

Iran Unveils MOHAJER-10 Advanced Drone

2 >



Avicenna, the great physician

3 >



Iran among five producers of heavy water

7 >



Iran's Dramatic Arts Center joins WMO for first time

8 >

Turkey's goal of restoring Turkic bloc a threat to Iran?



By Silvia Boltuc
Managing Director at SpecialEurasia

OPINION EXCLUSIVE

Turkish-Iranian relations have always been complex. Despite formal cooperation, the interests of the two powers are often in competition. Iran has been enhancing relationships with Eurasian countries and trying to reduce tensions in order to improve regional cooperation and trade. Ankara's focus, however, seems to be on restoring the Turkic bloc and countering Tehran's influence.

Several areas in the region have become a battleground of conflicting interests, namely Syria, Iraq, and the South Caucasus. [Page 2 >](#)

Egypt, Iran poised to restore ties

A high-ranking Egyptian official said Cairo and Tehran are still in contact about plans to restore their bilateral ties, but their negotiations do not necessarily have to be publicized.



Mohamed Orabi
sis.gov.eg

Chairman of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs Mohamed Orabi further stressed in an interview with the Arab World Press (AWP) news agency that the Northeast African country does not need mediation to fully restore diplomatic relations with Iran, Press TV reported.

Iran's non-oil exports hit \$18.7b: IRICA

Economy Desk

Iran exported \$18.7 billion worth of non-oil commodities during March 21-August 16, announced Mohammad Rezvanifar, the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) on Tuesday. Speaking in a meeting with members of the Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture, the official added that goods valued at about \$23.4 billion were imported during the said period, indicating an 8.7-percent growth compared to the figure for preceding year, IRNA reported. The IRICA head said that a sum of 5.5 million tons of commodities were transited through the country, up 2.7 percent than the corresponding figure for the past year. There are a total of 156 customs offices in Iran, Rezvanifar said noting that about 60 percent of the country's foreign trade is done through seven main customs offices.

Iran unveils Mohajer-10 advanced drone

Ballistic, Cruise missile production up significantly in two years



Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi (C) speaks in front of a part of Iran's missile arsenal on display in Tehran, Iran, on August 22, 2023.
● IRNA

Honoring Gen. Soleimani

Iran separately said it had provided two types of ballistic missiles to its army and the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps on Tuesday, including one named after General Soleimani.

The mass addition of strategic missiles of Khorramshahr and Haj Qassem to the armed forces occurred with the presence and order of President Raisi, according to ISNA.

On the sidelines of visiting the exhibition of the latest technological and advanced achievements of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces, the president expressed hope that "the efforts of all of us will increase the country's dignity, honor and authority".

"Today, we can firmly introduce Iran as an advanced and technologic nation to the world," Raisi said in comments aired on state television.

He reiterated Iran's stance about friendly relations with "all countries in the world," adding that Iran's armed forces will cut off any hand that reaches out in an attempt to invade Iran.

Increased missile production

Iran's defense minister announced that in the past two years, the production of solid fuel ballistic missiles, as well as air defense

and cruise missiles have jumped by 64, 45, and 100 percent, respectively.

In a message marking Defense Industry Day, Mohammad Reza Ashtiani enumerated multiple achievements in the country's defense sector over the past two years.

According to Ashtiani, Iranian experts have managed to reduce the probability of their ballistic missiles missing their targets for less than 35 meters and increase their range to 2,000 kilometers.

In air defense, he added, several systems have been developed in order to deal with low-altitude targets and cruise missiles.

Ashtiani further noted that the experts have designed and manufactured Nasr and Ghadir air-based cruise missiles (with a range of 35 to 200 kilometers) as well as Talaiyeh ground attack missiles with a range of more than 1000 kilometers.

In the field of drones, the Defense Ministry is seriously pursuing the development of the fifth generation of strategic drones under a "drone leap" program, which also involves the development of artificial intelligence along with support, electronic warfare, and signal collection missions.

He also reported a 30 percent increase in the development of different types of speedboats.

National Desk

Iran has built an advanced homemade drone named Mohajer-10 with an enhanced flight range and duration as well as a greater payload.

The drone has an operational range of 2,000 km (1,240 miles) and can fly for up to 24 hours. Its payload can reach 300 kg (661 pounds), double the capacity of the Mohajer-6 drone, allowing it to carry all kinds of bombs and ammunition, Reuters reported.

The new drone can fly at an altitude of 7,000 meters (23,000 feet). It can travel at speeds of up to 210 kilometers per hour (130 miles per hour) and is equipped with updated electronic and intelligence systems.

The predecessor Mohajer-6 drone can hold 150 kilograms of weapons and fly for 12 hours. The previous model also had a lower flight altitude of 5,400 meters and a speed of 200 kilometers per hour.

US officials have accused Iran of providing Mohajer-6 drones, among other unmanned aerial vehicles, to Russia in its war against Ukraine. Tehran vehemently denies this.

Western governments have in recent months expanded biting sanctions on Iran over the alleged arms sales, AFP wrote.

A video released on Tuesday by Iranian media displayed the drone among other military hardware, with text saying "prepare your shelters" in both Hebrew and Persian. The Mohajer-10 drone was introduced at a ceremony

in Tehran attended by President Ebrahim Raisi, celebrating the achievements of Iran's defense industry.

"Mohajer" means "immigrant" in Farsi and has been a drone line manufactured by the Islamic Republic since 1985.

Is it reverse-engineered?

The Associated Press claimed that the Mohajer-10 drone resembles America's armed MQ-9 Reaper. Iran has in the past captured US drones

or pieces of them, but the news agency clarified that there's no evidence that it has taken a General Atomics' Reaper, which is flown by the US Air Force and allied American nations as a "hunter-killer" drone that can operate at high altitudes for long hours and follow a target before attacking. North Korea in July showed off drones mirroring the Reaper, possibly designed from publicly available information about the aircraft.

In December 2011, Iran seized an RQ-170 Sentinel flown by the CIA to monitor Iranian nuclear sites after it entered Iranian airspace from neighboring Afghanistan. Iran later reverse-engineered the drone to create their own variants.

In 2019, Iran shot down a US Navy RQ-4A Global Hawk in the Strait of Hormuz amid high tensions over its collapsed nuclear deal with world powers.

