

Iran Adapts to New Realities in Foreign Relations

Page 3

Report

Strike action paralyzes UK

More and more workers from different sectors in the United Kingdom are taking industrial action as public anger mounts at low wages in the face of a rising cost of living crisis gripping the country.

Both the government and main opposition Labour party leaders have chosen to take sides with private companies (making record profits) at the expense of workers (struggling with record inflation). Labour has sacked its shadow transport minister for joining the striking workers.

The government's own transport secretary has also come under fire for trying to implement measures that would curb the ability of unions to take action.

In the latest and the largest strike action by train workers on Saturday, commuters were hit as rail services were severely disrupted in the most widespread train drivers protest since 1996 when the railways were privatized.

Members of the UK's train driver's union, Aslef, stopped working for 24 hours for seven train operators leaving only a few trains running on some lines.

The train drivers strike comes only three days after a national strike by members of the RMT union shut down most train services. On Wednesday, millions of travelers were affected as a bitter row between RMT members and privatized rail companies worsened over work conditions, jobs, pay, and pensions.

The train workers walkout on Saturday coincided with the first weekend of the Commonwealth Games. The train company which runs services to sporting venues around Birmingham, the host city of the Games, had no services leaving passengers scrambling for alternative routes. No trains ran at all on most of the London Overground, with no Heathrow Express line to the UK's largest airport. ▶ Page 5

Report

Handball in Iran on the rise: IHF

TEHRAN - Handball in the Iran has been on the rise in the past years, both on the men's and the women's sides, with serious strides and important programs put in place to develop and nurture talent in a big pool of potential, which can definitely yield results, ihf.info reported.

For the men's side, the talent has transcended the country and helped Iran gain honor in Europe, with several players impressing on the biggest of stages. The Esteki brothers, Sajjad and Allahkaram, were the pioneers, with the former even finishing in the top 10 of the top scorer standings in the EHF Champions League Men.

After their maiden appearance at the IHF Men's World Championship in 2015, an eight-year hiatus followed, but Iran will finally make their long-awaited comeback at the competition at Poland/Sweden 2023, after finishing fourth at the AHF Asian Men's Handball Championship in 2022.

"One of the most important ideas of Iran Handball Federation is to raise a generation of great handball players of Iranian children, to develop their future and create a great team in our country.

"The federation has already planned to create some program throughout all the country, enabling children to be more and more interested in handball. ▶ Page 3



© Tehran Times

TEHRAN – Iran and Russia have taken significant steps for removing the U.S. dollar from their bilateral trade, launching a settlement system to use their national currencies in economic exchanges, renowned American business magazine Forbes admitted in an article piece published on Friday.

Iran's Integrated Forex Market launched the Ruble/Rial currency pair earlier this month, following a visit of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) Governor Ali Saleh-Abadi to Moscow.

The new arrangement means the two countries can now settle trading debts in

each other's currencies. The first trade took place on July 19, the day that Russia's President Vladimir Putin arrived in Iran for talks with Leader of the Islamic Revolution Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi.

As reported, the new monetary system could significantly reduce the ▶ Page 4

Blood donation rate grows by 9%

ISNA quoted Abbas Sedaqat saying on Saturday.

The blood donation index has grown by 9 percent in the first four months of this year compared to the same period last year, he stated.

He went on to say that the highest blood donation growth was recorded in Kordestan province

with 28 percent, North Khorasan province with 27 percent, and Hamedan province with 26 percent growth respectively.

Also, people in Tehran province donated 18 percent more blood in the first four months of this year compared to the same period last year, he added. ▶ Page 7

America is to blame for deterioration of situation in Lebanon: diplomat

TEHRAN - Mohammad Sadeq Fazli, an assistant to Iran's foreign minister, has said that America, through its support for Israel and its interference in the countries of the region, has caused the situation to deteriorate in these countries, particularly in Lebanon.

The assistant foreign minister said that Iran will stand by the noble nation of Lebanon in its resistance against bullying.

He made the remarks on Twitter in response to the United States decision to extend the state of national emergency with respect to Lebanon. The decision was announced in a White House statement on Friday.

Addressing the U.S., Fazli said, "Stop supporting the aggressors and looting Lebanon's land and sea resources." ▶ Page 3

JCOA needs to be saved, but at what cost?

TEHRAN — Western media is rambling on and on about Iran not viewing the proposed draft by the European Union positively, but is that really the case?

Writing an article in Financial Times on Tuesday, Josep Borrell, the European Union high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, said he has put forward a draft of the JCOA revival negotiations.

"After 15 months of intense, constructive

negotiations in Vienna and countless interactions with the JCOA participants and the U.S., I have concluded that the space for additional significant compromises has been exhausted. I have now put on the table a text that addresses, in precise detail, the sanctions lifting as well as the nuclear steps needed to restore the JCOA," Borrell wrote.

According to Borrell, the text offers "the determination of all JCOA participants to

Want a once-in-a-lifetime experience? Head to Iran during Muharram

TEHRAN - For avid travelers, sightseers, and even researchers, who take a fancy to feel extraordinary scenes or a first-hand cultural experience, now is the time.

Some believe a visit to Iran in Muharram, and especially during the first ten days of the lunar month, could be comparable to a visit to China during the Lunar New Year or Europe during the Christmas season. ▶ Page 6

From Inside

- IRGC holds 9th intelligence drill **P2**
- Iranian, Chinese presidents hold talks on solidifying strategic coordination **P2**
- Iran to sign SCO commitments in next summit: Uzbekistan **P3**
- Iran FM to attend parliamentary session **P3**
- Iran exported commodities worth \$2.2b to UAE in 4 months **P4**
- Quarterly coal concentrate output rises 44% **P4**
- 261 knowledge-based workshop units to be launched in technology parks **P4**
- Bust of Hungarian poet unveiled at Hafez mausoleum **P6**
- Tourism minister promises to help restore flood-hit Yazd **P6**
- WHO to review Iran's malaria elimination program **P7**
- COVID deaths triple in week **P7**
- \$7.1m of smuggled goods seized nationwide **P7**
- Match Factory handles global sales for "Beyond the Wall" **P8**
- "Constantinople: City of the World's Desire" appears in Persian **P8**

Interview

China, Russia and Iran collectively oppose U.S. hegemony: researcher

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – China, Russia and Iran are clearly in one bloc opposing the U.S. hegemony and Washington is seriously unhappy with this coalition, a research associate at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) says.

"China, Russia and Iran, are clearly in one bloc opposing the U.S. hegemony," Dost Muhammad Barrech tells the Tehran Times.

Barrech also says, "Beijing has inked 15 strategic partnerships with the Arab states in the last decade alone, putting Washington in hot water in the Middle East (West Asia)."

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you evaluate the American administration's about-face when it comes to Saudi Arabia?

The Biden administration tries to reset the relationships with Saudi Arabia, as ties were deteriorated in 2018 over the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi. Biden, after assuming the charge as the president of the country, had vowed to make Saudi Arabia a "pariah" state over Khashoggi's murder. My sense says that he is not in a position to punish MBS due to the evolving situation of regional and international politics. ▶ Page 5

Iran Film Museum launches lineup of movies on Muharram rituals, Ashura tragedy

TEHRAN – The Film Museum of Iran kicked off a program on Saturday presenting movies on Muharram mourning rituals and the tragedy of Ashura.

Ten movies have been chosen to be screened in the first ten days of the lunar month of Muharram, during which Shia Muslims commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions who were killed in 680 CE in Karbala in the course of their valiant stand against the injustices of the oppressive Umayyad dynasty.

The program, which is open to the general public, commenced by screening Shahram Asadi's 1995 movie "The Fateful Day", which is an adaptation of a play by Bahram Beizai about a story set during Ashura.

A Christian converts to Islam for the love of a Muslim girl. At the wedding, he hears voices calling for help. He leaves the ceremony and takes a journey to Karbala, but he arrives the end of the Battle of Karbala after the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions. ▶ Page 8

JCPOA needs to be saved, but at what cost?

From page **1** ► A senior Israeli diplomatic source, speaking on the condition of anonymity, told Al-Monitor that the U.S. Special Envoy for Iran Robert Malley recently told Israel that he believes the Iranians will reject Borrell's proposed text. Malley's stated opinion reflected that of Biden's Middle East adviser Brett McGurk, who told a gathering of think tank analysts last week that the reinstatement of the nuclear deal is "highly unlikely."

Meanwhile, Al-Monitor claimed it has discovered that the Mossad intelligence agency is operating under the assumption that a deal would be achieved.

According to Ali Vaez, Iran project director at the International Crisis Group, the EU proposal misses the mark of Iran's aspirations and is unlikely to overcome the remaining gaps between the two countries.

"It's difficult to imagine any type of mutually acceptable formula being reached at this point," Vaez remarked.

"Although the sides are unwilling to say that the discussions have failed, I don't believe there is a route ahead," he said, adding that "I'm almost convinced that Iran would reject the amended proposal."

It is not too difficult to understand how Vaez came to such conclusion without seeing a text. As one of the architects of the JCPOA text, he knows very well that the deal does not address Iran's concerns regarding economic assurances, and it will not also provide a mechanism for International Atomic Energy Agency director general, whoever he/she may be, to close all Iran files.

In line with the spectrum of spreading doubts over the deal, a European Union diplomat told Laura Rozen, a prominent American reporter on Thursday, "We are trying to bridge remaining differences through all possible means, but no progress so far."

The "Iranians are stuck or are pushing on several unrealistic asks—including 'we will not return to JCPOA until [IAEA Director General Rafael] Grossi closes all files,'" another official with one of the European parties to the nuclear pact said. "Everyone is looking elsewhere, but this summer is when things start going downhill."

Vaez also shared his intellect with Rozen, saying, "To my understanding, the proposal contains slight revisions, and does not contain any substantive concessions from either side. And so, I'm almost certain that it will fall short of Iran's expectations."

"If the Iranians were looking for a face-saving way out, the proposal would meet that criteria," Vaez said.

Iran detains Swedish national on espionage charges

TEHRAN — Iran's intelligence ministry issued a statement on Saturday announcing that it has detained a Swedish national on accounts of espionage.

The ministry identified and arrested the citizen of "the Kingdom of Sweden on charges of espionage," the statement said.

"The accused Swedish, who was on the list of suspects of the counter-espionage unit of the ministry of intelligence during his previous multiple trips to Iran due to some suspicious behavior and communications, has always been under constant supervision by the ministry officials from the moment of entering the country. All his movements, communications, trips to different cities of the country (which was generally carried out outside the tourist destinations and procedures) was under the exact supervision of the elite counter-intelligence agents of this ministry until leaving the borders of the Islamic Republic of Iran," the statement read.

