

Athletes refusing to face Zionist regime’s representatives must be backed: Leader

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Report

U.S. finally admits Afghan airstrike killed civilians

In yet another blow to the image of America's intelligence-gathering efforts, the U.S. military has admitted that a drone strike in Kabul last month killed as many as 10 civilians, including seven children and apologized for what it called a "tragic mistake".

Previously the Pentagon had claimed the August 29 airstrike targeted a Daesh terrorist bomber who posed an "imminent" threat to U.S.-led troops at the international airport as Washington completed the last stages of the American-led withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Even as reports of civilian casualties quickly emerged, a top U.S. general had described the attack as "righteous". The head of U.S. Central Command, Marine Corps General Frank McKenzie, said that at the time he had been confident it averted an "imminent threat" to the foreign forces at the airport.

Speaking to reporters, McKenzie finally admitted "our investigation now concludes that the strike was a tragic mistake". He says he now believes it unlikely that those killed were members of the local Daesh affiliate, or posed any threat to U.S. troops.

The top American general says the Pentagon was considering reparations but did not confirm any compensation.

"I am now convinced that as many as 10 civilians, including up to seven children, were tragically killed in that strike. Moreover, we now assess that it is unlikely that the vehicle and those who died were associated with [Daesh] or were a direct threat to U.S. forces".

He also refused to confirm if anyone will be held accountable saying "we are in the process right now of continuing that line of investigation. "The killing of civilians, in a strike, carried out by a drone-based outside Afghanistan, has raised questions about the future of U.S. counter-terrorism strikes in the country, where intelligence gathering has been all but choked off since last month's withdrawal.

For days after the 29 August strike by a single Hellfire missile, Pentagon officials asserted that it had been conducted correctly, even though numerous civilians had been killed, including children. General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had hailed and praised the attack as a "righteous strike".

Opinion

How could ancient remedies lift tourism?

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - Recent decades have seen a growing interest in medicinal plants and the traditional knowledge of their usage to some extent that some believe the drugs of the future might come from the past.

Due to the side effects of synthetic drugs, the herbal products and the desire for multilateral use of these plants in various pharmaceutical, food, and cosmetic industries are becoming more and more popular again. And such a trend steps up demands for potentially important tourist attractions.

That is why the rural destinations with medicinal herb resources are becoming increasingly popular in Iran and many other countries, especially as a part of alternative medicine.

Iran is a country of exceptional biological and landscape diversity, a huge, untapped potential that could help to improve the tourism offering. Of the 8,425 species of herbs identified in the country, 2,300 are medicinal, aromatic, and cosmetic properties, according to data provided by the Forests, Ranges, and Watershed Management Organization.

Dotted with tens of thousands of ancient villages, rural tourism in the country perfectly suits the trend of many domestic and even international vacationers who are seeking unique natural experiences, unspoiled landscapes, stay in authentic accommodation, and feel local lifestyles.

Sightseers may stay with a rural or nomadic family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life.



The “Francophone”, “Francophile” who stabbed France in the back



TEHRAN — In an article published on November 23, 2020 on the Politico website titled “9 things to know about Antony Blinken, the next U.S. secretary of state”, Blinken was projected as a man with no flaws.

In a subhead the article also called Blinken a

“Francophone and -phile.” Now, we want to study how this man, stabbed not just France, but an entire continent in the back.

In 2016, France and Australia signed a deal worth of \$40, which required France to provide Canberra with submarines, according to Reuters.

On Wednesday, September 15, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States signed a trilateral partnership titled AUKUS. It was meant to provide Canberra with nuclear-propulsion technology for submarines. So easy, so simple, so elegant. Or so it seemed.

STAY UPDATED #AUKUS

India calls on Central Asian countries to expand trade through Chabahar

TEHRAN – Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has called on Central Asian countries to benefit from Iran's southeastern Chabahar Port capacities for expanding their trade in the region, Bloomberg reported.

Central Asian countries could unlock their vast economic potential by connecting with the Chabahar port in Iran, Modi said on Thursday in an online meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) hosted by Tajikistan.

“Central Asia's vast economic potential has remained untapped because of radicalization and extremism,” the prime minister added.

The Chabahar port is going to open up an important route to connect Afghanistan to Central Asia while bypassing India's main rival, Pakistan.

In May 2016, India, Iran, and Afghanistan signed a trilateral agreement for the strategically-located Chabahar to give New Delhi access to Kabul and Central Asia.

The original plan committed at least \$21 billion to the so-called Chabahar–Hajigak corridor, which then included \$85 million for Chabahar port development, a \$150 million credit line to Iran, an \$8 billion India-Iran MOU for Indian industrial investment in a Chabahar special economic zone, and \$11 billion for the Hajigak iron and steel mining project awarded to seven Indian companies in central Afghanistan.



Leader meets Olympians, Paralympians

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei met a number of Olympic and Paralympic athletes on Saturday. Iranian Olympic athletes won three gold medals, two silvers and two bronzes in Tokyo 2020.

Paralympians also claimed 12 gold medals, 11 silvers and one bronze in the Games.



Trawling: a catastrophe that must be stopped

By Faranak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN – The obvious violations of trawling vessels in the southern coast of the country in recent years, despite the dissatisfaction of locals, have posed a serious threat to the marine ecosystem, that must be stopped to prevent its irreparable damages.

Trawling is a method of fishing that involves pulling a fishing net through the water behind one or more boats. Trawling can be divided into bottom trawling and midwater trawling, depending on how high the trawl (net) is in the water column.

Trawling, which has been widely criticized for its use, causes damage to the seabed and coral reefs. It is estimated that each time the trawl net is pulled, about 5 to 25 percent of the seabed living environment is lost.

Davood Mirshekar, head of the marine ecosystem protection office at the Department of Environment (DOE), told YJC that “due to the special ecosystem sensitivities in the Persian Gulf and also the adverse effects of climate change on biodiversity, we are opposed to any kind of trawling in the Persian Gulf.

Saudis pursue Washington’s goals in talks with Iran

Op-ed

By Abir Bassam

It is not an easy task to start a new relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia, though in politics everything is possible. The two states have been barricaded behind their political doctrine differences. However, they are trying! Until today, they have finished three rounds of talks in an attempt to restore diplomatic ties and put ground roles to enhance bilateral relationships.

But it seems that the fourth session of discussions is facing difficulties.

The diplomatic relationship between Tehran and Riyadh was cut off in early 2016 after the attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran. This has led to complications in the relations. But in fact, it was an accumulated difference between the two states that led to a stalemate. One of the most important reasons is related to the different alliances each state is leading where each side is part of contradicting alliances that are having a different set of priorities

in the (Persian) Gulf and the Arab region.

Many attribute the differences between the two states to a competition to become the leader of the Islamic world. Others attribute it to sectarian differences. Nonetheless, the same kind of differences confronts the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Turkey. This is on the surface, and what lies beneath is deeper than it looks, since the differences between Iran and Saudi Arabia are based on political-ideological disagreements.

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Opinion

We respect Al Hilal but we are Persepolis: coach

By Farrokh Hesabi

TEHRAN – Persepolis coach Hamid Mottahari has reflected on the team's match against Istiklol of Tajikistan and their next match in the AFC Champions League (ACL) against Saudi's Al Hilal.

In an exclusive interview with Tehran Times, Mottahari admitted that the pressure on Persepolis was high before the Round of 16.

"Many people thought that we had an easy game. But I said before the match against Istiklol that the Tajik team are good enough to challenge any opponent in Asia. They had the hosting right and had their supporters in the venue. The Tajik people were kind, and they treated us very well, but the facilities like the artificial turf and the training fields were not at the level of Champions League, and it made the situation more difficult for us," Mottahari said.

"Istiklol were well-organized in performing their tactical plan, which was to defend and counter-attack. We had many plans to attack them, but they resisted well until the final moments of the match. Fortunately, we were able to break their defensive wall and win the game," he added.

When asked about the ACL's West Zone quarter-finals, where Persepolis will meet Al Hilal, Mottahari said that it did not matter which opponent they would face.

"We want to win the trophy in Asia. So, every opponents are respectable for us, but we don't fear to face this one or another. Persepolis are so strong that other teams are afraid of facing us. Al Hilal are a great team with great players. Besides, the matches will be played in their country, and it's a great advantage for them. However, we are Persepolis and we will focus on our strength," added Mottahari.

The Persepolis' former player and current assistant coach also talked about the changes in their team in the summer.

National Day of Persian Poetry and Literature celebrated in Tabriz

TEHRAN – Groups of Iranian literati and cultural figures came together during a meeting at Maqbarat ush-Shoara (Cemetery Of Poets) in Tabriz on Friday evening to celebrate the National Day of Persian Poetry and Literature.

The day, which fell on Saturday this year, is observed every year on the death anniversary of the most prominent figure of contemporary Persian poetry Mohammad-Hossein Behjat Tabrizi – Shahriar, who is buried at the cemetery.

"No works of any contemporary Persian poet could have influenced people's minds as much as Shahriar's, and his poems are within the memories of many people nowadays," Academy of Persian Language and Literature director Gholam-Ali Haddad-Adel said at the meeting.

He pointed to the numerous poets buried at the cemetery and said, "I don't suppose there is a city like Tabriz that has such a graveyard housing tombs of numerous great poets; this cemetery keeps many gems hidden under its soil that represent the grandeur and genuineness of Azarbaijan."

Iran, Tajikistan stress the need to establish inclusive government in Afghanistan



Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian and his Tajik counterpart, Sirojiddin Muhriddin, have stressed the importance of the establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan that represents all ethnic groups, while calling for the dispatch of humanitarian aid to the war-ravaged country.

In a meeting in Tajikistan's capital city of Dushanbe on Friday night, Amir Abdollahian said the formation of an inclusive government, involving the representatives of all Afghan ethnic groups, would be the only way for the restoration of stability and peace and promotion of development in Afghanistan.

The United States and a number of its allies invaded Afghanistan and toppled a Taliban regime there in late 2001 under the pretext of the so-called "war on terror." The invasion and the ensuing war gravely worsened the security situation in the country.

Russia, Iran, allies write to UN chief to complain of diplomatic ordeals in U.S.

Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Russia, Syria and Venezuela have sent a letter to UN chief Antonio Guterres, complaining about the United States' lack of commitment to its obligations as the host of the world body's headquarters.

In the joint letter sent on Thursday, permanent representatives of the six countries to the UN protested Washington's ongoing violation of its obligations under the United Nations Headquarters Agreement of 1947, demanding that the case be referred to a tribunal for settlement.

The letter said the U.S. violation of the norms of international law continues to persist.

In particular, the host country continues to not issue visas in time for delegates to participate at United Nations events or to work at the permanent missions, it added.

With regard to one delegation's experience in particular, upon receiving notification of completion of issuance of visas, delegates travel to a third country to collect them, but have to wait 10 to 14 days after arrival due to delays in the process of receiving the visas, it said.

The letter said in other cases, single-entry visas are issued for a limited period of time or with considerable delay, impeding the participation of the states in the world body and leads to unacceptable hardship for members of their permanent missions who are prevented from visiting their home countries for years, even for humanitarian reasons.

The six countries said the UN, which is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its members, should not tolerate coercion and discrimination against a group of its members.

"We are convinced that the establishment of a neutral arbitration tribunal and its legal

The government of Afghanistan collapsed on August 15 and president Ashraf Ghani fled the country in the face of the lightning advances of the Taliban militant group that followed U.S. President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw the American troops in a disastrous pullout.

On September 7, the Taliban announced the formation of a caretaker government in Afghanistan, where hunger and poverty have significantly increased following the collapse of the government.

Amir Abdollahian further hailed efforts made by the Tajik government and president to facilitate Iran's permanent membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and said Tehran supports expansion of bilateral cooperation in all fields.

Highlighting the religious, historic, and cultural commonalities between Iran and Tajikistan, the top Iranian diplomat called for promotion of bilateral cooperation in regional and international fields.

Muhriddin, for his part, congratulated Iran on its accession to the SCO, saying it would create a new opportunity for Tehran and Dushanbe to strengthen cooperation.

