that actions taken by the government, like imposing sanctions for political reasons, are based on good reliable evidence and not on the whims and fancy of any government.

***Sarosh Zaiwalla** founded Zaiwalla & Co. Solicitors in April 1982 with offices in Chancery Lane, London. He has been involved in over 1200 International Energy, Maritime and Construction Arbitrations in London and worldwide either as a solicitor, Counsel, party-appointed Arbitrator or Sole Arbitrator. Recently, he succeeded for Bank Mellat of Iran against the UK Government in the UK Supreme Court challenging legality of Iran nuclear sanctions |*





Interview by: Maryam Khormaei

Thai ambassador believes Thailand and Iran economies are complementary and names the cultural transaction and respect for internal affairs of any country as the ultimate goals of Bangkok.

Mr. Rasmee Chittham Thai ambassador to Tehran discussed a host of issues with Mehr News including Thailand – Iran cooperation in the post nuclear era as well as the role of a democracy-based diplomacy to enhance closer cooperation.

Chittham thinks of the people to people contact as a form of soft diplomacy laying the basis for broader relations with different states.

◆ **In which areas do the two countries of Iran and Thailand tend to develop cooperation in the post-JCPOA era?**

Thailand and Iran are very close friends. Our historical ties date back more than 400 years. Last year, we celebrated the 60th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. Thai government wishes to deepen and broaden cooperation in all areas with Iran especially in the field of trade, investment, energy, culture and tourism.

Recently, the Thai Deputy PM visited Iran in early February. Even before his visit to Iran, the Thai FM came here to attend 9th JC meeting. Since the Iranian nuclear talks have been successfully

concluded in JCPOA, the country is now open to the world again. So, why don't we expect Thailand to engage more activities with Iran? Thailand has sent the high level delegations to visit and discuss about how we can promote closer cooperation in order to widen and deepen the bilateral relation in every area as the two countries have potential to do so.

As Thailand is the regional hub and second largest economy in ASEAN, Iran can take advantage of Thailand as a gateway in expanding its trade to ASEAN.

Thailand is also aware of the investment opportunities in Iran, especially in the areas of manufacturing, urban and infrastructure development.

Recently, several Thai companies as well as the embassy participated in the Iran Food and Hospitality Fair 2016. We hope to promote food and agricultural products particularly Halal Thai food products to the Iranian market.

As Iran is well –endowed with oil and natural gas, Thailand sees great potential in developing cooperation with Iran in the energy and its related fields such as petrochemicals.

◆ **What position does Iran hold to Thailand with regard to energy market?**

As you know we need to import oil and gas because we are not an oil producer country by ourselves. That is why Thailand relies on importing energy products from the Middle East countries. So, Iran is another option for us. We have to share the Market to balance. Thailand does not want to only rely on the resources of one or two countries. Since we have a very good relations with Iran, we seek to explore the possibilities to import from Iran.

Thailand recognizes the great potentials of Iran in the energy sector. Iran has the fourth largest oil reserves and

the largest natural gas reserves in the world.

We are ready to resume energy cooperation with Iran. Such cooperation can include oil and gas exploration and production as well as trading in oil and related products.

The Thai government is also interested in investing in Iranian petrochemical sectors. Currently, there is a joint venture investment of SCG, a Thai Company, in the petrochemical industry in Asaluyeh, Iran.

Both countries need to exchange delegations to discuss how we can interact in doing this business for mutual benefits.

◆ **Except for energy market, in which areas do the two countries can cooperate with each other?**

Tourism is another key area of cooperation which will be beneficial to both countries. Thailand and Iran can work together to promote two-way tourism, especially with the opening of the direct flight between Bangkok – Tehran by Thai Air Asia Airlines on 22 June. We also look forward to the opening of the direct flight of Thai Airways in October. This will surely enhance greater people to people relations between two countries.

Even in food industry which Thailand is good at, we don't want to compete with Iran but to cooperate. Logistically, Thailand is a center for AEC (ASEAN Economic Community). As for Iran, the country is also located in a very good position. Chabahar port, a free trade-industrial zone can be a transit center of goods in transit being sent to neighboring countries of Iran such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian. Our economies can be complemented with each other.

We also discussed the possibility for investment in hotel industry in Iran, during the visit of Thai DPM, because

Thailand ambassador:

Thailand, Iran economies can be 'complementary'

your country needs at least twenty new hotels every year. However, at present, no Thai companies come to invest in this industry. But I will encourage them.

Furthermore, both countries can promote people to people contacts. A people center policy including cultural cooperation and exchanges are one of my priority. These would enhance closer co-operation between our two countries.

◆ **Currently, Iran owns only a 99 million dollar share of Thailand's 200 billion dollars market which stands just for less than 0.5 percent of the amount. So, what might be the new areas of activity of Iranian businessmen in Thailand? Will Bangkok have any special plans to absorb more Iranian investment?**

Thailand welcomes Iranian investment, particularly in the areas which Iran is very progressive i.e. science and technology, pharmaceutical and nanotechnology and others.

In 2015, trade balance between Thailand and Iran was around 357 million dollars, with Thailand having a trade surplus of 287 million dollars.

The Thai government would like to encourage greater trade balance with Iran through the exchanges of trade delegations, participation in trade fairs and organization of trade roadshows and exhibitions between the two countries. Thailand is also looking into the possibility of establishing distribution center at the free and special economic zones in Iran.

Furthermore, during the visit of Mr. Somkid Jatusripitak, Deputy PM of Thailand, on 1-4 February 2016, a trade agreement was signed aiming to increase to value of trade between two countries to 3 billion US dollars by year 2021.

Thailand is also interested to promote joint venture investment in Iran, particularly in manufacturing of goods, food processing, fishery |

Senior Thai official:

Iran new potential market for Thailand

Interview by Parnaz Talebi

Senior official of Thailand Ministry of Industry said Iran is considered as a new potential market for Thailand particularly in the field of consumer goods.

In an exclusive interview with Mehr News correspondent in Thailand, Ms. Anong Pajitprapaporn, Deputy Director General of Department of Industry Promotion of Thailand Ministry of Industry, answered some questions on Tehran-Bangkok trade ties and its prospect after the removal of anti-Iranian sanctions.

◆ **How do you describe Iran-Thailand's current economic and industrial ties?**

According to latest statistics (May 2015-April 2016) from Thailand's Ministry of Commerce, Thailand has exported about USD 201 million's worth of products to Iran while the total import value of Iranian goods was about USD 81 million.

Thailand's top 10 exports to Iran in 2016 include wood and wood products, canned and processed fruits, rubber products, rubber, beverages, fresh, chilled, frozen and dried vegetables, batteries and battery parts, shoes and shoe parts, cars and automotive parts, and compressors.

Meanwhile, Thailand's top 10 imports from Iran in 2016 have been iron, steel and products, plants and plant products, chemicals, fresh, chilled, frozen, processed, semi-processed aquatic animals, fruits and vegetables, other fuels, medical and pharmaceutical products, other textile products, cars and automotive parts, and compressors.

It is still expected that the export and import values between two countries would increase continuously.

◆ **What are the main fields of interest**



for Bangkok to be present in the Iranian market?

