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Interview



There are some concerns about Abu Dhabi's intentions in Muscat: GSA

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – Chief executive officer of Gulf State Analytics (GSA) says Omanis are concerned about the United Arab Emirates' interference in other Arab states.

"In Oman there are some concerns about Abu Dhabi's intentions in the region and the implications for Oman's own national interests," Giorgio Cafiero tells the Tehran Times.

A pillar of Omani foreign policy is the impartial promotion of geopolitical balance in West Asia, undogmatically by business-like if not fully amicable relations with all in the region, including Iran. Muscat leverages its unique ability to serve as a facilitator of peace and to function as a trusted and credible party that can provide channels for dialogue. The Omani belief that long-term peace, prosperity, and stability in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council require extinguishing fires in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf helps explain why Muscat invests resources in this Switzerland-like role.

However, the Saudi-Emirati interference in other countries including Libya, Syria coupled with their three-and-a-half-year blockade of Qatar have raised questions whether Oman's policy in the region can prove successful or not. The Saudi-led coalition has turned to a threat to other Arab states.

"Notably, after Oman and Kuwait observed Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt blockade Qatar in mid-2017, officials in Muscat and Kuwait City had questions ▶ Page 5

Raisi says was not under influence in naming ministers

TEHRAN – President Ebrahim Raisi said on Saturday that in selecting his ministers he was not influenced by any special group or faction.

Of course, Raisi said, there were many proposals by different groups for ministers.

"In selecting ministers, I was not influenced by any current or special group. Of course, many proposals were sent to the government by different groups in introducing persons," Raisi said while speaking in favor of his proposed ministers in the parliament.

Majlis started deliberations on the competence of ministers on Saturday.

The parliament is expected to finish its deliberation of the proposed ministers by Sunday afternoon.

Raisi called his proposed cabinet make-up "diverse" and said cabinet is not a "political party".

"Actually, we tried to introduce the competent ones," Raisi remarked.

There were efforts to consider the views of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution in nominating ministers such as ▶ Page 2



©Getty Images

Afghanistan: What to Expect

TEHRAN – With the Taliban taking the reins in Kabul, Afghanistan seems to be poised to become a new hotspot for regional and extra-regional power competition, one that, if unleashed, would do little to improve the lives of Afghan people fed up with war and destruction.

Two decades after being expelled from Kabul by a military campaign led by the United States, the Taliban have now returned to the capital of Afghanistan with more experience and lessons from its recent history.

Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a Taliban co-founder and its number-two man, arrived in Kabul on Saturday as thousands of escaping Afghans gathered at Kabul airport in the hope of finding a way out of the war-torn country.

He had arrived in Afghanistan on Tuesday from Qatar, choosing to touch down in the country's second-biggest city, Kandahar – the Taliban's spiritual birthplace.

Baradar will meet militant commanders, former government leaders and policy makers, as well as religious scholars among others, a Taliban official told Reuters. His arrival marked the beginning of the Taliban's efforts to form a government that is expected to fill the current vacuum emanating from the fleeing of the previous government's high-ranking officials.

What the new government will look like is yet to be seen. The Taliban official told Reuters that the group planned to ready a new model for governing Afghanistan within the next few weeks, with separate teams to tackle internal security and financial issues. ▶ Page 3

◀ STAY UPDATED #TalibanTakeover

Op-ed



Recent wave of terror attacks in Pakistan is a litmus test for Islamabad-Beijing ties

By Mobeen Jafar Mir

A recent report published by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has alarmed both Islamabad and Beijing. The report confirms the presence of 6,000 insurgents of the banned militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Afghanistan.

In addition to revealing that TTP maintains ties with the Afghan Taliban, it adds that there are hundreds of anti-Beijing Muslim radicals inside the war-torn Afghanistan. TTP's links with the Afghan Taliban do not come as a surprise because both militant groups are ethnically Pushtuns and ideologically aligned, both stress the implementation of an intolerant version of Sharia, and more importantly, they both have once pledged their loyalty to Mullah Omar. But the possibilities of anti-Beijing militants establishing ties with other insurgents in Afghanistan can have serious repercussions for Islamabad-Beijing ties.

The optimism brought about by a marked reduction in terrorist incidents in the wake of stringent counter-terrorism efforts taken in recent years seems to be eroding. It can be ascertained from the fact in 2013, there were nearly 4000 terrorist attacks and 2020 saw 319 attacks, a nearly ten fold decrease. This year, however, there has been a gradual uptick in the violence with 230 terrorist incidents so far. This means violence is picking up in Pakistan. ▶ Page 5

Iran's July oil output rises 28% year on year: OPEC

TEHRAN – Iran produced 2.485 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil in July, registering a 28 percent increase compared to the same month in 2020, according to OPEC's latest monthly report published on August 12.

Based on secondary sources, Iran had produced 1.936 million bpd of crude oil in July 2020.

The Islamic Republic's average crude output for the second quarter of 2021 stood at 2.443 million bpd indicating a 224,000-bpd increase compared to the figure for the first quarter of the year, the report said.

The report put the average Iranian crude output for 2019 at 2.356 million bpd, while the average output in 2020 fell to 1.988 million bpd.

These statistics show that although with the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions, Iran's oil production decreased; gradually the country has been able to compensate for part of the output decline.

The country's heavy crude oil price also increased \$1.3 in July, to register a 1.8 percent rise compared to the previous month, according to the OPEC report.

Iran sold its heavy crude oil at \$72.98 per barrel in the mentioned month, compared to June's \$71.68 per barrel. ▶ Page 4

Archaeological evidence sheds new light on early human presence in western Iran

TEHRAN – Newly-discovered stone tools and animal remains have shed new light on the history of human presence in Paveh county of Kermanshah province, which is situated in western Iran.

Based on new archaeological discoveries, the history of human habitation in the Paveh county, which is situated in the south of the Hawraman (Uramanat), is estimated to stretch back to more than 40,000 years ago, provincial tourism chief Jabbar Gohari said in an interview with Salam Paveh last week.

The survey was carried out in the vicinity of Shamsheir and Zardui villages, south of the Hawraman region, with the close cooperation of archaeologists of the Paleolithic Department of Iran National Museum with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department of Kermanshah, the official said.

Gohari added that recent archaeological discoveries in the region are promising ▶ Page 6

Parliamentary bloc thanks Leader for naming Sunni as Iran's Navy chief

TEHRAN – The Sunni bloc in the Iranian Parliament has thanked Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei for naming Rear Admiral Shahram Irani, a Sunni Kurdish commander, as the new chief of the Iranian Navy.

In a letter to the Leader, the Sunni bloc expressed hopes that Iran would appoint more Sunnis and other religious minorities in top positions in the Shia-majority country.

They said the Leader's decision untied the Gordian knot in the Islamic Republic's managerial positions and was a green light to all those who intended to use competent Sunnis in all areas of the country's high-ranking positions.

"While thanking Your Excellency again and wishing success and a life with dignity for you and all those who serve the Islamic system, we hope that the revolutionary administration [of Ebrahim Raeisi] would also consider picking the competent and benefiting the country through the capability and expertise of competent Sunnis of Iran and all ethnicities, ▶ Page 2

Father of Iranian desert studies, Parviz Kardavani, passes away

TEHRAN – Parviz Kardavani, the renowned geographer and the father of Iranian desert studies, died on Wednesday, at the age of 90.

Kardavani was suffering from bone marrow cancer. He was the founder and director of the Desert Areas Research Center in Iran.

In 2005, Kardavani was honored as an 'eternal figure' in the field of geography

He believed that even one inch of desert areas and salty soils are not unusable. Kardavani opined that in the past, these regions were regarded as unusable, ominous, damned as well as horrifying and viewed as barriers to economic development. But today these areas can be important, recoverable, and sustainable economic resources and help attract tourists.



Pakistan Navy chief visits Tehran



Iranian Navy chief Rear Admiral Shahram Irani (L) meets Pakistani counterpart Admiral Mohammad Amjad Khan Niazi.

TEHRAN — Admiral Mohammad Amjad Khan Niazi, the commander of Pakistan's Navy, visited Tehran on Saturday and was officially welcomed by his Iranian counterpart Shahram Irani.

Admiral Niazi is visiting Iran upon the official invitation of the Iranian Navy commander.

The two commanders discussed a range of issues including expanding military relations, deepening ties in the sea, protecting regional security, and using military experience in undertaking missions and safeguarding the two neighboring countries' national interests at the sea.

On the sideline of the meeting, Iranian and Pakistani navy commanders also paid tribute to the anonymous martyrs of the eight-year Sacred Defense buried in the National Museum of the Islamic Revolution and Holy Defense and then made a tour at the museum.

Iran refers to resistance against the invading Saddam Army in the 1980s as Sacred Defense.

Admiral Irani said that Iran and Pakistan could serve together as a powerful arm for ensuring regional security.

Referring to strategic relations between the naval forces of Iran and Pakistan, the commander said that the two forces have staged different joint naval maneuvers over the past years.

He also called for efforts by the naval forces of both countries to establish security, particularly in the Northern Indian Ocean.

Iranian and Pakistani naval forces have in recent years promoted cooperation and staged several joint drills in the Indian Ocean and the Sea of Oman.

In April, a flotilla of the Pakistani Navy berthed at Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas and held a joint war game in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman with the Iranian units.

The Pakistani Navy commander is scheduled to visit Iran's northern fleet deployed at coasts of the Caspian Sea.

Parliamentary bloc thanks Leader for naming Sunni as Iran's Navy chief

From page 1 ► sects and religions at the highest levels of the administration by following in the footsteps of the great Leader of the Islamic Revolution and [His] wise approach," Press TV quoted the Sunni lawmakers as saying.

Irani, who is from the Kurdistan province's capital city, Sanandaj, where a significant number of Sunnis live, was named the new chief of the Navy in a decree by Ayatollah Khamenei on Tuesday, replacing Rear Admiral Hossein

Khanzadi, who had held the position since 2017.

The Leader said the appointment was made in view of the commander's commitment to his duties and positive work experience and upon a proposal by the Army commander.

Iran military chief: Boosting ability to target threat centers a strategic policy

TEHRAN — Iran's military chief Major General Mohammad Hossein Baqeri issued a message on Saturday asserting that the Iranian Armed Forces consider increasing the ability to attack the centers of threat against the Iranian homeland as a "strategic, inevitable and unstoppable policy".

General Baqeri issued the message on the occasion of "Defense Industry Day".

The message reads as follows:

"I congratulate the arrival of the 22nd of August, the day of the country's defense industry to the proud nation of Islamic Iran, officials, specialists and valuable employees of the Armed Forces and the defense industry of Islamic Iran.

This day makes the great Iranian nation proud and let it shine in the world despite the long-standing, all-encompassing and oppressive sanctions by the bloc of domination and arrogance and the enemies of the Revolution and the establishment.

There is no doubt that the revolutionary and power-building armed forces of the country, which are the front line of movement and a sign of the authority of dear Iran, based on the requirements of today and the future, use science and technology as one of the main drivers and engine of progress. The country is considered at the second step of the Revolution. Therefore, in this regard, the workers of the field of industry have considered the growth and increase of deterrence in the field of defense

and military as the forefront of their strategies. They know this field as the guarantor of strengthening Islamic Iran in this field.

We thank God that this blessed path is institutionalized in the Armed Forces under the flag of the Ministry of Defense and with the integration, dynamism and reliability of the defense industry components with elements and components of national empowerment and utilization of scientific and technological capacities of the private sector.

We also use the capacities of professors, researchers, students, and the scientific capacity of the Basij, policy-makers, and through active and intelligent defense diplomacy at home and abroad.