The Reaper also carries special significance for Iran, as one reportedly carried out the 2020 strike in Baghdad that killed Lieutenant General Qassem Soleimani, a top Iranian anti-terror general.

openly support the secession of the Turkic-speaking populations of northeastern Iran. Otherwise, in equal measure, it would have to recognise Nagorno-Karabakh/Artsakh to the Armenians.

The fact that during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict, Iran, for one thing, agreed with the hand-off of the disputed territories to Baku despite its long-lasting relations with Armenia and, for another, proposed a mediation format to stop hostilities proved that Tehran tried multiple times to mediate and stabilise the Southern Caucasus.

The recent Azerbaijani attempt to connect Nakhichevan to Azerbaijan through the Armenian Syunik region will serve Ankara's goal of connecting Turkey to Azerbaijan, the Caspian Sea, and the Central Asian republics.

For Iran, this would mean being cut out from energy corridors and losing its land connection to Russia and Armenia, a door through which Tehran can access the Eurasian Economic Union markets.

Although in the past Ankara and Tehran have found a convergence of policies regarding opposition to an independent Kurdistan and support for creating an independent Palestinian state, the recent Azerbaijan-Turkey-Israel axis represents a threat to Iran, particularly now that Azeri President Ilham Aliyev announced on April 29, 2023, that the Turkish military company Baykar will establish a Bayraktar centre in Azerbaijan. Aliyev stated that Selcuk Bayraktar, the Director of the Baykar company, presented him with a model of the company's new product, Kizil Elma, its first jet-powered unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV), which is more lethal than

the famed TB2. Aliyev expressed his hope that shortly, Kizil Elma will also be in the sky over Azerbaijan. The new UCAV is a low-observable vehicle and could represent a threat to the Islamic Republic of Iran. This, together with Azerbaijan's expansionist attitude towards Armenia and northeastern Iran, leads to the destabilisation of the South Caucasus. In addition, Turkey pushed the development of the Azerbaijan-KRG relationship. Notably, Tel Aviv and Erbil also have strong ties. To conclude, although Iran and Turkey have the potential to work together. However, the possibility of their collaboration appears distant at present. This is imputed to Turkey's international policy pursuits in the Caucasus, Middle East, and Central Asia, along with Ankara's backing of Baku and Tel Aviv, which represents a danger to Tehran.

While Ankara and Tehran have forged different cooperation agreements on trade and regional security on a diplomatic level, Turkey's policy of opposing Iran remains. Azerbaijan has become one of the primary tools Ankara uses to threaten Iran's stability. While other Turkic-speaking countries, such as Kazakhstan (which is also part of the Organisation of Turkic States), have many times stressed the need to enhance cooperation with Iran, Baku is exploiting the northeastern Iranian Turkish minority to destabilise the country. On August 12, 2023, the South Azerbaijan Culture Centre in Baku held a conference on "Promotion and problems of South Azerbaijan culture" sponsored by the APA GROUP and the World Union of Young Turkish Writers. Moreover, the Cultural Centre of South Azerbaijan will or-

ganise the "Cultural Days of South Azerbaijan" in Izmir, Turkey, from September 23 to 30, 2023.

By 'South Azerbaijan,' Baku and Ankara mean to refer to the northeastern provinces of Iran inhabited by a large Turkic-speaking community. By using this expression, they underline that such a region should be part of Azerbaijan and separate from the Islamic Republic of Iran. Although the Turkic-speaking peoples within Iran have, like any other minority, their own language and culture alongside the Persian one. The support that this secessionist group is receiving is a violation of international law on territorial sovereignty. Conferences like the previously-mentioned one on the culture of 'South Azerbaijan' can be considered part of the soft power used by Azerbaijan and Turkey to destabilise the northeastern Iranian provinces. Nevertheless, Ankara cannot

Turkey's goal of ...

Moreover, both Iran and Turkey have the potential to establish their

territory as regional transit and energy hubs. In the past, Iran planned to supply gas to Europe via Turkey, but the Turkish government was limiting their delivery capacity. Ankara perceives Iran's vast oil and gas reservoir as a threat to its regional role.

Besides economic and strategic interests, the two states have important ideological differences. The Ottoman-Safavid conflict and the divide between Shia and Sunni played a role in these distinctions. In 1514, Selim I imposed an economic land and sea blockade on the Iranian silk trade and persuaded leading Sunni religious leaders to issue fatwas against his Shia opponents, condemning them as heretics. This set

the stage for a long-lasting Sunni-Shia divide between the Ottoman and the Safavid Empire. During his march through Ottoman territory and into Iran, Selim massacred up to forty thousand of his own empire's Shia believers. Nowadays, things have not changed significantly. In 2016, when the operation to liberate Mosul began (since 2014 the city had become the headquarters of the self-proclaimed caliphate of the Islamic State in northern Iraq) Ankara reaffirmed the Sunni identity of the city, triggering a clash with the Iraqi authorities, which feared a demographic change in Iraq. It is important to underline that the creation of the Shia crescent in the Middle East has been a disadvantage for Turkey and its foreign strategy.

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● IRNA

Avicenna, the great physician



Compiled by
Sahba Saffary
Guest contributor

In the very heart of the city of Hamedan there is an elliptic, beautiful square that holds a magnificent and sky-high mausoleum. The bulk of the square is loaded with colorful flowers and tall trees that stretch up to the heavens.

The mausoleum belongs to Avicenna (Hojjat-ol-Haq Sheikh-ol-Rais) the great Iranian philosopher, scholar and physician (980-1037 CE).

The towering dome of mausoleum that can be seen from every corner of the square is supported by extremely high stony columns. It is a needle tower that shows the scholarly figure of Avicenna.

On the other side of the square, Avicenna's colossal statue is observable that creates a respectful sensation in observers because, as a man of genius, he was the preeminent philosopher and physician of the Muslim world, flourishing during the Islamic Golden Age, serving in the courts of various Iranian rulers, and he is often described as the father of early modern medicine. It is a title bestowed upon him by Europeans, and some historians have likened him to Aristotle.

His most famous works are 'The Book of Healing,' a philosophical and scientific encyclopedia, and 'The Canon of Medicine,' a medical encyclopedia which became a standard medical text at many medieval universities and remained in use as late as 1650 CE.

Avicenna created an extensive body of work during what is commonly known as the Islamic Golden Age, in which the translations of Byzantine Greco-Roman, Persian and Indian texts were studied extensively. He wrote most of his philosophical and scientific works in Arabic, but also wrote several key works in Persian. Besides philosophy and medicine, Avicenna's work includes writings on astronomy, alchemy, geography and geology, psychology, Islamic theology, logic, mathematics, physics and poetry.