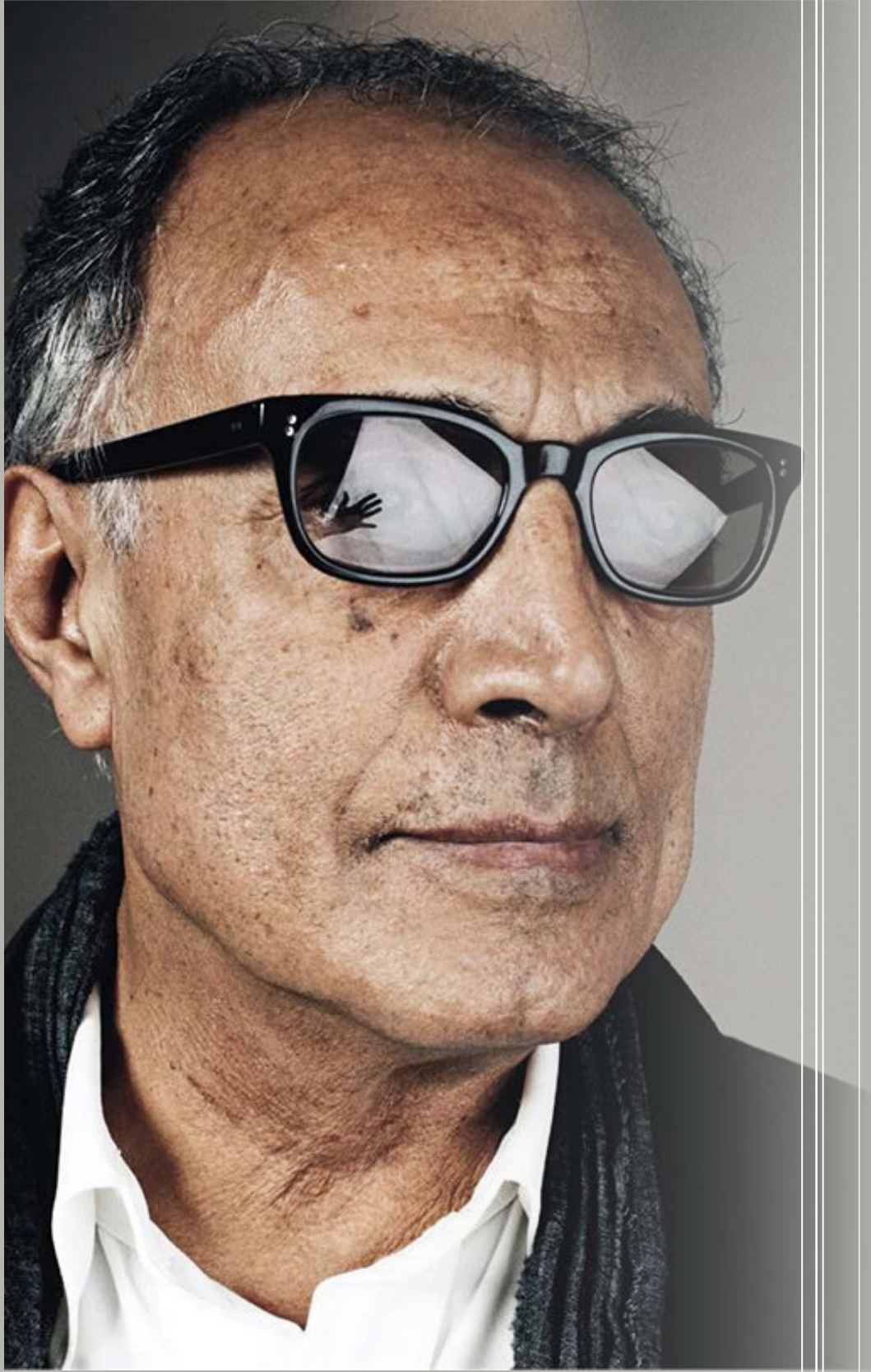
Thailand has high potential to produce various types of products, especially consumer goods. Therefore, the major targets in Iranian market could be any products which are interested by Iranian consumers, such as cosmetic.

◆ **Does Thailand have any plans to increase its share in Iran's market? And how would the Ministry of Industry contribute to this?**

Based on the policy, Thai government would like to build up a trading relationship with Iran, which is recognized as a new potential market for Thailand. Ministry of Industry realizes the importance of this direction and thus will play a vital role in promoting relevant activities to support the national policy.

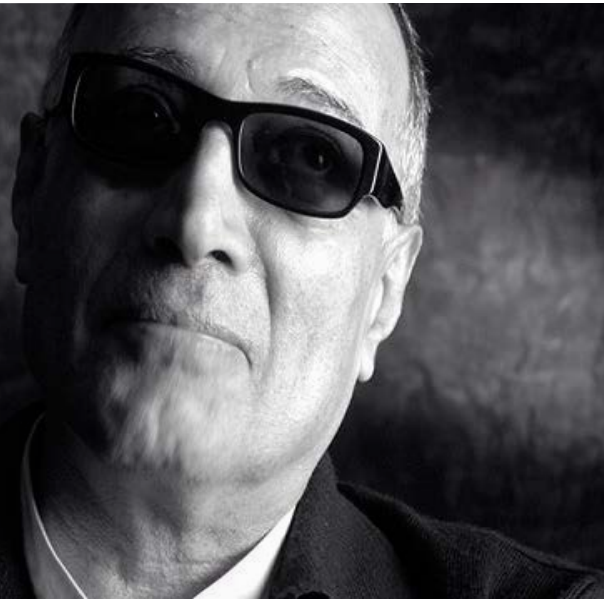
◆ **How much impact would lifting of anti-Iranian sanctions have on this issue?**

Lifting anti-Iran sanctions would definitely boost up Thailand-Iran relations, particularly Thai-Iranian trade value |



Culture

A tribute to Abbas Kiarostami; **The wind carried him to the whiteness of the clouds**



Written by Marjohn Sheikhi

Abbas Kiarostami was a filmmaker that deepened the world's understanding of Iran and its people at the time western media were hell-bent on putting Iran in a black box and call it a global threat.

"The wind will carry
The cherry blossoms
All the way to the whiteness of the
clouds."
- Abbas Kiarostami

Former husband to Parvin Amir-Gholi for 13 years and father to two sons – Ahmad and Bahman, Abbas Kiarostami was also a towering figure in world cinema for his poetic way of looking at ordinary life and bringing profoundly humane films to the silver screen. He was an artistic polymath, perhaps unbeknownst to many cinephiles. He was a photographer, painter and poet, in addition to being an extraordinary director of over 40 films that had a powerful impact on the Iranian New Wave.

"Not being able to feel the pleasure of seeing a magnificent landscape with someone else is a form of torture. That is why I started taking photographs. I wanted somehow to eternalize those moments of passion and pain," Kiarostami said.

He had once said, "we're often not

able to look at what's in front of us, unless it's in a frame." And sometimes, we are unable to appreciate the value of what we have, until it is gone. I will not lie; when the news of his death hit media outlets on July 4, we were completely taken by surprise; utterly shocked at the great loss, unable to believe it to be true, because Kiarostami was indeed a highly influential filmmaker in the world and the only Iranian ever to win the Palme D'Or at Cannes, but we were also shocked because we had not expected it. When was the last time we sat down to re-watch *The Taste of Cherry*? When was the last time we felt the missing space in our hearts for long silences and long shots, searching for the meaning that eludes us but flashes before us at every corner of self-discovery?

