

Israeli Showoff for Friends Backfires

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Armed Forces will dismantle terror groups in Iraq's Kurdistan if mischief continues: top general

Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri has warned about the activities of anti-Iran terrorist groups in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, emphasizing they will be fully dismantled in case they insist on their mischief.

"Unfortunately, we witness that armed counter-revolutionary groups are actively operating in northern Iraq because of apathy shown on the part of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the central Iraqi government's weaknesses as a result of Americans' presence," the top general said on the sidelines of an official ceremony in Tehran on Sunday.

The Iranian commander said the terrorist groups have tried to expand their operations at the provocation of the United States, the Israeli regime and some reactionary Arab states.

"Although they have not managed to cause any major trouble yet, they have been a source of insecurity and concern in some border areas of Iran. We do not tolerate such mischief," Major General Baqeri pointed out.

The high-ranking military official also stated that the Baghdad government and the KRG should not allow terrorist groups to establish training bases, radio and television stations, and camps in northern Iraq, wage attacks on Iranian border regions and assassinate Iranians.

"Iranian Armed Forces, under the command and auspices of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), will destroy the bases of such terrorist groups. Operations that have been going on for the past two weeks will continue as it is the legal and logical right of the Iranian nation to enjoy secure and peaceful borders," he emphasized.

"We have called upon the KRG leaders and Iraqi government officials to uproot these terrorist groups and prevent their activities, but the requests have not been properly answered. Therefore, if the presence of such outfits and their mischief continue, we will fully dismantle them," the top commander said. ▶ Page 2

Report

France, U.S. tensions enter "crisis" mode

In an unprecedented step that has exposed the intensity of France's anger against its allies, Paris has recalled its ambassadors to the United States and Australia in a furious row over the scrapping of a submarine contract.

The withdrawal of ambassadors did not even occur during the Presidency of Donald Trump when relations between Washington and its European allies were widely believed to have hit rock bottom.

The French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian says President Emmanuel Macron has recalled the envoys after Canberra ditched a deal to buy French submarines in favor of U.S. nuclear-powered vessels.

Le Drian said that the decision was made to "immediately" recall the two French ambassadors due to "the exceptional seriousness of the announcements made on September 15 by Australia and the United States".

He described the escalating tensions as a "crisis" in France's relations with the United States and Australia.

In a strongly worded message to the UK, he said "with Britain, we do not need [to recall our ambassador]. We know their constant opportunism, so there's no use in having our ambassador (in Britain) come to explain that to us. In addition, Britain in this matter is quite the spare tire."

A French diplomatic source also said the United Kingdom acted in an "opportunistic manner"

The French ambassador recalls from the United States and Australia are unprecedented in nature among allies nevertheless enemies. Withdrawing envoys is usually viewed as a last resort diplomatic step taken when relations between feuding countries are plunged into crisis but they are extremely unheard off between allies. ▶ Page 5



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Iran down Japan to win Asian Volleyball Championship

TEHRAN – Iran defeated Japan 3-0 (27-25, 25-22, 31-29) on Sunday to win the 21st Asian Senior Men's Volleyball Championship in Chiba, Japan.

Opposite Saber Kazemi, who charted a total of 21 points, including the crucial plays that led toward

Iran's title defense.

After the poor performance in the 2020 Olympic Games, Iran participated in the Asian championship with the young players. The superstars like Saeid Marouf, Mohammad Mousavi, Amir Ghafour

and Mehdi Marandi were not invited to the National Team.

Defending champions Iran won the title for the fourth time. Japan still are the most-decorated team in Asia with nine titles. ▶ Page 3

Iran's petchem, fuel sales surge in shadow of oil sale restrictions

TEHRAN – Iran's exports of fuel and petrochemical exports have surged in recent years as the re-imposition of the U.S. sanctions on the country's oil industry curbed crude sales, the Daily Star reported.

The situation has left Iran in a good position to be able to expand trade in Asia and Europe rapidly, if the sanctions are removed, the report said quoting trade sources and officials.

The United States imposed sanctions on Iran's oil and gas industry in 2018 to choke off the Islamic Republic's main source of revenues. The sanctions significantly declined crude exports but not sales of fuel and petrochemicals.

Iran exported petrochemicals and petroleum products worth almost \$20 billion in 2020, twice the value of its crude exports, oil ministry and central bank figures show. The government said in April they were its main source of revenues.

"The world is vast and the ways of evading sanctions are endless," Hamid Hosseini, board member of Iran's Oil, Gas and Petrochemical Products Exporters' Union in Tehran, told Reuters. Competitive prices and Iran's location, close to major shipping lanes, made its products attractive, he said.

There are also many more buyers of refined products than importers with refineries configured to process Iranian crude. ▶ Page 4

227 knowledge-based companies operating in medical sector

TEHRAN – A total of 227 knowledge-based firms are supplying medical equipment for health centers across the country, according to the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology.

These companies are producing many of the sanctioned items, and export them in addition to supplying the domestic market.

In Iran, the production of technological and advanced equipment is being carried out rapidly.

Products, in addition to meeting the needs of medical centers and hospitals, accelerate research pace and paves the way for other technological productions, as well as reducing costs and dependence on imports.

On the other hand, some of this knowledge-based equipment was on the sanctions list, and with the domestic production in accordance with international standards, an effective step was taken.

This capability has been very effective in times of crisis, such as the production of ventilators during the outbreak of coronavirus.

Of course, the knowledge-based firms definitely had challenges to produce advanced equipment, which were facilitated through 110 services provided by the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology. ▶ Page 7



What behind Persian Gulf leaders' détente

TEHRAN – A new, controversial photo featuring a casual appearance by leaders from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates has once again focused the debate on the driving force behind the prompt reconciliation among some countries in the region that have been at daggers drawn for years. ▶ Page 3

Tehran museums reopen to visitors as coronavirus cases fall

TEHRAN – Museums of the Iranian capital have reopened their doors to the public following a five-month closure as the metropolis experiences a sustained drop in coronavirus infections.

As Tehran is situated in the "orange" zone and restrictions over the coronavirus pandemic have been relaxed, all museums in Tehran reopened and started their activities, IRNA quoted Mohammadreza Kargar, the tourism ministry's director for museums and historical properties as saying on Sunday.

However, visitors need to adhere to health protocols

and social distancing guidelines, the official added.

Last November, the official announced that Iranian museums have taken 1.7 trillion rials (some \$42 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) hit from the coronavirus outbreak.

If the country was in normal condition, the museums would host over 25 million visitors [within a year], but now they have faced huge losses as there is almost no visitor to the museums, he noted.

Last October, former Cultural Heritage, Tourism,

and Handicrafts Minister Ali-Asghar Mounesan warned that Iran's cultural heritage and tourism will be in a critical situation if the crises are caused by the outbreak of the coronavirus continue.

With the outbreak of the coronavirus, museums were at the forefront of closures and for several months, they have not had any revenue from the sale of tickets, Mounesan explained.

Meanwhile, the ministry is facing a shortage of funds in the field of cultural heritage, which causes problems for maintaining and ▶ Page 6

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Interview

EU powerless in face of U.S. sanctions on Russia and Iran: expert

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN – A consultant in European and international affairs believes that the EU is absent and powerless when it comes to U.S. unilateral sanctions against other countries.

"The position of the European Union is absent and powerless on the American sanctions against Russia and Iran because it does not have considerable power," Ludovic Zanker tells the Tehran Times.

"The European Union is obliged to ally itself with the United States to be heard and to follow sanction policy against Russia and Iran. Just take away the United States, the European Union has no authority, its decisions are inaudible," Zanker notes.

Russia-U.S. relations have gone through many ups and downs over the past decades. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Washington spared no effort to establish itself as a global hegemon through waging wars and imposing sanctions against its rivals.

Meanwhile, many European states have preferred to follow U.S. policies or play a marginal role in the new world order.

Many critics say that the EU, despite its economic weight, is dependent on the U.S. in the terms of military and security.

"The European Union is dependent on the United States on certain issues, including Russia in the case of the annexation of Crimea in Ukraine, but also the presence of military troops in Dombass," Zanker remarks.

Following is the text of the interview:

How do you assess Russia-U.S. disputes under the Putin-Biden presidencies? Is there a strategic rivalry or an economic competition?

The differences between Russia and the United States under the chairmanship of Biden and Putin have important consequences in relations both diplomatic and political, but also economic.

To answer your question, there is a strategic position between Biden and Putin, the balance of power both diplomatically and economically. On the diplomatic level, tensions are not at a standstill, following a cyber-attack from Moscow. Similarly for Russia, the Kremlin has also decided to expel American diplomats on their soil.

Economically, Russia will be a little weaker, but it will resist these U.S. sanctions. For the United States, it will lose an important partner because Russia remains an important country in the military and also economically. ▶ Page 5

New NIGC head appointed

TEHRAN – Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji appointed Majid Chegeni as the new head of the National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) in a decree on Sunday, Shana reported.

Chegeni replaced Hassan Montazer Torbati who served as the NIGC head since November 2018.

He previously served as the head of the Oil Ministry's office for supervision of exports and exchanges of petroleum products.

Iran Armed Forces will dismantle terror groups in Iraq's Kurdistan region if mischief continues: Top general

From page 1 ► Back on September 9, the IRGC Ground Force used suicide and combat drones as well as smart and precision-guided artillery to target terrorists in the rugged mountains of Iraq's Kurdistan region.

It came days after the force's commander, Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour, warned the KRG not to allow terrorist groups to use its territory to threaten the Islamic Republic.

Iraqi Kurdistan Region has long been used by anti-Iran terror groups such as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its offshoot, PJAK, which are active in Iraq and Turkey, to launch occasional attacks against Iranian border guards and border areas in northwestern parts of the country.

The attacks have been met with crushing responses from Iran's border guards and other military units deployed in those areas.

Iran nuclear chief visits Vienna

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) arrived in Vienna on Sunday to attend the 65th Annual Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference, IRNA reported.

Mohammad Eslami is heading a high-ranking delegation to Vienna, according to the AEOI website.

The regular session of the International Atomic Energy Agency runs from September 20 to 24 at the Vienna International Centre (VIC), where high-ranking officials and representatives from IAEA member states will consider a range of issues, as announced by the IAEA website.



Iran's membership in SCO promises close political and economic cooperation in a wide geography

TEHRAN - Among the regional organizations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has attracted Iran's attention since its formation in 2001. It centered on two major world powers, China and Russia. Now, Iran's membership in the organization is a harbinger of expanding economic-political cooperation in the region.

Two political and economic factors are involved in analyzing the membership.

Tensions and the continuation of the U.S. sanctions system have always acted as a deterrent to the development of Iran's foreign trade, depriving Iran from the benefits of international markets or attracting foreign investment for infrastructure projects, including transportation, communications. Sanctions have mostly affected tourism and oil and gas sectors.

Aware of this issue, the Islamic Republic of Iran has chosen the strategy of "looking to the East" in order to expand regional cooperation and confront the sanctions system.

Today, the volume of economy and trade and, most importantly, China's technical and technological knowledge has persuaded not only Iran but also a large number of countries to establish close trade and economic relations with this great Asian country.

In this context, the Chinese interest in Iran's 80-million-population market and investing in various Iranian industries have created a kind of common strategic interest for closer cooperation between the two Asian countries, IRNA said in commentary on Saturday.

