

The following is a translation of the VOA TV Persian program "Late Edition," which was broadcast via satellite on September 3, 2007 at 1830 UTC.

TRANSLATION BEGINS HERE

[Female announcer]

A report on Labor Day in America.

An interview with Ali Eskandarian, a young singer and songwriter living in New York.

[Host Elham Sataki]

Greetings dear friends. Today is the 3rd of Shahrivar, 1386 [or September 3rd, 2007]. We begin the program Shabahang [Late Edition] by looking at some of the headlines.

[Interlude]

[Host Elham Sataki]

Today, President Bush along with several senior officials made an unexpected visit to Iraq in order to hold discussions with Iraqi and American officials.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, White House National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates accompanied President Bush on his trip.

President Bush, who was heading to Australia for the Asia Pacific Economic Summit, stopped in Iraq on his way. The plane carrying President Bush landed at a remote military base in the al-Anbar province west of Baghdad.

Robert Gates and other senior American military officials arrived in Iraq on a separate plane.

Geoff Morrell, a Pentagon spokesman, says, "Today's discussions with President Bush's military advisors and Iraqi officials will have an impact on President Bush's decisions on American's future policies in Iraq."

Iraqi security forces announced today the completion of British military withdrawal from the southern city of Basra and the handover of the city to the Iraqi military.

Close to 550 British military personnel, whose army staff headquarters was located at the presidential palace of the former Iraqi president at Basra, returned the palace to the Iraqi military in an official ceremony.

Meanwhile, Britain's defense ministry issued a statement announcing that control of the entire province of Basra will be turned over to the Iraqi army in the course of the next few months.

In other news, Nouri al-Maliki, Iraq's Prime Minister, has ordered a board to be formed to investigate the bloody clashes between rival Shiite groups that occurred a few days ago in the city of Karbala. In a statement issued by al-Maliki's office it is pointed out that these investigations will be "100 percent impartial."

Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, traveled to Sudan today. Mr. Moon's main objective is to put pressure on the government of Sudan to accept UN peacekeeping forces that are to be deployed to the war-torn Darfur province in southern Sudan.

In a speech in New York last week the UN Secretary-General said that he was worried about the daily escalation of violence in Darfur. Mr. Moon is attempting to convince the president of Sudan to accept UN peacekeeping forces numbering 26,000.

In his six-day trip to Africa the UN Secretary-General will also visit two other African countries, Libya and Chad.

And finally, today officials in Bangladesh arrested Khaleda Zia, the country's former prime minister, on administrative corruption charges.

Ms. Zia, who was removed from her post last year, was arrested this morning along with her youngest son, Arafat Rahman Coco. Bangladeshi security forces then transferred them to a courtroom in the capital to respond to the charges brought against them. The presiding judge in the court refused to allow [their release on] bail and sent Ms. Zia and her son to prison.

Bangladesh's interim military government has accused the former prime minister of misusing her power by awarding building contracts to private firms run by acquaintances, and particularly to those [run by] her younger son.

[Interlude]

The controversial nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran has alarmed Iran's neighbors and the international community.

This is at a time when, contrary to the Iranian government's announcements to the public, the United States as well as other countries has consistently emphasized Iran's right to obtain peaceful nuclear energy.

Let's watch a report by my colleague Ladan Yazdian on this issue.

[Ladan Yazdian]

These days the anxiety of Iran's neighbors and the international community over Iran's suspicious nuclear program has reached a peak. This is while Ahmadinejad's confrontational speeches continue to worry the countries in the region.

Ahmadinejad had said earlier that Iran was successfully running 3000 centrifuges for enriching uranium. Today, too, he pointed out "Iran's nuclear case should be considered closed."

[Mahmoud Ahmadinejad]

From our point of view, the nuclear case is closed and the majority [of countries] have acknowledged Iran's right.

[Ladan Yazdian]

Ahmadinejad spoke these words at the meeting of the heads of the Non-Aligned Movement held in Tehran, though his claim concerning 3000 centrifuges has been rejected by international observers. The report by the United Nations also considers the number to [be] lower.