Kiarostami was not a follower of 'let's-overwhelm-audience-with-too-much-information' movement. His films are a reflection of the real life, and to him, even in the real life we receive less information than what he gave us; "I feel that [people] should be grateful for the little bit of information I give them," and they were. In more ways than one.

The news of his passing sent shockwaves through the world film industry. Picture after picture resurfaced on various social media, all showing him in his signature sunglasses and serene smile. American director Martin Scors-

ese issued a statement in the wake of Kiarostami's passing, and described him as "one of those rare artists with a special knowledge of the world, put into words by the great Jean Renoir: 'Reality is always magic.'"

Thierry Frémaux, the director of the Institut Lumière and of the Cannes Film Festival, paid tribute to Kiarostami, describing him as "extremely gentle, extremely tolerant, and curious about others."

"He was a true artist...not only a filmmaker, but also a great photographer, a great poet; one must rush to read his books, his texts; a complete artist, magnificent," he added.

Gilles Jacob, director and president of the Cannes Film Festival between 2001 and 2014, in a tweet in French following the passing of Kiarostami, said "Abbas Kiarostami is no more, except in the hearts of those who loved him and his beautiful movies."

Kiarostami was invited by the Oscars to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in 2016, but he never made it.

Film critic Philip Concannon in an exclusive correspondence with Mehr News talked about his personal experience with Kiarostami's movies.

"I first discovered Kiarostami's work in the late '90s, when the *Koker Trilogy* was shown on television," he said. "I was living in Ireland then and this was ➔

my first revelation that the world of cinema was so much bigger than what I had been exposed to."

"It felt like nothing I had seen before," he went on to add, "The simple but involving and profoundly moving storytelling, the way he played with notions of fiction and reality, the way his use of offscreen space was as important as what we see on the screen."

"It was fascinating to follow his career and to see how he continued to evolve as an artist," he said reverently. "He never stopped trying to find new ways of making films, and to test the boundaries of what cinema could be, with formal experiments such as *Ten, Five: Dedicated to Ozu and Shirin*. His final films *Certified Copy* and *Like Someone in Love* had the fluid, playful, curious quality of an artist completely free and in command of his craft."

"I'm heartbroken that we will see no more Kiarostami films," he lamented, "but I'm looking forward to revisiting his work, which never loses its

freshness, and always retains its capacity to enchant and surprise."

When asked to select one film as his favorite, he chose *Homework*, a 1989 documentary film where young boys of a primary school in Iran talk about their parents, teachers, punishment, reward and homework in an educational system fraught with serious weaknesses.

"From such a simple premise, Kiarostami produces a revealing, moving and emotionally complex portrait film about education, family, society," he explained. "I have seen this film just once around 15 years ago, but it remains vivid in my memory, with the final scenes being incredibly powerful."

He maintained that while *Homework* seems to be one of his least-seen and discussed films today, it is one that he would encourage people to seek out.

Concannon talked highly of the influence and the role of Kiarostami's films in bringing a great revelation to the knowledge of the west about

Iranian life; "Like the breakthrough Japanese films of the 1950s, Kiarostami's work opened the door to a whole culture, with other director subsequently coming through following his success."

However, he went on to highlight the main reason for Kiarostami's appeal as his focus on people, their interactions, their contradictions, and their mysteries.

"He could capture something ineffable but true about human nature, and he found beauty in the everyday," he said. "Even if his films were specifically about Iran, Kiarostami like all truly great artists created work that had deeper universal resonances, allowing them to move viewers and win admirers across the globe."

Considered one of the great masters of world cinema, Abbas Kiarostami passed away at 76 on July 4, 2016 in Paris where he had been undergoing hospital treatment for cancer. He may no longer be among us, but he will continue to live within his timeless creations of art and cinema |





By: *Shaidul Alam*

Bangladeshi photographer and writer Shahidul Alam who had recently met with Abbas Kiarostami has written a piece in memory of late acclaimed filmmaker.

We chose not to be photographed. His broad smile was somewhat subdued, though the impishness of his chuckle still remained. The big hug didn't work out. Even in the generous light through the large open window, a frail Kiarostami with tubes wasn't how we wanted him depicted. He had cancer, and the surgery had gone wrong. My young friend Mansour Kiaei had accompanied me and had only met the great man for the first time. He wanted to photograph the two of us. We declined, saving the moment, for when Abbas would be better, and more the Abbas, as I had known him.

Abbas Kiarostami *Untitled* 1978-2003, from a series of 32 photographs, 122 x 93 cm.

It was a delicate and elegant set of silhouettes against the snow that first caught my eye in a gallery in Paris. My knowledge of film being limited, I hadn't at that time known that the author was a great filmmaker. Later, when I was commissioned to curate for the book "Blink" by Phaidon, Abbas Kiarostami was one of my nominated photographers. It didn't work out. The negotiations between the gallery and the publisher, simply took too long and we were coming up against a deadline, but while publishers and galleries quibbled over transactional details, the two of us became friends. Later, when

I was in Tehran for a show at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts, we met for the first time in his home in North East Tehran. Since then, we've shared books and stories, and every time I've been in Tehran, assuming he too was there in between his many film related travels, we would catch up on all that we had done and laugh at life.

I had tried to get him across to our festival Chobi Mela several times. He was hesitant, saying his English was not up to speed. Language had never been an issue on the many hours we had spent together. Despite his stature as a filmmaker, he was quite shy, and while expansive and argumentative in our moments together, he was self-conscious when it came to public engagements.

June 2016 had been a crazy month, with two trips to the UK, one to Tanzania and another to Iran to fit in. But the Iran trip at the end of the month had an added incentive. Besides friends related to the TV programme and film I was involved in, it was also a chance to meet up with other old friends. Neither Shadi Ghadirian nor Rana Javadi were in town. Abbas Kiarostami strangely, had not responded. He didn't answer the phone when I rang, and there was no answer to the email. But then someone rang Mansour to ask if I could come over the next morning. It was only when we met that I realised how ill he was. Visitors were forbidden. While he never mentioned it, seeing me must have taken a special effort. I tried asking him not to

speak, content just to be by his bedside, but though speaking was difficult, he wanted to talk, and we drifted into old times. I mentioned Chobi Mela, and with a wry smile he said, 'These are the times when you reflect on the many things you never got round to in your life. Coming to see you in Dhaka is one of them.'

I had taken a copy of our new book on Muslin, the fabled Bengal fabric. He insisted on going through it. I turned the pages one by one, going briefly over the contents, wanting to stop, as I knew it was an effort for him. But he wanted me to go on. This was one way we could continue being together. For once, we didn't talk politics or photography, or film, but small things, personal things. Things that needed to be said. I did stop at one stage, had a cherry and an apricot from the large bowls of fruit that always greets a visitor to an Iranian home. Then it was time to say goodbye. A weak hand held me close as I kissed him on the forehead. The eyes followed as I walked through the door.

Entrance to house of Abbas Kiarostami. Tehran 21 June 2016. Photo: Shahidul Alam/Drik/Majority World

As we left the house, I took a photo of the empty doorway. On another day, this is where Abbas would have been standing and we'd have shared one last hug.