Pointing to the latest developments in Afghanistan, the Tajik foreign minister also stressed the need to deliver humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, urging the formation of a broad-based government in the country with the participation of all ethnicities.

conclusions on the scope of its powers and the pressing problems of the day-to-day life of delegations would be beneficial for the smooth and effective functioning of the UN," they said.

Iran denounces unilateral U.S. sanctions

In a separate development, Iran's permanent representative to the United Nations office in Geneva called for the US and some of its European allies to be prosecuted for their illegal sanctions against other countries.

Esmail Baghaei Hamaneh made the remarks in an address to the 48th regular session of the Human Rights Council on Friday, following a special report on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

"The time has come to prosecute the United States as the main culprit, as well as some European countries, for imposing illegal sanctions against the target countries," he said.

He said the U.S. has intensified its unilateral sanctions over the past two years despite the coronavirus pandemic, to the point that even Covax, the mechanism for the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, is not excluded from the negative impacts of the bans.

Hamaneh further said the unilateral sanctions primarily harm innocent people of the target countries and should be considered as crimes against humanity, adding that prosecution should be part of any program to curb the negative effects of sanctions on human rights.

"We agree on the need for a coherent approach to dealing comprehensively with various aspects of U.S. unilateral sanctions and their negative effects," he said.

TEHRAN – Nozar Shafiei, a foreign policy analyst, has said a move by Iran to revive the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and its membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) demonstrate that Tehran is moving towards a "balance" in foreign policy.

Iran was admitted as a permanent member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on Friday. The decision to accept Iran as a member came as the SCO leaders met on Thursday and Friday in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, for an annual summit. It was the 21st summit of its kind. President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran, who took power in early August, participated in the conference.

"The summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was held while the president attended the summit for the first time and this trip is his first foreign trip. It is assumed that what he proposes reflects the views and approaches of the new Iranian administration," Shafiei said in an interview with IRNA published on Saturday.

The expert stated that the president's remarks at the SCO summit were a signal for diplomats, experts and analysts that shows where Iran's foreign policy will be heading in the next four years.

He also referred to the recent consensus between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency on the monitoring of Iran's nuclear activities based on the Safeguards agreement, saying: "On the other hand, there are signs in the relations between Iran and the West that indicate an improvement of relations between the two sides."

The balance can be seen in the visit of IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi to Tehran and the agreement reached between the two sides, as well as the willingness by the parties to the 2015 nuclear deal (JCPOA) to continue the Vienna talks in order to revive the multilateral pact, he underlined.

Shafiei also assessed the messages sent to Tehran by the JCPOA parties to revive the nuclear agreement seem promising.

The talks to revitalize the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action started in April. Six rounds of talks were held until June 20. Though the sides failed to agree on all issues, the talks made considerable progresses. The U.S., which quit the JCPOA during Trump's presidency, is participating in the talks indirectly.

Now that the new administration has come to power in Iran, the talks are expected to start within weeks.

"Given that there are hopes for a revival of the JCPOA and the lifting of sanctions, this issue sends a message to various parties that Iran attended the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit with every possibility at its disposal," Shafiei opined.

Iran has been seeking membership since years ago. However, the United Nations sanctions against Iran and lately opposition by Tajikistan acted as hurdle for membership. Before Iran was admitted as member it, had been observer status by the Eurasian group.

"The issue of permanent membership is not decided in a summit, but in terms of expertise, a permanent membership of a country is discussed and concluded, and if nothing special happens, that membership will be announced," the analyst explained.

The university professor said permanent membership in the SCO has two stages: one stage is the announcement of membership and the other stage is the membership process, which may take more than a year, just as the membership of India

Moves to revive JCPOA, membership in SCO show a balance in foreign policy, expert says



and Pakistan took three years.

SCO emphasizes campaign against terrorism, separatism and extremism

The SCO is mostly seen as a security bloc led by Russia and China.

"The meaning of Iran's permanent membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is, in fact, Iran's membership in one of the most important regional organizations. A revival of the JCPOA and membership in the organization show that Iran is moving towards a balance in foreign policy," Shafiei pointed out.

One of the major topics of the SCO summit was the current situation in Afghanistan as the Taliban have returned to power after 20 years.

Since 2015, Afghanistan has also been striving to get a membership in the SCO. The situation has become more complicated as the Taliban have taken the reigns.

"The fact is that the current situation in Afghanistan has affected the whole region.... This issue made the Afghan crisis one of the important agendas of the summit."

Stressing that in terms of security the SCO charter is against terrorism, separatism, and extremism, the foreign policy analyst said: "It is important for members of the organization to analyze what is happening in Afghanistan and its consequences. In fact, the organization decides on one of the most important issues in its life."

Referring to Washington's pressure on Beijing and Moscow, Shafiei said: "Perhaps never before have China and Russia been under as much pressure from the West, especially the United States, as they are today, and the Shanghai organization has not convened a meeting in such a context."

On Wednesday, the U.S., UK, and Australia announced a security pact in the Asia-Pacific, in what's seen as an effort to counter China.

It will let Australia build nuclear-powered submarines for the first time, using technology provided by the U.S., according to the BBC.

The AUKUS pact is one of the countries' biggest defense partnerships in

decades, analysts say.

China has condemned the agreement as "extremely irresponsible."

Foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said it "seriously undermines regional peace and stability and intensifies the arms race".

China's embassy in Washington accused the countries of a "Cold War mentality and ideological prejudice".

Some analysts also say one of the chief reasons for the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and gradually reducing its presence in West Asia is to focus more on China.

On the other hand, Russia has come under increased Western pressure in regard to its disputes with Ukraine.

Shafiei also pointed to the previous sanctions on Iran backed by the UN, saying: "One of the reasons for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization's reluctance to accept Iran permanently years ago was that Tehran was under United Nations sanctions, but Resolution 2231 has lifted sanctions on Iran and the United States and the West should also move towards lifting sanctions on Iran."

Resolution 2231 ratified by the UN Security Council in July 2015 annulled all previous UN resolutions against Iran.

Shafiei said that a possible lifting of sanctions has given hope to the SCO and Iran's membership.

"Sanctions on Iran may have prevented Iran from membership in previous years, but their adjustment paved the way for Iran's membership," he pointed out.

Benefits of permanent membership in SCO

Shafiei emphasized that no country is now completely Eastern or completely Western-oriented.

"Even China, Russia and the United States are neither completely Western nor completely Eastern-oriented. Countries have 'multi-vector diplomacy' and 'dynamic diplomacy' on the agenda, and on the other hand, rapid developments and acceleration have led countries to make decisions in cybernetic conditions."

He underlined that if Iran's for-

eign policy orientation was only the East or only the North, etc. it would be wrong. "In the last 40 years, we have seen the loss of some of these orientations. We must have the concept from the East and the West that if a country does not have a colonial, unilateral, domineering and authoritarian policy towards us, we can have close relations and cooperation with that country."

"An organization can be the backbone of our foreign policy and national security, even if it is a claim on the paper," said the expert on the benefits of Iran's permanent membership in the SCO.

"(For example,) if one day radical forces from Pakistan or Afghanistan invade Iran's Baluchistan, all members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization are obliged to counter these forces in security cooperation with Iran."

Shafiei added if a country like the United States puts Iran under political and economic pressure, the SCO is a strategic institution that can reduce these pressures through multilateralism.

"The Shanghai organization facilitates relations between members and allows members to interact with each other," the expert underscored.

According to the professor, the SCO is turning competition into cooperation.

Organizations work to facilitate relations and establish peaceful relations, and if necessary, become regional strongholds to defend the interests and security of members, he explained.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman on Friday welcomed the approval of the Islamic Republic's permanent membership in the SCO, saying it will play a leading role in enhancing Tehran's ties with neighboring and Asian countries.

In a post on his official Twitter account, Saeed Khatibzadeh said he "warmly welcome(s) the decision of the SCO to approve #Iran's full membership."

He added that the endorsement would be "a major step toward enhanced ties with neighbors & an important impetus for our Asia-centered foreign policy."

The spokesperson emphasized that the country would continue its efforts to "build on indigenous initiatives for the good of the region."

Addressing the SCO summit on Friday, President Raisi said Iran's foreign policy has always been based on supporting multilateralism and active participation in international organizations while playing a constructive role in countering regional and global challenges.

"The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been based on active participation in international organizations, multilateralism and opposition to unilateralism based on justice, cooperation, mutual respect and the need to play a constructive role in facing international and regional challenges," the president said, according to Press TV.

He added that the world has entered a new era where hegemony and unilateralism are on the decline.

The international system, the president said, is changing towards polarization and redistribution of power in favor of independent countries.

"As in the not-so-distant past, Asia is at the center of global change. Maintaining and strengthening peace in this vast area is not a choice but a necessity. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its 'governing spirit' i.e mutual trust, common interests, equality, mutual consultation, respect for cultural diversity and common development are key tools for maintaining peace in the 21st century," Raeisi said.

The "Francophone", "Francophile" who stabbed France in the back

From page 1 ► The pact created a huge controversy all around the world, from China to the EU and the United Arab Emirates. The UAE foreign minister traveled to France on September 15 and the UK on September 16.

According to the joint statement released by the French and Emirati leaders, the visit took place upon invitation by the French side. Yet, the move is considered by many political analysts as an attempt to form an alliance, and respond to the U.S. "stab in the back."

"The French President and His Highness expressed their shared ambition to make the bilateral partnership deeper, broader, more multilateral, and with increased people-to-people exchanges.

They thus reaffirmed their enduring commitment to Louvre Abu Dhabi museum. In the field of economy, they welcomed the increasing co-operation between France and the UAE.

They also called for broadening the partnership to new areas. They welcomed the agreement between Institut du Monde Arabe and the Abu Dhabi Arabic Language Centre – Department of Culture and Tourism to co-operate on an Arabic Language certificate," according to the statement released by the French foreign ministry.

As for the UK visit, much of the focus was on the UAE-UK Sovereign Investment Partnership, in which the UAE will funnel £10 billion (\$13.8bn) over five years into promising companies that operate in the clean energy, technology and infrastructure industries.

The Times said the deal builds on the UAE's previous decision to invest £800 million in the UK's life sciences industry made in March.

The Financial Times said UAE investment under the framework had already reached £1.1bn in UK companies and funds, including £500m in CityFibre, a telecoms infrastructure group.

Can you really blame the UAE? Well, if the U.S. can ditch their longtime friend, the European Union, the UAE can be thrown in the trash can in no time.

The friends and allies' mistrust of the U.S. is growing into a big tumor. In our Saturday report, titled "U.S. couldn't care less about EU: Will Europe learn the lesson?", the Tehran Times advised the EU to act independently.

Blinken, a guy highly admired by the American and European think tanks, who was renowned for his reputation of multilateralism and being a "Europeanist," ducked the country he had been studying in, and had an emotional connection to. France

had hosted Blinken and his half-sister in the past, and now the French feel betrayed.

On September 17, France recalled its ambassadors to the U.S. and Australia for "further consultations".

A spokesperson for Australia's foreign affairs minister, Marise Payne, said, "Australia understands France's deep disappointment with our decision, which was taken in accordance with our clear and communicated national security interests."

She also said that Australia values its relationship with France, "which is an important partner and a vital contributor to stability, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. This will not change."

The spokesperson said Australia and France share many issues of interest and "we look forward to engaging with France again."

The AUKUS pact turned the attention of political commentators and analysts to a theory first put forward in 2013, and renewed by EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell in December 2020.

"Because the world has changed. It is dif-

ficult to claim to be a 'political union' able to act as a 'global player' and as a 'geopolitical Commission' without being 'autonomous.' What are then the factors that make this concept more relevant than ever?" Borrell asked in his article titled "Why European strategic autonomy matters".

In the article published on the EU website, he added, "The first is that the weight of Europe in the world is shrinking. Thirty years ago, we represented a quarter of the world's wealth. It is foreseen that in 20 years, we will not represent more than 11% of world GNP, far behind China, which will represent double it, below 14% for the United States and at par with India."

