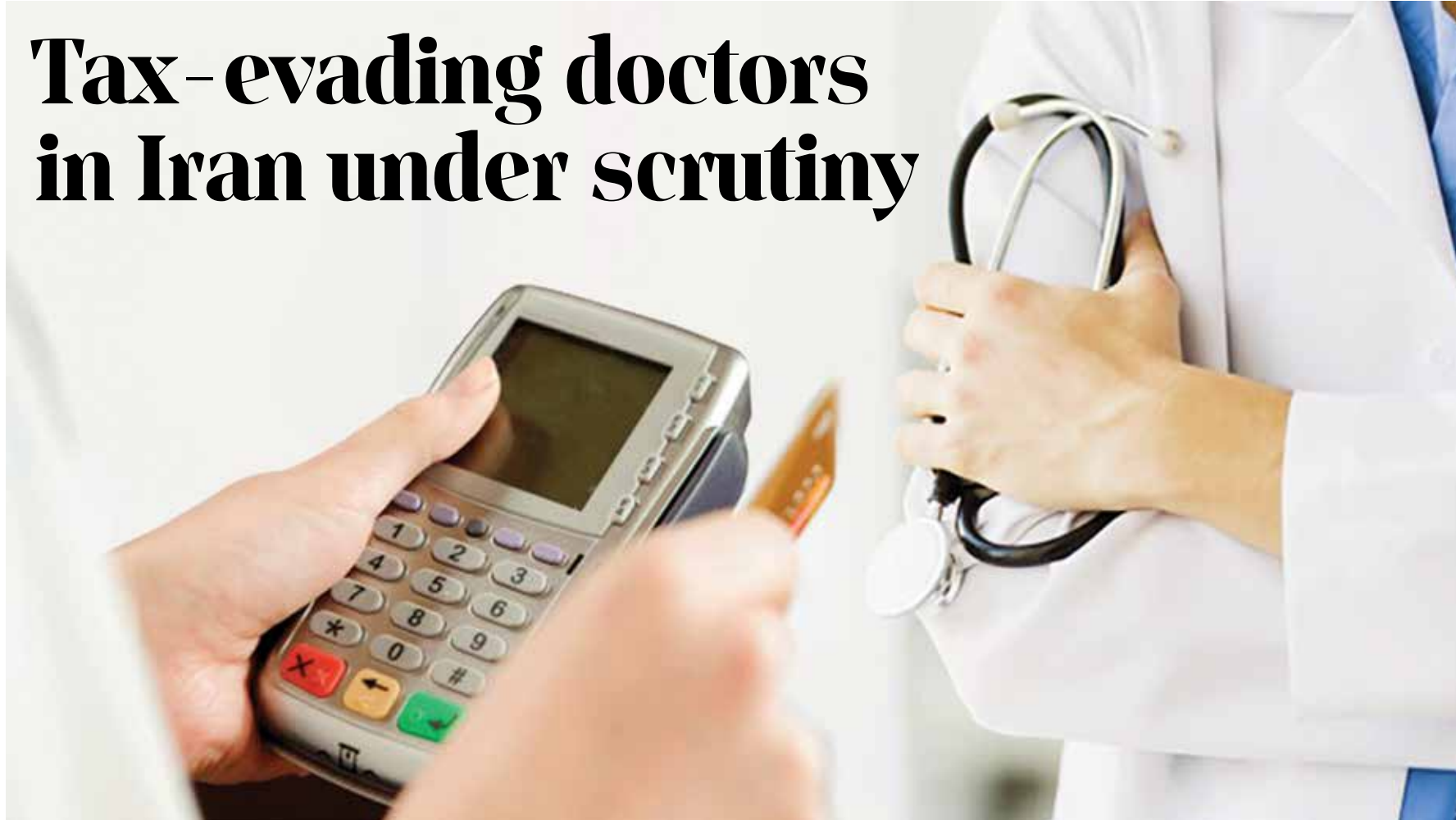


Tax-evading doctors in Iran under scrutiny



IRNA

Social Desk

EXCLUSIVE

Taxation is an essential component of any country's economy as it provides the government with the necessary funds to finance public services and infrastructure. These services include education, healthcare, and public transportation, which are crucial for the well-being of citizens. Taxes also help fund national defense and security, which is essential in maintaining a stable and safe environment for businesses to operate in. Additionally, taxes are used to fund social welfare programs that provide assistance to those in need, such as unemployment benefits, disability payments, and housing subsidies. Furthermore, taxes play a vital role in regulating the economy by influencing consumer behavior and incentivizing investment. For example, taxes on tobacco products discourage people from smoking, while tax breaks for businesses encourage them to invest

in research and development, job creation, and expansion. Moreover, taxes can be used as a tool to address income inequality by implementing progressive tax systems that require higher earners to pay a larger percentage of their income in taxes. In this way, taxes can help reduce poverty and promote social justice.

Despite the numerous advantages and significance of tax compliance for every employed individual, certain individuals opt to evade their tax obligations, thereby causing harm to their society and country. Tax evasion is the act of deliberately underreporting or failing to report income to avoid paying taxes. This illegal practice is a significant problem for many countries, including Iran, as it deprives the government of much-needed revenue, which could be used to fund public services and infrastructure. Tax evasion can take many forms, including hiding income, claiming false deductions, and fail-

ing to report offshore accounts. It is estimated that tax evasion costs the global economy billions of dollars each year. According to the latest published stats, Iran faces tax evasion of up to a billion dollars.

The dangers of tax evasion are significant for both society and the economy. When individuals or businesses evade taxes, they are essentially stealing from the government and society as a whole. This can lead to a lack of funding for public services and infrastructure, which can have a detrimental impact on the well-being of citizens. Moreover, tax evasion can create an uneven playing field for businesses, with those who evade taxes gaining an unfair advantage over those who comply with the law. This can lead to a loss of confidence in the tax system, which can ultimately harm the economy by reducing investment and economic growth. Additionally, tax evasion can lead to increased income inequality,