Dhaka

5th July 2016

Shahidul Alam is a Bangladeshi photographer and writer who was a friend of Iranian world-famous director and photographer Abbas Kiarostami



Iran's Natl. Botanical Garden piece of heaven on earth

By: Lachin Rezaian

If you are a nature lover and like seeing the world's whole nature only in three hours, Iran's Natl. Botanical Garden is a must to see.

'You can see all nature's variety here!' This is what guides of Botanical Garden say to the astonished visitors.

Founded in 1968, National Botanical Garden of Iran is located by the side of a highway between the capital, Tehran, and the city of Karaj.

Although made around 40 years ago, the Garden was open to public in recent years.

The place is planned to be the main center for horticulture and plant taxonomy in Iran with area of about 150 hectares.

The Garden is home to 3000 species of plants, shrubs and trees. Throughout a full visit around the wonderful garden you can see different species of plant. *Gaillardia grandiflora*, *Lonicera japonica*, *Gleditschia caspica*, *Fraxinus excelsior*, *Atriplex canescens*, *Taxus baccata*, *Sorbus terminalis*, *Frangula alnus*, *Danae racemosa*, *Quercus castaneifolia* subsp. *undulata*, *Zelkova carpinifolia*, *Tilia platyphyllos*, *Ruscus hyrcanus*, *Tussilago farfara*, *Urtica dioica*, *Polystichum aculeatum*, *Cydonia oblonga*, *Albizia julibrissin*, *Gleditschia caspica*, to name a few.

The purpose of establishing the Botanical Garden was to produce a collection of native and non-native plants outdoors or in greenhouses.

The Garden plays an important role in research field of Botany or plant sciences, horticulture, public education and making people aware of the importance and diversity of plants and the need for their protection.

The Botanical Garden is also a resource bank to protect genetically the endangered species from extinction.

National Botanical Garden of Iran can help researchers know about the country's plant species and determine



the scope of their distribution through various scientific methods.

Research on methods of breeding of worthy species for protection is another issue to be addressed in the Garden.

On a weekend in April, I visited this park and truly it was the best time for visiting the big well maintained garden with charming atmosphere as well as calming environment.

In a three-hour tour inside the well-kept beautiful Botanical Garden you can see many plants and species from parts of the world are brought up here in different sections, including Aknorz, Caspian as well as non-Iranian parts like American, Japanese, European, Himalayan, and Caucasian parts.

Still under construction, the garden contains an arboretum, six lakes, hills to represent the Alborz and Zagros mountains and Himalayas, rock garden, a waterfall, a wetland, desert plants areas, a salt lake and a wadi, a river about 1 km long, systematic area, fruit garden, picnic area with some pavilions and other facilities. The botanical and horticultural library has more than 11,000 volumes.

Thanks to the country's research system, the beautiful place is considered without doubt one of the most important achievements in the field of

natural resources.

Accordingly, Iran's powerful research system has brought together a collection of about 300 researchers in various fields related to natural resources and environmental sciences in this unrivaled complex and national treasure of Iran's National Garden, trying to take care of the live and unique museum of nature and at the same time make the students and those interested in nature and Botany more familiar with the advantages of Iran's plants.

In fact, while the annual visit of the UK Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, which is the world's second botanical garden, is close to 2 million, the number of people visiting the National Botanical Garden of Iran in Tehran is only 50 thousand each year.

Worse, the garden every year faces with the nightmare of funding to pay for treatment and maintenance of thousands of plant species.

All these issues perhaps are rooted in the way the spectacular complex deserves to be recognized to the people and the whole world, the place that is the result of efforts and expertise of a group of the most elite researchers and experts in the field of Botany, environmental design and related sciences to forestry and desert!

By: Marjohn Sheikhi

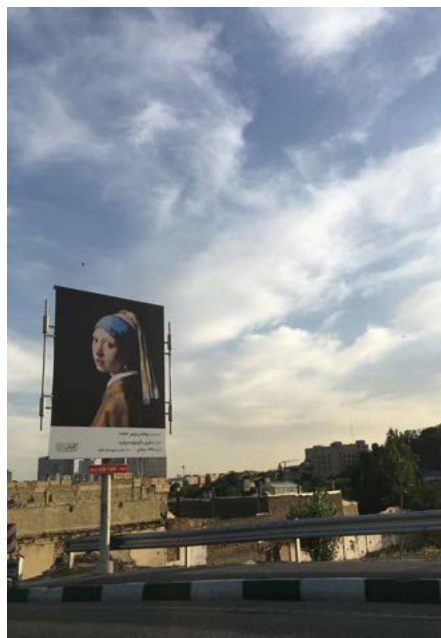
Tehran looks very different now; if you are walking the streets of the Iranian capital these days, make sure to turn your eyes upward, or you will miss the chance to see the biggest art gallery in existence.

If you are one of the lucky pedestrians walking the streets of Tehran or driving your car or riding on a public transportation through the highways and various routes from May 21 to 30, you may want to turn your eyes upward to watch the billboards. No, this is not a well-disguised coercive technique in service of consumerism. You may be surprised to find all the commercial billboards across the Iranian capital void of any advertisements for food, clothing articles or kitchen appliances. Instead, you will be presented with a large-scale, breathtaking view of famous artworks by Iranian and international artists, from the post-impressionism of Van Ghog to the abstract expressionism of Jackson Polack to the pop art of Andy Warhol. The artists have been chosen from across the world from the German expressionist Käthe Kollwitz to Danish-French impressionist Camille Pissarro to Japanese early nineteenth century artist Katsushika Hokusai.

But if you were also among the lucky ones during May 5-21, 2015, then you would remember the occasion as 'A Gallery as Large as a City' which experienced its first tentative display in Tehran last year to avid enthusiasm from the residents of the capital as well as applauding reviews from some foreign media which called the initiative unprecedented and ingenious.

Every nation loves art, and every time human beings gathered in one place, there always came a moment for some kind of appreciation for aesthetics. The tremendous success of last year's project promoted Tehran Municipality under the management of Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf to have another go at it. This time, 800 copies of artworks by artists across the world have been put on display on 2000 billboards in Tehran. Two-third of the works are from Iran and by Iranian artists and the rest have been selected from the world's major artists, some of which may be famous enough to be recognized by nearly half of the

Look up! There is an art gallery above you!



population, such as Van Gogh's *The Starry Night* or Johannes Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*.

"When I see a painting on the billboards I recognize I become strangely proud of myself," said Saman, 24, a student of electrical engineering. "My field of study does not allow me much free time to get acquainted with art and I've always felt a pang of remorse for being too immersed in mathematics and having no time to spare to visit a gallery. I like what the Municipality has done with the city, though."

Mina, 31, by contrast, turned out to be quite well-versed in the vast field of art. A photographer and illustrator, Mina spends nearly all her time hunting for beautiful spots to capture. "I'm an art major and seeing all of these wonderful works of art spread around my hometown fills me with such a warm feeling of appreciation."

"I was pleasantly surprised to find this painting as part of the displayed works in Tehran's gallery project," she showed me a photograph on her cell phone of a painting depicting the back of a lone man standing on a cliff facing a misty valley that resembled a stormy sea. It had a whimsical, mysterious feel about it. The painting was propelled on a huge

billboard against the background of a highway bridge in Tehran, and according to description under the painting, it currently resides in the Kunsthalle Hamburg in Germany; "This one here is called 'Wanderer above the Sea of Fog' by the German romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. He's one of my favorite artists. Seeing this painting right before my eyes in such a large scale, even if just a copy of it on a billboard, fires up my inspiration."