The statement went on to say that the findings of the ministry's counter-intelligence structure were that the accused, in all his previous trips, in compliance with the professional principles of communication, protection and concealment had communicated with a number of suspected European and non-European agents who were under surveillance in Iran.

The ministry said the suspect in question returned to the country a few months ago after the arrest of another European spy, with the mission of obtaining intelligence

"But I don't think that's the case. So unfortunately, I don't think this last ditch effort is going to salvage the JCPOA"

Maybe, if we look at the U.S. State Department spokesperson's Thursday briefing, we may get a better understanding of what the EU-proposed draft offers.

"It is our understanding that the proposal that Mr. Borrell put forward was based on the deal that has been on the table, that was painstakingly negotiated...that we have been prepared to accept since March," Ned Price told journalists at the State Department on Thursday.

"We have not been the cause of that (stalemate). There has been one country that has prevented a return to compliance with the JCPOA. That is Iran," Price continued, following a trend of public accusations against Iran in the media.

The Elysee Palace stated on Thursday that there was still time to rescue the JCPOA, but it also stated that the ball is now in Tehran's court.

In this regard, Price told the press, "We've been in touch with our European allies. We continue to remain in close contact with our P5+1 partners in this regard, including, of course, our European allies in this. We are reviewing the draft understanding. We plan to do so swiftly. We'll share any reactions we have with the EU directly."

Price also stated that Washington was exploring all contingencies in the event that a deal to resurrect the 2015 pact could not be reached.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and other Iranian officials responded favorably to Borrell's idea right away.

During a phone conversation on Wednesday evening, a day after Borrell offered a new silver lining, Amir Abdollahian welcomed the continuation of diplomacy, thanking Borrell and his deputy Enrique Mora for their efforts.

The Iranian foreign minister said the U.S. has always claimed that it wants a deal, so this must exist in the wording of the agreement and also in practice.

The JCPOA needs to be saved, but not at any cost. In the event of a mutual return to the 2015 nuclear deal, there is a big if. What if the IAEA continues the trend of baselessly accusing Iran over non-existent so-called "concerns"?

The deal on the table must ensure that the IAEA will close all the Iran files.

on how to reveal the identity of that spy and the type and amount of information that had fallen into the intelligence web of the ministry.

"During the entire duration of the last mission, his contacts with the mentioned related parties were under continuous control of the intelligence officials and finally with the completion of the documents, he was arrested by a judicial order while he was leaving the country," it stated.

According to the ministry, the accused had a history of traveling to the occupied territories prior to leaving for Iran.

"As the intelligence ministry has announced repeatedly, it considers the security of the country and the comfort of the people as its red line, and it responds decisively to the smallest violation of the country's security borders, regardless of the noise made by professional singers and Western-Zionist chorus, especially to the infamous Swedish regime, which has supported several proxy spies for the occupying regime of Jerusalem (such as Ahmadreza Jalali, a definite spy of the Zionist regime and a definite criminal in the identification and assassination of some of the country's nuclear scientists) and safe haven for criminal terrorists such as the MKO and murderers of people and innocent children in the bloody parade of Ahvaz. The ministry warns that if the proxy spying procedure and the support of murderers by the intelligence agency of Sweden continues, it will receive an appropriate response."

the security of Iran during the past four decades, he said, "In this exercise, real conditions were simulated and the most advanced and up-to-date tools of intelligence, new techniques of obtaining intelligence, and intelligence experiences of the IRGC have been used."

In another part of his remarks, the IRGC commander-in-chief pointed to the valuable actions of the Hamza Seyed al-Shaheda camp in establishing security in the northwest of the country, saying that today this operational camp has become an impenetrable barrier against the enemies.

"We have witnessed the establishment of security and stability in the northwestern borders of the country," he added.

TEHRAN — In a 60-minute phone conversation on Friday, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi discussed significant global and regional developments while highlighting the importance of expanding and fortifying strategic cooperation.

During the conversation, Raisi and Jinping viewed U.S. interference in other nations' internal affairs as detrimental and the outcome of Washington's unilateralist policy, which has turned into a severe danger to international peace and security.

According to the Iranian president, one of Tehran's key foreign policy tenets is to respect other nations' national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Within that context, Tehran backs the robust China policy as a fundamental element of its foreign policy, Raisi remarked.

Raisi also emphasized Iran's steadfast desire to expand its comprehensive relations with China, regardless of any developments on the global stage, contending that independent cooperation of nations based on securing their own national interests is the proper pattern of good governance in regional and global settings.

The Iranian president went on to highlight that the new international order must prioritize justice and fairness, and any attempt by the U.S. to bring back the Cold War era in the global arena is evidence of the declining U.S. hegemony.

The president emphasized that "this approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran has provided the required basis for collective security in West Asia, and can

Iranian, Chinese presidents push for solidifying strategic coordination



be a good pattern for strengthening regional political trust and economic development." This was in response to the Chinese president praising the Iranian government's policy of expanding relations and cooperation with neighboring countries and its outstanding results so far.

He also stressed how crucial it is for Iran to ensure the safe navigation and transfer of energy within the same framework.

Raisi also pointed to the ongoing negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear

deal, saying a "political decision" is needed by the American side as the only party that violated the nuclear agreement.

It is also essential that the U.S. terminate illegal sanctions on Iran and third parties, he stressed.

Furthermore, Raisi applauded strengthening global economic cooperation in extra-regional and regional accords like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Presidents Raisi and Xi concurred

on strategies for rapid expansion of cooperation and swift implementation of the provisions of the 25-year Iran-China partnership. They were both pleased with initiatives aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation and increasing annual bilateral trade during the previous year.

The Chinese president also praised the efforts made by Raisi's administration to strengthen bilateral, regional, and global cooperation with China.

The Chinese leader emphasized the value of Iran's constructive contribution to maintaining regional peace while reiterating Beijing's opposition to using political pressure and unilateralist strategies.

He also stressed the strategic importance of China's relations with Iran, saying that his country is determined to expand and improve its critical bilateral strategic cooperation, notably in the area of security.

He continued by saying that both nations still have a long way to go until the 25-year partnership is fully implemented.

Accordingly, Xi said he would give the necessary instructions for the development of comprehensive strategic partnership with Iran, especially in the area of the economy.

According to the 25-year Iran-China comprehensive strategic partnership, China will invest a whopping \$400 billion in various Iranian sectors including oil and gas. In exchange, Iran will ensure steady energy supplies to China for a period of 25 years at a discounted rate.

France wants to revive EU role in JCPOA talks, MP says

TEHRAN — An Iranian MP believes that France is trying to revive the process of nuclear negotiations.

In an interview with IRNA published on Saturday, Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi said that the phone conversation between French President Emmanuel Macron and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi shows that Paris is playing the role of two persons in the nuclear negotiations.

"Paris does not like the role of the Americans in these negotiations to outweigh Europe and is trying to revive the role and position of Europe in these negotiations. This is the general policy of the French," said Jahanabadi who sits on the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

Stating that France has adopted a new policy in the region, he said the Elysee Palace is trying to somehow fill the void left by the United States in West Asia and to strengthen relations with the Mediterranean, West Asian and Persian Gulf countries.

This is part of France's policy, the legislator pointed out.

Jahanabadi said France is interested in playing its role more vividly than other European countries during the nuclear negotiations, stating that efforts have been made by the French government to strengthen cooperation.

"A detailed conversation between the presidents of Iran and France has taken place, and Iran's point of view was conveyed to this country and they also conveyed the Americans' point of view to us," the MP elaborated.

The legislator went on to say now that Tehran's policy and interest is not to talk directly with the Americans, the French can play this role to convey the messages and take a mediatory role.

"Iran wants to resolve the issue of nuclear negotiations. Therefore, we welcome any country that wants to mediate in this regard," Jahanabadi

emphasized.

The representative of the people of Torbat-e-Jam in the parliament went on to say that despite the sanctions on Iran, the Islamic Republic is not in a weak position.

"Undoubtedly, Iran's infrastructure and economy have suffered (from sanctions), but the Western side is also deceiving itself. The Western side that signed the JCPOA and then withdrew from it has not achieved anything since the withdrawal," said the legislator.

Former U.S. president Donald Trump quit the nuclear deal in May 2018 and slapped the harshest sanctions in history against Iran in line with his "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

The legislator said it was the West that suffered from violating the legally-binding agreement.

"Has Iran stopped increasing the number of centrifuges?" the MP asked, adding that Iran's enrichment has not been reduced, and on the contrary, Iran's influence in West Asia has increased and the power of Iran's drones has also been improved.

He went on to say that the positions of Iran and the U.S. in the West Asia are incomparable.

"When the JCPOA was signed, the Americans were present in Afghanistan and Iraq, but now they have left the region. This shows that the West is in a weak position," he assessed.

Referring to U.S. President Joe Biden's West Asia tour, he said that the U.S. president's attempt to revive Saudi Arabia's position in the energy market has failed and this shows that West Asia is no longer the West Asia of the past and that Americans' perception of Iran is incorrect.

The legislator also warned that if the Westerners think that Iran will accept any kind of commitment and sign any agreement due to economic problems, it will show that their understanding of Iran is quite wrong

Iran, Russia to take lead in global oil market: MP



TEHRAN — An Iranian lawmaker has said that the signing of a cooperation agreement between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran, two major energy producers, might open the door for both countries to seize the lead on the world oil market, IRNA reported on Saturday.

In light of the fact that all nations are in desperate need of energy resources, according to Mahmoud Abbaszadeh Meshkini, the signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Moscow

and Tehran in oil and gas industry could have an impact on regional developments.

Russia and Iran are significant hubs for producing oil and gas in the world. On July 19, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) signed a strategic MOU with Russia's Gazprom to cooperate in oil and gas industry projects valued at about \$40 billion.

The MOU was signed by NIOC Head Mohsen Khojasteh-Mehr and Vitaly Markelov, deputy chairman of the Gazprom management committee.

The development of Kish and North Pars gas fields, increasing the recovery factor of South Pars field, development of six oil fields, swapping gas and petroleum products, completion of LNG projects, construction of gas export pipelines, and cooperation in other scientific and technological areas are among the most important axes of the signed memorandum.

Khojasteh-Mehr said signing the memorandum with Gazprom can be considered one of the biggest foreign investments in the history of Iran's oil industry.

"The National Iranian Oil Company does not ignore any investment opportunity," the NIOC chief said.

MP Meshkini said the 40-billion-dollar investment is seen as a major change in Iran's oil industry that may guarantee successful outcomes and economic prosperity for the Islamic nation.