I hope that this process, which is the manifestation of the infinite, diverse defense and military power of the country and the field of showing the firm determination and the iron-clad will of the children of Islamic Iran in this field, promises the emergence of a unique phenomenon that can deeply influence the ideals outlined in the second phase of the Revolution.

God willing, this flourishing and proud path will continue in the thirteenth government and the new period of strategic management and guidance of the Ministry of De-

Armed forces use technology as the main engine of progress



fense and support of the Armed Forces with strength and power.

We humbly remember the great martyrs of the defense industry, especially Dr. Fakhrazadeh.

We remind the enemies of the Revolution and the opponents of the Islamic system: The Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, powerful and determined under the wise orders and menus of the Leader and Commander-in-Chief, Imam

Khamenei, while pursuing a strategy of peace, friendship and integration with the nations of the region against foreigners and trans-regional adventurers, regardless of media war and

From page 1 ► being competence, commitment, loyalty to values, being young, etc., the new president explained.

Raisi said his government's plans are drawn based on "justice and progress" in all areas.

Reducing government's monopoly and capacity-building have been given due attention in order to give opportunity to the people, the president stated.

"All plans have been crafted in a way to fulfill justice and progress in providing opportunities and facilities," the president explained.

He added priority is being given to "meritocracy" and countering those who have amassed power and capital through favoritism.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the president said regulations have been changed from "corruption-producing red tape" and a mere campaign against corruption to "preventing corruption".

President Raisi released the names of his proposed cabinet ministers to the Majlis (Parliament) on August 11.

Raisi also said his government is bent on preventing constant changes in regulations with a focus on "knowledge-based economy", redirect the government's intervention in economy to a supervisory one and reforming the capital market.

The president went on to say that his government is seeking to take a departure from reliance on oil incomes and export of raw materials to increasing productivity and insisting on durable sources of income, and changing from traditional budgeting to smart budgeting strategy.

The president went on to say that his government is seeking to take a departure from reliance on oil incomes and export of raw materials to increasing productivity and insisting on durable sources of income, and changing from traditional budgeting to smart budgeting strategy.

the psychological operations of imperialist media and the unimaginable aspirations of the United States, the Zionist regime and their evil and filthy allies, considers strengthening defensive power, safe indigenous deterrence and increasing the ability to attack the centers of threat against the Islamic homeland as its strategic, inevitable and unstoppable policy.

It will not miss a moment of neglect in this path, which makes us proud of providing material, interests and national security."

Defense Ministry commemorates "Defense Industry Day"

In a statement released on Saturday in commemoration of the Defense Industry Day, the Iranian Defense Ministry said the Islamic Republic's definite and unchanging strategy en-

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) launched the Vienna talks months after Joe Biden, who had promised to bring the U.S. back into the deal, occupied the Oval Office.

Tehran has refused to speak directly with Washington throughout the course of the talks, citing the latter's withdrawal from the deal under Biden's predecessor, Trump, as the reason that the U.S. cannot attend the talks as it is no longer a party to the deal.

During his interview, Malley also warned that his team is preparing some contingencies if Tehran and Washington fail to agree on resuming compliance with the terms of the nuclear deal.

"It's too early to be pessimistic, dear Rob," Ulyanov told the top U.S. diplomat in his tweet, adding that the Vienna Talks will resume soon.

Ulyanov, who leads the Russian team to the Vienna talks, called on the participants to address

the remaining obstacles with due creativity.

"It's too early to be pessimistic, dear Rob. #ViennaTalks will resume soon. Chances to restore #JCPOA seem to be real, although not fully guaranteed, of course. That's why the participants should address the remaining shambling blocks with due creativity," he tweeted.

'Iran to pursue new negotiation model'

Meanwhile, a member of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee says President Ebrahim Raisi has agreed to resume the Vienna talks, "but the model of the talks will change in the new administration."

"The talks [on the JCPOA revival] continued during the [Hassan] Rouhani administration with no results, but we will certainly not see that during the new administration," Zohreh Elahian said during an interview with Mehr news agency

Raisi says was not under influence in naming ministers

'We will guarantee legitimate freedoms'



He also insisted on agricultural economy, saying promoting the economic status of the poor classes of society is of great importance.

The president went on to say that his government has drafted a short-term planning to deal with the pressing current problems, as well as medium-term and long-term planning which will be presented to the MPs and the educated class.

Elsewhere in his remarks, while defending his nominated ministers, the president said the first priority is to control the Covid-19 pandemic, insisting on a quick vaccination of the citizens.

The second priority is to stabilize the economy, improve living standards and create a favorable environment for business.

The president also defended the credentials of his ministers.

He described proposed education minister Hossein Baghghi as a reformer and experienced person; the nominee for communications and information technology minister Issa Zarepour as a figure who can implement the plans; the nominee for economy minister Ehsan Khandouzi as a young and intelligent person; proposed labor and social welfare

minister Hojat Abdolmaleki as an anti-corruption manager; nominee for minister of industry, commerce and minister Reza Fatemi as brave, expert with revolutionary spirit; interior minister

nominee Ahmad Vahidi as a knowledgeable and strategist figure.

He also defended the record of Rostam Qassemi as the proposed housing and transport minister, saying the government plans to build one million houses in a year and during the four years of his presidency the government in-

tends to build four million housing units.

"Mr. Qassemi has plans in this regard and it is important for us that a person take the helm (at this ministry) that can materialize this promise of the government."

Qassemi was the chief of the Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters, one of the greatest contractors run by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). He also served as oil minister in the Ahmadinejad administration.

Qassemi also nominated to run for the post of president in the June election. However, the withdrew candidacy.

The president also defended the record of the proposed oil minister Javad Oji, saying he is one of the reputable and well-known figures of the Oil Ministry with high expertise.

Raisi also said a good plan is underway for exporting oil.

The president also said Mohammad Mehdi Esmaeili who has been proposed as minister of culture and Islamic guidance is an experienced and knowledgeable person who can meet his sensitivities toward the issue of culture.

He also said the cultural figures should know their freedom has been given by God.

"Persons of culture and art should know that we have not given you freedom. It has been given by God and we guarantee it," Raisi said, adding, "The government is guarantor of legitimate freedoms... so that the ability of cultural figures and artists is blossomed and this is the duty of this ministry."

Iran following inappropriate behavior toward citizen in Sweden

TEHRAN — Ahmad Masoumifar, Iran's ambassador to Sweden, wrote on his Twitter page on Saturday afternoon that he is following up on the case of the beating of an Iranian national in a Swedish detention center.

He tweeted, "After 20 days of follow-up, I managed to meet the Iranian citizen in prison. Evidence of violence and violation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984) Articles 12, 1 and 16, Civil and Political Rights (1966) Articles 10, 9, 7 and 14 and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950) Articles 5, 3 and 7."

He added, "The complaint was submitted by the lawyers to the judicial authority and in a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice, I called for an independent investigation into violations of prisoners' rights, obstruction of medical examination, desecration of faith and physical and mental torture of Iranian citizens."

Masoumifar emphasized he will follow the issue until a convincing result is reached.

It was in early August that the Iranian ambassador to Stockholm wrote on his Twitter page about the beating of an Iranian in a Swedish detention center by the officers of the detention center, saying, "Today, I learned that an Iranian was heavily beaten in Sweden's detention center by security guards. I will not tolerate disrespect and violation of the rights of the citizens of my country."

New Iranian drone being developed for special purposes: commander

The Iranian Air Force is manufacturing a new generation of Kaman-class pilotless aircraft perfectly suited for a special operation, a top commander said, according to Tasnim.

In comments on Saturday, Air Force Commander Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh said his forces are developing Kaman-19 (bow-19) unmanned aerial vehicle for a special operation.

He said a previous version of the drone, Kaman-12, has already been employed in a number of military drills, while Kaman-22 is also in the final stage of production.

Pointing to the remarkable flight endurance and great range of Kaman-22, General Nasirzadeh said the homegrown drone has special features in terms of carrying combat cargo and conducting patrol and reconnaissance missions.

Russia rejects U.S. pessimism on Vienna talks, says revival chances 'seem to be real'

Russia's permanent representative to international organizations in Vienna says chances to restore the Iran nuclear deal seem to be real, a day after Washington voiced doubt about the future of the agreement, which was ditched by the U.S. and as the remaining signatories seek to revive it.

"Chances to restore #JCPOA seem to be real, although not fully guaranteed, of course," Mikhail Ulyanov wrote in a tweet on Friday, referring to the nuclear pact by its official acronym.

He made the remarks in response to comments made by Robert Malley, the U.S. envoy for Iran, who called the nuclear deal's fate "one big question."

In an interview with NatSec Daily published on Thursday, Malley said the delay in the Vienna talks, which have proceeded fruitlessly since April, is due to the mistrust sowed during the Donald Trump administration's "maximum pressure" campaign and the political transition in Iran.

Iran and the five remaining parties to the Joint

published on Thursday.

Raisi will make sure that the Vienna talks would not become "attritional," she added.

So far, six rounds of "constructive" and "businesslike" negotiations have been held in the Austrian capital, but the participating diplomats who were previously optimistic about the revival of the JCPOA now sound more cautious.

Since the beginning of the talks, disagreements have persisted over a number of issues, including how to sequence the U.S. sanctions removal, with Tehran arguing that since Washington was the party that violated the terms of the agreement, it should take the first step back into compliance with the deal by removing its unilateral sanctions.

The Biden administration, on the other hand, has declined to remove the sanctions, despite repeatedly attacking the Trump administration's "failed" maximum pressure policy and vowing to repeal it.

(Source: Press TV)

Afghanistan: What to Expect

From Page 1 ▶ “Experts from the former government will be brought in for crisis management,” he told Reuters.

The new government structure would not be a democracy by Western definitions, but “it will protect everyone’s rights,” the official added.

The Taliban had a short-lived experience in governing Afghanistan in the 1990s. And after its downfall, it turned into a militant group mounting guerilla attacks on U.S. and Afghan forces. But militancy is different from governance. Whether they would succeed in ruling Afghanistan with all its ethnoreligious complexities remains an open question.

In the last few weeks since the beginning of their takeover of Afghanistan’s provincial capitals, the Taliban sought to present a more moderate face and assure the Afghan people that they would be able to run the country.

They also tried to maintain good relations with all of Afghanistan’s neighbors. Till now, there is no indication that the Taliban’s Afghanistan would be at odds with any of the country’s neighbors.

But over time the new government of Afghanistan may be cajoled by some regional states into siding with certain blocs against others. Sensing a potential opportunity in the rise of a Sunni-dominated government, these states may be tempted to exploit the new political dynamics in Afghanistan to score political goals with their archrivals. At the end of the day, in the politically polarized atmosphere of West Asia nothing is impossible.

In fact, some commentators in the region have already started to anticipate a devastating war between Iran and the Taliban-led Afghanistan, one that would be indirectly waged by great powers in another dirty “game of nations.”

“Many don’t believe that the Taliban’s victory was the result of misjudgment or a slip-up by the U.S. and Britain. It won’t be long before Iran enters a confrontation it would rather avoid at this time, pushing all the Shiite factions under its control to repel Taliban attacks and thereby igniting a war whose trajectory would be unknown,” wrote Huda al-Husseini in an opinion piece for the Saudi newspaper, Asharq Al Awsat. “The war



would fragment its strength and ravage its entity, weakening it in the face of the countries that made the decision.”

Accusing Iran of pursuing the goal of reestablishing the “Persian empire,” the analyst said the war would put an end to this “dream”.