Not all copies are of paintings, however. Some of the billboards are dedicated to pictures of objects of cultural heritage, such as an Iranian carpet with the image of a lion belonging to the 19th century, or an engraved steel plate dating back to the Safavid era. Some paintings also depicted some verses from Ferdowsi's *Shahnama*, such as the famous tragedy of Sohrab, where Rostam, the father, kills his own son unwittingly.

The billboards will be hosting the artworks until May 30, and seeing the public's positive views on the project, it is likely that Tehran Municipality will come back for a third round of the city gallery next time. Or it may come up with an even more ingenious idea to charm and dazzle the art-lovers of the capital. We should wait and see!

On occasion of National Journalists' Day; Journalism, thrill of pursuing truth on perilous path



Written by Marjohn Sheikhi

'Being a journalist is hard work,' you may have heard these words from almost everyone in the journalism profession. Iran celebrates National Journalists' Day on Aug. 8 to express the nation's gratitude for all the hardship endured by journalists.

"I am grateful to journalism for waking me up to the realities of the world." - Eduardo Galeano

Being a journalist is hard work, this is the first thing my boss told me when I came for my job interview three years ago, as a warning or perhaps as an amicable advice to give me a chance to rethink my career choice if I did not see myself fit for the job description. Needless to say, I did not heed the warning, because really, how hard could it be? There is an expression among us Iranians that says 'this is the toughest job in the world, after working in the mines.' Some would even go so far as to say journalism is even tougher than a mining job. Comparisons aside, no one gets into journalism for the money. The job may hold some flimsy prestigious appeal to those looking at it on the sidelines, but from inside, it is fraught with so many sleepless nights, anxiety-ridden hours, exhausting commute on foot or by public transport in terrible climate conditions, and just pure headache. But, this cannot be all, right? According to a survey conducted in 2014, there were 83,000 full time professional journalist employees in the United States. Deputy Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Hossein Entezami, put the number of active journalists in Iran in 2016 at approximately 5,000. The figures are not staggering, of course, especially when one compares it to the whole Iranian population of 77.45 million in 2013. Yet, being a journalist must have its appeals, if it has attracted thousands of people to choose it as their profession when they could have easily been working a 9-to-5 office job (it is 8-to-4 in Iran, by the way).

Mitra, a young journalist with five years

of experience in medical and scientific journalism, perceived her career with passion and love; "journalism for me is not just a word, but a combination of creativity, honesty, alertness, confidence and courage," she said. "These are the reasons why I am still pursuing this career with the same enthusiasm I had five years ago."

"Each day at my work greets me with a new kind of adventure," she said with excitement. "It is hard work, but you can never accuse journalism of being boring."

The pursuit of information can indeed come with a rush of pure excitement and adrenaline-pumping experience, as beautifully dramatized in 'Spotlight'. But sometimes it comes at the cost of great perils. According to Reporters without borders, 80 journalists were killed in 2015, with Iraq, France, Syria and Brazil among the deadliest countries. The website puts the number of killed journalists in 2016 so far at 35, with Syria, Mexico and Yemen having the highest number of fatality among journalists. The report published by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) cites 199 jailed journalists worldwide in 2015, and 452 forced into exile since 2010. There are also a number of missing cases, particularly in Syria and Iraq as two countries are currently suffering from terrorist activities and civil wars.

People in Iran commemorate Journalists' Day on August 8 (August 7, this year) in memory of Mahmoud Saremi, Afghanistan bureau chief for the official Iranian news agency, IRNA, who was killed when Taliban militia seized the northern city of Mazar Sharif and captured the Iranian consulate. Our National Journalists' Day is in fact a commemoration of the sacrifices that journalists and reporters make on this hazardous path toward truth and awareness. But I do not wish to end my piece here, making it sound as if journalism is bound to always have a sad ending. I would like to talk about one of my own experiences as a journalist, at the time when all the world's eyes had been focused on Iran: the period between June and July 2014, when Iranian nuclear negotiators sat with

the six world powers to reach a deal on the country's nuclear program. During this time, world news headlined the process of nuclear negotiations and people were following up on the news with apprehension and curiosity. Some would even argue that the media also played a part in the conclusion of the nuclear deal; in fact, President Rouhani thanked the active presence of Iranian youth in the cyberspace who had been in one way or another engaged with the negotiations buzz, and deemed the role of media outlets highly effective on the path that ultimately led to signing of the agreement on July 14, 2015.

It was a race among Iranian media and press to be the first among their peers to broadcast the news to the world. And it was one of those few cases where we, at Mehr News Agency, found ourselves personally involved in and concerned with the course of the news.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi who was among the nuclear negotiating team called the nuclear negotiations as part of our history and expressed his content over the fact that the same view was present among the journalists who had been covering the news at the time.

No one can deny the power of written words, and journalists are simply in possession of that power. With power comes responsibility, and those journalists who are committed to excellence and moral principles in their profession can bring positive changes to the world around them.

Joseph Pulitzer, an American newspaper publisher who is perhaps better known for the Pulitzer Prizes, has left us with this golden quote which I am leaving here for those of you who are thinking to become a journalist yourself: "I am deeply interested in the progress and elevation of journalism, having spent my life in that profession, regarding it as a noble profession and one of unequalled importance for its influence upon the minds and morals of the people."

Olympic athletes now enjoy halal food

Brazil Islamic Center, an Islamic NGO, has been working to provide food labelled 'halal' for Muslim athletes in Rio Olympics 2016.

The Islamic Center had been commissioning the project to provide halal food in Olympic Games during 8 months during which the Center persuaded the Olympic organizing committee on recognizing Islamic teachings in practice about eating food prepared according to Islamic practices. The Olympic organizing committee has been committed, during the negotiations, to prepare conditions for Muslim athletes in enjoying halal food by the Center.

The Center will provide halal food for Muslim delegations in Rio. To this end, separate kitchens have been devised in the Olympic village along with a large dining hall which is capable of hosting more than 2,000 athletes and managers of Muslim delegations to Rio. The whole system of catering, preparation, and distribution of food is handled by the Islamic Center and under its supervision.

The project complies with the health standards of the Olympic organizing committee. The workers and cooks are uniformed and easily identified. They are only eligible to commute to spaces where non-Islamic food is distributed and are banned from entering these sections.

The dining complex of Olympic village provides more than 65,000 foods to more than 18,000 athletes and delegation members; 8,000 athletes and delegation members will receive food with halal labels on them.

Islamic Center of Brazil has been working for 20 years in halal food industry with Brazil's wider industry along with South American continent. The Center has the honor to provide halal food in major events including 2014 FIFA World Cup and Rio+20 in 2012



'Son of Desert' to explore Iranian central desert: planned for 2017

Report by: Masoud Borbor,
translated by Samad Habibi

Italian famous desert-trotter has decided to come to Iran and explore the road not taken by any human being in the history of the desert: to cover on foot the central desert of Iran which stretches 400km north-south.

