

ALI AKBAR VELAYATI

"FATHER OF JOBS," SUPREME LEADER'S INFLUENCER

UNVEILING
UNTOLD
REALITIES

**AUTHORITY,
CONTROVERSY
AND
DOMINANCE**

From Diplomatic
Engagements to
Legal Verdicts.



Ali Akbar Velayati

December 2022

I. Findings

1. Identity

One-sentence Identifier: The corruption of Ali Akbar Velayati and his family members who is famous as an Abul-Mashaghel (Father of Jobs)

Mr. Ali Akbar Velayati was born on 25 June, 1945 in Rostamabad, Shemiranat, Tehran, Iran and has five sisters. He has been married twice; His first wife was Maryam Khoshnevisan, the granddaughter of the famous Iranian calligrapher Mohammad Hossein Khoshnevisan, who died during a surgical procedure in Tehran in 2004/2005i.

In 2007/2008, Velayati married for the second time, this time to Leila Enayat. Officially Enayat is a housewife, however, according to Iran's Company House, she is the Executive Director and Chairwoman of a multi-purpose cultural and artistic company, "Andish Gostar Afarin"ii (See Image 1 in Appendix B). Velayati has six children: four boys and two girls.

Velayati can be categorized as a hardliner, who has acted as a chief advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei for international affairs since 1997 and Khamenei's representative at the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations (SCFR) since 2013. He is also one of the regime's longest-serving members. He was the Minister of Foreign Affairs for 15 years, a member of the Supreme Council of the Cultural Revolution, Secretary General of the Islamic Awakening Conference, and the Expediency Discernment Council. Velayati has at least 63 official job titles, for this reason, his nickname is "Abul-Mashaghel (the translation in English is Father of Jobs)". The following list is the most important titles he either used to hold or still has them:

- The Islamic Republic of Iran's Foreign Minister from 1981 to 1997
- Member of the Supreme Cultural Revolution Council from 1989 to 2021
- Member of the board of directors at Medicine of Tehran University of Medical Sciences from 1991 to 1998
- President of the Islamic Association of Physicians of Iran from 1992 to present
- Member of the Islamic Association of Graduates of Europe, America and Oceania from 1995 to present
- Member of the Expediency Discernment Council from 1996 to present
- Deputy President of Strategic Council on Foreign Relations from 1996 to present
- Member of the board of trustees of the Islamic Azad University (IAU) from 1997 to present
- Chief Advisor to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei for international affairs from 1997 to present

- Professor at Medical College at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences from 1998 to present
- Secretary-General of the AhlulBayt World Assembly from 1999 to 2022
- Chairman of Culture and Social Committee at the Expediency Discernment Council from 2007 to present
- Secretary-General of the World Assembly of Islamic Awakening from 2011 to present
- Chairman of the Strategic Research Center at the Expediency Discernment Council from 2013 to present
- Head of Masih Daneshvari Hospital from 2019 to present Due to his close relationship with Khamenei, Velayati sees himself as an unofficial foreign minister of the Islamic Republic who not only advises, but also helps implement Khamenei's policies behind the scenes. He may wield more actual influence in this role than official members of government. For example, in the famous meeting between Khamenei and Bashar al-Assad, President of Syria, Velayati was at the meeting while Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Foreign Minister, was not. This meeting is famous because Zarif was not aware of it and was not invited to the meeting. In response to not being invited to the meeting, Zarif apparently submitted his resignation letter to President Hassan Rouhani, although it was not accepted by Rouhani. In an interview with the Entekhab Newspaper, Zarif said: "After the publication of today's meeting [between Khamenei and al-Assad], Javad Zarif does not have any credits as a Foreign Minister."iv (See Image 3 in Appendix B).

Two of Velayati's sons - Mohammad and Ali Asghar (See Image 2 in Appendix B) - are property developer tycoons and founders of Seif Bana Engineering Consultancy, a contractor company involved in the gas, oil and petrochemical industry, as well as property developments in north and south of Iran and also Tehran. These two brothers have built over 1,600 units in Tehran, particularly in elite and upmarket areas such as Elahiyeh and an office complex in Turkmenistan.

Mohammad is the Executive Director, and Ali Asghar is the Chairman of the board of directors of Seif Ban. Their appearance in Istanbul at a luxury conference with Jordan Belfort, who is known as the Wolf of Wall Street, became controversial following public outcry about how his sons could afford to live such a luxurious lifestyle, at the same time that Velayati was encouraging Iranians to learn from Houthi rebels who fight against Saudi Arabia, and who, instead of wearing nice clothes, pick up guns and eat "pieces of dried bread"vi. After this public backlash, details of both were removed from the website of Seif Bana and were later added back with a change to the date of their joining the company.

