

Inauguration Speech of the Mayor of Tehran, HE Dr Ghalibaf

in

the First National Congress on Urban Health

(Tehran, 24 April 2010)

Since the first day that I was fortunate to work in the municipality, my first concern was that why municipalities in Iran, contrary to the modern municipalities of the world, mainly deal with the physical issues of the cities. The questions arise as whether this is dictated to us by our Iranian culture from the old days up to now or by our Islamic culture and religious beliefs? The answer to these questions is negative. When we consider the activities of a municipality in the Iranian cities, we find out that all their concerns are about providing services and no attention is paid to other issues. Sometimes we even forget that for whom these services and structures are provided. We have worked so deeply that we have failed to remember for whom we want these cars, streets and buildings and for whom we want these beauties and tranquility. We have neglected that if a city has developed and gained an identity, it is because of the people who live in it. Therefore, from the very beginning of my work in the municipality, I seriously asked my colleagues not to think about their own concerns and instead pay attention to the people's concerns, and look at the city in a people-oriented way. If we look in such a way, undoubtedly the people's most important concerns are physical and mental health, morality and education. Even if we give priority to the cleanliness, it is because of the same principal objectives. From this viewpoint, the outward appearance of Tehran is cleaner than many modern cities of the world. Especially with our Iranian culture that every now and then we do not observe the rules. Municipality of Tehran is a social institution not a service department. Of course this is not a reason for failure to do our service duties. Every expert who comprehensively surveys the activities of municipality in the recent five years will observe this movement clearly. Our movement in Tehran is based on the collective wisdom and honestly working. Every activity requires knowledge, estimation and field work. We have promised the people of Tehran that we will not do the works inexpertly or unscientifically. Surely it does not mean that we have made no mistakes. However, we have done our best to make use of the experiences of our predecessors, express their remarkable achievements, learn from their failures and do not repeat their mistakes. Dr Marandi also referred to the same issues in his discussion about equity assessment in the north and south part of the city. The day that I took on the management of Tehran, I promised to stop deepening of the gap between the north and south part of the city and also try to reduce inequalities. After Islamic Revolution, this gap became even deeper than before. We have also the same gap between east and west part of the city. Today we believe that if you look at the activities of Tehran municipality and take all determinants into account, you will see that always we have given priority to the south of the city. We have also deprived areas in the north parts. In the district 1 of Tehran which is a wealthy area, we have some deprived places with conditions even worse than the south parts. In the south of Tehran there is a kind of homogeneity but in the deprived areas of the north parts, a citizen who leaves his house and his street, will be confronted with a strange contrast. Then he hears our slogans about justice and always has an inner conflict and asks what justice? Solving the problem of the south of Tehran will be possible with production of wealth. Today, wealth is produced only in the north and west parts of Tehran and nobody is interested to invest in the south parts because the return of his investment in every section of the north will be 3.5 times more than the south parts. With such a good condition in the north, no