Borrell also discusses "the transformation of economic interdependence," as the Europeans have greatly invested on, particularly through "the defense of multilateralism".

"Today we are in a situation where economic interdependence is becoming politically very conflictual. And what was traditionally called soft power is becoming an instrument of hard power," he cautioned.

The theory of European strategic autonomy seems to be pursued more strictly than before, in view of Washington's betrayal of the European bloc by forming an Anglo-Saxon alliance. Washington did it without informing the EU. In the words of French Foreign Minister Le Drian it is a "breach of trust".

The AUKUS pact came as a blow to France's economy. They lost a major economic deal. Some say they lost over \$56 billion, some say \$66 billion, and the Guardian even went on to say that France lost a \$90 billion deal.

France had signed a deal with Australia to provide submarines for them in 2016, but with the AUKUS pact, Australia cancelled the deal with France. Some anonymous users on Twitter started defending the Australian decision, saying that it was best to cancel the deal, as France was going to provide Australia with diesel-powered submarines. A user mentioned Gerard Araud, the former French ambassador to the United States, as saying, "Well you should look on the reasons why the Sub have been replaced. Hardly a diesel is good especially based on a french engine. Also you talk about borders and Brexit. Happy to block the Italian border but yet you do not stop boats leaving bound for the UK."

Araud, who has been famous for his up-

front answers on Twitter, said, "The diesel was a Australian demand. Our submarines are nuclear powered! We could have easily provided nuclear powered submarines if we had been asked. We weren't."

He even went so far to say that France has to reassess its foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific region, considering "the seriousness of the blow which has been delivered to our industrial and strategic interests." Araud suggested these changes to be made in relations with the United States and NATO as well. Another sign of the existing tumor of mistrust among the U.S., and UK allies and friends. They all seem to be going into other directions.

Another important factor in the AUKUS deal, which shall not be forgotten, is Liz Truss, former international trade secretary, and current Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of the United Kingdom. According to Politico website, Truss shook on the AUKUS deal. The website also says that Truss "rolled over EU deals with 63 nations."

Her appointment as UK foreign minister suggests that the backstabbing could be continued. With her architecting such deals, the EU must be vigilant towards the U.S. and UK, and not put all their eggs in their baskets.

Iran and Tajikistan hope to open new chapter in ties

Raisi says Iran and Tajikistan share similar views on Afghanistan

TEHRAN – President Ebrahim Raisi of Iran who had visited Dushanbe to participate in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit held talks with his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon on Saturday.

Speaking with the Tajik leader, Raisi stressed that Iran and Tajikistan enjoy good capacities to expand ties. He said an increase in ties will pave the way for regional cooperation.

“Deepening and strengthening bilateral bonds and interactions will also serve as a ground for enhancing the level of regional cooperation between the two states,” Raisi said, according to Press TV.

“Through regular meetings and bilateral talks, Iranian and Tajik officials should establish stable and comprehensive relations between the two Persian-speaking countries, which become a model at the regional level,” the Iranian president suggested.

Raisi’s visit to Dushanbe culminated in Iran being accepted on Friday as a full member of the SCO after waiting for years as an observer at the Eurasian political, economic and security alliance.

The SCO summit was held on Thursday and Friday.

The accession marks President Raisi’s first achievement in new office, coming on his visit to a country which opposed Iran’s SCO membership in the past, Press TV commented.

Rahmon thanked Raisi for accepting his invitation and making his first foreign visit as new Iran’s president to Tajikistan.

Referring to joint projects implemented



by Iranian experts in Tajikistan, he said, “The friendship and love that exist between the two countries’ people and governments provide a proper ground for enhancing the level of cooperation and relations.”

During the meeting, the two sides pointed to their nations’ common religion, culture and language and expressed hope that the endeavors of Iranian and Tajik officials will mark a new chapter in economic, cultural and political cooperation.

Raisi also traveled to the city of Kulob in southern Tajikistan to visit the tomb of Mir Sayyid Ali Hamadani, an Iranian scholar, poet and a Sufi Muslim saint of the Kubrawiya order.

Addressing local people there, Raisi said relations between Iran and Tajikistan go beyond politics and that the two countries enjoy “deep heartfelt and cultural ties.”

Raisi says Iran and Tajikistan enjoy “deep heartfelt and cultural ties.”

Iran, Tajikistan set the goal for \$500 million trade

At a meeting of the top delegations of Iran and Tajikistan the two sides set the goal for promoting trade ties to 500 million dollars per year.

The delegations also signed eight cooperation documents, including in areas of tourism, labor and energy.

“Common views on Afghanistan”

In a press conference with his Tajik counterpart, the Iranian president said that

the agreements “attest to the serious will of the two countries to develop relations”.

He also emphasized that relations with Tajikistan are one of the priorities of the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy.

“I hope that this trip will open a new chapter in relationship with Tajikistan and that we will see the development of cultural, tourism and scientific ties between the two countries, along with economic and trade relations,” he added.

Raisi further noted that Iran and Tajikistan share similar views on Afghanistan, saying, “We believe that foreign interference in Afghanistan has caused many disasters and that the hands of foreigners should be cut off from the country. The foreigners neither established, nor promoted security. They were also not able to solve problems of the Afghan nation.”

“The issue of Afghanistan must be resolved by the people of the country and with the cooperation of neighboring countries that are interested in Afghanistan... Intra-Afghan talks should be facilitated. The government that will be formed in Afghanistan must be inclusive,” he went on to say.

“The Americans, who formed Daesh, went to Afghanistan following evil acts in Syria and Iraq. The presence of Daesh in Afghanistan is dangerous not only for Afghanistan but also for the region... We are opposed to the presence of any current that sets the stage for the growth of terrorist currents in Afghanistan. We do not accept that a terrorist current and Daesh reside along our border and damage countries, the region and Afghanistan.”

More advanced models of Bavar 373 on the way, top general says

TEHRAN – The Deputy Chief of the Army Air Defense for Operations has announced that in due time very good news about the next models of the “Bavar 373” system would be released by high-ranking army officials.

Iran unveiled Bavar 373, the long-range, surface-to-air missile air defense system in August 2019.

In an interview with the Mer news agency published on Saturday, Brigadier General Khoshghalb said, “The actions of Iran’s integrated air defense network in recent years in detecting, controlling and finally destroying the attacking planes, including the Hermes UAV belonging to the Zionist regime and the U.S. Global Hawk drone in our airspace has proved the capability of the Islamic Iran’s air defense to the world.

This has been achieved while our country has been under the most severe sanctions for over 40 years, especially in the military field, but nevertheless, with the measures taken by the officials in this field, today Iran is one of the top powers in the world in the field of air defense.”

Regarding the reasons for the advancement of the air defense network, Khoshghalb said: “The army air defense force has had a significant growth in terms of quantity and quality in various dimensions and in different areas compared to the past few years.”

This advancement, especially in combat capability and operational and combat readiness, has been rapid and impressive, the top general noted.

“Manpower and equipment are two important and key components in the operational and combat readiness of air defense,” he said, adding predicting, planning and foresight are on the agenda of the army

air defense force.

The official highlighted that in both of these components, quantitative and qualitative planning and the existence of special plans have led the air defense to achieve a desirable, sustainable and growing development with balanced and scientific growth.

Khoshghalb went on to say: “In the area of equipment in quantitative and qualitative dimensions, especially during the past year, we have witnessed a logical and acceptable surge in improving the combat capability that new equipment has entered the operational cycle of the force with new technologies.”

“In mission areas, we use various equipment and systems, including detection, reconnaissance, combat, intelligence, drones, cyber, and with the latest technologies in the world and above the edge of technology,” general stated.

Air defense has a favorable situation in the variety and multiplicity of impact-oriented equipment, he stressed, noting, “Combined and hybrid use of equipment in operational and technical planning is on the agenda of the force, all of which are to enhance our capabilities and create an atmosphere of ambiguity and confusion in the strategic, operational and tactical calculations of the enemy.”

The Deputy Chief of the Army Air Defense for Operations also referred to the unveiling of a new model of Bavar 373 system and considered it much more advanced than his own class systems.

“Bavar 373 system is one of the strategic systems, ie its strategic effects are far greater than its tactical effects, because both the depth of discovery, the depth of conflict and conflict with several targets and its



remoteness are important.”

At present, Bavar 373 system has a meaningful presence in one of the sensitive and vital projects of Iran. Very good news about the next models of Bavar 373 will be published soon by high-ranking officials of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the commander noted.

Referring to the construction of a more advanced version of the Bavar 373 system, he stated: “This project is underway, which is a joint work between the technical and operational capability of the force and domestic industries.”

“This shows that in using equipment with new capabilities, we are pioneer and update ourselves daily in different areas according to new threats. Technological threats require new and up to date equipment, and one of these equipment is the 373 Bavar system,” Khoshghalb highlighted.

The top military official underlined that in the future, the depth of discovery of this system will be multiplied and it will be given a suitable depth in the field of conflict. Technical and operational tests are underway in this regard.

Permanent membership in SCO will break economic bans on Iran: MP

TEHRAN – A member of the Planning and Budget Committee of the Iranian Parliament is of the opinion that Iran’s membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will end the “economic sanctions” on Iran.

“Iran’s membership will break the siege and economic sanctions,” Ehsan Arkani told Mehr on Friday.

Iran was officially admitted as a full member of the SCO on Friday.

The decision to admit Iran as a member was declared in the 21st summit of the SCO leaders in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Before membership, Iran had been given an observer status in the organization.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who addressed the summit virtually on Friday, confirmed that from now Iran would become a permanent member of the SCO.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted Iran’s membership.

Now the SCO includes China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan and Iran.

“The Shanghai pact is one of the most important treaties in the world. For the first time since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has joined a major regional pact,” Arkani said.

Regarding the importance of the organization, the MP added, “One third of the land area is owned by the member states of this treaty and 40% of the world’s population are members of this organization.”

“China and Russia, as two permanent members of the Security Council, are members of the Shanghai Pact,” he said, noting,” In addition, India and Pakistan, as Asian economic powers, are members of the treaty.”

Arkani added: “25% of the world’s GDP is in the hands of the members of this organization, which shows the strategic importance of the Shanghai organization.”

Alliance as well as economic and security cooperation was the basis for the formation of the organization, he said.

“Given that Iran is facing economic pressures and sanctions, using the vast capabilities of the Shanghai members, including China, Russia, and Central Asian countries, will break the siege and economic sanctions,” the MP remarked.

The MP stated: “Using the market of this region and the industrial technologies of the member states is very important. In addition, Iran’s oil and gas reserves are needed by major

member states such as India and Pakistan.”

“The United States has always tried to bypass Iran, which is the main corridor from North to South and East to West Asia, and replace Iran with other countries, but it has not been able to replace Iran with any other country in the region, so Iran’s membership in this organization is a turning point,” Arkani highlighted.

The member of the parliament’s Planning and Budget Committee said that the approach of the Raisi administration’s “look to the East” had a significant impact on Iran’s membership in the organization.

“Tajikistan’s opposition was one of the reasons for Iran’s non-acceptance by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which was eliminated by change in Iran’s foreign policy to strengthen ties with new countries,” he opined.

He added: “The administration should be able to use the capacities that membership in this organization provides for Iran, because a mere membership of Iran in this organization will not solve the problem.”

“Tajikistan’s opposition was one of the reasons for non-acceptance of Iran at the Shanghai Cooperation

SPORTS

Athletes refusing to face Zionist regime’s representatives must be backed: Leader

TEHRAN – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the Zionist regime attempts to gain some legitimacy by appearing in international athletic competitions and the government must support the rights of Iranian and non-Iranian athletes, who were deprived due to refusing to compete with the Israeli representatives.

The Leader made the remarks in a meeting with the Iranian Olympic and Paralympic medalists at the 2020 Tokyo Games, which was held in accordance with health protocols at the Imam Khomeini Hussainiyyah on Saturday.

Iranian athletes have refused to recognize the Israeli regime’s competitors in sports fields since 1979.

