

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of Iran Trade Promotion Organization (PMO) says the level of trade ties between Iran and Iraq has increased significantly, adding that the two countries can hit a target of \$30-40 billion in annual of trade. Speaking after a second joint business committee of Iran and Iraq in Tehran on Monday, Mehdi Zeighami said that the committee had reviewed programs, infrastructure, and solutions for the two neighboring countries to reach \$20 billion in annual trade in the near future. Zeighami said, however, that bilateral annual trade can reach \$40 billion in the long run. The PMO chief said despite serious sanctions imposed on Iran in recent years, the country is ready to transfer its experiences on industrial projects to Iraq.

IRAN NEWS

MASHHAD (IRNA) - Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sarakhs Special Economic Zone located in Iran's northeastern Khorasan Razavi province has announced that a first Russian shipment of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has been successfully transited via the region and through the Iranian territory to Pakistan. Mohammadreza Berahmand said on Tuesday that more than 100,000 metric tons (mt) of Russian LPG had been transited via Iran to Rimdan Border Crossing in Sistan Va Baluchestan province to Pakistan. Berahmand said the operation to transit the shipment, which was a first of its kind, had been completed in six months. He said consultations are underway to conclude a new contract for transiting a second Russian LPG cargo to Pakistan via Iran.

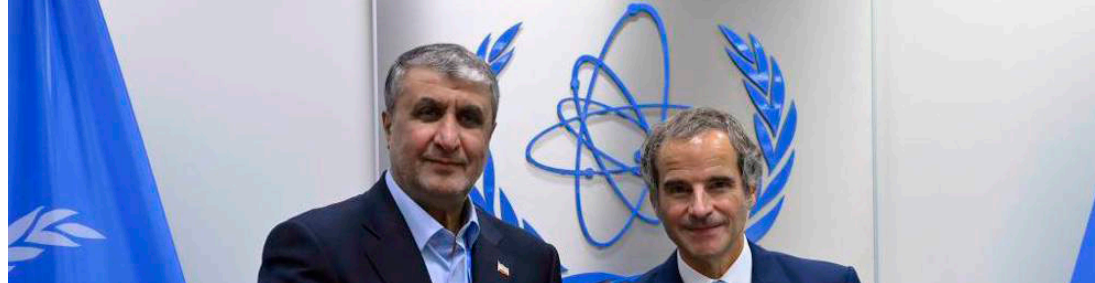
Minister Stresses Global Need to Uphold Moralities



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Minister of Culture Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili has underlined that with the spread of modern ignorance and the emergence of extremist groups, the world is required to stick to morality and spirituality more than ever. Esmaili made the remarks in an address in Arabic language to a meeting of Islamic culture ministers in Qatar on Monday. He reiterated that what has caused the emergence of extremist and Takfiri groups is the distancing from morality and spirituality. The minister argued that the insult of the Holy Quran in Sweden and some other countries was an indication that those who are angry with the unity of the Muslim world would do whatever they can to sow discord among Muslims and divert their attention from fundamental issues. He also stressed that the Holy Quds, for its high position, has to stay away from religious rivalries and hostilities. Noting that the issue of Palestine has injured the hearts of the Muslim Ummah, he urged the necessity for the Islamic societies to use their potentials to provide support for the Palestinian cause. During his stay in Doha, the Iranian minister has met with a number of Qatari officials as well as his counterparts from other Muslim countries.

AEOI Says West Pressure on Iran Not to Go Unanswered

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has slammed Western countries' efforts to mount political pressure on the Islamic Republic, adding that such moves will not go unanswered. Mohammad Eslami made the remark in a Monday meeting with Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi in Vienna. Criticizing the biased approach taken to Iran by Western countries, the Iranian official said, "By resorting to sanctions ... these countries are trying to use the IAEA's mechanisms to mount pressure on Iran." "Brutal political pressures exerted by Western countries on Iran will not bear fruit and the Islamic Republic will not allow any politically-motivated pressure to go unanswered," Iran's top nuclear official said. He urged Grossi to keep the IAEA on an impartial and professional track and does not allow the Western states to use the Agency's reports as an excuse to put pressure on Iran. The meeting came as tensions between Iran and the IAEA have been rising after Tehran's move to bar a number of the Agency's inspectors from being assigned to the country. On September 16, the IAEA chief issued a statement condemning what he called Iran's "disproportionate and unprecedented" move to withdraw the designation of the Agency's several "most experienced" inspectors assigned to conduct "verification activities" in the country under the NPT Safeguards Agreement. Grossi claimed that Iran's measure "affects the normal planning and conduct of Agency verification activities" in the country and "openly contradicts the cooperation that should exist between the Agency and Iran." In response to Grossi's claim, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kan'ani said the United States and the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear agreement -- formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) -- have abused the UN nuclear watchdog to achieve their own political objectives. "Unfortunately, despite Iran's positive, constructive and continuous interaction with the IAEA, the three European countries and the United States have abused the Agency's Board of Governors for their own political purposes with ... the aim of damaging the atmosphere of cooperation between Iran and the Agency," Kan'ani said in a clear reference to France, Britain and Germany. The IAEA's Board of Governors also issued a Western-sponsored statement on September 13, accusing Iran of noncompliance with its safeguards commitments. The document, signed by 62 member states of the Agency, called on Iran to take steps to address outstanding safeguards issues and provide the IAEA with information concerning its new nuclear facilities. Following the meeting, the IAEA chief said in a post on X social media platform, formally known as Twitter, that his meeting with Eslami was "important." According to the statement, both sides recognized that such positive engagements between Iran and the IAEA can pave the way for wider agreements among state parties.

