

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran's nano market worth \$600m

The secretary of the Iranian Nano Technology headquarters revealed recent statistics regarding the country's exports of nano products. The total sales market for these products in 2022-23 amounted to over \$600 million, marking a 50 percent increase compared to the previous year. "More than six percent of the market, equivalent to \$69 million, came from the export of these nano products," according to Emad Ahmadvand, Mehr news agency reported.

In terms of market share, the construction, automobile, oil, gas, and petrochemical sectors emerged as the top three industries for nano products in 2022-23. The construction sector alone accounted for nearly half of the country's nanotechnology market. Meanwhile, automobile and oil and gas industries heavily relied on nano catalysts.

Iran's nano products have found a global market, with exports amounting to over \$69 million. Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan were the main destinations for these exports, representing more than 80 percent of the total export volume.

Iran's gas and petrochemical industries witnessed a boost in domestic production, with around 70 percent of the total nano catalysts being produced within the country.

Iranian non-oil exports hit \$24b

The head of Iran's Trade Development Organization said Saturday that the total exports of the country has reached \$24 billion since mid-March 2023, showing a growth rate of 29 percent in terms of weight.

Mehdi Zeighami stated that there was an increase in the number of business consultants in target countries, as well as the establishment of 50 Iranian business centers in 35 countries, IRNA reported. "Iran's strategy has been to focus on developing trade with various countries, and its performance over the past two years indicates that this objective has been successful," said Zeighami.

He emphasized that the government tried to enhance trade with neighboring countries and previously overlooked destinations. Furthermore, it has prioritized the expansion of trade with South America, Asian countries, and the African Continent. He further highlighted that the government's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS holds great promise for trade development and access to markets in numerous countries.

Water project glimmer of hope for thirsty SE Iran

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

An Iranian lawmaker expressed confidence that the desalination project and the transfer of water from the Oman Sea to Zahedan and other water-scarce areas of Sistan and Baluchestan Province will be completed by mid-March 2025. This development is expected to provide the people with sufficient healthy drinking water.

In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Iranian MP Esmaeil Hossein Zehi highlighted that besides the Oman Sea water transfer project, the government is also taking additional measures to address the water problem in various cities and villages across the province.

"However, there is a need for special attention and swift implementation of these measures by the government," he said. The plan to transfer water

from the Sea of Oman to the southeastern region of the country has been under discussion for several years, with the objective of addressing water scarcity in Sistan and Baluchestan Province, which is the largest province in the southeast. As part of this project, pipeline operations commenced in May 2023 to transport water from the Oman Sea to Sistan and Baluchestan, South Khorasan, and Khorasan Razavi provinces. Approximately 1,700 kilometers of pipelines were laid for this purpose. The water transferred to Sistan and Baluchestan will not only be used for industrial consumption but also for drinking purposes.

The main goal of this project is to provide sustainable water resources in the eastern region of the country and develop water infrastructure as a prerequisite for overall development. It aims to meet the water needs of industries and mines in the eastern provinces, support the growth of mining industries, and the development of petrochemicals, refineries, and other sectors in the area, create employment opportunities, eliminate deprivation, stabilize the population in the eastern region, prevent migration, and provide drinking water to the cities and vil-



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lages of the region. The legislator expressed concern over the current water shortage in different regions of the province, especially the city of Khash, which he represents in Parliament.

"Despite the approaching rainy season, only 30 percent of Khash City's water requirements are being met, resulting in a lack of drinking water and health-related challenges," Hossein Zehi said, and called for "more urgent action to ensure that water reaches the city faster to avoid a potential disaster." Hossein Zehi pointed out

that the lack of drinking water and adequate agricultural resources in various regions of Sistan and Baluchestan Province have contributed to the abandonment of villages in these areas. He stressed that the Ministry of Energy and the Ministry of Agriculture are responsible for implementing water supply and irrigation projects in these regions. He emphasized the need for close monitoring and follow-up by relevant institutions to expedite these measures.

The lawmaker identified poor water resource man-

agement as a key factor contributing to the water shortage in Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

"Despite Khash receiving considerable rainfall in recent years, no measures have been taken to collect surface water and manage watersheds effectively," the MP said.

Regarding Iran's rights to the Helmand River, the lawmaker stated that both the Parliament and the government are actively pursuing the fulfillment of Iran's rights from Afghanistan.