In Avicenna's time, the Samanid dynasty in eastern Iran and the Buyid dynasty in western Iran provided a thriving atmosphere for scholarly

and cultural development. Avicenna had access to the great libraries of Balkh, Khwarazm, Gorgan, Rey and Hamedan.

Due to his intelligence, he was first schooled in the Qur'an and literature and, by the age of 10, he had memorized the entire Qur'an. He was later sent by his father to an Indian greengrocer, who taught him arithmetic. Afterwards, he was schooled in jurisprudence and sometime later Avicenna's father invited the physician Abu Abdallah al-Natili to their house to educate Avicenna. After Avicenna had read the *Almagest* of Ptolemy and Euclid's *Elements*, Natili told him to continue his research.

By the time Avicenna was 17, he was well-educated in Greek sciences.

He was employed as the head of the royal library in the Samanid court. At this time, some of his adversaries were concerned about his genius, and an accusing finger was pointed at him constantly, especially when the library caught fire and, unexpectedly, in the dead of night a conflagration consumed the whole library and the flames spread to all parts within minutes of ignition and everything was badly damaged. All of his malevolent rivals imputed this ruination to him because they strongly believed that Avicenna had memorized all of the books, and now he had set a light to the library to prevent other scholars from using it.

His professional status in treating pains and illnesses was so significant that many biographers believe that the emergence of the new medical era began with the nullification of Avicenna's era.

At the age of 17, Avicenna cured Nuh II, a Samanid prince who suffered from hallucination, a form of psychiatric disorder. The prince dreamed up that he had transformed into a bull, mooing like the animal.

All physicians did their best to cure the prince, but it didn't come to anything. Ultimately, they begged Avicenna for help. He examined the mentally-ill prince and noticed that his poor diet had led to his illness. So, by feeding him a good diet, he nursed him back to health.

Among a wide circle of his devotees and students, Avicenna's friendship with

Abu Ubayd al-Juzjani was a significant event in his life because he remained as a constant assistant and a bosom friend. He encouraged Avicenna to write many of his treatises and collected many of his works.

Avicenna lived in continual escape from the hands of cruel sultans during his entire life. Because they were showing open hostility towards his ideas and philosophy.

It is a well-known story regarding Avicenna and his three constant companions escaping from the claws of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni's agents, as he was sentenced to life imprisonment because of his scientific beliefs.

In spite of his perpetual escape, he wrote most of his works on horseback. He drafted 450 books, about 240 of which have survived, including 150 on Islamic philosophy and 40 on medicine.

Avicenna went to the city of Rey, where he entered into the service of Majd al-Dawla, a Buyid ruler to work as a court physician. During this period, he finished his 'Canon of Medicine', and started writing his 'Book of Healing'.

In 1037, while Avicenna was accompanying Ala al-Dawla to a battle near Isfahan, he was hit by a severe colic, from which he had been constantly suffering throughout his life. He died shortly thereafter in Hamedan, where he was buried.



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A turning point for Persianate culture in South Asia

Persian did find itself in transition in the latter days of the Mughal Empire. The political shocks of the eighteenth century, such as Nader Shah's sacking of Delhi in 1739, initiated a breakdown of complex patronage networks and a loosening of the rigid social system of the Mughals, causing literati to leave Delhi and placing Persian literary culture and production in a state of flux.

The arrival of the British on the Indian Subcontinent also played a large part. The impact of the British on informational networks wedded to Persian language and administrative norms is well-known. The way in which the British used and manipulated aspects of Persianate literary culture and reconfigured existing networks to fit with their own political aspirations certainly represents a major

turning point for Persianate culture in South Asia.

In their quest to achieve economic and political inroads into the Indian Subcontinent, the British relied on informants, administrators and secretaries versed in the Persian language and its cultural norms.

One of the many ways in which to capture the larger trends working against Persian's administrative dominance can be gleaned by looking at the figure of the secretary (*munshi*) and how the British relied on this ever-dependable class whose administrative and scribal skills derived from their placement within Mughal governmental structures.

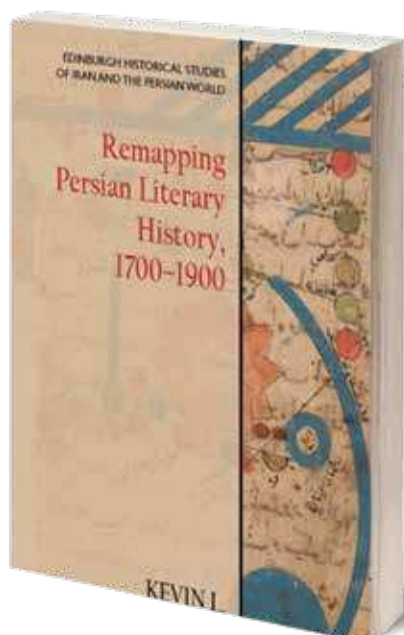
During the early rise of the East India Company (EIC), especially from the mid-eighteenth to the

mid-nineteenth century, *munshis* were crucial in helping the British navigate the established set of cultural norms related to the use of the Persian language. These *munshis*, skilled in the Persian language and Mughal administrative technologies, 'were desperately needed by the British as they maneuvered their way through diplomatic exchanges and political intrigues in their rise to power'.

Before 1830 in particular, the EIC used *munshis* to 'manipulate the information systems of their Hindu and Muslim predecessors' to their political advantage. Approaching the Persian language as a 'pragmatic vehicle of communication with Indian officials and rulers through which ... they could express their requests, queries, and thoughts, and through

which they could get things done', the *munshi* proved indispensable to British political and economic activity.

The British tasked these individuals with a variety of roles, ranging from administrator and secretary to language instructor and author. They served as administrative and cultural interpreters between the EIC and Mughal successor states, accompanied British diplomatic missions abroad and composed works on various aspects of South Asian history and culture at the behest of their British employers. Though no comprehensive work exists on the variety of roles occupied by the *munshi* class, a variety of studies have been devoted to individual *munshis* and their role within British residencies and language training colleges.



The above is a lightly edited version of part of a chapter, 'Persian Literary Historiography of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', from a book entitled, 'Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700-1900', written by Kevin L. Schwartz, published by Edinburgh University Press.



By Zohreh Qanadi
Staff writer

Johannesburg this week hosts the annual summit of the BRICS group of emerging economies – currently Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – that seek to push for a shift in global geopolitics.