According to the 25-year Iran-China partnership, the Chinese have agreed to invest \$400 billion in Iran's infrastructure projects and this shows the economic importance of Iran to China, which is now the second largest economy in the world.

Basically, Iran is an important partner in China's "One Road One Belt" project. China's interest in Chabahar

port which can help advance the large-scale project reflects the fact that Iran has a special place in Beijing's economic and political outlook.

Today, with Iran's official membership in the SCO, which is centered on two major Eastern powers, China and Russia, can bring great economic and trade opportunities for the country.

It seems that Iran's membership in the organization will pave the way for the development of economic cooperation, especially the implementation of the 25-year Iran-China agreement.

It should not be overlooked that the United States has not given up on intensifying tensions with China with the aim of containing China's rise even during the Biden era. It has been clearly announced that the recent military pact between the U.S., UK and Australia is aimed at China. The pact, dubbed AUKUS, will see the U.S. and UK give Australia the technology to build nuclear-powered submarines for the first time.

Today, U.S. officials see China as a key rival in challenging their power in the Asia-Pacific region and are using various means to contain China. But the reality is that today China, as an economic superpower, seeks to strengthen regional cooperation to protect and perpetuate its status.

Therefore, the enlargement of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Iran's membership can be analyzed in such a context. In addition, with the membership of Iran, the Chinese are somehow trying to deepen their economic and political cooperation in West Asia.

On the other hand, the membership of Iran in this organization promotes the regional and international position of the Islamic Republic in an effective and desirable way. However, in today's global arrangements, countries play an active role in the form of regional organizations. The SCO is the largest Eurasian political, economic and security alliance.

Another opportunity for Iran in joining the SCO is to increase the country's position internationally. Today, two of the nine main members of the organization (China and Russia) have veto power in the UN Security Council.

Of course, the membership of India as a large and emerging economic power, which is usually a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and one of the leading regional and global powers, is also very important.

The need to strengthen, develop transport infrastructure in region

Iran has a coastline of 2040 km with the high seas in the south, and if Shanghai members use Iran's infrastructure to increase cooperation capacity, there are common interests for all members, especially China and Central Asian countries that do not have access to the high seas.

In other words, Iran, with its special geographical location, can serve as a North-South and East-West bridge in the SCO. Achieving this goal requires the expansion of transport cooperation, especially in transportation infrastructure.

At present, the railway line to Herat has progressed and certainly the development of this line needs the support of the great powers of the organization.

It should be noted that the SCO with its current capacity accounts for 42% of the world's population and a quarter of the world's GDP. This, together with the energy capacity and reserves of oil and gas resources, is all an ideal opportunity to strengthen economic convergence and mutual development for all members of the organization.

In the new era countries

vice-chief of the staff of the Armed Forces.

The Leader asked Vahedi to pay due attention to efforts to upgrade the capability and combat readiness in responding intelligently to any type of air threat.

He also asked Vahedi to pay special attention to the growth of human resources with the approach of building an air force with elite scientists.

Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr named Expediency Council secretary

TEHRAN - In a decree on Sunday, Sadeq Larijani appointed Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr as the new secretary of the Expediency Council.

Zolqadr replaced Mohsen Rezaei, whose resignation was accepted by the Leader of Islamic Revolution.

Israeli showoff for friends backfires



TEHRAN — In a heavily fictionalized report published on Saturday night in the New York Times, Ronen Bergman, who is mostly known as the official voice of the Israeli regime in the New York Times, claimed to have "revealed" some new, groundbreaking information regarding the assassination of the Iranian scientist, Mohsen Fakhriadeh.

However, the report did not add anything to the spectrum of this cowardly assassination by the Mossad. It was mostly information already published in media outlets, gathered altogether in a report.

The Times claims that its report is "based on interviews with American, Israeli and Iranian officials, including two intelligence officials familiar with the details of the planning and execution of the operation..."

According to the Times, the assassination occurred in the most fictional way, something that could only be spotted at commercial fictions in Hollywood. The authors seem to have forgotten that this is

not some Mission Impossible scene.

Many Iranians looked at the report with a pinch of salt. The described fictionalized surveillance operation was something that caught the eyes of many Iranians, as well as a poorly described Fakhriadeh. Who would have thought that the Times would resort to such desperate measures such as the ring late Fakhriadeh wore?

"...the machine gun, the robot, its components and accessories together weigh about a ton. So the equipment was broken down into its smallest possible parts and smuggled into the country piece by piece, in various ways, routes and times, then secretly reassembled in Iran," Bergman says in the report!

Expressions such as "sending data at the speed of light," or "Israel had an effective network of collaborators inside Iran" clearly shows that the piece was meant to be written as a propaganda for the Israeli regime, and to show off the non-existent high-tech Mossad intelligence facilities. While there are several

examples of Iranian intelligence power, which the Tehran Times is not authorized to discuss in detail, Iran has never felt the need to brag about its intelligence activities, and continues to do its job in total silence.

Well, there is no doubt that a report, co-authored by Ronen Bergman, is nothing but a cheesy attempt to promote and propagate Israel for its friends and allies. Now, why is the New York Times becoming a mouthpiece for propagating Israel? The answer lies within the disputes between the EU bloc, the United States, and Israel.

The Israeli regime looks confused about the new approach taken by the American establishment. The case in point is the embarrassing withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, the AUKUS pact, and even Biden taking a joyful nap in his meeting with the Israeli regime's Prime Minister, Naftali Bennett.

The piece says that preparations for the assassination began "after a series of meetings toward the end of 2019 and in early 2020 between

Israeli officials, led by the Mossad director, Yossi Cohen, and high-ranking American officials, including President Donald J. Trump, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the CIA director, Gina Haspel."

WOW! Such groundbreaking information! Everyone knew that the assassination was done with the backing of the United States and it is evident that such cowardly acts could not have taken place without Washington's consent. The Times have taken the bull by the horns!

Bergman who wrote a book titled "Rise and Kill First: The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations", is the co-author of this piece. It is no surprise to describe the assassination scene like a fictional Hollywood movie.

The NYT must know that its readers are smart enough to be able to distinguish facts from fiction. It must also remember that it has not revealed a wow! factor. Most of what they published had already been on the news outlets. This is not investigative journalism.

Membership in the SCO will promote regional and international position of Iran in an effective way.

have no choice but to expand regional interactions for economic development, and it is hoped that with the official membership of the country in the Shanghai organization, a serious and operational step will be taken to increase economic relations and expand investment in various infrastructural and industrial dimensions.

Some important benefits of Iran's membership in SCO are:

- * Improving Iran's security
- SCO members are committed to hold joint military maneuvers.
- * Increasing the possibility of foreign investment

- In international bodies, Russia and China will be committed to support Iran and will not be obliged to comply with U.S. sanctions against Iran.

* Important effect on Iran-Eurasia relations

* Iran's position in the international equation will be strengthened and this will help reduce U.S. sanctions against

Iran.

* Iran has been an observer member of the organization since 2005 and by joining it as a permanent member, we can hope that the level of our country's foreign trade with the members of the organization will increase and will be able to face the restrictions imposed by Europeans and the United States on Iran's economy.

However, it should not be forgotten that Iran's extensive engagement at various political levels with countries around the world should be on the agenda as a strategy.

* Members of the Shanghai organization have about one-third of the land surface.

* While China and Russia, two of the five permanent members of the Security Council, are key pillars of the treaty, it is enough for any observer to understand why the SCO is more important than a regional security organization.

* Geographically, Iran is located in a region that can connect the North to the South, and the West to the East. Over the years, many countries have tried to somehow replace Iran with other countries, but Iran is still the most important corridor in West Asia.

* In the field of energy, according to available statistics, Iran has the combined largest oil and gas reserves in the world, which is mostly needed by China and India as two important members of the pact.

* By becoming a permanent member of the organization, Iran will be connected to the vast markets of the member states.

As an observer member of the Eurasian Union, and its presence in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can complement the process of making Iran use the economic potential of the countries in this region, which together accommodate 65% of the world's population, as well as the world's resources.

* It is also important for the SCO to have a close relationship with a power like Iran, which has very rich resources for economic cooperation and is considered a bridge between East and West Asia as well as the North to the South.

Due to its vast energy resource (oil and gas), Iran will naturally be an important powerhouse in the organization; more cooperation will strengthen Iran's role in the new Silk Road to benefit of all parties.

Leader appoints Vahedi as new Air force commander



TEHRAN — Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, has appointed Brigadier General Hamid Vahedi as the new commander of the Air Force.

In his decree that was issued on Sunday, the Leader thanked Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh, who was appointed as the

si appointed Rezaei as his deputy for economic affairs.

Ayatollah Khamenei also wished success for Rezaei in his new post.

Rezaei, 67, was a candidate in the June presidential elections.

He was the first commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC). Rezaei served in the job from 1981 to 1997.

Leader accepts resignation of Rezaei as Expediency Council secretary

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Sunday accepted a request by Mohsen Rezaei to resign as the secretary of the Expediency Council.

The Leader also thanked Rezaei for his long years of work at the secretariat of the Expediency Council, saying such efforts are "unforgettable".

On August 25, President Ebrahim Rai-



Iran FM to leave Tehran for New York on Tuesday

TEHRAN – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian will travel to New York this week to participate in the meeting of the UN General Assembly where he is also expected to meet many foreign officials, according to the Iranian foreign ministry.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said that the new Iranian foreign minister will have about 45 meetings in New York.

Speaking at a press conference on Sunday, Khatibzadeh said the new Iranian foreign minister will leave Tehran for New York on Tuesday to take part in the United Nations General Assembly. He added that so far about 45 meetings with foreign counterparts have been scheduled for Abdollahian.

Khatibzadeh pointed out that these meetings include bilateral talks with the foreign ministers of all the remaining parties to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

He underlined that there would be no meeting between Iran and the U.S. in New York.

But the spokesman left the door wide open on the possibility of a multilateral meeting of Iran and the P4+1 group of countries which includes Russia, China, France, the UK, and Germany.

“Regarding the meeting of the P4+1 foreign ministers, I should emphasize that if we see that this meeting can be useful in the direction of what we have said, that is useful negotiation, we will make that decision. We have not made a decision now and we have to see what the subject of the meeting can be and then make a decision based on it,” Khatibzadeh said.

He added, “What is important is that our Foreign Minister will have ‘bilateral meetings’ with all the P4+1 foreign ministers, and if it was deemed necessary and there was a special agenda and a specific issue was raised, it could be held collectively between Iran and the P4+1, but for the time being, no decision has been made in this regard.”

Khatibzadeh also touched on the stalled Vienna talks. He said Iran is reviewing its negotiating team and the U.S. should come back to Vienna with a different approach.

Commenting on the composition of the Iranian nuclear negotiating team in Vienna, he noted, “The composition of the negotiating team is under consideration and naturally changes will take place and the form of these changes has not been finalized yet and will be announced as soon as it is finalized.”

The spokesman called on the U.S. to abandon its unilateral approach. “The United States must abandon its unilateralist approach to defining what is enshrined in international law. Unilateralism under Trump was manifested by unilateral, extraterritorial, and illegal sanctions. What we see today is unilateralism in the definition of what is stipulated in the JCPOA and the benefit that Iran should derive from the JCPOA as well as the



duties and responsibilities of all parties to the JCPOA signatories,” he stated.