"European are not interested in sanctions on energy industry"

Abbaszadeh Meshkini, who sits on the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said if the strategic agreement between Moscow and Tehran is put into effect, the two countries will be able to control the global energy market and set energy prices, which will be advantageous for both sides.



The people of Iran, he added, will never surrender to the demands of the global arrogance.

Referring to France's inclination to mediate in Iran-U.S. nuclear talks, the MP said, "Iran prefers Qatar, Oman and Iraq for mediation because we have deeper ties with these countries and a better understanding of the common problems in our region. Of course, any country that wants to make efforts and mediate will be welcomed by Iran."

Iran and the U.S. have not talked directly since negotiations started in April 2021 to resurrect the JCPOA. European Union's political director Enrique Mora has been acting as the coordinator of the talks.

He went on to say that West Asia was once under the control of the Americans, but the recent summit held in Jeddah showed that the Americans' allies also believe that one should not be fooled by the Americans.

"During Biden's recent trip to Saudi Arabia, he was treated coldly. The countries of the region realized that the regional problems must be solved by the countries themselves and there is no hope for the Americans," he concluded.

President Biden visited Israel and Saudi Arabia on July 13-16. During his trip, he failed to convince Arab states to team up with Israel against Iran.

He added that Russia and Iran supply a significant portion of the world's energy needs, and the West is heavily dependent on energy. He also noted that European nations are not interested in imposing sanctions on the energy industry.

Notably, he observed, U.S. sanctions could not prevent Russia and Iran from signing MOUs and agreements, saying that Moscow and Tehran have characterized their relationship as a strategic partnership, and both countries are eager to cooperate within this framework.

A deep strategic partnership between Russia and Iran has been sparked by developments in the international arena, the lawmaker said, adding that this partnership is anticipated to have positive outcomes for both countries.

This partnership includes economic exchanges in addition to political and security cooperation, he opined.

IRGC holds 9th intelligence drill

TEHRAN — Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has held its ninth intelligence drill, Fars news agency reported.

The exercise was held in the provinces of West Azarbaijan, Kurdistan, Markazi, Lorestan and Zanjan.

"The main goal of the exercise was to increase the level of preparedness of the intelligence and security apparatuses, as well as eliminating the existing deficiencies, increasing the progress to deal with the enemy's intelligence services and improve the level of intelligence readiness," IRGC chief Major General Hossein Salami said on the sidelines of the extensive intelligence exercise in western provinces.

Noting that evil powers have been trying to disrupt

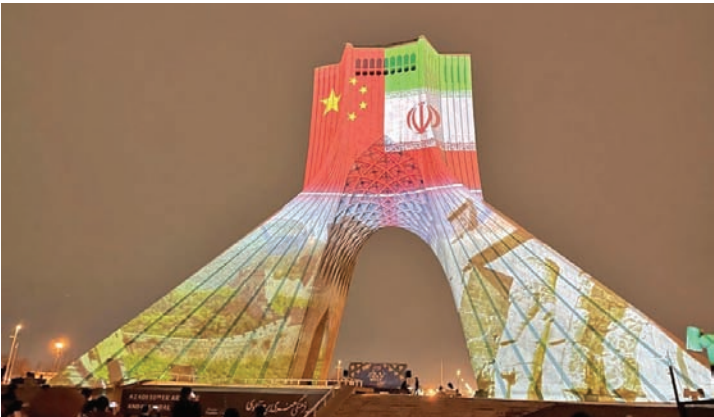
Iran adapts to new realities in foreign relations

TEHRAN – Despite growing uncertainties over nuclear talks with the West, Iran has moved to develop its foreign relations with many countries in the world and upgrade them to a strategic level in some cases.

Developing Iran's foreign relations is no longer contingent on the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). This is what can be inferred from Iran's diplomatic moves over the course of the Ebrahim Raisi presidency. Upon assuming office in August 2021, Raisi moved to strengthen Iran's ties with neighboring counties and non-Western world powers.

In the early weeks of his presidency, Ayatollah Raisi succeeded to set the stage for Iran to become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The process of granting Iran a full membership status began last year, but it will be finalized in the next SCO summit due to be held in Samarkand in mid-September. The Uzbek acting foreign minister, Vladimir Norov, has recently said that the organization is preparing the necessary documents that Iran needs to sign to become a full member. "In Samarkand, a memorandum on Iran's obligations as an SCO member will be signed," Norov said.

In addition to the SCO, Iran is also seeking to join the group of emerging economies that is called BRICS.



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian has said that Iran is one of the first countries that is going to become a member of BRICS +.

BRICS includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

In parallel with its efforts to join prestigious international institutions, the Raisi administration also mounted an extensive diplomatic push to patch up ties with some Arab counties in the West Asia region. President Raisi and Amir Abdollahian have visited certain Arab countries. Now, these efforts appear to be bearing fruits as the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have decided to dispatch ambassadors to Iran soon. As regards relations with Saudi Arabia, a meeting is being arranged between the foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia in Baghdad.

Also, Iran has worked with China and Russia toward signing strategic partnerships. On Friday afternoon, President Xi Jinping of China spoke with President Raisi for an hour about a range of issues, including China's desire to strengthen strategic partnership with Iran.

"China views its relations with Iran from a strategic perspective and stands ready to work with Iran to push for new progress in the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership," President Xi said in the conversation, according to Xinhua.

Emphasizing the strategic importance of China-Iran relations and his country's efforts to strengthen the key strategic and security cooperation between the two countries, especially in commercial, economic, infrastructure and energy fields, the Chinese president stated,

"The implementation of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation document between the two countries is a big step in this direction, and on this basis, I am issuing the necessary orders for the development of all-round strategic relations with Iran, including in the economic field."

Raisi and Xi also agreed to accelerate the implementation process of the 25-year comprehensive cooperation plan by proposing cooperation development initiatives and expressing satisfaction with the development of relations and leap in commercial exchanges over the past one year, according to a readout of the call put out by the Iranian presidency.

All this took place at a time when the situation around the 2015 nuclear deal is vague and unclear. However, Iran said it will not tie its foreign policy to the fate of the JCPOA.

Nasser Kanaani, the spokesman for the Iranian foreign ministry, recently said Iran's neighborly policy is not contingent on the nuclear deal.

"False dichotomy between JCPOA (of which Iran, unlike US, remains a party) & good ties between Iran & its neighbors, inc. Russia, doesn't hide the fact that indecision of the unfaithful US is the main hurdle for a deal," Kanaani said on Twitter. "Our neighborly policy is not contingent on JCPOA or US permission."

Iran to sign SCO commitments in next summit: Uzbekistan

TEHRAN – A senior Uzbek diplomat has said that Iran will sign an obligations document for its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

The Uzbek acting foreign minister, Vladimir Norov, said on Friday that planning is underway for Iran to sign the document needed for its full membership in the SCO in the next summit of the organization which will be held soon, according to a Fars News report.

Norov said the annual SCO summit will be held on 15-16 September.

"It is also expected that the memorandum granting the status of dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar will also be signed. In this way, the legal registration of their presence in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is completed in the mentioned format," he added.

He made the remarks after a meeting of SCO foreign ministers held in Tashkent.

"The foreign ministers welcomed the requests of Bahrain and the Maldives to receive the status of dialogue partner in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The relevant decisions will be signed within the framework of the meeting of the Council of Presidents of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the city of Samarkand," Norov said. "The parties are also actively considering Belarus' request for full membership in the Shanghai

Cooperation Organization."

He noted, "In the framework of the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, opinions were exchanged regarding the preparations for the important event - the meeting of the Council of Presidents of the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which will be held on September 15 and 16, 2022 in the city of Samarkand. The foreign ministers coordinated a large package of documents for the upcoming meeting of the Council of Presidents."

He said these documents included the draft Samarkand statement, comprehensive plan for the implementation of the Good Neighbor Agreement, friendship and long-term cooperation, the theory of cooperation for the development of interconnection and the creation of effective transportation corridors, the program of encouraging industrial cooperation, and the regulations for the honorary title of "Goodwill Ambassador of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization."

He continued, "We also examined the way and prospects of expanding mutual cooperation in all aspects of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's activity and exchanged opinions on the issues of the regional and global agenda."

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian expressed hope that Iran would become a full member of the SCO in September. Amir Abdollahian expressed hope that in its

September meeting, the SCO would review Iran's application.

"We hope that in the September meeting of the organization, we will enter into the implementation and practical stages of using the benefits of Iran's permanent membership in this organization," Amir Abdollahian stated.

Similarly, on Iran's membership process in BRICS +, he noted that the Islamic Republic is one of the first countries that is going to become a member of BRICS +.

BRICS includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Norov stated on July 11 at a panel meeting in Moscow that "this year, under Uzbekistan's chairmanship, Iran will become a full-fledged member of the SCO as an observer state."

"In addition, in Samarkand, a memorandum on Iran's obligations as an SCO member will be signed," Norov continued.

The SCO was formed in 2001 by the presidents of Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan at a summit in Shanghai. The Shanghai Five mechanism came before it.

China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, India, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan are the current full members of the SCO.

Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia are also observer countries.

America is to blame for deterioration of situation in Lebanon: diplomat

From Page 1 ▶ "We will stand by the honorable and resistant Lebanese people against arrogance," the assistant to the Iranian foreign minister added.

Iran has recently appointed a new ambassador to Lebanon. The new ambassador, Mojtaba Amani, arrived in Beirut on Friday. Upon his arrival, he was welcomed by Lebanon's officials and party figures.

Amani said he will focus most of his attention on strengthening and expanding Iran-Lebanon relations.

Amani was received by representatives of the various Lebanese parties, Deputy Parliament speaker Qabalan Qabalan, and the former minister and member of the Political Council of Hezbollah, Mahmoud Qamati.

Amani replaced Mohmoud Jalal Firouznia, who had served as Iran's ambassador to Lebanon since 2017.

Mojtaba Amani, the former head of Iran's interest section in Egypt, was appointed as Tehran's new ambassador to Lebanon earlier this month. Amani spent 9 years of his

diplomatic career in Egypt. Prior to beginning his mission in Egypt, he served as the deputy director-general of the Office of Political and International Research Center at the Foreign Ministry.

The new envoy met with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian on the eve of his departure to Beirut.

At the meeting, Amir Abdollahian pointed to the importance of cooperation between Iran and Lebanon and insisted on the need to pay attention to strategic ties between the two countries.

Explaining his plans in Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani called cooperation with the Lebanese government and all different political groups in the country one of his most important plans.

The foreign minister and the new ambassador also emphasized the status of Lebanon as a pioneer in resisting the Israeli regime's aggressions.

