



Survey of Significant Cinematic Events in Iran in 1389



Images of Cinema in the Iranian Calendar Year 1389

(March 21, 2010 - March 20, 2011)



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Although cinema presents images of social realities and events and sometimes acts as a pictorial almanac, it also participates actively in the course of events. The Iranian cinema experienced a lot of ups and downs and faced difficulties as in the past years. Naturally this survey can not incorporate all of those events and only a number of typical and most controversial happenings will be included here. To get a better view of the events we could divide them in three groups: screening and production, organizational and cinematic relationships and festivals. In the end of course we will have cinematic programs, departed film artists and the last program at the House of Cinema in the past year.

A. Screening and production

A-1. Increase in the Screening Capacity and Trade Council of Screening

Apart from the number of films produced during a year, one of the criteria for evaluating the cinematic operation in a country is the screening capacity. The number of films produced and screened were planned to be increased during the year. According to contradictory available statistics, the number of produced films increased to 90, while 60 films were screened. It should be noted that in 1384 (2005) film production reached the record number of 112 films, while most producers were unhappy with the screening situation. For instance, while 12 films were screened in the cinemas simultaneously, some of them, which were experimental films, had only a single screening. The situation led to the coining of the term "film burning" which expressed unhappiness with the situation.

The director-general of the screening and evaluation attributed the problem of the film screening to the trade council of screening (which was controlled by the House of Cinema). It is worth mentioning that the screening and evaluation department had a representative in the council and a number of changes in film screenings were carried out with his oral orders. This vexed the managing director of the House of Cinema who in September wrote to chairman and members of the council, reminding them that representative of the screening and evaluation department had no right of vote, and that the head of the screening and evaluation department should demand such changes in writing. But Alireza Sajjadpour, director-general of the screening and evaluation department kept criticizing the performance of the

trade council of screening: "The high number of screenings and the single screening of some films result from the operation of the trade council of screening." He also remarked: "Film screening will be much better next year."

But at the beginning of the current year and after the announcement of the screening regulations by the Trade Council of Screening, Sajjadpour had said: "Ultimately the deputy minister for cinematographic affairs plans to form a council of screening. But until that is done, film screening will have to be managed with the use of the existing regulations. The new group of experts at the office of the deputy minister has much more extensive plans."

Concerning the distribution of films among the various groups of movie theaters, he had said: "The program for the past year was not entirely satisfactory. In fact the trade council of screening should be responsible for questions regarding the number of screened films. We tried not to interfere with the decisions made by the council."

The summer of 2010 began with the screening of films like Democracy in Broad Daylight, The Girls, Marriage at Extra Time and Milk and Honey, while the director-general of screening and evaluation announced he would be taking over the task of assigning films to movie theaters. This led to protest by filmmakers and at the House of Cinema and the Deputy for cinematographic affairs Javad Shamaqdari announced the project would be postponed until favorable conditions were created. The objections to the screening of films in 2010 were the selection of films without regard for diversity of contents, the simultaneous presence of one actress in five screened films and the single séance screening of films which de-

prived many people of the chance of seeing them. These drawbacks were removed in the first version of the regulations prepared by the House of Cinema which were notified to the director-general of the supervision and evaluation. All the same Sajjadpour managed to enforce his views despite objections by the trade guilds and created the new screening council under the control of the newly-established producers guild (which was created with the support of the government) and thus the council of screening was moved out of the control of the House of Cinema, and this completed the range of restriction of the rightful functions of the House of Cinema of which it had been deprived.

A-2. According to the reports of the media at the end of the year 89, 16 films were in the shooting stage and 34 projects were in post production.

Statistics for the box office receipt of films demonstrate that the Iranian cinema was still plagued by financial crisis and except for one film, The Kingdom of Solomon, which earned more than 3 billion tomans thanks to widespread TV advertisement and the great length of its screening period, other films could not reach even the 2 billion tomans target.

A-3. Box office receipts of films:

Over one billion tomans

1. The Kingdom of Solomon, Shahriar Bahrani, 3.166 billion tomans
2. The Extremists, Jahangir Jahangiri, 1.892 billion tomans
3. Son of Adam, Daughter of Eve, Rambod Javan, 1,700 billion tomans

4. Poupak and Mash Masha'allah, Farzad Motamen, 1.680 billion tomans
5. St. Petersburg, Behrouz Afkhami, 1.170 billion tomans

Over 500 million tomans

1. Settling Accounts, Tahmineh Milani, 933 million tomans
2. In Color Purple, Ebrahim Hata-mikia, 920 million tomans
3. Milk and Honey, Arash Moayerian, 920 million tomans
4. Dog Day Afternoon, Mostafa Kiani, 850 million tomans
5. Good Morning Love, Asghar Naimi, 844 million tomans
6. The Age Forty, Akireza Raisian, 840 million tomans
7. Democracy in Broad Daylight, Ali Atshani, 802 million tomans
8. The Red Light, Yaghoub Ghaf-fari, 785 million tomans
9. Seven Minutes to the Autumn, Alireza Amini, 760 million tomans
10. Gold and Copper, Homayoun As'adian, 620 million tomans
11. A Small Mistake, Mohsen Damadi, 534 million tomans
12. Playing Stubborn, Seyed Mehdi Borghei, 530 million tomans
13. Big Trouble, Mehdi Golestaneh, 525 million tomans