Khatibzadeh added, “If the United States puts aside this unilateralism, both in terms of implementation and in terms of interpretation and approach, the Vienna talks will surely move in a better direction. Iran has emphasized that the United States, as the main culprit in the current situation we are witnessing in the JCPOA, including the current U.S. administration, is violating [UNSC] Resolution 2231 and its obligations under the JCPOA.”

Khatibzadeh continued, “Unilateral and oppressive pressure on the Iranian people are continuing, and once this approach is put aside in practice and we make sure that the United States is credible and that we can verify what the United States claims, then the Vienna path will be different.”

The spokesman noted, “We do not make any more commitments to anyone than the JCPOA, and we do not accept any profit from the JCPOA less than the JCPOA. The United States must come to Vienna with a different approach.”

SCO membership showed the failure of U.S. policies

Khatibzadeh also commented on Iran's becoming a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). “The internal mechanisms of this organization are important to us; I hope we will both implement and improve these mechanisms. Iran's membership in Shanghai is a sign of the failure of U.S. policies,” he said.

Khatibzadeh added, “Iran's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was the practical end of the project of isolating Iran by some international actors, including the United States, and was another sign of the failure of those policies.”

On Friday, Iran announced that it ended a 16-year-old peripheral status at the SCO to become a full member in the regional body.

“At the end of the 21st Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, held in the Tajik capital Dushanbe, the leaders of the eight main members of

the organization agreed to change the membership of the Islamic Republic of Iran from an observer member to a full member and signed the relevant documents,” the Iranian presidency said in a statement. “Accordingly, the technical process of Iran becoming one of the main members of the organization has begun and Iran will henceforth cooperate and interact with member countries as the main member of the important regional organization.”

The membership was achieved during the first foreign visit by Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raisi in his capacity as Iran's president.

Addressing the SCO summit in Dushanbe, Ayatollah Raisi elaborated on this policy. “When I took over the presidency of the Islamic Republic, I introduced my foreign policy orientation as focusing on ‘economic multilateralism’ and strengthening ‘neighborhood policy’ in its broadest sense, and strengthening its presence in regional organizations,” he said.

The Iranian president added, “The combination of the Eurasia and One Road-One Belt initiatives can be an objective realization of this approach, and the vast potential of the Islamic Republic of Iran in terms of geopolitics, population, energy, transportation, human resources, and most importantly spirituality, culture and civilization can cause a significant stimulus to this outlook.”

Foreign Minister Abdollahian described Iran's membership in the SCO as “strategic” that will have an important impact on Iran's “comprehensive” cooperation within the framework of the Neighborhood and Asia-oriented Policy.

Abdollahian also said that his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov and Russian President Vladimir Putin have supported Iranian membership. In a tweet on Friday, Abdollahian said he met with Lavrov on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Shanghai in Dushanbe and thanked him and Putin for their support of Iran's membership in the organization.

Earlier, Khatibzadeh had welcomed the membership on Twitter. “Warmly welcome the decision of the SCO to

approve #Iran's full membership. A major step toward enhanced ties with neighbors & an important impetus for our Asia-centered foreign policy. We'll continue our efforts to build on indigenous initiatives for the good of the region,” Khatibzadeh said.

On Saturday, the Iranian foreign ministry announced the beginning of the legal and technical procedure for Iran to become a full member of the SCO.

“As a result of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran's constantly pursuing the matter at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), these efforts have gathered pace since the beginning of the tenure of the 13th administration. Finally, when Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi took part in the 21st SCO summit in the city of Dushanbe in Tajikistan, all 8 main members of the SCO unanimously announced their agreement to our country's request for permanent membership in this organization. Accordingly, the legal, technical and administrative procedure of the membership began,” the foreign ministry said in a statement.

It added, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses its pleasure over this joyful accomplishment for the country while highlighting its commitment to tap into all its specialized potential to make the necessary coordination with other relevant bodies as well as the SCO's Secretariat to make the legal and administrative procedure of the membership run its course in the shortest possible time.”

The statement noted, “The acceptance of the Islamic Republic of Iran's request for membership in the SCO is a key step and plays a positive role in the promotion of our country's cooperation and relations with the SCO member states in all bilateral, regional and international areas.”

It concluded, “The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expresses its gratitude to all SCO members for having agreed to the Islamic Republic of Iran's membership and will employ an active diplomacy to boost its relations with the diplomatic apparatuses of the SCO member states within the framework of the organization [s regulations].”

SPORTS

Iran down Japan to win Asian Volleyball Championship

From Page 1 ► South Korea have also won the title four times. China have claimed the championship three times and Australia seized the title one time.

“I am very happy with the win against Japan and I believe that we deserved to win the title. I dedicate the title to the Iranian people and I am very pleaded for making them happy,” Iran coach Behrouz Ataei said.

Earlier in the day, China overpowered Chinese Taipei 3-0 in bronze medal match.

A total of 16 teams competed in the 21st Asian Volleyball Championship from Sept. 12 to 19 in Chiba, Japan.

Iran and Japan will also represent Asia at the 2022 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship in Russia.

Saber Kazemi named 2021 Asian Volleyball Championship MVP

TEHRAN – Saber Kazemi was named as the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the 2021 Asian Senior Men's Volleyball Championship.

Kazemi played a key role in helping Iran win the title for the fourth time.

The opposite striker also was the best player of the final match, where Iran defeated host Japan 3-0.

Furthermore, Javad Karimi was named the tournament's best setter, Milad Ebadipour and Yuki Ishikawa (Japan) were chosen as the best opposite spikers. Ali Asghar Mojarad and China's Li Yongzhen were named the best middle blockers and Mohammad Reza Hazratpour was selected the best libero.

Persepolis looking for first ACL title against Al Hilal: AFC

TEHRAN – A bone fide clash of Asian heavyweights, the meeting between Al Hilal and Persepolis brings together two clubs with genuine claims on being the biggest and best in the continent, with vast support bases and bulging trophy cabinets.

Al Hilal go into the contest looking to return to the form that saw the club capture the AFC Champions League title in 2019 as the Riyadh-based giants finally shook off almost two decades of disappointment at continental level to claim the title.

Persepolis are not without their motivations in this competition too, having finished runners-up in 2018 and 2020 – behind Japan's Kashima Antlers and Korea Republic's Ulsan Hyundai respectively – as the Tehran Reds look to win the championship for the first time, the-afc.com wrote.

The two clubs are no strangers on the continental stage having met one another on eight previous occasions, with the most recent coming in 2017. That ended in success for Al Hilal as they advanced to the final with a 6-2 aggregate win over the Iranians before losing to Urawa Red Diamonds in the decider.

Ahmad Madadi steps down as Esteghlal GM

TEHRAN – Esteghlal football club general manager Ahmad Madadi stepped down from his position on Saturday.

Madadi had replaced Ahmad Saadatmand in the position in December 2020.

Madadi has already worked as deputy in Iranian football clubs Paykan and Saipa.

Persepolis general manager Jafar Samiei had also resigned from his position last week.

Esteghlal and Persepolis are owned by Iran's Sports Ministry.

Iran on brink of World Women's Handball qualification

TEHRAN – Iran are on the brink of making 2021 Asian Women's Handball Championship finals appearance after defeating hosts Jordan 28-22 on Sunday.

The Persians will meet West Asian powerhouses Syria on Tuesday.

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.

Torabi's goal voted the best goal of the 2021 ACL Round of 16

TEHRAN – Persepolis midfielder Mahdi Torabi's goal against Tajikistan's Istiklol was voted the best goal of the 2021 AFC Champions League Round of 16.

Torabi scored a late goal in Dushanbe's Republican Central Stadium on Tuesday and sent two-time runner-up Persepolis into the quarterfinals.

The 17,000 spectators were stunned at the last seconds of the match.

Torabi defeated Bafetimbi Gomis, Jakub Swierczok, Vincent Aboubakar and Teerasil Dangda to win the accolade.

Iranian volleyball coach Hossein Kazemi dies

TEHRAN – Iranian volleyball coach Hossein Kazemi passed away at the age of 42 on Sunday.

He lost his long battle with lung cancer in his homeland Amol, Mazandaran Province.

Kazemi was a member of coaching staff in the 2019 FIVB Volleyball Men's U21 World Championship, where Iran won the title in Bahrain.

He was laid to rest in Amol.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to the Kazemi family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Mehdi Ghaedi's magic in UAE

TEHRAN – Iranian striker of Shabab Al-Ahli Mehdi Ghaedi had a fabulous night against Sharjah on Saturday.

On matchday four of the UAE league, Shabab Al-Ahli edged past Sharjah 4-3 thanks to two goals and one assist by Mehdi Ghaedi.

Bernard opened the scoring for Sharjah just one minute into the game and no further goals were scored in the rest of the first half.

Just two minutes after coming into the pitch, Mehdi Ghaedi converted Juma Eid's pass and leveled the match in the 48th minutes.

But Sharjah did not pull back and Lucas Fernandes scored another goal for the team in the 58th minute.

Five minutes later, Shabab Al-Ahli again scored an equalizer by Igor Jesus from the penalty spot. However, Ben Malango scored yet another goal for Sharjah in the 66th minute to make the match 3-2.

Ghaedi's technique came to help Al-Ahli in the 81st minutes when his ball touched Sharjah's net by an own goal of Salem Sultan. This was not the end and three minutes into the added time, Ghaedi showed part of his technique, getting past two defenders and putting the ball into the corner of the net.

The Iranian striker's performance has had a vast reflection in UAE dailies and social media.

Shabab Al-Ahli is sitting third in the table with 10 points from four matches.

What behind Persian Gulf leaders' détente

From Page 1 ► The photo was released Friday by Director of the Private Office of the Saudi Crown Prince Badr Al Asaker, possibly with the pre-consent of his boss as well as the Qatari and Emirati participants.

“A friendly and brotherly meeting in the Red Sea brings together Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, and the UAE National Security Adviser in the UAE, Sheikh Tahoun Bin Zayed Al Nahyan,” Al Asaker wrote on Twitter.

Most Saudi and Emirati, as well as Qatari outlets, were apparently instructed to marginalize the photo in their news coverage. They only gave it cursory attention despite its interest and importance to their local audiences. They did so partly because the photo was not meant to send a local message. Instead, it was intended to project an image of unity among the Persian Gulf Arab states that have been at loggerheads since at least 2017.

“Like nothing ever happened,” Washington Post Beirut bureau chief Liz Sly commented on the photo in a tweet.

In reality, much happened between Qatar on the one hand and Saudi Arabia and the UAE on the other. Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, along with Cairo and Manama, cut off diplomatic ties with Doha in 2017 and imposed a blockade on the tiny Persian Gulf nation that pushed it closer to other regional players such as Turkey and Iran.

At some point, Saudi Arabia even reportedly mulled a military attack on Qatar to oust the “Group of Two Hamads,” a derogatory appellation Saudi and Emirati commentators used in referring to former Qatari Emir Hamad bin Khalifa and former Qatari Prime Minister Hamad bin Jasssem to imply that the two influential men actually run the gas-rich country from behind the scene even after Sheikh Tamim assumed office.

All that now is water under the bridge and the leaders of these countries seem to be all smiles even after they went too far in damaging each other's image through their media outlets. But what caused this reconciliation?