The BRICS club presents a potential to challenge the existing global order and the dominance of unipolarity. With their collective economic power accounting for a substantial portion of the global economy – about a quarter, BRICS nations with China, the world's second economy at the top, have the capacity to influence international dynamics and reshape geopolitical norms.

An expansion of the bloc under consideration at this year's three-day summit in the South African capital has attracted a motley crew of potential candidates with one thing in common: A desire to establish a multipolar world where diverse voices and perspectives are acknowledged; to rectify what many see as an unfairly global arena, including abusive trade practices, punishing sanctions regimes, perceived neglect of the development needs of poorer nations, the wealthy West's domination of international bodies, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank.

Iran is also among dozens of countries seeking membership in BRICS and has submitted a formal request to join the body. At least 40 countries have shown interest in becoming members, with 23 having submitted their applications.

By forming a counterbalance to the traditional Western-centric power structure, these countries aim to foster greater equity in global decision-making and reshape the rules of international trade, finance, and governance.

The increasing interest from countries like Iran and Indonesia to join BRICS underscores its appeal as an alternative platform for cooperation and collaboration. This expanding membership could further diversify the group's influence and challenge the dominance of established powers.

Global landscape across multiple fronts

Formed in 2009, this diverse group represents over 3 billion people, 40 percent of the world's population, and a significant share of global GDP.

For developing countries, the body offers an attractive alternative platform to exert influence in key areas such as climate change, trade, and technology standards. Unlike the Western bloc, BRICS promises financial initiatives like the New Development Bank, aiming to fund infrastructure projects in developing nations, showcasing its focus on cooperation for mutual benefit.

With economic powers like China and India, the latter ranking sixth globally, the emergence of BRICS signifies a profound aspiration to reshape the global landscape across multiple fronts:

In terms of international trade, these nations aim to establish novel trade networks that promote inclusivity and reduce trade barriers.

By advocating for fairer practices and collaborating on initiatives, BRICS seeks to challenge the dominance of West's traditional trade powers and drive economic growth within the group.

In the realm of currency, BRICS possesses the potential to exert a significant influence by either establishing a unique currency or fostering increased collaboration around its member states' national currencies. By fostering greater use of their national currencies in trade and investment, the member states could challenge the dominance of the US dollar as the global reserve currency, offering more diversified options for international transactions. Such a move could enhance their economic autonomy and reduce dependency on Western financial systems, although it would necessitate robust

mechanisms for currency stability and liquidity.

One of the reasons for the United States' domination over the global financial system is its significant influence in international affairs, made possible through its robust military power. This global influence has enabled the United States to strengthen the position of the dollar as a credible and unchallenged global currency. However, the BRICS bloc holds some of the strongest currencies after the US dollar.

In matters of influence and diplomacy, BRICS's combined strength offers a counterbalance to the Western-centric power structure.

Through cultural exchanges, partnerships, and soft power initiatives, these countries project their values onto the global stage.

By pursuing reforms within international institutions, the group promotes a more equitable representation of emerging economies and challenging established norms.

Furthermore, in the realm of governance and norms, BRICS envisions diverse governance models that go beyond Western conventions. They seek to set new rules and norms that reflect a broader range of perspectives, giving voice to developing nations and enabling them to actively shape global policies.

As in his recent address, the hosting country's president, Cyril Ramaphosa, has said South Africa will not be forced to side with any global powers.

"While some of our detractors prefer overt support for their political and ideological choices, we will not be drawn into a contest between global powers," Ramaphosa said in a televised state of the nation address.

"We have resisted pressure to align ourselves with any one of the global powers or with influential blocs of nations," he said.



BRICS VS UNIPOLAR GLOBAL ORDER

Emergence of BRICS signifies a profound aspiration to reshape global landscape across multiple fronts

Expanding membership, a more global BRICS

The international summit in South Africa this year is drawing interest from countries that are fed up with the Western hegemony.

"A more global BRICS means the G7 countries would have to discuss and share more with the global south," said a journalist and expert on the strategic affairs from Pakistan on the eve of the BRICS summit.

Hammad Sarfaraz says BRICS's decision to admit new members reflects a strategic vision that chal-

lenges the long-standing dominance of Group of Seven (G7) countries.

"With the inclusion of new members like Saudi Arabia and the UAE alone, the bloc can potentially trigger a profound shift in the existing global order. If this happens, the expansion could serve as a transformative catalyst, propelling BRICS from the periphery of global affairs to a central and influential player on the world stage."



BRICS a Strategic Bloc Against Western Hegemony

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

Can the BRICS group of large developing nations, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, possess the potential to emerge as a significant force in international relations? What advantages would Iran's membership in BRICS offer to Tehran? Iran Daily has explored these questions with Shoeib Bahman, a university professor and the head of the Contemporary World Research Institute (*jahanemoaser.ir*).

Iran Daily: Many experts and mainstream media, including Reuters, suggest that the BRICS member nations are aiming to forge a new world order or reshape the existing one. In your opinion, does BRICS have the capability to emerge as a major player in international relations?

Bahman: The BRICS member states hold considerable positions and capacities on the global stage. Together, they encompass 40% of the world's land area and account for 40% of the global population. Presently, these five nations contribute almost 31.5% to the global economy, slightly surpassing the Group of Seven's 30.7% share. Hence, in terms of the economy, the BRICS member states are now on par with their G7 counterparts.

Throughout its years of existence, BRICS has undertaken strategic initiatives that could pave the way for substantial future developments. BRICS nations set up the New Development Bank and a fund, known as Contingent Reserve Arrangement, which aims to help members with balance of payment difficulties. These institutions possess the potential to rival Western-centric international counterparts like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. They have already extended billions of dollars in loans to member nations and friendly aligned countries.

The BRICS members are actively in talks to create an interbank system akin to SWIFT. Another striking stride taken by BRICS nations involves conducting trade using their respective national currencies. As a result, BRICS is gradually and steadily organizing itself to extend its global influence and effectiveness.

There's a belief that the financial mechanisms employed by the WB and the IMF fail to adequately address the needs of underdeveloped nations and often seem more aligned with the interests of developed

countries. Many underdeveloped countries are now pinning their hopes on BRICS to support their development. What is your take on that?

Absolutely, there is no doubt about this fact. Take the World Bank as an example; it refrains from extending loans to many countries for various reasons, including their conflicts with Western powers. This is where BRICS can step in as a potential avenue for underdeveloped countries, particularly those with less harmonious relationships with Western nations. The fundamental allure for many nations in seeking BRICS membership is such capabilities it has.