Over 300 million tomans

1. The Killer, Reza Karimi, 445 million tomans
2. Teheran, Tehran, Dariush Mehrjui, Mehdi Karampour, 440 million tomans
3. Those Better Than Us, Mehrdad Farid, 430 million tomans
4. Nothing, Abodreza Kahani, 420 million tomans
5. A pocket Full of Money, Qodratollah Solh Mirzai, 420 million tomans
6. Marriage at Extra Time, Saeed Soheili, 400 million tomans

7. The Distance, Kamran Qadachian, 400 million tomans
8. Aal, Bahram Bahramian, 385 million tomans

Over 200 million tomans

1. Karat 14, Parviz Shahbazi, 260 million tomans
2. The Death Carnival, Habibollah Kasesaz, 260 million tomans
3. Whatever God Wills, Navid Mi-handoust, 260 million tomans
4. Hot Chocolate, Hamed Kolahdari, 260 million tomans
5. The Penalty, Hassan Fathi, 235 million tomans
6. Please Do Not Disturb, Mohsen Abdolvahab, 225 million tomans

Over 100 million tomans

1. The Insider, Ahmad Kavary, 171 million tomans
2. The Shy Bridegroom, Arash Moayerian, 170 million tomans
3. Aunt Bug, Nadereh Torkamani, 166 million tomans
4. The Girls, Qasem Jafari, 160 million tomans
5. Anahita, Azizollah Hamidnezhad, 146 million tomans
6. The Stoker, Mohsen Amir

- Yousefi, 130 million tomans
7. Ungrateful, Hassan Hedayat, 113 million tomans
8. The Pea-Size, Jalal Fatemi, 110 million tomans
9. Around the expressway, Siavash Asadi, 101 million tomans
10. The Awakening of the Dreams, Mohammad Ali Bashe-Ahangar, 100 million tomans

Over 50 million tomans

1. The Remembrance, Nader Tariqat, 90 million tomans
2. The Doll, Ebrahim Vahidzadeh, 84 million tomans
3. The Other Person, Mehdi Rahmani, 70 million tomans
4. Daddy's Bones, Seyed Mehdi Rezazadeh Fakhar, 70 million tomans
5. Secret of Taran Plain, Hatef Alimardani, 69 million tomans
6. Serial Dreams, Pouran Darakhshandeh, 62 million tomans
7. Roaming in the Mist, Bahram Tavakoli, 58 million tomans
8. Friday Afternoon, Mona Zandi Haqiqi, 56 million tomans

Over 20 million tomans

1. Morning of the Seventh Day,

- Masoud Atyabi, 40 million tomans
2. Third Floor, Bizhan Mirbaqeri, 36 million tomans
3. And the Blue Sky, Ghazaleh Soltani, 35 million tomans
4. Very Close Encounter, Esmail Mi-handoust, 35 million tomans
5. Untimely Cock, Hossein Qasemi Jami, 30 million tomans
6. Wind in the Prairie, Khosro Masumi, 28 million tomans
7. Non-Profit Police Station, Yadollah Samadi, 22 million tomans
8. Afternoon of the Tenth Day, Mojtaba Raie, 20 million tomans

A-4. The latest movie by the renowned Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, *Certified Copy*, in which the director returns to a narrative film style, has been screened in numerous countries and has been acclaimed at festivals around the globe.

A-5. *Sunset to Dawn Scheme* One of the challenges faced by the Iranian cinema is created by the interference of organizations that are not related to the cultural

fields. This has led, for instance, to at least temporary ban of a number of films. Another instance is the damage received by the sunset to dawn scheme, meaning extra film screening during late hours and until dawn at the month of Ramadan, which had been quite successful in the previous year. In 2010 the scheme was not successful as contradictory comments from some organizations made it impossible for movie theaters to make preparations for the scheme.

Lengthening the screening period of some films during the summer led to decrease in box office receipts during Ramadan in September.

Also, movie going habit among people has dwindled due to the effect of digital entertainment, satellite TV channels as well as the inhomogeneous geographical distribution of movie theaters. The House of Cinema tries to reduce the effect of the above factors by arranging "red carpet" premiere of films at movie theaters which are open to the general public, and in which the filmmakers and stars are invited. This scheme also met objections by some of the authorities and had therefore to be abandoned.

B. Organization and Cinematic Relationships

The issues discussed and decisions made at the managerial level are much more important than the number or quality of films produced during a year in shaping the future of this art-industry. This section covers the most important events that are related to film industry management and issues related to interests of the film trade guilds.

B-1. Publication of Booklet of the Government's film Policies
In the beginning of the year the deputy for cinematographic affairs announced at a press conference with filmmakers the main policies of his office in three chapters: fundamentals, approaches and methods. Later, and after objections were raised by filmmakers, the deputy's office announced that soon changes would be effected and the final version would be published.

B-2. Formation of the High Council of Cinema
The trend for the elimination of the film trade guilds in decision making continued as representatives from the House of Cinema were not included in the council of film production license.

The most important event at the official level of management was the formation of the high council of cinema after a 12-month delay. According to official statements, the council will deal with the overall problems of film industry. Issues such as the provision of technical facilities, construction of movie theaters, job security and retirement of filmmakers and the creation of a cinema organization were emphasized at the initial session of the council.

The first session of the high council of cinema was held in the presence of the President, minister of culture and Islamic guidance, Esfandiar Rahim Mashai, Javad Shamaqdari, Davoud Mirbaqeri, Ahmad Najafi, Jamal Shourjeh, Mohsen Ali Akbari, Shahriar Bahrani, and Masoud Dehnamaki – without any invitation to the representative of the film trade guilds.