These allegations of Iran using Shiites groups to combat the Taliban came after Tehran strongly rejected any involvement in the war between the Taliban and the previous government of Afghanistan. The allegations were often made by Saudi commentators and experts.

One such allegation was made by a prominent Saudi Iran expert who falsely said that, during the Taliban’s advance toward Kabul, Iran had told the Afghan government that it was ready to use Fatemiyoun Brigade to defend the government against the Taliban, a claim that was strongly rejected by the Brigade.

These allegations were made with one purpose possibly in mind: souring the Iran-Taliban relations right from the start. Therefore, greater intuition and vigilance are required on the part of the Taliban to avoid falling into the trap that regional players could set for it.

Japan FM due in Tehran on Sunday

TEHRAN - Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi will pay a visit to Iran on Sunday and is expected to meet his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif and Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi.

After arriving in Tehran on Saturday, Motegi is expected to hold talks with Ayatollah Raisi and Foreign Minister Zarif on Sunday, The Japan Times reported. It added that the top Japanese diplomat is also planning to meet with Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a former Iranian deputy foreign minister who is set to succeed Zarif under the Raisi administration.

Citing diplomatic sources, the Japanese newspaper claimed that there are calls within the Iranian government to ask Japan to mediate and push the United States to ease its sanctions on Iran.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh had announced that the Japanese foreign minister will pay a two-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran at the invitation of Zarif.

“This trip, which is of great importance on the eve of the formation of the 13th government, is in response to Dr. Zarif’s visit to Tokyo in 2019,” Khatibzadeh said.

The spokesman underlined, “Iran-Japan relations have always been important as two important powers in West and East Asia, and the two countries have enjoyed friendly relations based on common interests during 90 years of diplomatic relations, and now consultations are underway on bilateral and multilateral issues, and are at the highest level between the two countries.”

Khatibzadeh confirmed that in addition to Zarif, Motegi will meet other high-ranking Iranian officials.

Earlier, the Iranian embassy in Japan had said that the Japanese foreign minister’s visit to Tehran in the near future, on the eve of the formation of a new government, could open a new chapter for deepening bilateral relations, and close consultations between the two countries on important regional and international issues.



Ahead of his visit, Motegi wrote an opinion piece for Iran’s state news agency, IRNA, explaining the importance of the visit. “Close communication between the two governments is also necessary to strengthen bilateral relations. To this end, I decided to travel to Iran to exchange views at the earliest opportunity with the government of Mr. Raisi, who has recently taken office,” he wrote.

“This is the first time in about two years that the Japanese foreign minister is visiting Iran, and in addition, he will be the first high-ranking foreign official from a developed Asian country to hold face-to-face talks with the new Iranian government. I look forward to having frank consultation to deepen the long-standing friendly relations between the two countries,” Motegi added.

The Japanese foreign minister noted, “In late July, Japan donated a total of about 2.9 million doses of

Japanese-made vaccine to Iran as part of its support to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. I personally supported this decision due to the long-standing friendly relations between Japan and Iran. This is the largest donation of vaccine by Japan abroad and the fastest vaccine donation under COVAX. If this support helps strengthen the relations and cooperation between Japan and Iran, it will make me happy.”

“For Japan, which imports about 90 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East [West Asia], peace and stability in the Middle East are crucial. Stable oil supplies from the Middle East are also essential for the stability and growth of the global economy, including Japan. There is no doubt that in this regard, Iran’s role as a major country in the Middle East is very important,” he continued.

Motegi concluded, “Having long-standing friendly relations with Iran, Japan will continue its diplomatic and active efforts to defuse and stabilize the situation in the Middle East, as well as to strengthen bilateral relations between Japan and Iran.”

He also reiterated this position in an earlier interview with the Saudi daily newspaper, Asharq Al Awsat, underlining that he would conduct frank discussions with the region’s countries about the situation in West Asia.

“Japan is in a position where it can openly talk with Iran through its long-standing and traditional friendship with Iran,” he told the Saudi newspaper.

He also pointed to Japan’s continued interaction with Iran. “I have had six direct conversations with the Iranian foreign minister since I took office,” Motegi noted.

“For Japan, which imports about 90 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East [West Asia], peace and stability in the Middle East are crucial.”

Iran, Russia discuss boosting ties

TEHRAN — Iranian Ambassador to Russia Kazem Jalali has met with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov to discuss the need to expand mutual cooperation in various fields.

The two sides explored avenues for bolstering and reinvigorating bilateral ties in different areas, Fars News reported. They also exchanged views on developments in West Asia, and the Persian Gulf region, including Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq.

The meeting was held on Wednesday concurrently with another meeting between the Head of Iran’s Supreme Council of World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought Ali Qazi Asgar and Interim Head of Russian Federation Muftis Council Demir Mohyeddinev. The two sides agreed to broaden the level of cooperation on Islamic unity.

In the meeting held at the Headquarters of the Russian Federation Muftis Council in Moscow in the presence of the Head of Moscow Islamic Center Saber Akbari Jeddi, and the Iranian Embassy’s Cultural Attaché Masood Ahmadvand, Demir Mohyeddinev said that the Shia and Sunni Russian Muslims enjoy peaceful coexistence, IRNA reported.

He added that one of the major objectives of the Russian Federation Muftis Council is the establishment and strengthening of strong friendly ties among the entire world Muslims.

The Head of Supreme Council of World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought Ali Qazi Asgar, too, said that during the years of serving as the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei at the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization he had close cooperation with the Russian Federation Muftis Council on satisfactory performance of the Hajj pilgrimage and the affairs related to that great Islamic annual gathering.

The Islamic societies around the globe have lots of commonalities, such as the glorious Qur’an and the Hajj pilgrimage rituals, which can serve as the foundation stones for their proximity, and the Supreme Leader’s approach on interactions among world Muslims is based on the same principle, said Qazi Asgar, according to IRNA.

Raisi, Putin hold phone talks

Also on Wednesday, Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi spoke over the phone with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Speaking with the Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday evening by telephone, Ayatollah Raisi described the development of relations with Russia as an important priority of the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy.

“We are looking for ways to remove the obstacles in the development of relations and opening new doors, and we are determined to increase the volume of bilateral trade with Russia,” according to a statement by the Iranian presidency.

Emphasizing that Iran is determined to promote friendly and comprehensive relations between the two countries in a way that will become a successful model for non-neighboring relations, the president added, “We have a serious will to finalize the comprehensive document of Iran-Russia cooperation as soon as possible.”

Raisi thanked Moscow for its initiative to launch the process of Iran’s membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and described it as a step towards strengthening very close relations between the two countries.

The Iranian president thanked Russia for its cooperation in preventing the outbreak of coronavirus and for the effort to jointly produce

the COVID-19 vaccine, stating, “Iran is requesting to receive more shipments of the COVID-19 vaccine due to the current special circumstances.”

Ayatollah Raisi added, “As a party to international treaties such as the NPT, the Islamic Republic of Iran is serious about enforcing the rights of its people in the field of peaceful nuclear activities and enjoying the benefits and achievements of this technology in all peaceful fields.”

He said, “The United States intends to use its political and media games to stand as a plaintiff instead of a criminal, and instead of being accountable for violating its promises and oppressive and illegal actions, put Iran in that position.”

“We have a serious will to finalize the comprehensive document of Iran-Russia cooperation as soon as possible.”

Iran looking forward to win 28 medals at Paralympic Games

TEHRAN — Chef de Mission Hadi Rezaei says that Iran delegation look for winning 28 medals at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Iran will partake at Tokyo 2020 with 62 athletes in 10 sports. It will be the nation’s smallest team since sending 40 to Sydney 2000.

Since then, Iran sent 89 athletes to Athens 2004, 72 to Beijing 2008, 79 to London 2012 and 110 to Rio 2016.

Iran finished 15th in the medal table in 2016 with 24 medals after winning eight golds, nine silvers and seven bronzes.

“Iran will compete in athletics (16), archery (6), sitting volleyball (12), wheelchair basketball (12), taekwondo (3), rowing (2), judo (2), shooting (3), cycling (1) and powerlifting (5) at the 2020 Tokyo,” Rezaei said.

“It’s hard to anticipate exactly how many medals we will win but we are going to sit in a better position than the previous edition. According to our assessments, our athletes can win 11 gold, 11 silver and six bronze medals in the Games.

About 4,400 competitors from more than 160 countries were set to compete at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics before it was delayed by a year.

Iran freestyle team crowned champions of Junior World Wrestling

TEHRAN — Iran freestyle wrestling team were crowned the Junior World Championships on Wednesday.

The Iranian wrestlers claimed five gold medals, one silver and one bronze in the competition held in Ufa, Russia.

They waited for six years for it but finally did it. For the first time since 2015, Iran won the junior world team title and in style.

Iran accumulated 178 points to win the top position in freestyle wrestling.

Rahman Amouzad Khalili (61kg), Erfan Elahi (70kg), Mohammad Nokhodi (79kg), Amirhossein Firouzpour (86kg) and Ali Akbarpour (125kg) claimed five gold medals.

Mahdi Hajiloueian seized a silver in the 92kg and Alireza Abdollahi snatched a bronze medal at the 97kg.

Persepolis complete signing of Reza Dehghani

TEHRAN — Persepolis football team completed the signing of Reza Dehghani on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old left winger has penned a two-year contract with Persepolis.

He played for Nassaji last season in Iran Professional League. Dehghani is Persepolis’ second signing of the summer. The Reds have already completed the signing of defender Alireza Ebrahimi.

Dehghani started his playing career in Sepahan in 2017.

He has also played for Iran U20 football team.

Dorostkar named Iran freestyle wrestling head coach

TEHRAN — Pejman Dorostkar was named as new head coach of Iran freestyle wrestling team on Tuesday.

The 45-year-old trainer replaced Gholamreza Mohammadi in the team.

Dorostkar, who won two gold medals at the Asian championships in 2001 and 2003, has already worked as head coach of Iran junior team.

Dorostkar will have to prepare Iran wrestling team for the 2021 World Wrestling Championships which will be held in Oslo, Norway from Oct. 2 to 10.

2022 WCQ: Iraq to play Iran at neutral venue

TEHRAN — Iraq’s home friendly against Iran at the 2022 World Cup qualification Round 3 will take place at a neutral venue.

The match has been scheduled for Sept. 7 in Group A.

Iraq will reportedly choose Doha, Qatar as neutral venue.

FIFA and the AFC had periodically placed a ban on Iraq hosting international games for security reasons.

Persepolis sporting director Peyrovani extends contract

TEHRAN — Persepolis sporting director Afshin Peyrovani has penned a two-year extension with the team.

He is a familiar face for Persepolis’ fans since he has played in the team for 11 years from 1993 to 2004.

He also coached Persepolis for a while after the departure of Afshin Ghotbi in November 2008.

Peyrovani has also worked as sporting director of Iran national football team in 2016.

He has played 66 appearances for Iran national team and was a member of the team at the 1998 FIFA World Cup.

Nourollahi joins Shabab Al Ahli

TEHRAN — Persepolis iconic midfielder Ahmad Nourollahi joined Emirati football team Shabab Al Ahli on Tuesday.

The 28-year-old player has penned a two-year deal with the Emirati football team.

Nourollahi will wear No. 7 jersey in Shabab Al Ahli.

The midfielder played a key role in Persepolis’ success over the past four years, winning Iran Professional League four times with the Reds.

Payam Niazmand happy to join Portimonense

TEHRAN — Iran international goalkeeper Payam Niazmand is happy to have joined Portimonense.

The 26-year-old Iranian keeper has penned a three-year contract with the top-flight Portuguese team.

