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Rouhani calls British PM's remarks 'inappropriate and unacceptable'

TEHRAN TIMES Political Desk TEHRAN — Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has criticized the anti-Iranian statements made by British Prime Minister David Cameron at the recent session of the United Nations

General Assembly, calling them "inappropriate and unacceptable".

Rouhani made the remarks at a press conference upon his arrival in Tehran after visits to New York and the Russian city of

Astrakhan.

"Everyone should know that this century is the 21st century, and if anybody thinks in the environment of the 19th century, he will harm himself," Rouhani

stated.

The Iranian president said his meeting with Cameron was held upon a request by the British government.

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Iran unveils energy saving plans valued at \$12b

'Hezbollah's priorities are stabilizing Lebanon, countering Takfiris'

TEHRAN TIMES Political Desk TEHRAN — The Hezbollah secretary general has said that stabilizing Lebanon and countering threats posed by Takfiri terrorists are Hezbollah's priorities, IRNA reported on Tuesday.

Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah made the remarks during a meeting with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani in Beirut.

Nasrallah said Takfiris pose "complicated" threats to the security of the Middle East countries including Lebanon and this necessitates boosting national unity in the country.

He also expressed gratitude to Iran for its support to the resistance movement against Israel and the campaign against terrorism.

The Hezbollah chief also said the fight against terrorism should be done without "double standards".

For his part, Shamkhani praised Hezbollah's role in defending security and stability in Lebanon.

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Asian Games 2014: Iran targets fourth place

TEHRAN TIMES Sports Desk Iran is going to finish in fourth place in the 2014 Asian Games underway in Incheon, South Korea.

The Iranian athletes have won 14 gold medals so far, one gold medal behind Kazakhstan in the medal table.

Iran claimed four gold medals on Tuesday and now two gold medals would take them above Kazakhstan in the table.

Iran could win more gold medals in Greco-Roman wrestling, taekwondo, karate, volleyball, basketball and boxing in coming days. Two Iranian Greco-Roman wrestlers won gold medals on Tuesday.

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NEWS

Nine Bahraini Shias stripped of citizenship

A Bahraini court has sentenced nine people to life and revoked their citizenship for smuggling arms to be used in "terrorist acts," the Gulf kingdom's prosecutor general has said.

The Bahrain News Agency (BNA) said on Monday that the Fourth Grand Criminal Court had found the men, who are all Bahraini-born Shias, guilty of smuggling weapons, including explosives, into the country in a case that dates back to December 2013.

The court in Manama also found them guilty of having contacted an agent of an unnamed foreign country "to carry out acts hostile to Bahrain," the prosecutor general said in a statement.

Three of the men were also sentenced to three years in jail on charges of assaulting public security personnel in addition to their life imprisonment, BNA said.

In 2012, Bahrain stripped 31 people of their citizenship after they were convicted of damaging state security.

Last month, Amnesty International said that 10 people among the 31 were facing deportation or imprisonment, a move the rights group said was part of an array of "arbitrary" powers that Manama had granted itself to punish opponents of the government.

Dozens of Bahraini Shias have been given lengthy prison terms after being convicted of involvement in anti-government protests which have shaken the country since February 2011. The tiny Persian Gulf nation remains deeply divided three years after authorities crushed the uprising.

(Source: agencies)

Can technology bridge the schism of politics?

What a Berkeley event says about the power of diasporas and technology

Alidad Mafinezam
Special to Tehran Times

The Bridge 2014 gathering on "High-Tech Entrepreneurship in Iran," held at the Wheeler Auditorium of the University of California at Berkeley on the first Saturday of September, broke new ground on multiple fronts. It drew seven hundred people from across the U.S. and internationally. Over a dozen leading academics and entrepreneurs came from Iran itself, to explore the potential of high-tech manufacturing, E-commerce and Internet-based services to advance development in the country, and ways of building bridges between Iran's entrepreneurial ecosystem and its large and

wealthy diaspora in the U.S. as a gateway to the world of innovation and finance.

