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At the start of the session Towhidi thanked the media representatives, especially the press and the websites and said: "You reflect the issues, views and attitudes of the various guilds. All of you, including those who criticized us and those who agree with our points of view, reported the activities of the House of Cinema and for that I am grateful to you."

Regarding the beginning of the operations of the 12th board of directors of the House of Cinema he said: "At the beginning of the activities of the 12th board of directors I wish to thank the previous board of directors and those friends who are not among the new group, such as Amin Tarokh, Morteza Razaq Karimi, Mohammad Reza Sokout and Kamran Maleki, for their constant efforts. The truth is that the previous period was one of the hardest periods in the House of Cinema and we managed to move on against all odds mainly thanks to their efforts and thoughtfulness."

He considered it a happy coincidence that the start of the new period of the board of directors was concurrent with the formation of the high council of cinema and said: "This is really a happy coincidence, and we are especially happy that the President pays attention to the problems of cinema."

"I feel that the first session of the High council of cinema could have been arranged much better, and it is unfortunate that our colleagues at the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance did not take part in the session with a clear-cut program. Certainly we have a lot to say about the council, the composition of the members and their relationship with the cinema. We believe the council should include prominent and experienced filmmakers who are both familiar with the problems of cinema and have managerial background, and are well-informed about the issues related to film industry infrastructure."

He specified: "But we sincerely believe there is a firm determination to resolve problems in the cinema and the film industry infrastructure, and we hope proper programs will be drawn up to resolve all this issues and find ways of providing job security for filmmakers." Concerning the complaint of reporters about the absence of the media representatives at the general assembly of the House of Cinema, the chairman of the board of directors of the House of Cinema said: "That was an official session for members of the board of directors and no other person was allowed in the session. This is a common practice in all organi-

zations.

"We really have no secret from the public or the press, and everything that has been done at the House of Cinema and in the film trade guilds during the past few months has not been hidden from the sharp eyes of the press. There were of course people who thought a certain amount of lobbying had been done. The fact is that there had been certain counseling and it all pertained to bring about unity among the guilds. And the points that were approved in the session were nothing but the programs that had been carried out during the past two years, and the approval of the programs proved that the guilds had no permanent ties with persons, but with only what has to be done."

Towhidi continued: "I should point out here that a strong force from outside the House of Cinema sought to bring about changes in the board of directors. But during the voting it became clear 25 guilds out of the 27 guilds whose representatives attended the session shared common views and the range of votes gained by the new members (a minimum 18 votes and maximum of 25 votes) indicates that lobbying from outside the House of Cinema did not yield any results."

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Board of Directors' Press Conference

Concerning the absence of the representative of the House of Cinema at the session of the high council of cinema, Farhad Towhidi said: "It is deplorable that a representative from the House of Cinema was present in the session. But the fact is that we were not informed about the session and had not been invited. We believe the House of Cinema represents the entirety of the film industry, and our views are always directed by the needs of this invaluable asset whenever we are given the chance to express our views."

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Regarding the differences between the House of Cinema and the office of the deputy minister for cinematic affairs of the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance he said: "It is a difference of two points of view and not differences between two people. One point of view gives the priority to the demands of the government sector, while the opposite point of view is focused on the private sector and demands the minimization of the government role and the relegation of decision making to the filmmakers themselves. With the favorable points of view among the members of the high council of cinema, we hope the expertise of knowledgeable people will be taken into account in the study of problems and in drawing up future programs and policies. Among the sources that could be used in this connection is the draft of the law for the cinematic structure, the protection of the rights of the filmmakers, and providing job security for all filmmakers, all of which are available at the House of Cinema."