The whys and wherefores of the reconciliation may never be fully known. At the end of the day, politics in the Persian Gulf's Arab states are more influenced by temperaments and personal moods than stately recalibration. It is well known among regional observers that a personal resentment on the part of a Persian Gulf Arab leader is enough to strain relations for years with another country. On the contrary, a cordial kiss and hug sometimes suffice to mend relations.

But to say that the recent casual photo was only a product of a change in the mood is simply an exaggeration. It was largely necessitated by many developments in the region which all served to reinforce a sense of abandonment among these states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE which now grapple with the receding shadow of the U.S. military presence in the region.

In fact, they felt this abandonment first in the attack that knocked out half of the Saudi oil production on September 14, 2019. The Saudis blamed the attack on Iran, which, in turn, denied any involvement. Riyadh expected what the Saudis called a deterring credible response to Iran from the U.S. But the White House did nothing but condemnation. And this was the Trump administration with which the Saudi crown prince struck up a rapport through Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Then came Biden, a president the Saudis resented coming right from the start. Biden made it crystal clear to the Saudis and their Emirati friends that his number one priority is not the protection of Riyadh or Abu Dhabi. To make things worse for the Saudis, Biden even withdrew

air defense systems from Saudi Arabia while the Saudis were openly beseeching him not to do so. The Saudis turned to Israel and Greece for defense systems.

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Zayed, whose absence in the photo was quite remarkable, decided that the UK and France can fill the vacuum left by the U.S. He recently visited both countries and pledged huge investments in them in a bid to lure them to the Persian Gulf.

“Analysts see the visit of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to France as being tied to Emirati-French attempts to build a new alliance that could fill the void left by Washington's disengagement from the [Persian] Gulf region,” The Arab Weekly, a publication close to the UAE, reported. “Since the inauguration of the U.S. administration of President Joe Biden, there has been an impression of dwindling American commitment to Gulf security.”

The publication has put bin Zayed's visit to London in the same context.

“The United Arab Emirates has been edging closer to Britain, in an attempt to create a regional and international front that could fill in the security and strategic vacuum left by the United States in the [Persian] Gulf region. Over the last few months, the administration of U.S. President Joe Biden has made additional steps to shift its global focus away from the Middle East and more towards China,” it said.

But the Saudi-Emirati efforts to bring European forces to the Persian Gulf are doomed to fail because the Europeans lack the strategic strength needed to project power in a region averse to foreign military presence.

Iran's petchem, fuel sales surge in shadow of oil sale restrictions



From page 1 ► In addition, Iran exports some fuel by trucks to its neighbors, which involve small transactions that are tough for the U.S. Treasury to detect.

Tehran has been in talks since April to revive its nuclear pact with six world powers, after the United States under President Donald Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018 and ratcheted up sanctions. Iran says it will

only comply with the pact if U.S. sanctions are scrapped.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic has completely prepared itself to boost its oil production if the measures are eased. While most of the world slashed refinery throughput during the COVID-19 pandemic, Iranian gasoline exports rose 600 percent year on year in 2020 to eight million tons, or 180,000 barrels per day (bpd), the customs administration said. This is while as recently as 2018, Iran had been importing gasoline.

Iran's revenues from gasoline exports were an estimated \$3 billion in 2020, Hosseini said.

Iranian oil production is now about 2.5 million bpd, with around two million bpd allocated to domestic refineries and roughly 500,000 bpd to exports, a source close to the oil ministry said, adding that Iran could boost crude output by two million bpd in two to three months if sanctions were lifted.

5-year plan prepared for fishing fleet modernization

TEHRAN- The director-general of Fisheries Office of Iran Fisheries Organization (IFO) announced the preparation of a five-year plan for the modernization and rebuilding of the country's fishing fleet.

Mokhtar Akhouni said according to this plan, vessels that are more than 20 years old have the priority for renovation and reconstruction and receiving facilities.

Stating that currently the largest navy and most ports in the country are related to fishing activities, he said the fishing fleet with about 11,500 fishing vessels, including 3,400 Lenj boats, 8,000 boats and 125 ships owned by the private and cooperative sectors are under the planning, supervision and management of the IFO.

Last week, Secretary of the Iranian Merchant Mariners Syndicate (IMMS) Saman Rezaei said buying new ships and the renovation of the country's existing maritime fleet is an important necessity for developing the maritime trade.

"Older ships have higher de-



preciation and maintenance costs and lower safety, so buying new ships and renovating the existing ones is a very important necessity for the country's maritime sector," the portal of the Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) quoted Rezaei as saying.

According to the official, an aging fleet will have several disadvantages and challenges including low safety, transportation restrictions, non-compliance with current requirements and standards, and high maintenance costs.

Rezaei has made the remarks referring to the Transport and Urban Development Ministry's new plan for the development of a roadmap for improving the quality of the maritime transport fleet and the country's northern and southern ports.

"The equipment of the country's ports as well as our maritime fleet have been worn out due to sanctions and unfavorable economic conditions, and in recent years we have not been able to buy new ships and renovate the national fleet," he said.

Commodities worth over \$356m traded at IME in a week

TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday) Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) hosted trading of 1.865 million tons of commodities worth over \$356 million.

As reported by the IME's International Affairs and Public Relations Department, there was 1,372,000 tons of commodities sold on the IME's metals and minerals trading floor valued at more than \$142 million.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1,023,000 tons of cement, 65,412 tons of steel, 6,520 tons of copper, 4,225 tons of aluminum, 180 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 21 tons of precious metals concentrate, 14,500 tons of zinc dust, 2 kg of gold bars, 12,000 tons of sponge iron and 250,000 tons of iron ore.

Furthermore, the exchange saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor trade of 486,000 tons of commodities worth more than \$210 million.

On this floor, customers purchased 246,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 55,899 tons of bitumen, 73,123 tons of polymeric products,

36,205 tons of chemicals, 85,000 tons of lube cut, 3,311 tons of base oil and 6,520 tons of sulfur.

There was also 6,071 tons of commodities traded on the IME's side market.

The value of trades at Iran Mercantile Exchange in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20) rose 108 percent compared to the preceding year.

During the past year, about 3.5 quadrillion rials (about \$83.5 billion) worth of commodities were traded at the mentioned market.

In the past year, several new records were achieved in terms of the volume and value of transactions in the mentioned market's various floors including the industrial, petroleum, and petrochemical floors.

IME is one of the four major stock markets of Iran, the other three markets are Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), Iran's over-the-counter (OTC) market known also as Iran Fara Bourse (IFB), and Iran Energy Exchange (IRENEX).

trades at the Tehran Stock Exchange are going to follow an upward trend in the remaining months of the current Iranian calendar year (ends in March 2022).

"Based on the forecasts, it seems that the stock market trading will experience a positive trend and be upward by the end of this year due to the current inflation in the country's economy," Soheil Kolahchi told IRNA.

Emphasizing the parameters affecting stock market transactions, he said: "A few days of correction in the market paved the way for the return of the upward trend in stock trading, in this regard, the future of this market in the medium term can be considered as upward."

"Another issue that can affect the stock market in the near future is the nuclear deal and the outcome of the negotiations, which can to some extent affect the trading process in this market," the expert added.

A capital market analyst has said the

Olive gardens in Iran to expand by 4,000 hectares

TEHRAN - Iran plans to increase the area under olive cultivation across the country by 4,000 hectares in the current Iranian calendar year (ends on March 20, 2022), an official with the Agriculture Ministry announced.

"Considering the demand and the existence of the necessary infrastructure, it is possible to expand the country's olive groves by 4,000 hectares if the necessary budget is allocated," Javad Mir-Arab Razi, who is in charge of the ministry's olive cultivation development program said.

As IRIB reported, according to the official, over 500 million rials (about \$11,900) is required for the cultivation of each hectare of olive gardens, so for the realization of the abovementioned goal about \$47.5 million is required.

Nearly 80 percent of the mentioned figure will be funded by the government in the form of bank facilities and the remaining will be paid by the farmers, Mir-Arab said.

Iran has banned the imports of olive oil since the Iranian calendar



year 1390 (ended in March 2012) with the aim of supporting domestic production.

The per capita consumption of olive oil is currently 140 grams per year, while two years ago the figure was 200 grams per person, the official said.

The Agriculture Ministry plans to increase annual olive production to

around 200,000 tons by 2022 and increase per capita consumption of olive oil to 190 grams per year.

The world's average per capita olive oil consumption is 430 grams (about three times more than in Iran).

Mir-Arab had previously said that a total of 109,834 tons of olives are estimated to be produced

in the current calendar year, 8.47 percent less than last year's yields.

"We hope 55 percent of this year's harvest will be sent to oil extraction factories," he said earlier this month.

The official noted that presently there are 75,000 hectares of olive farms across the country, 58,000 hectares of which are productive.

"Last year, 120,000 tons of olives were produced. Yet, the decline we expect in this year's production is due to the unfavorable weather conditions facing the country. Cold spells, as well as water shortage, have damaged olive plantations," he added.

Based on figures released by the Agriculture Ministry, annual domestic demand for olive oil currently stands close to 15,000 tons.

Leading olive growing regions in Iran include Fars, Kerman, Hormozgan, Sistan-Baluchestan, Qazvin, Gilan, Golestan, and Zanjan provinces.

At present, some 40,000 Iranians earn their living through olive cultivation.

ICCIMA head calls on govt. to pursue privatization, lifting sanctions

TEHRAN - Head of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) has called on the government to support production by pursuing the removal of the U.S. sanction and implementing privatization.

Making the remarks during the 16th ICCIMA board meeting on Sunday, Gholam-Hossein Shafeie warned of the consequences of repeating previous unsuccessful patterns, ICCIMA portal reported.

ICCIMA recommends that the new government pursues lifting of sanctions to attract domestic and foreign investment and enable higher and more sustainable economic growth, while making the economy more competitive by privatizing and handing the management of enterprises to the private sector, Shafeie said.

"If the government bases all its decisions and strategies on creating a favorable business environment, while removing internal and external barriers to production, the economic problems in the country will be solved," the official stressed.

According to the ICCIMA head, the best solution to current problems is to use all the capacities of the country to increase competitive production and to improve the economy.

"This will mobilize production, create jobs and increase tax revenues, which will improve income distribution and reduce the budget deficit as the main



root of inflation," he said.

"By increasing production, it is possible to pay higher wages and thus improve people's livelihoods," Shafeie added.

He further mentioned the need for the vaccination of the workforce and said: "we ask the government, which has done a very good job in importing vaccines, to prioritize production line workers, as social distance is not possible on many production lines."

Referring to the gas and electricity issues during the winter, the official called on the government and the relevant authorities to take precautionary measures to prevent any problems for the production units.

Shafeie also mentioned the joining of Iran to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and said: "Iran's accession to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was one of the good news that will create great opportunities for us in the future."

Cellphone imports up 85% in 5 months yr/yr

TEHRAN - Iran's imports of mobile phones increased by 85 percent in the first five months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-August 22), as compared to the last year's corresponding period, ISNA reported.

Based on official customs data, some \$1.395 billion worth of cellphones were imported into the country in the mentioned period, while in the previous year's same time span the mobile phone imports stood at \$756 million.