Three dozen speakers addressed the gathering. The quality and spirit of their input represented tech savvy and significant wealth combined with sympathy and goodwill – an indispensable combination for offering workable solutions to a crisis-ridden world. The venue matched the positive energy and the high calibre of the contributors. As the leading state university in the U.S., and among the best in the world, the Berkeley campus typifies the openness and academic rigour that has underpinned Silicon Valley's reliance on top talent and a "can-do" spirit in science and engineering.

A sizable portion of such talent comes

from China, India, and Iran to Berkeley and Stanford for graduate education before joining the high-end of intellectual capital that underpins the ongoing technology revolution, which was spawned in the Bay area a generation ago. In terms of its numbers and the heights to which it has risen in Silicon Valley, the Iranian diaspora can indeed be placed in the same league as its Chinese and Indian counterparts, who have made profound contributions to these two giants' technological and economic advancement and meteoric rise over the past generation. And yet, unlike China and India, Iran has not been able to harness the technological prowess of its diaspora in Silicon Valley.

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ISIL closes in on town on border with Turkey

ISIL terrorists close in on the key Kurdish town of Kobane, as Turkey considers sending troops to both Iraq and Syria.

Fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) have closed in on a key Kurdish town in Syria, next to the border with Turkey, prompting the government in Ankara to deploy tanks to protect its territory.

Al Jazeera's reporter Bernard Smith from Suruc close to Turkey's southern border, said ISIL fighters had moved within two kilometers of Kobane.

Turkish tanks and armored vehicles had taken up positions near its border on Monday, after shells and mortars from Syria hit Turkish villages. At least 15 tanks were positioned, some with their guns pointing towards Syrian territory.

Intensified shelling in and around Kobane has angered Kurds on the Turkish side of the border, who said the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was not doing enough to stop the assault.

According to Al Jazeera's



reporter Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu was expected to meet military commanders on Tuesday to spell out Turkey's strategy against ISIL.

"The prime minister is expected to present two motions to parliament authorizing Turkish forces to operate in both Iraq and Syria and to allow foreign forces to use Turkish soil in operations against ISIL," Smith said.

The government previously said it would submit motions to parliament authorizing armed forces to take action in Iraq and Syria, so Ankara could join the U.S.-led coalition against the ISIL fighters.

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Yemen's Houthi opposition rebels refuse to leave Sanaa

Yemen's Houthi opposition fighters have refused to withdraw from Sanaa after seizing much of the capital in a lightning offensive earlier this month, despite signing an agreement with the government saying they would leave.

A Houthi spokesman told Al Jazeera on Tuesday that the rebels would not withdraw to their mountainous stronghold in the north, but instead work with security authorities in the capital.

"We will not withdraw from Sanaa," Mohammed Abdulsalam said.

Under a UN-brokered peace accord Houthis agreed to stop all acts of violence and leave Sanaa after the appointment of a new prime minister.

However, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, Yemen's President, has failed to name a new premier.

Hakim al-Masmari, the editor of the Yemen Post, told Al Jazeera that the government succumbed to each of the rebels' demands and "article 15 of the deal gave the Houthis the right to remain in Sanaa and its neighboring areas".

The Houthis had besieged Sanaa for over a month, even-



tually seizing key state installations from the government with little resistance.

The Houthis, also known as Ansarullah, are a Shia group who make up 30 percent of Yemen's population and ruled a kingdom there for 1,000 years.

The Houthis have fought the central government in Sanaa for years, complaining of marginalization under former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who was ousted in 2012 following a year of protests.

The Houthis have been trying to enlarge their zone of influence since January by pushing out from their mountain strongholds in the far north to areas closer to the capital.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

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Can technology bridge the schism of politics?

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The Islamic Republic of Iran, after all, is the world's most sanctioned country, over \$100 billion of whose assets have been frozen by the world's largest economies on suspicion by the U.S. and European countries that it seeks to build nuclear weapons. Virtually all trade and investment with Iran are forbidden by a series of U.S., EU and UN Security Council sanctions that have targeted the country's oil and banking sectors, imposing exorbitant costs on the country and, by most accounts, the region of which Iran is such an integral part. The official rhetoric coming from Tehran remains opposed to U.S. influence in the world as it reiterates the 1979 Islamic revolution's anti-American ideology for continued sustenance. The Berkeley event was all the more impressive for being held against such a fraught background.