'When someone says it's impossible I already feel that I can do,' this is audacious sentence written in Max Calderan's official website. His stamina belies the conventional wisdom and medical practice. He is beyond the understanding traditional people make of what the strenuous task is and what the sport proper is. Calderan's achievements go beyond the most strenuous of the Olympics. His distances covered in the desert simply dwarf that of the Olympic Marathon. He is a master of desert and single-handedly crossed the passages no human being dared to ever.

Crossing 250km of Sinai Desert under torrid conditions of 50 degrees Celsius and by fasting in day of holy month of Ramadan is a demanding task not even

imagined. Max converted to Islam 12 years ago just ahead of its epic journey in the Sinai Desert. "I want to achieve what has not been achieved by anyone; I want to tread places not trodden by anyone before; I want to face challenges no one welcomed," says Calderan, who is in Iran this time to record another Guinness record among his repertoire of the mind-blowing superlatives.

His new plan is to cover 400km of Iranian central desert north-south to protect Asiatic Cheetah. The route he will take is not an easy route and no one so far has gotten the gauntlet the inhospitable environs of the Iranian desert usually had thrown. The sun warms this desert more than any other spot on the planet. The desert is northernmost part of the desert band which rounds the earth. NASA has recorded a hottest temperature of 71 degrees Celsius (159 degrees Fahrenheit) in the region, which gives the desert the epithet 'hottest place on earth.'

"I had been telling myself that people usually speak of the hottest temperature recorded ever; many people would experience the temperature, however not in

the middle of the July; I want to be the first to cross the desert in summer heat to redefine the boundaries of human abilities: to run from sunrise to sunset, whatever kilometer I could."

He defines crossing for July-August 2017, when the sands are hottest. Alfons Gabriel once crossed the desert in 1938 with his wife and defined it: "moving mammoth sand dunes, with twisted routes, painful to cross."

The proposal came by a certain Homa Davari, a desert tour guide. She dubs the expedition 'an environmental project.' "Max is a desert-trotter, and so is Asiatic Cheetah. We have this parallel and a pretext to organize the project accordingly. This project will grab many attentions to Asiatic Cheetah, a large cat on the verge of extinction," tells Davari to Mehr News.

Max is quick to agree to the project and is invited to Iran officially. He is not a stranger to the Middle Eastern deserts. In 2014, Aljazeera recorded a documentary featuring Max Calderan, aptly entitled 'The Son of the Desert,' aired worldwide to publicize this newly-convert Muslim of Christian stock |



Persepolis threatened by drought, land subsidence



By Samad Habibi

Agricultural activity in the villages near Persepolis historical complex had exacerbated already tense situation in the land subsidence as a result of droughts and unregulated use of underground water.

Persepolis now faces new threat: the region with land subsidence has now moved to a distance of 600 meters from the major site and has raised concerns over the millennial monument. In 2008, it was discovered that Persepolis was subject to land subsidence. The solution however was ill-devised and authorities filled the cracks by earth transported from elsewhere by trucks.

Located in dry climate, Persepolis had been erected through 200 years by different Achaemenid potentates on a ground mainly composed of limestone, which is subject to wind erosion relatively easily. Droughts of recent years rendered the region unsuitable for agriculture. However, in villages near Persepolis, water had been increasingly wasted in traditional rice plantations; this contributes to even more severe land subsidence. Authorities have warned

about pernicious effects of activities on the site, but farming had been continued untrammelled.

Tahmouras Yousefi, Head of Center of Geology in South (Shiraz Office) tells Mehr News local correspondent that Marvdasht plain had been a site of significant land subsidence, with a general trend also afflicting the province; "Fars province suffers the maximum fall in the level of water which makes the province's plains subject to cracks and sinkholes," he added.

"In recent years, unregulated underground water use had been the major cause of drying of the plain in a tree plantation project near Persepolis; the issue invites serious measures by the authorities in provincial and national levels," Yousefi asserted.

"The northern part of the plain in outskirts of Rahmat Mount has huge cracks which continue to Naghsh-e-Rostam; cracks had been discovered in a village, Shoul, near Marvdasht, with widest cracks in Karbal near the historical complex; cracks had become wider 1 centimeter annually during past 10 years, however, it was 50 meters within two years only," he told Mehr News.

Caveat also comes from a local archaeologist Nowrouz Rajabi who reiterates warnings on impending damage threatening Persepolis; "the public is also subject to dangers; the underground water levels has shrunk severely, drying up the bed of the river Kor. Rice is grown in the vicinity of the site despite the conditions of drought; rice planting exhausts water resources in Marvdasht plain near Gediyoun village, only 1 kilometer from Persepolis; this would lead to a disaster of far-reaching consequences; agricultural activity should be slowed in these regions for an effective solution to the land subsidence," he demanded |



Bam Citadel to open to public after 13 years

*Report by: Asma Mahmoudi ,
translated by Samad Habibi*

The world's largest adobe building has only recently been finding its past glory after reconstruction of its most beautiful part which is planned to be opened to interested public.

Built around 500 BC, Bam Citadel was hit by the earthquake which equally devastated City of Bam in the desert province of Kerman. The quake demolished 90 per cent of this invaluable architectural monument, but the revival attempts, having started almost immediately after the quake, addressed the rebuilding of the citadel through a combination of traditional and modern methods of reconstructing an ancient building. The initial efforts sought to restore the strength to the castle and save its historical identity and hue as well.

In the process of construction, different academicians and experts participated in a multinational workshop to erect the citadel anew; now, after so many years, the citadel is yet to find its past glory. The testimony to this is the flow of large groups of tourists on daily basis who come to Bam only to behold the gem of the orient. The estimations show that 99 per cent of the historical citadel has been restored to its former structure, with efforts still underway in other parts.

Afshin Ebrahimi, head of Bam International Heritage, an NGO to register the citadel in UNESCO World Heritage List, told Mehr News local correspondent on Wednesday that the restoration work would give the public access to seat and office of the Governor (hakim neshin) and the first porch of the Citadel. He was satisfied with the process of construction; "the reconstruction turned the Citadel to one of the largest architectural workshops ever to restore historical monument and the embodiment of a national solidarity and collaboration to restore a monument of a long-gone civilization," he told Mehr News. "We predict to have swarm of



tourists rushing to the Citadel by the opening of the seat of the Governor by next New Year's Eve (21 March 2017); however, to see that future as a reality, we need much-required resources to invigorate the construction process and instill some hope to the body of the ancient giant building."

"Seat of the Governor is the highest point in the Citadel where it gives breathtaking landscape and view to the city itself and the remaining part of the Citadel; the clearing of the rubble has been completed almost 99 per cent, with strengthening and bolstering of the building following; in the course of the restoration, research and technical work had been carried out regularly, since the rubble was the most valuable part of the Citadel where it gave the researchers rare historical information as to the origin of the rocks and the adobe incorporated into the building," he detailed for Asma Mahmoudi, Mehr News local correspondent.

Bam Governor Mr. Reza Ashk joins the conversation later with a depiction of Bam just after the quake which impinged upon the minds of the local people a painful experience of the death of the loved ones and a public mourning of the devastation of the Citadel as well; "in 2003, the Citadel was demolished by the quake; this struck the people with grief and gloom, since

the Citadel was a source of inspiration and symbolized the life in a city in the middle of the desert; now however, the perennial efforts are yielding and local people feel euphoric and excited about the view of the new restored building," he told Mehr News. "The international welcome has been quite satisfactory and the city's airport largely contributed to this influx of tourists, bringing in foreign tourists more than ever."