Iran and Lebanon enjoy strong relations dating back to the early years of the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979.

multilateralism, he pointed out.

The deputy foreign minister further spoke about the U.S. president's failure to achieve the goals of his regional tour, stressing that arranging the Astana summit in Tehran just a few days after Biden's failed trip to West Asia was a sign of Iran's diplomatic prudence and the symbol of the superiority of the Islamic Republic's discourse of regional interaction.

After the meeting, Abolfazl Amouei, the spokesman for the parliamentary committee, offered more details of the meeting. He said that the lawmakers in the committee meeting stressed the need to obtain sufficient guarantees from the U.S. in the event of a return to the nuclear agreement, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Handball in Iran on the rise: IHF

From Page 1 ▶ The idea is to promote handball as a fun activity to usher the children to try and play handball, while also creating the proper environment for their families," says IRIHF President Alireza Pakdel.

"In the last decade, we had plenty of plans for identifying talented young players, but everything really got better and better in the last three years, due to the support of people and sponsors. The result is, for us, phenomenal. In a very short period of time, we found excellent players that made an unbelievable impact on the future of Iranian handball.

"Although the COVID-19 pandemic caused some interruptions to the Federation's programs, these programs were never closed and were back in business quickly as the conditions improved," adds the IRIHF President.

While the popularity of handball in Iran has soared, there are still plenty of things which need to improve both in the short and in the long term. The ambitions are definitely high, which are translated to a bold objective – reaching the final of the AHF Asian Youth Championship and the AHF Asian Junior Championship in both categories.

"In the last three years, we had a plan to introduce handball to Iranian people more and more. And we can surely say now that handball is one of the most popular sports in Iran and many families want their children to compete and take up the sport.

"Broadcasting of handball matches on TV channels and being a part of daily news in news agencies, becoming an interesting subject in social media and holding festivals and events is just a part of our plans that we did specifically in the last year.

"Many stars in other sports in Iran, like our football players, which have a huge following, are promoting handball in their social media accounts. People are cherishing our players of national handball teams in Instagram and Twitter. They see how Iranian players are doing their best," concludes Pakdel.

Iran start 2022 IHF Women's Youth World Championship on high

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Uzbekistan 47-31 in their opening match of the 2022 International Handball Federation (IHF) Women's Youth World Championship on Saturday.

Iran are scheduled to meet Senegal and North Macedonia in Group B on Sunday and Tuesday, respectively.

The 2022 IHF Women's Youth World Championship is ninth edition of the championship which is being held from 30 July to 10 Aug. in Skopje, North Macedonia under the aegis of International Handball Federation (IHF).

Originally scheduled to be held in Tbilisi, Georgia, it was moved to North Macedonia in April 2022.

Iran hopeful of playing Senegal in Austria

TEHRAN – Iran national football team are still eager to play a friendly match with Senegal in September.

The 'Persian Leopards' are scheduled to meet Uruguay in Vienna, Austria on Sept. 23. La Celeste are in Group H of the 2022 FIFA World Cup along with Portugal, Guinea and South Korea.

Now, the local media reports suggest that Dragan Skocic's team will likely play a friendly match with Senegal four days later in the same place. The Lions of Teranga are in Group A along with Qatar, Ecuador and the Netherlands.

Iran will participate at the World Cup for the sixth time in the country's history and on a third consecutive occasion.

The Persians will kick off their campaign against star-studded England on Nov. 21 before taking on Wales and the U.S. in Group B.

Colombian Zapata reaches agreement with Iran's Aluminum

TEHRAN – Colombian attacking midfielder Hansel Zapaha has reached an agreement with Iranian top-flight club Aluminum.

Zapata, 27, started his playing career in Colombian team Unión Magdalena in 2007 and has also played in his homeland teams Once Caldas and La Equidad.

He has most recently played at Moldovan team Sheriff Tiraspol. Zapata has arrived in Iran to undergo Aluminum's medical exam.

Aluminum are headed by former Iran and Esteghlal goalkeeper Mehdi Rahmati.

Iran's Iman Ahmadpour peaks K2

TEHRAN – Iranian mountaineer Iman Ahmadpour has conquered K2, the world's second-highest mountain at 8,611m.

He has summited the Peak without supplemental oxygen. Last week, Afsaneh Hesamifard became the first woman from Iran to successfully summit K2.

She also became only the third woman to reach the top of Mount Everest during an expedition in May.

K2 has one of the deadliest records, with most fatalities occurring to climbers on their descent. Only a few hundred have successfully reached its summit.

By comparison, Mount Everest has been summited more than 9,000 times.

Winds on K2's peak can blow at more than 200 kilometers per hour and temperatures can drop to minus 60 degrees Celsius.

Ayanda Patosi extends deal with Foolad

TEHRAN – South African international midfielder Ayanda Patosi will continue playing for Foolad after signing a one-year deal with the Iranian club.

Patosi is an integral part of Foolad's plans for the 2022-23 season and the club has done well to keep the 29-year-old attacking midfielder in Ahvaz.

The former Cape Town City player had been linked with several South African teams.

Patosi has previously played for another Iranian team Esteghlal.

Sepahan beaten by Mesameer in Friendly

TEHRAN – Iranian football club Sepahan lost to Qatari club Mesameer in a friendly match on Friday.

Sepahan lost to Mesameer 1-0 in their training camp in Turkey. The Yellows are preparing for the 2022-23 Iran Professional League where they will play Esteghlal on Matchweek 1 in Tehran.

Sepahan are headed by Portuguese coach Jose Morais.

Ghafouri joins Foolad

TEHRAN – Former Esteghlal captain Voria Ghafouri has officially joined Foolad FC.

Earlier, a photo that showed Ghafouri privately training with a jersey of Foolad had gone viral on social media but the contract has been just inked by the sides after what Iranian media called "long" negotiations.

Hamid Reza Garshasbi, director general of Foolad, said the talks were prolonged due to financial issues, rejecting rumors that claimed some authorities were hindering the contract.

The right-back parted ways with Esteghlal weeks ago after six years. His decision came as the club's officials did not contact him for the extension of the contract this summer.

Foolad have acquired several players in the summer window such as Ehsan Pahlavan, Saeed Aghaei, and Ali Ghorbani but Ghafouri can be considered their bombshell.

Iran, Russia take major step for de-dollarizing mutual trade



From page 1 ► two sides' demand for dollars. Bilateral trade between Iran and Russia stood at four billion dollars in 2021 but the two countries say they are hoping to ramp up bilateral trade to eight billion dollars in the short-term.

The new trading arrangement allows them to avoid the use of dollars and, by doing so, also sidestep the impact of the U.S. sanctions.

Iranian officials say they plan to expand the new bilateral settlement system to

include the currencies of other key trading partners, including the Turkish lira, the Indian rupee and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) dirham.

"We will offer other currencies in future to have a diversified basket and to reduce the influence of currencies like the dollar," Saleh-Abadi said on July 21.

If that happens, the effect will be to create a network of agreements enabling Iran to carry out trade without having to resort to the dollar or the euro.

Iran's deputy foreign minister for economic diplomacy Mehdi Safari has also floated the idea of developing a new interbank messaging system between Iran and Russia. This could act as an alternative to Swift.

Speaking to the media in late July, Saleh-Abadi said: "Two countries that want to de-dollarize their transactions must have a special system similar to Swift... We have practically reached a very good agreement."

Alumina powder production up 11% in 3 months on year

TEHRAN- Production of alumina power in Iran rose 11 percent in the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21), as compared to the same period of time in the past year, according to the data released by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

The IMIDRO's data put the alumina powder output at 62,291 tons in the three-month period of this year, while the figure was about 55,974 tons in the same time span of the previous year.

Based on the data previously released by IMIDRO, Iran has produced 230,682 tons of alumina powder in the past Iranian calendar year 1400 (ended on March 20).

The IMIDRO's data put the alumina powder output at 231,612 tons in year 1399.

Aluminum oxide, which is commonly called alumina, is an inert, odorless, white amorphous material often used in industrial ceramics.

Alumina is an important ceramic material for industrial applications. The



numerous fields of application range from construction materials, to filling materials, as well as abrasives and catalysts.

In plants and mechanical engineering, alumina ceramics are mainly used for wear and corrosion protection.

The particle size distribution largely determines the application range and the quality of an alumina powder. Reliably identifying the differences in particle size is therefore an essential requirement of the measuring instrument.

Energy Ministry plans to sell electricity through offering mechanism



TEHRAN – Iranian Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian has said his ministry plans to implement a program in the near future to sell electricity through an exchange mechanism

and based on a supply and demand system.

According to Mehrabian, a similar mechanism has been implemented previously in other sectors like cement, steel, and mining, so there is a good chance that the program will also have good results in the electricity sector, IRNA reported.

"We are making the necessary preparations in this regard and hopefully the sale of electricity by power plants through the stock market will be done as soon as possible, which will strengthen the stock market and make it more transparent," Mehrabian said.

Quarterly coal concentrate output rises 44%

TEHRAN – Production of coal concentrate in Iran reached 184,587 tons during the first three months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20-June 21), which was 44 percent more than the output in the first quarter of the previous year, according to the data released by the Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization (IMIDRO).

As reported, IMIDRO's two major subsidiaries namely Tabas Parvadeh Coal Processing Company and Central Alborz Coal Company (CACC) had produced 128,475 tons of coal

concentrate in the first quarter of the previous year, IRIB reported.

Of the total produced coal concentrate, 162,748 tons was produced by Tabas Parvadeh Coal Processing Company while Central Alborz Coal Company managed to produce 21,839 tons.

The IMIDRO data show that coal extraction by the said companies also increased by 53 percent in the first three months of the current year.

The mentioned companies extracted about 525,144 tons of coal ore in the said quarter, of which



450,967 tons was extracted by Tabas Parvadeh Coal Processing Company, 44,481 tons was extracted by Tabas Coal Complex, and Central Alborz Coal Company extracted 29,746 tons.

Due to the special conditions of coal mines in Iran, these mines are subject to tax exemption and any miners who need mining machinery can use the facilities and tax exemption in this sector to import their necessary machinery.

The country's average annual coal concentrate production is about 1.5 million tons, while the country's current demand has exceeded two

million tons.

Currently, Iran's coal sector provides employment for 17,000 people, however, the capacity of the country's coal mines is much more than this figure, and the development of the mining sector and modernization projects can play an effective role in increasing employment in this sector.

Unofficial data indicate that there are 185 small and large coal mines in the country, of which more than 59 percent are currently active, while 10 mines are being equipped and prepared, and the rest are idle.