His contract buyout clause is €20m.

“I’m very happy to be here and very optimistic about the future. Since they contacted me, I realized the club’s great interest in signing me.

“I had several offers, but when I spoke with the president and the coach, I obviously chose Portimonense,” Niazmand said.

“I also spoke with several Iranian players who have played here and asked them about Portuguese football, the country and culture. Everyone told me it is a great country and a great league so we can grow as a player,” the goalie added.

Iranian duo shortlisted for Best 2021 ACL Volleys & Half-Volleys

TEHRAN — Persepolis Shahriyar Moganlou and Esteghlal winger Mohammad Naderi have been shortlisted for the best 2021 AFC Champions League Group Stage Volleys & Half-Volleys.

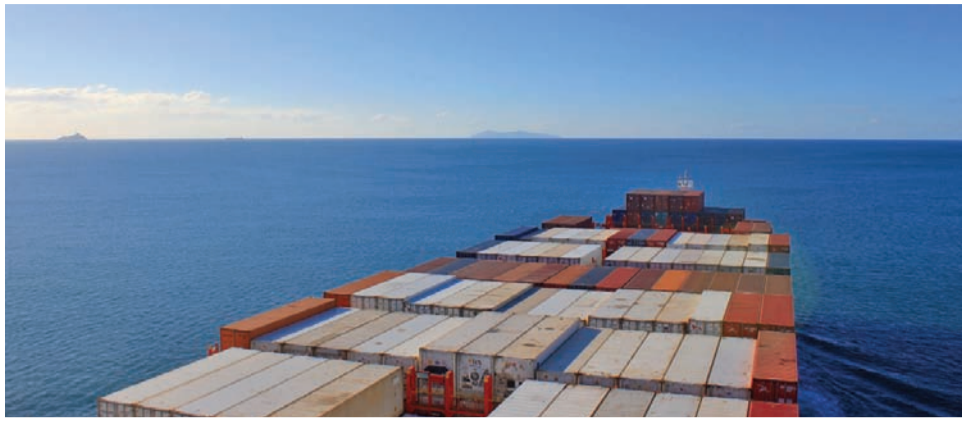
On Matchday Two, Persepolis of IR Iran scored just two minutes after the interval against Qatar’s Al-Rayyan to draw level, but it was far from finished.

Lulling the defense into a false sense of security with a jogging build up, Moganlou used one well-timed burst of speed to leap and get on the end of a perfectly placed Siamak Nemati cross to give his side the lead.

Esteghlal FC’s Matchday Two opener was a masterclass in recognition and cohesion starting with Mehdi Ghaedi’s well-timed run to the edge of the penalty box to get on the end of a through ball.

With barely a glance, he saw the advancing Naderi, chipped it through two defenders and set it up beautifully for the Iranian defender to volley home.

Leandro Velazquez (Johor Darul Ta’zim), Mateus (Nagoya Grampus) and Jovin Bedic (Kaya FC–Iloilo) are among the candidates.



Economic exchanges with EAEU to boost trade with third countries

TEHRAN - Head of the Non-Oil Export Promotion Committee of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) says trade with the members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) will result in the expansion of trade with third countries.

"The Eurasian Union could be a great target for Iran's export development, and the current preferential trade agreement is a good practice for free trade," Jamshid Nafar said mentioning the new government's planning for expansion of non-oil trade as the main strategy.

He said that the current imports and exports to the Eurasian Economic Union need to be analyzed and new measures should be taken to remove obstacles to provide suitable conditions for foreign trade.

Noting that the Eurasian Economic Union member states can meet Iran's domestic needs such as animal feed, Nafar said: "On the other hand, there is a high ca-

capacity for food industry exports to this region, and this can balance trade."

"Such conditions make free trade competitive and stimulate interest in the development of trade among domestic economic actors and Eurasian countries," he added.

He further noted that relations with neighboring countries and with the Eurasian Economic Union, should be accelerated as one of the priorities of the thirteenth government, and this goal can be made possible by identifying and resolving problems.

"Exports to Eurasian Economic Union member states will boost Iran's trade and strengthen its trade opportunities with third countries," the official stressed.

According to IRNA, Iran exported \$258 million worth of goods to Eurasia in the first quarter of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-June 21) while importing \$347 million from these countries.

Iran and Eurasian Economic Union reached a free trade agreement in October 2018 based on which about 862 commodity items were subjected to preferential tariffs.

The interim agreement enabling the formation of a free trade area between Iran and the EAEU was signed on May 17, 2018, and officially came into force on October 27, 2019.

Iran is a very important market in the region and the development of ties with this country is of high significance for the EAEU members (Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan).

The free trade agreement between Iran and this union has laid the ground for the expansion of trade ties between the two sides.

The agreement with the bloc has increased Iran's exports to the EAEU member states significantly, which is a turning point for the Islamic Republic's plans for boosting non-oil exports during the U.S. sanctions.

Private sector fully supports new industry minister candidate

TEHRAN - Representatives of the Iranian private sector in various associations have expressed their complete support for President Raisi's industry, mining, and trade minister candidate Seyyed Reza Fatemi Amin, IRNA reported.

As reported, Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), Iran House of Industry and Mining, Tehran Chamber of Guilds, Iranian Animal Feed, Poultry and Aquaculture Industry Association, Detergent, Health, and Cosmetics Association, Iranian Meat Products Association, Iranian Tire Industry Association, Iranian Telecommunication Industries Syndicate, Iranian Mineral and Drinking Water Association, Iranian Canning Industry Syndicate and many other private sector associations and syndicates in the country have strongly supported the plans presented by the proposed minister.

Expressing the importance of economic issues and the irreplaceable role of the Industry Ministry in advancing the economic goals of the country, the mentioned associations have said that Fatemi Amin is considered to have experience, a good program, a strong resume, and sufficient



knowledge of this important ministry.

Fatemi Amin has been previously the deputy industry minister for planning, the deputy of Industries and Mines Ministry, the board member of the country's Industrial Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO), head of the Industries and Mines Transformation Headquarters, and advisor to the Minister of Industry, Mining and Trade in industrial, mining and trade strategies.

Earlier this month, President Raisi introduced the list of ministers of his government for a vote of confidence in the parliament.

Iran's July oil output rises 28% year on year: OPEC

From page 1 ► The country's average heavy crude price was \$65.01 since the beginning of 2021 up to the report's publishing date, in comparison to \$38.54 in the previous year's same period.

In addition to the devastating impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on the global oil industry which resulted in the drastic fall in oil prices, the Iranian oil industry has also been under pressure from the U.S. efforts to isolate the country by re-imposing sanctions.

According to IRNA, studies show that the share of oil in Iran's economic growth increased in the previous Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20); the figure was reported to be - 7.4 percent in the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020), in the



winter of 1999, it reached + 4.5 percent.

Iran has been ramping up its oil production over the past few months following the recovery of

the global markets from the negative impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier in February, Fitch Solutions Incorporation, a subsidiary of

Fitch Ratings, which is one of the U.S.'s three biggest credit rating agencies, forecasted a 6.8-percent growth for Iranian oil exports in 2021 if the U.S. comes back to the 2015 nuclear deal.

In one of its latest reports dubbed "Iran Oil and Gas Report", Fitch also saw the Islamic Republic's crude oil exports double in 2022 compared to 2020.

"The prospects for the Iranian oil sector have brightened significantly following Joe Biden's victory in the U.S. presidential election on November 3, 2020. President Biden has indicated that he will seek to re-enter the U.S. into the Iranian nuclear deal, paving the way for a roll-back of secondary sanctions and recovery of around 2.0 million bpd in oil production," the report said.

Domestic production of equipment saves Iranian gas industry €250m

TEHRAN - Head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) has said the indigenization of the knowledge for the production of gas industry equipment has saved the country over 250 million euros in the past few years, Shana reported.

Hassan Montazer Torbati mentioned signing agreements with domestic knowledge-based companies for the production of 25 major gas industry equipment items, saying: "so far, of the 29 major items required by the industry, 25 have been indigenized by signing deals and agreements with local knowledge-based companies."

"Decisions have also been made for the indigenization of the other four items and negotiations are underway," Montazer Torbati added.

National Iranian Gas Company pursues its technological needs in several ways; part of the need is met through institutes and knowledge-based companies, some through manufacturing contracts, and part through technology transfer, he said.

The official noted that in the next few years, NIGC will try to indigenize the knowledge for the



production of all the items needed by the country's gas industry in the refining, transmission, and distribution sectors.

"Although the sanctions brought us some difficulties, they also helped the National Iranian Gas Company, to gain self-sufficiency in manufacturing of equipment in addition to production and operation," the NIGC head said.

Going hand in hand with the oil industry, the Iranian gas sector has been enjoying drastic technological advances in recent years, and nu-

merous knowledge-based companies, research centers, and institutes have become active to help the industry reach its goals of self-sufficiency.

The indigenization and domestic production of oil and gas industry equipment have been always among the objectives of the Iranian Oil Ministry. However, the issue became further highlighted since the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions and Washington's determination for cutting off the Islamic Republic's ties with the world advances in knowledge and technology, especially in the oil and gas sector.

In the past few years, the ministry has been seriously supporting knowledge-based companies and startups, and several events, exhibitions, and panels have been held in this regard to encourage the mentioned companies' contribution to the country's oil and gas industry.

In June 2019, NIGC held a reverse pitch panel to address the industry's technological issues and to benefit from the capabilities and capacities of the knowledge-based companies and academics active in the industry.

Gasoline, gas oil export drops in 4 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - Iran's export of gasoline and gas oil seems to have been dropped in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-July 22), as compared to the first period of time in the past year, according to a member of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (ICCIMA).

"The price of gasoline in neighboring countries, including Afghanistan, has now reached about \$900 per ton, so it seems that in the first four months of this year, we have not had a significant presence in the field of gasoline and gas oil exports", Hamid Hosseini stated.

"So far, the official details of product export statistics have not been published, but in the first four months of last year, we had about \$700 million worth of gas-

oline exports. In total, the highest export figure in the country was related to gasoline in the last year", he added.

Iran is currently the biggest producer and exporter of gasoline in West Asia, according to the Managing Director of National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC) Alireza Sadeq-Abadi.

"We are exporting to most of our neighboring countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iraqi Kurdistan," Sadeq-Abadi said in January.

In the Iranian calendar year 1396 (ended on March 20, 2018), the production of gasoline in Iran stood at 59 million liters per day; the figure reached 107 million liters per day last year, and currently the country's gasoline production capacity is between



107 to 120 million liters per day.

Iran has achieved this success despite the external pressures and hurdles imposed by the U.S. sanctions on the country's oil industry, Sadeq-Abadi stated.

The significant increase in the country's gasoline production and exports comes despite the fact that nearly two years ago Iran was an importer of the strategic product, shipping in 17

million liters per day of gasoline.

Iran exported over \$1.4 billion worth of gasoline in the first seven months of the previous Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20-October 21, 2020).

The country exported nearly \$490 million worth of the mentioned commodity during the Iranian calendar year 1398 (ended on March 19, 2020).

Iran-Turkey annual trade anticipated to reach \$10b by next March

TEHRAN- The head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce stated that the value of bilateral trade between the two countries is forecast to reach \$10 billion in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2020).

"Official Turkish statistics show that Iran-Turkey trade has been declining sharply since the second quarter of 2019, and the downward trend in trade with this country has continued until the second quarter of 2020. But since then, it has been on the rise and has increased in the first quarter of 2021 for the third consecutive season; In a way, we have witnessed a 53-percent growth in trade value between the two countries", Mehrdad Sa'adat stated.

