

Iran-Syria Ties Stronger Than Ever

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Report

Why can't British government tackle rising Islamophobia?

TEHRAN - The opposition Labour Party has called on the ruling Conservatives to "get serious" and address the problem of Islamophobia in Britain as new data reveals that last year nearly half of all religious hate crimes targeted Muslims. But is this something the Tories can live up to when an internal probe found "anti-Muslim sentiment remains a problem within the party."

Statistics by the Home Office show the number of offenses against British Muslims in 2019/20 made up 50% of all religious hate crimes reported, compared to 45% in 2020/21. The real number of course can be much higher as not all Muslims report hate crimes committed against them to the police, authorities or even monitoring groups.

The Labour Party chairwoman Anneliese Dodds has told her Conservative counterpart Oliver Dowden to not just tackle Islamophobia in British society but also within his own party.

In a letter, Dodds said Muslims "remained consistently, and especially, vulnerable to religiously motivated hate crimes, a trend that shows no signs of abating under the Conservative Government."

She also raised questions whether the Singh investigation released earlier this year "presented a full picture of Islamophobia within your own party" ► Page 5

Report

Iranian, German archaeologists in search of clues about Achaemenid, Sassanid miners

By Afshin Majlesi

TEHRAN - Teams of Iranian and German archaeologists have commenced a new season of excavation on an ancient Iranian mine, which has so far yielded a number of 'salt mummies', personal belongings as well as animal remains.

Situated in Zanjan province, Chehrabad (Douzlakh) salt mine has received increasing interest from Iranian and international archeologists. Also, the biological remains from this site have provided valuable sources for studying the pathogenic agents of ancient times.

Led by senior archaeologists Abolfazl Aali and Thomas Stöllner, respectively, the Iranian and German teams aim to gain further strong evidence about the history of mining at Chehrabad salt mine, particularly during the Achaemenid (c. 550 - 330 BC) and Sassanid (224-651 CE) eras, according to the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage and Tourism (RICHT).

Results of previous excavations suggest that Chehrabad has been the subject of a long-term activity that started from the Achaemenid era continuing in different periods including Sassanid, Seljuk, Safavid, Qajar, and Pahlavi periods, ISNA quotes Aali as saying on Saturday. ► Page 6

Tehran, Baku to sign energy co-op agreements soon

TEHRAN - Iran and Azerbaijan are going to sign some agreements for cooperation in various energy sectors in the near future, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji announced on Sunday.

Oji made the announcement after a meeting with Azerbaijan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Development Shahin Mustafayev in Tehran, Shana reported.

Speaking to the press after the meeting, Oji said positive talks were held and constructive agreements were reached between the two sides.

According to the oil minister, the two sides have agreed to cooperate in swapping gas from other countries in the region including Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan.

The development of oil and gas fields in the Caspian Sea was another subject discussed during the meeting with the Azerbaijani delegation, and according to Oji, initial talks have been held in this regard and expert delegations of the two countries are continuing the negotiations.

He expressed hope that in the coming weeks, good agreements will be signed with

Azerbaijan in the field of oil, gas, and development of Caspian oil and gas fields.

Mustafayev for his part told the media that the Republic of Azerbaijan and Iran are friendly and neighboring countries and there is a historical connection between the people of the two countries.

He said that there is successful cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan in all areas, especially energy, adding: "Cooperation between Iran and Azerbaijan in the oil and gas sector has been fruitful" ► Page 4

IRGC Navy chief: Much of news of Iran-U.S. clashes in Persian Gulf not released

TEHRAN — IRGC Navy Commander Admiral Alireza Tangsiri said on Sunday that there have been numerous one-on-one clashes between Iran and the U.S. in the Persian Gulf, but many were not reported.

Admiral Tangsiri made the announcement in the 7th session of the national congress of Basiji students held at the 13 Aban Cultural Complex, Fars reported. In his remarks, the top general also noted that the young Iranian generation must know that the Islamic Republic has important resources and capacities in the Persian Gulf and enjoys a very important geostrategic status.

The commander went on to say, "Of course, these advantages have caused the Americans to be greedy for the vast resources of this region and to always come to the Persian Gulf with great costs and hardships."

The commander stated that since its establishment the IRGC Navy has been able to work together with the naval unit of the Army to protect the resources and interests of Iran in the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea.

"We have slapped the Americans on the number of martyrs of the IRGC navy in a direct battle with the United States in the Persian Gulf, although the reports of many Irani-

an-American clashes in the Persian Gulf have not been released," the commander stated.

Tangsiri elaborated by saying that the IRGC navy has lost 9 servicemen in direct battles with the Americans to defend the Iranian territory in the Persian Gulf.

"Of course, in the clashes we had with the Americans, some of them have not been covered by the media for some reason. For 9 martyrs in a direct battle with the Americans, we were able to give them 9 memorable slaps, and today they have realized the domination of the Islamic Republic in the maritime arena," the IRGC official noted.

Noting that Iran has the longest coasts in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, he said, "With the efforts of the armed forces, no one can change the name of the Persian Gulf. Today, when entering or departing the Persian Gulf in the Strait of Hormuz, all ships are controlled and the first island at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz is Lark Island, and when entering the depths of the Persian Gulf, there are three strategic islands of the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Moussa so that when every ship enters the Persian Gulf, it must pass along these islands." ► Page 2

Report

Road casualties drop in coronavirus era

By Farnak Bakhtiari

TEHRAN - The number of traffic-related deaths last year (March 2020-March 2021) decreased by 15.2 percent compared to a year before, 13 percent of which is estimated to be caused by the pandemic.

Traffic restrictions and declining road trips are the most important factors that have reduced the road crash death toll by more than 3,000.

Statistics show that last year, the number of vehicles in the country, including cars, minibuses, buses, vans, trucks, and motorcycles, increased by 3.55 percent compared to a year before, amounting to 34.8 million vehicles, but the number of fatal accidents compared to the previous year, has decreased by 10.86 percent and has not exceeded 12,565.

Last year, the number of people killed in road accidents has decreased by 21.4 percent compared to five years ago and according to Forensic Organization statistics, it has declined by 15.2 percent; ► Page 7

Iran held by Tajikistan in 2021 CAFA U15

TEHRAN - Iran were held to a 1-1 draw by Tajikistan in the 2021 CAFA U15 Championship on Sunday.

Ali Rahmannedjad scored for Iran just seven minutes into the match but Abubakr Sulaymonov equalized the match from the penalty spot 10 minutes later.

Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan also shared the spoils in a 2-2 draw.

The Iranian team defeated Uzbekistan 3-2 in their opening match on Friday.

Vahid Amiri's boys will play Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday.

The tournament is being held in Dushanbe from Nov. 19 to 23 in a round-robin format.

Iran won the 2nd edition in 2018 which was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

The CAFA Championship is an international football competition in Central Asia for the member nations of the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA).

Leader writes commendation for memoirs "Cry in Solitude"

TEHRAN - A book entitled "Cry in Solitude" has received a commendation from the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei.

Published by Hemaseye Yaran in summer 2020, the book contains the memoirs of Ashraf Sadat Montazeri, the mother of Mohammad Memarian, a 13-year-old volunteer who was martyred in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war. The book has been authored by Akram Eslami.

The commendation was unveiled in a special ceremony held at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on Sunday to celebrate a day from the 29th

edition of the Iran Book Week named after "Books, Martyrs' Mothers and Women in the Sacred Defense".

"With a thirst and eagerness, I read this incredible book that cleansed my eyes and heart," the Leader said in the commendation written on February 28.

He added, "Everything is perfect in this book; the narrative is excellent, narration is excellent, writing is excellent, editing and compilation are excellent, and there is great regard for 'the master of martyrs' [Imam Hussein (AS)] shown by him and his mother." ► Page 8

From Inside

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Interview

Iran should not count too much on international law to protect its interests: Hunter

By Mohammad Mazhari

TEHRAN - Shireen Tahmasb Hunter, a professor of political science at Georgetown University, believes Iran should not count too much on international law to protect its interests.

"Unfortunately, international relations are not based on law, despite much talk about a law-based international order," Hunter tells the Tehran Times.

"Iran should not count too much on international law to protect its interests and must pay more attention to power equations."

Talks aimed at reviving the landmark 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six other nations are to resume this month after a five-month hiatus.

Iran's chief negotiator Ali Baqeri Kani said that the Iranian government had agreed to meet in Vienna on 29 November.

The talks to revitalize the 2015 nuclear deal were put on hold since the election of Iran's new president Ibrahim Raisi in June.

However, it seems the road for talks between Iran and Western powers is bumpy.

"The U.S. is still the most powerful state. Therefore, others are not willing to challenge it, although some of its actions clearly go against international rules and practices," Hunter notes. ► Page 5



South Pars condensate loading capacity rises

TEHRAN - Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC) has put a new single point mooring (SPM) into operation at phase 19 of South Pars gas field to increase the condensate loading capacity of the giant field, an official with the company announced.

According to the Operator of South Pars phase 19 development project Seyed Hossein Azimi, a one-million-barrel cargo has been loaded from this SPM for the first time, the POGC portal reported on Sunday. ► Page 4

IRGC Navy chief: Much of news of Iran-U.S. clashes in Persian Gulf not released



From page 1 ► Of course, none of the ships of the U.S. and its allies pass through the mentioned area and as soon as they enter the area, they change their route and enter international waterways, the general stated.

The commander of the IRGC navy stated that during the eight years of the Sacred Defense, when Iraq despaired facing Iran with all the equipment and foreign assistance, the Americans directly entered into a direct conflict with Iran in 1987 to support Saddam's army in the Persian Gulf.

"During the Sacred Defense, an Iraqi plane was in contact with the American ship 'Stark' and used this warship to check whether the space in the region was 'clear', or whether there was an Iranian ship in the region or not. However, an Iraqi plane mistakenly hit the ship, killing 11 of its crew," Tangsiri pointed out.

On October 25, the IRGC navy reclaimed a cargo of oil that U.S. forces had stolen from a tanker carrying Iranian oil in the Sea of Oman.

Servicemen from the IRGC Navy took the control

of the oil tanker by landing on the tanker's dock in a helicopter operation and redirected it to the Iranian territorial waters.

U.S. forces, using helicopters and warships, tried hard to redirect the ship but they failed as they faced bravery demonstrated by the IRGC personnel, according to the state TV.