Towhidi, chairman of the board of directors of the House of Cinema, evaluated the first session of the high council of cinema as an important event that could have positive outcomes for the Iranian cinema, but he was not satisfied with the composition of the council. Towhidi believed filmmakers who are included in the council should have sufficient filmmaking and managerial experience and an in-depth understanding of the needs of the Iranian cinema.

He criticized the high council of cinema on that account and said: "We were not informed about the session. But the high council of cinema is a valuable asset and disregard for it could lead to losses for the entire film industry. We have a lot to say in this connection, and as the minister of culture and Islamic guidance as well as his deputy for cinematographic affairs have announced that the composition of the council could be altered, we hope that in the future session people who have had over two decades of theoretical and managerial experience will be invited."

B-3. House of Cinema Elections and the appointment of the 12th Board of Directors

The most important event in the film trade guild in the year 2010 was the election at the House of Cinema and the appointment of the board of directors. Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour was elected as managing director of the House of Cinema for a second term. Farhad Towhidi was elected as chairman of the board of directors and speaker, while Amir Esbati was chosen as deputy chairman. Merila Zarei, Ebrahim Mokhtari, Mohammad Sarir, Mohammad Reza Moini and Touraj Mansouri along with Towhidi and Esbati are members of the board of directors of the House of Cinema. Sirius Alvand and Morteza Razzaq Karimi are proxy members, and Mehdi Khadem and Keivan Kasirian are, respectively, the inspector and proxy inspector.

The result of the election and the general assembly of the House of Cinema met with official objection, while film trade guilds were in agreement. It should be mentioned that the society of production managers and movie theater managers boycott the election, while the film directors center participated after long debates among themselves. Months before the election of the board of directors of the House of Cinema, the deputy minister of culture had said that they would announce the mode of the ministry's relation with the House of Cinema and its financial issues after the election. And Asgarpour had announced twice that he would resign if the budget for the House of Cinema was paid.

Film trade guilds had held bi-weekly sessions since two months before the election to reach consensus on a composition of the board of directors that would be in line with the

proclaimed objectives of the guilds. The sessions were held with representatives from 24 guilds and with the mediatory presence of Zinat Reza, Mohammad Reza Moini, Touraj Mansouri and Mir Tahmasb.

B-4. Change in Film Directors Center
The change in the film directors center was the second notable event of the year. Alireza Raisian, who had functioned as manager of the center for years, was replaced by Sirius Alvand in about a week before the new election. Soon, however, some of the new members, including Saeed Soheili, Kambuzia Partovi and Mehdi Karampour, resigned and thus the future of the center was wrapped in a halo of ambiguity.

B-5. Program of the New Board of Directors of the House of Cinema
The new board of directors of the House of Cinema announced the three issues of determining and strengthening of House of Cinema's financial resources, follow-up of the job security, and reforming the structure of the trade guilds as its priorities for the next two years. Since the appointment of Javad Shamaqdari as deputy for cinematographic affairs there has been much controversy regarding the financial issues between the office of the deputy and House of Cinema. Shamaqdari and his staff have tried to bring the House of Cinema under their control, while the House of Cinema tried to preserve its position as an independent entity arising from the wishes of the trade guilds. After the gradual elimination of the representatives of the film trade guilds in

decision making bodies, Shamaqdari began to restrict the financial resources of the House of Cinema in the attempt to force the House of Cinema to give in to the ministry.

When the House of Cinema's allocated budget and credits for 2009 were not provided and no budgetary and financial agreements were reached for 2010, the House of Cinema faced a 500 million toman debt resulting from the expenses for organizing the feast of cinema, members' insurances, arranging training workshops and attending international events.

At the latest press conference, Towhidi said: "We face a 500 million toman debt of which 200 is related to the feast of cinema. 306 million were paid in the previous year, and for the 2010 the deputy minister had agreed with an 800 million budget of which only 306 million were provided. This has dealt a heavy blow to the job security scheme and the insurance of filmmakers. Unfortunately we had to integrate the insurance for filmmakers with insurance in other fields and we had to pay a 80 million toman fine for cancelling our insurance with the previous company."

B-6. Work Group for Provision and Expansion of the House of Cinema's Financial Resources

After the approval and announcement of the two-year program of the board of directors of the film trade guilds, the first part of which was related to strengthening the financial resources of the House of Cinema, the managing director asked Merila Zarei, Mehdi Fakhimzadeh, Reza Mir Karimi, Manouchehr Shahsavari and Maziar Miri to form a work group for designing and expansion of the House of Cinema's financial resources.

The first measure undertaken by the group was to send a call for voluntary financial assistance by filmmakers to their respective guilds. The reason for the measure was explained thus: "The budget for the House of Cinema was provided by the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance in accordance with an approved bill by the cabinet. The annual budget was determined and was paid on monthly basis. Since January 2010 the ministry stopped the payment, and this faced the House of Cinema with great financial difficulties so much so that it could not pay the salary of 16 staff members."

The measure was met with great enthusiasm, and within days 44 filmmakers, including Rasoul Sadr Ameli, Mohammad Hossein Latifi, Majid Majidi, Kamal Tabrizi, Saman Moqaddam, Fereshteh Sadr Erfai, Bahram Dehqani, Zhila Ipakchi, Mahboubeh Honarian, Parviz Shokri, Mohammad Atebbai, Mehrdad Mirkiaei, Hassan Bahramzadeh, Hassan Hassandoust, Masoud Behnam, Mostafa Kherqeh Poush, Parviz Shahbazi, arrived in the House of Cinema and offered their donations.

Later other filmmakers came for-

ward with donations, and by the end of the year 310 people offered a total of 1,682 million tomans. Maziar Miri, the secretary of the groups announced that the program of voluntary aids will be followed in the new year on a much wider scale.