He mentioned gas and petrochemicals, raw materials and agricultural products as the major goods traded between the two sides.

The value of trade between Iran and Turkey rose by 53 percent in the first quarter of 2021 from the first quarter of 2020, Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines, and Agriculture (TCCIMA)



reported, based on the official statistics released by Turkey.

The report put the worth of the two countries' bilateral trade at \$986 million in the first three months of this year.

Of the mentioned figure about \$505 million was related to Iran's exports to Turkey and about \$481 million was related to Iran's imports from this country. Meanwhile, in the first quarter of 2020, Iran's main trade with Turkey was related to Iran's imports from this country, while during the first quarter of 2021, Iran's trade balance with Turkey was positive.

During the first quarter of 2021,

Iran's imports from Turkey increased by about 29 percent compared to the same period last year, and during the same period, Iran's exports to this country increased by 87 percent, which caused Iran's trade balance with Turkey from minus \$104 million in the first quarter of 2020 reach a positive \$24.4 million in the first quarter of 2021.

As previously reported by the head of Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce, Iran has exported \$2 billion of commodities to Turkey in 2020.

Putting Iran's imports from Turkey at \$2.254 billion in 2020, Sa'adat said, "Iran-Turkey trade declined highly in 2020, while we had experienced an annual bilateral trade of \$15 billion, and meanwhile our target is to reach \$30 billion".

Different factors led to decline in trade between the two neighbors in the previous year, among them the U.S. sanctions and the coronavirus pandemic were the

most outstanding ones, he noted.

Saying that Iran-Turkey Joint Chamber of Commerce is looking for a roadmap to improve trade transactions between the two sides, Sa'adat said, "In this regard, last year, the issue of trade ethics between the two countries was addressed and some indicators were selected in this field, because if we want to improve the volume of trade and achieve the goals, we must take action to solve the root problems."

"Preliminary studies have shown that many problems arise from business ethics that need to be addressed in order to alleviate the problems that traders are struggling with, and this issue was addressed last year, and we hope for a favorable outcome", he added.

During the 27th meeting of Iran-Turkey Joint Economic Committee, which was held in Ankara in mid-September last year, the two sides investigated different ways of reaching the targeted \$30-billion bilateral trade and reiterated that reaching this figure is possible despite the pressures of the U.S. sanctions.



TEHRAN - The meeting of the founding general assembly of Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber of Commerce will be held at the place of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) on September 13.

As reported by the news portal of the ICCIMA, the meeting will be held online.

In last December, ICCIMA deputy head for International Affairs Mohammad-Reza Karbasi had held an online meeting with Mukhtor Umarov, the chairman of the Association of Exporters of Uzbekistan, in which the two sides expressed the need for implementing a trade agreement between the two countries' chambers of commerce.

As reported by the ICCIMA portal, in this meeting Karbasi announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ICCIMA and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan with the aim of forming a joint Iranian-Uzbek trade committee and noted that this MOU can be a big step toward the expansion of

ICCIMA to hold Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Chamber of Commerce's meeting in mid-Sep.

economic relations between the two countries.

According to Karbasi, the Iran-Uzbekistan Joint Trade Committee is in charge of implementing the provisions of the mentioned memorandum.

The official underlined some of the advantages of Iran as a trade partner like extensive infrastructure, significant economic potentials, efficient manufacturing sectors, highly skilled human resources, and expertise and noted that the country could be a gateway for Uzbekistan's trade relations with other countries in the region and in Asia.

He further mentioned Iran's favorable geographical position, saying: "Iran has the shortest and fastest routes for the transit of goods between Europe and East Asia, as well as between a large part of Russia and West Asia and North African region."

Iran's special position in the region, both geographically and in terms of security, provides a stable and growing prospect for investment and economic cooperation with countries all around the world, he added.

According to Karbasi, removing banking barriers and problems, reducing customs tariffs, reducing transportation costs and providing the necessary facilities in the field of rail transportation, and increasing the number of active wagons between the two countries is necessary for the growth of trade and investment between Iran and Uzbekistan.

From page 1 ► about what this bloc of Arab states might possibly intend to do to other states in the region down the line, particularly those which would not be willing to kowtow to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi on all major foreign policy issues in the Middle East (West Asia);” the DC-based consultant notes.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you evaluate Oman’s contribution to peace process in the region especially when it comes to Yemen?

The Sultanate of Oman is a regional balancer which does not align with one geopolitical bloc against another. This was underscored by Muscat’s decision to avoid entering the Saudi-led military campaign against the Houthis in Yemen as well as Oman’s neutral positions in the civil wars that have recently plagued Libya and Syria. Regarding Yemen, Oman has been the only member-state within the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that has never taken part in any military action in that country since the Houthis captured Sana’a in 2014. Muscat’s refusal to enter the anti-Houthi coalition in March 2015 has enabled Oman to serve as a trusted and credible diplomatic bridge between the Houthis and other actors such as Washington and Riyadh. Oman has its own national interests in play. Given that a continuation of the multiple and intersecting conflicts in Yemen pose a threat to Omani security, officials in Muscat want to see the warfare wind down in Yemen.

In general, Omanis are very passionate about Yemen and are genuinely concerned about the war-torn country’s future. There are deep ties between Omanis and Yemenis, whose countries share a 187-mile border, based on geography, history, as well as economic, ethnic, familial, tribal, and religious links. From Oman’s perspective, helping Yemenis resolve their various conflicts, which have led to much death, destruction, and numerous humanitarian disasters, is a moral obligation.

Of course, there are limits to Oman’s ability to help the Yemenis wind down conflict in their country. The Omanis alone can’t solve Yemen’s problems--many of which are beyond Muscat’s control. Nonetheless, out of all countries in the Middle East (West Asia) – and also world at large – it is safe to say that Oman has been the most credible and respected diplomatic actor in Yemen, maintaining positive relations with most of the major Yemeni factions, fellow Arab states, Iran, and the West.

While some Arab monarchies like Emirates and Qatar were trying to expand their military presence in other countries, Oman preferred to take the role of broker or mediator. Why? And was Oman successful in this regard?

Perhaps in manners that one could compare to Algeria or China, Oman strictly adheres to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of foreign countries. Other GCC states played very active roles in the wider Arab world following the eruption of “Arab Spring” protests in 2010/2011. Some GCC members intervened militarily in Libya and Yemen, while also funding certain anti-Assad militias in Syria and bankrolling the Egyptian coup of 2013. But Oman never interfered in these Arab countries following the revolutions and revolts of 2010/2011. This has



There are some concerns about Abu Dhabi’s intentions in Muscat: GSA

‘Oman is very mature and pragmatic’

been consistent with a long-standing Omani tradition of maintaining neutrality in most regional conflicts.

Oman has the closest ties with Iran in comparison with its Persian Gulf partners. Do you consider historic roots for such relations or just joint interest in this period of time? The ties between Muscat and Tehran were cozy even before the victory of the Islamic revolution in 1979.

Regarding Iran, Oman is very mature and pragmatic. Officials in Muscat realize that Iran is a permanent neighbor, and it serves Oman and Iran’s interests to establish a good working relationship.

From the Omani perspective, Iran has never posed any major threat to the Sultanate’s own security, which is different from the perspectives of some other GCC states that do see Tehran as not only a regional challenge but also an internal one too. Pro-Iranian groups in the Middle East (West Asia) have never been hostile to Omani interests.

Many factors help explain why Oman and Iran have an overall positive relationship. One of them is the history of Iran’s support for the Sultanate amid the Dhofar rebellion. Because the Shah of Iran deployed Iranian forces to fight the Marxist rebels in Oman, and some of these Iranians lost their lives in that armed conflict of the Cold War era, Omanis

to this day remain grateful to the Iranians for their help during that period of crisis. Notably, Iran’s 1979 revolution did hardly anything to fuel problems between Muscat and Tehran. Although Oman was slightly on Saddam Hussein’s side at the very beginning of the Iran-Iraq War (a.k.a. the “Imposed War”), Muscat ultimately maintained neutrality throughout that eight-year conflict, and even hosted ceasefire talks between the Iranians and Iraqis.

Mostly differences between members of the Persian Gulf council don’t come to the surface. Do you confirm that there is a hidden competition between Oman and other Arab monarchies in the Persian Gulf, especially the Emirates?

In Oman there are some concerns about Abu Dhabi’s intentions in the region and the implications for Oman’s own national interests. Notably, after Oman and Kuwait observed Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt blockaded Qatar in mid-2017, officials in Muscat and Kuwait City had questions about what this bloc of Arab

states might possibly intend to do to other states in the region down the line, particularly those which would not be willing to kowtow to Riyadh and Abu Dhabi on all major foreign policy issues in the Middle East (West Asia).

Of course, the al-Ula summit of January 2021 resulted in partial GCC reconciliation, and a lifting of the blockade imposed on Qatar 43 months earlier. But no one should be naive enough to believe that the al-Ula agreement resolved the fundamental issues which have produced much division within the GCC. Those divisions are still there, but what remains to be seen is how the rulers of GCC countries choose to address and manage those sources of tensions.

Why didn’t Oman try to mediate between Iran and Saudi Arabia while Iraq is very enthusiastic to host the talks between Tehran and Riyadh?

Muscat always welcomes dialogue between regional rivals and adversaries. When other Arab powers such as Iraq or Qatar try to facilitate talks and/or mediate between various actors, Muscat can always be counted on to fully support those efforts. My understanding is that the Iranian-Saudi talks have been taking place not only in Baghdad, but also in Doha and Muscat too.

At this period of time, all countries in the Persian Gulf realize that the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) talks in Vienna may fail to revive the 2015 nuclear accord. But regardless of the JCPOA’s future, Oman and other countries in the sub-region believe that the Iranian-Saudi talks, which started in April 2021, must carry on. Muscat will always encourage and help facilitate greater dialogue between member-states of the GCC and Tehran, as well as between different Arab states.

Recent wave of terror attacks in Pakistan is a litmus test for Islamabad-Beijing ties

By Mobeen Jafar Mir

A recent report published by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has alarmed both Islamabad and Beijing. The report confirmed the presence of 6,000 insurgents of the banned militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Afghanistan.

In addition to revealing that TTP maintains ties with the Afghan Taliban, it adds that there are hundreds of anti-Beijing Muslim radicals inside the war-torn Afghanistan. TTP’s links with the Afghan Taliban do not come as a surprise because both militant groups are ethnically Pushtuns and ideologically aligned, both stress the implementation of an intolerant version of Sharia, and more importantly, they both have once pledged their loyalty to Mullah Omar. But the possibilities of anti-Beijing militants establishing ties with other insurgents in Afghanistan can have serious repercussions for Islamabad-Beijing ties.

The optimism brought about by a marked reduction in terrorist incidents in the wake of stringent counter-terrorism efforts taken in recent years seems to be eroding. It can be ascertained from the fact in 2013, there were nearly 4000 terrorist attacks and 2020 saw 319 attacks, a nearly ten fold decrease. This year, however, there has been a gradual uptick in the violence with 230 terrorist incidents so far. This means violence is picking up in Pakistan.

The regrouping of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), one of the most malignant terror outfits in the history of Pakistan, is believed to be a major concern for the policymakers in Islamabad. There is a probability of TTP joining ranks with anti-Beijing insurgents as one of the many terror attacks claimed by TTP, the Serena Hotel explosion in Quet-

ta in April remained the deadliest one, so far, where Chinese ambassador Nong Rong was reportedly the target. It is also feared that Chinese citizens and interests including project sites could be on the TTP’s hit list. In May 2017, a Chinese couple was abducted from Quetta and later killed by Islamic State terrorists. A recent attack on a bus carrying Chinese nationals to the Dasu hydropower project –being built with financial and technical cooperation of China– in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province is again a grim reminder of the vulnerability of Chinese citizens and project sites at the hands of terrorist outfits.