Both sons are either owners or members of the board of directors of other companies, such as Seif Bana Steel, Tadbir Andishan Arshia, Binesh Niyayesh Asar Engineering Consultancy and Pahneh Gostar Bana. Besides their construction activities, Mohammad and Aliasghar are active in Islamic Republic cultural affairs, through their membership on the boards of directors of the Institute of Creators of Islamic and Iranian Culture and Civilization (ICIICC). Like all other kleptocratic regimes, the ICIICC gets grants from the Islamic Republic to promote the Islamic Revolution values in and outside Iran. Although it is not clear the budget and revenue of the

ICIICC, this institution receives public funds from the regime with high confidence. Due to a lack of transparency, there is no public financial information about the ICIICC and other companies that are linked to Velayati. See Appendix C for more details about each company and institution.

Additionally, Velayati's sons have a close relationship with Hamidreza Qassemi, the director of the 780 company, a financial startup and one of the biggest sponsors of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). The 780 company has been accused of money laundering and embezzlement by various media outlets in Iran.

According to our investigation, Qassemi is a middleman between Velayati's family, particularly Mohammad Velayati, and Ali Ansari, the former Executive Director of Tat Bank, which was dissolved due to embezzlement and corruption perpetrated by Ansari.

There is no public information about Velayati's daughters. However, one of Velayati's sons-in-law - Mohammad Reza Jafar Aghaei - made a headline in Iran in January 2019 due to his luxurious

lifestyle^{vii} and the number of official jobs he holds without the required experience. Jafar Aghaei is the Executive Director of the International Trade Group of Atiyeh Khahan Mellat Bank, a member of the board of directors of Melli Bank's Pharmaceutical Company (Osveh), Mellat Bank's System Engineering Company (Arghavan Yas) and the Pension Fund Trade Company. He is also the temporary head of cultural and artistic news at the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA).

In August 2020, Jafar Aghaei's name came up again in the media in connection with one of the biggest embezzlement schemes in the steel industry in Iran, according to the Islamic Republic's Parliament investigation. In the Autumn of 2020, a series of Members of the Islamic Republic's Parliament requested an inquiry into Mobarakeh Steel Company due to mismanagement, paying billions of IRR to the directors and management and wasting billions of IRR in unrealistic projects.

In this inquiry, 90 illegal actions, including billions of IRR embezzlement, were announced, and it concluded^{viii} that Mobarakeh Steel Company's case is one of the biggest corruption cases in Iran's history. According to the investigation, Jafar Aghaei used the political influence of Velayati and his allies to hire and fire directors and managers of the Mobarakeh Steel Company^{ix}. In the wake of the investigation, Jafar Aghaei was removed from his position at the Mobarakeh Steel Company, but on 28 July 2021 —in the last days of Hassan Rouhani's administration — he was appointed Executive Director of Taraz Steel Company, a Mobarakeh subsidiary. Three months later, he was fired as public pressure forced the authorities to fire some of the high-ranking managers, including Jafar Aghaei^x.

Velayati's nephew is Mohammad Arabxi, who became the Mayor of Qom and then became Velayati's Deputy of Administration and Finance in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)^{xii}. After seven years as a Deputy, Arab became the Islamic Republic Ambassador in Oman. After he retired from the MFA, he became a City Council of Qom member. Arab died on 1 September 2020 after he contracted Covid-19^{xiii}.

Velayati has also had a massive influence on Iran's Judiciary System and the Government due to his close relationship with Khamenei; In October 2020, a reporter close to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former President of Iran, recorded a video of the wall of Velayati's house and was sentenced to six months in prison for "filming from forbidden locations"^{xiv} (See Image 4 in Appendix B).

This house also drew public attention in the summer of 2018 after a journalist inquired about its location and why Velayati has 1,000 square meters in the Sa'dabad Complex. This complex is a popular area amongst the Islamic Republic's authorities and is protected by security forces.

According to published information by various sources^{xv} Velayati did not pay a fair price for his house; instead, he acquired it on the cheap through relationship and corruption. In 2022, Velayati put this same building up for sale with a price tag of around 6 million USD^{xvii}. It is not clear whether the house has been sold and, if so, who bought it.