261 knowledge-based workshop units to be launched in technology parks

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Small Industries and Industrial Parks Organization (ISIPO) has said his organization plans to establish 261 knowledge-based workshop units in seven different technology parks across the country, Mehr News Agency reported.

According to Ali Rasoulion, over 5.925 trillion rials (about \$21.3 million) is going to be invested in the mentioned units which are going to be constructed under the framework of a program carried out in collaboration with the Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology.

Rasoulion said there are currently 600 knowledge-based production units active in the country's industrial parks and zones, adding that ISIPO will provide applicants



for establishing such units special facilities including land and infrastructure.

The ISIPO head had said earlier that 1,433 small workshop units were established in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) most of which were production and knowledge-based units with high

technology.

In line with the current Iranian year's motto, which is "Knowledge-Based and Job-Creating Production", the Ministry of Industry, Mining and Trade has been implementing new programs to support knowledge-based production units across the country.

Providing infrastructure and incentives to small businesses and enterprises are among the major programs that the ministry has been following in relation to industrial parks.

According to Rasoulion, over 2,023 projects related to providing infrastructure for industrial parks, including water, electricity, and gas supply, with 60 trillion rials (about \$215.8 million) of credit is underway in different parts of the country.

25% of farmlands equipped with modern irrigation systems in Golestan province

TEHRAN- There is 270,000 hectares of agricultural lands in Golestan province, northeast of Iran, which are proper for the implementation of modern irrigation plan, but until today only 25 percent of the farms are equipped with the modern irrigation systems, a provincial official lamented.

Mohsen Kia Al-Hosseini, the director of water and soil in the province's Agriculture Department, said considering the lack of water resources in the province, the complete implementation of this plan is one of the necessities in Golestan.

This year, the project of establishing modern irrigation system and transferring water with pipes in 12,000 hectares of Golestan agricultural lands is being implemented, he also announced.

It is planned that 51,000 hectares of farmlands in the province will be equipped with the modern irrigation systems by the Iranian calendar year 1404 (March 2025-March 2026), the official added.

As stated by the project manager of the Agriculture Ministry's smart irrigation systems development program, so far 2.6 million hectares of the country's farmlands have been equipped with modern irrigation systems.

Fariborz Abbasi has said that completing semi-finished agriculture projects is the priority of his ministry in the current Iranian calendar year, and expanding the modern irrigation network across the country is of significant importance in this regard.

The deputy agriculture minister noted

that the project for implementing irrigation networks in the west and northwest of the country is about 70 percent completed and the ministry is pursuing to get the necessary funding for the remaining 30 percent.

The official expressed hope that considering the budget allocation for the provinces at the beginning of the current Iranian year, the ministry would be able to develop the project in terms of both quantity and quality.

The purpose of implementing the plan of modern irrigation systems is to increase the productivity and sustainability of water and soil resources in the country to ensure the sustainable production of agricultural products.

"Over the past three years, each year, an average of 150,000 hectares of farmlands have been equipped with modern irrigation systems, and we have witnessed a 300 percent jump", the official said.

Agriculture Ministry is also taking the necessary measures for supporting the domestic manufacturing of equipment used in these systems, he added.

Back in September 2021, Abbasi had said that 95 percent of the equipment used in such systems is manufactured inside the country.

The official said the ministry has comprehensive plans for indigenizing the knowledge for the production of the other five percent as well.

He pointed to the filters and drippers in modern irrigation systems as the equipment whose domestic production is on the agenda



and predicted: "In a two- or three-year plan, part of the imported equipment and supplies will be produced by domestic manufacturers."

Abbasi mentioned the quality improvement of modern irrigation systems as one of the main strategies of Agriculture Ministry and said: "We believe that along with the quantitative development of new irrigation systems, quality improvement should also take place to improve productivity and ensure food security by increasing water efficiency in the best possible way."

He further underlined educating farmers, officials, and managers of companies active in the field of production and implementation of new irrigation systems as one of the programs that his ministry is pursuing in order to improve the quality and optimal use of these systems.

Referring to the activity of 2,400 private companies in the development of new irrigation systems in the agricultural sector, Abbasi said: "The private sector in this field includes 350 consulting companies, 1,600 contractors, 400 manufacturers and suppliers of equipment, and a number of monitoring firms."

TEDPIX drops 2,700 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), lost 2,795 points to 1.44 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

As reported, over 4.35 billion securities worth 26.201 trillion rials (about \$93.575 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market's index dropped 3,110 points, and the second market's index lost 2,397 points.

TSE is on the four Iranian stock exchanges, the other three ones are Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX), and Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market, known as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB).

Iranian stock market has been struggling for months to get back on track, however various internal and external factors have been hindering this market from reaching its true potential.



According to Market Analyst Vahid Halalat, the uncertainty of the global economy in the wake of the Ukraine war, the unclear situation of the privatization of the country's major automakers, and most importantly, the lack of enough attention paid by the government officials to the stock market are among the internal and external factors that have caused the capital market to fall behind other markets

such as housing.

Emphasizing that these factors have affected the mindset of the shareholders and caused everyone to stay away from the market, Halalat said: "Considering internal factors, the country's major automakers play an important role in the stock market and have a great psychological impact; And since their privatization process has not been realized yet, the validity of the entire project has become questionable."

The analyst stressed that the market is in a stagnated condition, adding: "If new developments occur in favor of the market, for example the shares of automakers are offered, it can be an excuse for the market to return to its upward trend."

Overall, at the moment there is no expectation for the market to fall or rise. If nothing changes, the market will grow over time, he said.

Iran exported commodities worth \$2.2b to UAE in 4 months



TEHRAN- Iran exported non-oil products valued at \$2.264 billion to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22), according to the data released by the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA). Based on the IRICA data, the UAE was Iran's

third main export destination in the four-month period.

Iran has also imported goods worth with \$4.875 billion from the UAE in the first four months of this year.

The UAE was Iran's top source of imports in the mentioned time span.

Increasing non-oil exports to the neighboring countries is one of the major plans that the Iranian government has been pursuing in recent years.

Iran shares land or water borders with 15 countries namely UAE, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Saudi Arabia.

China, Russia and Iran collectively oppose U.S. hegemony: researcher

From page 1 ▶ He is under tremendous pressure to crack down on Russia and lower domestic gas prices amid inflation seeking a political solution to the high gas prices and widespread inflation in the U.S. By following realpolitik, he will set aside his moral outrage to pursue warmer relations with Riyadh amid the dramatic global upheaval spurred by the Ukraine crisis. Washington accuses Tehran of not complying with the nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) that further escalates consternation of both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia. I reckon Biden's visit so far has not yielded fruitful results in terms of securing more oil from Saudi Arabia and made little headway on Israeli-Palestinian relations.

Biden said in Saudi Arabia that America would not “walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran,” while his predecessor Trump was planning to withdraw U.S. forces from the Middle East. What is your take?

You are right, Biden has reassured his allies in the Middle East (West Asia) that the U.S. will stay actively engaged amid fears that China and Russia could swiftly fill a leadership vacuum. Countering China's growing influence in international politics, Russia's war in Ukraine and Iranian influence in the Middle East (West Asia) remain to be seen as the top priority of the Biden administration. To me the New Cold War has already been triggered, the New Cold War will see further intensification due to China's growing economy, military modernization, superiority in Artificial Intelligence AI and soft power domain. China bilateral trade with Arab world in 2021 crossed the figure of U.S. \$330 billion. The China-led Belt and Road Initiative BRI has 20 partners in the Middle East (West Asia) and North Africa while Beijing has inked 15 strategic partnerships with the Arab states in the last decade alone, putting Washington in hot water in the Middle East (West Asia).

We can see the region has rapidly been witnessing bloc politics. The U.S. and China are in quest of promoting their ideologies and political clouts. Washington seeks



to promote democratic values importance of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East (West Asia). His as the Quad known predecessor Trump also used the same caustic language against Riyadh. When Trump became the president of the country, he instead of visiting Canada (Ottawa is the first capital to be visited by the U.S. presidents due to economic diplomacy) visited Saudi Arabia and inked an agreement, worth U.S. \$350 billion including a \$110 billion weapons deal. My sense says that Saudi Arabia is a lucrative market as far as the U.S. military-industrial complex and foreign direct investments FDI are concerned. Saudi Arabia can also be instrumental in eroding Iranian sway in the region.

Biden had said that Saudi Arabia is a pariah country. So what happened or what has changed now?

One can always find a huge difference between a political campaign and the reality of being in office. Being a president of the country, Biden knows the

“The U.S. is more concerned about its national interest and is least bothered with morality.”

What is the fallout of Biden's meeting with bin Salman? Do you think the U.S. president has legitimized MBS by visiting Riyadh?

To me, international politics in the current arena witness fierce great powers' rivalry between the U.S. and China, where the former strives to lessen the latter's rising influence. The Middle East (West Asia) is unlikely to remain immune to the great powers' competition. Legitimation of MBS remains to

be seen as the tip of the iceberg. The only game in the town for Washington is China and Iran in the region. MBS ought to be equated with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi was the only person ever denied a U.S. visa because of deliberately allowed anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat state in 2002 when he was the Chief Minister of the state resulted in the killing of more than 1,000. However, Modi turned out to be an apple's eye of the U.S. as soon as he became prime minister of India. I think the U.S. is more concerned about its national interest and is least bothered with morality. As the saying of Machiavelli goes that “politics have no relation to morals”.

Biden says that Washington will not leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia or Iran. Do you think Iran, Russia and China are the new evil axis to the U.S. and we should expect returning George Bush's rhetoric?

China, Russia and Iran, are clearly in one bloc opposing the U.S. hegemony. The Ukraine crisis has further been bolstering ties among Beijing, Moscow and Iran. Biden's statement clearly illustrates that aforementioned countries are predicated to be described the new evil axis to the U.S. in a bid to unite the allies to protect the so-called democratic values and the prevailing international world order.

U.S. mulls designating Russia as state sponsor of terrorism: White House



The U.S. administration is looking into the possibility of including Russia into the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre has told reporters.

She reiterated that the matter was up to the U.S. Department of State to decide.

“This requires a determination by the Department of State on specific criteria in

congressional statute. So we're looking into it along with a range of other proposals to impose further costs on Russia,” the press secretary said.

She did not elaborate on other possible anti-Russian measures currently under consideration by the Joe Biden administration.

Earlier, Kiev pressed Washington to put Russia on this list. Similar statements were echoed by a number of Congressmen. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova earlier castigated Washington over its “idiotic” gamble to brand Russia as a sponsor of terrorism and warned that this move won't go unanswered.

The “state sponsor of terrorism” designation is applied by Washington to countries that have allegedly “repeatedly provided support for acts of international

terrorism”.