The IRGC released detailed footage of its confrontation against the act of piracy on November 3.

The footage depicted the incident in great detail, first showing the IRGC navy's intelligence command and intelligence gathering network detecting the vessel laden with the stolen crude.

The IRGC navy was subsequently seen dispatching its rapid reaction units to the area to seize back the cargo.

The commandos then engaged in a heliborne operation, which featured their aircraft landing on the second vessel.

The navy's drone units, speedboats, and other vessels were, meanwhile, seen assisting the operation.

USS The Sullivans (DDG-68) and USS Michael Murphy (DDG-112), two American destroyers, were then seen approaching second tanker to prevent its recapture, but were warned away by the IRGC navy.

The footage relayed from the operation, meanwhile, depicted the involved American vessels and their crew in striking detail.

Hamas chief thanks Iran for its support

TEHRAN — Following Iran's condemnation of a controversial decision by the UK to declare the Hamas movement as a terrorist organization, Ismail Haniyeh has thanked Iran for its support.

In an interview with the Al-Aqsa satellite network aired on November 20, Haniyeh said, "Iran supports the Palestinian resistance financially, politically and militarily and is a strong support for it."

The Hamas leader thanked Iran for its pivotal role in supporting the Palestinian resistance.

In another part of his interview conversation, Haniyeh pointed out that Hamas is a large and powerful movement inside and outside Palestine, and said that one of the components of Hamas' power and cohesion is internal elections and adherence to its results in all regions.

According to the Palestine Information Center, Haniyeh noted that his movement has been able to keep the status of the Palestinian issue alive among Islamic and Arab countries as the cornerstone of the Islamic ummah unity.

He added, "After 4 decades of activity, this movement, despite the martyrdom, wounding and captivity of many of its members, still adheres to the national principles of Palestine and the option of resistance."

The head of Hamas political bureau also stated that the resistance movement is still interested in establishing historic relations with Saudi Arabia.

"Unfortunately, in recent years we have seen a change in Saudi Arabia's position on Hamas, which has also affected some Palestinians," he said.

On November 19, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian condemned the declaration of Hamas as a terrorist organization.

IRGC to be supplied with three new warships



TEHRAN – The naval unit of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy will be supplied with three new warships in the current Iranian year, which ends on March 20, 2022.

Speaking at a cultural ceremony in Tehran on Sunday, IRGC Navy chief Alireza Tangsiri said one of the warships will have the capability to launch missiles with a range of 300 kilometers.

Rear Admiral Tangsiri said the IRGC and the

Defense Ministry are cooperatively building two advanced warships named after two martyrs, General Mohammad Nazeri and Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani.

The Nazeri warship will be 55-meters long and the Soleimani 65 meters, he explained.

Another military vessel is being built by a knowledge-based company, the commander said. The vessel, which is furnished with sea-to-air missiles with a range of 300 km, can carry helicopters and reach a velocity of 35 knots, Tasnim reported.

Last week, IRGC Commander Major General Hossein Salami said his forces have obtained modern naval technologies and they have managed to enhance the quality of combat vessels.

"The vessels that constitute the real nature of our tactic have strategic messages in the sea," he noted, adding that the process of enhancing the IRGC's capabilities is unstoppable.

TEHRAN — Alexander Lavrentiev, the Russian Special Presidential Envoy on Syrian Reconciliation, and Sergey Vershinin, Russia's deputy foreign minister, headed a delegation to Tehran on Sunday to discuss bilateral relations and regional cooperation, especially the Syria issue, with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian.

The Russian delegation arrived in Tehran from Damascus after talks with Syrian officials.

In the meeting, Amir Abdollahian emphasized the Iranian government's serious attention to relations between the two countries in various fields, the mutual visits of high-level delegations between the two countries, and the recent telephone conversation between the presidents of Iran and the Russian Federation.

They also described Iran-Russia relations as "stable and long-lasting."

Referring to the regional cooperation between the two countries, Amir Abdollahian described the joint cooperation between the two countries in Syria as a completely successful experience that has been formed within the framework of the will of the Syrian government.

The Iranian foreign minister also stressed the need to use the successful experience of the joint cooperation between the two countries in the fight against terrorism in Syria and use this model for close cooperation in the economic sphere.

He also pointed to the need to

Russian diplomats consult Iran FM on Syria



reconstruct Syria and stabilize the country.

Iran's top diplomat reiterated that the Tehran-Moscow cooperation within the framework of the Astana format and the intra-Syria talks are the only solution to the Syrian crisis.

For their parts, Lavrentiev and Vershinin also delivered Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's regards to his Iranian counterpart, as well as discussing various issues

of mutual interest in bilateral and multilateral areas.

They called the issues related to Syria important and explained the latest developments concerning Syria at the international stage during their visit to Damascus.

Russian delegation meets Iranian special envoy for Syria

The Russian delegation also met with Ali Asghar Khaji, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's special envoy for

Syria, to discuss regional cooperation between the two countries, with a particular focus on Syria.

Referring to the partnership of Iran and Russia in the fight against terrorism in Syria, Khaji, who also acts as senior advisor Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian, stressed the need for close cooperation between the two countries in maintaining the Syrian sovereignty, reconstruct the country and help stabilize it.

Referring to Iran's hosting of the Astana summit, he stressed the importance of pursuing a political solution to the Syrian crisis in the form of the Astana format and the continuation of the Syrian-Syrian dialogue within the framework of the Syrian Constitutional Committee.

The Russian delegation appreciated the warm welcome of the Iranian side and said, "Dialogue and consultation with the Iranian side at various levels have always been effective and important."

The Russian officials also stressed the importance of a political solution to the Syrian crisis and strengthening the Syrian national dialogue to activate joint meetings within the framework of Astana format and bilateral understanding.

On November 17, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad hosted the Russian delegation, discussing preparations for meeting of the Syrian Constitutional Committee which is scheduled to be held in Geneva in August next year.

Iranian presidential adviser stresses attention to rights of minorities

TEHRAN — The advisor to the Iranian president on ethnic and religious minorities has said it is necessary to pay attention to the rights of minorities in Iran, IRNA reported on Saturday.

"All great heavenly messengers have come to invite human beings to respect morality and submission to the command of God," Mamosta Abdolsalam Karimi said in a meeting with the representatives of religious minorities in the Parliament.

"All of us, the followers of monotheistic religions must submit to God's command. As all the prophets of the divine religions were united in upholding the principles and observance of morality, it is advisable for us, the followers of the religions, to live and interact peacefully and to treat each other on the basis of justice and good morals," Karimi stated.

Karimi further pointed to the declining birth rate in the country, saying decrease in the population in recent years entails serious attention.

The presidential advisor went on to say that the approach of the Islamic Revolution is justice-oriented and universal, so all must move on the basis of rationality and social justice, not ethnic and sectarian feelings and prejudices.

Karimi pointed out that religious minorities were alongside their fellow Shia brothers in the uprisings that led to the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and fighting against the invading Saddam Army during the Sacred Defense in the 1980s.

The adviser noted, "As all Iranian tribes and followers of monotheistic religions during the Revolution and the Holy Defense defended the borders of this Islamic homeland, we also fully believe that within the framework of the constitution, all dear Iranians of any ethnicity, and religion should play a role in the administration of the country."

Stating that the constitution is the national covenant of all Iranians, Karimi added that the

constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is the covenant of all those who love this proud homeland and the new Islamic civilization.

"Therefore, the participation of all Iranians must be observed according to the constitution; and on the other hand, all ethnicities, religions and sects must respect the constitution of the country."

Mamousta Karimi added, "The demands of all Iranians in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and the repeated statements of the late Imam Khomeini and the Supreme Leader must be pursued, and we are obliged to pursue legal demands."

The advisor also stressed that the problems and concerns of the followers of monotheistic religions would be studied in consultation with the MPs, and through cooperation with the educated classes a suitable strategy will be adopted to solve them.

During the meeting, Robert Beglarian, the MP representing the Armenian community in Isfahan and southern Iran in the parliament, said, "I was very happy when I found out that the president had chosen an educated citizen from a religious minority as his advisor."

"The view that religious minorities are an opportunity for us needs to be redefined and clarified," Beglarian said, adding that the way monotheists view the administration needs to be revised.

Homayoon Sameh Yeh, representative of the Jewish community in the parliament, also said, "We, the Jewish community, had several main demands that were answered positively, and we hope that the rest of our demands will be met by your efforts."

He asked Karimi to appoint one of his advisers from religious minorities.

Sameh Yeh added, "Following the issues and demands of religious minorities will create cohesion and strengthen the relationship between the religious



community and the administration. In addition, such actions are in line with national interests and help the Islamic Republic of Iran in international bodies, (especially) issues related to human rights."

Ara Shaverdian, a representative of the Armenians in Tehran and northern Iran, also said, "Our main question is how this consultation will help the Armenian community and the followers of monotheistic religions. Is there any support from the cultural-scientific centers of the followers of monotheistic religions?"

Addressing Karimi, Shaverdian highlighted, "It is very gratifying that you are from a religious minority community and you were appointed as an advisor to the president, and we hope that positive and effective measures will be taken in this new era."

"Our expectation from the administration and from this consultation with minorities is that the human dignity and public rights of the followers of monotheistic religions are fully supported," said Charlie Arniyeh Tekiyeh, the representative of Assyrian-Chaldean Christians in the parliament.

For his part, Esfandiar Ekhtari, the representative of Zoroastrians in the parliament, noted, "In general, all of us, the representatives of the followers of monotheistic religions, are with the system. Although our population is declining, and this is a serious alarm, but the existing population is also influential and role-playing."

Expert says signs of change in UAE foreign policy approach is visible

TEHRAN - A top delegation from the United Arab Emirates will visit Tehran soon as the Persian Gulf state works to de-escalate tensions with Iran, senior Iranian and Gulf officials told Reuters on Wednesday.

Seyyed Reza Sadr al-Hosseini, a senior expert on West Asia affairs, said on Saturday that the decision by the UAE to send a delegation to Tehran as well as the recent visit by UAE officials to Syria indicate a change in Abu Dhabi's foreign policy approach.

In a live TV program, Sadr al-Hosseini also pointed to some ambiguities surrounding the UAE foreign policy in the future, saying: "One of the ambiguities of the United Arab Emirates foreign policy is the continuation of cooperation

with the failed coalition against the Yemeni people and we should witness what policy the Emirates will follow in this regard."