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency's report the rate of uranium enrichment has slowed. Moreover, in cooperating with the agency Iran plans to avoid the third round of UN sanctions. This comes at a time

when, according to Ahmadinejad, Iran is ready to share its nuclear knowledge with other members of the agency.

[Mahmoud Ahmadinejad]

[Iran] is ready to share its findings – under the safeguards and within the regulations of the agency – with other members of the agency [and] within an informational framework.

[Ladan Yazdian]

In the meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, which usually concentrates on cultural and human rights issues, Ahmadinejad accused Israel of ignoring Palestinian rights in the occupied territories and heavily criticized Western nations for supporting Israel.

[Mahmoud Ahmadinejad]

Such an inhuman regime is under the political, economic, and military protection of some powerful nations.

[Ladan Yazdian]

This comes at a time when the Islamic Republic is itself being criticized by international and human rights organizations for ignoring individual and cultural rights of Iranians. Ahmadinejad also talked about human rights in Iraq.

[Mahmoud Ahmadinejad]

They attack the rights, lives, properties, and the sacred principles of the Iraqi people and insolently seek to change an independent government.

[Ladan Yazdian]

He had said earlier that in the case of the withdrawal of the coalition forces, the Islamic Republic is ready to fill the vacuum in the region.

At the end of his speech, Ahmadinejad told the representatives of the participating countries that the non-aligned nations have to unite against the “strangulation and the dictatorship” of countries who want to rule over others.

At the same time, in another development the Austrian Chancellor, Alfred Gusenbauer, in his two day-visit to Israel said that he supported the attempts of the international community against Iran’s nuclear program.

[Alfred Gusenbauer]

... deep concern we share for the Iranian nuclear program and I think it's important that we stick to the decisions that the Security Council took and to the sanctions that were implemented.

[Ladan Yazdian]

In a news conference after his meeting with Mr. Gusenbauer, Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Prime Minister, emphasized that the most important issue that the European Union and the international community have to address is the Islamic Republic's atomic program, which threatens the stability of the Middle East and the world.

Alfred Gusenbauer said that Austria will support sanctions until Iran's atomic program is halted. Later, in a visit to Yad Vashem, the largest holocaust museum in the world, he said, "This museum is a reminder that we have to stand up and fight against racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination in any form."

[Interlude]

[Host Elham Sataki]

America Labor Day is celebrated every year on the first Monday of September as a token of appreciation for the hard and difficult tasks that workers perform in America, as well as [for] the services they provide. This day has been an official holiday since 1894 and is considered an important part of American culture.

[Female announcer]

In 1886 America and Canada put an eight-hour limit on the workday. Most countries celebrate labor on May 1st. In 1894 President Grover Cleveland, under pressure from labor unions, moved this day [America's Labor Day] to the first Monday in September.

This day used to have confrontational connotations to workers, but today Labor Day has [been] transformed from a day of demonstrations and protests into a day of celebration.

Most people, including Marla, a resident of Washington, DC, see Labor Day as the end of summer. "On the Labor Day holiday I usually do the things

that I should have done during the summer but procrastinated.” But for Bob Fissel, a retired school teacher who taught for years in high school, this day has a different meaning.

[Bob Fissel]

I taught high school for 35 years...

[Female announcer, translating]

I taught high school for 35 years. At that time Labor Day was the day before school started, but today school starts earlier and Labor Day becomes the first holiday that we have in the school year.

Close to 34 million people in America travel over the Labor Day weekend. Roads and airports are filled with travelers, but this does not stop people from celebrating this day. In different parts of the country people celebrate this day with picnics and elaborate parades.

[Host Elham Sataki]

In this section we... wow [dropped her microphone]... In this section we not only go to the physician in our program, Vahid Behravan, but also... my microphone fell!... I hope you can still hear me. In any case, dear Vahid, welcome!

[Vahid Behravan]

Thank you.

[Host Elham Sataki]

What happened, you brought an earthquake! My microphone fell.

[Vahid Behravan]

Accidents happen.

[Host Elham Sataki]

Dear Vahid, you're going to talk to us about heart palpitations.

[Vahid Behravan]

That's right...we have several news reports today. Our first story is about heart palpitations. When heart palpitations occur you have a racing feeling, a pounding or shivering feeling. Whatever it is, it's generally worrisome because when we talk about the heart everyone thinks – if it's not a normal

feeling and if we are feeling it throb, then something might have happened to the heart.