In response to another question regarding the exact date and time of the meeting between the board of directors of the House of Cinema and the deputy director for cinematic affairs, the spokesman of the board of directors of the House of Cinema said: "We were informed the session would be held on Monday at 10 a.m., and I hope it will prove to be a fruitful session." He pointed out that while the board of directors realizes the need for cooperation it preserves for itself the right to criticize. "While we are eager to cooperate with the deputy for cinematic affairs, we think we have the right to criticize his programs and actions. In any case we will endeavor to have an interactive and understanding approach." He then announced the programs of the society for the film guilds for the coming two years as follows:

Guidelines of the 12th board of directors of the House of Cinema

A. Organizing and strengthening the budget of the House of Cinema

1. Reducing the expenses through a revision of priorities.
2. Managing the sources of income from the available possibilities
3. According an economic role to the guilds through receipt of membership fees.
4. Finding sponsors and making optimum use of the sponsors
5. Receiving aids from people and sources interested in cinema

B. Job security

1. Increasing the capabilities, knowledge and skills of the manpower through (a) organizing training workshops and (b) encouraging authorship and translation of books and taking advantage of the experiences of other countries
2. Clarifying the methods and channels of information on distribution and exhibition of films
3. Follow-up action on legislation

requiring the National Television to acquire and air films

4. Follow-up action on the establishment of unemployment fund and promoting complimentary insurance

5. Follow-up action on the participation of representatives from the film guilds at decision-making sessions

6. Implementing the charter of group employment contracts and ensuring its execution (deputy for cinematic affairs' office)

C. Reforming the structure of the society of the film guilds

1. Follow-up action on the project for structural revision of the charter of the House of Cinema

2. Follow-up action on legislation for protection of the filmmakers' rights

3. Follow-up action on legislation for the cinematic structure

In response to a question on the meeting between the council of the film directors center with Javad Shamaqdari, Towhidi said: "In accordance with the approval of the cabinet the House of Cinema should have two representatives in the council for issuance of exhibition license. The two representatives are traditionally from the film directors center and the film producers. Thus the two representatives are introduced by the House of Cinema, without any of the guilds introducing representatives directly."

Referring to the financial position of the House of Cinema, Towhidi said: "We are now facing a 500 million tomans debt, of which 200 million is related to the feast of cinema. 308 million tomans of the our budget from last year has not yet been paid, and according to the agreement of the deputy for the cinematic affairs we are to receive 800 million tomans in the current year of which only 175 million has been paid.

"The debt has dealt a severe blow in the area of job security and the insurance of the filmmakers as part of the 500 million debt is related to the complimentary insurance of filmmakers. Unfortunately we have had to accept the scheme of combining the insurance of filmmakers with that of artists in other fields, which had been approved by the fund for support of artists, and cancel our contract with the previous insurance company, and we had to pay 85 million tomans for the cancellation of the insurance contract."

Concerning the formation of a single guild of producers the spokesman of the board of directors of the House of Cinema said: "One of the issues which we will take up in our negotiations with the deputy for cinematic affairs is the issue of a single guild of film producers. The problem actually started 5 years ago when divisions among the produces led to the creation of three parallel guilds of producers. The divisions are so deep that the board of directors and the managing director had to create the high council of producers in accordance with a letter of understanding and an agreement with the approval of the general assembly.

"So in accordance with the view of the general assembly the high council of producers will represent film producers until the end of the current Iranian year (March 20, 2011), and it will follow up the formation of a single guild of film producers. Regarding the guild that is about to be formed with the cooperation of the ministry of culture and Islamic guidance, it has to be seen whether the guild will be able to unite all producers in a single body. Certainly we will support the formation of a single guild of producers, however for the moment we will

regard the high council of producers as the official representative of the House of Cinema."

In response to a question on the re-election of Asgarpour as the managing director of the House of Cinema and his differences with Javad Shamaqdari, Towhidi said: "As I indicated before the votes given to the board of directors were not based on preferences for any person but for a body of programs. And the votes were unprecedented in the history of the House of Cinema. It is regrettable that the two guilds of producers and directors are not represented in the board of directors, but the truth is that nobody was left out because of personal biases. The votes were withheld because of the programs put forward by people who were not elected. Lobbying in the house of Cinema can be carried out with regard to one or two guilds, but that is impossible when 25 guilds are involved. The votes and the election were spontaneous. For instance, Merila Zarei was elected with a high number of votes, and that demonstrates that she was regarded highly by members of the society of actors and that a reliable person had to be elected.