At the peak of the Covid-19 worldwide pandemic, and after the ban on the import of Western-made Covid-19 vaccines by Khamenei, Velayati showed his support for the Iranian Traditional Medicine (ITM), which was promoted by hardliners, including some clerics around the country.

In an interview^{xviii} he said people would trust ITM in the future. During the same time, some reports claimed Velayati got exclusive rights to import Favipiravir^{xix} from Japan, which can be used for the treatment of Covid-19, and stored them for the use of the Islamic Republic officials^{xx}.

One of the most controversial stories regarding Velayati is his selection by Khamenei as the President of the board of trustees of the IAU in January 2017. This appointment violated the requirement under the IAU charter that the board of trustees should nominate and vote on its own president.^{xxi} Essentially, Khamenei bypassed the board of trustees and chose Velayati without its consent. Once in position, Velayati fired the Dean of the IAU and also implemented a mass expulsion of lecturers who were not hardliners. Additionally, he expelled Yasser Hashemi Rafsanjani from his position as trustee.^{xxii} In other words, he made a cultural coup d'état at the IAU. The scale of this coup d'état was of such magnitude that the grandson of Rohullah Khamenei, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, published an open letter^{xxiii} criticizing Velayati. After his coup d'état, he enforced a strict dress code on IAU students, such as a ban on wearing short sleeve shirts for men and casual clothes for women at the IAU's dormitories.

2. Suspected Kleptocratic Connections and Activities

- The role of his wife as an Executive Director and Chairwomen of Andish Gostar Afarin, while she is still regarded as a housewife in the legal sense, according to the public statements from Velayati and media outlets. Although, it is not illegal that someone become a director of a company, it is not clear why his wife needs to have a company when she is a full-time housewife.
- His sons, Mohammad and Ali Asghar Velayati, have various companies, and in at least one of them, their father is a board member. With high confidence, it is clear that his sons have been using Velayati's influence to secure governmental contracts, particularly in industrial sector

such as oil and gas that private companies cannot compete with the IRGC's companies and other influential Islamic Republic authorities such as Velayati.

- His son-in-law, who became either director or board member of various companies through the use of the political power held by Velayati. His son-in-law had made headlines in the media inside Iran due to his role in one of the biggest corruption cases in Iran's history.
- The story of his 1,000 square meters house and how he purchased it and the price tag for selling it. Although, Velayati has never admitted that he used his relationship in the higher ranking of the Islamic Republic, it is crystal clear that he managed to occupy and later own the house due to his close relationship, particularly with Khamenei.
- His role during the Covid-19 pandemic by importing Favipiravir from Japan and promoting the ITM. There is no information about how he managed to purchase, stored, and also financed Favipiravir. Also, it is not clear what happened to this purchase and if he made profit out of it or not. It must not be forgotten that Khamenei personally had a role in terms of medicine and the management of the pandemic and for sure, Velayati could not import Favipiravir without the consent of Khamenei, who ban importing of AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines into Iran.
- His story of becoming the Trustee of the IAU and later the President of the university via an order from Khamenei. This story was an illegal action by Khamenei as it was against the charter of the IAU. Also, there was a public outcry including the grandson of Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic regime.

3. Significance

The findings are all in the public domain, although we believe the public is not fully aware of the depth of his political power and how he has been using it to benefit his family members, particularly his sons. So far, no one has created a package that covers the corruption in Velayati's family in detail over his activities in different roles. Also, it is noteworthy that he has not been in the public eye in recent years. As a result, he has gotten less public attention regarding his corruption.

This finding will hopefully create public awareness and expose how Velayati has been involved in a patterned series of corruption, and how he has managed to have such influence and control of various offices of the regime. His son-in-law, who was elected by the Rouhani Administration as a director of a steel company, is one example of this influence and is evidence of his relationships with so-called reformists/moderators in Iran. Another example is the IAU incident which was an outright illegal act by Khamenei when appointing Velayati as a Trustee.

II. Methodology

1. Sources Utilized

The following sources have been used in preparing this dossier:

- The public data about the registered companies in Iran and all relevant public

documents

- Interview with two investigative journalists who have worked on corruption projects in Iran
- Online social media accounts of Ali Akbar Velayati
- Interviews of Ali Akbar Velayati
- Extensive web search from available contents on the internet

We have not detected any content removal from the internet, as even if the content from Website A was removed, other websites had already published it as well. The only risk we have found is the potential threat that Velayati may try to suppress and silence individuals who criticize him, such as the case of a journalist who published a video clip of Velayati's house and was sentenced to 6 months in prison^{xxiv}.