He also said the Zionist regime's reproachment with certain regional countries, including the UAE, is another issue, noting that the normalization of the UAE's relations with the Israeli regime would definitely affect the Abu Dhabi-Tehran relations, the IRIB news agency reported.

The analyst also said, "As the relations between neighboring countries are being strengthened, the hands of foreigners and the West will be cut off from the region."

The expert on West Asia affairs went on to say that neighboring countries did

not have much differences with Iran. For example, he says, there were no border disputes, no religious conflicts, and no important case to bring them to point of contention, but some neighboring countries had put the issue of Iranophobia on the agenda in recent years due to the pressure by arrogant countries.

He added: "The Islamic Republic of Iran has ignored such incidents in recent years and been seeking to expand relations with its neighbors."

Sadr al-Hosseini also said there is a need to restore security in the region with the involvement of regional countries.

"Expanding relations with neighbors has been one of the most important

New developments in Iran-Azerbaijan economic ties reviewed

TEHRAN - Iranian entrepreneurs, investors, and industrialists living in Baku discussed the latest

developments in economic and trade relations between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan, ISNA reported on Friday.

The meeting was attended by economic experts, the Iranian ambassador to Baku and the commercial attaché of the Iranian embassy.

The participants discussed ways to strengthen

economic ties and remove existing barriers.

At the meeting it was decided to continue these meetings. The Iranian ambassador also dedicated one day in a week specifically to Iranians, especially businessmen and entrepreneurs, to examine the problems, remove obstacles and facilitate trade and economic exchanges.

Iran-Syria ties stronger than ever

TEHRAN – With the civil war in Syria grinding to a halt by the day, some Arab states have moved from totally blockading the Syrian government to exploring avenues for repairing ties with Damascus.

But a resumption of ties between Syria and other Arab states is being recast as an attempt to curtail Iran's deep influence in Syria despite the fact that Tehran has voiced support for a thaw in Syria-Arab ties.

These days, the Arab press is abuzz with speculations over the impacts of reviving Syria's relations with certain Arab states on Tehran-Damascus ties.

The recent visit by United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed to Syria was the trigger for these speculations. After years of strained ties with Syria, the UAE reached out to the Syrian government in early November in a bid to improve relations. Sheikh Abdullah paid a surprise visit to Damascus and met with Syrian President Bashar Assad, the highest-level meeting in a decade.

The latest developments in the West Asia region and Syria, in addition to a number of regional and international issues of common interest featured high during the meeting, according to a statement by the UAE foreign ministry. “The two sides also reviewed the prospects of enhancing relations between the two sisterly nations,” the statement said, adding, “The Syrian president reciprocated the greetings and underlined the strong bonds between the two fraternal nations. He also commended the objective positions adopted by the UAE.”

After Damascus, the top Emirati diplomat immediately traveled to Jordan, where he met with Jordanian King Abdullah II, an indication that regional issues were on the agenda of Emirati-Jordanian talks.

Concurrently, Arab media outlets reported that Jordan, together with the UAE, was working to normalize



relations between Syria and other Arab states amid growing economic cooperation involving Amman, Damascus, and Beirut.

The Jordanian diplomatic push was evident when Sheikh Abdullah chose Amman as his next stop immediately after Damascus.

Talks of a thaw in Syria-Arab relations gave rise to years-old speculations about a possible crack in Tehran-Damascus ties encouraged by the so-called “moderate” Arab states in tandem with Russia.

Egyptian and Algerian efforts to bring Syria back to the Arab League have only exacerbated these speculations that are rooted in the belief that economic dividends stemming from Syria's return to the pan-Arab organization and the overall promised Arab openness would be enough to cajole President Assad into giving up on his strong partnership with Tehran.

This is while Iran strongly supports Syria's return to the Arab League and does not feel threatened by such a move. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian even encourage Algeria to move ahead with its efforts regarding Syria.

In his recent phone conversation with Algerian Foreign Minister Ramtane Lamamra, Amir Abdollahian

expressed hope that the upcoming meeting of the Arab League will have important benefits for the Islamic ummah, according to the Iranian foreign ministry. The conversation took place after Sheikh Abdullah's visit to Damascus, which indicates Iran's confidence that a normalization of Syria-Arab ties wouldn't come at a cost to those between Tehran and Damascus.

In fact, Iran and Syria have on several occasions underlined “strategic relations”. In October, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh praised Tehran-Damascus ties, noting that they have been elevated to a strategic level.

Commenting on a visit by Amir Abdollahian to Damascus, Khatibzadeh said Iran-Syria relations have been upgraded to an important level. “Iran-Syria relations have entered a strategic phase. The dimensions of Iran-Syria relations are different, and the nature of strategic relations requires that these relations be established in all dimensions, including economic, cultural, military, and so on,” he said.

This view is also shared by the Syrian leadership. In mid-July, Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad, receiving a delegation from the Iranian foreign ministry led by Assistant Foreign Minister of Iran Reza Najafi, stressed the depth of the “strategic relations”

between Syria and Iran.

News media outlets affiliated with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, nevertheless, continue to spread unsubstantiated reports about the possibility of undermining Tehran-Damascus ties. One such report was published Sunday by Asharq Al Awsat, a Saudi-owned newspaper.

It said Arab states have two options regarding Syria. “The first is engaging Assad and ending Damascus’ isolation with the hope of easing Iran's influence. The purpose would not be to immediately shift Syria from the ‘resistance alliance’, led by Iran, to the ‘moderate camp’. Rather, the aim is for Damascus to be open between the two camps,” the newspaper said, adding, “The second option lies in banking on the leadership of Russian President Vladimir Putin and his ability to rein in Iran.”

But these two options rest on two flawed assumptions. First, the Syrian leadership is ready to go along with what “moderate” Arab states would demand. Second, Russia is on the same page with these states in terms of undermining Iran's clout in Syria.

Both assumptions are wrong. Because Syrian- Iranian relations are “strategic” and have been further strengthened during the years of war. Besides, President Assad is unlikely to forget who funded and supported rebels in Syria to topple the Syrian government. In the meantime, he is also unlikely to forget who stood beside him in times of crisis.

As for the second assumption, Iran-Russia interactions regarding Syria are always done in a cooperative atmosphere. And the two countries are now speaking of their cooperation in Syria as a role model to develop bilateral relations. This was evident during Amir Abdollahian's meeting with Russian Special Presidential Envoy on Syrian Reconciliation Alexander Lavrentiev on Sunday.

IRAN IN FOCUS

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Straight Truth
TEHRAN TIMES

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SPORTS

Iran’s NOC president Salehi Amiri Attends OCA General Assembly

TEHRAN - President of Iran's National Olympic Committee (NOC) Reza Salehi Amiri attended the 40th Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) General Assembly on Sunday in Dubai, the UAE.

The General Assembly agenda highlighted the stability of the Olympic movement in Asia with presentations or updates from the next four hosts of the OCA's showpiece event, the Asian Games: Hangzhou 2022, Aichi-Nagoya 2026, Doha 2030 and Riyadh 2034.

The OCA Executive Board heard reports from the next four hosts of its flagship event, the Asian Games.

The 76th meeting of the OCA Executive Board take place on Saturday ahead of the General Assembly.

Ex-Iran basketball player Nourbakhsh dies

TEHRAN – Former Iran basketball player Hassan Nourbakhsh died on Sunday in Tehran.

He passed away at the age of 77.

Nourbakhsh worked as head of Iran's Basketball Federation's Referees Committee and director of national teams for many years.

He will be laid to rest on Monday.

Tehran Times extends deepest sympathy to Nourbakhsh's family, loved ones, and friends over his demise.

Iran honors Tokyo 2020 Paralympics medal winners

TEHRAN – Iranian medal winners of the 2020 Tokyo Paralympic Games were appreciated in a ceremony held in Iran Sports Federation for the Disabled's headquarters on Sunday.

President of Iran's National Paralympic Committee (NPC) Mahmoud Khosravi Vafa, Mohammad Shervin Asbaghian, head of Iran Sports Federation for the Disabled, Iran's chef de mission in Tokyo Hadi Rezaei, and Maryam Kazemipour, Deputy Minister of Women, attended the ceremony.

shooter Sareh Javanmardi, sitting volleyball team's members, powerlifting team's members, shot putter Sajad Mohammadian, javelin throwers Hashemiyeh Motaghian, Sadeh Beyt Sayah and Amanollah Papi were among the Para athletes who were appreciated.

Iran delegation came 13th in the 2020 Paralympic Games with a total of 12 gold medals.

The Iranian Para athletes won historic 12 gold medals as well as 11 silvers and one bronze.

Iran sent 62 athletes to Tokyo in 10 sports.

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

Nemati elected to chair NPC Iran Athletes’ Commission

TEHRAN - The first meeting of NPC Iran Athletes’ Commission took place at the NPC headquarters on Sunday and Zahra Nemati was elected as the chairperson of the Commission.

The meeting featured Zahra Nemati (Archery), Javad Hardani (Athletics), Sajad Mohammadian (Athletics), Davoud Alipourian

(Sitting Volleyball), Sadeh Bigdeli (Sitting Volleyball), Ahmadreza Shahhosseini (Football 5-a-side), Samira Eram (Shooting), Gholamreza Rahimi (Archery) and Sadegh Kalhor (Alpine Skiing).

Zahra Nemati was voted as the chairperson in the election. Sadeh Bigdeli was also elected as the vice-chairperson of the Commission, Paralympic.ir wrote.

Nemati also is a member of International Paralympic Committee (IPC) Athletes’ Council.

Iran’s Greco-Roman youth and junior coaches named

TEHRAN – Head of Iran Wrestling Federation Alireza Dabir appointed the head coaches of Greco-Roman youth and junior teams.

Mohsen Sourian was appointed as head coach of youth team and Hamid Bavafa was named as head coach of junior team.

The Iranian federation is going to invest in Greco-Roman wrestling for the upcoming events.

Iran won two medals in Greco-Roman wrestling in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Mohammad Reza Gera claimed a gold medal in the 67kg while Mohammad Hadi Saravi seized a bronze in the 97kg.