B-7. Deputy Minister's Broken Promise

A surprising event in this connection was the announcement by the deputy minister concerning the payment of 100 million tomans to the House of Cinema: He said: "I have given instructions for the payment of the House of Cinema's expenses up to 100 million tomans." Talking to IRNA news agency, he praised the House of Cinema's recent initiative. "I have often announced that nonpayment to the House of Cinema results from legal restrictions. Our friends at the House of Cinema have not yet cleared these restrictions and it has been agreed that a joint committee should study these problems."

However, three weeks after the above announcement the house of Cinema informed that they had sent documents for the expenses of the salaries of the staff for three months, insurance, and current expenses, amounting to 100 million tomans to the deputy minister's office, but received a negative reply that the money could not be paid as accounts for the previous year had been closed.

B-7. Organization of the Cinematic System and Job security

The law for the formation of the organization of cinematic system and support for the rights of the filmmakers has yet to be approved. The issue had been broached at a session of the heads and inspectors of the film trade guilds in April 2010. During the session, attended by representatives from all film guilds, Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour, managing director of the House of Cinema presented a report on the activities of the previous year and emphasized the need for upgrading the position of the House of Cinema through the formation of the organization of Cinematic system. It should be noted that as a first step cinematic system cards has been issued for 3100 permanent members as a preliminary step for the realization of the group contract for the engagement of legal and clear professional transactions among the filmmakers and government bodies and centers.

On the basis of a survey of the needs of 23 guilds, the priorities are: 1- job security, 2- insurance for joblessness and housing, 3- training and professional activities.

The approval of the bill for the law of organization for cinematic system will allow for support of filmmakers' copy rights, economic relationship of the guilds with film projects and government bodies and centers.

The managing director of the house of cinema explained the problem regarding a clear understanding of the concept of job security. "It is usually thought that job security means people should be paid

when they are out of work. Thus the house of cinema decided to present clear definitions of the factors involved which are related to investment, screening and production infrastructure as well as training and legal rules which are controlled by the executive branch of the government."

Also at an interview Asgarpour said: "One of the great problems faced by artists, including filmmakers is the lack of clear understanding of job security by the executive managers. Unfortunately, this is often mixed with political issues. I have often said that I would be ready to discuss this with cultural managers so that we could reach an agreement. I should also mention that we have certain laws in this connection which have been disregarded, including the law for the establishment of a work insurance fund and the trade guild system which are part of the Fourth Development Plan and have remained neglected and have at times been negated."

B-8. Film Guild Screening Council and Related Problems

The formation of guild screening council without the participation of the House of Cinema created with official managers and a new body of film producers deprived the House of Cinema of its last chance to have an active presence in decision making concerning the film guilds.

From the day Abdolhossein Barzideh left the session of the council of issuing film production license in protest to the policies of the new official cinema executives, no one imagined that this would serve as a beginning for the long term elimination of the guilds.

Barzideh was critical of the policies followed by official authorities and they in turn were too impatient to wait for another representative to be introduced by the House of Cinema and appointed a replacement for Barzideh from among officials who were in line with them.

Stopping the payment of the House of Cinema's budget was another step in reducing its power, and later the official authorities refrained from taking part in the feast of cinema organized by the House of Cinema, and even the minister of culture and Islamic guidance made the feast the target of severe criticism. Thus cinema was attacked not only from outside but also from people who should support it.

The trend continued when the representative from the House of Cinema was not invited to the high council of cinema, and finally the guild screening council was formed, contrary to the screening regulations for the year 2011 prepared by the House of Cinema's representative, at the quarters of the newly established union of film producers, and thus the House of Cinema did not have the slightest chance to have any effect in the decision making.

Meanwhile the House of Cinema was totally dependent on its members who included prominent filmmakers and provided assistance and financial contributions. The directors of the House of Cinema, who obtained no result from a one-

sided correspondence with film authorities, reached the conclusion that they should contact higher government authorities.

In spite of all these problems, and the official authorities' negative attitude toward Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour, the House of Cinema is supported by its members and the results of the recent election and the appointment of Asgarpour for a second term is proof of their approval of the policies and actions of the board of directors and the managing director of the House of Cinema.

B-9. Filmmakers' Law Suits

Apart from their professional and guild problems, filmmakers faced legal problems during 2010. The most important were the detainment of Jafar Panahi and Rasouf on charges of making propaganda against the government, and the complaint the House of Cinema had lodged against Farajollah Salahshour's insult of filmmakers.

Jamal Khandan Koucheiki, attorney for the House of Cinema specified: "Tehran court branch No. 1057 sentenced Mr. Salahshour to payment of 4000 tomans cash fine, a verdict which was confirmed by a higher court after appeal. The fine for libel is 5000 tomans, but the court, taking into account the possibility of involuntary error, reduced it to 4000 tomans."

It should be pointed out that another law suit against Salahshour for plagiarism is being processed. The plaintiff is Shahaboddin Taheri, writer of the two-volume screenplay "The Truthful Joseph", who complained that Salahshour, writer and director of the TV series "Prophet Joseph" based the script for the series on his book. The court has assigned a 3-member group led by Abbas Babouyehi to investigate the case.

In reply to a question concerning the court verdict for Salahshour, Farhad Towhidi remarked: "The fact that Salahshour has been convicted is much more important than the amount of the fine. We thank the court for their decision for it demonstrates irresponsible comment and libel against real or legal persons will not go unpunished."