as those who evade taxes are often wealthy individuals or corporations who can afford to do so.

For a considerable period, certain Iranian physicians have opted to conceal their earnings through diverse means. Among these methods, which reflect their inclination to avoid tax payment is the absence of a POS terminal at their offices. This absence also inconvenience the patients, as they are forced to find other ways of paying for the services.

Needless to say, doctors are highly respected members of society who play a critical role in ensuring the health and well-being of their patients. As such, it is essential that they set an example by complying with the law and paying their fair share of taxes. By avoiding taxes, doctors are not only breaking the law, but they are also contributing to the problem of tax evasion, which harms society and the economy. This can erode public trust in the medical profession and

damage the reputation of doctors as responsible and trustworthy individuals.

Furthermore, doctors have a unique position in society as they are often among the highest earners. As such, they have a moral obligation to contribute to the public good by paying their fair share of taxes. By avoiding taxes, doctors are essentially shirking this responsibility and putting their own financial interests ahead of the needs of society. This can lead to a loss of respect and trust from patients and the wider community, which can ultimately harm the medical profession as a whole. Despite cultural barriers to tax payment, it is crucial to ensure that all professions, including doctors, are held accountable for their taxes. Unfortunately, some Iranian physicians have long resorted to evading taxes through various methods. However, there is hope as efforts are being made to combat such practices and encourage compliance with tax laws in Iran.

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Fandoqlou forest in Iran: A haven for biodiversity under smugglers' threat

Smugglers' tactic

According to Mahmood Qolizadeh, the director general of Natural Resources in Ardabil Province, smugglers are using state-of-the-art chainsaws to stealthily cut down the trees. In some instances, the smugglers even resort to igniting fires to eliminate the surviving remnants of the Hyrcanian wildlife on the border of Ardabil and Gilan provinces to peddle their charcoal in the market. Smugglers enter the forest with their kin and cut one or two trees, taking a break for tea before transporting the illicit timber to the open market for a profitable sale.