This situation, the heart palpitation, is a very common phenomenon that many people experience. It could come about after a specific action or an emotional event. It could also happen for no particular cause. For example, it could be that the heart is beating in an irregular way, or it could be a temporary problem which causes the individual to feel his heart beating and have that pounding feeling or a similar feeling. It could be that there is a problem that occurs in the functions of the heart valves, which pass blood through. These could be the causes for heart palpitations.

But there are other cases where, without any cause or without experiencing these difficulties, an individual could have heart palpitations or feel his heart beat. When nothing is found in medical examinations this could cause worry for the individual and lead to anxiety. It will bother him or at least worry him that nothing is found in the examinations.

Well, when there are no problems found it is believed that the heart palpitations are mild and will not cause a problem for the individual even if it worries the individual.

In such cases it is suggested that the individual do certain things in order to reduce or stop the palpitations. There is a series of very simple things which, if followed, could reduce the possibility of heart palpitations.

One is to reduce or eliminate caffeine from the diet; the source could be coffee or soft drinks, or whatever the source of caffeine may be.

Another would be to reduce or eliminate cigarette smoking, as this could cause heart palpitations. The other point is the use of alcohol. The consumption of alcohol could also cause heart palpitations.

Another issue is over the counter drugs, for example decongestants. [One is] known in America as Sudafed, often called Pseudoephedrine. In Iran it's present [decongestant] in cold medicines. This could cause palpitations in some people.

The other point is that people should regulate their eating and drinking habits. The practice of eating very little and then overeating could cause this problem in some people.

Also, regular and sufficient sleep could help reduce the heart palpitations. Learning stress-reducing techniques is also beneficial. Stress too could cause mild heart palpitations in some people.

[Host Elham Sataki]

We're talking about stress; in our other report it is mentioned the way mothers hold their babies shows their level of stress. How is that?

[Vahid Behravan]

That's right; this is very interesting news about a study that was conducted. Stress is an important issue for mothers because many mothers don't recognize that they may have this type of stress.

That initial stress in mothers could lead to more severe problems, such as postpartum depression, [also called] mother's depression. That is a more serious problem because it damages [sic] the relationship between the mother and child, which affects the child's development. When this relationship is damaged, the next generation is also affected.

Based on this research there [are] already questionnaires [developed] for recognizing stress, but the medical community is always looking for simpler ways and signs to recognize this type of stress in mothers.

Seventy-nine mothers and their babies (with an average age of seven months) were the subjects of the study. In an interesting request they asked them to hold their babies in their own home environment, [that is, at the location where] the stresses [occur]. Then questionnaires [were administered] to measure the mental state of the mothers.

The interesting point that came out of the research was that it didn't matter whether the mothers were left handed or right handed, the majority of mothers (that is, 86 percent) held their babies on the left side.

[Host Elham Sataki]

So even if you're right handed, you do all the work with the left hand and...

[Vahid Behravan]

Exactly, you hold the baby on the left. Eighty-six percent is a very high number. They observed that in mothers who have stress, even if they do not recognize their own stress, [the likelihood they] hold their babies on their right is higher. This is also mentioned in the study. What we see here is a correlation; a cause and effect relationship could not yet be discerned.

But it was a positive point because it's a sign [obtained] without administering a questionnaire or performing a mental exam. It's a sign that even people around you could discern. They could recognize a mother who may be under stress, the kind of stress that may be very common during childrearing, especially after the birth of the first child.

It could be that the mother and the people around her may not be aware of it. In any case, this was a small study that could be used as a method for recognizing stress.

[Host Elham Sataki]

Interesting, I keep thinking that if you are right handed then ...

[Vahid Behravan]

You should hold the baby on the right, but it's been observed that 86 percent hold the baby on the left and it didn't matter whether they were right or [left] handed.

[Host Elham Sataki]

Well, those mothers who really want to protect their child, they hold the baby on the left so [as] to look after the child with their right hand.

[Vahid Behravan]

That's right.

[Host Elham Sataki]

Well, in our other report we talk about food restrictions which help to clean cells.