AFC Champions League 2021 set for historic showdown

TEHRAN - Asian football history will be made at the AFC Champions League 2021 Final between Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal SFC and Korea Republic's FC Pohang Steelers with both teams aiming to lift the Continent's most sought after club accolade for an unprecedented fourth time.

After a thrilling campaign in the AFC Champions League, both teams will go head-to-head in the winner-takes-all single-leg battle at the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh on Tuesday in front of what is expected to be a capacity crowd after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) approved full spectator attendance strictly in line with health and safety protocols.

Al Hilal SFC won the showpiece in 1991 and 2000, before sensationally claiming their third title just two years ago and the Saudi Arabian giants will seek to rewrite Asian football history on home soil.

The West Asian side qualified from Group A as one of the best runners-up but it was in the knockout stages that Al Hilal SFC were truly impressive when they dispatched Iran's Esteghlal FC in the Round of 16 and two-time finalists Persepolis FC in the Quarter-finals.

Leonardo Jardim's men were in peak form again during the Semi-finals against Al Nassr in the ‘Riyadh Derby’ after edging their fierce rivals 2-1 with man of the match Salem Al Dawsari scoring the winner to lead his side to their third final in five years.

Standing in their way are three-time Continental club champions FC Pohang Steelers who have also produced standout performances in the knockout rounds after qualifying as one of the best placed runners-up. Kim Gi-dong's side edged Japan's Cerezo Osaka 1-0 in the Round of 16 before claiming a dominant 3-0 victory over Nagoya Grampus in the Quarter-finals to set up an exciting encounter against AFC Champions League title holders Ulsan Hyundai.

The East Coast Derby between the two clubs did not disappoint with FC Pohang Steelers recovering from a goal down to eventually defeat their opponents on penalties to book a spot in the final for the first time since 2009.

The enticing final looks set to be a memorable clash between the West and East clubs who will be determined to cement their place in Asian football history and claim one of the richest Continental club prizes in world football.

Expert says anti-Iran activities have become IAEA common practice

TEHRAN- “Anti-Iran activities have become the common practice of the International Atomic Energy Agency,” says an expert on international affairs.

Fouad Izadi said IAEA chief Rafael Grossi has made himself “fully “available” to Western countries.

Izadi says as the Vienna talks are approaching Grossi makes more claims against Iran, Izadi told the Farhikhtegan newspaper in an interview published on Sunday.

In his latest remarks, Gross, in an interview with AFP, claimed that the Agency had no contact with the new Iranian administration to discuss some issues related to Iran's nuclear program and described the issue as “astonishing”.

However, in addition to frequent contacts with the Permanent Mission and acting representative of Iran to the international organizations in Vienna over the past three months, he also visited Tehran in September and is set to visit Iran on November 22.

“This is not just a new, astonishing claim made by Grossi. Such claims have already been made in the framework of Western pressure on Iran,” Izadi remarks.

The excerpts of Izadi's remarks are as follows.

The IAEA, which must act professionally in line with its technical duties, has become a Western political entity against Iran.

The experience of the Islamic Republic for several decades of interaction with the International Atomic Energy Agency has been

that, contrary to the IAEA Statute, in practice the IAEA has become a Western political entity against Iran.

- Instead of being a technical body and pursuing technical discussions related to Iran's peaceful nuclear program, the IAEA has instead become a political body, not just an ordinary political body but also a Western and anti-Iran political body.

Grossi has made himself completely available to Western countries

During his tenure, you will see how Grossi has performed. He has completely presented himself to the Western countries.

It was the same in the time of Yukiya Amano, and those WikiLeaks documents, if you remember, were published in which in one of the documents disclosed he had said if Americans put me in charge of the Agency, I will fully cooperate with them on Iran.

Iran ranks first in interaction with the IAEA

Iran ranks first in terms of inspection hours conducted by the IAEA of its nuclear activities.

As a result, instead of hailing Iran for its cooperation, IAEA officials have always been complaining and expressing dissatisfaction.

Anti-Iran activities have become the IAEA practice

You are not dealing with a neutral institution. Rather you are dealing with a completely political and anti-Iran institution. If once the IAEA agrees with Iran, then it is surprising!

Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament).

The heads of the executive, legislative and judicial branches stressed the need to coordinate executive measures to solve economic problems. The most important national issues were discussed at the weekly meeting of the heads of the three branches.

They discussed executive

policies to resolve economic problems and improve people's livelihoods and ways of systematic support and further coordination in this regard.

This is the second meeting of this kind since mid-November. About two weeks ago, Ayatollah Raisi met with the heads of the legislative and judicial branches of the government. At that meeting, the most important issues of the country, especially

economic issues were discussed.

The continuation of efforts by all state bodies was emphasized during the weekly meeting of the heads of the three branches of government to improve the livelihood of the people. Raisi, Eje'i and Qalibaf underlined the need to continue their coordinated efforts to improve people's livelihood, according to a statement by the official website of the Iranian presidency.

Tehran, Baku to sign energy co-op agreements soon



Iranian Oil Minister Javad Oji (L) and Azeri Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev

From page 1 ► “During the meeting with the Iranian Oil Minister, the ways of expanding cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector were discussed,” he said, adding: “We discussed a number of new projects in the energy sector and I believe new documents will be signed in the near

future.”

Mustafayev pointed to the presence of a group of Azerbaijani experts in his accompanying delegation and said: “This group is going to continue the talks between the two sides in detail.”

Transportation cooperation

During his visit to Tehran, Mustafayev also met with Transport and Urban Development Minister Rostam Qasemi and discussed expansion of cooperation in transport areas.

In this meeting, the two sides stressed the need to follow up on the previous agreements reached between the two countries in the fields of transportation, transit and transportation-related services.

The officials expressed dissatisfaction with the current level of cooperation and called for the expansion of cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

South Pars condensate loading capacity rises

From page 1 ► “With the fourth single point mooring of South Pars going operational, in addition to increasing the condensate loading capacity in the export terminal of South Pars Site 2, the field’s operational flexibility will increase and will lead to stable production of gas and gas condensate in South Pars Site 2 during the coming winter,” he said.

POGC, which is in charge of developing the South Pars gas field in the Persian Gulf, had installed this SPM system at Site 2 of the field in January to facilitate gas condensate exports from the region.

The SPM, which is the second one at Site 2 of South Pars, has a loading capacity of 7,000 cubic meters per hour of gas condensate.

Prior to the inauguration of this SPM, the gas condensate produced at Pars 2 region was sent through a subsea pipeline to the SPM No. 1 of the South Pars Phase 12 to be loaded for exports, now this second SPM is also connected to the site by a 36-inch subsea pipeline with a length of 6.8 kilometers.

According to Azimi, the new SPM will increase the operational flexibility for gas condensate exports by making POGC able to carry out periodic facility repairs on both SPM systems, and will also prevent the deterioration of condensate measuring and loading equipment by balancing the operational loads between the two systems.

In late December 2020, Iran inaugurated its strategic gas condensate storage facilities in the South Pars region in a move to boost the storage and exports of the mentioned commodity.

With a nominal capacity of 640,000 cubic meters (four million barrels), the mentioned storage facilities and gas condensate measuring stations have been constructed to store gas condensate produced by South Pars refineries.

The mentioned storages are able to supply 480,000 barrels of gas condensate to the Persian Gulf Star Refinery on a daily basis and also are able to send gas condensate to the mentioned SPM systems via pipelines.

Over 208,000 tons of copper anode produced in 7 months

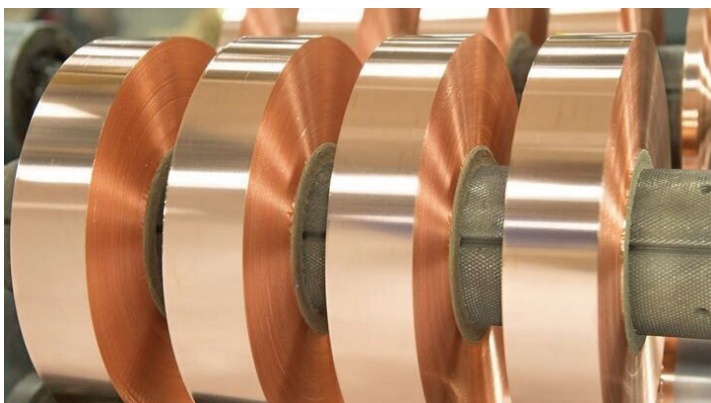
TEHRAN- Iran produced 208,509 tons of copper anode in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), which was two percent more than the output in the same period of time in the past year.

Copper anode production stood at 29,725 tons in the seventh month of this year, indicating 16 percent rise from that of the previous year.

The periodical reports and statistics indicate that Iran’s metals sector is progressing both in terms of production and export despite the limitations imposed by the U.S. sanctions.

The country’s copper industry is moving forward noticeably, as some outstanding projects are implemented.

In early April, the managing director of National Iranian Copper Industries Company



(NICIC) announced the discovery of one billion tons of new copper reserves in the country.

NICIC carried out 101,000 meters of deep drilling to identify new copper reserves across the country in the previous Iranian calendar year (ended on March 20), which resulted in the discovery of one billion tons of new reserves,

Ardeshtir Sa’d-Mohammadi said in a press conference.

Sa’d-Mohammadi put the value of the discovered reserves at 350 trillion rials (about \$8.3 billion).

According to the official, NICIC had also discovered 523 million tons of copper reserves across the country during the Iranian calendar year 1398 (March 2019- March

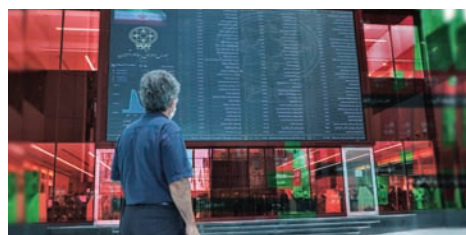
2020).

Considering the new discoveries, NICIC’s total copper reserves across the country have currently surpassed eight billion tons.

The official put the country’s total copper reserves at 40 billion tons, saying that Iran currently has the world’s seventh-largest copper reserves, and hopefully the country will climb to sixth place in the current Iranian calendar year.

Also, earlier this month, the official said his company has it on the agenda to be placed among the world’s top 10 copper-producing companies within the next four years.

Stating that NICIC is currently in a good position, he noted that with new discoveries, the company is on a good upward path.