During the said five months, over 2,560 tons of cellphones were imported into the country, to register a 36-percent rise in terms of weight.

According to the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA), the total value of Iran's non-oil trade was \$34



billion in the mentioned period, which indicates that cellphones accounted for about five percent of the total value of the trade in the said time span.

Iranian mobile phone traders imported 15.8 million smartphones over the previous Iranian calendar year, according to the Iranian Association of Cell-

phones, Tablet, and Accessories Importers.

Back in January, the spokesman of the Iranian Association of Cellphone, Tablet, and Accessories Importers had announced that the price of cellphones had dropped 12-20 percent in domestic markets.

With the implementation of

Iran's National Mobile Registry Plan back in October 2017, people must register all new mobile phones to be eligible for use in the country. This law is to fight smuggling phones to Iran. As a result, all people who want to use their phones for more than one month in the Islamic Republic will need to register their phones as a way to pay the customs fees.

In April, Iran's Deputy Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sattar Hashemi announced the launch of a five-year plan for the domestic production of 14 million cellphones and tablets.

According to Hashemi, the mentioned program is going to create job opportunities for over 43,000 people and save the country over \$1 billion during the said five years.

TEDPIX drops 29,700 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), dropped 29,741 points to 1.42 million on Sunday.

As reported, over 7.218 billion securities worth 54,014 trillion rials (about \$1.286 billion) were traded at the TSE on Sunday.

The first market's index dropped 24,836 points, and the second market's index lost 50,425 points.

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

The index closed at 1.488 million points on Wednesday (the last working day of the week).

During the past week, the indices of State Retirement Fund, Social Security Investment Company, Sepid Makian Company, Behsaz Kashaneh Tehran Company, and Barekat Pharmaceutical Group were the most widely followed indices.

A capital market analyst has said the



Kolahchi further stressed the need to change some of the regulations in the stock market and said: "Issues such as the base volume and the amplitude in the market are among the topics whose change has been discussed many times."

Back in July, Market Analyst Mehdi Bayat-Manesh had said that TEDPIX is going to improve in the second half of the current

Iranian calendar year (September 23, 2021-March 20, 2022).

Bayat-Manesh noted that considering the current trend of capital inflow into the market TEDPIX is expected to rise in the mentioned period.

According to Bayat-Manesh, the government policies for supporting the upward trend of the market should continue in the coming months in order to ensure this upward trend.

Following the supportive measures taken by the government, the Iranian stock market has been gradually getting back on track and experts believe that the market is regaining people's trust.

Iran's new Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs Ehsan Khandouzi has previously underlined the capital market as one of the major priorities of his ministry during his tenure.

Increasing the role of the capital market

in financing production companies and projects, diversifying financial instruments in the capital market, eliminating unnecessary regulations and barriers, facilitating the entry of companies into the stock market, reducing the cost of issuing bonds by facilitating relevant regulations, canceling monopolies and facilitating licensing for stock market-related services such as portfolio management, marketing, and brokerage, reforming corporate governance to manage conflict of interest between major and minor stakeholders and finally providing incentives for people to invest indirectly in the capital market have been mentioned as the major programs that the economy ministry is going to pursue in order to improve the capital market.

According to Khandouzi, the stock market is one of the most important pillars of the economy as it will play a significant role in financing government projects and supporting economic growth.

France, U.S. tensions enter “crisis” mode

From page 1 ► “I am being recalled to Paris for consultations,” France ambassador to the U.S. Philippe Etienne wrote on social media. He underlined the seriousness of the issue by adding “This follows announcements directly affecting the vision we have of our alliances, of our partnerships and of the importance of the Indo-Pacific for Europe.”

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, in Washington, said she understood the “disappointment” in Paris and hoped to work with France to ensure it understands “the value we place on the bilateral relationship and the work that we want to continue to do together”.

France’s Ambassador to Australia Jean-Pierre Thebault told reporters in Canberra before returning to Paris “This has been a huge mistake, a very, very bad handling of the partnership because it wasn’t a contract, it was a partnership that was supposed to be based on trust, mutual understanding and sincerity”. Thebault also argued, “It was not about selling salads or potatoes, it was a relationship of trust at the highest-level covering questions of the highest level of secrecy and sensitivity.”

France has mostly focused its anger on Australia and in particular the United States which Paris appears to be holding responsible.

The mounting anger from France has for now at least put on hold hopes of a post-Trump renaissance in Paris Washington relations under U.S. President Joe Biden and his Secretary of State Antony Blinken, a fluent French speaker, educated in Paris.

Experts say that even if U.S. officials anticipate the crisis blowing over in the immediate future, it may have caused lasting damage to Washington’s alliance with France and Europe.

Analysts have also pointed out that it will damage the Biden administration’s efforts of seeking to forge closer ties with Europe to counter China’s growing power.

According to the Le Drian, the abandonment of the ocean-class submarine project that Australia and France had been working on since 2016 constituted “unacceptable behavior among allies and partners”

U.S. President Joe Biden announced the new Australia-U.S.-Britain defense alliance on Wednesday, extending U.S. nuclear submarine technology to Australia as well as cyber defense, applied artificial intelligence and un-



dersea capabilities.

Le Drian added “There has been duplicity, contempt and lies, you can’t play that way in an alliance. Their consequences affect the very concept we have of our alliances, our partnerships, and the importance of the Indo-Pacific for Europe”

A White House official expressed “regret” over the French envoy’s recall but added “we will continue to be engaged in the coming days to resolve our differences, as we have done at other points over the course of our long alliance.”

U.S. State Department spokesperson Ned Price tried his best to downplay the escalating tensions. In a post on social media, Price says that Washington understood France’s position and was in “close contact” with Paris. He added that the issue would be discussed “at the senior level”, including at the United Nations General Assembly next week, which both Le Drian and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will be in attendance.

Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby did not share the same enthusiasm. He acknowledged that telephone talks earlier between U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and French counterpart Florence Parly showed “that there is still much work to do in terms of our defense relationship with France.”

France views itself as a major power in the Indo-Pacific due to overseas territories such as New Caledonia and

French Polynesia which give Paris a strategic and military foothold unmatched by any other country in Europe. Paris had made no effort to disguise its fury even before the recalls and last week Le Drian accused Australia of back-stabbing and Washington of Donald Trump-era behavior over the submarines deal.

Following trilateral alliance announcement and decision to ditch the French submarine contract, France’s European Affairs Minister Clement Beaune said that Paris was “unable to trust” Canberra in ongoing European Union trade deal talks”.

France meanwhile also called off a ceremony at its ambassador’s house in Washington scheduled for Friday last week. The event was supposed to celebrate the anniversary of a decisive naval battle in America’s historic military adventurism, where France played a key role.

The pact is widely seen as aimed at countering the rise of China. But the move has infuriated France, which lost a contract to supply conventional submarines to Australia that was worth \$36.5 billion (31 billion Euros) when signed in 2016.

Australia earlier shrugged off Chinese anger over its decision to acquire the U.S. nuclear-powered submarines, while vowing to defend the rule of law in airspace and waters where Beijing has staked hotly contested claims.

Beijing described the new alliance as

an “extremely irresponsible” threat to regional stability, questioning Australia’s commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and warning the Western allies that they risked “shooting themselves in the foot”.

China has denounced those who try to cause tensions in the South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade pass annually, rejecting competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Beijing says any dispute should be resolved through regional negotiations and not foreign powers deploying warships and other military hardware to its backyard.

Malaysia has also said that Canberra’s decision to build nuclear-powered submarines could trigger a regional nuclear arms race, echoing similar concerns that had been raised by Beijing. The Malaysian prime minister’s office said “It will provoke other powers to also act more aggressively in the region, especially in the South China Sea”.

The row between Paris and Canberra marks the lowest point in their relations since 1995 when Australia protested France’s move to resume nuclear testing in the South Pacific and recalled its ambassador for consultations. Public opinion in France, where President Emmanuel Macron is expected to seek a second term in an election due next year, has also been very critical of Australia and the United States.

EU powerless in face of U.S. sanctions on Russia and Iran: expert

From page 1 ► **How do you read the launch of Russia’s Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline? What are its implications for the U.S and the EU?**

The pipeline is a real boon for Russia, President Putin gains points by attacking Europe and the United States on this angle. Because through the construction of this pipeline, the credibility of the Russian SputnikV vaccine is also at stake, which is recognized as reliable in many countries. For Russia, this project will bring billions of euros.

The involvement of the United States is to overturn the project with regard to Russia, following the Russian troops present in the Dombass in Ukraine. The Kremlin denies wanting to reconquer other territories in the country. But the United States is playing to find other strategies to sanction Putin’s Russia more strongly.



For Europe, the involvement is limited, because this project concerns Germany more because the end of the work ends in the German Sea. As a result, German Chancellor Merkel does not share Biden’s sanctions to cancel this construction, at least not to finish the work. However, Germany won the case against the United States, the project could be completed, the Russian president succeeded in giving guarantees to the chancellor. Russian military troops withdrew into Ukrainian territory, part of the military.

Do you think great powers, such as Russia and China, can form a coalition to confront U.S. influence in Asia?

Yes, in a fictitious policy, but in reality, this will not happen, because Putin has other more strategic ambitions, Russia will not be able to detach itself from the European Union, because for Europe, Russia is an indisputable and important partner, but for Russia too. If Russia turns its back on the European Union definitively, it will make a coalition with China, it could have a real major problem.

China could be a very powerful dominatrix, but it could manipulate and have control over Russia, Europe would be powerless and inaudible, isolated from all. The United States would be in an open panic, both economically and diplomatically, not to mention militarily. While relations between Russia and the United States are strained, reason always trumps the good and not the danger.

How do you assess the EU’s postures when it comes to U.S. sanctions against Russia and Iran? Apparently, EU’s political stances are not independent?

The position of the European Union is absent and powerless on the American sanctions against Russia and Iran because it does not have considerable power, the European Union is obliged to ally itself with the United States to be heard and to extend the strong sanctions against Russia and Iran. Just take away the United States, the European Union has no authority, its decisions are inaudible.

To answer your second question, the European Union is dependent on the United States on certain issues, including Russia in the case of the annexation of Crimea in Ukraine, but also the presence of military troops in Dombass. For Iran, there are disputes over Iran’s nuclear program, human rights and press freedom.

What are the effects of U.S. sanctions on China and Russia’s economy?

The decision comes against a background of a sharp deterioration in relations between China and the United States, rivals in the economic and technological spheres and opposites on a multitude of subjects (Hong Kong, human rights, technologies, coronavirus crisis in particular). We again urge the United States to immediately correct its mistake and remove unreasonable restrictions on the activities of the Chinese embassy and its US-based staff,” Zhao Lijian said.

This confrontation between the two world powers took on the appearance of a new Cold War in July with the forced closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston, against a backdrop of espionage charges. China responded by ordering the U.S. consulate in Chengdu (southwest) to close a few days apart. Sanctions on the Chinese economy by the Americans.

As for sanctions against Russia, the experts interviewed by the Russian daily believe that the new U.S. sanctions should not significantly affect the Russian economy. “Unlike the years 2014–2018, the Russian economy is more prepared for this kind of challenge,” says Andrei Roussetski of BKS Financial, for example.