Athletes from Muslim countries have repeatedly refused to compete against Israeli opponents at major international events in protest to Israel’s crimes and occupation of Palestine.

“The message of championship in athletic events, particularly at the international level, is that of ability, exuberance, perseverance and willpower. Champions teach resistance, hope and exuberance,” the Leader said, according to the khamenei.ir.

“Some ways of becoming a champion are not healthy or valuable. There are many examples in the world: unfair refereeing, political scheming, bribery and doping. Another example is when athletes win a medal by betraying their country or themselves. These are in conflict with values,” he added.

“The chivalrous behavior displayed by Iranian athletes is valuable, examples such as: performing prayers, embracing the defeated rival, using a kufiyah scarf as a symbol of resistance and ladies’ hijab in competitions.

“Our female athletes have proven that hijab is not an obstacle that prevents brilliance. Similarly, women have previously proven this in the fields of politics, science and management,” the Leader stated.

Three Iranian women won three gold medals in the 2020 Paralympic Games while wearing hijab in their competition.

Archer Zahra Nematy made history in Tokyo by winning her third consecutive gold medals. Shooter Sareh Javanmardi, who had won her first gold in Rio 2016, seized the second gold in Tokyo. And Hashemiyeh Motaghian became the first Iranian woman to win a medal at either the Olympic or Paralympic Games in athletic.

“Our female athletes’ hijab encouraged women from other Muslim countries, and later female athletes from over 10 other countries appeared in athletic events wearing hijab. This was not common previously, and you Iranian champions have prepared the ground for this,” Ayatollah Khamenei pointed out.

“The genocidal, illegal Zionist regime attempts to gain some legitimacy by appearing in international athletic competitions. The world’s arrogant powers and their cohorts assist and support them in this.

“A freethinking athlete cannot acknowledge the Zionist regime for the sake of a medal. The government must support the rights of Iranian and non-Iranian athletes, such as the Algerian athlete, who were deprived due to refusing to compete with the Zionist regime’s representatives.

The Leader was referring to Fethi Nourine and his coach who withdrew from the Tokyo Olympics to avoid facing an Israeli athlete. The decision was made in support of the “Palestinian cause”.

Iran book 2022 Volleyball World Championship ticket

TEHRAN – Iran booked their ticket at the 2022 FIVB Volleyball Men’s World Championship on Saturday.

Behrouz Ataei’s team defeated China 3-1 (25-22, 17-25, 25-22, 25-17) in the 2021 Asian Men’s Volleyball Championship semifinal at the Chiba Port Arena and qualified for the world championship as one of two teams in Asia.

Iran will play winner of Japan and Chinese Taipei in the final on Sunday.

The FIVB Volleyball Men’s World Championship will be held in Russia from Aug. 26 to Sept. 11, 2022 with the participation of 12 teams.

Iran trounce Palestine at Asian Women’s Handball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran eased past Palestine 52-9 at the 2021 Asian Women’s Handball Championship on Saturday.

Iran had started the campaign with a 23-20 loss against Japan in Group B on Wednesday but defeated Kuwait 38-11 in their second match.

The Iranian women will meet Jordan and Syria on Sunday and Tuesday, respectively.

Group A consists of South Korea, Singapore, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Hong Kong.

The 2021 Asian Women’s Handball Championship is being held from Sept. 15 to 25 in Amman, Jordan under the aegis of Asian Handball Federation.

It is the third time in history that the championship is organized by the Jordan Handball Federation.

It also acts as the qualification tournament for the 2021 World Women’s Handball Championship, with the top six teams from the championship directly qualifying for the event to be held in Spain.

On August 9, 2020, the Asian Handball Federation decided to postpone the championship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, the championship was scheduled to take place from December 10 to 22, 2020.

On August 3, 2021, the AHF announced to move the event from South Korea to Jordan due to the pandemic.

Iran victorious over the U.S. in Futsal World Cup

TEHRAN – Iran came from a goal down to defeat the U.S. 4-2 in Group F of the FIFA Futsal World Cup Lithuania 2021 at the Vilnius Arena on Friday.

Two consecutive wins puts Iran in a strong position to advance to the knockout stage with South American powerhouse Argentina their final Group F opponents on Monday.

The 12-time Asian champions suffered a setback when goalkeeper Alireza Samimi was sent off in the second minute due to touching the ball outside the area.

One minute later, Luciano Gonzalez fired his effort past substitute goalkeeper Sepehr Mohammadi.

However, the Americans’ lead was short lived as Iran responded immediately, finding the back of the net through Farhad Tavakoli’s sublime strike off Farhad Fakhim’s assist.

The game tilted in Iran’s favor after that as they enjoyed the lion’s share of possession and doubled their lead after Moslem Oladghobad set up Mahdi Javid in the seventh minute.

The U.S. pushed forward to level the score but were hit again when Ahmad Esmaeilpour added Iran’s third goal in the 10th minute.

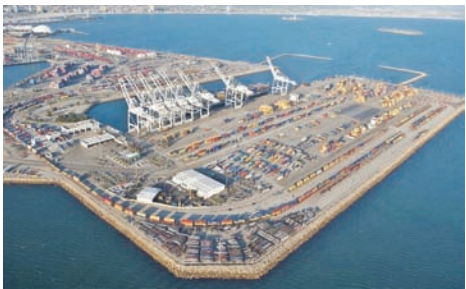
Despite being forced to depend on counter-attacks, the U.S. reduced the deficit in the 36th minute following the powerplay with goalkeeper Diego Moretti providing the assist for Gonzalez but Saeid Ahmad Abbasi sealed the win for Iran with his strike a minute from time.

We respect Al Hilal but we are Persepolis: coach

From Page 1 ▶ “We lost great players like Ahmad Nourollahi and Hossein Kananizadegan. They did a lot for our team and were influential players. However, we, as the Persepolis coaching staff, have tried to build a team that is tactic-oriented rather than man-oriented. Our most prominent star is our team and not the players. Although, I emphasize that we have great players who do their best for the team in every minute of every game,” he said.

“We tried to bring the players that can play a role in our tactical plans, and we think that we have done well in the transfer window. Every single player in our team is extremely important for us, and we have a great squad, but I again confirm that our superstar is our team,” Motahari concluded.

India calls on Central Asian countries to expand trade through Chabahar



From page 1 ► India is currently the only foreign country that is participating in a major development project in Iran despite the U.S. sanctions.

The Chabahar Port development project is the anchor for the expansion of economic relations between the two nations.

India is going to install and operate modern loading and unloading equipment including mobile harbor cranes in Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar.

Back in February, the director-general of the political office of India's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said his ministry has received the Iranian Ports and Maritime Organization's request for accelerating the importing and installation of equipment for the Chabahar port and India is seriously pursuing the matter.

Iranian and Indian officials held a meeting in Chabahar in late January to review the state of mutual cooperation in the development of Shahid Beheshti Port.

The strategic port in southeastern Iran is the only ocean port on the Makran coast and it has a special place in the country's economic affairs.

Iron ore concentrate output up 4% in 5 months on year

TEHRAN - Production of iron ore concentrate in Iran has risen four percent during the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-August 22), as compared to the same period of time in the past year.

According to the data provided by Iranian Mines and Mining Industries Development and Renovation Organization, ten large iron ore concentrate producers of the country have produced 21.195 million tons of the product in the five-month period of this year, while the figure was 20.373 million tons in the same time span of the past year.

Production of iron ore concentrate in Iran during the previous Iranian calendar year 1399 (ended on March 20) reached 49.714 million tons, registering a five-percent rise compared to the preceding year.

According to the Industry, Mining and Trade Ministry data, of the mentioned figure 3.533 million tons were produced in the last month of the previous year (February 19-March 20).

As reported, the country's major iron ore concentrate producers had managed to produce about 47,306 million tons of the mentioned product in the Iranian calendar year 1398.

Last year, major mining companies also produced 902,454 tons of granulated iron ore, to register a decrease of 54 percent compared to the preceding year (1,965,733 tons).



In its outlook plan for the Iranian calendar year 1404 (2025-2026) Iran has envisaged production of 55 million tons of steel per annum, and to achieve this target the country requires to extract 160 million tons of iron ore.

In a bid to prevent the exports of unprocessed minerals, creating more value-added and meeting the requirements of domestic producers for the raw materials, Iran has levied a 25-percent duty on the exports of raw minerals (especially iron ore) since September 2019.

The duty is aimed at encouraging the production of more processed minerals such as pellets and concentrate instead of selling the raw minerals.

By Mahnaz Abdi

TEHRAN- It's over two years that stock market in Iran has been playing an outstanding role in the attraction of the people's investment.

Iranian people, who used to invest their money in some traditional ways such as buying gold, or deposit money in the banks, have taken a new approach for investment over the past two years, as they have been investing more and more in the stock market.

The rising number of new shareholders in Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), which is Iran's major stock exchange, is an indication of this new approach.

Different factors have created such condition, among them it could be referred to the efforts made by the stock market to attract people's more investment through laying the proper ground, for example via introducing new financial instruments, and also by making people more acquainted with this market.

The other factor is the government's policy and new approach toward the stock market, and putting emphasis on this market's role in funding and economic growth.

The status of the parallel markets such as forex, housing, and gold markets has also made stock market a more attractive place for the people to invest in.

Meanwhile, the government's policy of lowering the interest rate of the bank deposits has redirected a huge amount of people's investment to the stock market.

In a recent interview, a director in Iran Securities and Exchange Organization (SEO) has announced that the fixed income funds have lagged the banks behind in attracting the people's investment.

Saying that the risk of invest-

Fixed income funds overtake banks in attracting people's investment



ing in the fixed income funds is very low and these funds now pay regular returns to investors at good rates, Meysam Fadaei, the SEO's director for supervising the financial entities, underlined that these funds are one of the largest mutual funds that have been welcomed by the people, and some of them have even grown more than some banks and attracted more capital.

Traditional methods of investing, such as bank deposits, cannot meet the new types of investment needs.

"Now, for example, one of the fixed income funds has succeeded in attracting people's investment three times more than a private bank (Middle East Bank) and another fund twice as much as another private bank (Post Bank)", he stated.

Announcing that over 5.3 quadrillion rials (about \$126.19 billion) has been already attracted by the mutual funds, Fadaei said that the fixed income funds, which pay more interest than banks, account for attracting 3.7 quadrillion rials (about \$88.095 billion)

Govt., private sector discuss issues facing imports of basic goods

TEHRAN - The 78th meeting of the dialogue council of the government and the Tehran Province's private sector was held on Saturday, in which issues pertaining to the imports of basic goods and raw materials into the country were discussed.

The meeting was attended by the Governor-General of Tehran Province Anushirvan Mohseni, the Head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) Masoud Khansari, the Deputy Industry Minister Rasoul Mohammadi, and the representatives of the province private sector, the TCCIMA portal reported.

During the meeting, major challenges and issues pertaining to the imports of basic goods



TCCIMA Head Masoud Khansari (2nd R) and Tehran Province Governor-General Anushirvan Mohseni (2nd L)

and supply of such commodities in the domestic markets including the timely imports and

supply of raw materials, setting a ceiling for the import of basic goods, ambiguity in the type of currency allocated to the import of basic goods and the inefficiency of the country's transport fleet were raised.

Speaking in the meeting, Khansari emphasized that the above-mentioned challenges would be the main bottlenecks in the supply of basic goods in the coming months and noted that the most important problem regarding the supply of basic goods in the country is the allocation of subsidized currency to some commodity items.

"The problems regarding the supply of basic goods will not be solved unless this issue is resolved," he said.

Oil Ministry eager for developing joint fields

TEHRAN – Deputy Head of Iranian Parliament's Energy Committee has said the Oil Ministry is seriously determined to pursue the programs for developing the country's joint oil and gas fields.

Referring to the one-day visit of Oil Minister Javad Oji to Khuzestan province, Qassem Saedi told Shana: "Oji's visit to Khuzestan was aimed at reviewing the condition of drilling rigs, the activities of the province's refining and petrochemical sectors, as well as the quantitative and qualitative assessment of production, development, and operation at joint oil fields."

