

## TEHRAN "Iran's Capital City"

As well as being the seat of government, Tehran is also the financial and intellectual capital of Iran. The city is situated on the foothills of the Alborz mountain range. The province of Tehran extends from the southern slopes of the Alborz mountains into the Dashte Kavir desert. The highest peak in the Alborz range, Mount Damavand (5,761 meters, 18,600 feet) dominates the skyline of Tehran and is an extinct volcano. Its last eruption probably occurred within the last 10,000 years. The crater lake at the summit is 1,300 feet (400 m) deep. Damavand area is frequently visited by skiers, mountain climbers and hikers. There are trails through the Alborz mountains to the Caspian coast.



**Damavand Peak**

Damavand holds a special place in Iranian folklore. According to a legend, Zahhak, the Cruel, was imprisoned in the volcano by the benevolent Fereydoun, who later became king, with the help of Kaveh, the blacksmith, whose sons had been murdered by Zahhak. In the legend any tremor in the Damavand area is associated with an attempt by Zahhak to escape from his eternal prison.

The region around the modern city of Tehran has a long history. Remains of Neolithic settlements have been found in the small town of Ray (about ten km south of Tehran).

It is unclear when the first settlements in Tehran were established, but they probably date back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. By virtue of being at a high elevation and near several small rivers, Tehran had a more moderate climate than towns in the southern deserts and supported flourishing agricultural communities. As a result, it was often the target of bandits roaming the area. The villagers made underground dwellings to protect themselves, and the region became known as Tah-Ran (later Tehran) which means underground dwellings.

The village of Ray, south of Tehran has a long history dating back to the Achaemenian dynasty. The Seleucids further developed the city and it gained great importance under the Parthians and the Sassanids. In 1220 the Mongols destroyed Ray, and then Tehran began to develop as a small, but moderately prosperous trading center.

Descriptions from foreign travelers in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century mention the existence of a well-established town, but it was not until the reign of the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasb I (1571-1629) that a fortified protective wall was built around the city. Shah Tahmasb rebuilt the bazaar and added a citadel (or arg) in the center. In 1618, the traveler Pierre d'Laval observed that one third of the land inside the fortified wall was allocated to houses and two thirds were orchards and gardens. The town was also known as Chenarestan because of the abundance of plane trees (Chenar) in the area. Still today rows of plane trees adorn many streets and roads in Tehran.

Tehran became the capital in 1789 under Agha Mohammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar dynasty. It replaced Shiraz as the seat of government and in 1796 Aqa Muhammad Khan was officially enthroned there. His successor, Fath Ali Shah (1791-1834), continued the transformation of the town and built the Shah's Mosque (today, the Imam Khomeini Mosque) and Golestan Palace. Nasir ad-Din Shah (1848-96) enlarged the walls and commissioned the Sepahsalar Mosque.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, most commercial and other activities remained focused around the palace and in the Bazaar. However, Reza Shah (1925-1941) preferred to live in his palaces to the north and especially in Sa'ad Abad, 10 kilometers to the north. Wider avenues were cut to link these areas to the downtown areas. This was the beginning of the vertical north-south axis, which is so characteristic of Tehran.

The modern city is huge and is still expanding. Its population continues to increase and is now around 12 million (in 1923 it was only 210,000). Along the foothills of the Alborz mountain range, remnants of old villages are fighting a losing battle against the mansions and apartment blocs of the wealthy and the developers. Tehran's seemingly insurmountable traffic adds to the air pollution in the hot summer months. Most residents of Tehran escape the heat by heading for the hills north of Tehran. There they relax in the many tea-houses built around mountain streams.

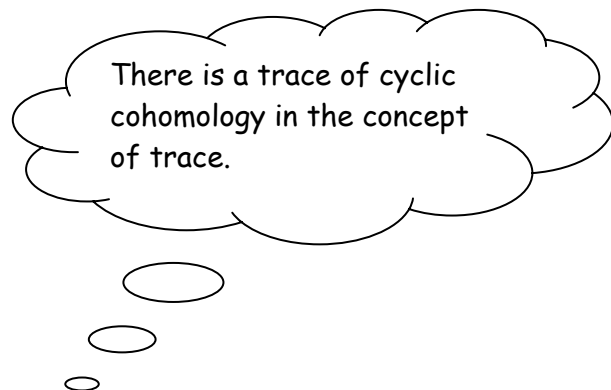
## News

My lecture got off to a nice start but soon I realized that I could not erase the board! That's what happens when you use a permanent pen, or you are given only a permanent pen! Soon a whole crew was cleaning the board with alcohol. We all inhaled a lot of it! Surely that's not what we expected. I never expected to get so high on Mathematics!!!!