However, Ivan Timofeev, program director of the Russian Council for International Affairs, warns: “This time, Moscow is no longer facing routine sanctions, but a major new decree.” And the Kremlin cannot

turn a blind eye to this. “The possibilities of a local resumption of relations as a result of the change in U.S. administration are exhausted,” the expert says. This will further solidify the rapprochement between Russia and China, but will also lead to a hardening of Moscow’s positions in Syria and on the Iranian nuclear issue. Sanctions on the Russian economy by the Americans.

Israel carries out mass arrests of Palestinians after heroic jailbreak

A group advocating Palestinian prisoners’ rights says scores of Palestinians have been arrested by Israeli forces in recent days as the Tel Aviv regime is pressing ahead with its crackdown following a heroic escape of six Palestinian inmates from a high-security Israeli jail.

In a report on Sunday, the Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association said Israeli forces have detained more than 100 Palestinians since the daring jailbreak from the Gilboa prison located in the northern part of the occupied territories through an underground tunnel earlier this month.

“We have documented an average of 14 arrests per day in the occupied West Bank since the men escaped,” Milena Ansari from Addameer told Al Jazeera. This does not include the Palestinians arrested within Israel.”

Israel launched a campaign of mass arrests and raids in the occupied cities of Ramallah, al-Khalil, Nablus and surrounding villages following the prison break.

A number of Palestinian children were also swept up in the latest wave of arrests.

In the predawn hours of September 6, Zakaria Zubeidi, a former commander of the al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigade in Jenin and five Islamic Jihad members tunneled their way out through their cell’s drainage system and escaped from Gilboa prison.

Four of the Islamic Jihad members were serving life sentences, while the fifth had been held without charge for two years under a so-called administrative detention order, according to Israeli media.

Over 4,500 Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons faced a repressive campaign by the Tel Aviv regime in the wake of the recent escape.

The Israel Prison Service (IPS) sent many Palestinian prisoners into solitary confinement and restricted their access to essential services.

Last Saturday, Israeli media outlets reported that four of the escapees had been arrested in the northern part of the occupied territories.

Following the arrests last week, thousands of Palestinians held protests across the occupied West Bank in support of the six prisoners, particularly those who were recaptured.

The protests were held amid fears of an Israeli retaliation that has already repressed hundreds of Palestinian political prisoners.

The heroic jailbreak has come as a huge embarrassment to Tel Aviv and exposed fault lines in its much-hyped security and intelligence apparatus. The Gilboa prison is one of the highly-fortified detention centers in Israel.

The Palestinian resistance groups and several political factions have warned Israel against causing harm and endangering the lives of prisoners.

On Sunday, the Israeli ministry of military affairs said earlier in the day that the two remaining Palestinian prisoners were apprehended in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin.

It said the two Palestinians “were caught alive”, surrendering without resistance after troops encircled their building.



Palestinian media outlets said there were exchanges of gunfire during the pre-dawn raid by Israeli special forces.

Palestine’s Wafa news agency reported on Sunday that the Israeli soldiers fired live bullets at protesters during the clashes which erupted in the neighborhood following the raid, injuring at least two of them. The two were hospitalized.

Two other Palestinians, reportedly Jenin residents, were also arrested in the raid, including a man with physical disability.

Prison authorities keep Palestinian inmates under deplorable conditions lacking proper hygienic standards. The prisoners have also been subjected to systematic torture, harassment and repression.

Human rights organizations say Israel violates all the rights and freedoms granted to prisoners by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

There are reportedly more than 7,000 Palestinians held at Israeli jails. Hundreds of the inmates have been apparently incarcerated under the practice of administrative detention.

Libya’s interim government must end civil society crackdown

By Mayada Elmaki

In 2011, Libyans took to the streets to overthrow the regime of Muammar Gaddafi after 42 years of dictatorship. Amid the upheaval, diverse communities are organized to demand greater rights, justice and equality. For the first time, a more democratic future seemed within reach.

Ten years on, the opening of civic space is under threat, and not just from Libya’s numerous militias and armed groups. In a disturbingly authoritarian turn, subsequent Libyan authorities have used Gaddafi-era laws and new repressive measures, seemingly aimed at making it impossible for civil society organizations (CSOs) to operate freely.

If national elections scheduled for December 24 2021 are to be free and fair and the outcome accepted, the newly formed interim Government of National Unity (GNU) must live up to its name, roll back these measures and allow all Libyans to participate freely in the democratic process.

One of the most positive legacies of the 2011 uprising was the birth of a vibrant civil society movement. Across the country, individuals from all walks of life raised their voices to air grievances left unaddressed for decades and demanded accountability for the many brutal crimes committed under Gaddafi.

The sense of hope, however, was short-lived, as divisions deepened and conflict erupted. Lawyers, journalists, activists, human rights defenders, members of parliament and others have been harassed, attacked, forcibly disappeared and murdered with impunity. Recently, calls for accountability have focused on the lawless militias that have ruled in Gaddafi’s wake.

Despite the dangers, many Libyans have taken great risks to advocate for change. Rather than rising to the challenge, in 2019 the internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) issued Decree 286, introducing draconian restrictions on CSOs with sinister echoes of Gaddafi-era repression. Rather than roll back these measures, the current Government of National Unity (GNU) looks set to continue this disturbing trend by preparing to issue a new decree imposing further restrictions.

Decree 286 regulates the work and activities of the governmental Commission of Civil Society (CCS) and requires CSOs to re-register. However, it does not specify the grounds on which registration can be rejected, leaving the process open to arbitrariness and abuse. The draft decree currently being considered by the GNU would create a new CCS but does not state how it will work or what its composition would be.

Some CSOs that have tried to re-register have faced significant bureaucratic obstacles. When they have



tried to challenge them, the CCS has threatened some with arrest, explaining that they were trying to “filter and liquidate problematic CSOs.” In other words, independent non-governmental organizations speaking out against human rights violations committed by the government and affiliated militias.

Among other things, Decree 286 and the new draft decree also require CSOs to obtain prior approval from the CCS to raise funds, open a bank account or participate in public events, and CSOs that register must seek permission to engage with international organizations in any form. Such restrictions are in clear violation of international law, standards and best practices aimed at protecting freedom of association.

In addition to onerous red tape, Decree 286 and the new draft decree prohibit CSOs from engaging in “political activity” without defining what this means, or any activities which the CCS believes exceed the bounds of an organization’s statutory objectives. Such vague and oppressive provisions create dangerous opportunities to target activists with politically motivated restrictions.

While Decree 286 and the new draft decree themselves do not contain explicit penalties, violations are punishable under the penal code and Gaddafi-era legislation. Minor breaches can lead to excessively harsh penalties, including the closure of CSOs, criminal sanctions such as imprisonment or asset freezes, and could even result in life imprisonment or the death penalty. As well as violating Libya’s obligations under international law and standards to enable CSOs to operate without interference, these decrees risk a chilling effect on freedom of expression and open debate in the public interest.

Official rhetoric has added to the sense that the authorities view civil society with suspicion. In 2018, the highest religious authority in the country, the state-affiliated Dar al-Iftaa, issued an advisory religious opinion calling foreign organizations which conduct advocacy in Libya spies “with foreign agendas”, which are harming national security and the interests of the Libyan people. Such narratives have created a hostile environment for CSOs and their staff, especially those working on human rights and the rule of law.

In healthy democracies, civil society plays a vital role in holding the authorities accountable, balancing minority rights against majoritarian interests and strengthening local communities. With elections fast approaching, the interim executive authorities must urgently address seven key priorities, including supporting civil society to defend the rights of all Libyans and encourage broad participation in the political process.

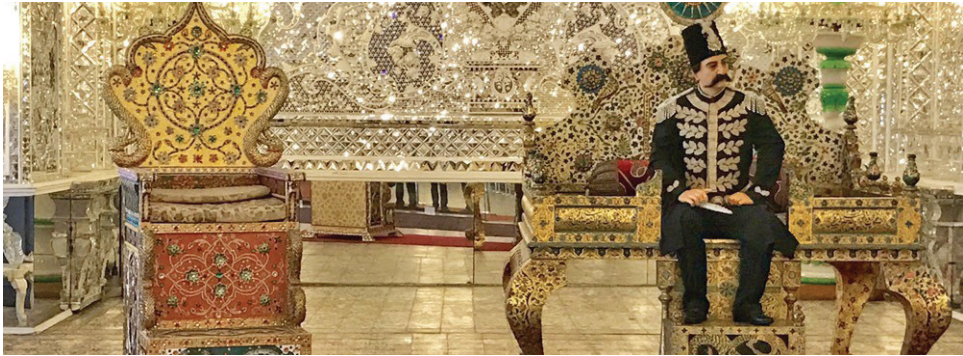
This would increase the likelihood that the elections will be free, fair and peaceful, and enable a future government to build legitimacy through a pluralist platform based on human rights and equality.

The civil society movement that bloomed in 2011 was already becoming paralyzed by the armed conflict before Decree 286 was introduced. Without a swift change, of course, Decree 286 and the new draft decree are likely to be another nail in the coffin of Libyan civil society, putting the country’s hard-won democratic gains at serious risk just when they are needed most. That is why Lawyers for Justice in Libya has launched a campaign calling on the GNU to immediately revoke Decree 286 and refrain from issuing the new draft decree.

To fulfill its mandate of moving Libya towards reconciliation and meet its international human rights obligations, the GNU must act now to scrap the repressive measures that the GNA imposed. To build a better future, there must be no return to the past.

(Source: Al Jazeera)

Tehran museums reopen to visitors as coronavirus cases fall



From page 1 ► preserving 34,000 National Heritage properties as well as 26 UNESCO-tagged sites, the official explained. He said in August that Iran's tourism has suffered a loss of 12 trillion rials (some \$2.85 billion) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Currently, 740 museums are active across Iran and some three million historical objects are being kept at museums affiliated with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and handicrafts Ministry.

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, embracing settlements dating back to 4000 BC. It also hosts some of the world's oldest cultural monuments including bazaars, museums, mosques, bridges, bathhouses, madrasas, gardens, rich natural, rural landscapes as

well as 26 UNESCO World Heritage sites.

The name of Iran, formerly known as Persia, mostly conjures up the first Persian Empire, ruled by the Achaemenids (ca. 550 – 330 BC) and sites such as Pasargadae and Persepolis. However, there are tens of prehistorical sites as the Burnt City in Sistan-Baluchestan, Tepe Sialk in Kashan, Susa, and Tchogha Zanbil in the Khuzestan province, and Ecbatana in Hamedan which predate the Achaemenid period.

From a wider point of view, Iranian history can be divided into Pre-Islamic and Islamic eras. The Medes unified Iran as a nation and empire in 625 BC. The Islamic conquest of Persia (633–656) that put an end to the mighty Sassanid Empire (224–651) was a turning point in the history of the nation.

Isfahan museums welcome visitors after COVID shutdown

TEHRAN – Museums and cultural heritage sites across Isfahan province reopened to visitors on Sunday after months of closure caused by the COVID pandemic, according to a local tourism official.

“Fortunately, with the measures devised by the National Headquarters for Coronavirus Control, the indicator of coronavirus infections in the province has changed from the color red to orange, and this has made it possible to reopen its historical monuments and tourist sites,” Seyyed Rouhollah Seyyed-Asgari said, CHTN reported.