Saedi also pointed to the visit of the oil minister to the West Karoun region for assessing the operation of the facilities of Yadavaran oil field, adding: "The determination of the Oil Ministry in stepping toward increasing production in joint fields is commendable."

"Preventing the crude sale with the development of downstream industries is a necessity that cannot be ignored because it can affect the employment, as well as the development of the oil and gas industry," the official stated.

He further stressed that more attention should be paid to joint oil and gas fields.

Iran's oil industry has been strongly focused on developing joint oil and gas fields, aiming to increase the share of such fields in the country's oil and gas production.

Back in June 2019, former Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh had put the development of Iran's shared oil and gas fields as the main priority of the ministry and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC).

TEDPIX down 37,900 points on Saturday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 37,991 points to 1.45 million on Saturday (the first day of Iranian calendar week).

As reported, over 8.017 billion securities worth 73.225 trillion rials (about \$1.743 billion) were traded at the TSE on Saturday.

The first market's index lost 38,262 points, and the second market's index dropped 44,099 points.

TEDPIX lost 38,000 points, or 2.5 percent, in the past Iranian calendar week.

Economy Ministry supports one-million housing project

TEHRAN- The deputy finance and economic affairs minister announced the ministry's support to the implementation of one-million housing project.

Speaking in a meeting of the annual general assembly of the acting bank of housing sector, Abbas Memarnejad, the deputy minister for banking, insurance and state-owned companies affairs, stressed the finance and economic affairs minister as well as the mentioned bank's managing director's support to fulfill the promise of building one million housing units per year.

He said Finance and Economic Affairs Ministry along with Transport and Urban Development Ministry and Planning and Budget Organization will definitely support this bank for materialization of the mentioned project.

On Monday, Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi had announced that the first step for the implementation of the one-million housing project will be taken by the next two weeks.

The minister said that in the next two weeks, good news will be announced in terms of the government's housing program, which is the practical step to start construction of the houses.

"We have no problem with the land issue, and this strategic move by the Minis-

try of Transport and Urban Development to establish a land bank is envisaged in a two-month plan that provides a large portion of the land for our four-year goals in the housing sector", he explained.

It is while last week, the deputy head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (TCCIMA) had said that the lack of infrastructure makes the one-million housing project a challenge.

Mohammad Atabak believes that from the point of view of providing the required materials, the implementation of the annual construction plan of one million houses is possible and feasible, but the lack of infrastructure such as water, electricity and gas is likely to pose a serious challenge to this project.

The production of constructional materials can certainly meet the need for the construction of this number of houses per year, but not in a situation when power outages have taken the breath away of cement and steel factories, he noted.

He said that if the weakness of the

Different ways to attract financial resources for housing construction projects, including the use of private sector potentials, is on the agenda.

infrastructure, especially in the field of energy supply (gas and electricity), is not eliminated, the implementation of this project will probably be challenged.

The deputy speaker of the parliament has recently said that by using the land, facilities and the capacity of the private sector, it is possible to build one million housing units in the country.

Speaking in a TV interview on August 29, Ali Nikzad referred to the plan for surge in housing construction, and said that the MPs presented the plan to the parliament, which became law yesterday.

He continued by pointing out that this plan is very progressive; in this plan, the issue of land and the transfer of government lands to the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development was accelerated.

Also, the deputy Head of Iran's Mass Construction Association Iraj Rahbar has recently said the country's contractors are capable of constructing one million housing units a year if the necessary funding and land is provided.

Mentioning a plan for the construc-



tion of one million affordable housing units per year by the new government, Rahbar said: "Allocating land and financing are two important factors for the successful implementation of any housing project, and if these two are provided, building one million housing units per year will be easily possible."

The official noted that over the last three years, many efforts have been made to allocate the needed land for housing projects including the National Housing Action Plan to the Ministry of Transport and Urban Development, but the land has not been provided as needed.

Rahbar further stressed that there are different ways to attract financial resources for housing construction projects including the use of private sector potentials.

In early August, Mahmoud Mah-

moudzadeh, deputy transport, and urban development minister announced that planning has been made and preparations have been done to start constructing 1.3 million affordable housing units across the country.

Mahmoudzadeh said the required regulations have been prepared and facilities have been created to provide land for the mentioned housing units by the next government.

"With the measures taken, the conditions are more favorable for the new government to begin the work," he noted.

Started in winter 2018, the National Housing Action Plan aims to construct 400,000 small and medium-size apartments (70-100 square meters in size) across the country and particularly in Tehran, where housing prices have risen most sharply.

Nearly half of the total number of the said houses will be constructed in Tehran's suburban "new towns" such as Parand and Pardis, respectively located in the west and east of the city.

Back in March, former Transport Minister Mohammad Eslami had announced that 510,000 residential units will be provided for the applicants under the framework of the National Housing Action Plan during the current year.

ridor while playing a pivotal role in other new routes and emerging corridors," he explained.

The official pointed to the existence of more than 20 international ports and terminals in the Caspian littoral states and specified: "Caspian littoral ports, with a total operating capacity of about 140 million tons and having 300 active vessels, including the Russian fleet with 150 vessels, the Iranian fleet with 60 vessels and three other countries with a total of 90 vessels have a high capacity to develop maritime trade relations in the region."

Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi traveled to Tajikistan on Thursday to attend the annual meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

'Cooperation with SCO members to realize potentials of Iranian ports'

TEHRAN - Abdollah Jafari, the director of international agreements in Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran, has said cooperation with the members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) would be a great opportunity for Iranian ports to realize their trade potentials.

According to Jafari, such international unions and negotiations with the leaders of the countries present at such summits could be a good platform for Iran to pursue its goals for expanding international trade, the PMO portal reported.

Given the current situation in the face of U.S. sanctions, the recent developments in Afghanistan and the serious determination of the 13th government to restore the country's economic

interactions, increasing trade and developing economic cooperation with the countries in the regions and across the world is a necessity for Iran, the official said.

He stressed the importance of making greater use of economic potential in the field of transportation and transit at the crossroads of East-West, and North-South and said: "A special attention to the development of joint cooperation with the east (especially China and India as two important members of SCO) and the Eurasian countries (especially the Caspian littoral states), can be an effective and ground-breaking way out of the existing economic bottlenecks and a new window for increasing trade and improving the country's economy."

Saudis pursue Washington’s goals in talks with Iran

From page 1 ► Saudi Arabia has been seeing the Islamic Revolution of Iran as a threat to the Saudi monarchy, since the early days of the revolution in 1979.

On the other hand, the open discussions on social media and in TV programs always refer to the following files. One of the most important files is Yemen. The Arab alliance against Yemen is facing catastrophic defeats, especially for the Saudis, who are accusing Iran of supporting the Houthis in the war against the “Arab” Alliance intervention in Yemen.

The attitude of the Alliance is inconceivable. They act as if the Houthis represent a strange militia that needs to be controlled, and not as part of the Yemeni population. In addition, the Arab Alliance, as it is referred to, in its reality is a Saudi-UAE- American-Israeli alliance.

The second file is the relation between Iran and Hezbollah, the Islamic resistance in Lebanon. Hezbollah has officially declared its support to the Yemenis’ resistance to the Intervention. The discrepancy between Hezbollah and the Saudis is deep since the suspicious role the latter has played in supporting the “Israeli” war on Lebanon in 2006 to disarm Hezbollah. This fact was declared in many of Sayyed Hassan Nasrullah’s speeches.

The fourth file is the relation between Iran and al-Hashed al-Shaabi in Iraq. The Saudis insist that Iran should break its ties with the group and stop supporting its fighters. They even call these groups Militias. They do not even see them as part of the Iraqi population, who fought ISIS, a terrorist group that played a destructive role in bringing Iraq into disorder and chaos.

In fact, the Saudis see that their role in Iraq should be of greater importance because Iraq is an Arab country, and the ties should be

closer; however, it has lost its grip in favor of Iran.

The fifth file is the Syrian file. Saudi Arabia is dealing with the file as if Syria is a quasi-state and its file needs to be run through agreements among parties. The Saudi Arabian monarchy holds a venom against President al-Assad. Let us remember, the minute Mr. Assad described Arab leaders in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia as semi-men, in a speech he gave after “Israeli” War against Lebanon in July 2006. During this period the Iranian-Syrian relationships witnessed more improvement and became more strategic and more annoying to their foes in particular “Israel”.

The sixth file is definitely related to supporting the Palestinian resistance inside Palestine. Undoubtedly, Hezbollah is participating in this support, which the Americas and the Israelis are of great concern about. Ideologically, the resistance axis, especially Hezbollah, believes in ending the Israeli existence.

The six points mentioned above are the key points that hold back the progress in the Vienna talks between Iran and G5+1. Actually, it is hard not to consider them, since most of the controversial issues with Saudi Arabia also revolve around the same points. Therefore, it is hard to reflect on any true agreement between the Saudis and the Iranians without the American accord. Hence, it is not difficult to understand the means behind the end foreseen results which is securing the “Israel’s” peace and security.

Furthermore, an American retaliation airstrike took place 10



days after an attack on American’s targets on the 15th of February in Iraq; the airstrike targeted, as the BBC describes them as, Iran-backed militia groups, including Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Sayyid al-Shuhada, who are allied with the Damascus government, on the borders between Boukamal in Syria and Qaim in Iraq.

The BBC explains that the message to Tehran behind the airstrike is: “just because we’re willing to sit down and talk doesn’t mean [that] your proxies around the region can do what they want.” BBC continues, “The message came at a time when Biden’s administration is checking ways to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.”

In addition, Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said the strike was meant to punish the militias but not to escalate tensions with Iran. Taking into consideration, since 2009, the U.S. has designated the two groups as terrorist organizations, accusing them of threatening the peace and stability of Iraq.

In reviewing the course of restoring the Iranian-Saudi relationship, Saudi Arabia’s intent was not really clear, when Iran declared on April 21st the second round of talks. However, the Saudis did not even confirm the information about the first round, held in Baghdad, until it was exposed by the American press. The Saudi attitude towards the conformation is not fully understood. It seems that they were dragged to the talks by the Americans. However, the talks were withheld at the same time in which Iran’s indirect talks with the Americans to return to the nuclear

agreement were withheld.

It has become common knowledge that the Iranians refused to include the Saudis in the neo-nuclear talks. Both states see the other party as a source of instability in the region; even though both parties have started new talks since April. The main issue Saudi Arabia is bushing towards is stopping the Iranian support to the Houthis in Yemen. However, the other list is mostly American demands, which the Saudis are including so that to retrieve normal relations with Iran.

According to France Press, at the end of April, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia Muhammad bin Selman said: “He is hoping for a good relationship with Iran”. This acknowledgment was later affirmed by the declaration of Mr. Faissal bin Farhan, the Saudi Foreign Minister, the same article quotes him: “We hope that the Iranians will see that in their interest is to work with their neighbors in a positive way that leads to security, stability and prosperity... I can only hope.” However, stability and prosperity are two big words Saudi Arabia cannot fully understand them outside the American context.

Accordingly, Biden’s administration recently declared that it is ready now to restart the talks with Iran under Ibrahim Raisi’s leadership as soon as possible. Consequently, the Saudi will follow. The U.S. has declared that it needs to finish and seal the nuclear agreement. It is cleverly timed. The American withdrawal from Afghanistan is supposed to complicate the regional situation and push Iran into closing the nuclear agreement in America’s best interest. And that is why the Saudis are waiting for American approval to acknowledge whether any Saudi- Iranian talks will lead to the best interest of the Americans and “the Israelis”, or not.

My generation can liberate Palestine and end the occupation

By Janna Jihad

Not many people across the world know what life is like for Palestinian children, how unsafe we feel in our homes and what we go through every single day because of the Israeli occupation.

I grew up in the village of Nabi Saleh in the occupied West Bank. When I was seven, I started making films on my mother’s mobile phone about our lives to share on social media and with news outlets.