Concerning Jafar Panahi's case Rahim Moshai, chief of the President's office said: "I have already said that the government and the President are not in agreement with the verdict of the judicial authorities. We don't like it that Panahi has been deprived of the right to work for a lengthy period. We think one should not get involved in such cases."

The chairman of the board of directors of the House of Cinema talked about his visit with Mr. Mashai in connection with the cases of Panahi and Rasouf and said: "Mr. Mashai promised that there would soon be very good news. The President is following up the cases, and generally we believe these types of harsh verdicts create concern among people who care for the system. Besides they could be used for adverse propaganda about our country in the world. For that reason we have

sent a letter signed by 12 prominent artists in the realm of cinema to the head of the judiciary and have requested an appointment.

Jafar Panahi is now free on bail, but he is not permitted to engage in filmmaking. He was selected as a jury member at the latest Berlin International Film Festival which he could not attend. However, he participated in the festivities the House of Cinema arranged in honor of Asghar Farhadi and Mohammad Ali Talebi for their successes at the Berlin Festival.

B-9. Rahim Mashai's Visit with Film Guild Representatives

Generally film industry's relations with the political realm became much more prominent in the past year and acquired new dimensions. One of the most important events was the visit of Esfandiar Rahim Mashai, the highly influential chief of the President's office, to the House of Cinema on January 11, 2011. Mashai met with members of the board of directors of the House of Cinema, several active guild members and an economic manager from the private sector who had expressed the wish to invest in cultural fields and had arranged the visit.

The meeting began with the announcement of the formation of the cultural-economic relation, and then several filmmakers explained problems. Mashai spoke about the subject of cultural management and promised closer assistance and follow-up action. It is worth noting that the deputy director of the supervision and screening department joined the session without prior invitation and with obvious reluctance, apparently just to alleviate the concerns of the director of his department.

Concerning the visit of Rahim Mashai to the House of Cinema, Farhad Towhidi, chairman of the board of directors of the House of Cinema, explained: "With an economic package for the execution of joint projects for the social welfare of members of the House of Cinema we are negotiating on the subject of job creation. Some of the participants in the meeting insisted that official authorities, particularly the chief of the cultural committee of the government, Mr. Mashai, should be involved in the projects because of the significant roles they could play in this connection, that government facilities should be used for the purpose.

B-10. Cinematography Workshop in France

One of the objectives of the House of Cinema's programs is to acquaint its member guilds with the latest international achievements in their specific fields of work. For this purpose the House of Cinema arranges study trips for its members and for their meeting with their foreign counterparts. The study trip to the French cinema organization (CNC) during 2010 was the most important project of this type. Of course

Farabi Cinema Foundation and City Cinema Institute provided no assistance in spite of prior promises. A total of 11 cinematographers traveled to France to attend a short-term training workshop of digital cinematography and the use of the blue screen. The workshop, which was organized by the French cinema organization at the Lumiere Institute, was of great interest for the participant cinematographers.

B-11. Publication of the Book 'Experiences of Other Nations'

During 2010 the House of Cinema published the book "Experiences of Other Nations" compiled by Seyed Mohsen Hashemi and with a preface by Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour.

"Experiences of Other Nations" includes translations of 10 legal documents used in drawing up the copy rights of cinematic productions, cinematic contracts and an essay of comparative study of cinema in France and Iran.

In the preface Asgarpour writes: "Experiences of Other Nations is a collection of documents and rules used by other nations in the field of filmmaking. Human experiences and knowledge, very much like art, transcend geographical boundaries, although they are influenced by it. "The collection includes ten translations and an original essay, researched and translated by my executive deputy Seyed Mohsen Hashemi."

Asgarpour expressed the hope that the book will be a useful guide for his colleagues and people engaged in the international area of the film industry. The book is in 238 pages and has been published in 500 copies. Nastaran Nourbakhsh and Simon Simonian have done the Persian translation of the selected articles.

B-12. Job Security Scheme and the Cancelled Meeting

In March 2010, Asgarpour announced at a press conference that the scheme of filmmakers' job security would be the main objective during the year. After a meeting with the board of directors of the House of Cinema in May, in which details of the scheme for job security and the software complementing guild membership cards were expounded, deputy minister for cinematographic affairs promised his full support for the scheme. Less than a week later the director of the supervision and screening announced the issuance of professional cards for members of four film trade guilds.

After the cancellation of the meeting on the criteria of job security, the House of Cinema prepared a booklet introducing the main criteria for job security in a sort of rough draft for the attention of the authorities and the legislative bodies.

The required criteria enumerated in the booklet are:

1. Strengthening the manpower for

the creation of value added in the cinematic productions or services.

1.1. Arranging training workshops to upgrade filmmakers' knowledge of the latest technological advances, making the participation in the workshops mandatory for professional promotion.

1.2. Promoting the compiling and translation of books for indirect transmission of technical know-how.

1.3. Dispatching filmmakers to countries with advanced film industry for participation in short-term training programs.

2. Ensuring job security through increasing film screening capacity.

2-1. Increasing film screening capacity by encouraging the private sector to invest on the construction of screening halls.

2-2. Clarifying screening and distribution information (through online sale of movie tickets).

2-3. Requiring the National TV channels to purchase and air a certain number of domestic feature and documentary films for a specified number of imported products (through preparation of bill of laws to be approved by the Islamic Consultative Assembly).

2-4. Offering facilities for access to home screening network with guarantees for acquisition, including pre-production purchase by the deputy for cinematographic's department with the increase in production quality.

2-5. Promoting participation in world economic area through covering marketing expenses, offering incentives to the private sector for their export programs, and restricting Farabi Cinema Foundation's monopoly of film foreign trade.