Soaked in a rich history and culture, Isfahan was once a crossroads of international trade and diplomacy in Iran. Now, it is one of Iran's top tourist destinations for good reasons.

The ancient province is filled with many architectural wonders such as unmatched Islamic buildings, bazaars, museums, Persian gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. Its capital, Isfahan, is also a destination for walking, getting lost in its mazing bazaars, dozing in beautiful gardens, and meeting people.

The city has long been nicknamed as Nesfe-Jahan which is translated into “half the world”; meaning seeing it is relevant to see the whole world. In its heyday, it was also one of the largest cities in the region with a population of nearly one million.

Isfahan is renowned not only for the abundance of great historical bridges but also



for its 'life-giving river', the Zayandeh-Rood, which has long bestowed the city an original beauty and fertility. The cool blue tiles of Isfahan's Islamic buildings, and the city's majestic bridges, contrast perfectly with the encircling hot, dry Iranian countryside.

The huge Imam Square, best known as Naghsh-e Jahan Sq. (literary meaning “Image of the World”), is one of the largest in the world (500m by 160m), and a majestic example of town planning. Built in the early 17th century, the UNESCO-registered square is punctuated with the most interesting sights in Isfahan.

Modern Isfahan is now home to some heavy industry, including steel factories and a nuclear facility on its outskirts, however, its inner core wants to be preserved as a priceless gem.

Three Iranian villages nominated for UNWTO label



A view of Barandaq village in Ardabil province, northwestern Iran.

TEHRAN – The Iranian villages of Kharanaq, Barandaq, and Lark have been nominated for the 'Best Tourism Villages' label, which the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is projected to grant to a selection of rural destinations across the globe.

The villages have been selected by a team of experts from the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts according to eligibility criteria declared by the UN Body, ISNA reported on Saturday.

Home to thousands of ancient villages, Iran perfectly suits the tastes 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 stop for a rest with a rural or nomadic family for a while or enjoy an independent stay and assist them with day-to-day life. 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.

The village of Kharanaq is

sometimes referred to as a photographer's dream as it embraces a labyrinth of streets, tunnels, passageways, and impressive buildings such as a tiny mosque, a shaking minaret, and an old caravanserai. It is situated in Ardakan county of Yazd province in central Iran.

Located on a small island of the same name in the Persian Gulf, the village of Larak is a scenic off-the-beaten destination. It is home to various species of corals that are unique in their own kind. There are various activities you can do there with the scuba being a must. Seeing the beautiful aquatic nature is surely an experience of a lifetime.

Situated on a high, windswept plateau in the northwestern Ardabil province, the village of Barandaq enjoys lush natural beauties, historical places, and hospitable people. The village is freezing in winter and mild in

Home to thousands of ancient villages, Iran perfectly suits the tastes of many vacationers who are seeking unique natural experiences.

summer, attracting domestic travelers every year.

The World Tourism Organization aims to turn the spotlight on the “uniqueness” of each village to make tourism a means for further development in rural areas.

“Tourism can be a driver of positive change for rural communities all around the world. According to UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, tourism can be a driver of positive change for rural communities all around the world.

“We want to recognize the uniqueness of each village and showcase the best initiatives to make tourism a means for a better future in rural areas.

As we restart tourism, we work to ensure that we leave no one – and no village – behind.”

Indicators and initiatives such as sustainable tourism; economic, social, and environmental

factors; historical, cultural, and natural attractions; tangible and intangible cultural heritage; local communities; traditional ceremonies, and rituals are among the criteria being assessed for the initial evaluation.

Furthermore, the organization aims to select the best examples of rural villages harnessing the power of tourism to provide opportunities and safeguard their communities, local traditions, and heritage. The initiative seeks to identify villages taking innovative and transformative approaches to tourism in rural areas in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

With the vision of making tourism a positive force for transformation, rural development, and community wellbeing, 'Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO' aims to maximize the contribution of the sector to reducing regional inequalities and fighting against rural depopulation. It also seeks to advance the role of tourism in valuing and safeguarding rural villages along with their associated landscapes, knowledge systems, biological and cultural diversity, local values, and activities, including gastronomy.

7,000-year-old hill represents Qom's civilization and culture, official says

TEHRAN – The 7,000-year-old Qoli Darvish Hill, which is situated in Qom province, shows the antiquity and originality of the civilization and culture of the province, the deputy provincial tourism chief has said.

Several ancient artifacts such as a temple, pottery tools, and a water supply system were discovered in this area, which proves Qom was once home to an ancient civilization, Ammar Kavusi announced on Sunday.

The Iron Age hill, which is situated not far from the Jamkaran Mosque, a major religious tourism destination, could become a top attraction for tourists, the official added.

Visitors to Qom are often cultural tourists seeking to experience the ancient and Islamic culture, so there should be a consideration for their needs, he noted.

Earlier in August, the official announced that an open-air museum will be established on the premises of Qoli Darvish Hill.

“The first phase of the project involves building an access road and installing metal grating fences along the route of visitors to the Iron Age site,” he explained.

A budget of 2.7 billion rials (\$64,000 at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) has been allocated to the project, the official added.

The museum site will be designed and constructed to attract tourists and display old and discovered objects from the area as



well as creating a pleasant atmosphere for those interested in ancient and historical monuments, he mentioned.

The provincial tourism chief, Hamid Yazdani, announced in January that an archaeological project is scheduled to be launched on the ancient hill with a budget of one billion rials (about \$24,000).

Dating back to the Iron Age, the hill is located southwest of the city Qom. Archeological excavations, which began in 2002 showed that Qoli Darvish dates back to six to seven thousand years ago.

The hill covers land as big as 50 hectares. The discovery of historical elements of an ancient temple from the Bronze Age to the end of the Iron Age led to conclusions about the social classes and further anthropological researches about those periods of history.

In recent years, domestic and foreign tourists can visit the ancient hill, which was inscribed on the National Heritage list in 2003.

Iron Age is the final technological and cultural stage in the Stone-Bronze-Iron Age sequence. The date of the full Iron Age, in which this metal, for the most part, replaced bronze in implements and weapons, varied geographically, beginning in West Asia and southeastern Europe about 1200 BC but in China not until about 600 BC, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Although in West Asia iron had limited use as a scarce and precious metal as early as 3,000 BC, there is no indication that people at that time recognized its superior qualities over those of bronze.

The country's second-holiest city after Mashhad, Qom is home to both the magnificent shrine of Hazrat-e Masumeh (SA) and the major religious madrasas (schools).

Apart from sightseers and pilgrims who visit Qom to pay homage at the holy shrine, the city is also a top destination for Shiite scholars and students who come from across the world to learn Islamic studies at its madrasas and browse through eminent religious bookshops.

The city's antiquity goes back to the Sassanid era (224 CE–651) and several historical mosques, mansions, and natural sceneries have been scattered across the city as well as towns and villages nearby.

COVID causes \$1.9m damage to crafts of Iranian province

TEHRAN– The handicraft sector of the southwestern Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province has suffered a loss of 80.4 billion rials (\$1.9 million at the official exchange rate of 42,000 rials per dollar) since the outbreak of the coronavirus, the provincial tourism chief has announced.

Major damage was caused to production units and workshops for handicrafts, and parts of the damage also occurred to exhibitions and shops of traditional arts and crafts, Mehrdad Javadi said on Sunday.

Over 260 handicrafts workshops shuttered during the pandemic, with 329 crafters losing their jobs during that period, the official added.

Currently, 52 fields of handicrafts such as kilim carpets, traditional locks, and the Givsh shoes – traditional, lightweight footwear – are practiced in Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari province.

Chaharmahal-Bakhtiari has various unique traditions and rituals relative to the 'tribal' lifestyles. Special forms of music, dance, and



clothing are noteworthy. It has considerable potential to become a vibrant tourist attraction because of its changing natural landscape.

The province is also a hub for making wool felt products, majorly of which exported abroad. It is home to some 500 crafters, in over 250 workshops, making handmade felt products.

Last year, deputy tourism minister Pouya Mahmoudian announced that the handicrafts

industry and related businesses across the country have suffered a loss of 19,000 billion rials (some \$452 million) since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

“The outbreak of coronavirus was one of the events that caused a lot of damage to the art of handicrafts in the country so that all handicraft markets have been closed and no exhibitions have been held in this area.”

“Due to the lack of inbound passengers during this time, unfortunately, the amount of suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) diverged to almost zero,” the official said.

According to Mahmoudian, Iran globally ranks first in terms of having the topmost number of world cities [and villages] of handicrafts. “Some 295 fields of handicrafts are currently practiced across Iran with more than two million people engaging, majority of whom are women... Handicrafts also play an important role in the economy in our rural villages.”

toll on the tourism industry.

The ancient land embraces hundreds of historical sites 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, the country aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.

Minister appoints new deputies for tourism and cultural heritage

TEHRAN – Iranian minister Ezzatollah Zarghami on Sunday appointed new deputies for tourism and cultural heritage affairs.

Ali-Asghar Shalbafian became deputy minister for tourism, replacing Vali Teymouri who took the helm in October 2018.

Furthermore, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Minister named Ali Darabi as his deputy for cultural heritage affairs. Darabi replaced Mohammad-Hassan Talebian who took

the office in February 2013.

Earlier this month, Zarghami called on travel agencies and tour operators to design affordable packages aimed to jumpstart domestic tourism when COVID-19 is less of a major concern.

According to available data compiled by the tourism ministry, the number of foreign visitors to Iran plunged 94% in the first nine months of the past Iranian calendar year (ended March 20, 2021) as the coronavirus pandemic takes a heavy

Gears at Tehran gas station likely to gain global status

TEHRAN – Vintage items at Darvazeh Dolat Gas Station Museum in downtown Tehran have the potential to score global registrations, the director of the museum has announced.

The highlights are two industrial treasures including a 1947 Leyland petrol tanker and a 1921 Satam gas pump, both of which are worthy of being listed as industrial world heritage, Maryam Esmaeili said on Sunday, IRNA reported.

Leyland was a British automotive engineering and manufacturing company, while Satam was a French company supplying metering solutions to the oil and gas industry.

The Leyland petrol tanker offered the capability of refueling 12,000 liters of gasoline and Satam gas pump operated 5 liters at a time, stopping after each, the official explained. The Leyland company built these tankers from 1896 to 1968, and this is the only



example in the country, which is on display at the museum, she noted.

This museum houses some 500 historic objects, all of which registered on the national heritage list and date back 50 to 100 years, she added.

She also noted that during the 1940s, fourteen gas stations were built in Tehran with the assistance of a British company, of which only the Darvazeh

Dolat Gas Station Museum, and Station No. 4 still exist. Other gas stations have slowly crumbled and repurposed.

The museum was active as a gas station till the 1990s, after which it ceased operations to the construction of the subway. In 2017, the museum department of the Oil Ministry has restored and turned the building into a museum.

Govt. supporting knowledge-based firms set up by foreign nationals

TEHRAN – The Vice Presidency for Science and Technology is currently providing all services to support the knowledge-based companies set up by foreign nationals in Iran, the head of the international science and technology interaction center, has announced.

All support services provided to domestic knowledge-based companies will also apply to foreign nationals residing in Iran, so Afghan immigrants working in the entrepreneurial field in Iran will benefit from these services, ISNA quoted Mehdi Ghaleh-Noei as saying on Sunday.