In my films, I try to show what daily life is like for us. The night raids – waking up at 3 am to the sounds of gas canisters, bombing near your window, or Israeli forces trying to break into your house. There was even a time when I woke up to find an Israeli soldier in my room, breaking my toys with his gun. He went on to hold his weapon to my head.

This week, world leaders are meeting at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, and UN Human Rights Council meetings are taking place in Geneva. This is a great opportunity for the international community to end its silence on the abuses faced by Palestinian children. Israel is violating our rights and breaking international law with impunity.

Our most basic rights and freedoms, including our right to life, are being violated. We often struggle to overcome the feelings of sadness, stress, loneliness, and fear caused by the excessive use of force against us, the targeting of our families, schools and homes. My friends in Gaza live with the fear of being targeted by Israel’s bombs every day.

My cousin, Mohammad Munir al-Tamimi, was murdered on the last day of Eid this year.

Israeli soldiers were raiding our village and soon they started shooting at everyone they saw on the streets. When Mohammad went out of his house to look for his brother, a soldier shot him in the stomach with live ammunition. He was only 17 years old.

We mourn our lost friends and relatives, but we remain strong. Every bullet that does not kill us, gives us more hope and makes us more determined to resist this occupation.

Israel is the only regime in the world that routinely arrests, detains and tries children in a military court system.

My cousin, Ahed Tamimi, was jailed for eight months in an Israeli prison when she was just 16. She was there with many other women and children. Some were under “administrative detention” – meaning they may be held in prison, without any

official charge or a trial, for years.

Palestinian children who are detained in Israeli prisons face a great deal of trauma. Because of what they have been through, even after their release, many will not be able to enjoy their childhood again.

When I was only 12 years old, I was stopped on the border coming back from Jordan and interrogated for three hours by Israeli forces. I did not have a parent or a lawyer with me, so the interrogation was illegal under international law. But they did not care.

After this incident, I decided to register myself as a journalist. Soon I became the youngest press card-carrying journalist in the world. Being accredited provided me with some protection. But, of course, journalists too are routinely arrested, injured and even killed in occupied Palestine.

Today, I will be speaking as a witness at a public hearing, organized by the NGOs ActionAid and Al-Haq. I will talk about some of the human rights abuses and violations of international law that Palestinian children face. Al Jazeera Arabic journalist Givara Budeiri – who was violently arrested by Israeli forces while covering a peaceful demonstration in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of occupied East Jerusalem in June – will also be there to speak about Israel’s attacks on press freedom. Other witnesses will be testifying about the forced displacement of Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah, and the theft of land and natural resources in the Jordan Valley.

Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Council is calling on member states to cooperate fully with its Commission of Inquiry into violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the occupied Palestinian territory. This investigation is long overdue. The international community cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the suffering of Palestinians.

Palestinian children, like all children, have a right to be safe in their homes and schools. They have the right to be free from harassment, violence, arbitrary arrest, and attacks from Israeli soldiers and settlers.

But despite all the difficulties we face, I am hopeful for the future. We are the generation of change and the generation that, I hope, will liberate Palestine. We will make the world a better place, a place where there is no occupation or colonization, where everyone is equal, where Palestinians can live their lives freely and with dignity. But we cannot do this alone – the international community needs to end its silence and stand by our side in our fight against oppression.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Former Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika dies at 84

Algeria’s former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika has died at 84 more than two years after he resigned under pressure from protests and the army.

He had rarely been seen in public before his departure since 2013 when he suffered a stroke that affected his mobility and speech.

He spoke with difficulty and faced constant speculation over his health condition which was treated as a state secret for years.

Bouteflika, a veteran of Algeria’s war for independence against French colonial rule in the 1950s, is well known for his anti-colonial role and for helping to mediate conflicts and political instability in neighboring states.

After Algeria won independence in 1962, Bouteflika was appointed minister of youth and sports in the government of Ahmed Ben Bella, the North African country’s first elected president.

He headed Algerian delegations in negotiations with the French in 1963 and was appointed as the country’s first and the world’s youngest minister

of foreign affairs.

He kept that post for 16 years, raising Algeria’s influence in the region and leading newly independent African nations towards non-alignment in the Cold War.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Algeria housed and welcomed freedom fighters from around the world, including Che Guevara. Bouteflika is also credited with giving young Nelson Mandela his first military training.

Algeria was active in the United Nations in those years which led Bouteflika to preside over the UN General Assembly in 1974.

In a historical step toward international recognition of the Palestinian country, he invited former Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to address the world governing body for the first time.

Bouteflika also demanded China be given a seat in the in the United Nations, and rallied against apartheid in South Africa.

He took office in 1999 to help lead the nation

out of civil war between the army and a militant group. Both sides had been accused by human rights organizations of committing atrocities during the war, which left an estimated 200,000 Algerians dead.

Bouteflika, Algeria’s first civilian leader in more than three decades, managed to bring stability to a country nearly brought to its knees by the violence.

He was reelected in 2009 and 2013, after the Constitution was amended to allow him to run without term limits.

However, increasing frustration over the country’s stalled economy, corruption and authoritarianism as well as Bouteflika’s illness and his poor performance finally took its toll on the once-charismatic figure.

He led the country for almost two decades before stepping down in April 2019 after his bid for a fifth term in office led to massive street protests. The protests continued and the military stepped in, ending his government.

U.S. finally admits Afghan airstrike killed civilians

From page 1 ► This is while the confirmation of civilian deaths will provide further fuel to critics of the chaotic U.S. withdrawal and evacuation of Afghan allies, which has generated the biggest crisis yet for the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden.

Amnesty International’s crisis response program says “the U.S. must now commit to a full, transparent, and impartial investigation into this incident. Anyone suspected of criminal responsibility should be prosecuted in a fair trial. Survivors and families of the victims should be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and be given full reparation”.

The rights group added “It should be noted that the U.S. military was only forced to admit to its failure in this strike because of the current global scrutiny on Afghanistan. Many similar strikes in Syria, Iraq, and Somalia have happened out of the spotlight, and the U.S. continues to deny responsibility while devastated families suffer in silence.”

In a statement, the American Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin admitted the drone strike had killed Mr. Ahmadi who worked for a non-profit aid organization called

Nutrition and Education International.

In ??? statement, Austin said, “We now know that there was no connection between Mr. Ahmadi and Daesh that his activities on that day were completely harmless and not at all related to the imminent threat we believed we faced”. Austin added, “we apologize, and we will endeavor to learn from this horrible mistake.”

Reports had emerged almost immediately that the drone strike in a neighborhood west of Kabul’s Hamid Karzai International Airport had killed civilians including children. Video from the scene showed the wreckage of a car strewn around the courtyard of a building. A spokesman for Afghanistan’s new Taliban rulers, Zabihullah Mujahid, said at the time that the attack killed at least seven people and that the Taliban was investigating.

The strike came three days after an explosive device killing scores of Afghan civilians as well as 13 U.S. troops who had crowded outside the airport gates, desperate to secure seats on evacuation flights after the U.S.-trained Afghan forces melted away and the Taliban swept to power in the capital. The attack was



reportedly claimed by the Daesh terror group.

Following the bombing attack at the airport, the U.S. military launched a drone strike in eastern Afghanistan that the Pentagon claims killed two Daesh members. That airstrike is not under any form of investigation and it is unclear who was killed in the initial strike.

The second strike admittedly mistaken by Washington itself came as the U.S. military was on heightened alert, with

officials claiming they expected more attacks on the airport, including from rockets and vehicle-borne explosive devices, as the Pentagon wrapped up its mission. General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, appeared to blame the fog of war, even as he acknowledged in a statement that the civilian deaths were “heart-wrenching”.

Milley says “in a dynamic high threat environment, the commanders on the ground had the appropriate authority and

had reasonable certainty that the target was valid”

The authority to carry out strikes in Afghanistan, against al-Qaeda or Daesh affiliates, will not rest anymore with U.S. commanders in the region, a U.S. defense official says, adding Austin himself will have to authorize any future strikes.

Still, the intelligence failure exposed in America’s last military strike of its war in Afghanistan raises hard questions about the risks going forward. These include whether the United States can keep track of al Qaeda and Daesh threats, and act quickly on any information it gets.

So far, U.S. military intelligence in Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Somalia and elsewhere has strongly damaged the image of America’s intelligence agencies with the ever-growing number of civilian fatalities.

Despite this, McKenzie played down the impact the latest civilian casualties would have on future actions in Afghanistan saying “I don’t think you should draw any conclusions about our ability to strike in Afghanistan against Daesh targets in the future based on this particular strike”.

According to the London-based monitoring group Airwars, since 2001,

when the US-led “war on terror” was launched following the attacks in New York and Washington DC, U.S. airstrikes alone have likely killed at least 22,679 civilians, and as many as around 50,000.

The reported figures from Airwars cites data from several sources, as the U.S. Department of Defense does not publish full counts of civilian casualties recognized by the monitoring group.

According to Airwars the statistics it obtains are from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Bureau of Investigative Journalism, The Nation, and the volunteer project Iraq Body Count.

Some critics’ say even this figure is an underestimate, if more accurate fatality rates of Saudi airstrikes in Yemen are taken into account, as the U.S. provided the intelligence for Saudi warplanes (trained and fuelled by Washington) during the Kingdom’s airstrikes in the war on Yemen.

Tens of thousands of Yemenis are widely believed to have been documented as killed as a result of Saudi airstrikes on its southern neighbor with intelligence provided by Washington. Many of those who have been killed as a result of the Saudi bombardment have been women and children.

How could ancient remedies lift tourism?



From page 1 ► It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture whose magic know-hows passed down from generation to generation.

Rural tourism, however, has many definitions, including rural areas, rural communities, and rural experiences. Rural travelers have the opportunity to participate in activities, lifestyles, and traditions of rural communities, which yield a personalized experience of the countryside combined with the usage of local social, cultural, and natural resources.

In Iran, rural development is established as an economic, social, and ecological priority, which is essential to improve the quality of life and the reduction of poverty.

Sustainable rural development in the county depends on the practical application of a combination of 'multi-functional agriculture' concepts and an integral approach to an all-encompassing improvement of life conditions and the socio-economic position of the village and

rural communities.

Experts believe that medicinal and aromatic plants can help prolong the tourist season and enhance the tourism offering if hard efforts are made to continually track the wants and needs of visitors, build the required tourism infrastructure, and teach and enable tourism workers to organize and conduct so-called aromatic tours.

It is also necessary to facilitate the development of small local farms or cooperatives that could base most or at least part of their activities on medicinal and aromatic plants, considering the fairly large areas of neglected farmland, particularly in lesser-known areas such as the southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province.

Such goals can be achieved through an increase of employment opportunities outside agriculture in the light of available resources. Moreover, a special emphasis should be laid on environmental protection and conservation in rural areas, aiming at the preservation of habitats, plant and animal diversity, genetic resources of autochthonous species and races.

Besides, Iran earns some \$500 million annually by exporting medicinal herbs. Of the figure, about \$350 million of the revenue is related to saffron and the rest is related to other medicinal herbs, according to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

Iranian officials and policymakers in the realm of travel expect rural tourism development to curb and possibly reverse the trend of migration from villages to cities by creating sustainable jobs and prosperity for local communities. Well, we have to wait and see.

TEHRAN – The burr of wheels rolling over the ground, and the sweeping wind that becomes cooler and cooler as you pick up the pace make biking something special when you are on the right touring trails.

Furthermore, bike touring is one of the most natural ways to explore more of the outdoors. Interesting cycling routes open up an opportunity for tourists to visit amazing sights, local cultures, and to meet locals in one of the best possible ways.

There are lots of amazing routes for cycling in the country, which can make a wonderful experience. It is possible to bike to the ancient land in any season but spring and autumn give you the best weather, during the summer the cool mountain regions will make for the most pleasant cycling but from November you can expect snow on the ground and freezing temperatures throughout the north of Iran.

Here is a well-chosen selection recommended by Iran Adventure:

Abr forest

If you have always dreamed of cycling or hiking in the clouds, you can live your dream in the Abr forest. This forest is located almost on the border of Semnan and Golestan provinces and is known by this name because most of the time the space of this forest is covered by an ocean of clouds. In this forest, the clouds are so close to the trees that you can walk through the clouds.