"Asgarpour is a cultural manager who has emerged out of the reigning system and that it cost the system a lot to train such a manger. If he were to leave the House of Cinema there is no doubt that his capabilities will be used in other organizations,

"We should not reduce the differences between the House of Cinema and the office of the deputy for cinematic affairs to the conflict between two persons. It is not a difference between two people but between two points of view.

"The policies of the House of Cinema are not determined on the basis of political considerations, and if some people view our actions as politically motivated then they need to correct their mistaken views."

In response to a question on the severe verdict issued for Farajollah Salahshour, Farhad Towhidi said: "I take this opportunity of thanking the judicial authorities for the verdict, regardless of whether or not it was too severe. It is important to know that the judiciary does not permit people to level accusations without sound basis. The verdict demonstrates that libel and irresponsible accusations are always condemned."

Regarding the organization of the 15th feast of the House of Cinema Towhidi said: "After the formation of the board of directors a committees for the expansion of financial-commercial resources was formed. We drew up long-term and short-term policies, and adopted methods for earning income and revising the expenditure. Given adequate financial resources we will organize the feast on the grand scale we had for the previous feast, otherwise we will have to organize it on a smaller scale.

"With the changes brought about in the structure of the House of Cinema we are trying to give greater importance to the commercial section alongside of the administrative section."

Regarding the law suits of Jafar Panahi and Mohammad Rasoulof, he said: "We believe they did not deserve such harsh sentences which will create great concern among people really attached to the reigning system, while it is having adverse publicity in the world. For that reason we have sent a letter signed by 12 prominent figures of the Iranian cinema to the head of the judiciary and asked for an appointment. We also had a meeting with the director of the office of the Islamic human rights. The meeting had a positive effect and the director had a meeting with Panahi's attorneys and studied the relevant documents.

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Issuing Financial Support Bonds to Assist the House of Cinema

The public relations office of the House of Cinema announced that following the approval and announcement of the two-year programs of the board of directors of the society of film guilds, the first part of which related to strengthening the financial resources of the House of Cinema, the managing director of the House of Cinema asked Merila Zarei, Mehdi Fakhimzadeh, Reza Mirkarimi, Manouchehr Shahsavari and Maziar Miri to form a work group and take over the task of planning and developing the financial resources of the House of Cinema.

In its first session on January 1, the work group selected Maziar Miri as its secretary. In their weekly sessions the members of the work group have so far devised four methods and approaches for the strength-

ening of the financial resources of the House of Cinema which are to be implemented concurrently after the necessary planning has been completed.

In its first practical measure the work group will be trying to issue financial support bonds with a view to enabling the House of Cinema to meet its financial obligations for the implementation of educational, social welfare programs and the organization of the 14th feast of cinema. After the failure of the agencies for the provision of the budget and credit facilities of the House of Cinema in the past year and the lack of financial and budgetary agreement in the current year the House of Cinema now faces a 600 million toman debt.



Members of the 12th Board of Directors of the House of Cinema Were Selected

The general assembly of the House of Cinema convened this afternoon (Sunday) to select the new board of directors. During the session Farhad Towhidi, Merila Zarei, Amir Esbati, Touraj Mansouri, Ebrahim

Mokhtari, Mohammad Reza Moini and Mohammad Sarir were introduced as the principal members of the new board of directors of the House of Cinema.

Also Sirius Alvand and Morteza Razzaq Kari-

mi were selected the proxy members of the board of directors of the House of Cinema.

Mehdi Khadem and Keyvan Kasirian were selected, respectively, as inspector and proxy inspector.