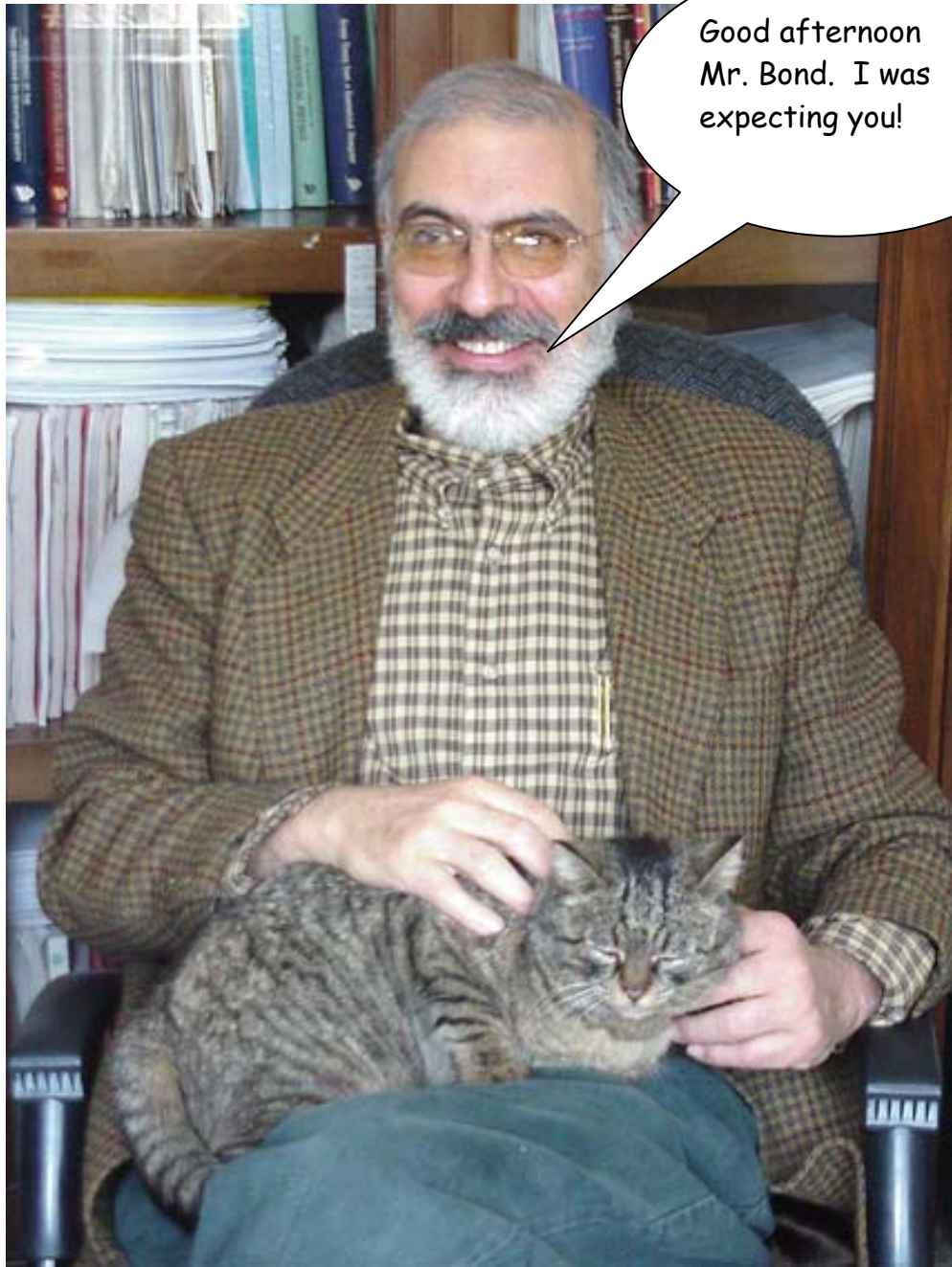
Masoud



## Quotes of the Day



Shahin: If you want exact results, talk to a physicist.  
Masoud: Exact, yes; but only up to 3 decimal places!



***Attention***



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## *Lima Bean with Dill Rice BAGALI SHEVID POLOW*

### *Bagali polo*

(Serves 6 to 8 )

The following recipes are from "Secrets of Cooking" by Linda Chirinian (ISBN 0-9617033-0-X Lionhart Inc. New Canaan, CT).

This exotic Iranian dish can be served with plain yogurt spooned over the rice, or with roast chicken, barbecued lamb chops, or steak. A straight-sided, non-stick, saucepan is the best kind of pot to use for this recipe.

#### **Ingredients:**

- PREPARATION TIME: 20 MINUTES (plus soaking for rice)
  - COOKING TIME: 45 MINUTE
  - 1 recipe Steamed Rice
  - 1 package (10 ounce) frozen baby lima beans, thawed
  - 14 tablespoons butter
  - 3 cups freshly chopped dill
  - 3 medium potatoes, cut into 1/2 inch slices (optional)
  - 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon threads crushed and steeped in 2
  - tablespoons hot water
  - Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- Prepare Steamed Rice . Melt 4 tablespoons butter in a non-stick 6-quart saucepan. Arrange potato slices in single layer in saucepan.
  - Spread one-third of prepared rice over potatoes. Salt and pepper. Cover with half of lima beans, and half of dill. Cover with half of remaining rice and remainder of lima beans and dill. Top with remaining rice. Keep ingredients mounded high in center so steam can circulate. Sprinkle 4 cup water over rice. Slice remaining butter, place over rice. Cover rice with waxed paper. Wrap cover of pot in kitchen towel and place over saucepan to keep steam inside.
  - Cook over medium-high heat 8 minutes, reduce heat to low, and cook 35 minutes or until rice is soft and fluffy.
  - Set 1 cup rice aside. Mound remaining rice on serving dish. Remove potatoes from saucepan with spatula and place around rice or in separate dish. Sprinkle reserved cup of rice with saffron and mix well. Spread saffron rice on top of plain rice. Season with salt and pepper.
- VARIATION: When layering rice, add 1 large onion, chopped and sauted in butter, 6 broiled lamb chops or 2 pounds cooked boneless lamb shoulder cubes, or 6 cooked chicken cutlets. Increase cooking time by 15 minutes.

Photos