2-6. launching TV networks to air Iranian films and TV series in three languages (proposed by the House of Cinema to the President's office in several letters during 2009 and 2010).

3 - Job Security and Copyrights

3-1. Drawing up the bill of law for the copyrights of cinematic productions and follow-up action for its approval (specified in letters to the President's office and head of the cultural committee of the Islamic Consultative Assembly).

3-2. Pre-planning for the insurance system of the cinematic productions, with the guarantee of partial responsibility for losses by the Ministry of culture and Islamic Guidance as a means of encouraging insurance companies to engage in this type of insurance.

3-3. Relegating the evaluation and determining of the criteria for filmmakers and their works to the film trade guilds (House of Cinema) through drawing up clear and documented regulations.

3-4. According membership to representatives of the film trade guilds in committees and centers responsible for determining policies or issuing licenses for the production, and screening of cinematic works.

4. Job security Through Increase in Production Capacities

4-1. Imparting a sense of security to the filmmaking profession (by clarifying legal relationships, defining permissible fields and avoiding personal interpretations of regulations).

4-2. Devising ways and means for expansion and upgrading production infrastructure (supporting construction of cinematographic studios, upgrading the equipment for lighting, camera movements, cranes and encouraging their acquisition by the private sector).

4-3. Providing the required legal infrastructure for the participation of other institutes and organizations that use government budget in production of films in line with their general objectives.

5. Job Security Through Maintaining and Increasing Demand for Cinematic Productions and Services

5-1. Standardization of cinematic productions and services to maintain their quality level.

5-2. arranging reductions and providing subsidies for the advertisement and dissemination of information on cinematic productions and services.

5-3. Drawing up and executing policies for promoting demand for cinematic productions and services.

5-4. arranging premiere screening of films in the presence of film stars in movie theaters.

6. Job Security Within the framework of Social Services

6-1. Increasing retirement insurance from the minimum (303,000 tomans) to at least twice that amount to be covered by the ministry and the filmmakers on a 50-50 basis.

6-2. Providing joblessness insurance for filmmakers as specified in the law of the Fourth Development Plan, or aiding the project for the retirement fund of the film trade guilds (subject of several letters to the President's office), or requiring the organization of the social welfare to provide insurance coverage for filmmakers.

6-3. Expanding the scope of life and accident insurance for all people in the film industry. (During the year the House of Cinema provided insurance coverage for 2040 members.)

6-4. Providing medical insurance (through conclusion of complementary insurance contracts)

6-5. Legal and financial support for housing cooperative for members of the film trade guilds

6-6. Drawing up criteria for awarding national medals with cash prizes for outstanding people in the film profession.

7. Job security through legal basis for protection of people working in the film industry

7-1. Drawing up regulations for issuing cinematic system numbers

7-2. Drawing up regulations for

group work contracts

7-3. Preparing methods for work performance guarantee in professional institutes – legal authorities and protection council

7-4. Preparing methods for work performance guarantee in government offices as follows:

Description of the methods of performance in government offices:

A.The House of Cinema member societies, after verifying the applicants general qualifications and their acceptance (as specified in the constitution of the I.R.I.) and verifying their professional qualifications, will accept the applicants in the respective guilds and introduce them to the bureau of the secretariat of the job security stationed in the House of Cinema for the issuance of cinematic system numbers.

B.The secretariat of the job security has so far issued cinematic system numbers for 2199 members attached to 23 guilds. The secretariat receives appli-

cations stamped by the relevant guild and issues cinematic system cards within 20 days.

C.Producers are committed to give priority to members of the film trade guilds in employing work force for their production projects. In case producers decide to employ people outside the film trade guilds they are required to pay up to 30 percent of the salary of an equivalent guild member to the insurance fund for joblessness.

D.Enforcement guarantee. Inasmuch as the production process in the Iranian cinema has three points of contact with government institutions, the three points could provide the executive bases for the execution of job security scheme for members of the trade guilds.

1)Council for issuance of production license

2)Organizations of the ministry responsible for provision of facilities (in cash, services or supplies) such as Farabi Cinema Foundation, Center for Promo-

tion of Documentary and experimental Cinema, etc.

3)Council for issuance of screening license

E.For this purpose it is necessary for the applicants of production licenses to include in their application apart from the presently anticipated professionals (producer, director, screenwriter, production manager, cinematographer), other professional people such as set designer, sound recorder, logistics manager, assistant cinematographer, assistant director and actors.

It is also possible to issue the license in two stages – First a provisional license based on the information presently filled in the application forms, and then a license for the start of the production activities after the other professionals involved in the project have been introduced.

F.Site for comprehensive information on the film trade guilds are prepared by the House of Cinema. Information on non-

employing guilds are revised every six months, while information on the employing guilds are revised every three months. The information includes member cinematic system number, type of membership, and national code.

G.The department for supervision and evaluation will also process applications with confirmation of the membership or certificate of contribution of aid to the trade fund for injured members.

H.Also organizations subsidiary to the donating facilities and aids will use the information on the site to process applications and thus protect job security.

I.Filmmakers working on the post-production stages of the films, such editors, composers, special effects will also be considered on the basis of guarantees by the producers or certificate of contribution of aid to the trade fund for injured members.

C.Festivals

C-1. Fourteenth Feast of the Iranian Cinema

Unlike the 13th edition of the feast, the 14th Feast of the Cinema was organized as a competitive event, including competition sections for short films, documentaries, animations, and the grand feast of the cinema in July.