Predictions about a possible resurgence of TTP are materialising as the Afghan Taliban gain ground in neighbouring Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal. It is feared that many terrorists can cross into Pakistan in the guise of refugees as the Afghan turmoil is likely to linger on. The TTP-affiliated terrorists, emboldened by the rise of the Afghan Taliban, may find their way back into the formation of an intimidating force against Pakistan, creating new challenges for the Islamabad-Beijing ties, particularly the building of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

CPEC is not under a threat by different anti-Pakistan and anti-China insurgents alone. The U.S. and India, two major rivals of China, also continue to be skeptical of the CPEC projects and other plans in Pakistan. Washington has time and again lambasted CPEC as a non-transparent project, and Delhi, a regional adversary of Beijing, believes that it infringes Indian sovereignty.

Potential challenges to China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is a flagship project of Chinese economic development in the 21st century, can

have regional and global repercussions. The landmark programme of investment in infrastructure is broader in scope than the Marshall Plan of the U.S., which was proposed by the former U.S. President Harry Truman in 1948 to rebuild Europe in the aftermath of Second World War.

A question arises why China and its interests could be a primary target of TTP? A possible answer to this question can be traced back to the siege of Islamabad’s Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in July 2007. Many believed that then President Pervez Musharraf was pressured by China to use force against the administration of the mosque. Western media had also tried to develop a connection between the Lal Masjid operation and an alleged Chinese role played in it. In its response, TTP was established in December 2007, with an eight-point charter, emphasizing the enforcement of Sharia law in Pakistan, to launch jihad (holy war) against the foreign troops in Afghanistan, and to carry out “defensive” jihad against Pakistan military.

The U.S. withdrawal, along with Indian and Afghan subterfuges, can slow down CPEC-related projects. An eminent Chinese scholar Wang Shida has also forewarned that a systematic attempt to stop the smooth functioning of CPEC can be underway in the wake of the resurgence and reunification of multiple regional and sectarian extremist outfits into TTP. It is the need of the hour for both Pakistan and China to redouble their efforts to protect their interests, particularly CPEC, from the machinations of both regional and global adversaries.

Mobeen Jafar Mir is an Assistant Researcher at Islamabad Policy Institute (IPI). He is a graduate of National Defence University, Islamabad. He tweets at @jafar_mobeen

Syria “destroyed” almost all Israeli missiles

The Russian military says Syria’s air defense systems shot down 22 of 24 Israeli missiles fired during recent air raids conducted by the regime’s warplanes near the Syrian cities of Damascus and Homs.

In a statement, the deputy head of Russia’s Reconciliation Center for Syria, Rear Admiral Vadim Kulit, said “On August 19, 2021, six Israeli Air Force tactical fighters launched 24 guided missiles from Lebanese airspace at targets in the Syrian Arab Republic”

The statement added that “the Syrian air defense destroyed 22 missiles using Russian-made Buk-M2E and Pantsir-S systems... There were no casualties among the Syrian military personnel or destruction of infrastructure”.

The Israeli regime violated Lebanese airspace to conduct the air raids, triggering condemnation from Beirut. Lebanese Defense Minister, Zeina Akar, has said it “blatantly violated Lebanon’s airspace” and triggered “a state of panic among citizens.”

Lebanon has also filed a formal complaint with the United Nations, saying the strikes violated UN Resolution 1701, which ended a major war Israel waged against Lebanon in 2006.

Likewise, Damascus has filed a complaint with the United Nations calling on the world body to fulfill its responsibility by taking firm measures against Israeli attacks against a sovereign country. Damascus also called on the UN to hold Tel Aviv accountable for its “terrorist and criminal actions”.

The Israeli regime has conducted hundreds of similar air strikes on Syrian territory over the past decade.

According to Lebanon’s Hezbollah, the goals of the attacks are to hamper the Syrian army advances against terrorists, assist terrorists groups and prevent advanced weapons from reaching the resistance movement.

Recently, Hezbollah’s Secretary General, Sayyad Hassan Nasrallah, said all three of these Israeli goals have failed to achieve their objective.

Last month, during a meeting in Kazakhstan, Russia, Iran and Turkey issued a joint statement condemning Israel’s “continuous” assault on Syria, insisting they not only violate “international humanitarian law” and “the sovereignty of Syria and neighboring countries,” but also destabilize the broader region.

Since 2015, Moscow has been helping Syrian government forces liberate their country from foreign backed terrorists.

At the invitation of Damascus, Moscow and Tehran have also sent military advisors to assist the Syrian Arab army.

Having already ignored a previous statement from the three countries issued last year, which also urged Israel to halt its bombing campaign, Tel Aviv appears unlikely to stop its violations of international law or destabilizing West Asia.

U.S. hits Russia with sanctions

The administration of U.S. President Joe Biden has slapped sanctions on a Russian ship and two companies involved in the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. In a report, the U.S. State Department says the sanctions have been imposed on the vessel, Ostap Sheremeta, ship owner JSC Nobility and construction company Konstanta.

At the same time, President Biden has issued an executive order allowing for sanctions to be imposed on certain Russian pipelines.

In a statement U.S. Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, said that the Biden White House has now sanctioned seven entities and identified 16 of their vessels as blocked property under sanctions laws passed by Congress.

However, the punitive measures are unlikely to have much impact on the nearly completed energy project.

Analysts say the \$11 billion pipeline venture to bring Arctic Russian gas under the Baltic Sea to Germany would likely be completed despite the American sanctions.

Just like the previous two U.S. presidents, Biden has opposed the pipeline because it would potentially undermine America’s own energy output as well as boost ties between Moscow and Berlin.

Biden has also sought to repair U.S. relations with Germany, Europe’s biggest economy, as he needs the help on many issues from the economy to support against America’s adversaries Iran, China and Russia. Under the Trump era, Washington’s ties with Berlin were fractured.

On Friday, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Nord Stream 2, led by Russia’s state energy company and its Western partners, is almost complete with only 15 km left to construct.

Meanwhile, on the anniversary of the alleged poisoning of Russian opposition figure, Alexei Navalny, Britain and the U.S. imposed sanctions on individuals, which Washington and London claim are Russian intelligence operatives allegedly responsible for the alleged poisoning of Navalny.

Britain and the U.S. both targeted seven Russians with sanctions and also issued a joint statement warning Russia over chemical weapons.

Washington separately imposed sanctions on another two men and four Russian institutes it said were involved in chemical weapons research or what it described as an “assassination attempt” against Navalny.

Navalny was flown to Germany for medical treatment after falling ill in Siberia on August 20 last year.

Moscow has rejected any involvement in the incident and allegations against it accusing the West of a smear campaign against Russia.

SNP set stage for Scottish independence referendum

Scotland’s ruling party has announced a landmark power-sharing deal for a pro-independence majority in the devolved parliament in Edinburgh, giving the Greens Party their first ministerial positions in UK politics.

The agreement between the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Scottish Green Party needs to be approved by members but strengthens ties between the two parties, both of whom back a new vote on independence from the United Kingdom.

The agreement promises to deliver another referendum before the end of the first half of the current parliamentary session in 2024.

The last independence referendum in Scotland in 2014 saw 55 percent vote against cutting ties with England, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, since Brexit where the majority of Scots voted in favor of remaining in the UK, there is a stronger sense of belief among pro-independence leaders that a second referendum will bring a different result.

First Minister and SNP leader, Nicola Sturgeon, hopes to secure the so-called “indyref2”, despite strong opposition from the UK government in London.

At a joint press conference at her Edinburgh residence she says “for my part, I am determined there will be an independence referendum in this parliament. We (the SNP and the Scottish Green Party) are choosing to work together and we are doing so not out of necessity but for the common good”.

Sturgeon added that “we also in this agreement reaffirm our shared commitment to securing independence.”

The deal is not a coalition, however, according to its text; the Greens will get two ministerial positions. Appointments have yet to be announced. The party’s co-leader, Patrick Harvie, hailed the agreement as a “historic moment” but insisted the two parties would retain their “distinctive voices”.

The Scottish Greens have just eight seats in the 129-seat parliament in Edinburgh.

The SNP, which has been banking on Scottish opposition to the UK departure from the European Union; as well as Britain’s controversial nuclear weapons program, Trident, based in Scotland, has 64, just short of an overall majority.

New developments expected to boost hydro tourism in northern Iran



TEHRAN – Five special projects, which are currently underway in Golestan, are expected to boost hydro tourism across the northern province, the provincial tourism chief has said.

A budget of 5.6 trillion rials (about \$134 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been invested in the projects, Ahmad Tajari announced on Saturday.

Various potential areas for dams and water facilities have been identified across the province based on their capacities as tourism destinations, the official added.

Covering a total area of 109 hectares, the mentioned developments are expected to generate 540 job opportunities upon their completion, he explained.

The first phase of the project, which includes preparing the water facilities for operation by equipping them with pedal boats and jet engines, and such equipment, is estimated to be completed by the end of the current Iranian calendar year 1400 (March 2022), he noted.

Hydro tourism or water tourism involves traveling to places specifically to take part in water-based activities. Some individuals who do not wish to partake in water-related activities embark on water tourism trips so that they can visit tourist sites that sit close to bodies of water such as lakes, rivers, dams, oceans, etc. Water tourists are regularly independent travelers, although some travel

businesses do organize group trips.

While water tourism often includes active chases, some water tourists visit islands and shore regions to join more relaxed pursuits such as diving or swimming. Travel businesses organize tours of coral reefs and arrange for local tour guides to preside over excursions on which travelers can swim with local marine life such as dolphins or even sharks. Some tour operators also cater to families who are primarily focused on swimming and tanning rather than interacting with aquatic life.

Water trips occasionally involve inland destinations such as lakes and rivers. Holidaymakers can sail or swim on lakes while many rivers are ideally suited to white water rafting. Additionally, some leisure businesses operate water parks that contain swimming pools, water slides, and areas for kayaking or canoeing.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus – a one-millennium-old brick tower – amongst its most famous. Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond. The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

Parthian rhyton, jewelry unearthed in Semnan

TEHRAN – Archaeologists have unearthed a clay rhyton and some pieces of jewelry while surveying tomb chambers of an ancient cemetery in Semnan province, north-central Iran.

The rhyton, which bears the depiction of a wild goat, is estimated to date from the Parthian era (247 BC – 224 CE), ILNA reported.

Moreover, in a tomb belonging to a lady, a bronze ring depicting a sphinx was discovered next to other luxurious objects such as bracelets, bracelets, various types of pottery, etc., which is unique, the report said.

Up to the moment, a team of archaeologists has explored five tomb chambers and three newly carved trenches each measuring ten by ten meters.

The Parthian Empire, also known as the Arsacid Empire, was a major Iranian political and cultural power in ancient Iran. The Parthians largely adopted the art, architecture, religious beliefs, and royal insignia of their culturally heterogeneous empire, which encompassed Persian, Hellenistic, and regional cultures. At its height, the Parthian Empire stretched from the northern reaches of the Euphrates, in what is now central-eastern Turkey, to



eastern Iran.

Parthian wealth obtained through lucrative trade networks resulted in substantial patronage of the arts, in particular, relief sculpture, statuary (large and small scale), architectural sculpture, metalwork, jewelry, and ceramics; coins with images of Parthian rulers form another important category of

objects.