Refining Company, National Iranian Copper Industries Company, Mobarakeh Steel Company,

Bank loans to economic sectors increase over 58%

TEHRAN- Iranian banking system has paid 14.828 quadrillion rials (over \$353 billion) of facilities to domestic economic sectors in the first seven months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-October 22), registering a 58.5-percent rise from the same period in the previous year, IRNA reported.

According to the data provided by the Central Bank of Iran (CBI), working capital loans paid to different economic sectors in the mentioned seven months were above 9.917 quadrillion rials (about \$236.1 billion),

accounting for 66.9 percent of the total provided facilities.

During the said period, the country’s mining and industry sector received over 3.476 quadrillion rials (about \$82.76 billion) in the form of working capital loans, accounting for 35.1 percent of the total such facilities.

Back in October, the CBI had announced that 12.41 quadrillion rials (over \$295.49 billion) of facilities were paid to domestic economic sectors in the first half of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), to register a 57.9-percent rise



from the same period in the previous year.

According to CBI, the country’s banking system offered 18.989 quadrillion rials (about \$452.1 billion) facilities to domestic economic sectors in the previous Iranian calendar year of 1399 (ended on March 20), 94.8-percent more than the figure for its preceding year.

CBI has defined supporting production as one of its major plans over the past two years.

Former CBI Governor Abdolnaser Hemmati had repeatedly stressed that supporting production units

to flourish production is the priority of the country’s banking system.

In early May 2019, Hemmati had outlined CBI plans for neutralizing or relieving the impact of U.S. sanctions on the country’s economy and mentioned providing liquidity and working capital to maintain and boost domestic production as one of those plans.

CBI’s plans take two major approaches, one of which is to secure finance for production activities and also to provide the working capital needed for such activities.

IME’s value of weekly trades grows 28%



TEHRAN- During the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday), 1.953 million tons of commodities worth \$608 million were traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME), indicating 28 percent rise in the value and four percent growth in the weight of trades as compared to its preceding week.

As reported by the IME’s Public Relations and International Affairs Department, the exchange experienced trade of 1.566 million tons of commodities valued at more than \$380 million on its metals and mineral trading floor.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1,000,035 tons of cement, 269,829 tons of steel, 110,000 tons of iron ore, 11,550 tons of copper, 9,375 tons of aluminum, 7,300 tons of sponge iron, 640 tons of zinc, 280 tons of molybdenum sulfur, 15 tons of precious metals concentrate and 20 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor trade of 882,000 tons of commodities worth almost \$220 million.

The IME’s customers purchased on this

floor 160,229 tons of bitumen, 78,686 tons of polymeric products, 61,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 42,000 tons of lube cut, 26,565 tons of chemicals, 8,200 tons of sulfur, 4,406 tons of base oil and 68 tons of insulation.

It’s worth noting that the IME’s agricultural trading floor played host to trading one ton of saffron.

Last but not least was the IME’s side market with 14,889 tons of commodities traded on it.

As previously reported, 7,222 million tons of commodities worth \$2.008 billion was traded at Iran Mercantile Exchange during the past Iranian calendar month (September 23-October 22).

Within this month, the exchange traded on its metals and minerals trading floor 5.541 million tons of commodities valued at \$1.096 billion.

Commodities sold on this floor included 1.226 million tons of steel, 3.993 million tons of cement, 26,445 tons of copper, 580 tons of molybdenum concentrate, 69 tons of precious metals concentrate, 23,940 tons of aluminum, 215,000 tons of iron ore, 21,870 tons of zinc, 2,000 tons of coke, 49,000 tons of sponge iron and 67 kg of gold bars.

Furthermore, the IME saw on both domestic and export pits of its oil and petrochemical trading floor trade of more

than 1.65 million tons of commodities worth \$885 million.

The IME’s customers purchased on this floor 419,796 tons of bitumen, 328,872 tons of polymeric products, 140,451 tons of chemicals, 13,955 tons of slops wax and 501,000 tons of vacuum bottom.

It’s worth noting that the IME’s agricultural trading floor played host to trading 1,300 kg of saffron within this month.

Last but not least was the IME’s side market which was a platform to trade 30,860 tons of various types of commodities in this month.

IME traded 1.566 million tons of commodities on its metals and mineral trading floor in a week

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).

ICCIMA board of representatives holds meeting with tourism minister

TEHRAN – The 18th meeting of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) board of representatives was held on Sunday in the presence of the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Minister Ezatollah Zarghami, the ICCIMA portal reported.

The main focus of this meeting, which was chaired by the ICCIMA Head Gholam-Hossein Shafeie, was the issues that the country’s private sector active in the tourism industry is currently facing.

Speaking in the meeting, the head of ICCIMA Tourism Committee Ali-Akbar Abdolmaleki underlined the importance of the tourism industry in the global economy and stressed the need for placing more importance on this sector.

“Over 11 percent of the world’s total employment is in the field of tourism and about 10 percent of the country’s GDP is accounted for by the tourism industry; the arrival of each tourist brings the country nearly 1000 dollars,” Abdolmaleki said.

According to the official, one of the potential



opportunities for economic growth in the field of tourism and combating Iranophobia is to use the capacity of Iranians abroad.

“This capacity can be used to introduce Iran and attract investors and counter Iranophobia. I must point out that one of the complementary capacities in this regard is Iran’s joint chambers with other countries,” he added.

Further in the meeting, Shafeie pointed the problems and issues in the field of tourism, saying that the government should pay serious attention to the cultural and historical heritage and use the capacities in this industry to develop the country’s economy.

TEDPIX gains 3,400 points on Sunday

TEHRAN- TEDPIX, the main index of Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE), rose 3,480 points to 1.386 million on Sunday.

As reported, over 5.725 billion securities worth 39.244 trillion rials (about \$934.3 million) were traded at the TSE.

The first market’s index rose 2,764 points, and the second market’s index increased 6,338 points.

TEDPIX rose 58,000 points (4.1 percent) to 1.456 million in the past Iranian calendar week (ended on Friday).

During the past week, the indices of Isfahan

Social Security Investment Company, Bandar Abbas Refining Company, Iran Khodro Group, and Saipa Company were the most widely followed ones.

In early July, Market Expert Reza Alavi said that the inflow of liquidity into the market and the increase in the value of transactions indicate that people are once again trusting the capital market.

“At present, other markets such as gold,

foreign currency, and cars are not attractive enough for investors, and the stock market is still a good place for people’s investments,” Alavi said.

“After the [presidential] election debates, people have come to the conclusion that the stock market is one of the priorities of the new government, and for this reason, they have re-trusted this market, and as a result, the inflow of new capital into the market has increased,” he noted.

From page 1 ► and said Labour will be closely monitoring the approaching deadlines the party had set itself for responding to the probe.

In May, a long awaited investigation into Islamophobia within the Conservative Party headed by Professor Swaran Singh (the Singh investigation) was published and found that two-thirds of discriminatory incidents reported to the party's hierarchy over six years involved anti-Muslim hatred.

Dodds' letter also said the Conservative Party refuses to use the term Islamophobia, instead referring to "anti-Muslim hatred," which was "undermining [the party's] credibility over tackling this problem."

In May, then Tory chairwoman Amanda Milling said the party had accepted all the recommendations outlined by the Singh report. She said: "We held this investigation to address these allegations to make sure that any instances of discrimination are isolated and to look at how we can improve and strengthen our complaints process."

But Dodds – who is also shadow women and equalities secretary – notes that the Conservative party have a long way to go saying "It's about time the Conservatives got serious about tackling Islamophobia in our society and in their own ranks. They can't do that if they won't even name it"

She noted, "the Tories have dragged their feet on this issue for far too long." She has called for changing attitudes within the government and "that change must start at the top of this Conservative Government."

It was recently revealed that the Prime Minister himself Boris Johnson has not even responded to a call by MPs to take action on Islamophobia for a year now. In November 2020, Afzal Khan, a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims, wrote to the prime minister and warned about a rise in anti-Muslim hate crime and questioned "the inaction of this government in tackling the issue."

An official guide says government departments should respond to correspondence from MPs within 20 working days, but a year has gone by and Khan has yet to receive any response. Khan has called the lack of response "shocking and wholly unacceptable" and urged the prime minister to at least make a statement to MPs on Islamophobia. His 2020 letter, seen by some British media outlets, accused the government of strengthening "disgraceful racism" towards Muslims with actions during the coronavirus pandemic, including a sudden regional lockdown on the eve of the annual Muslim occasion of Eid al-Adha.

Khan wrote, "It contributed to a deeply concerning, and false, far-right narrative that

Why can't British government tackle rising Islamophobia?



British Muslims are 'spreading corona', as prime minister it is your duty to protect and safeguard all communities. However, I am disappointed, if not surprised, at the inaction of this government in tackling the issue of Islamophobia, which is clearly growing."

The Singh investigation was commissioned after accusations of Islamophobic behavior by Tory party members and representatives. It considered cases including a 2018 column written by Johnson comparing Muslim women to "letterboxes" and "bank robbers." The review said such incidents "give an impression to some of a party and leadership insensitive to Muslim communities."

The government was previously accused of "utterly neglecting" Islamophobia by failing to come up with a definition that can be used to combat anti-Muslim hatred for more than two years. In 2018, a group of lawmakers drew up a working definition and urged the government to adopt it, saying the lack of any term was allowing Islamophobia to "increase in society to devastating effect."

However, the government rejected the proposal in May 2019 and said it would commission independent experts to draw up a different one.

Since that time only one "expert" has been appointed and no proposals have ever been published.

During a parliamentary debate on the conservative party's definition of Islamophobia, one conservative minister said: "We

remain committed to there being a robust and effective definition, and we will outline our steps to achieve that in due course."

Meanwhile, according to Sajjad Karim, the former conservative European Member of Parliament, Muslim members of the Conservative party were deliberately excluded from the inquiry into Islamophobia within its ranks. Karim, who represented northwest England in the European parliament for 15 years until 2019, said the Singh investigation was a "whitewash," and apologies from the prime minister for any offence he had caused were "insincere."