Challenges faced by rangers

Accessing Fandoqlou has encountered numerous impediments due to its rugged terrain, rendering the task of monitoring and safeguarding the area a demanding undertaking. Forest rangers must traverse Heyran Pass, a tough mountainous road, to reach operational zones sometimes amidst blazing fires. Furthermore, Ardabil Province is saddled with limited number of rangers and safeguarding this forested expanse has been fraught with many challenges. Consequently, this forest has been pillaged by tree smugglers for several years.

Legal harvesting of trees

Qolizadeh disclosed that

the forest trees in the protected area of Fandoqlou cannot be legally harvested for industrial purposes and are typically utilized as firewood or charcoal. The presence of wood industry factories in the locality has provided a pretext for felling trees, and locals have become accomplices in this unlawful activity. Judicial oversight, coupled with round-the-clock vigilance by park rangers in the region and even outside the wood industry factories, has curtailed wood smuggling to a certain extent. Furthermore, the authorities have intensified forest protection measures and created obstructions to impede illicit transit. In addition, monitoring has been amplified through the em-

ployment of cutting-edge technological cameras.

Arson as a tactic

Colonel Mohammad Nouri, the commander of the Natural Resources Protection Unit of Ardabil Province, confirmed the insidious practice of wood smuggling in the Fandoqlou forest and expounded that for years, smugglers have deployed arson as a tactic to divert forest rangers. They set fire to one section of the forest, thereby attracting rangers' attention, while they engage in clandestine tree cutting in another part. The fact that a section of the Fandoqlou forest burned in November, despite the absence of any fire history in the area, is an unequivocal indication

of the malice behind this nefarious activity perpetrated by the smugglers.

Economic, livelihood problems

Nouri highlights the economic and livelihood problems plaguing the youth in the region as a significant factor behind the rampant deforestation and conversion of trees into charcoal. He laments the small number of protection forces in the area, consisting of merely ten personnel, rendering it impossible to monitor and safeguard the entire region continuously. To address this, he advocates the cultivation of a culture that instills a sense of reverence for trees, regarded as valuable and living beings, among the

locals through education and awareness programs. The commander emphasizes that it is not only the responsibility of the protection unit to preserve the region's natural resources but also the duty of the entire community. Therefore, he urges the local officials to provide support and resources to the unit to increase its capacity and enhance its ability to enforce the laws and regulations related to the protection of natural resources. Furthermore, he calls on the authorities to enforce stricter laws against wood smuggling and deal more severely with the smugglers. Unless urgent and decisive measures are taken, he warns that the Fandoqlou forest will cease to exist within a year.

How solitude can be good for mental health



GETTY IMAGES

Spending time alone can induce fear in a lot of people, which is understandable. At the same time, the difference between moments of solitude and loneliness is often misunderstood.

Some psychologists study solitude – the time we spend alone, not interacting with other people. In a research started more than 10 years ago, and up to this point, findings on young people's time alone had suggested they often experience low moods when alone, according to Science Alert. On social media, television, or in the music we listen to, we typically picture happiness as excitement, enthusiasm, and energization. From that perspective, solitude is often mistaken for loneliness.

In psychology, researchers define loneliness as a distressed feeling that we experience when we don't have or are unable to get the kind of social connections or relationships we hope for. Solitude is different.

While people's definitions of solitude might vary, what is interesting is that for many, being solitary doesn't necessarily mean there's no one else around.

Instead, many people can, and do, find solitude in public spaces, whether this be sitting with a cup of tea in a busy cafe or reading a book in a park. The aforementioned research suggests that taking some time for yourself could have a positive impact on your daily mood.

Many of us have had days when there are troubles at work, when things don't go as expected, or when we take on too much and feel overwhelmed.

One of the findings of the research is that learning to take a little time for yourself, a moment of solitude, could help you deal with these feelings.



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