The closing ceremony of the feast was held in Milad Tower with the participation of a large number of filmmakers who talked of their professional concerns, especially the issue of job security. Some of the interesting events of the ceremony were as follows:

-Instead of presenting a quantitative report on the number of films presented in the feast, Farhad Towhidi, the secretary of the feast read a letter written by a filmmaker of half a century ago to the then minister of culture. Towhidi had found the letter among the bricks of a wall during the restoration operation of a movie theater.

-The remarks of Jahangir Kowseri who had stepped on the stage to present the award for best special effects, surprised the audience by his question about Farhad Towhidi: "I wonder why the organizing committee had appointed a secretary of such a stature as the secretary?" The question was replied by filmmakers who were present on the stage, but the real reply was provided by the audience when they welcomed Towhidi with a standing ovation when he was later called to the stage by Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour.

-Asghar Farhadi who had stepped on the stage to receive the award for best director, remembered filmmakers such as Bahram Beizai and Amir Naderi who had been absent from the filmmaking scene for some time. His remarks

drew added applause from the audience.

"I am a member of the House of Cinema." The sentence was uttered by most filmmakers on the stage, to emphasize the importance of the House of Cinema which had been ignored by government authorities.

-The presence of Farhad Ayish and Maedeh Tahmasbi as program directors of the ceremony imparted an exciting atmosphere to the ceremony which had been lacking in the previous years when the program was led by professionals from the radio or TV.

-The short dramatic pieces performed by Mehran Rajabi in various roles such as the municipality workers, CD vendors, etc., which represented some of the filmmaking problems including the job security issue, was met with enthusiastic reception.

-The timely screening of the video-clips introducing the nominees, made the audience forget problems in this connection which had occurred in previous editions.

-Taraneh Alidousti, who had appeared on the stage to present the award for sound recording, asked the organizers of the Feast of cinema to invite in the coming editions even guild members who have not been nominated.

-During his speech Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour referred to the cancelled meeting of filmmakers on the job security, and pointed out that under the circumstances, the feast of cinema had been made possible through the united efforts of the guild members.

C-2. Iranian nomination for the Foreign language Oscars

One of the important annual event in the country is the selection of the

Iranian nomination for the Foreign language Academy Awards, which this year aroused a lot of controversy.

The selection and announcement of the film "Adieu Baghdad" by the general director of supervision and evaluation, without the presence of a selection committee, was another of the unorthodox measures of the official authorities. Although the film did not lack the qualifications to represent the Iranian cinema, the procedure for selection met with a lot of protests. "Adieu Baghdad" directed by Mehdi Naderi was announced just 8 days before the deadline.

In recent years the House of Cinema introduced its representatives to the international section of Farabi Cinema Foundation, who discussed the year's top films with two representatives from Farabi and the group picked the Iranian nomination for the Oscars race.

According to the rules of the Academy of Motion Pictures Sciences and Arts, films must be selected by an organization or a committee of film artists. The films must have had public screening in the country and must be introduced before August 13. The film print and publicity materials must be dispatched before October 1. "Adieu Baghdad" had not gone on public screens, and thus a short public screening of about a week was arranged shortly before its introduction.

The director general of the supervision and evaluation of the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance had explained to ISNA news agency: "There were films that could have caused controversy but might have better chances for the Oscar award. Although I am convinced that the awards for foreign language entries are highly influenced by politics. Nevertheless we have to take advantage of the opportunity to introduce Iranian cinema to the world."

Sajjadpour said: "In view of the anti-military occupation theme of the film, which is a hot topic in the United States, it was felt that "Adieu Baghdad" could have a very good chance. All the same we have not neglected promotion for the film, and after the film's introduction I informed our friends who are now in the United States to launch publicity for the film."

Shamaqdari, deputy for cinematographic affairs who was in New York at the time, said: "The most important point is to arrange for the public screening of the film in the United States. I have made all the arrangements and the film is to be screened in December. I also talked to members of the Academy and it has been agreed that the film should be dispatched after my return to Tehran."

Shamaqdari also said that films have to receive special license for screening in international festivals." This requirement has already deprived the film "Nothing" from participation in foreign festivals.

C-3. 29th Fajr International Film Festival

The 29th edition of Fajr International Film Festival was held under circumstances when the Iranian cinema faced a number of challenges. The most important of these was the lack of coordination between the house of Cinema and the deputy minister's office, the formation of the high council of cinema under conditions when a wide spectrum of filmmakers had objections to the composition of the council, and the launching of the union of the film producers. These challenges were expected to create untoward events during the festival and this is what actually happened.

Apart from all these challenges, there were other problems including the great number of titles in

the competition of the Iranian cinema, the creation of a Certain Outlook section while there was no clear definition for it, and the composition of the juries. All these problems turned this edition of the festival which could have been one of the most successful due to the great number of filmmakers who had taken part, into one of the most controversial editions in the history of the festival.

It should be noted that the Iranian films in the festival this year presented a wide variety, and films with political themes were prominent. And it is also interesting that films made by independent filmmaker reaped the greatest number of the award, and this proved the superiority of independent creation to commissioned productions.

Controversies on the Jury

The composition of the jury members in a festival is a clear indication of the view of its organizers. Initially the jury members announced by the festival included Abolqasem Talebi, film director, Ali Moalem producer, Jahangir Almasi actor, Jaber Qasemali screenwriter, Majid Entezami composer, Dr. Hassan Abbasi media strategic expert and Asadollah Niknezhad director.

The presence of Niknezhad and Abbasi in the jury did not last long, since the easily available information in the internet sites revealed their backgrounds, and one of them announced his resignation.

Changing Screening Schedule

The 29th festival had the greatest number of changes in its screening schedule and people who made advance reservations for the film screenings were never sure what film they were going to view.