A rhyton is a roughly conical container from which fluids were intended to be drunk or to be poured in some ceremony such as libation, or merely at table. They are typically formed in the shape of an animal's head, and were produced over large areas of ancient Eurasia, especially from Persia to the Balkans.

Archaeological evidence sheds new light on early human presence in western Iran

From page 1 ► for further studies of the prehistory of Hawraman. Referring to the preliminary results of this archaeological reconnaissance, Gohari said that the region's human history is much older than previously thought.

"Based on these recent findings, the history of human habitation in Paveh county is older than 40,000 years ago and this early evidence adds to the richness and importance of the Hawraman region of Kermanshah."

"Paleolithic hunters used two rock shelters for seasonal or short-term habitation near the villages of Shamsir and Zardui during a period that archaeologists call Middle Paleolithic," the official explained.

According to the archaeologists involved in this research, the inhabitants of these two shelters, that were most probably Neanderthal, used flint to produce stone tools, which according to their type



and method of flaking (such as Levallois technology) belong to the Middle Paleolithic period (40,000 to 200,000 years ago), Gohari added.

In addition to stone tools, the presence of animal remains such as bone and tooth fragments in these shelters, which mostly belong to ibex, can provide a window to study the ancient biodiversity of the region during the Ice Ages, he said.

Restoration projects commence on Shushtar mansions

TEHRAN – Restoration projects have commenced on several historical mansions, which are located in the ancient town of Shushtar, the tourism director of the ancient town has said.

Of the centuries-old mansions is the Qajar-era Khaneh Mostofi, whose damaged parts are being repaired, renovated, or being strengthened, CHTN quoted Ali-Mohammad Chaharmahali as saying on Saturday.

In December, the official announced that nearly all historical sites and monuments in the city and its outskirts needed restoration work.

Situated in southwest Iran, Shushtar is home to numerous sites dating from prehistorical times onwards, he noted.

Since last summer, more than eight monuments, including houses and sabats, have been restored using government funds, the official said,

adding some others are also being overhauled by private investors.

The town is also famed for being home to the UNESCO-registered Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System, known as a "masterpiece of creative genius". The ensemble comprises bridges, weirs, tunnels, canals, and a series of ancient watermills powered by human-made waterfalls. It is named after an ancient city of the same name with its history

dating back to the time of Darius the Great, the Achaemenid king.

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2009, the Shushtar Historical Hydraulic System may testify to the heritage and the synthesis of earlier Elamite and Mesopotamian knowhow. According to UNESCO, the ensemble was probably influenced by the Petra dam and tunnel and by Roman civil engineering.

U.S. releases religious tiles after confiscating them for violating Iran sanctions

TEHRAN – The U.S. Treasury Department has released a shipment of religious tiles that were projected to be installed at a northern Virginia mosque but were confiscated at Dulles International Airport after they were determined to have violated sanctions on Iran.

Engraved with verses from the Holy Quran, the custom-made tiles had been imported from the Iranian holy city of Qom to embellish a mihrab, a niche in the wall of a mosque or a room that points toward the direction of Mecca, Islam's holiest site and the direction worshippers face when they pray.

Months ago, Imam Abu Nahidian, the religious leader at Manassas Mosque in northern Virginia, had wanted to create the niche with a specific design in mind for his mosque, which has been active since 1994. According to the Washington Post, he told a mosque in Iran what he was looking for, and people there agreed to help create the tiles for the niche, which is roughly 8½ feet long by 9 feet high. The work took six months. The tiles arrived at Dulles Airport in June.

However, earlier this week, he rushed to Dulles International Airport to pick up 17 tightly sealed boxes. "After months of waiting, Nahidian was grateful to finally have the shipment in his hands. Inside were 750 pounds of handmade tiles painted dark blue, turquoise, yellow, orange, brown, and yellow, with Quranic scripture at the top in white."

The U.S. has imposed a variety of sanctions on the Islamic Republic since 1979, and "the tiles' provenance triggered a standoff with Muslim advocates that ended Monday when Treasury Department officials said they had agreed to release them after threatening to destroy or re-export them."

"But when Nahidian went to retrieve them, a U.S. customs official told him the shipment violated U.S. sanctions on Iran and refused to release them. Nahidian said he tried to explain that the tiles were a gift and were not purchased. As he understood the rules, the sanctions apply to products for sale. But the customs official was not persuaded and withheld them," the American daily said on Saturday.

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection cargo office at Dulles Airport later told Nahidian in an email that the tiles would have to be sent back to Iran or destroyed. Under federal rules and regulations, to get tiles from Iran, the mosque needed to get permission from the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the Treasury Department.

"Nahidian says he was surprised — the mosque has received tiles from Iran before without any problem or any requirement of such a permit."

The last batch had arrived just eight months earlier. The process to get the license for the tiles for the niche would probably take months, Nahidian recalled being told at the time. So he sought help from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), a leading Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization, and hired an attorney, Saied B. Amini.



Imam Abu Nahidian is reflected in a mirror at the Manassas Mosque in Manassas, Va., on Aug. 18, 2021. (Katherine Frey/The Washington Post)

Amini filed a request for the necessary license in late July. Initially, he tried to argue that the shipment was a gift under \$100 since an Iranian mosque had donated the tiles to the mosque in Virginia. That argument typically would be enough to secure an import approval under federal guidelines, but it wasn't successful, he said in an interview.

In August, Amini filed a request for the license to be expedited because it was a religious issue; the mosque needed the tiles quickly so it could start work on the niche. Mosque leaders also wanted to get the shipment out of the hands of customs so the tiles would not be destroyed.

Meanwhile, CAIR and the mosque's leadership pressed publicly for the Department of Homeland Security and the Treasury Department to release all the boxes. CAIR officials called on the U.S. government to release the tiles because they are used for religious purposes.

"The tiles are religious items; they're not weapons of mass destruction subject to sanctions," CAIR Director Nihad Awad said at a news conference on Aug. 10.

"Regardless of the politics of the sanction policies of the U.S., we're talking about common sense," Awad continued. "Laws do have common sense when it comes to the application. This situation is the victim of bureaucratic complications and a lack of leadership to make a decision."

On August 16, the Treasury Department granted the mosque a license to import the tiles into the United States. Nahidian went to the airport with the paperwork in hand, showed it to a customs agent, and transferred the 17 boxes into a car. U.S. customs agents had reinspected the boxes before they handed them off. There was no damage to any of the tiles, he said.

A spokesperson for the Treasury Department said that the agency broadly prohibits items from Iran without a license, and once Nahidian had one, the department handed the tiles over, the daily said.

First Announcement



Khouzestan Steel Company

Two-phase public tender announcement

Tender subject:

Khuzestan Steel Combined Cycle Power Plant with a nominal capacity of 520 MW

Identifying investors and evaluating them for financing, design, supply of equipment, construction and operation and then transfer of

"Khuzestan Steel Combined Cycle Power Plant with a nominal capacity of 520 MW "under a BOT contract

Tender type: tow – phase public tender

Deadline for announcement of readiness: until the end of office hours on Tuesday August 17, 2021 bidders could participate in the tender by visiting the "pim.ksc.ir" website and entering their general and supplementary information and attaching the required documents.

Important note:

All bidders, in addition to posting information on the website "pim.ksc.ir", need to announce their readiness to participate in the tender by sending an email to the address "M.SALJOOGHIPOUR@ksc.ir"

Applicants who are recognized by the Supplier Evaluation Committee as eligible to participate in the tender, by paying the amount of 500,000 Iranian Rials (can not be reimbursed) from August 31, to September 2, 2021 they could receive the tender documents from the "pmi.ksc.ir" website.

Offer delivery date: Saturday September 18, 2021

The first stage of the tender does not have guarantee amount

Address: Iran, Ahvaz, 10 km of Bandar Imam Khomeini Road, Services and Contracts Management Department

Iran tops Islamic nations in 2021 Academic Ranking of World Universities

TEHRAN — The 2021 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) has placed Iran above all other Islamic countries with the highest number of academic centers among the world's best 1,000 universities.

With 11 universities, Iran surpassed Turkey (8 universities), Saudi Arabia and Egypt (6 universities each), Malaysia and Pakistan (5 universities each), and Tunisia, Lebanon, Qatar, Nigeria, and Oman (1 university each) in the ranking, IRIB reported.

The 2021 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) was published on August 15 by ShanghaiRanking Consultancy. Since 2003, ARWU has been presenting the world's top universities annually based on transparent methodology and objective third-party data. It has been recognized as the precursor of global university rankings and the most trustworthy one. This year, more than 2,000 institutions were scrutinized, and the best 1,000 universities in the world are published.

Harvard University tops the ranking



list for the 19th year. Stanford University and the University of Cambridge remain at the No. 2 and No. 3 seats. Other Top 10 universities are MIT (4th), Berkeley (5th), Princeton (6th), Oxford (7th), Columbia (8th), Caltech (9th), and Chicago (10th).

Among Asian universities, The Uni-

versity of Tokyo (24th) keeps its leading position. Tsinghua University (28th) moves up one position, holding on to the second-best place in Asia.

Iran ranked 43rd among the 100 most vibrant clusters of science and technology (S&T) worldwide for the third consecutive year, according to the Global

Innovation Index (GII) 2020 report.

Every year, the Global Innovation Index ranks the innovation performance of more than 130 economies around the world.

The total ranking of Iran was 67 in the GI 2020 report, compared with 61 in 2019.

Iran's share of the world's top scientific articles is 3 percent, Gholam Hossein Rahimi She'rbaf, the deputy science minister, has said.

The country's share in the whole publications worldwide is 2 percent, he noted, highlighting, for the first three consecutive years, Iran has been ranked first in terms of quantity and quality of articles among Islamic countries.

Iranian articles rank 16 and 15 in Web of Science and Scopus, respectively.

Sourena Sattari, vice president for science and technology has told the Tehran Times that Iran is playing the leading role in the region in the fields of fintech, ICT, stem cell, aerospace, and is unrivaled in artificial intelligence.

Development plans in Iran should meet climate change goals: UNESCAP

TEHRAN — Arid and semi-arid countries, like Iran, should prepare plans for social and economic development based on the climate change goals, Mostafa Mohaghegh, a senior official at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), has said.

According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered, Mohaghegh, who is the senior coordinator at Asia and Pacific Centre for Development of Disaster Information Management of UNESCAP, told IRNA on Thursday.

The IPCC has reported that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean, and land and has found that changes to the climate system at an unprecedented scale have occurred in every region across the globe.

The report assesses that global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered. In particular, the report concludes that global warming



of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in CO2 and other greenhouse gas emissions are made in the coming decades.

In the near term (2021-2040), 1.5°C is more likely than not to be exceeded under every emissions scenario. For every additional 0.5°C of global warming, there are clear increases in the intensity and frequency of heatwaves, heavy precipitation (extreme daily precipitation events are projected to intensify by about 7% for each 1°C of global warming) as well as agricultural and ecological droughts in some regions.

With increasing CO2 emissions, carbon sinks are projected to be less effective at slowing the increase of atmospheric CO2, with the proportion of emissions taken up decreasing with increasing emissions, leaving a higher proportion of emitted CO2 in the atmosphere.

Iran has been suffering droughts for decades. It has been expedited over the last three decades.

The plateau of Iran is a chief victim of global warming which its main culprits have been pumping gas emissions into the atmosphere through their unclean technology.

According to the World Meteorological Organization's multiannual forecast, in the next five years, Iran's average rainfall will decline by 75 percent, and the temperature rises by 50-75 percent compared to the long-term average.

According to the national center for drought and crisis management, since the beginning of the current water year (September 23, 2020), precipitation has declined by 41 percent compared to the long-term average and 53 percent compared to the same period last year.