Emphasizing that a number of technology companies have been set up by immigrants residing in the country so far, he said that the members of the board of directors of about 45 knowledge-based companies are among Afghan entrepreneurs; In addition, the owners of some knowledge-based companies are also citizens of Afghanistan.

Empowerment services to knowledge-based companies include seven main topics including training and consulting, financial and administrative services, product development, intellectual property, certification and standardization, attracting capital, and developing the export market, he highlighted.

Referring to the “Special Residence” card as one of the support programs for Afghans, he explained that foreign



nationals living in Iran, including Afghan immigrants, will be granted 3 and 10 years of residence and will enjoy all the rights of Iranian citizens except the right to vote.

He further expressed readiness to attract Afghan entrepreneurs and elites to enter the country's innovation and technology ecosystem.

According to Iran Immigration Observatory's census in 2016, a total of

1,654,388 foreign nationals are residing in Iran, 1,583,979 are Afghan nationals that constitute 96 percent of the whole population.

Iranian universities grant scholarships to Afghans
Allameh Tabatabai University of Tehran is the first Iranian university to offer scholarships to faculty members, talented students, and Afghan journalists since 2016 with the aim of expanding scien-

Afghan immigrants will be granted 3 and 10 years of residence if set up knowledge-based companies.

Smuggled goods worth \$47.5m discovered in a week

TEHRAN – Smuggled goods worth 2 trillion rials (nearly \$475 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials) have been seized across the country over the past week, through the ninth phase of a nationwide plan to fight against smuggling.

Under the plan, police detectives identified the location of the depot through round-the-clock efforts and specialized actions, Mohammad Reza Moghimi, the police chief, said on Sunday.

More than 12 million types of smuggled goods, including basic goods, home appliances, electronic equipment, car, and mobile phone accessories, etc., along with 420,796 liters of all kinds of smuggled fuels and petroleum products discovered, IRNA reported.

He went on to say that essential goods worth 2 trillion rials (around \$47.5 million) have been discovered, while 621 vehicles and 1,403 criminals were arrested during the implementation of the plan.

Most recently, some 2.9 trillion rials (nearly \$70 million) worth of smuggled goods has been seized across the country in May.

\$20-25 billion of smuggled goods annually

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



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

Every year, \$20-25 billion worth of goods are smuggled in and out of the country.

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

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

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

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

COVID-19 screening for 622,000 travelers at borders

TEHRAN – Some 622,515 passengers have so far been screened for coronavirus by thermal tests at the country's official borders since March 10, Mehdi Valipour, head of Relief and Rescue Organization affiliated to the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), said on Saturday.

During the aforesaid period, IRCS forces have conducted 72,582 PCR tests and 87,646 rapid tests, he said, IRNA reported.

He went on to lament that some 211 individuals, who tested positive, have so

far been temporarily quarantined, under a plan to rapidly identify suspected cases of coronavirus and prevent the spread of new strains.

A total of 471 members of the IRCS cooperate for carrying out the plan in 16 provinces across the country, Valipour concluded.

With the cooperation of ministries of health and transport, a plan is being implemented with the goal of rapidly identifying and testing incoming passengers and keeping them in quarantine

facilities, if necessary.

Thirty border checkpoints have been selected, including 18 land borders, nine air borders, and three sea borders, all incoming passengers will be tested and referred to the quarantine facilities in case of necessity.

Around 8,000 individuals enter the country via borders on a daily basis.

On August 22, Iran announced that all travelers must have a negative PCR test certificate or a health card to enter the

country during the Covid-19 pandemic, IRINN reported.

Due to the prevalence of delta variant, negative PCR test is also mandatory for vaccinated passengers, Mohammad Reza Seif, head of safety and quality assurance department of Imam Khomeini Airport Town Co, said.

All passengers entering Iran, even if they have been vaccinated and have a vaccination card, must have a negative test result, he stated.

227 knowledge-based companies operating in medical sector

From page 1 ► In 2018, the National Medical Device Directorate reported that the Iranian medical equipment market was worth \$2.5 billion, 30 percent of which belonged to over 1,000 domestic firms.

On a global scale, 56 percent of 500,000 medical equipment items avail-

able in the world market have Iranian versions. In pharmaceuticals, around 70 percent of Iran's \$4.5 billion markets are domestic products and, in 2018, 97 percent of pharmaceuticals consumed in the country were manufactured locally.

In 2018, 67 percent of the active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) used to

produce drugs in Iran were made locally.

4b\$ allocated to support knowledge-based firms

The Innovation and Prosperity Fund affiliated with the Vice Presidency of Science and Technology has earmarked a sum of 170 trillion rials (nearly \$4 billion

at the official rate of 42,000 rials) to support knowledge-based companies over the past 4 years.

There are currently 6,263 knowledge-based companies operating in the country, offering advanced products and services in various fields of technology to domestic and foreign markets, and some

of them have entered international markets, Siavash Maleki, deputy head of the Fund stated.

The fields of aircraft maintenance, steel, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, oil, and gas are among the sectors that researchers in technology companies have engaged in, leading to import reduction.

Fauna of Iran

(Part 5)

Reptiles. To the observant traveler, reptiles, particularly lizards, are among the most familiar animals, as many are diurnal and most active during the hours of least extreme temperature. Certain general ecological types occur in most geographical regions of Persia, where 113 species of lizards are currently recognized.

Of the Agamidae large rock-dwelling lizards of the genus *Laudakia* (or *Stellio*) are common in mountainous and foothill regions, where deep crevices provide retreats. Smaller species of the genus *Trapelus* move from the ground onto small rock piles or into branches of shrubs, where they watch for passing insects.

On the flat plains of the central plateau toad-headed agamids, *Phrynocephalus*, sit and wait for ants, termites, and other small ground prey; several different species occur on the various types of substrate: loose sand, gravel, silt, and so on.

In southwestern Persia and on the plateau, where alluvial soils permit burrowing, large herbivorous spiny-tailed *Uromastix* are sometimes seen. The largest lizards in Persia are monitors of the genus *Varanus*, which occur in most provinces; they are active predators, hunting other lizards, rodents, and prey of comparable size.

Two widely distributed Western Palearctic legless lizards in the family *Anguillidae* extend into northern Persia, *Anguis fragilis*, a somewhat specialized feeder on slugs and snails inhabiting the Hyrcanian forest floor, and *Ophisaurus apodus*, a more active predatory lizard tolerant of drier conditions, found in northern Persia and the western foothills of the Zagros.

Active foragers for insects in nearly all Persian environments are the relatively small, quick lizards of *Lacertidae*, often called “race runners.” Several genera occur on various substrates, and these lizards are common in most habitats.

The genus *Lacerta* is generally Euro-Siberian in distribution and is represented by species in northern and mountainous regions of Persia; *Eremias* is a genus with many species throughout the Irano-Turanian region and is common on the plains, steppes, and interior foothills of the Iranian plateau, whereas there is only one genus of *Ophisops* on the plateau in Persia.

Mesalina and *Acanthodactylus* are Saharo-Sindian genera; most species of the latter are specialized for running on loose sand. The shiny-scaled skinks are less numerous but occur in most habitats; some species are adapted to rocky habitats, others to burrowing in loose sand.

The most diverse lizard family at the generic level is the geckos, many species of which are adapted to specialized substrates and environmental conditions. Most are nocturnal, but some are crepuscular and a few abroad even during the day. Most familiar to the traveler are species that live in and around houses and can be seen every evening clinging to plaster walls, waiting for insects attracted to the lights.

In his study of the lizards Anderson (in Camb. Hist. Iran) found that only a few species with



broad ecological tolerance extend throughout the greater part of either the Saharo-Sindian or Irano-Turanian regions.

Although each area has been penetrated by species characteristic of the other, relatively few species are broadly distributed in both regions. Entering southwestern Asia from the northwest and extending into Persia are elements related to European species, primarily those with Mediterranean distribution. Aralo-Caspian desert species occur in northern Persia in areas that are physiographic extensions of lowland Central Asia. A few Oriental faunal elements occur in southeastern Persia, primarily Baluchistan.

The Persian fauna includes seventy-five species and subspecies of snake. Although every province is rich in species, snakes are less commonly seen than lizards, partly because they are well camouflaged and usually remain motionless in the presence of large animals. Because they feed higher on the food chain, the population densities of snakes tend to be much lower than those of lizards.

All are predators, the larger species feeding mainly on rodents, whereas small and medium-sized species feed on lizards and occasionally birds and the smallest on arthropods. A few, like the grass snake (*Natrix*), eat fish, amphibians, or both.

Although many species may be considered beneficial because they feed on rodent pests that compete with humans for crops and stored foods, a few are dangerous to human beings, particularly if barefoot or lightly shod.

There are several genera and species of viper, and some, like the small saw-scaled vipers of the genus *Echis*, are quite aggressive, whereas others, like the false horned vipers (*Pseudocerastes*) and *Vipera lebetina* are large and capable of injecting quantities of venom.

(Source: Encyclopaedia Iranica)



COVID-19 UPDATES ON SEPTEMBER 19

New cases	15,975
New deaths	391
Total cases	5,424,835
Total deaths	117,182
New hospitalized patients	2,207
Patients in critical condition	6,765
Total recovered patients	4,764,998
Diagnostic tests conducted	31,007,134
Doses of vaccine injected	43,372,270

ENGLISH IN USE

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COVID-19: Iran reopens schools under strict health protocols

Over 15 million students attended schools nationwide on Saturday for the new school year under strict health protocols to protect teachers, staff, and students against the coronavirus pandemic.

The opening bell of the new academic year was rung symbolically by President Hassan Rouhani at a girls' high school in downtown Tehran.

The back-to-school ceremony is officially inaugurated by the president each year, as he rings the bells in a symbolic gesture at a chosen school. Mohsen Haji Mirzaei, Education Minister, symbolically attended the virtual festival. More than 15 million students started the new school year in 116,000 schools across the country, Haji Mirzaei stated. This year, education is followed in three forms of in-person, virtual, and television-based, but our priority is school attendance, he noted, highlighting, all schools should strictly follow the health regulations so that the students are protected.

Maintaining a shorter duration for classes, the students will sit 35 minutes in each class, he emphasized.

بازگشایی مدارس با پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی

بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را با رعایت پروتکل های سختگیرانه بهداشتی آغاز کردند.

زنگ آغاز سال تحصیلی به صورت ارتباط تصویری در مراسمی به دستور رئیس جمهور در دبیرستانی در تهران نواخته شد.

محسن حاجی میرزایی وزیر آموزش و پرورش در این مراسم گفت: بیش از ۱۵ میلیون دانش آموز سال تحصیلی جدید را در ۱۱۶ هزار مدرسه آغاز کردند.

وزیر آموزش و پرورش در این مراسم گفت: امسال آموزش دانش آموزان به سه شکل حضوری، مجازی، و تلویزیونی دنبال می شود، اما اولویت ما آموزش حضوری دانش آموزان است. او افزود: همه مدارس باید شیوه نامه های بهداشتی را به طور جدی رعایت کنند تا مشکلی برای دانش آموزان پیش نیاید.

وی تأکید کرد: کلاس های مدارس امسال ۳۵ دقیقه ای خواهد بود و زمان حضور دانش آموزان در کلاس ها به حداقل رسیده است.