Karim voiced concerns that the Conservative Party headquarters would use "sleight of hand" to avoid implementing the recommendations made by the Singh investigation. He said party members including him had "no confidence left that the party internally is willing to actually deal with this issue. We cannot just rely on internal processes to deliver a result"

Karim also revealed he told party officials of a "particular complaint" before the Singh inquiry began and was given assurances he would be contacted once the probe started but he heard "absolutely nothing." He later found his complaint had been wiped off media reports and said he was told by the Conservative Party "we're very sorry, it's too late for you to contribute to the inquiry – it was open to the public but now it's closed." Karim said this was proof of a "very shabby

attempt to skewer the findings of the inquiry by trying to make sure only certain people gave evidence so that it progressed in a certain direction." He adds "I'm not the only one that finds himself in this position"

Singh's investigation found anti-Muslim sentiment "remains a problem" within the Conservative Party. The 44,000-word report said: "Judging by the extent of complaints and findings of misconduct by the party itself that relate to anti-Muslim words and conduct, anti-Muslim sentiment remains a problem within the party. This is damaging to the party, and alienates a significant section of society."

Singh's published report also found:

Two-thirds of all incidents reported to the complaints team at the Tories' headquarters related to anti-Muslim discrimination

-Three-quarters of all incidents involved social media

-High-profile incidents, such as Johnson's comments on Muslim women "give the impression to many that the party and its leadership are insensitive to Muslim communities"

-The Conservatives' complaints system is "in need of overhaul" due to its "under-resourced and inadequately trained" complaints team, a "weak" data collection system, and "poor" communication between officials, complainants and respondents

-There has also been a "lack of transparency" in the complaints process

Singh said parts of his report would "make for very uncomfortable reading among the leadership and the rank and file." He added that "change will be a difficult process that will require a completely new mindset in some quarters and one that some party members may not like."

Former Tory cabinet minister Sayeeda Hussain Warsi, a long campaigner on Islamophobia in the Conservative Party said the "crucial" detail of the report "tells a story that headlines do not." She says each section (of the report) "reveals a deep and embedded issue of a party at best unable and at worst unwilling to deal with the issue of racism"

The report found disturbing examples of anti-Muslim prejudice in the Conservative party. And while the probe did not find evidence of institutional anti-Muslim prejudice, experts beg to differ saying the party's leadership is riddled with institutional Islamophobia.

After all the Tories cannot even come up with the right term to define Islamophobia; and Warsi, the first member who demanded an at least internal inquiry into the party's anti-Muslim sentiment, says there were issues "from the top ... to the bottom" of the party.

Iran should not count too much on international law to protect its interests: Hunter



From page 1 ► Following is the text of the interview:

The U.S. administration is trying to blame the Iranian government for avoiding negotiation. But it was the Trump administration that abandoned the pact in 2018 while Iran was fully honoring its commitments. Don't you think Iran is rightful when it comes to guarantees?

Unfortunately, blaming the other side or sides for the failure of any diplomatic negotiation is a common practice of states. Certainly, both the U.S. and Europe would like to hold Iran responsible for the current crisis, ignoring the fact that the U.S. exit from the JCPOA led to Iran's retaliatory reactions.

In principle, Iran's desire for some guarantees that the U.S. will not again leave the JCPOA is understandable. But, I don't believe that the Biden administration would be willing to give such guarantees. Moreover, even if Biden gave such guarantees, a future administration might not abide by it, as Trump did not respect the Obama administration's decision to sign the JCPOA. The only way Iran could be sure that sanctions would be lifted permanently is to resolve its basic differences and disputes with the U.S. and to establish normal relations with it. Otherwise, the risk of current sanctions remaining in place and even additional sanctions being imposed would remain.

According to some reports, the current impasse is not because of an Iranian sense of immunity to pressure, rather it is largely because President Biden is refusing to commit his administration to lift sanction on Iran during the remaining years of his presidency, even if Iran fully complies with the nuclear deal. What is your opinion?

It is difficult to confirm or deny the report that President Biden refused to commit the U.S. to keep sanctions on Iran lifted for the remainder of his term. However, I don't believe that the U.S. would make any commitment to lifting sanctions permanently or even for a certain period. Sanctions have become an important instrument of U.S. foreign policy towards its antagonists, of which Iran is one. The only way the U.S. can give such guarantees is if a new treaty on the nuclear issue were signed. But to be valid such a treaty must be ratified by the U.S. Senate, which is extremely unlikely. One reason the Obama administration did not make the JCPOA a treaty was because it was certain that it would not be confirmed by the Senate.

Some critics say the nuclear dispute is not resolvable through technical discussions. This is a political issue that is rooted in distrust between the U.S. and Iran. For example, the U.S. can impose new sanctions under the pretext of a missile program or Iran's role in the region. This is against what Obama said when he called the nuclear

pact an agreement based on technical solutions, not trust. Don't you think such complicated issues need a certain extent of trust?

Most interstate disputes are political in nature, although they may also have technical dimensions. The problem of Iran's nuclear program is essentially political and is related to its approach towards the U.S. and some regional states. If Iran was not seen as a state challenging the existing international and regional systems, reactions to its nuclear program would have been much less intense. For instance, because Pakistan has by and large good relations with major international actors, including the U.S., and does not threaten any regional state, it has not faced economic and other pressure, although it has developed a significant nuclear arsenal.

Do you predict Iran and the U.S. will agree on a less for less policy or do they need a new different deal in case the diplomatic efforts to revive the JCPOA fail?

It is difficult to predict whether a less ambitious agreement could be reached. Washington is under pressure by Israel, and possibly even Saudi Arabia, not to enter such a deal and instead put more pressure on Iran including by threatening military action if necessary. Iran also might not be willing to do so. However, depending on the urgency of Iran's economic needs, Tehran might accept some economic relief by walking back some of its retaliatory measures, such as reducing the level of its enriched uranium. So such an agreement cannot be completely ruled out.

Do you think the world must accept this reality that successive U.S. administrations may breach their international commitments without being punished?

Unfortunately, international relations are not based on law, despite much talk about a law-based international order. Rather they are determined by the balance of power among various actors. The U.S. is still the most powerful state. Therefore, others are not willing to challenge it, although some of its actions clearly go against international rules and practices. Other great powers are also guilty of such behavior. For instance, Russia's attack on Georgia in 2008 and its annexation of Crimea in 2014 were against international law. Yet, despite some sanctions, Russia was not punished for its transgressions. Even less powerful states are guilty of such behavior, such as Iraq's attack on Iran in 1980, its canceling of the 1975 Algiers agreement on the Shatt al Arab, and its invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Saudi Arabia's attack on Yemen in 2015 is another example of such behavior, which has gone unpunished.

In general, Iran should not count too much on international law to protect its interests and must pay more attention to power equations.

WHO worried about Covid surge in Europe

TEHRAN – The World Health Organization (WHO) is "very worried" about the spread of Covid in Europe as cases and deaths have surged ahead of the winter season.

Some half a million more people could die in Europe from COVID-19 by March in the absence of urgent action, the World Health Organization warns.

The WHO's Europe director, Dr Hans Kluge sounded the warning on Saturday, saying he was very worried about a fresh wave of infections that had spread across the continent and led countries to announce new restrictions.

He said the winter season, along with the dominance of the more transmissible Delta variant, had raised the threat level, added to the fact that too many people are susceptible to the virus through being unvaccinated or having lost protection as a result of the length of time since their



last jab.

He called for more public health measures to be implemented amid the situation.

"COVID-19 has become once again the number one cause of mortality in our region," he said.

Explaining the rise in infections, Kluge considered such factors as the winter season and low vaccination rates to be

responsible.

"We know what needs to be done" to fight the disease, he, however, added.

Kluge called for wider vaccination coverage, basic public health measures to be implemented, and new treatments to be developed.

The official still considered mandatory vaccination to be a last-ditch solution.

No earlier than on Thursday, Kluge had cautioned that transmission rates in 53 European countries were of "grave concern" and new cases were nearing record levels, exacerbated by the more transmissible Delta variant of the virus.

The region saw a six percent increase in new cases last week of nearly 1.8 million new cases, compared to the week before. The number of deaths rose 12 percent in the same period.

Restoring tourism flow far preferable to profitability, Iranian expert says



TEHRAN – Iranian Tour Operators Director Ebrahim Pourfaraj has said the restoration of tourism flow to the country is very important for Iranian tour operators and travel insiders.

“At the moment, we are not thinking about revenues, but we are looking for the beginning of the tourist flow to the country and renew our links [with international fellows],” Pourfaraj said on Saturday.

His comments came after months of steep recession triggered by massive coronavirus restrictions which led many travel insiders, hoteliers, and tour operators towards bankruptcy, unemployment, debts, and the prospects of not being competitive on the international level.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he expressed gratitude to efforts made by Iranian President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and his tourism minister Ezzatollah Zarghami to reissue tourist visas since late October.

Furthermore, Pourfaraj said that the Islamic Republic must rebuild trust with the global tourism market, referring to the high levels of health security and vaccination that the country has achieved against the coronavirus.

He said some of his colleagues have commenced talks in various tourism fields with target markets of China, Japan, Russia, and some European countries.

Earlier this month, he announced, “It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies, economic and cultural attaches, and ministries of health and tourism to inform the world about Iran’s [great achievements in] public vaccinations.”

As mentioned by Pourfaraj, Iran has made its best to maintain contact with global tourism markets and companies that worked with Iran in the past, especially since virtual communication and meetings have thrived.

“Following the resumption of the tourist visa, visitors from Russia and France have traveled to Iran and we are currently expecting a smaller number of tourists in Iran due to the current situation in the world,” he explained.

Although there are requests for traveling to Iran in the current year (2021), most travel agencies and tour operators believe that the flow will go back to normal in the next year, he said.

Handicrafts by physically-challenged people on show in Tehran

TEHRAN – A collection of handicrafts made by physically-challenged people has been put on show at the headquarters of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts in Tehran.

The week-long exhibition features potteries, leatherwork, and Minakari (enamel) works to name a few, CHTN reported on Sunday.

Minakari is an ancient art of painting natural motifs such as flowers and birds on the surface of metals, mostly copper. Over the ages, the art of Minakari has fascinated many famed people including French traveler Jean Chardin and American orientalist Arthur Pope. Isfahan is one of the traditional hubs of the craft in the Iranian plateau. The prices are diverse, therefore you can either spend a lot or little money on these special pieces of art.

With 14 entries, Iran ranks first globally for the number of cities and villages registered by the World Crafts Council, as China with seven entries, Chile with four, and India with three ones come next.

