

Bamyan Art Market; stepping up towards self-sufficiency

Capris, rags, hats, embroidery, pottery and other local products are readily found in the art market shops. All the sellers are women and the products they sell are either their own or brought from women providing at homes.

Established years ago, the small art market with 22 stand-made shops is located in the northern part of Bamyan city bazaar, where women sell their handicrafts. The market was established by a number of businesswomen to provide income for women who are engaged in weaving, carpets, rags, felt or designing women and children or handmade garments.

In the ancient province, Bamyan is the sole breadwinner of her 26 family members, her children and 18 grandchildren, while other men are unemployed. The majority are at her shop to sell local goods to the people and those visiting Bamyan province. As one of the tourists from Bamyan, Bamyan women the collapsed body of the Buddha and the legendary vases showing thousands of foreign and domestic women to visit the city each year, even by crossing the more controlled by the Taliban fighters. Tourism and the culture of Bamyan has made Bam-

yan one of the safest and most trusted provinces for tourists and women. Bamyan women and men, more provinces in Afghanistan, women have been working and enjoy relative freedom.

Safina Sabagh, another woman who designs wedding dresses at the Bamyan Art Market, dreams to become one day the designers of clothes nationwide. "I want to be known nationally and globally," she said smiling. She has been five years since she started a shop in the small market to offer the clothes she designs to her customers and the designers a fabric that she says will be used in vogue habits.

"With the income from my business, I sent my children to a private school, bought gold for myself and bought land and built a new house for myself," she joyfully beamed.

Capris, rags, hats, embroidered garments, and other types of embroidery, jewelry and other local women's products are readily found in the art market shops of the newly visited art market.

The art market sellers are all women, and the products they sell are either their own or brought from women providing at homes.

By: Karima Malik



Iran oil workers strike for better wages as economy suffers

Thousands of workers in Iran's vast energy industry have gone on strike over the past week, for poor demand for their services and conditions at oil facilities. The widespread demonstrations underscore the mounting economic pressures on the country as it struggles to secure relief from crippling sanctions.

Foreign law spread across social media showing construction workers at oil and petrochemical installations, largely in the country's oil-rich south, working off their jobs in protest. In some videos, crew took and crowds of workers cheer as they strain into the dusty roads, the refinery's halting while during strikes resulting in deaths.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani vowed Wednesday to "solve" oil workers' grievances and sought to assuage fears over any economic repercussions.

He said in labor demonstrations were mostly limited to private construction workers on temporary contracts at the plants and would not hurt Iran's oil production. The protesters have not yet reached the state-owned National Iranian Oil Company where some 200,000 workers receive wages three times as high and better protections under Iran's labor law.

"We do not know and we will not take any position in the production, transfer, distribution and export of oil," Rouhani told his weekly cabinet meeting. "I promise the workers of the oil industry that their problems will be solved."

The striking workers at remote facilities in the southern desert reaches of the country, where summer temperatures exceed 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), are pushing for wages on par with their counterparts in the state oil company. They also want 10 days off a month to visit their families in busy cities. The contract was initially set to expire in 2020, but was extended by one month, before one day off per week and 21.2 vacation days a month at a

of its economy, has been devastated by the impact of American sanctions, ever. Rouhani, in a similar fashion, said that the 2015 nuclear accord with world powers and external sanctions in economy. Diplomats from parties to the deal have been struggling to reconcile the agreement in Vienna.

In oil-rich southern provinces, inflation has spread over 40%, reaching a heavy toll on ordinary jobs. Workers have staged scattered, low-level strikes in petrochemical and industries over salary, retirement and pension issues to secure months.

There have been reports of tough action against the strikers by security forces. Rouhani's right group have nonetheless raised the threat, citing the country's dual history of crackdowns on popular protest.

Iran's news media, strictly controlled by authorities, has paid little attention to the oil workers' strikes. Opposition labor demonstrations in the oil sector remain politically sensitive in Iran, where in 1978 mass strikes over wages and working conditions in the oil industry secured production and resulted in demands for the ouster of the pro-Western monarchy before the Islamic Revolution months later.



How will the UK economy emerge from the shadow of Covid-19?

It seems likely that later this year or early next the economy will return to the level of activity we recorded at the end of 2019. But even if activity in aggregate returns to pre-crisis levels, with services and construction in the lead, neither manufacturing nor agriculture seems likely to return to their former levels.

In the meantime, however, the short run, with the economy considerably beyond its former level, the prospects of London showing more resilience and the Midlands and Northern Ireland looking particularly vulnerable. More importantly, the economy has lost about two years of economic growth and sectors that are so important to the UK, such as hospitals and the arts, may have the scars for some time to come.

There are two specific areas to which attention is drawn. First, in the labor market, the fact that the labor market is still in a state of shock, with many employees still being asked to work for free, or even to work for less than they were paid, is a stark reminder of the damage done by the pandemic.

Second, there has been a good deal of discussion about the need for a new social contract, or a new deal, between the state and the private sector. This is a topic that has been discussed for some time, but the pandemic has brought it to the fore.

China's economy sees new pockets of growth in rising shopping trends



BEIJING — Chinese consumers spent less on daily necessities from foreign brands last year during the coronavirus pandemic, while those in smaller cities were more willing to spend from those brands.

The report, conducted by consultancy Bain & Company and published by Kantar Worldpanel, reflects pockets of growth in a economy that was already slowing its expansion before the pandemic.

The "China Shopper Report" which the firms have conducted for 10 straight years — looks at a category called "fast-moving consumer goods" that includes food, beverages, personal care and home care. Items such as apparel are excluded.

The volume of foreign brands sold in China last year fell 4.1%, while average selling price rose 1%, according to the report released last June 29.

As a result, the study said the foreign brands' value declined 3.1%, versus a 0.5% drop for domestic companies. Volume was measured by kilograms, liter or unit depending on the category, Bain said.

"Chinese brands, aided by their strong local supply chain, reacted more quickly to shifting consumer sentiments and captured more volume growth by lowering (average selling price)," the report said.

The China 19 pandemic disrupted global supply chains and forced businesses to find ways to control the virus' spread. China has particularly limited the ability of foreigners to enter the country.

Stimulating geopolitical tensions have also hampered the ability of some foreign brands to sell in China earlier this year.

For example, Swedish clothing brand H&M faced backlash in China in March over comments that purportedly linked labor in Xinjiang region. Management said it removed "vague" comments.

Meanwhile, executives for Japanese brands Nike and Adidas have been more optimistic about growth in the market in coming months, according to the last two months.

The fact that this is a local brand versus an international brand may be the most important criterion. What's more important is the right brand for me," he said, pointing to factors like familiarity and recommendations from friends.

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