“Also we have been informed that the deputy for cinematic affairs had a meeting with the President and asked for his assistance in this case. While we respect the independence and sound judgment of the judiciary, we also hope that all aspects of the national interest will be kept in view, that the Islamic mercy will be observed regarding the two filmmakers and that we will have them among the other filmmakers in the country.” Esbati, deputy director of the House of Cinema, began his speech by saying: “Our film industry has always been facing problems and ups and downs which are of the nature of this type of activities. But we expect to witness avoidance of the marginal issues. Cinema may always be accompanied by marginal issues, but we hope that they will not overshadow the principal issues, and that rational methods of investigations will be adopted to resolve the main problems.

“The House of Cinema is the association of the Iranian film guilds, and as an indisputable fact, the institution is expected to perform the duties assigned to it by its charter.”

The member of the board of directors of the House of Cinema referred to the budgetary problems of the House of Cinema and said: “the budget is one of the most important problems which have been discussed even in the general assembly. We have always envisioned the reduction of our financial reliance on the not so predictable support of the government sector. Now this issue has turned into a real problem which I believe should not be allowed to turn into our vulnerable point. Filmmakers face many financial problems during the production of their films, and they manage to find solutions for the problems. I believe this experience could help us to be more successful in our guild activities. The House of Cinema will certainly pursue its previous credits from the responsible organizations, but it will not delay its future programs pending the receipt of the government budget.”

We have made no mistake in the choice of the

managing director of the House of Cinema

In another part of the session the deputy director of the board of directors of the House of Cinema talked about the remarks of some reporters about problems that could be created by the re-election of Mohammad Mahdi Asgarpour: “One of the sources of the emergence of marginal issues in cinema derives from the tendency to regard differences between two managers as the source of problems. This tendency will lead us astray and in effect belittles the principal issues. If we were to change one manager because of his difference with another manager, we would lose sight of the true problems. And certainly it would create a chaos if the tendency was extended to other areas of the society. We should also remember that no person will be holding his current position indefinitely and thus it would be illogical for us to base our logic on their demands. I still believe that the House of Cinema needs a determined manager like Asgarpour and that we have made no mistake in our choice of the managing director.”

Regarding the view that the activities of the House of Cinema are politically oriented, Esbati specified: “It is always said that our activities are politically oriented. We would really be delighted to hear the reasoning and evidence behind such accusation. Do they mean we are politically motivated if we do not elect people they favor? We have our own programs and guild frameworks, and we act in accordance with those considerations.”

During the session Ebrahim Mokhtari, secretary of the board of directors of the House of Cinema, talked about projects proposed for the revision of the structure of the House of Cinema: “The present structure of the House of Cinema presents opportunities for lobbying. But the recent election of the board of directors and the subsequent reactions has induced our guilds to cooperate in stopping such lobbying. At any rate the task of supervision has taken a formalistic aspect now, and thus it requires closer attention.

“At the moment lower members have turned into a kind of signature mechanisms, while

waiting for the board of directors takes over. It is interesting to note that producers, who are considered one of the four principal elements in the creation of good films have only one vote in the elections, like the other guilds. This is a questionable point which could be resolved with the revision in the guilds structure.”

In another part of his speech Mokhtari dealt with the issue of the high council of cinema: “It could be questioned whether the adjective ‘high’ applies to a council in which the fundamental element of the film industry is not presented. Would such a council have access to the necessary information regarding the situation in the film industry?”

“The position of the high council of cinema requires a serious study. Such a council existed also in the past during the period of the late Seifollah Daad. But that council had a different composition and it was dismissed with the demise of Daad. Do we have to go over the same experience again? These are the questions that could be discussed in a study of the council.”

Ebrahim Mokhtari concluded his talk by saying: “We do not insist that our representatives should be included in the high council of cinema, but the nature of such a council requires a minimum of members. In my view the members should include not only representatives from the four basic elements of cinema, but also representatives from the different branches of the Iranian cinema, namely, feature films, animation and documentaries. These groups are considered the main branches of filmmaking in all parts of the world and they should not be ignored. Actually the council should include also representatives from the creators of short films. If these points are taken into consideration then many of the current issues will be automatically resolved.”

The House of Cinema Newsletter

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