The value of Iran’s handicrafts exports stood at \$120 million during the first eleven months of

The expert believes that international tourism flow to Iran will return to normal in 2022. “There is speculation that in the spring of 2022, which is a high season of traveling in Iran, the number of inbound passengers and trips would be increasing.”

Last November, the World Tourism Organization announced that international tourist arrivals to Iran plunged 72% during the first eight months of 2020 when compared to 2019, highlighting the severe impact of COVID-19 as the main factor.

Some experts believe Iran is still somehow “unknown” for many potential travelers due to Western “media war”. Several estimates have been released so far on the extent of the tourism-related losses incurred by the pandemic. Only months into the outbreak, Zarghami’s predecessor, Ali Asghar Mounesan, lamented that the number of foreign travelers to Iran was drastically plunged due to the pandemic.

“Tourism of the country was growing before the corona [outbreak], its revenues reached \$11.7 billion in 2019, which accounted for 2.8% of GDP, nearing the average share of tourism in the world GDP, which was 3.2 percent,” Mounesan said. He added 8.7 million foreign nationals visited Iran during the [Iranian] year (1398), adding that Iran was ranked as the second fastest-growing country in tourism based on data compiled by the World Tourism Organization.

Even before the pandemic, Iran’s tourism was already grappling with some challenges, on top of those Western “media propaganda” aimed at scaring potential travelers away from the Islamic Republic. Some experts believe Iran is still somehow “unknown” for many potential travelers due to such a “media war”. They, however, consider bright prospects for the tourism sector of the country if it vigorously pursues comprehensive strategies to counter U.S.-led propaganda and strict sanctions, yet does its best to loosen tough travel regulations.

Iran is potentially a booming destination for travelers seeking cultural attractions, breathtaking sceneries, and numerous UNESCO-registered sites. Under the 2025 Tourism Vision Plan, Iran aims to increase the number of tourist arrivals from 4.8 million in 2014 to 20 million in 2025.



the past Iranian calendar year 1399 (March 20, 2020 – February 18, 2021), Mehr reported. The country’s handicrafts exports slumped during the mentioned months in comparison to the same period last a year earlier due to the damage the coronavirus pandemic has inflicted on global trade.

The Islamic Republic exported \$427 million worth of handicrafts during the first eleven months of the calendar year 1398. Of the figure, some \$190 million was earned via suitcase trade (allowed for customs-free and tax-free transfer) through 20 provinces, according to data compiled by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts.

From page 1 ► What was a catastrophe for the ancient miners has become a sensation for science. Sporting a long white beard, iron knives, and a single gold earring, the first salt mummy was discovered in 1993. He is estimated to be trapped in the mine in ca. 300 CE. In 2004 another mummy was discovered only 50 feet away, followed by another in 2005 and a “teenage” boy mummy later that year.

“Several miners known today as salt men were trapped, killed, and buried inside the mine in various periods including the Achaemenid, the beginning and end of the Sassanid era, as well as Qajar and Pahlavi periods,” the archaeologist explained.

“Collapses occurred in Chehrabad mine and its extraction tunnels mostly due to the lack of integration of salt veins, earthquakes, and non-observance of safety issues.”

Mummified remains have long attracted interest as a potential source of ancient DNA as such mummification is a rare process that requires an anhydrous environment to rapidly dehydrate and preserve tissue before complete decomposition occurs.

Research on a mummified sheep co-authored by 15 international experts including Aali and Stöllner, has shed new light on sheep husbandry practices of the ancient Near East and underlined how natural mummification can affect DNA degradation.

“We present the whole genome sequences of a ~1600-year-old naturally mummified sheep recovered from Chehrabad, a salt mine. Comparative analyses of published ancient sequences revealed the remarkable DNA integrity of this mummy. Hallmarks of postmortem damage, fragmentation, and hydrolytic deamination, are substantially reduced, likely due to the high salinity of this taphonomic environment. Metagenomic analyses reflect the profound influence of high salt content on decomposition; its microbial profile is predominated by halophilic archaea and bacteria, possibly contributing to the preservation of this sample. Applying population genomic analyses we find consistent clustering of this sheep with Southwest Asian modern breeds, suggesting ancestry continuity. Genotyping of a locus influencing the woolly phenotype



Iranian, German archaeologists in search of clues about Achaemenid, Sassanid miners

showed the existence of an ancestral “hairy” allele in this sheep, consistent with hair fiber imaging, further elucidating Sasanian-period animal husbandry.”

According to the authors of the research, in 1993, a remarkably preserved human body dating to the ~1700 years Before Present (BP) was discovered in the Dowlakh salt mine near Chehrabad village in the Zanjan province of northwest Iran. A total of 8 “Salt Men” have been identified at the mine, several retaining keratinous tissues such as skin, hair, and both endo- and exoparasites, despite dating to the Achaemenid and Sasanian.

Their research proved that the mine was active in various periods and its archaeological refilling layers represent an extraction history that ranged from the 6th century BC to the 20th century CE. In addition to the “Salt Men”, textiles, leather objects, and animal remains have been discovered, likely preserved by the high salinity and low moisture content of the mine.

Furthermore, isotopic, genetic, and lipid analyses have been reported for this material, and studies have been carried out to characterize genomic DNA survival. These human and animal remains are examples of natural mummification – the spontaneous desiccation of soft tissue by a dry environment that rapidly dehydrates soft tissue before decay begins.

What was a catastrophe for the ancient miners has become a sensation for science.

Mummification provides scientists significant evidence that bears sufficient keratinized tissue for ancient DNA sequencing. “Mummification has been suggested as a mechanism that may sufficiently preserve keratinized tissue for ancient DNA sequencing. The effects of age-related damage in DNA are well documented and include base misincorporation at strand overhangs, fragmentation, and low endogenous content.”

Both deamination and depurination, associated with postmortem

transition error and DNA fragmentation, respectively, require water as a substrate.

As mentioned in the research, ancient DNA from Chehrabad, a highly saline, anhydrous environment, presents an opportunity to investigate potential differences in nucleotide degradation resulting from this unusual taphonomic context.

Currently, a special exhibition featuring Iranian and German studies in the realm of ancient mining is underway at the National Museum of Iran in downtown Tehran.

It puts the spotlight on the appropriation of humans to mineral resources and the development of the history of human experiences and achievements in mining, which led to the development of technologies, the formation of professions, trade, and specialization of industries.

“Highlights of Ancient Mining from Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum” and “Death by Salt” are highlights of the event, which will be running through January 14, 2022.

According to Jebrail Nokandeh, the director of the National Museum, the museum and the German Mining Museum in Bochum have made considerable cooperation in line with an agreement they signed in 2017, based on which the two institutions are set to hold exhibitions of each other’s historical and cultural artifacts related to the subject of ancient mining.

It is worth mentioning that similar loan exhibitions featuring ancient mining and relevant documents were already staged in Iran and Germany.

Last year, a team of experts from the two countries started a project for purifying, cleansing, and restoring garments and personal belongings of the mummies which were first found in the salt mine in 1993.

The oldest-known mine on archaeological record is believed to be the Ngwenya Mine in Eswatini (Swaziland), which radiocarbon dating shows to be about 43,000 years old. At this site, Paleolithic humans mined hematite to make the red pigment ochre. Moreover, mines of a similar age in Hungary are believed to be sites where Neanderthals may have mined flint for weapons and tools.

Native rituals, skills join Iran intangible cultural heritage list

TEHRAN – A selection of seven time-honored rituals and skills, practiced in Iran’s Golestan province for centuries, have recently been added to the country’s intangible cultural heritage list.

Ingenious skills of making traditional dishes, bread kilns, handcrafted textiles, a spiritual ritual are amongst elements registered in the prestigious list, according to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts.

Golestan is reportedly embracing some 2,500 historical and natural sites, with UNESCO-registered Gonbad-e Qabus – a one-millennium-old brick tower – amongst its most famous.

Narratives say the tower has influenced various subsequent designers of tomb towers and other cylindrical commemorative structures both in the region and beyond. The UNESCO comments that the tower bears testimony to the cultural exchange between



Central Asian nomads and the ancient civilization of Iran.

Another rural hotel being constructed in Ardabil

TEHRAN – Over the past couple of years, several small hotels and eco-lodges have been built across Iran’s Ardabil province, which is home to lush natural beauties and hospitable people.

“In order to develop rural tourism, several tourism projects, including constructions of a one-star hotel, are currently underway by the private sector in Ardabil’s Aq Bolagh village,” a local official said on Sunday, CHTN reported.

The construction of small hotels and eco-lodges are gaining momentum in various Iranian villages where rural communities can play host to – or organize – nature and health tours, thereby it fetches income for further tourist infrastructure.

In the realm of rural tourism, Iran has many pristine yet diverse natural settings to offer to nature lovers. Rural tourism as well as agritourism and farm-stays can be regarded as a win-win both for local communities, and post-modern travelers who are tracing unique experiences.

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

Sightseers may stay with a rural or nomadic family for a while or enjoy an independent stay



and assist them with day-to-day life. It also opens up an opportunity to feel rustic routines, their agriculture, traditions, arts, and culture.

Furthermore, rural tourism, most of all, sets the ground for economic development in rural areas by creating additional income and employment especially for young people and women; the prosperity of handicrafts, and more entrepreneurship prospects. It can also improve the social wellbeing in rural areas, for instance by stimulating improvements in infrastructure, sanitation, and electricity networks.

Experts believe that apart from benefits to rural communities, the preservation of their environmental and cultural assets is of very high significance that should be taken into account. In some villages, over-tourism could pose threats!

“Tourism and Rural Development” has been

selected as the motto of World Tourism Day to encourage countries around the world to look to tourism to drive recovery in rural communities where the sector is a leading employer and economic pillar.

UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili has said: “All around the world, tourism empowers rural communities, providing jobs and opportunity, most notably for women and youth. Tourism also enables rural communities to hold onto their unique cultural heritage and traditions, and the sector is vital for safeguarding habitat and endangered species. This World Tourism Day is a chance to recognize the role tourism plays outside of major cities and its ability to build a better future for all.”

Certainly, paying attention to rural tourism as one of the tiniest segments of the tourism industry will be very effective in reviving the whole industry in the post-COVID 19 times. Moreover, it gives tourism experts another chance to recognize the weaknesses and strengths as well as the impact of tourism in small towns and villages.