In the current BRICS summit in South Africa, a multitude of African nations' leaders, along with representatives from key international and regional bodies like ASEAN and the Group of 77, are in attendance. This strong presence signifies their interest in either joining BRICS or forging cooperative ties with it. Even countries that maintain relatively smooth political relations with the West are showing an interest in joining BRICS, as seen with certain Arab nations along the Persian Gulf. For instance, Saudi Arabia is exploring mechanisms to conduct a portion of its trade using currencies other than the dollar, a strategy reminiscent of BRICS practices.

To put it in a nutshell, there's a growing interest in BRICS membership, with approximately 30 countries expressing a desire to join its ranks.

Iran is among the countries seeking to become a BRICS member. What benefits would Tehran gain from BRICS membership?

Membership in BRICS could be of critical importance for Iran in several ways, particularly in the economic realm. Given the existing sanctions, Iran faces constraints concerning the import of essential goods and international banking transactions. Furthermore, access to its revenues is also limited. Becoming a BRICS member could potentially alleviate or diminish some of these limitations. Over the years, Iran has sought a loan from the IMF, but due to op-



position from the United States, this loan has not been approved. BRICS' financial institutions could serve as a more viable alternative for Tehran compared to the IMF.

From a political standpoint, joining BRICS would signify a setback to America's attempts to isolate Iran. Collaborating with powerful nations like China, Russia, India, South Africa, and Brazil would bolster Iran's standing on both regional and global platforms. Moreover, it would foster the expansion of economic ties. Naturally, this aspiration works both ways — in other words, BRICS members are also interested in bringing Iran onboard. This is because Iran's strategic geographical location, abundant energy resources, and relatively sizable population make it an appealing and advantageous prospect for the BRICS nations.

Does BRICS possess the potential to emerge as a fresh influential force capable of impacting the existing Western-led unipolar world order?

Indeed, it holds this potential and we are witnessing it unfold at present. BRICS shouldn't be solely perceived as a purely economic entity, despite its substantial involvement in global economic interactions. In addition to their economic pursuits, BRICS member nations are inclined toward fostering a multipolar global landscape in contrast to the prevailing unipolar order and American dominance. BRICS is gradually solidifying into a prevailing trend or strategic pathway within the international system, a development that doesn't sit well with Western powers. Consequently, as BRICS advances alongside other regional and international groups like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which share a stance against the unipolar order, Western nations are simultaneously exploring novel mechanisms to uphold their position and hegemony.

BRICS 2023



Brazil



Russia



India



China



South Africa

Bloc's challenges

However, while BRICS has the potential to confront unipolarity, several challenges remain. The member countries have differing political systems, economic priorities, and strategic interests, which can lead to internal disagreements. Additionally, their individual power and influence may vary, potentially causing imbalances within the group.

Nonetheless, the annual summit and the growing interest in joining the BRICS group signify a shift in the global landscape. Some 50 other leaders who are not BRICS members — among them Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi has confirmed he will attend the talks. As more nations seek to participate, the organization's ability to foster multipolarity, influence international norms, and reshape global governance could become increasingly pronounced.

In closing, BRICS's pursuit of a multipolar world is fueled by its determination to transform international trade dynamics, enhance global influence through collaboration and reform, and establish new norms of governance that are more inclusive and reflective of the world's evolving realities.



Neville critical of United's handling of Greenwood investigation



● GETTY IMAGES

BBC – Gary Neville says Manchester United's handling of the Mason Greenwood investigation has been "pretty horrible" and lacked strong leadership. Greenwood, 21, will leave the club by mutual agreement after a six-month internal investigation.

It came after charges against the player, including attempted rape and assault, were dropped in February.

"It was clear from day one that he wouldn't play for Manchester United again," said former defender Neville.

Speaking on Sky Sports Monday Night Football, Neville, 48, who made 602 appearances for United, added: "The process in getting there has been pretty horrible. When you have significant situations, and difficult situations like this, it requires strong authoritative leadership. And that comes from the very top. Manchester United don't have that."

Fellow pundit and former England midfielder Karen Carney said the matter was "handled poorly" and it was a "really uneasy situation for me".

England international Greenwood was arrested in January 2022 following allegations surrounding material which was published online.

In a statement, Greenwood accepted he had "made mistakes" and took his "share of responsibility", but added: "I did not do the things I was accused of."

United have said "based on the evidence available to us, we have concluded that the material posted online did not provide a full picture and that Mason did not commit the offences in respect of which he was originally charged", adding: "All those involved, including Mason, recognise the difficulties with him recommencing his career at Manchester United."

An announcement of the investigation's results was expected before United's opening Premier League game of the season against Wolves on 14 August, but the decision was delayed amid fierce debate about Greenwood's potential reintegration at Old Trafford.

The club said they wanted to consult with their women's team, some of whom were part of England's World Cup squad playing in Australia, before announcing a decision about Greenwood's future.

Asian Volleyball Championship: Iran survives early scare against Iraq, will face Pakistan in knockouts

Sports Desk

Iran had to rally from a first-set upset to defeat Iraq 3-1 (19-25, 25-12, 25-15, 25-14) in Urmia's Ghadir Arena and win Pool A of the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship.

The defending champion, which eased past Hong Kong in straight sets in its opening game, will take on Pakistan in the first round of the knockout stage – comprising 12 teams – today.

Pakistan was beaten in four sets (26-28, 25-20, 32-30, 25-22) by South Korea earlier on Monday but still managed to progress from Pool F, thanks to a three-set victory over Bangladesh on the preceding night.

Prolific opposite-spiker Amin Esmaeilnejad chipped in a game-high 16 points for Iran against the western neighbor, with middle-blocker Mohammad Valizadeh finishing on 11.

"We underestimated Iraq in the first set, which is a weak spot for us. We can't afford to repeat those mistakes in the future games," said Iran head coach Behrouz Ataei, whose team is chasing a fifth title at the competition. "Our tactics didn't really change in the following sets. We just played with more intensity and won by a high margin. We need to keep delivering our routine performance in every game till the very last point," added Ataei, who led his side to the 2021 Asian crown with a final vic-



Iranian middle-blocker Mohammad Valizadeh (27) goes up for a spike during a 3-1 victory over Iraq at the Asian Men's Volleyball Championship in Ghadir Arena, Urmia, Iran, on August 21, 2023.