[Vahid Behravan]

That's right.

[Host Elham Sataki]

The kind of food you eat causes your cells to be cleaned or...

[Vahid Behravan]

This was an animal research study, and was also conducted using a limited group of individuals. People who eat less food or their energy intake is low often live longer. This study was conducted in order to find the mechanism by which this occurs.

It was observed that when cells are under stress (this stress could be due to lack of energy) a process develops within them which reduces aging. This mechanism works like this: in the process of aging, when poisonous materials are created in cells they can gradually kill the cell. It [poisonous material] often targets areas that are the source of cell building.

When this cell building area is damaged, it could order the cell "to commit suicide" and it sends a message to it saying, "You need to be destroyed." This is actually what happens in aging.

It has been observed, in lab mice, in mice whose calorie intake or energy intake has been reduced (although they were fed a complete diet that didn't lack essentials, only the energy had been reduced) that there was a 120 percent improvement in the process of cell rebuilding.

How did this rebuilding occur? When the process starts, the poisons within the cell were being produced but the cell itself consumed the poison and broke it down. Then [the cell] used its elements to rebuild itself. So it wasn't leading [to] suicide or death but instead, by using the elements that were broken down, it started to build those organs.

So, in fact, it was the external process that was preventing it. It should be noted that they are now searching for ways, with this stress process and a low-energy diet, to see how the mechanism behind it actually works. Is it possible to use a method other than eating less and consuming less energy to put the cell under pressure? Is it possible to use another method and force the cell to use the same mechanism to stop aging or delay the process of aging?

[Host Elham Sataki]

Well, we thank you for being with us! Thanks, dear Vahid, for today's information.

[Interlude]

[Host Elham Sataki]

In Los Angeles a new kind of yoga, called Yoga Hop, has become popular and it has changed the way yoga is performed.

Yoga Hop is a combination of yoga and Hip-Hop music and it has become so popular that you have to get on a waiting list in order to enter the classes.

[Video Report Starts Here]

[Male announcer]

Yoga has become a part of life for many Americans. Yoga Hop has become a hot topic in Los Angeles these days. Visually, Yoga Hop looks like yoga, but its music sounds different to the ear.

The class is equipped with several speakers and the trainers have headphones, which makes the environment seem relaxing and at the same time sports-like, with popular music.

A plasma TV shows psychedelic images to the beat of the music. Yoga Hop is a combination of eastern thought with a western kick. Hip-hop and pop music from artists such as Nelly, Lenny Kravitz and Sade fills the room.

Matthew Reyes is one of the pioneers of Yoga Hop and a well known personality in the world of yoga in Los Angeles.

[Matthew Reyes, in English]

It had a western element, which [was] music, so we ...

[Male announcer, translating]

We thought music causes movement so why not use that in yoga. This way we combined eastern yoga with western music.

His classes are always full. Many well known personalities, such as Minnie Driver, Reese Witherspoon, Dennis Quaid, Helen Hunt, Ashley Olsen, and David Duchovny are all members of his class.

Bryan Degressia is a bank investor in Santa Monica who has [been twisting and turning] to Yoga Hop for approximately a year. He says he's happy that these high-energy movements are considered a sport.

Zeta Jones is a 32 year old mother and nurse from Pacific Palisades who brings her husband and children to these classes. "Yoga Hop has changed my mind and body and has changed my life and my family's life. It has turned us into an athletic family."

Kimberly Seti is a 24-year-old housewife from Brentwood, and [she] says she loves the energy she gets from these classes and that her participation in these sessions has changed her view of yoga.

The two rooms called East Coast and West Side present two different types of classes. Reciting quotes of Gandhi and Tony Robbins provide a spiritual atmosphere.

Yoga Hop has even been introduced to cancer patients at Cedars-Sinai medical center.

[Diamond Dallas Page]

Take a deep breath in, take a deep breath and ...

[Male announcer]

Diamond Dallas is a yoga specialist. He has won three wrestling championships. He says that classes like Yoga Hop are a step towards popularizing yoga.

He is a well known international personality who had been for a long time suffering from torn tendons in both shoulders and in one knee. During acting in the movie *Ready to Rumble* his back was severely injured around the 4th and 5th vertebrae.