Popular Votes

The system of collecting popular votes also created problems. The organizers, believing there were not weak film among the competition entries had presented the audience only with the choices of good, very good and excellent. But after a few days they reached the conclusion that they should also include the choice 'weak'.

Political Films

There was yet another feature which differentiated the festival this year from the previous editions. As had been programmed by the deputy minister the number of films dealing with political issues were much greater this year.

50 Percent Increase in the Competition

The great number of films submitted to the 29th Fajr International Film festival encouraged the organizers of the event to announce a 50 percent increase in the competition entries. After announcing the first 16 films, the number was subsequently increased to 33 titles. Other films were included a Certain Outlook section, while some were presented out-of- Competition and finally there was the section for the first films. Altogether the festival screened 95 local films, thus only

very few films were left out.

All the same three films by prominent filmmakers were prevented from screening in the festival for censorship problems. The films were "Paternal Home" by Kianoush Ayyari, "Down the 8th Street" by Alireza Amini and "Living With Eyes Shut" by Rasoul Sadr Ameli.

The Closing Ceremony

The atmosphere prevailing at the closing ceremony of the festival was quite different from what it used to be in the previous editions. There were few well-known figures, the minister of culture and Islamic guidance did not attend, while the chief of the President's office was present.

Filmmakers who spoke at the feast of the Iranian cinema organized by the House of Cinema in September, started their speech with the phrase "I am a member of the House of Cinema." But no one expected a similar gesture at the closing ceremony of Fajr Festival. However, the view proved to be wrong when Mehdi Hashemi who was awarded the Crystal Simorgh Prize for Best Actor, began his speech by thanking his colleagues and then announced that he would contribute half of his cash prize to the House of Cinema. This was received with great applause by the audience.

The Jury and the Awards

The jury of the 29th Fajr International Film Festival faced many criticisms for its decisions. In the Iranian cinema competition the jury awarded the following prizes:

The Crime directed by Masoud Kimiai, was awarded Crystal Simorgh prize of best film, while Asghar Farhadi received the prize for best director for Nader and Simin: a Separation.

The Crime also received prizes for best supporting actor (Hamed Behdad), Music (Karen Homayounfar), set and costume designs (Iraj Raminfar) and sound mix (Es'haq Khanzadi and Ali Abolsedq).

Nader and Simin: a Separation also won prizes for best script (Farhadi), best cinematography (Mahmoud Kalari), best sound recording (Mahmoud Sannakbashi), and the audience prize for best film.

In the competition of first films The Red Journey by Hamid Farrokhnezhad received best film prize, while the diploma of honor for best director was awarded jointly to Farrokhnezhad and Amir Saqafi for Death Is My Business.

C-4. Iranian Cinema Success at Berlin Film Festival

The success of Asghar Farhadi's film at Berlin Film Festival raised once again the prestige of the Iranian cinema on the international scene. Nader and Simin: a Separation, which barely missed being banned by the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance, won three unique prizes in Berlin.

The international jury of the Berlin festival headed by Isabella Rossellini, awarded the Golden Bear prize of best film to Farhadi's film. The film also won Silver Bear prizes for

best actor and best actress for the ensemble cast of the film.

Farhadi had previously won the Silver Bear prize for best director for his film About Elly in 2009.

Ceremony in Honor of the Media

On the last working day of the year the House of Cinema arranged a special program in honor of people in the media to which journalists and other people working in the media were invited. Kamran Maleki said: "The program had been arranged by the site of the House of Cinema to appreciate the work you have done to reflect the voice of the House of Cinema."

Mohammad Mehdi Asgarpour, managing director of the House of Cinema also said: "I hope this ceremony will prove to be a suitable ending for the work you have done in the field of cinema during the year. We have had many experiences during the year some of which will improve our position, while some of them have ushered a new era which demands great work on our part."

Asgarpour also said: "Scouting, warning and offering suggestions are the three axes of work which we can perform in the House of Cinema as an institution oriented towards the public.

"To perform our tasks in the three axes of scouting, warning and offering suggestions we need your cooperation to spread our message. On behalf of the board of directors of the House of Cinema and the film trade guilds I wish to thank all of you, including those who have offered criticism of our actions."

Iranian Film Artists Departed in 2010

The Iranian cinema lost a number of its artists in 2010, including Mehdi Danesh-Raftar, Reza Karamrezai, Mahmoud Banafsheh-Khah, Kioumars Malek Moti'ie, Hamideh Kheirabadi, Nemat Haqiqi, Tahereh Sadat Hashemi, Ali Asghar Ojani, Mohammad Reza Aalami, Aram Shahidi, Qorbanali Torabi, Mahmoud Bahrami, Mohammad Baqer Ashtiani, Faramarz Farazmand, Behnam Safari, Mahin Shahabi, Naser Esmailzadeh, Reza Khandan, Manouchehr Haqani-Parast, Masoumeh Eskandari, Mohammad Razdasht, Esmail Riahi, Mehdi Ari-an-Nezhad, Hossein Baghi, Mohsen Yousefbeig, Abbas Amiri, and Mehri Vadadian. May God grant them eternal piece!

TV Program Seven

The launching of TV program seven in May 2010 at late evening hours reflects the attention that is being paid to cinema and its sensitive issues. The program faced a number of criticisms including those related to the airing of images of Fari-mah Farjami and Abolfazl Poorab. Also the insulting criticism of a critic of the film Crime by Masoud Kimiai aroused such intense criticism that the critic in question had to bid farewell to the program.

The House of Cinema Newsletter

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