The American government has broad authority to impose sanctions against those on the list. The U.S. Department of Treasury can take action against those entities and individuals, as well as states that trade with countries on the list. The listing of a state can have significant consequences in terms of further restrictive measures. Since 1979, Washington has added only a handful of countries to its list, and these are rogue states where American interests are limited, the Washington Post explained earlier.

On Wednesday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the Biden administration did not see much practical effect from a possible inclusion of Russia on the U.S. list of countries sponsoring terrorism.

(Source: TASS)

Indian-controlled Kashmir gearing up for Muharram rituals

Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, is round the corner.

Like in other parts of the world, people here in Kashmir, the only Muslim majority region in India, are also gearing up for annual Muharram ceremonies, Press TV reported.

Roads and streets are draped with black flags and banners in remembrance of Imam Hussein (AS), the beloved grandson of the holy prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who was martyred in the desert plains of Karbala in 680 AD.

Painter and calligrapher Showkat Ahmad is busy these days preparing banners to be used in mourning rituals. The banners are in huge demand as they are the integral part of Muharram ceremonies.

The Imambargahs, which are congregation halls for Shia commemoration ceremonies, are also being covered with black sheets and banners. The main Muharram commemorations are held in Imambargahs where Kashmiri Marsiyas, elegiac poems written to commemorate Imam Hussein and his companions, are recited.

Also, scholars deliver sermons to highlight the significance of the Ashura uprising. Ashura is the tenth day of Muharram when Imam Hussein and his 72 companions were martyred in the Battle of Karbala in southern Iraq 14 centuries ago.

While mourning ceremonies are held in different areas with sizable Shia population, the two major processions in the capital city Srinagar on the eighth of



Muharram and its tenth day known as Ashura, were banned by the authorities in 1990. Despite repeated pleas by the religious and political bodies to lift the ban, the authorities remain unmoved.

The authorities claim the traditional processions in Srinagar pose security threats. The religious

bodies and civil activists on the other hand term the ban as “blatant breach of religious freedom”.

Every year, despite the clampdown in the region, mourners defy the restrictions and try to carry out the Muharram processions, but they are tear-gassed, cane charged and detained.

Strike action paralyzes UK

From page 1 ▶ Aslef, like sister unions the RMT and the TSSA, hit out at the government for preventing the privatized industry from offering a pay rise in line with record inflation.

A spokesman said strikes were “always the last resort” but that the union had been “forced into this position by the companies, who say they have been driven to this by the Tory government”. He added that many of his members had not received a pay rise since 2019, in essence suffering a pay cut.

London mayor, Sadiq Khan, has backed the strike action saying responsibility for the strikers lay with the government, which was “interfering with rail companies who want to do a deal”.

Khan said: “The only way these disputes are ever resolved is if [the transport secretary] Grant Shapps and the government stops pulling the strings and allows the rail companies to talk to the trade unions.”

Further strike action is planned for August.

In June, the postal sector took action with Royal Mail managers voting to strike in a dispute over job cuts and a redeployment program to bring in “worsening terms and conditions”. Members belonging to the Unite union in UK overwhelmingly backed walkouts over the dispute, which involved around 2,400 managers across more than 1,000 delivery offices.

The union's general secretary, Sharon Graham, said “enough is enough” and “make no mistake, Royal Mail is awash with cash – there is no need whatsoever to sack workers, drive down pay or pursue this ill-thought-out redeployment program. These



plans are all about boardroom greed and profiteering and nothing whatsoever to do with securing this vital public service.”

Bus workers, bin lorry workers, tram workers, airlines, and BT Broadband staff have already or will go on strike this summer.

Meanwhile, the shadow transport minister, Sam Tarry, has been sacked for defying orders by the opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer to join a picket line.

Tarry joined workers on a picket line and made several posts on social media, as well as appearing on British media. He said “It can't be accepted anymore, that people just have to accept that inflation is out of control. The government's doing nothing on the cost of living crisis.”

In a statement, he also said “these key workers kept our train services running throughout the pandemic, and were among Britain's Covid heroes alongside the NHS and other public services.”

“Those same workers have been forced to take action because they're faced with a cost-of-living crisis and rampant inflation caused by the government's mismanagement of our economy, leaving millions struggling to pay their bills and provide for their families, made worse by the fact that callous and incompetent ministers refuse to even negotiate with their trade unions.”

A number of Labour MPs have already expressed support for the sacked minister. MP Ian Lavery says the sacking was

“shameful”. He wrote on social media that “supporting workers at the RMT union and all other workers in dispute is in the best traditions of what the UK Labour [party] was founded for and should stand for.” MP Kate Osamor also weighed in saying the party should not lose sight of the “fight for ordinary people”.

More members of parliament have also joined picket lines or expressed solidarity with striking workers across the country.

Further strikes are already planned for the coming weeks. This is despite Grant Shapps, the government's Transport Secretary setting out a series of measures to try and curb union power. Writing in a Conservative Party-affiliated National newspaper, he set out his plans involving as many as 16 measures. The planned restrictions on union action come despite the government saying it doesn't want to get involved.

Ironically Shapps has ruled out meeting union leaders to break the deadlock, even if the situation escalated saying he was “not the right person to be in the room negotiating”.

In response, union leaders have condemned the proposals, calling them an “attack on the fundamental right to strike” and that they would “be the green light for a return to the worst workplace abuses of the past”.

Sharon Graham, general secretary of the UK's largest trade union Unite, said the government had “miscalculated” with its attacks on union rights.

The TUC general secretary, Frances O'Grady, said “these proposals are anti-democratic and anti-worker.”

The Unison general secretary, Christina McAnea, said “the government wants to turn the clock back to Victorian times when children were sent up chimneys and working people ruthlessly exploited. Unions are trying to help employees through the worst cost of living crisis in recent history. Ministers want to demonize unions to distract from their own failings.”

Meanwhile, around 40,000 British Telecom (BT) and Openreach workers have walked off the job in the first national telecoms strike since 1987.

Hundreds of picket lines have been set up across the UK, according to the CWU union. It is the first of two strikes, with another set to take place on Monday, after members of the union refused a pay rise offer.

The CWU said that the striking workers are from a number of different divisions “they do run all of the maintenance on Britain's broadband services, but they also work keeping up national infrastructure from the NHS to the Ministry of Defence to mobile phone masts.”

MP Lavery again expressed support saying “Why should workers stand by and accept a pay cut while the companies they work for accumulate huge profits?”

He added “for too long this government has facilitated the redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich. We are told that there is a cost of living crisis, yet companies like Shell, Centrica, and Openreach record profits.”

Christian pilgrims observe Badarak ritual in northwest Iran



TEHRAN—A host of Christian pilgrims have come together at St. Thaddeus, northwest Iran, to observe their annual ritual of Badarak.

The three-day event commenced on Friday in Qareh Klise (“the Black Church”), one of the oldest surviving Christian monasteries in the country, CHTN reported.

Baptism of children and youngsters along with performances of traditional songs and dances are amongst the highlights of the event, the report said.

The pilgrimage is traditionally made by travelers from Iran, Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, the Netherlands, France, Austria, Germany, Canada, and some other countries.

The event is of high importance for Iranian-Armenians who mostly come from the cities of Tabriz, Urmia, Tehran, Isfahan, and Qazvin, to stage the reunion in groups and families. It also provides them an opportunity to go on

Tourism minister promises to help restore flood-hit Yazd

TEHRAN—Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister Ezzatollah Zarghami has pledged to facilitate the restoration of the damaged parts of the historical texture of Yazd in central Iran after the recent flash floods.

He also stressed the importance of the health of Yazd’s residents and tourists, as well as the restoration of the historical texture of the city, through the appointment of a special representative who will investigate the damages and provide funds for the reconstruction of the damaged portions of the city, IRNA reported on Saturday.

During the last few days, flash flooding in 17 provinces of the country claimed 32 lives and left 25 people missing.

The provinces include Sistan-Baluchestan, Tehran, Fars, Kerman, Hormozgan, Qom, Semnan, Mazandaran, Yazd, East Azarbaijan, South Khorasan, Golestan, Isfahan, Bushehr, Kohgiluyeh-Boyer Ahmad, Markazi, and Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari.

In July 2017, the historical core of Yazd was named a UNESCO World Heritage. Yazd is regularly referred to as a delightful place to stay, or a “don’t miss” destination by almost all of its visitors. The city is full of mudbrick houses that are equipped with innovative badgirs (wind catchers), atmospheric alleyways, and many Islamic and Iranian monuments that shape its eye-catching city landscape.

Cultural heritage experts believe that Yazd is a living testimony to the intelligent use of limited available resources in the desert for survival. Water is brought to the city by the qanat system. Each district of the city is built on a qanat and has a communal center. Furthermore, the

In Aran-Bidgol, the majority of historical buildings need urgent restoration

TEHRAN—Over 70 percent of historical buildings, scattered across Aran-Bidgol county, central Isfahan province, need urgent restoration, a local tourism chief has said.

A budget of 130 billion rials (\$434,000) should be allocated to the restoration projects, Mehdi Mashhadi explained on Saturday.

Some 450 historical sites and aging structures have been identified across the county so far, of which some 135 have been registered on the national heritage list, the official added.

Aran-Bidgol is the gateway to the Maranjab desert and caravansary, which also draws thousands of domestic travelers each year. The desert, which is a top destination for off-readers,

holiday and visit distant relatives.

Furthermore, the attendees commemorate the martyrdom of St. Thaddeus, one of the twelve disciples killed while he was preaching the Gospel. The legend says a church dedicated to him was first built in 68 CE where Qareh Klise is standing. Thaddeus was an apostle of Christ and the ceremony is rooted in the last supper with Jesus Christ on the night of his arrest and execution by the Roman soldiers.

It is situated in Chaldoran county some 20 kilometers from Maku, adjacent to the borders of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. The ancient Church shows off elaborate bas-reliefs of flowers, animals, and human figures on its façade and exterior walls. It bears verses from the Old and New Testaments in Armenian calligraphy as well.

Together with St. Stepanos Monastery and the Chapel of Dzordzor, Qareh Klise was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2008 under the name “Armenian Monastic Ensembles of Iran”. All three sites are located in West Azarbaijan and are of high significance from historical and cultural perspectives. They bear credible testimony to interchanges with the ancient regional societies, in particular the Byzantine, Orthodox, and Persian. UNESCO has it that the churches bear examples of the outstanding universal value of the Armenian architectural and decorative traditions.

use of earth in buildings includes walls and roofs through the construction of vaults and domes. Houses are built with courtyards below ground level, serving underground areas. Wind-catchers, courtyards, and thick earthen walls create a pleasant microclimate.