The forest can be explored among the clouds and is considered to be one of the most gorgeous natural landscapes in Iran by many tourists.

Due to the pristine and lush nature of this forest, it is hard to believe that its southern parts are bordered by the Khar Turan National Park. Tourists who aim to cycle along the 150 km route of the forest can start their journey from Shahroud and go through the forest to Alibab and finally end their journey in Gorgan province.

Kish Island

Kish Island, located in the stunning Persian Gulf, is a vast island suitable to be explored by bicycle. There are special cycling routes on the island making it an easier and safer cycling destination for tourists. Nights would be the best time for cycling in Kish Island, however, cycling or strolling along the beaches with clear water and the landscape of the Persian Gulf



Beautiful ribbon of road through Iran's Zagros Mountains. (PHOTO: World Biking)

Discover eight most beautiful cycling routes in Iran

during the day would also make a memorable time for every tourist.

Lar National Park

The combination of excitement, nature, and culture encourages anyone interested in cycling to visit Lar National Park at the foot of Damavand Mountain.

The best time to visit this protected area is in the spring when flora and fauna are in their best condition and you can take extraordinary photos there. Despite cycling, slight challenges such as climbing hills and crossing rivers, and spending time in this park can undoubtedly be a memorable experience for you.

Qeshm Island

Qeshm offers the most pristine

nature of Iran and although it is the largest island in the Persian Gulf, tourists can explore this beautiful island by bike.

Tourists can cycle across the 270-kilometer island while enjoying numerous attractions such as the Valley of the Stars, the Salt Cave, and the mangrove forest, as well as its scenic beaches, and sometimes the presence of camels along the way. Due to the hot and humid climate of this region, winter is the best time for cycling on the island.

Gisoom Beach

Gisoom beach is located on the border of the Caspian Sea and is one of the most beautiful and peaceful parks

in Iran. The asphalt path of this forest passes in a spiral in the middle of the tall and green trees, which have caused a lot of shade and often has foggy weather.

By cycling on this route, you will feel that you are the only one present in this forest, although you may also encounter some harmless animals. The distinctive feature of Gisoom beach is that you finally reach the Caspian Sea and depending on the season, you can dive into the water.

Kordestan province

Kordestan province is known for its fascinating and stunning nature. Cycling in the center of the Zagros will be interesting and memorable for any tourist because the pristine nature, the remote villages, and the hospitable people of Kurdistan and their extraordinary culture create happy moments for them.

Due to the rugged terrain and steep slopes in this part of Iran, more experience is recommended for cycling. We suggest starting from Uraman Takht, a village on a mountain slope, and pedaling to the south of the province.

Caspian Sea coast

The route of the Caspian Sea coast starts from the coastal city of Astara and moves along the Caspian coast until it reaches Gorgan in the northeast.

This route is about 750 km long offering a good opportunity to explore while cycling. Tourists encounter a combination of diverse nature and culture as they cross the forest, sea, and mountains of Alborz, as well as visiting small villages and local traditions in three different provinces in northern Iran.

Maranjab desert

Maranjab desert is located 60 km northeast of Kashan and is one of the most beautiful deserts in Iran and is an ideal place for cyclists. The diversity of plants and animals, as well as attractions such as Salt Lake, make this desert one of the most popular destinations for adventurers and among the best cycling routes in Iran.

Cycling in the Maranjab Desert, you will feel the magic of dirt roads and sand dunes, some of which reach a height of 70 meters. Finally, you can spend the night in Maranjab caravanserai, which dates back to some 400 years ago.

New round of restoration begins on Qajar-era caravanserai in Tabas

TEHRAN – The second round of restoration work has been commenced on the Qajar-era (1789-1925) Khan Caravanserai in Tabas, South Khorasan province, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

The project involves landscaping, repairing the yard's walls and stables, and eliminating the extensions, Ali Shariatmanesh announced on Saturday.

The historical inn, which is located on Tabas-Yazd old road, has several rooms, a courtyard, a stable, and windcatchers (badgirs), the official added.

The structure, which is one of the candidates for a collective UNESCO tag, is surrounded by a cistern and a castle dating back to the Safavid era (1501-1736), he noted.

Caravansary (also Caravanserai or Caravansaray) is a building that served as the inn of the Orient, providing accommodation for commercial, pilgrim, postal, and especially official travelers.

According to Encyclopedia Iranica, from the number of surviving caravansaries and their sizes, it is clear that in Safavid and Qajar times there was a state architectural department that was specifically concerned with the construction of caravansaries and stations on the overland routes. Furthermore, in the cities, several



caravansaries were erected as lodging houses, depots, and commercial offices in the vicinity of the bazaars.

A typical caravansary consists of a square or rectangular plan centered around a courtyard with only one

entrance and arrangements for defense if necessary. Whether fortified or not, it at least provided security against beasts of prey and attacks by brigands.

Iranian caravanserais being ready for collective UNESCO tag

An all-inclusive dossier of a select of Iranian caravanserais is being prepared to be evaluated during the next session of the World Heritage Committee, which will be held in 2022.

Last year, the tourism ministry announced that Iran is developing a dossier for a selection of its historical caravanserais for a possible inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list. In this regard, cultural heritage experts are assessing such monuments that are scattered across the country to make a shortlist in terms of their architecture, historical and cultural values.

Iran's earliest caravanserais were built during the Achaemenid era (550 -330 BC). Centuries later, when Shah Abbas I assumed power from 1588 – to 1629, he ordered the construction of network caravanserais across the country. For many travelers to Iran, staying in or even visiting a centuries-old caravanserai, can be a wide experience; they have an opportunity to feel the past, a time travel back into a forgotten age!

Safavid-era bridge in western Iran reinforced, repaired

TEHRAN – A centuries-old arch bridge in Khorramabad, the capital of western Lorestan province, has undergone some rehabilitation works, the provincial tourism chief has said.

Parts of the Safavid-era (1501-1736) bridge were damaged by the constant moisture and water penetration, which have recently been repaired and strengthened, Seyyed Amin Qasemi announced on Saturday.

Water leaking from a section of water and sewage pipes caused significant damage to the body of the bridge, according to investigations, the official added.

The project was carried out by the province's Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Department in collaboration with Khorramabad Municipality and the city's Water and Sewerage Department, he noted.

With an overall length of more than 350 meters and a width of 5.8 meters, the bridge is constructed of lime and gypsum mortar on a brick base. The construction of this bridge is very similar to that of the historical Khaju Bridge in the city of Isfahan.

The structure was inscribed on the national heritage list in 1999.



Lorestan, which is a region of raw beauty, was inhabited by Iranian Indo-European peoples, including the Medes, c. 1000 BC. Cimmerians and Scythians intermittently ruled the region from about 700 to 625 BC.

The Luristan Bronzes noted for their eclectic array of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Iranian artistic motifs, date from this turbulent period. Lorestan was incorporated into the growing Achaemenid Empire in about 540 BC and successively was part of the Seleucid, Parthian, and Sassanid dynasties.

Public bathhouses in Zanjan made national heritage

TEHRAN – Two historical public bathhouses in Zanjan province have recently been inscribed on the national heritage list.

“Listed on the national heritage list are the old bathhouses in the villages of Qeinarjah and Tabrizak,” CHTN reported on Saturday.

Five more properties including a holy shrine, historical site, mansion, ancient hill and tekylah were also added to the prestigious list.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts on Saturday announced the inscriptions in separate letters to the governor-general of the northwestern province.

Zanjan is one of the cities founded by Sassanid King Ardashir I (180-242 CE). The province makes a base for wider explorations with the architectural wonder of Soltaniyeh, the subterranean delights of the Katala-Khor caves, colorful mountains, and the UNESCO-registered Takht-e Soleiman ruins are nearby.

Public bathhouses in Persian culture

Bathhouses or 'hammams' in Iran were

not only places for bathing and cleaning up. They had a social concept for people who gathered at these places weekly.

It was a place where people talked with each other about their daily life and shared humor and news. There are still bathhouses in Iranian cities but they do not have their social function anymore since most people have bathrooms in their homes due to the modern lifestyle.

Some cities had separate bathhouses for men and women. They were usually built next to each other. However, there were some bathhouses, which were used by men and women at different times of the day.

There were also male and female public bathhouses; at daybreak, a longhorn (boooq-e javaz) was blown to announce that the bath was ready. Men came to the baths from daybreak till the afternoon. Women could use the bathhouses from then to sunset. In some cases, five days were allocated to men and two days to women.

Persian literature is full of proverbs, narrations, and folk stories about bathhouses, which indicate the importance of the place in the past time.

Iran selected as vice-chair of UNWTO Commission for South Asia

TEHRAN – Iran has been selected as the vice-chair of the Commission for South Asia of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the deputy tourism minister has announced.

The selection was made through the online conference of the 33rd Joint Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia and the Pacific & the UNWTO Commission for South Asia, the 54th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for East Asia & the Pacific, and the 58th Meeting of the UNWTO Commission for South Asia, which were held simultaneously on September 14.

Taking into account the strategic location of Iran within South Asia, the election of Iran as vice-chair of the commission will facilitate the introduction of the country's tourism capacities as well as strengthen the ties with the region, CHTN quoted Vali Teymouri as saying on



Saturday.

As part of the meeting, the World Tourism Organization and member countries discussed the work plan for the next two years and presented a report about the actions of specialized committees and working groups of the organization during the coronavirus pandemic, the official added.

The membership of Iran's

Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Ministry in the Education Committee of the World Tourism Organization was also approved during the meeting, he noted.

Moreover, UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili outlined how the organization is dealing with the negative effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the tourism industry in the

world.

Experts expect Iran to achieve a tourism boom after coronavirus contained, believing its impact would be temporary and short-lived for a country that ranked the third fastest-growing tourism destination in 2019.

The Islamic Republic expects to reap a bonanza from its numerous tourist spots such as bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, mausoleums, churches, towers, and mansions, of which 26 being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025. The latest available data show eight million tourists visited the Islamic Republic during the first ten months of the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20).

Pastu Covac, Sinopharm receive license for people under 18

TEHRAN – Pastu Covac and Sinopharm are the safest COVID-19 vaccines that will soon be injected into children aged under 18, Mohammad Reza Shanehsaz, head of the Iranian Food and Drug Administration, has said.

Pastu Covac, developed jointly by the Pasteur Institute of Iran and Cuba's Finlay Vaccine Institute, is the only home-grown vaccine available for injection in children aging 2-18.

These two vaccines are licensed to be used for people under the age of 18, he said, adding, Pastu Covac and Sinopharm provide immunization against COVID-19 based on clinical studies conducted in adolescents.

The study of Pastu Covac (called Soberana 02 in Cuba) was performed in

Cuba on children and the emergency use license has been obtained.

Pastu Covac vaccine is a conjugate vaccine with two injectable doses. It consists of the receptor-binding domain of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein conjugated chemically to tetanus toxoid.

The two first phases of the human trial have been conducted in Cuba, while the third phase was carried out on 24,000 volunteers in Iran and 44,000 volun-



teers in Cuba.

Mass vaccination gathering pace

Mass vaccination has been accelerated, as over 1 million doses are being injected daily, which can be achieved only by few countries, Alireza Raisi, a spokesman for the National Headquarters for Coronavirus control, has said.

"We plan to double the number of vaccination centers, which is about 1,008 by now," Raisi stated, adding, in addition, we plan to oper-

ate most centers in two work shifts to increase the speed of vaccination and to surpass 1.5 million injections per day.

He went on to in total, about 20 million doses of vaccine will be imported by the end of September, adding, about 30 million doses also will be delivered to the country since October.

Mass vaccination against COVID-19 started on Iranian citizens with the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine on February 9.

While Iran continues efforts to mass-produce local candidates, over 40 million doses of foreign vaccines have already been imported, and others are expected soon.

Iran is also producing vaccines jointly with three countries of Russia, Cuba, and Australia.