He was told to retire. Instead Page turned to yoga and after three years returned to the wrestling ring and became a well known supporter of yoga. He took over the yoga coaching at the Regular Guys, and even started to train the soldiers in Iraq.

[Diamond Dallas Page, in English]

There are only three things in this world that we control ...

[Male announcer, translating]

There are only three things in this world that we control: the way we breathe, how we adapt to situations, and the food we put in our mouths. Eric Pandovski, the head of Warner Brothers in Los Angeles, says men should not feel ashamed to participate in these classes because Yoga Hop is a difficult exercise.

He says Yoga Hop has found a large following in the United States because it could be viewed as the number one reducer of stress.

Yoga Hop classes are available in eight cities in America and have found their way to Tokyo, Paris, London, and Vancouver.

It is not just participation in the yoga classes which has a large following but becoming a yoga instructor has also become fashionable.

According the Center for Mind-Body Studies, America has 70,000 yoga instructors and approximately thirty million people participate in yoga classes.

[Video Report Ends Here]

[Interlude]

[Host Elham Sataki]

Medinas, or the Moroccan Houses that are designed in "garden style," have inspired Lori Park as well as other American artists to create inspirational and delicate wire statues.

The Radiance Exhibit in the Museum of Marrakech will continue until September 30th, or the end of this month.

[Video Report Begins Here]

[Female announcer]

For centuries the city of Marrakech has been a crossroads for different cultures and a gateway to the African continent.

The clash of different traditions and cultures in this city has fascinated Lori Park to the point where she has made this place her home and her source of inspiration for her work. Park is famous for her large contemporary statues in the shape of women's torsos.

Her statues are made from wire mesh and are decorated with multicolored paper dresses adorned with dried roses. Some of the statues can be seen in the traditional gallery in the Museum of Marrakech.

[Lori Park, in English]

The feeling of coming from one culture and going into another is so unique...

[Female announcer, translating]

The feeling of coming from one culture and going into another is so unique. This caused me to come to Marrakech instead of staying in the western world. This is a very different place. The aroma, the feel ... when you go to a perfume shop, everything is kind of illuminated in a way.

The Menebhi palace, which is the location for the Museum of Marrakech, is located in the traditional center of the city. This building, with its Moroccan city architecture, was built at the end of the 19th century.

Lori Park, a Harvard University graduate, moved to Marrakech three years ago. She says, "The more different the culture, the greater the shock. For me it's a 'creative fountainhead.' When I'm in an environment that is different from where I come from, I become more creative."

Each statue has been perfumed with a different scent which, according to her gives each of them a special personality.

[Female museum visitor]

It reminds me of a women's tailor shop. I saw a shirt like this, but instead of paper it was made up of flowers. I think it was by Prada in Rome.

[2nd Female museum visitor]

The artwork at various parts of this building has made the works more tangible, just like Marrakech itself.

[Lori Park, in English]

Well, radiance is a word that tries to capture ...

[Female announcer, translating]

Radiance is a word that tries to capture the energy that is within people, especially women. The feeling of movement, energy, and mentality is tantamount to the descent of soul towards the body. That's why I used this word for the exhibition.

Prior to Marrakech, Lori Park had exhibitions at the Atrium Gallery in London, Sa Tafona Gallery in Spain, and at Addison/Ripley Fine Arts in Washington, DC.

[The Report Ends Here]

[Host Elham Sataki]

Last week Seyhoun Gallery held an exhibition of the drawings of Lily Shams, who lives in Los Angeles. The exhibition enjoyed a great reception by art lovers. We have a report on this by Afshin Gorgin, reporting from Los Angeles.

[Video Report Starts Here]

[Afshin Gorgin]

Lily Shams, sculptor and painter, whose works were exhibited at the Seyhoun Gallery last week, was born in Esfahan in an art loving family. She was interested in painting and sculpture since she was young. Upon receiving her high school diploma she continued her education at the Sorbonne, in Paris, and went to training at several art academies. Prior to sculpting, Ms. Shams, along with her brother, worked at television and movie studios as a makeup artist. Since she became aware of her talent in sculpting, she has spent the majority of her time on this art.