2. Source Limitations

As mentioned in the Findings section, we could not find more information about Velayati's daughter. Also, more investigation into Velayati's sons' activities and also their operations in other countries, such as Turkey, will be helpful and will help to have a better understanding of the depth of the corruption of Velayati's family.

Please also note the way Iranian authorities work is different from Russian oligarch of Chinese authorities as the Islamic Republic has been under the US sanction for more than 40 years, as a result, the way they operate is different from their counterparts. For this reason, in general, the amount of digital footprints on the internet from the Iranian authorities such as Velayati is not a lot as they do not use online technology for their sensitive communication. Also, the Iranian officials have been started to delete their digital fingerprints in the recent years as they do not want to be expose to the public and also voluntary provide more information to the West, particularly the US, to sanction them.

3. Source Standards and Potential Impact

The current evidence is enough for different stakeholders such as journalists, think tanks, international media and also the US government agencies to follow up on, and for US agencies, such as the US Treasury, to sanction them due to bypassing the US sanction against the Islamic Republic and also the potential money laundering operations for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC).

III. Implications for Future Research

1. Recommendations for New Leads or Expanded Research

We have already captured all available data, and we do not think there are any further possible investigations, apart from finding new documents or interviewing people who are familiar with Velayati and his activities. The current dossier has enough information to help various stakeholders, particularly media outlets, to produce content such as video explainers.

IV. Value for Civic Activists

1. Pertinent Activists

This dossier can be used by civil society organizations and media outlets inside and outside the country. Media outlets and journalists can do more investigations regarding his sons and son-in-law and their potential activities outside Iran, particularly in Turkey.

The theory of change is IF the partners do more investigation regarding the activities of Velayati's family outside Iran, THEN the outcomes will result in more transparency for the public and policymakers in the West.

2. Avenues for Action

This research finding could be used to increase the political pressure on Velayati. Still, due to the current political situation in Iran as a result of the country being in the middle of a revolution, this is not a correct approach. Currently, the Islamic Republic as a whole is under constant pressure from the public. For this reason, finding out more about his and his family's business activities are more important as it will help with the potential sanction by the West on his assets and freeze them in the West.

The main obstacle regarding this approach is the potential difficulties in finding the Velayati family's trace outside Iran as they might use various shell and offshore companies. This is our main concern.

The best possible approach at this stage, based on the current political situation in Iran, is the naming and shaming strategy and producing a series of informative video clips to explain the corruption in Velayati's family.

3. Red Team: Anticipated Critique and Response

We do not see any possible criticism as all available information is in the public domain and also published by various media outlets and, in some cases, has been confirmed by Velayati.

V. Media and Multilateral Strategies

1. Media Strategy

As mentioned above, a series of video explainers regarding the activities of Velayati and his sons would be the best way to use this dossier. By producing these video clips, it might help to receive more information about the political and economic activities of Velayati by whistleblowers or the public. More investigation into his sons' interests in Turkey is also recommended.

2. Multilateral Strategy

Due to the current political situation in Iran, the Islamic Republic officials face the maximum pressure from the Iranian people because the public wants regime change in Iran. As a result, this dossier will not be helpful in that way; however, it can help the revolutionaries in the country to use it to convince more people in Iran that the regime is corrupted, especially the people who are still in the grey area and have not decided to move on from the regime.

VI. Appendix

A. Personal Information

Name in English: Ali Akbar Velayati

Name in Persian: علی اکبر ولایتی

Email: aavelayati@sbmu.ac.ir

Website: velayati.ir

DOB: 25 June 1945

National ID Number: 0451834232

Place of Birth: Rostamabad, Shemiranat, Tehran, Iran

B. Images

Image 1

The screenshot shows a profile page on a Persian website. At the top, there is a header with the text 'مؤثر جستجو و تحلیل داده‌های رسمی کشور' (Effective search and analysis of official country data) and a logo. Below the header, the name 'لیلا عنایت' (Lila Aynat) is displayed next to a placeholder profile picture. A dark blue bar contains the text 'اطلاعات کامل تر و بروزتر در رسدو' (More complete and up-to-date information in Resdo). The main content area is divided into sections: 'بیوگرافی' (Biography) with fields for 'شماره ملی' (National ID Number: 007262xxxx), 'شهر محل صدور' (City of issuance: تهران مرکزی - Tehran Central), 'جنسیت' (Gender: زن - Female), and 'زنا' (Marital status). Below this is a section for 'مشاهده آخرین اخبار این شخص' (View latest news of this person). At the bottom, there is a section for 'شرکت‌ها' (Companies) with the text 'لیلا عنایت در 1 شرکت عضو است' (Lila Aynat is a member of 1 company) and 'شرکت‌ها' (Companies).