private investor will go to the south parts. In the second half of the year 1384 that I started my work in the municipality, the total budget of the municipality was 1000 milliard Tomans but in the year 1388 we spent the sum of 500 milliard Tomans only for taking possession of Ghaleh Morghi garrison and this was 50% of the total budget in the year 1384. As a result of our planning, Ghaleh Morghi project will be a source of pride for our government. This project is ready for construction and we will show off the range of our capabilities to the whole world. In this project, a number of Iranian and foreign consultants are cooperating with us and we intend to construct it in such a way that everybody who travels to Tehran, will be interested to visit Ghaleh Morghi which is neighboring Javadieh and Khalij districts. In this way, the equity will be implemented. As the municipality, we try to deal with all the social, economic and health problems but sometimes they tell us that "mind your own business!" Health is a social production. Tehran has changed to a social structure which is taking away the happiness, physical and mental health of the citizens and we are making every effort to compete with this social structure and return the joy and happiness to the city. Although some people tell us that you should not interfere in something that is not your legal duty. But wisdom and human responsibility order us to deal with the urban health issues. Dr. Marandi was right to say that health is a social production. Determinant of health in cities is different from the villages. Even in the cities this determinant is different. In a city with a population of four to five hundred thousand or one to two million, if we deal with health issue as a phenomenon we may be successful. But in Tehran, if we do not understand that this is a social structure, we will face many problems. Therefore, if we can not recognize the difference between social phenomenon and social structure, we will not achieve our goals. One day, all our sources of honour were located in the districts 11 and 12. But in the district 12 which is one of the historical districts of Tehran, at nights only one hundred and twenty thousand people stay and the rest do not live there. Those who stay are obliged to do so and if they had the basic requirements they did not live there. If you look at the districts such as Molavi, Dardasht and Oudlajan, our problem is not dilapidated houses and urban texture. But our concerns are poverty, illiteracy, education, addiction, divorce, runaway children, bisexuals, moral and mental problems. Once I was fortunate to be the country's chief of police and I was informed about underlying layer of the city and now I see the upper layer of it. So I have seen both beautiful and ugly layers of the city and surely my duty is different from the others. If health is my concern, I understand what happens in the underlying layer. For instance, in the analysis of incidents and quarrels we found out that in certain places the most common causes of quarrels and conflicts were family problems resulted from women's physical problems and their one or two special disease. Now that we are aware of this fact, we do not need to increase the number of police stations or to force "police 110" to be more active. The proper solution for this problem is to pay attention to women's physical health and to observe morality. Dr Marandi was right to say that our men have no place for physical exercises, let alone the women. I say to Dr Marandi that the problem is more serious. Today our problem is not the exercise facilities. Because every citizen who is interested to exercise, will find an exercise set in a distance of 200 to 300 meters from his house. However, the citizens do not use these sets because they have no free time. The husband works in two shifts and the wife works in one shift. They have economic problems and at nights come back home with stress and think about their problems. So they have no free time and are not in the mood to exercise. But as municipality, we have the responsibility to provide these facilities. Considering the women's need to exercise and bearing in mind their different anatomy, we have installed special exercise sets in the guidance schools and high schools. The other problems confronting us are sound pollution, air pollution and environmental pollution. This social structure is trying to take away the happiness of people and we

want to prevent it. This would be impossible unless we make use of our social resources. Islam is among the greatest social resources and opportunities. The other social resource is meaningful cooperation. We managers should believe the meaningful cooperation. This is a bitter reality that all of us have received governmental training and we do not like to hand over our responsibilities to the people. Imam Khomeini (RA) in some parts of his speeches and writings has emphasized that the government should not undertake the tasks that people can carry out. This is the meaningful cooperation. Our project to establish board of trustees in the neighborhoods has been communicated to the neighborhood managers. Doubtless they will decide, manage, save and develop better than me. Now that we can say 60% of health issues are resulted from social problems, we should join hands with each other and try to solve them. In the municipality we have no limitations on our ability to work. If some people believe that we are meddling in such issues as health and urbanization, they should note that we are in "The Year of Intensified Effort and Labor" and we have paid attention to our human responsibilities. The Supreme Leader has also emphasized such issues as investment, health and public sport. Because in the countries that equity and development has not been realized, the people will face various challenges and a gap appears between the nation and the government. We should consider naming of the years by the Supreme Leader in a more practical way and do not look at these names as simple slogans. His Excellency called the fourth decade of the revolution as "The Decade of Justice and Progress". Looking at the previous year which was the year of "The Revisions of the Consumption Patterns", we find out that the approach of revising the consumption patterns is based on the issue of justice. And the current year which is "The Year of Intensified Effort and Labor" should direct us toward realization of development in the society. Currently the "Strategic Council of Health" functions at the municipality under the chairmanship of Dr Marandi. I refer to him not because he is a member of parliament, but because we have confidence in his own personality. All the gifted and talented people who trust in him should gather and tell us what to do. I tell you that not only in the health area but also in all other areas we have such strategic councils that specify the activities. You should not give up your hope because of my words. In Tehran we have plenty of opportunities and if we look at these opportunities properly, we will find the remedy for the city's decade-old injuries within itself. Even in the economic area, if we want money, it is hidden in the city. I hope we can cooperate with all citizens to make the most of Tehran's opportunities. Once the city's income was 1000 milliard Tomans and now it is 7000 milliard Tomans but we can increase it twice as much. For instance, in the same district 12 that I referred to its great cultural and economic opportunities, we can solve all its problems with a brief contemplation. I need the cooperation and guidance of all dear citizens to join our hands and make a good city which will be appropriate for the noble and religious people of Tehran. Please accept my apologies for speaking too much.

Vassalam-o Alaykom va Rahmatollah-e va Barakatoh (والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله... وبركاته)