[Lily Shams]

I started sculpting in 2004. It happened by coincidence. In my first class, I was able to make a beautiful shoe which was similar to Moliere's shoes. My instructor, who was a lady of German descent, was blown away by it. She kept looking at my hands. At the end of the class, she came to me and said, "I don't know what you do or what line of business you're in, but put down whatever else you are doing and stick to this." This really had a positive influence on me and I started to give it more serious thought.

[Afshin Gorgin]

The exhibition of the sculptures of Lily Shams is titled *Expression* for its depiction of faces and bodies in various positions and psychological conditions, ranging from laughter to crying, tranquility to restlessness, indifference to love.

[Lily Shams]

The word *Expression* suits it, "Expression of conditions and feelings!"

[Afshin Gorgin]

The works at this exhibition are categorized in four collections, Women, Lovers, Faces, and Angels.

[Lily Shams]

In this collection, which is the collection of *Women*, we see this segment called "The Passengers," showing women and young children covered in veils. If you pay attention their faces are invisible. They have no faces.

[Afshin Gorgin]

The statues in the collection *Lovers* are wearing clothes from the Ghajar era.

[Lily Shams]

Each [pair] in my collection of *Lovers* shows the expression of a lover to a beloved, showing them in different positions in different times. I used very warm colors. The clothes were inspired by the Ghajar era. There has been a great deal of work done on the clothes.

[Afshin Gorgin]

The collection *Faces* is one of the most interesting and most diverse parts of the exhibition. The sculptor has been able to depict various human faces in different positions.

[Lily Shams]

As you can see, the word "Love" appears on the clothes she is wearing. Behind this sculpture we see the sign of peace.

[Afshin Gorgin]

The collection *Angels* is the fourth segment of Lily Shams' exhibition.

[Lily Shams]

I have created angels, each of which has a different condition. For example, in this specific statue – which is the “conclusion” of this entire segment – you see an athletic angel who is not ashamed of her face; her body is built, she is athletic, she has very big wings. They are the angels which will save my country, Iran.

[Afshin Gorgin]

According to some of the visitors to this exhibition, Lily Shams’s most [significant] achievement is her efforts in depicting conditions and circumstances of women – as they pertain to their civil rights. Lily Shams says she was inspired by Forough Farokhzad in creating these statues.

[Lily Shams]

I was inspired by Forough Farokhzad’s poem when making one of the pieces. The name of this piece is “Ill.” It is a mother holding her baby. If you pay attention to the baby’s face, you will see that it has really red cheeks. This was influenced by the poem. [The baby] has a high fever and the mother is trying to save her in any way she can. The poem reads, “Oh God, I’m willing to die. Kill me, but spare my child.”

[Afshin Gorgin]

Ms. Shams is hopeful that by conducting this exhibition she was able to express her deep feelings.

[Lily Shams]

I hope that by conducting this exhibition I was able to send my “inner message” to the people I love and [to] be able to get closer to them.

[Afshin Gorgin]

Maryam Seyhoun, the curator of this exhibition, says, “This exhibition was prepared with a specific style and taste and is a result of years of work and effort.”

[Maryam Seyhoun]

The production of this exhibition at this time corresponded to the anniversary of Ghamar, a freedom loving Iranian woman. I am honored to have been her compatriot. It was she who gave power and [courage] to us Iranian women to do what we love. Since this exhibition had undertones of

flying and freedom, it was very important for me to produce it in this fashion. Moreover, since it is broken down into several categories, I am really happy about its theatrical mood as well as its *mise en scene*. It is different from all other exhibitions.

[Afshin Gorgin]

The exhibition of the statues of Lily Shams provided a new and different experience to its visitors. Afghin Gorgin, Voice of America, Los Angeles.

[Video Report Ends Here]

[Host Elham Sataki]

My colleague, Behnam Nateghi, in his report today for Shabahang, conducted an interview with a young Iranian artist living in New York named Ali Eskandarian, a songwriter and singer who is currently working on his second album. His first album will be redistributed by the company Wildflowers. Ali Eskandarian, who came to the United States with his parents, grew up in Dallas, Texas, and is now living in New York. Let's first watch a video clip by Ali Eskandarian and then go to the report.