Robert Price, professor of political science and the associate vice chancellor for research at Berkeley, helps oversee the university's domestic and international partnerships. He inaugurated the conference via teleconference from Paris, welcoming the guests on behalf of the University of California and the Charter Members who had sponsored the event. When used together, the words "Iran" and "high-tech" are more likely, he said, to bring to mind computer viruses that were unleashed on the country's nuclear program or the continuing focus on prohibited "dual use" technologies. Yet, he added, if sanctions on Iran are lifted, with a population of 80 million, high levels of education, and the outstanding achievements of the Iranian-American community in the high technology sector, Tehran could become a regional entrepreneurial hotspot. It is thus important to explore what should be done to alter conditions that hinder entrepreneurship.

Jack Citrin, the director of Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies, took to the podium to welcome the participants. He cautioned that two processes are colliding across the world: economic globalization that promotes interaction, versus the political and security polarization, which are pulling people apart and creating divisions. The need for building more bridges between the U.S. and Iran is especially palpable now, he said, pledging Berkeley's support for such academic exchanges.

The first keynote speaker was Behrouz Abdi, CEO of Invensense, which is a publicly traded chip maker based in San Jose, California, with half a dozen offices across Asia. The firm designs and manufactures motion tracking micro devices. In his talk Abdi drew a broad picture of the technology revolution since the late 1970s and early 1980s, calling it the "other revolution" in contrast to the religious and political one that came to Iran in 1979. Technology has lowered entry costs and entrepreneurs can be empowered much more readily than before, Abdi said, outlining the vast advances in China and India in the past decade as these countries have become central parts of the high-tech supply chain, while acquiring a significantly larger share of the global economic output.

Leading a company with offices in Japan, Korea, China, and Taiwan, Abdi reminisced of the time in recent memory when there was no direct flights between China and Taiwan, and called the establishment of direct air links between the two as a sign of the recognition that the demands of progress and economic competitiveness outweigh politics and ideology. This new openness has been part of the reason that over the past decade the number chip makers in China has grown four-fold, reaching over 500. He voiced his belief in intellectual and scientific talent of Iranians which, if harnessed, could transform Iran into a regional leader in technology and services.

Kamran Elahian, one of the event's main organizers, is a leading entrepreneur and investor in technology start-ups in Silicon Valley and around the world, who has worked with entrepreneurs in over a dozen countries from Asia and Europe to Latin America. He came to prominence in the early 1990s, leading a series of successful IPOs for technology start-ups.

Along with his wife Zohreh, Elahian is credited with launching Schools Online internationally and for numerous other philanthropic pursuits. He gave a motivational speech that drew on Mahatma Gandhi's saying that "You have to become the change that you wish to see in the world." Questioning the orthodoxies that had imposed artificial limits on his people, Gandhi's philosophy created an environment that in time enabled Indians' potential to be realized, and for the country to become a technological and economic powerhouse.

We have Doctors Without Borders, Elahian said, why not have a similarly ambitious Entrepreneurs without Borders that can promote positive change across the world, he asked. The high-tech community can and should make a more concerted effort to tackle the world's challenges, he said, then drawing a fundamental distinction between the speculative



Babak Parviz, an Iranian-American scientist, mentioned Iran's massive natural resources and its human capital as major assets that could underpin significant growth in Iran. Using the examples of Finland, Singapore, Brazil and China, he pointed out that these countries have experienced tremendous growth in one generation, and have moved from largely agricultural economies to high-tech manufacturing. He highlighted the impact of the Indian and Chinese diaspora communities in the vast transformation of these countries and wondered out-loud about whether Iran could learn from their examples.

economy and the innovation economy, that are based on two fundamentally different philosophies and ways of generating value -- the key difference being that the playing field is far more levelled in the latter, and the benefits are far more broadly shared.

He gave the example of Skype, which was created in Estonia with meagre capital investments but powerful intellect, and challenged the power of some of the world's largest telecommunications companies in providing low-cost and broadly accessible connectivity. By relying on their brains and Internet, people can bring about broad-scale change. Calling for an "i-Gandhi" (i for Internet), Elahian said that "the 21st century spinning wheel is shared ownership."