Image 2



Image 3

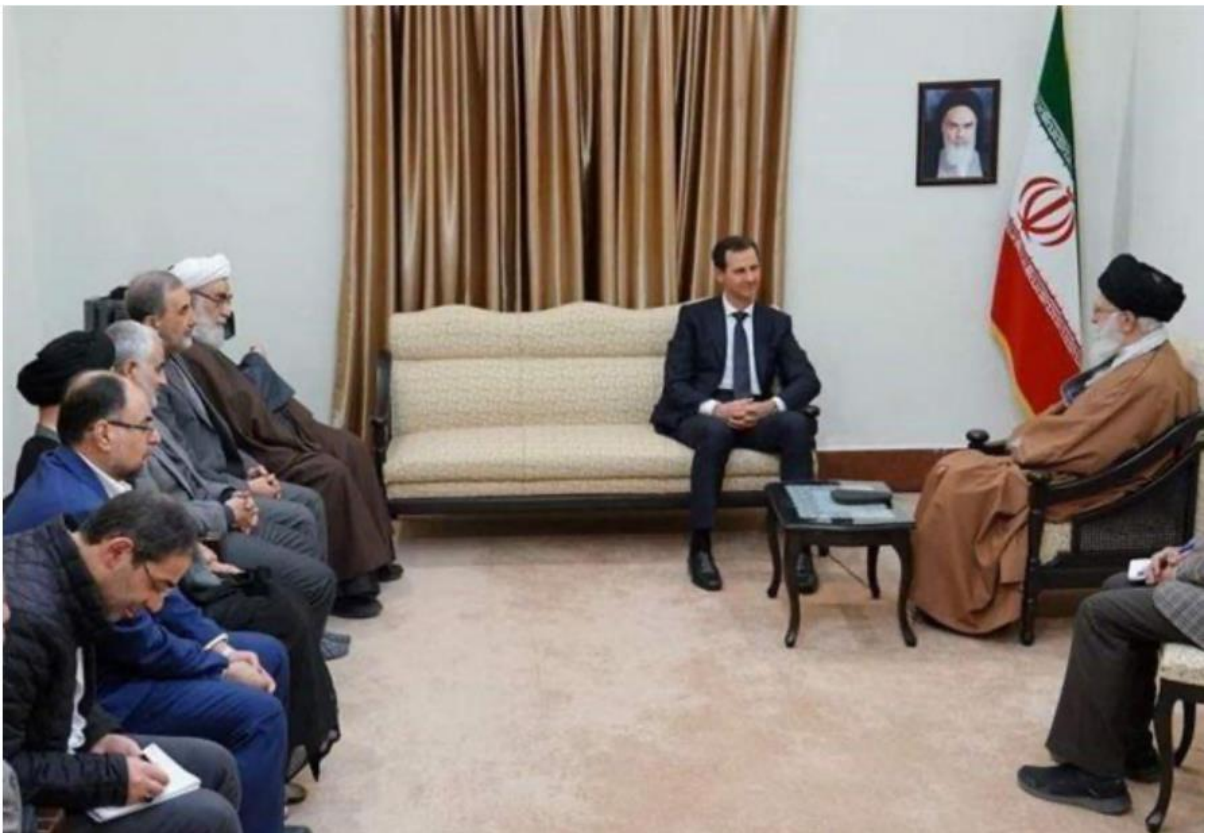


Image 4



Image 5

Photo of National ID Card of Mohammad Velayati (Left) & Ali Asghar Velayati (Right)



Image 6

List of companies that Mohammad Velayati has a senior role in.

محمد ولایتی 

<p>تدبیر اندیشان عرشیا عضو هیئت مدیره</p> 	<p>سیف بنا فولاد نائب رئیس هیئت مدیره</p> 
<p>آفرینندگان فرهنگ و تمدن اسلام و بوم ایرانیان عضو هیئت مدیره</p> 	<p>مهندسین مشاور بینش نیارش اثر نائب رئیس هیئت مدیره</p> 
<p>پهنه گستر بنا</p> 	<p>فنی مهندسی سیف بنا مدیر عامل</p> 

Image 7

List of companies that Ali Asghar Velayati has a senior role in.