The historical core of Yazd is chock-full of mudbrick houses, bazaars, public bathhouses, water cisterns, mosques, synagogues, Zoroastrian temples, and centuries-old gardens. From the divine point of view, the city enjoys the peaceful coexistence of three religions: Islam, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism.

Yazd is home to numerous qanats which have supplied water to agricultural and permanent settlements for thousands of years. The man-carved underground qanat system relies on snow-fed streams flowing down the foothills of surrounding mountains. The earliest water supply to Yazd is estimated to date from the Sassanid era (224 to 651 CE). However, many others have been continually repaired and used over time, and most surviving Ab-Anbars (traditional mudbrick cisterns) can be today traced to the late Safavid and Qajar periods.

Yazd Water Museum is a must-see destination for the ones interested to know about the brave men who built such underground aqueducts in the past. Located in a restored mansion with a visible qanat running underneath, the museum offers its visitors a fascinating glimpse into the hidden world of qanats through a series of photographs, exhibits, and architectural drawings. It represents nearly 2000 years of unique irrigation structure that has been in operation, yet describes the drilling of mother wells and associated underground water networks stretched to the ancient city.

leads to salt lake from the north, Band-e Rig and Desert National Park from the east, Masileh Desert, Hoz-e sultan, and Moreh Lakes from the west and eventually Aran and Bidgol from the south.

Situated in Isfahan province, the town is surrounded by desert from the north and east, and thus it has a typical climate of hot and dry in summer, cold and dry in winter, and very little rainfall during the year.

Last year, a team of Iranian archaeologists found remnants of a centuries-old network, which used to supply water to the underground city of Nushabad, located in the central district of Aran-Bidgol county.

Want a once-in-a-lifetime experience? Head to Iran during Muharram

By Afshin Majlesi

From page 1 ► For Iranians, Ashura is a solemn day of mourning, marked by various mourning rituals and passion plays re-enacting the martyrdom. Men and women, dressed in the black, parade through the streets, slapping their chests and chanting. Some people seek to emulate the suffering of their third Shia Imam by flagellating themselves with chains in a symbolic act.

As a foreign traveler, you are highly welcomed by mourners. However, you are expected to show respect for the sorrow of the locals these days. You are not expected to wear black as a tourist, just an acceptable covering of your body and hair for women is appreciated. Laughing loudly in the public may also be frowned upon.

During Tasu’a and Ashura, when the public mourning reaches its climax, a lively atmosphere prevails in all corners of the country to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (AS), a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), slain in 680 CE at Karbala in modern-day Iraq.

You may be interested to know that the core meaning of Muharram is beyond such mere bereavement and commemoration of the past. You may even conclude that Karbala was an actual and metaphorical venue where the Truth confronted the Lie, where justice spoke vibrant and audible in the face of prejudice, and where courage, passion, and devotion preceded attachment, worldliness, and obstinacy.

From a theological perspective, religious rituals are perhaps a revival of collective memories that help shape what is known as collective identity, an essential foundation for a sense of belonging. One such ritual is the mourning ceremonies which are rich in symbols and historical values.

They say the commemoration of Ashura is a tribute to truth and justice and condemnation of tyranny anytime and anywhere. This is perhaps one of the many reasons why a day like Ashura can never be overlooked, as these rituals encompass universal values that will never wear out.

The saga, however, is narrated to tell us that compared to the Pyrrhic and momentary victory of injustice, integrity and honesty will always stand the test of time as today the



life of Imam Hussein (AS) is honored by millions across the world while the account of his enemies is nearly lost in oblivion. The story also lives to tell us that the majority is not always right. Even if the army of Truth is small, it still is magnanimous in what it stands for.

Religious ceremonies in Iran more than often include food offerings, whether they are held at public venues like mosques or private residences. These communal gatherings are also a kind of forum where friends, acquaintances, and neighbors meet over food that is served after the ceremonies.

During Muharram, every village, township, city, or metropolis is abuzz with preparation for food offerings known as Nazri, the processions of which are usually sponsored by wealthy benefactors.

On Tasu’a and Ashura, each neighborhood sets stands to offer food to the mourners and the passersby. Also, households provide dishes to their neighbors by distributing parcels to houses or hosting mourning ceremonies inside their homes and asking people to join by invitation.

All and all, many tour operators and travel isiders believe it may be a lifetime experience to visit the Islamic Republic during Muharram.

Mourning in Muharram

Historically speaking, the army of Caliph Yazid laid siege to Imam Hussein (AS) and his followers in the desert near Kerbala on the first day of Muharram. The Imam and his loyal supporters were massacred in battle 10 days later after he had refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid.

For Shia Muslims all over the world, this is a special but extremely sad day. Muharram and the following month, Safar (which includes commemoration of the aftermath of

Karbala) are a period of lamentation. War and fighting are prohibited during Muharram and festivities like weddings and birthdays are usually postponed to more appropriate days. People generally wear black out of respect or at least avoid wearing very bright colors.

‘Azadari’ is the Persian word for mourning, stemming from the word Azaa. The literal meaning of Azaa is twofold. Firstly, it indicates ‘patience’ and ‘perseverance’ and secondly, when used as a verb, it implies consolation and solace that comes as a gradual result of that patience. In many cultures, the act of consolation has a ritualistic face, and it is therefore systematic and easy to follow as it provides its very own logic, symbolism, and paradigms.

The ritualistic bereavements of Muharram are a platform where various artistic genres like literature, painting, music, fiction, and drama are reconciled. During Muharram, apart from mosques, each neighborhood sets up its establishment for the ceremonial processions of the month known as ‘Tekkiyeh’, which are venues for the gathering of mourners known as ‘heyat’ (literally meaning group or delegation) who honor the life of Imam Hussein (AS).

The resilient beat of drums and a few other instruments are heard as people weep in the hymns and men in black rhythmically flagellate their backs with two pairs of chains and beat their chests with open palms. This ritual is known as Sineh-Zani (beating the chest).

Other communal forms of mourning include Tazieh, which is a passionate play usually performed during the first ten days of Muharram, culminating in a passionate and emotional peak on the tenth (Ashura). Stories and characters involved in the Karbala battle are enacted by men

and young children. Needless to say, these rituals are region specific and quite diverse. Major theatre houses in Iran also stage plays relevant to this month. Tazieh, which recounts religious events, historical and mythical stories, and folk tales, was registered on UNESCO’s List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in November 2010.

Facts

Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and therefore the 1st day of the month marks the Islamic New year. Since the Islamic calendar is lunar, Muharram moves from year to year. This is while the Persian New Year falls on July 30, 2022, according to the solar calendar.

Muharram (derived from the word Haram, meaning forbidden) is one of the four sacred months of the year in which war is prohibited.

All government offices, universities, sporting arenas, cinemas as well as most tourist attractions like museums are closed during Tasu’a (Sunday, August 7, 2022) and Ashura (Monday, August 8, 2022). Most of the restaurants are closed in Ashura as well.

In Islamic and Persian culture, the 3rd, 7th, and 40th day of birth and particularly death are significant dates. Arbaeen (literally meaning forty in the Arabic Language) which marks 40 days after the death of Imam Hussein (AS) is also a typical period of mourning for Muslims.

During Muharram, particularly on Tasu’a and Ashura, people refrain from doing or saying things that may violate the honorable spirit of the month. Television and radio channels alter their timings and programs to accommodate more religious sermons, mourning songs, live ceremonies, and films about the spirit of the month.

Black as the color of mourning during this month is visible in people’s attire, banners hanging from buildings, billboards, decoration of city walls, and in the writings on the rearview windows of cars.

The night of Ashura in Iran is called Shaam-e Ghariban, meaning “the night of strangers” and those who are far from home and help. People light candles in holy places and gatherings in every corner of the country.

The tragedy is also observed in some other countries with sizeable Shia communities, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Lebanon, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

Bust of Hungarian poet unveiled at Hafez mausoleum

TEHRAN—On Friday, a bust of Hungarian poet Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773-1805) was unveiled during a special ceremony at Hafezieh in Shiraz, where the illustrious Persian poet Hafez is laid to rest.

Hungary’s Ambassador to Iran Zoltan Varga-Haszonits, Fars province’s tourism chief Seyyed Mohsen Moayyednejad, and several diplomats and cultural officials attended the ceremony, CHTN reported on Saturday.

Hungary and Iran have had a long history of cultural relations for nearly two centuries, and this ceremony signifies the continuing relationship between these two countries, the Hungarian ambassador said.

Shiraz and Pecs in Hungary became sister cities in 2016, and this should not be halted by this ceremony and these cultural exchanges should continue, he added.

Recently, in cooperation with Shiraz Municipality and Pecs Municipality, 50 poems of Hafez have been translated into Hungarian, he explained.

The prominent Hungarian poet Csokonai wrote poetry for Hafez, and his poems, like Hafez’s, emphasize the importance of loving and living in the present, he mentioned.

For his part, Moayyednejad said that there are a lot of cultural similarities and commonalities between



Iran and Hungary that have contributed to the strengthening of bilateral relations between the two countries.

In the distant past, the relations between the two countries have been very good and have developed in recent years, highlighting the importance of cultural exchanges between the two countries and their increasing cooperation, he added.

Csokonai is a well-known poet in his country. According to Britannica, he had a brief career as an assistant master at the Calvinist college, and then the sake of a wealthy girl (the ‘Lilla’ of his poems), he tried to secure a permanent post, but by the time he had obtained such a position, in a small town, she had already married. Csokonai returned to his hometown poor and consumptive. He died there without having

French diplomat visits Gonabad, hails its attractions

TEHRAN –On Friday, the Second Secretary of France’s Embassy in Iran, Edouard Dambrine visited several tourist attractions in the northeastern city of Gonabad, Khorasan Razavi province, IRNA reported.

The city has unique potential in tourism, which can attract more foreign tourists to the region, he said during his visit.

“I enjoyed visiting the UNESCO-

registered qanat of Qasbeh, and Jameh Mosque of the city, surrounding villages and handicrafts workshops,” he added.

Gonabad is home to over 250

historical sites and structures, of which Qasbeh qanat, the oldest qanat in the world with more than 2500 years of history, is registered on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

WHO to review Iran's malaria elimination program

TEHRAN – The World Health Organization (WHO) will, by March 2023, dispatch a group of experts to Iran to review the malaria elimination program in the country, the head of the department of control and management of communicable diseases of the Ministry of Health, has said.

If the measures which have been taken to eliminate malaria meet the defined standards for obtaining an elimination certificate, we will receive this certificate, ISNA quoted Abdolreza Mir-Oliaei as saying on Saturday.