Maryam Rofougaran was another keynote speaker. Now in her mid-forties, she is a leading inventor and Iranian-American entrepreneur who holds 99 patents, some of which pertain to blue-tooth and wifi wireless applications. Along with her older brother Reza, she is credited with having helped put wifi and blue-tooth on an affordable chip, thus having "revolutionized the whole field" in the words of Frank Chang, chairman of the Electrical Engineering Department at UCLA, from which both siblings hold PhDs. She addressed passion and perseverance as the two wings of successful entrepreneurship and highlighted the historical contributions of Iranians to the worlds of science and scholarship, naming Avicenna, Kharazmi, Tusi, and Khayam as examples of Iranians who made seminal contributions to the world of science and philosophy in their time. She called Iran a rich land of art, culture and civilization whose contemporary image has been marred due to political reasons.

Despite this, she said, the Iranian-American community is one of the highest achieving immigrant groups in the U.S. and has produced scholars, scientists, entrepreneurs, and businessmen and women who have contributed to all fields of endeavour in America. She moved to the U.S. to study in the mid-1980s in her teens, after finishing high school in Iran. Her heroes were Newton and Einstein, who revolutionized physics, and she dreamt of one day winning a Nobel Prize in science. While she didn't reach her dream, she said, the energy the dream ignited in her mind led to other achievements and breakthroughs, among the most rewarding of which has been to help Broadcom, a multi-billion dollar chip maker to become globally competitive in wireless technologies.

Rofougaran highlighted the need for providing funding to university-based programs that can spawn and then bring discoveries and inventions

to market. She mentioned the achievements of Sharif University of Technology and the University of Tehran, and singled out Isfahan as the only city in the Middle East that has held an international physics Olympiad, a sign of Iran's prominent role in the scientific and knowledge ecosystem of the region of which it is a part. She reiterated her hope that Iran becomes the "Silicon Valley of the Middle East."

The technology entrepreneurs who visited from Iran seemed equally innovative. Nazanin Daneshvar, in her late 30s, is founder of a leading Ecommerce site, "Takhfifan.com" serving as a smaller version of Amazon.com for Iran. After three years of operations, the site has over a million subscribers and has been experiencing steady growth. Having studied in Britain and worked in Germany in technical positions, Daneshvar referred to the calling for making a difference as one of the reasons she returned to Iran to launch her company. With over 50 percent of Iranians using the Internet, she seemed hopeful that the Iranian E-commerce market retains significant capacity for growth.

Fereidun Ghassemzadeh is founder of the Tehran-based Afranet.com, a leading Internet service provider in Iran that has a user base in the millions. He said over 900 thousand Iranians are graduates of IT-related fields and that the country maintains significant human capital in this area, calling Iran the largest untapped IT market in the Middle East. With an estimated market size of over \$18 billion, he pointed out that only one-third of this figure was tapped, leaving a large gap, which could be filled by the well-placed and technologically savvy Iranian diaspora.

Mahmoud Nazari was another speaker and leading Iranian technology entrepreneur, and founder of System Group, which is among Iran's leading providers of business software solutions, with over 20,000 customers in the cement, tile, cable, and petrochemical sectors. He bemoaned the challenge of "brain-drain" with the best and brightest Iranian students looking to emigrate and expressed his hope that with a relaxation of sanctions members of the diaspora could get involved in the country's information technology sector.

Farshad Nowshadi is a UK-based senior advisor on technology and online banking to Saman Bank, a publicly traded financial institution with 250 branches across Iran. Since 2007, he has been a regular business visitor to Iran, and his impetus was partially responsible for enabling Saman Bank to be the first in Iran to offer online banking. Nowshadi described the "explosion" in the mobile market in

Iran, with over 120 million mobile phones, close to 1.5 phones per Iranian. Over 33,000 ATM machines exist in Iran catering to over 280 million debit cards in an economy that is the 20th largest in the world. He voiced his optimism in the future of the largely untapped Iranian market.

Farhad Rahnema of Rahnema Group of Companies was another leading tech player from Iran at the event, whose firm includes over a dozen start-ups that are involved with scores of technology parks across Iran. He echoed other participants' call to enhance interaction between the venture capital and technology entrepreneurs in the U.S. and Iran.