● PAYAM SANI/volleyball.ir

tory over host Japan on his debut on Iran's bench.

"The Iraqi players gave it their all today and that's why we were caught off guard in the first set," Iranian setter Mohammad-Taher Vadi said, while praising the "superb" home support in the packed Ghadir Arena. Having stepped into the event on the back of a disastrous campaign in July's

Volleyball Nations League – finishing third from bottom in the 16-team table of the preliminary round – Ataei's men will be looking to bounce back with the Asian trophy on home soil ahead of late September's Olympic qualifiers in Rio de Janeiro. Japan, which beat the reigning world champion Italy to the bronze medal in the VNL Finals, remains the favorite

to walk away with the ultimate prize next Sunday.

The outcome of the tournament will contribute to the teams' status in the FIVB World Ranking – a decisive factor in the qualification process for next year's Games in Paris – which convinced Japan to name a full-strength squad, including the formidable trio of Yuki Ishikawa, Ran Takahashi,

and Yuji Nishida, for the visit to Urmia.

Japan overcame Thailand and Uzbekistan without conceding a single set to top Pool B and is expected to come out victorious against Bahrain today.

Iran and Japan will not go head-to-head before the final showdown.

Elsewhere in the knockout phase, China will play India,

with South Korea facing Indonesia.

The winner of the two games will meet on Thursday for a last-four place against Iran or Pakistan.

In the other half of the draw, Iraq and Qatar will square off against the Chinese Taipei and Thailand respectively, with one of the four teams playing Japan or Bahrain in the semifinals.

World Athletics Championships: Sweden's Stahl takes discus gold with dramatic final throw

REUTERS – Olympic champion Daniel Stahl won a dramatic World Athletics Championships discus gold with the final throw on Monday just minutes after Kristjan Ceh thought he had done enough to retain his title when his final throw edged him in front of the Swede.

"I thought, what the hell, now I'm going to answer directly," Stahl told reporters. "It was just to dig in for king and country. I'm very proud of how I handled it. This was my best throw ever. It's very cool. "It's like I got a bit of 'sisu' in me," he added, using a Finnish word for fighting spirit. "I'm not going to give up, instead I'm going to get bigger in the moments."

Five men had gone beyond 70 metres this year but none of the field looked able to threaten it for most of Monday's contest.

On a hot, sultry night Slovenian Ceh led with 69.27 in the second round before Stahl went 10cm further in the fourth.

With only two throw-

ers left to go, Ceh finally crossed the 70 mark with 70.02 but showed only a muted celebration, knowing just what a competitor his big rival is.

Sure enough, Stahl launched the disc 71.46 – the second-longest throw of the year and a championship record – to take gold and add it to the world title he won in 2019 in Doha.

"The competition was so strong – we have five guys (who have thrown over) 70 and eight with 68 so you could never have predicted it," 30-year-old Stahl added. Lithuania's 20-year-old Mykolas Alekna, whose father won the world title twice, took bronze with 68.85.

Third in a row

Elsewhere, American Grant Holloway raced to his third consecutive world 110m hurdles gold medal in dominant fashion.

The 25-year-old, who won in 2019 in Doha and last year in Eugene, led by the first hurdle and was in a virtual race of his own by

the third, cruising to victory in a season's best 12.96 seconds.

Holloway held up three fingers after crossing the finish line, hollering "One-two-three!" to the delighted crowd at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest.

"I'm speechless right now," he said. "Nothing feels like the first one, but this one I'm definitely going to cherish in my heart."

Hansle Parchment of Jamaica closed well to take the silver in 13.07, while Daniel Roberts of the United States crossed in 13.09 for bronze.

The final was missing the world's fastest man this season, Rasheed Broadbell of Jamaica (12.94) who crashed out in the preliminary round.

Holloway, the second-fastest hurdler in history, finished second at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and said he was using the sour taste of silver as motivation to go one better next year in Paris.

Meanwhile, Burkina Faso's Hugues Fabrice Zango soared to victory in the



Sweden's Daniel Stahl is in action during the men's discus throw final at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest, Hungary, on August 21, 2023.

● PAWEŁ KOPCZYŃSKI/REUTERS

men's triple jump for the country's first-ever World Athletics Championships gold, while 18-year-old title favourite Jaydon Hibbert of Jamaica pulled out injured.

Zango, ranked No. 2 in the world, jumped 17.64 metres on his fifth of six attempts to overtake Cuba's Lazaro Martinez, who won silver with 17.41 after fouling on three of his

attempts. Martinez edged team mate Cristian Napoleos who jumped 17.40. The world gold was the first in triple jump for any African nation, Zango pointed out.

Tehran hosts conference on combating money laundering, financing terrorism

Economy Desk

The National Conference on Combating Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism was held in Tehran on Tuesday.

Addressing the conference, Iran's minister of economic affairs and finance said that Iran's position in interaction with the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is active, not passive, IRNA reported.

Ehsan Khandouzi added that his ministry expects the FATF to adopt a technical rather than political approach in its evaluation. The minister pointed to the situation of Iran's membership at the FATF and added, "According to the financial and judicial reports, salient measures have been taken in the country in the field of fighting against money laundering and financing terrorism which is unprecedented."

The economic experience of Iran in the determination (and blocking) of the path of financing money laundering and terrorism



is an experience that has higher standards compared to many countries of the world which have adopted

normal positions in the assessment of the FATF situation, the economy minister stated.

Iranian Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Ehsan Khandouzi addresses the National Conference on Combating Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism was held in Tehran on August 22, 2023.
● ALI HASSANPOUR/IRAN DAILY

Iran among five producers of heavy water

Heavy water is the second strategic nuclear material after uranium in the world and Iran is one of the five countries producing this compound with high purity and production efficiency which many countries are looking to buy despite sanctions.

Under the 2015 nuclear deal, Iran is allowed to use heavy water in its modified Arak nuclear reactor, but must sell any excess supply of both heavy water and enriched uranium on the international market, Press TV wrote.

The deal requires that the heavy water inventory not exceed 130 tonnes, but the US withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 has allowed Iran to ramp up production and see its stocks snapped up on the market.

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Mohammad Eslami told journalists during a Friday tour of the Heavy Water Production Plant in Khondab near Arak that Iran's heavy water has many clients. He said the country is now investing in heavy water

derivatives.

