

# 'Environmentalism' as Seen from Iran

by Hussein Askary

This author had the privilege of being the keynote speaker at the Iranian 3rd National Conference on Health, Environment and Sustainable Development, organized by the Bandar Abbas Islamic Azad University, on Feb. 19. Bandar Abbas is the capital of the strategically located Hormuzgan Province in southwestern Iran, and one of the economically fastest-growing areas in Southwest Asia.

The conference was held on the campus of the university, which is a newly constructed complex, designed to harmonize Classical Islamic with ancient Persian/Iranian architecture, creating a beautiful and relaxing environment, combining water fountains and carefully organized gardens with the surrounding buildings. The university was designed entirely by Dr. Sharar Moshari, the first chairman of the university.

The paper I presented to the conference, titled "Iran's and the Persian Gulf's Role in Eurasian Development," and the subject of my speech, were based on the International Schiller Institute's plan for peace through economic development in Southwest Asia. This plan is focused on creating a joint regional authority, and a plan for fighting desertification, drought, and eliminating the effects of sand and dust storms on the health and economic conditions of the nations of the region, beyond the political differences among them. This would be the first step toward normalization of relations to overcome the dangerous slide into religious and ethnic wars that are destroying Syria and Iraq today. Such a preliminary authority can, in the first phase, include Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, and

define a technical framework for cooperation on outlining the sources of the sand and dust storms, and allocating the human, natural, and artificial resources (water and agriculture), to resist and eliminate this process which affects all nations without regard to religious, ethnic, or national affiliation.

Iran has been hit more than most countries of the region by a sustained period of drought. Especially in the central regions of Iran, water scarcity is a major problem. Dust storms emerging from the Arabian Peninsula have become a major health problem for the population, in addition to the existing high levels of pollution in the major cities. But as the Schiller Institute has argued, these issues, like many similar economic and environmental issues, are not simply local or national issues, but regional and even planetary matters that require major joint efforts, and the deployment of the



Courtesy of Hussein Askary

*The author, second from left, was interviewed by Khaleej Fars (Persian Gulf) TV Network, and Fars News Official News Agency. Dr. Vali Alipour, professor of Environmental Engineering and Design, second from right, is interpreting between Farsi and English.*

most advanced technologies and methods of infrastructure development, for example. This approach is contrary to almost all proposals that have been made by Western institutions and international organizations, including the United Nations' own environmental organizations, which focus solely on small-scale "conservation" projects that tend to limit, rather than enhance, mankind's power in and over nature.

### Positive Environmentalism

I began my speech by emphasizing that the "only way to a better environment is through economic, scientific, and technological development," stressing that the Iranian nation's aspiration for a better environment and social development should be based on the Promethean and Islamic concepts of *Istikhlaf* (that Allah/God gave mankind a mandate for development of the Earth), and *Ihiya'* (reviving a dead land as a religious duty). I contrasted this to, and warned the audience against, the "Green ideology" in the West, which is a dangerous anti-human movement, financed and supported by the same financial and political forces that seek to deny Iran nuclear technology and industrial development, and ultimately to destroy Iran and any other nation that aspires to develop and remain independent.

Interestingly, there were no objections raised against this attack on the "green ideology"! From discussions with the young people gathered at the forum, it became clear that this reaction should not be a surprise. The young people of Iran are clearly interested in solutions that can lead to the betterment of their economic, social, and cultural conditions, and at the same time, give them the opportunity to contribute to global development, and to prove to the world that the Iranian people are not what the Western media has been trying to paint, as either primitive people or victims of a fanatically religious regime.

Simultaneously, there are no illusions about the reality and the obstacles that exist, both internally and externally, to achieving their aspirations. But the general idea is to move positively forward.

Although they were more of a political-strategic nature, the paper and the presentation were very well-received at this scientific conference by the audience, composed of about 200 university students, scientists, scholars, and official of the university, and the General Governorship of Hormuzgan Province. The regional television network Khaleej Fars (Persian Gulf) Network covered the conference proceedings with a short report on this author's presentation and an interview broadcast the same evening.



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*Askary was awarded a "Certificate of Honor and Appreciation" by the Bandar Abbas Islamic Azad University for his paper and presentation.*

The issues discussed by the Schiller Institute, and the solutions it presents to economic, strategic, and political problems engulfing the region and the world have obviously captured the open minds of Iranian academic and political institutions, as the Schiller Institute was the only foreign guest at this national Iranian conference. The conference organizers found the ideas of the Schiller Institute and the LaRouche movement in harmony with their national visions and aspirations.

### An Ancient, But Ever-Young Nation

Other conference speakers, who were mostly young Master's and PhD candidates and professors, discussed a wide range of issues related to desertification, radiation, forest fires, and waterborne health risks, and solutions. In spite of the economic sanctions imposed on the country for many years, including on scientific and academic institutions, the Iranian scientists and students show an admirable commitment to stay apace with international developments in their fields. Lifting of the sanctions on specific technologies and scientific instru-



Courtesy of Hussein Askary

Professors and graduate students of the Environmental Engineering College: Note the young age of both the professors and students (Askary is fourth from left).

ments and tools would lead to a positive explosion of scientific and technological activities in this youthful country. The thirst for new knowledge and technology is enormous.

American/NATO forces, toward a new system of cooperation among independent sovereign nations, of peace through economic development, as presented by the Schiller Institute and the LaRouche movement.

This conference, and the enormous development in Bandar Abbas, which changes from year to year (see author's report in *EIR*, April 5, 2013), showed once again the enormous potential of this ancient, but ever-young nation, were economic sanctions to be lifted, and peace established in the region from Afghanistan to Iraq, Syria, and Palestine. It became clear from the lively discussions during the conference, and in private discussions afterwards, that the young people of Iran are looking forward, and working hard toward that goal. What is needed is a shift in world politics away from the current imperial geopolitical wars led by the Anglo-

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