[Video Clip by Eli Eskandarian]

[Behnam Nateghi]

Wonderful! What was the name of the song?

[Ali Eskandarian]

Memphis.

[Behnam Nateghi]

What was it about?

[Ali Eskandarian]

Well, I've traveled a great deal in the United States, whether for music or otherwise, and Memphis really comes from the same roots as rock and roll, and blues. The song is really about loneliness. It is about being lonely. Memphis really comes from the same roots as the American music ...

[Behnam Nateghi]

When did you make the video?

[Ali Eskandarian]

It was made three months ago, four months ago.

[Behnam Nateghi]

This clip is from a video clip called "Fearless," which we actually use a lot in the program Shabahang. But [at the bottom of the screen] it says Fox, and that's because it was broadcast by the Fox channel and you recorded it from there. That was the reason.

[Ali Eskandarian]

That's right.

[Behnam Nateghi]

Tell us a bit about yourself. How old were you when you came to the United States? What made you go into songwriting?

[Ali Eskandarian]

I was 12 when I came to the United States. Before that we were in Germany for two years. I had left Iran when I was 10. My father and uncle ... there were a lot of musicians in our family. Even during wartime we had parties and played music and danced. I really grew up with it. At first I wanted to become a singer.

[Behnam Nateghi]

You look like one!

[Ali Eskandarian]

Thank you! Later, I realized it's really in my blood. It was something I had to pursue. Music was something that I couldn't separate myself from.

[Behnam Nateghi]

Well, music is a general term. You perform a special kind of music. In America it is called being a singer/songwriter. Even your way of singing and performing is reminiscent of the great figures in this field, such as Bob Dylan, [and] some of them [performances] remind us of Neil Young. What made you choose this kind of music?

[Ali Eskandarian]

It was really something that spoke to my heart, as they say in English. It is a "heavy" music. Even in Iranian music I always loved singers such as

Daryoush and Farhad. Their equivalents would be Bob Dylan and Neil Young, people who actually have something to say. It is not just “dum-dum dum-dum” type of music, not that there is anything wrong with that. But for me, there is so much music of the 60s, 50s, 40s, and 20s that I’m still stuck in those decades. I haven’t yet passed [to] the 70s and 80s. That is because there is so much in those decades.

[Behnam Nateghi]

That’s the source of your inspiration.

[Ali Eskandarian]

Yes.

[Behnam Nateghi]

What are the themes of the songs you write? Tell us a couple of them for our viewers who may not be familiar with the English language. Tell us about the themes of your songs. What inspires you? What is it that you are saying in your songs?

[Ali Eskandarian]

In many of my songs, I make an effort to say things that come out of me. Some of it talks about narcotic drugs, about poverty, about craziness, and loneliness. You know, “not belonging.” It is something that we also see in many Persian songs. You know, you don’t know where you came from when you leave your country at a young age, and you naturally feel lonely as a result. That’s something I try to talk about.

[Behnam Nateghi]

Nostalgia?

[Ali Eskandarian]

Yes, nostalgia. I try not to talk about politics, because I’m not a politician. But I want to talk about the sorrow felt by humans and my own grief. It is really about pain.

[Behnam Nateghi]

What makes your job hard is that you have put yourself in a very busy market, meaning that there are many singer/songwriters in America and they are constantly traveling and singing at clubs. I know that you are traveling these days. You sing at different clubs. I saw you at a club in

Washington. People were fascinated and your work was interesting. How are you going to make yourself different from all the other songwriters?

[Ali Eskandarian]

I actually happen to think it's quite simple, because in general I'm very different from other people. I think when an American talks to me [sic] for only five minutes he realizes that I'm singing an American song with an American style but it's still different. It's something inside you. It's not really hard to express it because I'm really different from other people.

[Behnam Nateghi]

Now to show how much you're different, would you pick up your guitar and play a piece for us?

[Ali Eskandarian]

Sure.

[Behnam Nateghi]

We'll make history in the Shabahang studio! People will later say that Ali Eskandarian came to Shabahang studio and played a song. We are witnessing history in making at Shabahang studio!

[Ali Eskandarian]

I think it'd be better if I sat down.