علی اصغر ولایتی 

<p>آفرینندگان فرهنگ و تمدن اسلام و بوم ایرانیان نائب رئیس هیئت مدیره</p> 	<p>سیف بنا فولاد رئیس هیئت مدیره</p> 
<p>مهندسین مشاور بینش نیارش اثر</p> 	<p>فنی مهندسی سیف بنا عضو هیئت مدیره</p> 
<p>مهندسی آسان پارک</p> 	<p>مهندسی به سبک</p> 
<p>پهنه گستر بنا</p> 	<p>عظیم صنعت اطلس رئیس هیئت مدیره</p> 

C. Details of Companies

Seif Bana Steel (سیف بنا فولاد) is a steel production company that manufactures steel frames for industrial and commercial buildings. This company exports steel to Qatar and Iraq, and they plan to expand their export market into Oman. Seif Bana Steel is also active in road building, and they apparently have built more than 10,000 km of road. There is no public information about the financial status of the company.

Seif Bana Engineering Consultancy (فنی مهندسی سیف بنا) is a building contractor company that builds residential, commercial and industrial buildings. The project they have built is a large-scale project such as building 500-unit apartments in Sari, Mazandaran or 300-unit apartments in Kashmar, Razavi Khorasan. Most of their commercial and industrial building projects are governmental projects, such as the ICT Ministry in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province. This consultancy is also active in the oil and gas industry. There is no public information about the financial status of the company, but based on the publicly available projects, it is crystal clear that Velayati's sons have leveraged their father's influence to get governmental projects.

Tadbir Andishan Arshia (تدبیر اندیشان عرشیا) is a design and engineering consultancy company that is specialized in the supervision of building regulations. There are not many pieces of information about the company apart from the huge number of directors that is 91 individuals are listed as directors of the company.

Binesh Niyayesh Asar Engineering Consultancy (مهندسین مشاور بینش نیارش اثر) is a building consultancy company specializing in oil and gas. According to Iran's Company House website, Binesh Niyayesh Asar is also active in getting loans from financial institutions such as banks to implement governmental and private projects. There is no public information about the financial status of the company.

Pahneh Gostar Bana (پهنه گستر بنا) is a construction company in drilling, tunneling, wharf, import and export of raw materials and also construction and operation of factories. There is no public information about the financial status of the company.

Institute of Creators of Islamic and Iranian Culture and Civilization (آفرینندگان فرهنگ و تمدن) (اسلام) is active in culture, art and religious products in Iran and other Islamic countries. This institution is part of the Islamic Republic's propaganda machines to promote the Islamic Revolution ideology worldwide, particularly in other Islamic countries.

Better Style Engineering (مهندسین به سبک) is active in investments and operations in pharmaceutical production plants. There is no publicly available data regarding this Engineering.

Easy Park Engineering (مهندسين آسان پارک) is active in designing and developing steel and concrete structures and importing and exporting goods.

Atlas Grand Industry (عظيم صنعت اطلس) is a business and operation consultancy that is active in import and export, opening branches of authorized foreign companies in Iran, and management of Free Zones in Iran.

D. Endnotes

i <https://bit.ly/3X0O7LI>

ii <https://bit.ly/3GR7lha>

iii <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-features-47372600>

iv <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-features-47372600>

v <https://bit.ly/3Znh6e6>

vi <https://bit.ly/3ZjStz3>

vii <https://bit.ly/3Qr6Qxq>

viii

https://media.farsnews.ir/Uploaded/Files/Documents/1401/05/29/14010529000086_Test.pdf

ix <https://www.akhbar-rooz.com/167608/1401/06/15/>

x <https://www.rchn.ir/news/1400080511820>

xi <https://bit.ly/3WYXLya>

xii <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?title=File:Ettelaat13601001.pdf&page=2>

xiii <https://bit.ly/3CCZ2mr>

xiv <https://bit.ly/3X2bJzi>

xv <https://www.radiofarda.com/a/karroubi-velayati-villa/29323592.html>

xvi <https://bit.ly/3XgBYIL>

xvii <https://twitter.com/pouriazeraati/status/1605157262552694784>

xviii <https://bit.ly/3XloCo4>

xix <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Favipiravir>

xx <https://bit.ly/3ZoSEsG>

xxi <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-38688497>

xxii <https://bit.ly/3ZjJ3nb>

xxiii <https://bit.ly/3VUYVcF>

xxiv <http://bit.ly/3iKRsiX>