Malaria is a mosquito-borne infectious disease that affects humans and other animals; the disease is most commonly spread by an infected female Anopheles mosquito. The mosquito bite introduces the parasites from the mosquito's saliva into a person's blood.

It causes symptoms that typically include fever, tiredness, vomiting, and headaches. In severe cases, it can cause yellow skin, seizures, coma, or death. Symptoms usually begin ten to fifteen days after being

If a country passes three years with no indigenous cases, the World Health Organization will grant it a certificate of malaria eradication.



bitten by an infected mosquito.

If a country passes three years with no indigenous cases, the World Health Organization will grant it a certificate of malaria eradication.

Last year, 1,010 patients of malaria were identified in the country, none of whom were indigenous cases, he stated.

Currently, the provinces of Sistan-Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and the south of Kerman province, mainly in Jiroft city, are endemic areas of malaria, and in these areas, we have special conditions and instructions to eliminate the disease, he explained.

The main challenge of our country to eliminate malaria includes climate change and rising temperatures and the movement of foreign nationals from infected countries to Iran, and especially the movement from the land border of Pakistan to Sistan and Baluchistan, he lamented.

The disease diagnosis is being carefully implemented. In recent years, all the efforts of the Ministry

of Health regarding the diagnosis and treatment of the disease and the management of the habitat of mosquito larvae have been favorable to a large extent, he noted.

The most important factor in malaria elimination is educating people to take self-care measures and improve environmental hygiene, Mir-Oliaei added.

Tedros Adhanom Director-General of the WHO praised Iran for controlling malaria, stating that Iran has not registered any native cases of malaria for three consecutive years.

There are about six species of Anopheles mosquitoes in Iran, of which there are no more than two or three species, which are actively involved in disease transmission in the south and southeast, and the rest are in the northern Zagros, from which there is no malaria transmission.

Although the most common route of transmission of malaria is mosquito bites, in rare cases there is a possibility of transmission through the use of shared

syringes among injecting drug users.

According to WHO 2017 malaria report, the incidence rate of malaria in Iran has decreased significantly from 12,000 people in 2000 to 57 in 2017.

Between 2000 and 2014, the number of malaria-related deaths fell by 40 percent worldwide, from an estimated 743,000 to 446,000.

There are 20 countries in the world that are moving towards the elimination of malaria; in the Eastern Mediterranean region, Iran is at the forefront.

High share of global malaria burden

According to the latest World malaria report, released in December 2019, there were 228 million cases of malaria in 2018 compared to 231 million cases in 2017. The estimated number of malaria deaths stood at 405,000 in 2018, compared with 416,000 deaths in 2017.

The WHO African Region continues to carry a disproportionately high share of the global malaria burden. In 2018, the region was home to 93% of malaria cases and 94% of malaria deaths.

In 2018, 6 countries accounted for more than half of all malaria cases worldwide: Nigeria (25%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (12%), Uganda (5%), and Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, and Niger (4% each).

Children under 5 years of age are the most vulnerable group affected by malaria; in 2018, they accounted for 67% (272,000) of all malaria deaths worldwide.

\$7.1m of smuggled goods seized nationwide

TEHRAN – Smuggled goods worth 2 trillion rials (nearly \$7.1 million) have been confiscated across the country through the third stage of the plan to combat the smuggling of goods and currency, Jalal Amini, head of the anti-trafficking police, has said.

In order to help domestic production, the fight against smuggling is underway continuously through monitoring of goods (origin and destination), implementation of plans, periodic and intermittent inspections of roads, etc. are on the agenda by the anti-trafficking police throughout the country, he explained.

The smuggled goods include basic goods, home appliances, electronic and medical equipment, car, cosmetics, clothes, and currencies, IRIB reported.

He went on to say that 1,037 accused were arrested and presented to judicial authorities, and 622 vehicles were seized.

\$20-25 billion of smuggled goods annually

Every year, \$20-25 billion worth of goods are smuggled in and out of the country, which, if stopped, will create hundreds of thousands of jobs, Hassan Norouzi, a member of the Parliament, said.

In the Iranian calendar year 1396 (March 2017-March 2018), \$12 billion was smuggled into Iran and \$900 million out of the country, according to the Headquarters for Combating the Smuggling of Commodities and Foreign Exchange.

According to some reports, over ten million



liters of gasoline are smuggled out of Iran on a daily basis, adding up to 3.65 billion liters every year. Other reports put the number higher. On December 19, 2018, a government spokesman said every day 11.5 million liters of gasoline are smuggled out of Iran. Ali Adyani, a member of the Iranian Parliament's Energy Committee, has quoted various sources as putting the figure at 10, 15, and even 20 million liters a day.

Mohammad Hassan Nejad, another member of the committee, says the smuggled fuel amounts to 22 million liters per day. With a 50 cent per liter profit, the total daily income adds up to 400 trillion rials annually or \$3.3 billion, nearly the same as the country's annual development budget.

In addition to gasoline smuggling, other fuels such as kerosene and diesel are also smuggled; not in lesser quantities.

In June 2020, the first phase of the national anti-smuggling plan was implemented with the priority of customs, tobacco, and transit goods nationwide.

Scientific challenge: predicting earthquakes or avoiding them?

Part 4

For example, geological studies provide information on the slip rates of active faults and the occurrence of historical earthquakes. These findings can be used to infer the future behavior of faults and earthquake potentials. By studying the landforms and geological units with known age that the faults have changed, it is possible to determine the displacement of the two sides of a fault relative to each other.

Under favorable conditions, even fault displacements during historical earthquakes can be detected and their size and approximate age can be determined. Significant fault displacement is generally accepted as evidence for large earthquakes, and thus the seismic history of a fault can be traced back thousands of years by geological studies.

Exploratory trenches across active fault zones are valuable for such studies and their use became common in the 1970s. For example, in 1984, American scientist Kerry Sieh published pieces of evidence of 12 earthquakes that occurred between 260 and 1857 AD along a section of the San Andreas fault, from trenching in Southern California.

His study provides the best evidence for a return

To be contd.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON JULY 30

New cases	4,505
New deaths	46
Total cases	7,381,299
Total deaths	141,937
New hospitalized patients	1,070
Patients in critical condition	1,198
Total recovered patients	7,079,239
Diagnostic tests conducted	53,176,227
Doses of vaccine injected	153,135,138

COVID deaths triple in week

TEHRAN – The number of coronavirus deaths registered across the country has tripled in the first week of the current Iranian calendar month, ending July 29, compared with a week earlier, the Health Ministry reported on Saturday.

A total of 204 deaths were announced by the Health Ministry during the mentioned week, a significant rise in comparison to 69 in the week ending July 22.

The number of inpatients also rose from 4,119 to 7,376, and the number of outpatients

climbed from 28,617 to 46,171, according to the report.

Seventh peak looming

A new wave of the coronavirus is currently sweeping the country and the seventh peak of the disease is expected to occur by October.

Considering that infection with the BA5 variant is milder than other variants, it is expected that the seventh peak of the disease to occur by October with lesser mortality, Hamidreza Jamaati, secretary of the National Scientific Com-

mittee of Coronavirus, said on July 22.

If preventive measures such as wearing masks and injecting booster doses are adopted, we will not experience the rates of mortality that happened in March with Omicron or last summer with Delta, he added

At present, in Asia and Europe, the incidence of Covid and its mortality is steady and declining, while in some African and American countries, there is a growing trend of omicron variants such as BA4 and BA5, which have not spread in Iran, Jamaati said in May.

Blood donation rate grows by 9%

From page 1 ▶ The regular blood donor index in the country is estimated at 53 percent, he said.

Referring to the 4.3 percent women's share of blood donation, he noted that the index of women's participation in blood donation is significantly lower than the average of developed countries.

Blood donation in Iran has long been done voluntarily as over 2.1 million Iranians donate blood annually, Bashir Haji-Beigi, the former Blood Transfusion Organization spokesman, said in June.

There are currently 178 blood donation centers in the country,

with Fars, Khorasan Razavi, Khuzestan, Tehran, and Mazandaran provinces having the largest number of blood donation centers, he stated.

Highest blood donation in Eastern Mediterranean

While blood donation in 70 countries still depends on replacement or paid donors, Iran is the first country in the region that has enjoyed voluntary blood donation by 100 percent since 2007.

More than 85 percent of all donated blood worldwide is used to produce blood products, while the rate is 65 percent in Eastern

Mediterranean countries. Iran ranks among the highest-income countries in terms of converting more than 97 percent of the blood donated by people to plasma-derived medicinal products (PDMP).

Only 55 of 171 countries produce PDMP through the fractionation of plasma collected in the reporting country. A total of 90 countries reported that all PDMP are imported, 16 countries reported that no PDMP was used during the reporting period, and 10 countries did not respond to the question, according to WHO.

Iran currently has the highest blood donation rate in the Eastern



Mediterranean region so out of 9.9 million blood donation units in this region, more than two million belongs to Iran.

Also, the index of blood donation is 25 per 1,000 populations, while in the member states of the Eastern Mediterranean region, this number is 14.9 per 1000.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries worldwide

Some 105 medical equipment produced by 23 Iranian companies are exported to 55 countries across the world, Reza Masaeli, an advisor to the health minister said on Sunday.

"Currently, a total of 280,000 medical equipment is produced in the country," Fars quoted Masaeli as saying.

"In recent years, the production of medical equipment in Iran has increased by 9 percent," he added.

One of the main strategies of the Health Ministry is to boost exports, he said, adding that Iran exports medical equipment to 55 countries including Russia, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Croatia.

So far, a series of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been signed for export of medical equipment to various countries, including Brazil, Iraq and Oman, Masaeli stated.

تجهيزات پزشکی ایرانی به ۵۵ کشور دنیا صادر می شود

مشاور وزیر بهداشت گفت: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می شود. به گزارش گروه اجتماعی خبرگزاری فارس، رضا مسائلی، اظهار داشت: در کشور بیش از ۲۸۰ هزار قلم تجهیزات پزشکی در کشور وجود دارد و در سال های اخیر، تولیدات تجهیزات پزشکی در جمهوری اسلامی ایران، ۹ درصد افزایش داشته است.

وی توجه به صادرات را یکی از مهمترین راهبردهای اساسی وزارت بهداشت در راستای حمایت از تولیدات داخلی دانست و افزود: در حال حاضر ۱۰۵ محصول تجهیزات پزشکی ایرانی که توسط ۲۳ شرکت ایرانی تولید می شود، به ۵۵ کشور جهان از جمله کشورهای روسیه، آلمان، ایتالیا، بلژیک، هلند و کرواسی صادر می شود.