Iran relies on homegrown vaccines to defeat COVID-19: expert

TEHRAN — Kayhan Azadmanesh, a medical doctor and biotechnologist who is head of the virology research division at the Pasteur Institute of Iran in Tehran, has said the country hopes to defeat the coronavirus pandemic with a homegrown crop of vaccines

We can't rely on help from the international community with the pandemic. We are living under sanctions imposed by the United States; in our opinion, these are unjustified, he said in an interview with Nature published on August 17.

"The United States says that sanctions don't affect humanitarian activities, but when your ability to transfer money is restricted, it is difficult to buy drugs and medicines. And we have the technology to pro-

duce vaccines, so why not use it? To ensure the safety of Iranians, it makes sense to develop a variety of vaccines using different research and development strategies."

Since January 2020, we've had five separate waves. So far, 18 million or so doses have been administered: some 12 million were China's Sinopharm vaccine; 4 million were the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine; and one million were COVIRAN BAREKAT, developed by the Iranian state-owned Shifa Pharm Industrial Group in Tehran. The remainder include doses of Russia's Sputnik V and India's Covaxin. More than half a million doses are being administered a day, and some 17% of Iran's population of 85 million have received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

We have a long history of vaccine production in Iran. The Pasteur Institute of Iran was established in 1920 and has produced vaccines against tuberculosis and rabies. Vaccines have also been developed in Iran against measles, mumps, and the human papillomavirus.

COVIRAN BAREKAT, the first homegrown coronavirus vaccine, was unveiled on December 29, 2020, and started to be mass-produced on March 29.

Meanwhile, a vaccine developed by the Razi Vaccine and Serum Research Institute (Razi Cov Pars) is expected to become the second Iranian-made vaccine to be administered among the population in early August.

Iran has also successfully com-



pleted the first phase of the human trial for Fakhra vaccine, the third domestically developed COVID-19 vaccine, named after martyred nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh.

Ovid-19, the fourth domestically-made vaccine, is also undergoing human trials, which will also be available in early September.

It is encouraging to see COVID-19 vaccination accelerating in Iran, WHO says



TEHRAN — The World Health Organization has issued a statement, saying that it is encouraging to see an acceleration in coronavirus vaccination in Iran that started early August.

The statement on "COVID-19 Vaccination in Iran" by Dr. Jaffar Hussain, WHO Representative & Head of Mission to the Islamic Republic of Iran, reads: "As of 16 August 2021, 13.1% of the total population have received the first dose and 5.15% have received two doses. While delays in delivering sufficient doses of

COVID-19 vaccines limited the capacity to increase coverage, it is encouraging to see an acceleration that started early August 2021, reaching priority groups and people in the age groups of the 40s and 30s in the worst-hit provinces of Iran."

WHO is closely monitoring the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iran. The Organization reiterates its commitment to support the country in responding to the pandemic.

WHO acknowledges greatly the increase in frequency of vaccination recently after deployment of international and locally-made vaccines. Based on the data shared by the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as of 20 August 2021, 21,805,879 doses of different vaccines have been administered in Iran. This includes utilization of 16,378,331 of those for the first dose and 5,427, 548 for 2nd dose of vaccination. This means thus far 19.3% of the whole population has received the first dose whereas 6.38% of the whole population is fully vaccinated which is a considerable change in a few days. However, it

is not enough for breaking the chain of viral transmission.

It is to be noted that the 8.5 million doses of COVAX allocation mentioned earlier are spanned to arrive over several months. The August to September consignment is approximately 3 million doses.

As part of its ongoing response to the pandemic in Iran, the World Health Organization continues to mobilize teams to provide information, recommendations, and technical guidance. WHO also continues to engage proactively with national counterparts to strengthen the health care system and raise awareness about the virus to counter its heavy economic and social burden.

One key measure taken in Iran is the COVID-19 Emergency Response Project (ICERP), financed by the World Bank and in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Medical Education of Iran. The project delivered life-saving medical and diagnostic equipment to public hospitals and laboratories across the country to support the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION

Non-repayable loans for e-bikes must increase: Tehran City Council chairman

While an important strategy to contain Tehran's air pollution is using clean energies, non-repayable loans to incentivize the owners to replace their motorcycles with electric ones is not sufficient and must increase, Mohsen Hashemi, Tehran City Council chairman, has said.

The scheme on encouraging the citizens to replace carbureted motorcycles with electric ones has started over a few years ago, however, the process has been evolving slowly, he said, adding, we hope to increase the use of electric motorbikes by allocating the necessary funds along with supporting the manufacturers next year (March 2019-March 2020).

The handouts supporting the residents to purchase the motorbikes has been about 25 million rials (nearly \$600), which is not adequate anymore given the current economic condition, he stated, Tasnim reported on Saturday.

تاکید رئیس شورای شهر تهران بر افزایش وام بلاعوض خرید موتورسیکلت‌های برقی»

محسن هاشمی رئیس شورای شهر تهران با اشاره به اینکه یکی از راه‌های کاهش آلودگی هوای تهران استفاده از انرژی‌های پاک است، گفت: رقمی که به عنوان وام بلاعوض خرید موتورسیکلت برقی برای تشویق دارندگان موتورسیکلت پرداخت شده است، پاسخگوی این شرایط نیست و این رقم باید افزایش یابد.

وی تصریح کرد: جایگزینی کردن موتورسیکلت‌های برقی به جای موتورسیکلت‌های کاربراتوری از چند سال پیش آغاز شده است اما این کار با کندی پیش رفته است و امیدواریم در سال آینده با تخصیص اعتبارات لازم و حمایت از تولیدکنندگان، میزان استفاده از موتورسیکلت‌های برقی افزایش یابد.

به گزارش روز شنبه خبرگزاری تسنیم هاشمی با اشاره به میزان تسهیلاتی که تا به امروز به‌عنوان وام بلاعوض برای خرید موتورسیکلت برقی در نظر گرفته شده است، یادآور شد: با توجه به افزایش قیمت خرید موتورسیکلت برقی، رقم ۲ میلیون و ۵۰۰ هزار تومان رقم قابل قبولی به‌عنوان وام بلاعوض نیست و باید این رقم افزایش یابد.

Western Iran forests



Part 1

This mountain forest steppe ecoregion supports oak-dominant deciduous forests and pistachio-almond forests, amidst a diversified steppe flora. A variety of animal life, such as brown bear, eagles, wolves, leopard and many other species, have long made their homes in the Zagros Mountains.

The highly endangered Persian fallow deer, once believed extinct, has recently been rediscovered in the western foothills of the mountain range, and a number of protected areas have been established to combat the tide of habitat degradation and species loss.

Location and general description

The Zagros Mountains forest steppe ecoregion is located primarily in Iran, ranging northwest to southeast and roughly paralleling the country's western border. It occurs along what Zohary (1973) terms the Zagros-Makran mountain arch, starting in the north around the Diyala River, near the Iraqi-Turkish border, passing through parts of southern Azerbaijan, Iranian Kurdistan and Faristan, and extending to Makran in southeastern Iran. In the northern and middle parts of the range, the mountain ridges are interrupted by deep valleys and other lowlands formed by waterways and faults.

Prominent peaks include the Kabir Kuh in Luristan and the Kuh-e-Dinar (4,276m) in the Bakhtiari Mountains. Further to the southeast the mountain system continues into the districts of Fars, Laristan and Makran. Here the terrain is mostly comprised of lowlands and a plateau, interrupted by isolated mountains such as the Shiraz range, and with occurrences of large flats and salt marshes. A number of seasonal and permanent rivers flow through the area into the Gulf of Oman or the Lake of Jaz Murian (Zohary 1973).

The forest and steppe forest areas of the Zagros Mountain range have a semi-arid temperate climate, with annual precipitation ranging from 400mm to 800mm, falling mostly in winter and spring. Winters are severe, with winter minima often below -25 degrees C, and extreme summer aridity also prevails (Anderson 1999; Frey & Probst 1986).

As characterized by Zohary (1973), the Kurdo-Zagrosian steppe-forest consists mainly of deciduous, broad-leaved trees or shrubs with a dense ground cover of steppe vegetation. The dominant species are oak (Quercus spp.), pistachio (Pistacia spp.) and a few others. In the northern reaches of the mountain range, lower altitudes (400m to 500m) host communities dominated by Astragalus spp., Salvia spp., or others while higher up (700m to 800m) forests or forest remnants of Quercus brantii and/or Q. boissieri occur up to an altitude of about 1,700m. Above the timber line (1,900m to 2,000m) appears a relatively wide zone of sub-alpine vegetation (Zohary 1973).

Further south along the range, the forest becomes more impoverished and a richer steppe flora develops among the trees. Forest remnants consist primarily of Quercus persica and, up to an elevation of 2,400m, xerophilous forest of Quercus spp., hawthorn (Crataegus), almond (Prunus amygdalus), nettle tree (Celtis) and pear (Pyrus spp) predominates. Below 1,400m, the vegetation is steppic, with shrubs predominating.

Biodiversity features

The Zagros Mountains have traditionally supported a rich variety of animal life, including brown bear (Ursus arctos), the Asiatic black bear (U. thibetanus), eagles (Aquila spp.), wild goats (Capra aegrus), sheep (Ovis orientalis), wolves (Canis lupus), leopard (Panthera pardus) and other wild cats (Humphreys & Kahrom 1995; IUCN 2001). Five taxa of lizards are endemic to the Zagros range and the contiguous mountains of Anatolia (Anderson 1999).

The lesser spotted eagle (Aquila pomarina) and the golden eagle (A. chrysaetos) breed in forested hills and mountain areas in northern and western Iran. Capra aegrus, distinguished by its majestic curved horns, lives in the high rocks and mountain areas; the IUCN Red List classifies this species as vulnerable, with major threats being hunting and habitat loss due to grazing and timber activities (IUCN 2001).

These trends probably also threaten the leopard, which prefers mountainous country, forests and wooded areas where it can feed on sheep, goats and other prey (Humphreys & Kahrom 1995); the endangered subspecies P. pardus ssp. saxicolor prefers coniferous forests (IUCN 2001). Ovis orientalis, also notable for its impressive horns, inhabits mountainous terrain, temperate forest, and a range of other ecosystems. Blandford's fox (Vulpes cana), one of the rarest foxes in the world, occupies the mountainous areas of Kerman and Fars. The highly endangered Persian fallow deer (Dama dama ssp. mesopotamica), formerly common in Iran, was believed extinct until the 1950's when a small population was discovered in the western foothills of the Zagros Mountains (IUCN 2001).

Other species that have been recorded in the southwestern part of this region include jackal (C. aureus), fox (Vulpes vulpes), marten (Martes foina), mongoose (Herpestes ichneumon), striped hyena (Hyaena hyaena), jungle cat (Felis chaus) and wild pig (Sus scrofa) (UNEP 1989a). In areas of semi-arid steppe, typical avifauna includes rock partridges (Alectoris chukar and A. graeca), see-see partridge (Ammodramus griseogularis), little bustard (Tetrax tetrax), houbara bustard (Chlamydotis undulata), black-bellied sandgrouse (Pterocles orientalis) and black vulture (Aegypius monachus) (UNEP 1989b).

(Source: worldwildlife.org)

COVID-19 UPDATES ON AUGUST 21

New cases	24,179
New deaths	544
Total cases	4,640,695
Total deaths	101,354
New hospitalized patients	3,666
Patients in critical condition	7,626
Total recovered patients	3,902,808
Diagnostic tests conducted	27,755,618
Doses of vaccine injected	22,007,514