[Behnam Nateghi]

Are you comfortable?

[Ali Eskandarian]

Yes.

[Behnam Nateghi]

OK!

[Ali Eskandarian plays a song]

[Behnam Nateghi]

Bravo! Thank you! It was a beautiful song. This song is called "Nothing to Say." Is that right?

[Ali Eskandarian]

That's the name of the album.

[Behnam Nateghi]

The name of your album is "Nothing to Say," which surprised me because I said to myself if an album is called "Nothing to Say" a customer might come and say, "Nothing to say, so no money to buy!" Or "No need to buy!" We don't need to buy it if you have nothing to say. What is this song saying?

[Ali Eskandarian]

This was actually one of my most simple songs. I usually make my songs a bit more complex. It's really about loneliness. Sometimes you think you have nobody in this world, even if you're surrounded by people. It's about the sorrow you experience. But at the end of the song it says, "I will come to you no matter what." It's really a song about love.

[Behnam Nateghi]

Let me tell our dear viewers that we are speaking with Ali Eskandarian, an Iranian songwriter and singer who works in the United States. I know that you have a very difficult life because you have a concert every night in a different city and you're not making a lot of money. You travel from city to city. Tell us about this lifestyle as a "troubadour," as they call it in America, someone who sings and travels. One must be young in order to do that. Please tell us a little about this.

[Ali Eskandarian]

For me it's really a heaven in many ways, because I'm on my own. I think America is a country in which you have to do a great deal of traveling. You have to travel by road in order to see it. I think if you don't travel by road in America you are missing out. [You will not get a chance to see] the American people. One of the most interesting things for me is traveling from city to city. I always loved going from city to city to perform for people. Financially it is hard, but many people have done it. The blues musicians – they could have actually gotten killed back in the 1920s. For me it's something historic, something I cherish.

[Behnam Nateghi]

How did you get your name out to these clubs who book you or those who buy your CDs? How did you advertise yourself?

[Ali Eskandarian]

I was lucky to recruit a manager about three years ago. Before that I used to perform at any show, party, or even on the stairs. I basically played at any place I could. I'm no longer like that, because people want to come and see your show.

[Behnam Nateghi]

The Washington Post spoke highly of you. They [make] those lists, saying people should definitely see his performance.

[Ali Eskandarian]

I think when people see my shows they realize that this is not something they could see every night. I know this for a fact. That's why I really want to play every single night. I like to do a show in a different city every night.

[Behnam Nateghi]

Well, you're doing that right now.

[Ali Eskandarian]

Yes I am!

[Behnam Nateghi]

Tell us about the recording company which is about to release your CD.

[Ali Eskandarian]

Judy Collins is one of the great American musicians – she is on a par with Joan Baez – [and] is the owner of Wildflower Records. I am really lucky for this. We really tried working with many big companies, such as Columbia. They all came and saw the work, but in the end said, "Thank you, good bye." But when they [Wildflower] saw it, they said from the very first minute that they wanted me. I think they realized that I'm at least "on the level."

[Behnam Nateghi]

We have a video of one of your other songs, one of the songs in the "Fearless" series, which people usually see on our program. Let's watch that together. I want to thank you for coming here to Shabahang studio. We were talking about Iranian music in another program, and we were lucky that you were able to come here as well. Now let's watch ... What is it called?

[Ali Eskandarian]
Government Meat.

[Behnam Nateghi]
We'll watch "Government Meat," by Ali Eskandarian, an Iranian artist in America.

[Video Clip: Government Meat]

[Host Elham Sataki]
In this section of the program, we will see short and entertaining images from around the globe.

[Video Clip: Around the World in One Glance]

[Host Elham Sataki]
The program Shabahang ends here. I thank Babak Bordbar, the producer of the show, as well as my other colleagues behind the scenes. We now go to VOA Studio 47. Mr. Chalangi hosts the program that follows. Mr. Chalangi, I hope you have a great program.

[Jamshid Chalangi]
Thank you, Ms. Elham Sataki. In our discussion with journalists and scholars in the program "News Talk" we will review and analyze headlines that relate to Iran and the people of Iran. Please stay with us at Voice of America.

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