"The news of the opening of the Citadel stole the headlines during the New Year's holidays when for almost two weeks, the Citadel saw thousands of tourists coming and paying pilgrimage to this monument; the Citadel yet awaits world recognition through UNESCO World Heritage List," Ashk concluded.

Mohammad Jahanshahi, another local official, deputy-head of local Cultural Heritage Organization also spoke to Mehr News on the topic; "according to figures, the Citadel topped the list of domestic and international tourist visits last year [2015]; after the quake, we had the historic record low in the number of incoming visitors, only alleviated by other provincial attractions such as Lout Desert, Meimand Village, and Rayen Citadel; the Citadel in Bam will restore the past boom in tourism with restoration efforts bringing good tidings," he said |

Turkish GAP projects 'bane of environment'

*Reported by Masoud Borbor,
translated by Samad Habibi*

A civil society of 1550 Iranian citizens have written to the UN believing Turkish huge dam projects over Tigris and Euphrates had contributed devastatingly to severe droughts in the downstream regions in Iraq and Syria.

The signatories of the letter, addressed to the UN, among whom appear notable names mainly environmental activists and experts, along with other NGOs, officially implicated Turkey in building mammoth dams in a notorious Southeast Anatolia Project (Gün-eydoğu Anadolu Projesi, GAP) and for the subsequent droughts, chronic environmental impacts and other social and political unrest which affected lives of millions of farmers who had long been living on those lands in the downstream of the Tigris and Euphrates. The political chaos in Iraq and Syria has allowed little opportunity to either governments on these countries or civil society, if any, to address the issue in international responsible organizations and hold Turkey culpable in International Court of Justice or any other courts.

Fatemeh Zafarnejad, water and sustainable development affairs analyst told Mehr News Society correspondent that Turkey had built over 15 dams on Tigris and Euphrates origins; "only one such dam, Atatürk, reserves 50 billion cubic meters of water behind itself which exceed the sum of all Iranian dam capacities, which barely amount to 46 billion cubic meters; the Euphrates enters Syria from Turkey to irrigate Syrian desert and then enters Iraq only to drain to Hour al-Azim wetland. The Tigris directly flows from Turkey to Iraq which also drains to the wetland in its finish line of long journey," she detailed. "Turkey allows only a fraction of original water quota which barely reaches Hour al-Azim and midway in its journey, it is a source of plight for the farmers living on the river for their agriculture."

Zafarnejad added that the construction of the dam potentially threatened ancient civilizations and their relics in Syria, Mesopotamia, and southern Iran, where diverse ethnic groups had been



living with symbiosis; "it also violates articles of UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) and of UNDRIP (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)," she told Masoud Borbor, Mehr News Society correspondent.

The letter sparked reactions even in the most callous officials of the Department of Environment who are usually slow to react. Such a reaction came first from head of Public Participation Office of the Department of Environment who criticized long and deafening silence of the Ministry of Energy on the grave issue of GAP and its consequences for Iranian geography, purportedly to address the issue but in a tactic to pass the buck to another organization whose share of responsibility equaled its own. Mohammad Darvish is quick not to spare his reproaches to 'experts of country's water sector' who "would wonder if building dams in the upstream of rivers could trigger desertification in the downstream regions and activate a spot from where the blinding dust and pernicious microorganisms arose."

"A long and 15-year-old silence has strong motives for the Ministry of Energy to wisely sleep on any objection to Turkish government in its highly devastating GAP project, since the same Ministry of Energy has always advocated, wrongly or rightly, building dams, which in turn triggered gradual drying up of almost all Iranian plateau and subsequent disasters as land downdrafts;

the same Ministry dried up Bakhtegan, Urmia, Atrak, Jazmourian, Dalaki, Mand, Minab, and Khuzistan hydrological ecosystems and is no longer in a position to hold responsible Turkish government to do the contrary and save the environment in downstream Tigris and Euphrates," Darvish sourly commented.

A Telegram group of the public campaign called Lovers of Kind Zagros posted the letter and have been collecting signatures from environmental activists. "The GAP project dams will drastically change hydrological patterns governing the Tigris and Euphrates fertile alluvial plains in Iraq and Syria, rendering those villages utterly deserted, with no less important Hour al-Azim wetland also to be hit by the wind erosion and waves of dust to continue to affect Khuzistan and other western provinces of Iran," the letter emphasized.

Signatories of the letter warned that apart from its impact on agriculture and drought, the GAP project would contribute to ever-present dust storms threatening southwest and central Iran, eventually rendering human settlements inhospitable enough to be abandoned.

The letter and ensuing movement should come as caveat to the government and foreign policy machine to act immediately through UNESCO and UN diverse mechanisms to mount pressures on Turkey on the issue and restore hope to the millions of dispirited farmers or the UN will turn a blind eye again to another environmental disaster to leave the people in the region to their own devices |