Iran, Tajikistan to enhance social welfare, labor co-op

TEHRAN – Two memorandums of understanding (MOU) were signed between Iran and Tajikistan on Saturday to expand cooperation on social welfare and labor, IRINN reported.

Iran's Ministry of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare inked an MOU with the Tajik Ministry of Health in the field of rehabilitation, injuries, and social protection.

The other one is signed with the Ministry of Labor, Migration, and Employment of Tajikistan on the exchange of experience in skills training, labor market



policies, health, inspection, and labor relations.

Hojjatollah Abdol-Maleki, Minister of Cooperatives, Labor, and Social Welfare, said that one of the clauses of this memorandum is labor exchange. There is a shortage of skilled labor in Tajikistan, and this could be an opportunity to send technical workers to the neighboring country.

On September 16, an Iranian delegation headed by President Ebrahim Raisi embarked on a trip to attend the twentieth-anniversary summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Tajikistan.

Trawling: a catastrophe that must be stopped



From page 1 ► However, due to the social consequences of unemployment in local communities, the DOE agreed with only traditional shrimp fishing in 3 coastal provinces of the Persian Gulf (Khuzestan, Bushehr, and Hormozgan) in two time periods of 30 to 45 days (summer and autumn) and in the Oman Sea based on time and place restrictions outside the coastal waters."

"So that, the DOE in cooperation with the Fisheries Organization has developed the guidelines for trawling in the Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman.

The instructions for trawling in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman spec-

ify which vessels can trawl in what area and at what time, and which species can be harvested," he explained.

Referring to the third way of trawling, he said that "bottom trawling is a fishing practice that herds and captures the target species, like groundfish or crabs, by towing a net along the ocean floor.

The bottom trawling causes large-scale damage to the seabed by pulling heavy fishing nets on the seabed. It can also lead to the breaking of coral reefs, the destruction of grasslands, damage to important habitats, the death of endangered species, and the extinction of marine ecosystems.

It also greatly reduces the biomass of seabed species, alters the composition of the marine ecosystem, suspends sediments, and disrupts the biogeochemical cycle that supports ecosystem function."

Midwater trawling also may lead to unintended capture of marine mammals (dolphins, porpoises, and whales) and other endangered species, he further lamented.

Since 2001, the DOE has taken various measures to reduce the effects of trawling in order to exercise environmental monitoring and stop trawling in southern Iranian waters, but there are still more than 10 trawling vessels. In Hormozgan province, at least 10 trawlers were seized due to environmental violations.

Challenges on the way to stop trawling

In general, the lack of a restraining law in the field of environment to prevent illegal and irresponsible fishing is considered the main legal problem, he highlighted.

It should be noted that according to the law on hunting and fishing, matters related to fishing and its monitoring are the responsibility of the DOE only in

wetlands, on rivers and areas under the management of the organization, while in sea and water areas, the Fisheries Organization is the responsible body, so that the lack of a responsible organization can be a barrier to stop trawling.

Also, the lack of a stable budget for the protection of the country's marine environment, the lack of specialized and trained manpower, the lack of a suitable and equipped vessel for environmental patrols and activities in coastal waters, the lack of new technologies in monitoring the marine environment, the lack of access for tracking fishing vessels and inadequate training of the public by media are other problems in monitoring the violations, he added.

Each time the trawl net is pulled, 5 to 25 percent of the seabed living environment is lost.

'Larger than usual': this year's ozone layer hole bigger than Antarctica

The hole in the ozone layer that develops annually is "rather larger than usual" and is currently bigger than Antarctica, say the scientists responsible for monitoring it.

Researchers from the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service say that this year's hole is growing quickly and is larger than 75% of ozone holes at this stage in the season since 1979.

Ozone exists about seven to 25 miles (11-40km) above the Earth's surface, in the stratosphere, and acts like a sunscreen for the planet, shielding it from ultraviolet radiation. Every year, a hole forms during the

late winter of the southern hemisphere as the sun causes ozone-depleting reactions, which involve chemically active forms of chlorine and bromine derived from human-made compounds. In a statement Copernicus said that this year's hole "has evolved into a rather larger than usual one."

Vincent-Henri Peuch, the service's director, told the Guardian: "We cannot really say at this stage how the ozone hole will evolve. However, the hole of this year is remarkably similar to the one of 2020, which was among the deepest and the longest-lasting – it closed around Christmas – in our

records since 1979.

"The 2021 ozone hole is now among the 25% largest in our records since 1979, but the process is still under way. We will keep monitoring its development in the next weeks. A large or small ozone hole in one year does not necessarily mean that the overall recovery process is not going ahead as expected, but it can signal that special attention needs to be paid and research can be directed to study the reasons behind a specific ozone hole event."

Scientists accept that the depletion in the ozone layer is caused by human-made gas-



es called CFCs, which were first developed in the 1930s for use in refrigeration systems and were then deployed as propellants in

aerosol spray cans. The chemicals are stable so can travel from the Earth's surface to the stratosphere. But then, at the altitude where stratospheric ozone is found, they are broken down by high-energy UV radiation. The ensuing chemical reactions destroy ozone. CFCs have been banned in 197 countries around the world.

Since the ban on so-called halocarbons the ozone layer has shown signs of recovery, but it is a slow process and it will take until the 2060s or 70s for a complete phasing-out of the depleting substances. During recent years with normal weather condi-

tions, the ozone hole has typically grown to a maximum of 20 million sq km (8 million sq miles).

The 2020 Arctic ozone hole was also very large and deep, and peaked at roughly three times the size of the continental US.

The Antarctic ozone hole usually reaches its peak between mid-September and mid-October. When temperatures start to rise high up in the stratosphere in late southern hemisphere spring, ozone depletion slows, the polar vortex weakens and finally breaks down and, by December, ozone levels usually return to normal.

Fauna of Iran

(Part 4)

Fishes. The native fresh-water fishes of Persia include 155 species in 24 families. In his concise analysis of the zoogeography of Persian ichthyofauna Coad (1987) recognized 19 major drainage basins, all but 4 of which are endorheic.

The fishes are principally Palearctic but include Oriental and Ethiopian elements, particularly in those few basins that drain into the Persian Gulf. The Sistan basin also contains Oriental species and species derived from the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan. Three families, Cyprinidae, Cobitidae, and Gobiidae together comprise 73.6 percent of the species in Persia.



The Caspian is the most diverse drainage basin, with 15 families, whereas the Tigris basin contains 11. The basins that drain into the Persian Gulf have 5 to 7 families each, and the remaining internal drainages have 4 or fewer.

According to Coad, the most important factors in determining the present distributions at species level are transgressions of the Caspian, which shares elements of Black Sea/Mediterranean fauna; drainage captures owing to orogeny and erosion, which have enabled fish to move between adjoining basins; river highways that over time have connected habitats at very different elevations (e.g., the Helmand river between the Hindu Kush and the Sistan basin); marine penetration from one basin to another in southern Persia, causing fresh-water fishes to develop a tolerance for salinity; and possibly human intervention. Because of rugged terrain and extreme climate (q.v.) Coad believes that historically most human relocation of native fish has been within, rather than between, basins.

Shifts in climate and devegetation affect all biota in the environment. Coad has discussed the impact of such environmental changes on fresh-water fishes (1980). The pace and impact of devegetation have increased as the Persian population has grown and industrialization expanded.

Overgrazing by larger and larger flocks and herds of domestic stock and deforestation for fuel and to clear land for agriculture have altered local climates, reduced rainfall and retention of water, and increased rates of erosion and silting of streams, lakes, and marshes.

Extensive irrigation projects have deflected water from natural watercourses while at the same time providing new aquatic habitats like qanats. Dam construction can have a cascade of effects deleterious to aquatic life, whereas wells may lower water tables, leading to loss of springs and marshes without providing new habitats for fish.

Agricultural and industrial runoff introduces silt and toxic chemicals into aquatic habitats. A number of exotic fish species have been introduced into Persian waterways for mosquito control and both commercial and sport fishing; such introductions alter ecological relations and may have profound consequences for native species.

Overfishing has reduced stocks of such important food fishes as Caspian sturgeon, Caspian "salmon," safid mahi (*Rutilus frisii kutum*), *Rutilus rutilus caspicus*, *Cyprinus carpio*, clupeid species, and the like.

Amphibians. Persian amphibians (q.v.) are far less numerous than other groups of vertebrates, being restricted to environments that reliably provide at least seasonal water for breeding and are thus most available in the mountain drainages of the north and west.

Two families of salamanders occur in Persia: The Hynobiidae, which is temperate Asian in distribution, is represented by two species of the genus *Batrachuperus* in northern Persia, and the Salamandridae, Holarctic in distribution, is represented by one species each of the European or Euro-Siberian genera *Salmandra* and *Triturus* and three species of the Anatolian-Iranian genus *Neurergus*. All are restricted to springs, caverns, and permanent streams on the windward slopes of the Zagros, Alborz, and Kopet-Dag ranges.

Frogs and toads are more tolerant of arid conditions and thus more broadly distributed. They represent four or five genera in four widely distributed families. *Hyla savignyi* is a Middle Eastern representative of a Euro-Siberian species of a genus that is primarily neotropical in distribution, with a few Holarctic species; in Persia its distribution corresponds approximately to that of the salamanders.

Pelobates syriacus, which occurs along the southern Caspian coast, represents the Western Palearctic group of toads. The genus *Bufo* is nearly worldwide in distribution; two species or species groups represented in Persia are Western Palearctic: *Bufo bufo*, with one subspecies just entering northern Persia, and *Bufo viridis*, with several populations and related isolated species in all provinces.

Two Oriental species, *Bufo olivaceus* and *Bufo stomaticus* occur in eastern Persian Baluchistan. The Ranidae are represented by four genera in Persia: *Rana ridibunda* and *Rana macronemis*, which are Western Palearctic; *Rana camerani*, which is Anatolian; and *Rana (Euphylyctis)*, according to some authors) *cyano-phlyctis*, an Oriental species extending into eastern Persian Baluchistan and Sistan.

(Source: Encyclopaedia Iranica)

ENGLISH IN USE

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97% of Iran affected by long-term drought: expert

Based on the data collected over the past decade approximately 97 percent of the country is affected by long-term drought, director of the national drought warning and monitoring center, Sadeq Ziaiean, has said.

Some 12.7 percent of the country is hit by extremely severe drought, 53.6 percent of the country is affected by severe drought while 24.8 percent of the country is facing moderate drought and 5.9 percent of the country is withstanding mild drought, ISNA news agency quoted Ziaiean as saying on Wednesday.

He went on to say that extremely severe long-term drought has had negative effects on 14.2 percent of the country's total population, severe long-term drought has hit 47 percent of the country's population, 30.7 percent of the country's population is affected by moderate long-term drought and 5.1 percent of the population is stricken with mild drought.

۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تاثیر خشکسالی است

صادق ضیائی‌ان رئیس مرکز ملی خشکسالی و مدیریت بحران سازمان هواشناسی اعلام کرد: بررسی داده‌های ۱۰ ساله خشکسالی بیانگر آن است که ۹۷ درصد مساحت ایران تحت تأثیر خشکسالی بلندمدت است. ضیائی‌ان در گفت‌وگو با ایسنا گفت: از این مقدار ۵۳.۶ درصد مساحت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۱۲.۷ درصد با خشکسالی بسیار شدید، ۲۴.۸ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵.۹ درصد مساحت با خشکسالی خفیف مواجه هستند.

وی ادامه داد: ۲ درصد جمعیت ایران با خشکسالی بسیار شدید بلندمدت است همچنین ۴۷ درصد جمعیت کشور با خشکسالی شدید، ۳۰.۷ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی متوسط و ۵.۱ درصد جمعیت با خشکسالی خفیف دست و پنجه نرم می‌کنند.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON SEPTEMBER 18	
New cases	12,847
New deaths	355
Total cases	5,408,860
Total deaths	116,719
New hospitalized patients	2,124
Patients in critical condition	6,836
Total recovered patients	4,736,896
Diagnostic tests conducted	30,893,103
Doses of vaccine injected	42,003,863