There are over 6 million mobile internet users in Iran, and over 10 million regular social media users, Rahnema said, and yet the entire E-commerce market in Iran is \$500 million, which shows large room for growth. He highlighted the gap in educational institutions, which, despite the high potential of Iran's talent pool, do not effectively teach "soft skills" or business and management acumen that enable the economy to flourish. He called for a culture that attaches more value to long-term investment, openness to calculated risk taking, and more investment from private sources into Iran's ecosystem. In the week before the event, Rahnema said, 3G, 4G and LTE technologies were introduced in Iran and soon found millions of eager users.

Yahya Tabesh, professor of mathematics and computer science at Iran's Sharif University, mentioned the pride he takes in his former students, congratulating Maryam Mirzakhani, the first woman to win the Fields Medal in mathematics, now at Stanford (where Tabesh has an adjunct appointment), as an example of the high talent that Iranians have in math and science. He referred to Iran's relatively developed university network as a major asset for the country, pointing to the 100 public and 500 private colleges and universities that dot Iran's landscape. He mentioned the weak private sector, the fact that the country is cut off from the world economy, and lack of IP protection as obstacles that would need to be addressed if Iran were to truly harness its potential in this area.

Another outlying Iranian-American scientist and

technologist who spoke at the event was Babak Parviz, now a vice president at Amazon. Parviz holds a PhD in electrical engineering and has done postdoctoral work at the cross-section of biology and circuits. Parviz is the creator of Google Glass and former director of Google's X Lab.

Despite the war and sanctions with which Iran has had to contend for over 35 years, Parviz expressed his continuing confidence in Iran's future "because of the quality of our people." He mentioned Iran's massive natural resources and its human capital as major assets that could underpin significant growth in Iran. Using the examples of Finland, Singapore, Brazil and China, he pointed out that these countries have experienced tremendous growth in one generation, and have moved from largely agricultural economies to high-tech manufacturing. He highlighted the impact of the Indian and Chinese diaspora communities in the vast transformation of these countries and wondered out-loud about whether Iran could learn from their examples.

Google executives were a prominent presence at the event: Roya Soleimani, a communications manager at the firm, was the event's emcee; and Babak Pahlavan, head of Google Analytics, shared his "secrets" of success and highlighted the importance of mentorship.

Along with the Elahians, Dariush Zahedi of Berkeley's Program on Entrepreneurship and Development in the Middle East, Payman Arabshahi of the University of Washington, Amir Zarkesh of iCelero, and Yahya Tabesh of the Sharif University were instrumental in organizing the innovative gathering. The spectre has been raised: can technology and goodwill succeed where politics and ideology have failed?

The Berkeley event showed the potential of three spheres whose combination can bring about major change: the universities as gathering places where governments and companies dare not go, the importance of diaspora communities in promoting understanding, mutual gain and development, and the role of technology and high-tech entrepreneurship in bringing down barriers.

Tony Perkins, a leading Silicon Valley investor, who chaired a panel on the "Ecosystem for Sustainable Entrepreneurship" used the example of the Indian-born Vinod Khosla, the co-founder of Sun Microsystems, who has given generously to meet more of India's development needs. Can a similar pattern be set with Iran, Perkins asked Saeed Amidi, founder of the Plug and Play Technology Center, one of Silicon Valley's, and the world's, leading technology incubators with hundreds of aspiring start-ups from across the world. The ties to Iran are incredibly strong, Amidi opined, and a sizeable portion (up to 20 percent) of the vast wealth of the Iranian-American community can be invested in there. Only if politics and ideology get out of the way of goodwill and mutual growth.

Pejman Nozad, another prominent Iranian-American technology angel investor issued a heartfelt appeal for patient capital, commitment, and investing in the future. In this particular sense, as the most sanctioned country in the world, Iran is the exception that proves the rule.

Alidad Mafinezam is president of the West Asia Council.

Robert Price, professor of political science and the associate vice chancellor for research at Berkeley, says if sanctions on Iran are lifted, with a population of 80 million, high levels of education, and the outstanding achievements of the Iranian-American community in the high technology sector, Tehran could become a regional entrepreneurial hotspot. It is thus important to explore what should be done to alter conditions that hinder entrepreneurship.