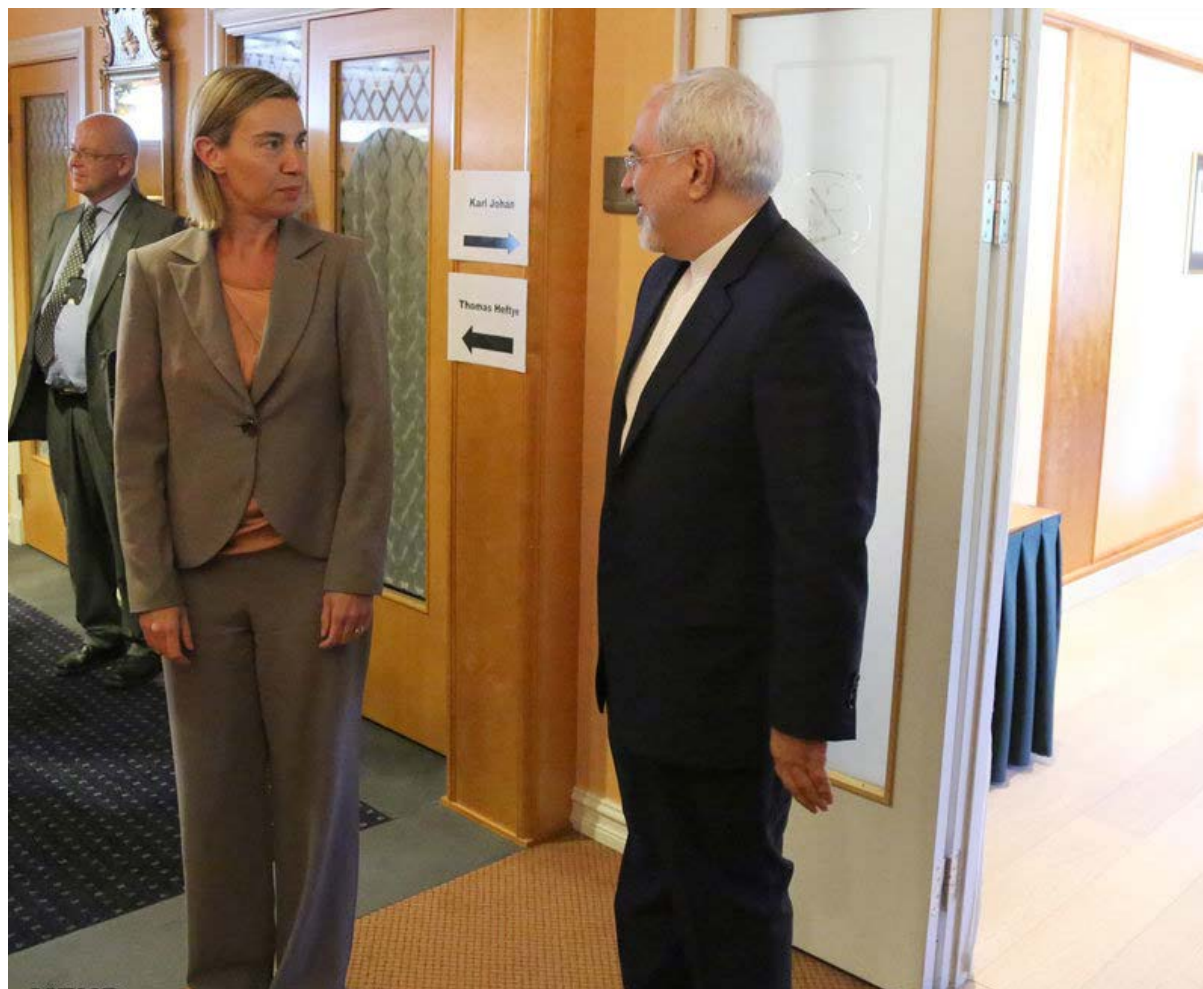


News in Vision



Zarif's European tour in frames

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif attended the Iran-Finland Business Forum on June 1 in Helsinki.



Zarif met and conferred with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini on June 15 in Oslo.

Iranian FM Zarif, during his three-day visit to the Norwegian capital Oslo, held talks with US Secretary of State John Kerry on June 15 over the implementation of Iran nuclear deal.



Zarif's European tour in frames



Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif held talks with German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier during his short stay in Berlin on June 16.

Zarif and his Dutch counterpart Bert Koenders attended a press conference in the city of Hague on June 24.





Zarif's African tour in frames

Zarif launched his West African tour on July 25 with a visit to Nigeria where he met with Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari.



Zarif arrived in Ghana on July 26 as the second leg of his West African tour and held talks with President of Ghana John Dramani Mahama.

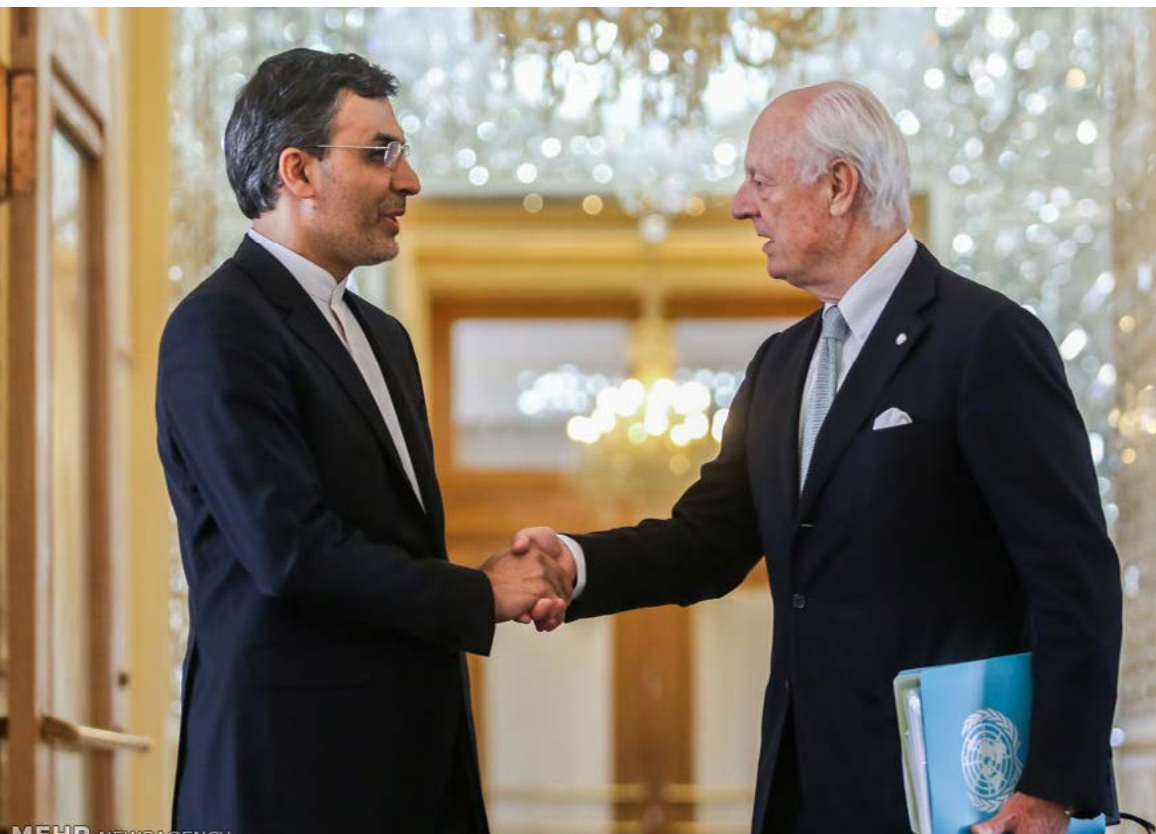
Zarif's African tour in frames



Foreign Minister Javad Zarif arrived in Guinea of Conakry as the third leg of his West African tour on July 27 and met with Foreign Minister Makala Tamara.



Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif visited Mali as the last leg of his African tour on July 28 and held talks with Malian Prime Minister Modibo Keita.



Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab-African Affairs Hossein Jaber Ansari met with United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura in Tehran on July 31.



Defense ministers of Iran, Russia and Syria held a trilateral meeting in Tehran on June 10 to discuss regional developments and coordinate efforts in the fight against terrorism.

Iran achieved a historic feat as they earned their first-ever Olympic Games qualification, after they defeated Poland in the tournament 3-1 at Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium on June 4.



The Iranian national freestyle wrestling team won the world cup for the 7th time after overpowering mighty Russia 5-3 in the final on June 13.



Asghar Farhadi's latest flick, 'The Salesman' won the Best Screenplay and Best Actor award for Shahab Hosseini in the 69th edition of Cannes Film Festival.



Abbas Kiarostami, the winner of the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1997 for 'Taste of Cherry', died in Paris on July 4, where he had been undergoing medical treatment.

**Foreign Ministers of
Caspian Sea littoral
states held meeting
in Kazakh capital
Astana on July 13.**



**In the presence of Commander of the Iranian
Army's Ground Forces Brigadier General
Ahmadreza Pourdastan, 209 tactical helicopter
simulator was unveiled on July 24.**



More than a million people in Tehran gathered in Grand Musalla of Tehran to participate in Eid al-Fitr Prayers led by Ayatollah Khamenei, marking end of a month of fasting on July 6.



Millions of Iranian people across the country took to the streets on June 1 to mark International Quds Day on the last Friday of Holy Ramadan.