

CONFERENCE ON ALL THINGS PERSIAN LEAVES U.S. FOR COVENTRY

Academic achieves city first

FOR the next few days Coventry will be the centre of the Persian-speaking world.

From Persian cuisine to Persian music . . . the city will be enveloped in the culture of one of the world's oldest societies as hundreds of international delegates converge on Coventry University.

For the first time in its 14-year history, the annual conference of the Centre for Iranian Research and Analysis, an American-based academic organisation, is being held outside the USA.

The choice of Coventry to host the event - a conference which Iran observes with interest although it sends no delegates - in preference to other centres is due in large part to the efforts of Dr Kamran Mofid. The Iranian-

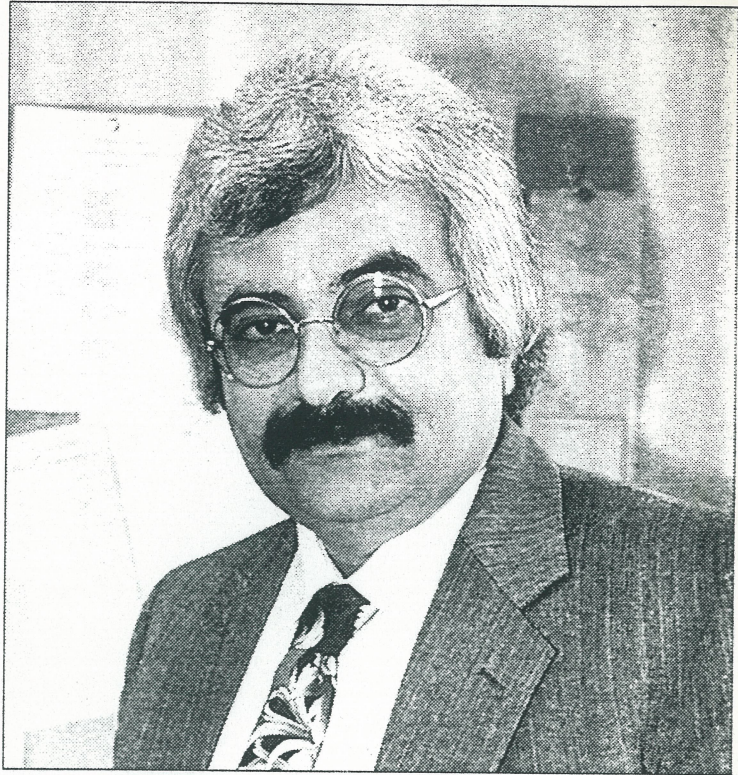
**By ANDREW MACLEOD
Industry Editor**

born doctor, an academic at the university's Business School, has made it his personal mission to put the city on the international map.

He made a start last year by organising a major international conference on Japan.

Dr Mofid, an expert on the Middle East and Japan, is the conference convener and persuaded CIRA to break with tradition and come to the UK by stressing Coventry's importance as a centre of reconciliation.

More than 130 speakers from 18 countries will address the conference, which will cover cultural, economic and political issues, and Iran's relationships with the Western world.



DRIVING FORCE: Dr Kamran Mofid of Coventry University

"It's going to be one of the biggest conferences held on Iran and the Middle East, as well as addressing many other issues, including the peace process and the policies of Britain, America and Europe in the region."

Delegates include former diplomats and visitors from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Dr Mofid said: "We hope the message of reconciliation and peace, coming from Coventry, will help bring about positive results in the Middle East.

"Iran is a very major player in

the region - a country with 64 million people, and 11 per cent of the world's oil reserves and 14 per cent of its natural gas.

"Iran could become one of the biggest markets for British industry."

The conference began this morning and continues tomorrow and on Saturday. Tomorrow there will be a welcoming ceremony at Coventry Cathedral, including a programme by the Coventry Philharmonic Choir and the children of St Thomas More RC Primary School.