"Our clients have noticed the high quality and purity of Iran's heavy water," he said. "Heavy water derivatives are very expensive and we are completing investment in this high added value chain." The US had undertaken to buy 32 tonnes of Iranian heavy water for use in its nuclear reactors, but it stopped the purchase after former president Donald Trump unilaterally abandoned the agreement.

After years of fits and starts, Iran's nuclear industry is coming of age, having weathered the most intrusive international inspections ever in the world which put the brakes on the pace of its progress but never managed to stop it.

It is now where the nuclear economic prosperity is kicking in. According to Eslami, the

nuclear industry is one of the highest added value industries in the world. "We had neglected this important matter, but we want to pay attention to the nuclear economy in a special way," he said.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei called on officials in June to take necessary steps to commercialize nuclear products and services. "Iran's nuclear products and services must be commercialized. There is a good demand for our achievements in the international markets which can be used to help our economy and income. There should be cooperation with allied countries," he said.

Since 2021, Iran has registered 159 scientific achievements and counting in the fields of nuclear fuel, energy, laser, plasma, radiation,

environment as well as water and soil.

In the past one and half years, Eslami said, Iran's uranium enrichment capacity has grown as much as 11 years. When he took office only two uranium mines were operating, but the number has reached eight and will surpass 20 next year. Earlier this month, Iran unveiled a uranium mine in the northwestern Khoys region, which the Iranian nuclear chief touted as a "hub" for producing raw material needed in nuclear power production. The Jan-e Sar mine also contains molybdenum, and a number of other rare earth elements.

Heavy water, also known as deuterium oxide, is a compound made up of oxygen and deuterium which is a heavier isotope of hydrogen.

The heavy water produced at Khondab is used in a variety of fields, including biology, medicine, physics, industry, agriculture, oil and gas, but its most important application is in nuclear power plants

as a coolant and in production of radiopharmaceuticals. The Heavy Water Production Plant is one of the largest nuclear facilities in Iran. Its construction began in 1988 near the village of Khondab where all stages of design and implementation were carried out by Iranian experts. Two units of the complex, each capable of producing 8 tonnes of heavy water a year, came into operation in 2006, but the overall capacity rose to 20 tonnes in 2013.

Currently, Iran is capable of producing more than 100 tonnes of heavy water with high purity, a feat no country has ever been able to achieve, according to officials at the plant.

Other products of the plant include isotopic compounds, deuterated solvents and the stable isotope of oxygen-18 with 97% richness.

Oxygen-18 is an important precursor for the production of fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG), a radiotracer which is used to diagnose and determine treatment plans for patients with various types of cancer, cardiovascular and neurological diseases.

Iran is one of the key producers of oxygen-18, which has come into wide use recently, especially in developed countries. Several important European and Asian countries currently source the product and other deuterated compounds from Iran.

Minister says incumbent gov't increased oil, gas output

SHANA - Iran's oil minister said increasing investment, completing unfinished projects, and boosting oil, gas, refining and petrochemical output have been the most important measures the Oil Ministry has carried out since two years ago.

Hailing the interaction between the Oil Ministry and the Parliament's Energy Committee Javad Owji added the oil industry would not witness such achievements if the committee did not support it.

Over 4k villages connected to internet in two years

IRNA - Minister of Communications and Information Technology of Iran Issa Zarepour said that 4,013 villages across the country have been connected to the internet during the two years to August 2023.

The southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan accounts for the most of the connection, according to the minister.

Zarepour also pointed out that over 800 villages in Iran have been connected to Internet since late May 2023.

Iran exports aquatic products to China, Russia



Economy Desk

Iran's aquatics export has found its way to Chinese and Russian markets, said Seyyed Hossein Hosseini, the head of Iranian Fisheries Organization (IFO).

Iran produces 1.352 million tons of fishery products per annum, of which 751,000 tons pertains to fishing and 601,000 tons in the field of aquaculture in the Middle East, the official noted, according to IRNA.

Iran ranks first in aquatic protein production in the region, and ranks second among 32 countries in the field of offshore fishing in the Indian Ocean, using 800 vessels, with about 170,000 tons, Hosseini added.

"We enjoy suitable structures and infrastructure in fishing with 227 crossing points, 70 fishing ports, 120 unloading docks and 37 public docks, 98 percent of which were built after the Islamic revolution of Iran [1979]," the official stated.

Hosseini added that the sea is divided into three parts: shallow, deep, and surface waters, in which there is excessive fishing in shallow water, as if we do not take overharvesting seriously, it leads to a serious challenge in the future.



Iran eases rules on exports of handwoven carpets

Head of Iran National Carpet Center (INCC) announced that the government has eased its rules on exports of handwoven carpets amid efforts to generate more hard currency revenues from the sector.

Farahnaz Rafe' said that the Iranian government will no longer require carpet exporters to supply their export proceeds to a system where importers can obtain hard currency at subsidized prices, Press TV reported. Rafe' said the measure is aimed at encouraging more exports of hand-woven carpets from Iran, a country known around the world for its high-quality rugs.

She said the requirement to return exports proceeds, which are applied to almost all exporters in Iran, had discouraged many carpet exporters over the past years and had led to a major reduction in shipments. "The finance ministry has approved this and soon there will be some good news in this regard," said the official.

Niavaran hosts exhibition on mosques



IRNA - In commemoration of the World Mosque Day (August 21), a collection of artworks from the Niavaran Cultural-Historical Complex are on display in an exhibition titled 'Mosque, Ornate for Art and Architecture' at the museum.

Among the works on view is a painting by Ja'far Petgar, created using oil painting technique, depicting Imam Mosque of Isfahan.

The exhibition also features engravings portraying the Dome of Sol-taniyeh, a series of dome installations representing mosques such as the Jama Masjid Agra and Mumbai's Jama Masjid, presented as a gift to Pahlavi II by the Armenian-Indian community, the seashell-made Al-Aqsa Mosque, and Jama Masjid in Hyderabad.

Decorative boxes with the Taj Mahal motif, an image of the kaaba, a collection of photographs of Mosque of Suleyman Pasha in Egypt, and Iranian mosque images including the Blue Mosque in Tabriz and Imam Mosque in Isfahan, taken from Pascal Coste's travel book to Iran, are also on display.

The exhibition is open to visitors from August 22 to September 1.