"Although the matter is still ongoing, consulta-

tions and negotiations are progressing in a manner that raises hope for a resolution in the near future," said Hossein Zehi in that regard.

Hossein Zehi further emphasized the urgency of resolving the issue of water flow from the Helmand River to Hamun Lake.

"It's been six years that the lake has not received any water from Helmand River. If left unresolved, the lake might dry up, posing significant risks. Currently, the water from the lake is used for drinking purposes in Zahedan and other locations," he said.



IRAN DAILY

China's BRI to shape future of global trade

By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

INTERVIEW

China hosted leaders and delegates from 130 countries in Beijing from Monday to Wednesday for the third Belt and Road Forum 10 years after it launched its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The project, a key component of Chinese President Xi Jinping's strategic agenda, aims to establish connections between Beijing and various spots across five continents. The event welcomed a distinguished guest, Russian President Vladimir Putin. Iran Daily has sat down with Shuaib Bahman, the director of Tehran-based Contemporary World Research Institute and an expert on Eurasian affairs to get his take on the forum's significance and the messages it conveys for the West.

IRAN DAILY: The Chinese hosted representatives from 130 countries. What objectives does



REUTERS

China seek with such an international gathering, and what message does it convey to the world?

BAHMAN: The Belt and Road Initiative Summit is important from several angles. On one hand, it pertains to economic and international trade matters. The BRI is the world's most extensive economic project launched by a single nation. Given its immense importance and massive investments, various countries are keen to participate, integrating themselves into this initiative to reap its economic benefits.

From another perspective, there is rivalry and disagreement between China and the United States. The US and Europe have tried

to establish alternative or opposing plans in response to China's large-scale project. The latest example is the India-Saudi-Israel Corridor, a project designed to link with Europe and unveiled during the recent G20 summit.

Zooming out further, the BRI can be seen as a key arena for competition between Beijing and Washington. If we consider the presence of envoys from 130 countries in China as a form of alignment, it signifies that more nations are motivated to engage with the Chinese plan. This has the potential to challenge America's international standing while simultaneously bolstering China's global influence.

Should we interpret Putin's visit to China and his meeting with Xi as merely an aspect of mutual cooperation, or does it carry broader implications?

Putin's visit to China serves the dual purpose of fostering cooperation and cementing the strategic relationship between the two nations, while also delivering a unified political message from Moscow and Beijing to the West. Russia and China are actively working to maintain harmonious relations in military, economic, and political domains. Such collaborations have remarkably gathered pace, particularly in the economic sector, following the war in Ukraine.

Furthermore, China and Russia, both global powers, are locked in opposition or rivalry with the United States. Thus, Putin's presence in China and his meeting with Xi can be seen as a challenge to the US and its sanctions imposed against Putin. It also sends a clear political message to both America and Europe. Above all, Russia is a part of the BRI. The northern route of the project, originally intended to connect China to Europe via Central Asia through Russia, faced

obstacles after the Ukraine war. However, by attending the Chinese forum, Putin aims to show his commitment to active engagement in the BRI and underscores that blocking the Russian route is detrimental to Europe. The Russian route offers both proximity to Europe and cost-efficiency, due to its extensive railway network established since the former Soviet Union.

The BRI, as well as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS, all seem to revolve around China and Russia. Are these projects and groupings linked to an emerging international order based on a multi-polar world?

Indeed, the BRI, the SCO, and BRICS are integral components of the strategic relationship between China and Russia. Their objective goes beyond mere bilateral ties, as they seek to advance their interests by establishing international and regional mechanisms and organizations. Through such initiatives, China and Russia not only bolster their own partnership but also bring on board other nations into their own alliances, enlarging and reinforcing the front against the West. Each of these

organizations holds its unique significance, acknowledged even by Western nations. For instance, the SCO is seen as an Eastern counterpart to NATO, with the potential to challenge the Western military alliance in the realm of security. Thanks to its diverse capabilities, BRICS, comprising emerging economies, can put up a fight against the Western monetary and financial system set up in the wake of World War II. The BRI, on the other hand, represents a promising future for international trade, prompting countries to participate in it to avoid being sidelined in the global commercial competition. Therefore, these institutions, predominantly driven by China and Russia, are part of efforts to reshape the international system or compete against the Western hegemony in terms of military and financial dominance. These groupings operate in concert, with China, Russia, and other participating countries keenly aware of the direction they are heading. Their collective trajectory aims to establish a new world order free from Western and American hegemony.