Iranian officials and policymakers in the realm of travel expect rural tourism development will end and possibly reverse the trend of migration from villages to cities by creating sustainable jobs and prosperity for local communities.

Lake Urmia volume increased by 30m cubic meters

TEHRAN – The volume of water in Lake Urmia has reached 2.48 billion cubic meters, which shows an increase of 30 million cubic meters compared to the last [Iranian calendar] month (September 23– October 22).

The level of Lake Urmia has now reached 1,270 meters 57 cm above the sea level, which is 63 cm less than the lake's level compared to the same period last year, IRNA quoted Yaser Rahbar-din, director of West Azarbaijan's water company, as saying on Sunday.

Currently, the area of Lake Urmia has been reduced to 1,835 square kilometers, while last year at the same time, the area was recorded above 3,488 square meters, he stated.

Of course, the lake's surface area has increased by about 135 square kilometers compared to the past month, he concluded.

Lake Urmia shrinks

Lake Urmia level has decreased by about 61 cm compared to last [Iranian calendar] year (March 2020-March 2021), Mehran Nazari, West Azarbaijan province's department of environment chief, said on October 16.



In other words, 1423 square kilometers of the Lake's surface has been reduced, losing 2 billion cubic meters of water, he added.

He went on to say that this environmental problem has increased the risk of salt dust storms in the region, which can have adverse effects on human communities and the lakeshore.

Shared between West Azarbaijan and East Azarbaijan provinces in northwestern Iran, Lake Urmia, was once the largest salt-water lake in West Asia. It was home to many migratory and indigenous animals including flamingos, pelicans, egrets, and ducks, and attracted hundreds of tourists every year who had bathed in the water to take advantage of the therapeutic properties of the lake.

The surface area of Lake Urmia has been reduced to 1,835 square kilometers.

However, decades of long-standing drought spells and elevated hot summer temperatures that speed up evaporation as well as increased water demands in the agriculture sector shrank the lake drastically. In 1999 the volume of water which was at 30 billion cubic meters drastically decreased to half a billion cubic meters in 2013. Moreover, the lake surface area of 5,000 square kilometers in 1997 shrunk to one-tenth of that to 500 square kilometers in 2013.

Lake's surface area reached up to 2,917 square kilometers, indicating 1,582 square kilometers increase in comparison to 2013 when the Lake Urmia Restoration Program began.

The level of Lake Urmia has reached 1,271 meters, which indicates an increase of over 1.39 meters compared to the lowest volume recorded. However, it still needs 9.5 billion cubic meters of water to reach its ecological level.

The above normal levels of rain came to help conservation measures to preserve Lake Urmia, but, this year, the drought and low rainfall are threatening the lake again.

How climate change may shape the world in the centuries to come

It's hard to imagine what Earth might look like in 2500. But a collaboration between science and art is offering an unsettling window into how ongoing climate change might transform now-familiar terrain into alien landscapes over the next few centuries.

These visualizations — of U.S. Midwestern farms overtaken by subtropical plants, of a dried-up Amazon rainforest, of extreme heat baking the Indian subcontinent — emphasize why researchers need to push climate projections long past the customary benchmark of 2100, environmental social scientist Christopher Lyon and colleagues contend September 24 in Global Change Biology.

Fifty years have passed since the first climate projections, which set that distant target at 2100, says Lyon, of McGill University in Montreal. But that date isn't so far off anymore, and the effects of greenhouse gas emissions emitted in the past and present will linger for centuries, according to Science News website.

To visualize what that future world might look like, the researchers considered three possible climate trajectories — low, moderate and high emissions as used in past reports by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change — and projected changes all the way out to 2500 (SN: 1/7/20). The team focused particularly on impacts on civilization: heat stress, failing crops and changes in land use and vegetation.

For all but the lowest-emission scenario, which is roughly in line with limiting global warming to "well under" 2 degrees Celsius relative to preindustrial times as approved by the 2015 Paris Agreement, the average global temperature continues to increase until 2500, the team found (SN: 12/12/15). For the highest-emissions scenario, temperatures increase by about 2.2 degrees C by 2100 and by about 4.6 degrees C by 2500. That results in "major restructuring of the world's biomes," the researchers say: loss of most of the Amazon rainforest, poleward shifts in crops and unlivable temperatures in the tropics.



The team then collaborated with James McKay, an artist and science communicator at the University of Leeds in England, to bring the data to life. Based on the study's projections, McKay created a series of detailed paintings representing different global landscapes now and in 2500.

The team stopped short of trying to speculate on future technologies or cities to keep the paintings based more in realism than science fiction, Lyon says. "But we did want to showcase things people would recognize: drones, robotics, hybrid plants." In one painting of India in 2500, a person is wearing a sealed suit and helmet, a type of garment that people in some high-heat environments might wear today, he says.

The goal of these images is to help people visualize the future in such a way that it feels more urgent, real and close — and, perhaps, to offer a bit of hope that humans can still adapt. "If we're changing on a planetary scale, we need to think about this problem as a planetary civilization," Lyon says. "We wanted to show that, despite the climate people have moved into, people have figured out ways to exist in the climate."

High greenhouse gas emissions could increase average global temperatures by about 4.6 degrees Celsius relative to preindustrial times. As a result, extreme heat in India could dramatically alter how humans live in the environment. Farmers and herders, shown in 2000 the painting at left, may require protective clothing such as a cooling suit and helmet to work outdoors by 2500, as shown in the painting at right.

Basij inaugurates 2,500 development projects

TEHRAN – The Basij, affiliated with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, has inaugurated 2,550 development projects in deprived regions nationwide.

The projects were in the areas of housing, water supply, agriculture, electricity, employment, infrastructure, roads, health, and sports.

Moreover, construction of 40,000 houses for the underprivileged families began, IRNA reported on Sunday.

About a year after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, on November 26, 1979, Imam Khomeini called for the formation of the Basij force with the aim of preparing the military and defense against threats of enemies.

Basij is tasked with preventing and counter-

ing any foreign military aggression, political, economic, and cultural threats, as well as natural disasters.

The establishment of Basij resulted in increasing labor productivity, training a skilled workforce, creating and strengthening job opportunities and supporting businesses, enhancing vocational training, developing the agricultural sector, improving the country's executive and administrative system, increasing construction activities, sustainable agricultural development, and protection of renewable natural resources, and saving on administrative costs.

Small groups of volunteers, mainly students called Basijis, spontaneously enter the field of construction and poverty eradication or in case of emergencies.



With the formation of Basij, the field of work becomes wider, so that at the beginning, only about 100 teams were operating in the country, while it has now reached more than 12,000 groups, which is still expanding.

Road casualties drop in coronavirus era

And in Switzerland and Norway, it has not exceeded 2.7 people per 100,000 people; But Iran ranks 113th with a death rate of 20.5 per 100,000 people, after Morocco, Brazil, and Myanmar.

Despite the reduction of 3,575 in the number of road accidents fatalities, the number of people killed in accidents in a year is still more than 30,000.

Car crashes responsible for 1.3m deaths annually

According to the World Health Organization, every year the lives of approximately 1.3 million people are cut short as a result of a road traffic crash. Between 20 and 50 million more people suffer non-fatal injuries, with many incurring a disability as a result of their injury.

Road traffic injuries cause considerable economic losses to individuals, their families, and to nations as a whole. Road traffic crashes cost most countries 3% of their gross domestic product.

More than half of all road traffic deaths are among vulnerable road users including, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists.

Some 93% of the world's fatalities on the roads

occur in low- and middle-income countries, even though these countries have approximately 60 percent of the world's vehicles.

Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5-29 years.

World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims

Since the adoption of the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/5, the observance has spread to a growing number of countries on every continent.

The Day has become an important tool in global efforts to reduce road casualties. It offers an opportunity for drawing attention to the scale of the

emotional and economic devastation caused by road crashes and for giving recognition to the suffering of road crash victims

and the work of support and rescue services.

In September 2020, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/74/299 "Improving global road safety", proclaiming the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, with the ambitious target of preventing at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. WHO and the UN regional commissions, in

cooperation with other partners in the UN Road Safety Collaboration, have developed a Global Plan for the Decade of Action.

According to the World Health Organization, every year the lives of approximately 1.3 million people are cut short as a result of a road traffic crash.

COVID-19 UPDATES ON NOVEMBER 21

New cases	4,340
New deaths	104
Total cases	6,077,438
Total deaths	128,956
New hospitalized patients	650
Patients in critical condition	3,409
Total recovered patients	5,783,425
Diagnostic tests conducted	37,781,134
Doses of vaccine injected	102,145,229

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Hospital beds capacity rises to improve medical system

Health Minister Saeed Namaki inaugurated 23 health centers, including 201 hospital beds, in Lorestan, Kermanshah, and Khuzestan provinces on Tuesday.

Built on 26,935 square meters area, the centers were constructed with a budget of 2.9 trillion rials (nearly \$70 million at the official rate of 42,000 rials).

The Ministry of Health is scheduled to add 10,600 hospital beds to the capacity of the country's medical system within the next 7 months.

Two years ago, there were a total of 140,859 beds in the country, which means 1.7 hospital beds per 1,000 population.

افزایش ظرفیت تخت های بیمارستانی

سعید نمکی وزیر بهداشت امروز به صورت مجازی ۲۳ مرکز بهداشتی و درمانی را شامل ۲۰۱ تخت بیمارستانی در استان های لرستان، کرمانشاه و خوزستان افتتاح کرد.

به گزارش ایرنا، این مراکز در زیربنای ۲۶ هزار و ۹۳۵ مترمربع و با اعتباری بالغ بر ۲۹۸۰ میلیارد ریال ساخته شده است. وزارت بهداشت قرار است تا ۱۲ فروردین سال ۱۴۰۰، ۱۰ هزار و ۶۰۰ تخت بیمارستانی به ظرفیت بیمارستان های کشور اضافه کند.

در انتهای سال ۱۳۹۷ مجموعاً ۱۴۰ هزار و ۸۵۹ تخت فعال در کشور فعال بود که اگر این میزان را به ازای جمعیت محاسبه کنیم، ضریب تعداد جمعیت به تخت مان، ۱.۷ تخت به ازای هر ۱۰۰۰ نفر است.