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Iran's Dramatic Arts Center joins WMO for first time

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran's Dramatic Arts Center became a member of the World Mime Organization (WMO) for the first time, coinciding with the second edition of the Pantomime International Theatre Festival in Zanjan. Simultaneously with the Iranian pantomime festival and the 125th anniversary of the legendary mime

artist Marcel Marceau's birth, and the 225th anniversary of the birth of Étienne Decroux (master of pantomime Jean-Louis Barrault), Iran's Dramatic Arts Center secured two seats, marking its first membership in the world organization, IRNA wrote. The World Mime Organization commenced its activities on March 22, 2011, coinciding with the birthday of French

artist Marceau. Since 2017, it has collaborated with the International Theatre Institute (ITI) to form a physical theatre group. Marceau visited Iran in 1973, performing some of his most exquisite theatrical pieces, including his famous character 'Bip the Clown,' at Tehran's Vahdat Hall. The organization holds specialized mime conferences and combined conferences

(encompassing mime and other performing arts). Annually, the international body collaborates with theater centers worldwide to provide workshops and masterclasses, offering training to aspiring mime artists. Member countries of WMO span four continents, with the organization headquartered in Belgrade, the capital of Serbia.

Iranian director joins jury in Austria

Arts & Culture Desk

An Iranian filmmaker and producer Mohammad-Mehdi Asgarpour was chosen to serve on the jury panel for the 11th Film Festival Kitzbühel, taking place in Kitzbühel, Austria.

The festival, which commenced on August 21, is set to run until August 27, according to ISNA.

The Kitzbühel festival has a distinctive emphasis on identifying emerging talents in the industry.

The event is dedicated to the promotion and advancement of both local and international talents. Attendees at the festival are afforded the opportunity to showcase their creations to a diverse array of audiences.

Founded in 2013, the Kitzbühel festival holds the distinction of being listed by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF).

Asgarpour, has made contributions to the Iranian film landscape, participating as a jury member or as the Vice President of FIAPF in numerous international festivals in recent years.

He recently served as a jury member at the 19th Golden Apricot Yerevan International Film Festival in Armenia.



● IRNA

Iran to retrieve 17,000 historical artifacts from US

Arts & Culture Desk

Iran is planned to retrieve some 17,000 cultural and historical artifacts from the United States in the coming months.

Iran has over 20,000 pieces of artifacts stored in museums abroad. Of those, 3,500 are slated to return to the country in the first phase of a repatriation process, followed by a substantial 17,000 artifacts in the second phase, IRNA reported. Iranian government, which has successfully brought 30

artifacts back to Iran over the past two years, is negotiating to have all these treasures returned to the country by the end of the Iranian calendar year (March 20, 2024). The retrieved artifacts include valuable pieces from France and England, such as a stone relief from the Sassanid dynasty (224 to 651 AD). The restoration of these artifacts aligns with Iran's commitment to preserving its rich cultural heritage. Iran has a total of 829 museums scattered across the coun-

try, consisting of 262 museums under the ministry of cultural heritage, 323 museums managed by other institutions, 209 private museums, and 37 collaborative museums. Formulating a 10-year plan for the global registration of tangible and intangible heritage with the aim of systematically and methodically listing cultural works and elements in the global registry are among the measures outlined in a specific strategy and roadmap for the global registrations of Iran. This strategy serves the nation-

al interests and the cultural affinity of Iran with neighboring countries. Currently, there are 200 cases under consideration in this regard. The increase of 53 museums in the country includes 10 museums affiliated with ministries, 26 private museums, and 17 non-affiliated museums, bringing the total number of museums in the country to 829. This comprises 262 affiliated museums, 323 non-affiliated museums, 209 private museums, and 37 participatory museums.

British Museum missing more than 1500 priceless objects

More than 1,500 objects from the British Museum are believed to have been stolen or destroyed by a single thief who went undetected for years, The Telegraph can disclose.

The total value of artefacts now known to be missing runs into millions of pounds, it was understood.

Staff are shocked at the scale of the losses, which were unearthed during an internal investigation into a senior curator at the museum who was dismissed in July.

The museum has so far refused to make public the number of items that were stolen, or to release photographs or descriptions of them. However, sources have confirmed to The Telegraph that the true

number is well over 1,000 and "closer to 2,000".

The sheer number of missing objects, some of which are 3,500 years old, helps to explain why the museum was so reluctant to share all of its information with the public.

As well as being deeply embarrassing for the museum, it appears increasingly likely that it might never know exactly what has been stolen because of gaps in its inventory.

The latest revelation will further intensify calls for Hartwig Fischer, the British Museum director, to resign immediately rather than wait until 2024. He announced in July that he was going to "pass on the leadership" next year.

Staff also believe that the position of Jonathan Wil-

liams, the deputy director, is now untenable. He was personally warned about the thefts in February 2021.

Martin Henig, a leading expert on Roman art at the University of Oxford, said the scale of the losses was "horrifying".

He said: "This is the worst case that I've come across like this because it involves not just selling the odd object, but also destruction. This is totally unforgivable."

He added that the loss of so many objects was a huge blow to historians because "although they're small, they were particularly valued in antiquity and they tell us more than sculpture about life in the past. They were very intimate items".

One museum source said



● GETTY IMAGES

the evidence is worse for the directorate than had been realised until now, and that its handling of the case can only be described as "negligent and incompetent".

Challenging the British Museum's official line that it had taken immediate action when the thefts were discovered, they claimed

that evidence presented to them was actually ignored. As The Telegraph reported last week, an antiquities expert had told the museum three years ago that items from its collection were being offered for sale on eBay.

One Roman object, valued at £25,000 to £50,000 by dealers, was offered for

just £40.

One source said: "The directorate has been banned from the investigation and has nothing to do with it... That the museum's own management is banned from having any involvement with this investigation is extraordinary. That goes to show that the trustees have apparently lost all trust in the directorate."

Until now, the museum has only said that an unspecified number of objects dating from 1,500BC to the 19th century, and comprising jewellery made of gold, semi-precious stones and glass, had been stolen or damaged. It also disclosed that a member of staff - since identified as Peter Higgs, its curator of Mediterranean cultures - had been

sacked. Higgs, who had worked at the British Museum for more than 30 years, has denied any wrongdoing, according to his family.

The thefts are being investigated by police. No arrests have been made.

An independent review led by Sir Nigel Boardman, a former trustee, and Chief Constable Lucy D'Orsi, of the British Transport Police, will "provide recommendations regarding future security" and "kickstart - and support - a vigorous programme to recover the missing items".

A British Museum spokesman said: "This is all now subject to a police investigation as well as the independent review. We cannot comment further."