Excessive Demands by U.S., European Parties Stalled JCPOA Revival Talks

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Iran's foreign minister says "excessive demands" by the United States and the three European signatories to the 2015 nuclear agreement have stalled multilateral negotiations to revive the US-abandoned deal. In an interview with Japan's Kyodo news agency on Sunday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian held the US, France, Britain and Germany responsible for the pause in the negotiations aimed at restoring the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). He further attributed the suspension of the talks to the aforesaid countries' "interference" in Iran's domestic issues such as last year's foreign-backed riots. Iran proved the peaceful nature of its nuclear program to the world by signing the JCPOA with six world powers. However, Washington's unilateral withdrawal in May 2018 and its subsequent re-imposition of sanctions against Tehran left the future of the deal in limbo. Negotiations kicked off in the Austrian capital city of Vienna in April 2021 to terminate the unilateral US sanctions and bring Washington back into full compliance with the deal. Also in his remarks, Amir-Abdollahian said the Japanese government has proposed an initiative to bring the JCPOA back to life, without elaborating on its details. The top Iranian diplomat added that he had received the proposal during his visit to Tokyo last month. Any initiative from Japan that aligns with "Iran's interests" would be viewed positively by Tehran, he said. "We support the constructive role of Japan in reviving the nuclear deal." During the trip, Amir-Abdollahian met with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who said Tokyo supports the JCPOA revival talks and is ready to help the sides in this regard.

Over 12m Tons of Commodities Traded on IME Last Month

IRAN NEWS ECONOMIC DESK



TEHRAN - Iran Mercantile Exchange (IME) witnessed trade of 11.9m tons of commodities and 81 vehicles with a total trading value of more than \$2.7b on its physical market in last Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar. According to a report by the IME's International Affairs and PR, the exchange saw on its metals and minerals trading floor, trade of 9,548,604 tons of commodities and 81 vehicles valued at more than \$1.6b. On this floor the IME sold 4,926,643 tons of cement, 2,350,000 tons of iron ore, 1,417,048 tons of steel, 886,000 tons of sponge iron, 85,575 tons of aluminum, 47,680 tons of zinc, 22,454 tons of copper, 1,450 tons of cast iron, 1,000 tons of coke, 670 tons of molybdenum concentrate and 45 tons of precious metals concentrate. It's worth noting that the IME also traded 1,530 kg of saffron on its agricultural trading floor. Furthermore, the exchange saw trade of 2,189,032 tons of commodities worth more than \$1b on both domestic and export rings of its oil and petrochemical trading floor. Items traded on this floor included 718,000 tons of vacuum bottom, 693,759 tons of bitumen, 387,774 tons of polymeric products, 167,868 tons of chemicals, 149,800 tons of lube cut, 35,560 tons of sulfur, 20,609 tons of oil, 14,812 tons of petroleum products, 1,980 tons of feedstocks, 1,500 tons of slop wax and 1,030 tons of waterproofing materials. Last was the IME's side market on which the exchange traded 170,109 tons of goods.

Iran, Venezuela Discuss Cooperation in Nuclear Medicine

TEHRAN (IRNA) - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Mohammad Eslami and Venezuelan Vice President of Science, Technology, Education, and Health, Gabriela Jiménez have held talks on bilateral collaborations in the field of nuclear medicine. The Iranian and Venezuelan officials met on the sidelines of the 67th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, Austria, the IRNA reported on Tuesday. The two sides discussed ways to develop cooperation in various areas of nuclear medicine, including the supply of diagnostic and therapeutic radiopharmaceuticals as well as equipment required for the nuclear medicine. The Iranian nuclear chief and the Venezuelan minister also conferred ways to improve relations between the two countries and they reached consensus on certain topics. It is worth mentioning that Venezuela's nuclear medicine is one of the areas affected by the West-imposed sanctions,

including radiopharmaceuticals; so, the number of cancer patients increased in the Latin American country; therefore, the development of cooperation between Tehran and Caracas can help the Venezuelan people overcome the challenge at this time, because Iran succeeded in developing nuclear medicine. The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran also held talks with the vice president of the China Atomic Energy Authority (CAEA), reviewed Tehran-Beijing ties in various fields and discussed issues, including the construction of nuclear power plants. The two sides underlined the need for the expansion of cooperation and further development of relations between Iran and China, as well as the need for confronting unilateralism in the world. The 67th Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference is being held from September 25 to 29 at the Vienna International Centre (VIC) in Vienna, Austria.

S. Korea Holds First Military Parade Since 2013

SEOUL (Dispatches) - South Korea stages its first military parade in a decade, showcasing its advanced arsenal in the face of plummeting ties with nuclear-armed North Korea. Pyongyang regularly puts on huge military parades but such events in Seoul are traditionally only arranged every five years to mark South Korea's Armed Forces Day. The last parade was in 2013. Five years later,

then-president Moon Jae-in chose to hold a celebratory ceremony instead of a military event, in line with his conciliatory approach to North Korea. The parade in Seoul began around 4 pm (7 am GMT) on Tuesday and involved around 6,700 troops and 340 pieces of military equipment, including F-35 stealth fighters, the South Korean defence ministry said. The KF-21, South Korea's first domestically produced fighter jet, as well as next-generation helicopters and drones were also on display.



Thousands Flee Enclave as Azerbaijan, Armenia Envoys to Meet

GORIS (Dispatches) - Envoys from Baku and Yerevan prepared to meet in Brussels for talks as thousands of refugees fled Nagorno-Karabakh after Azerbaijan's lightning takeover of the majority ethnic Armenian enclave. Last week, an offensive by Baku's forces established Azerbaijani control over the breakaway region, forcing ethnic Armenian fighters to disarm. The meeting in Brussels will be the first such encounter since the offensive but the leaders of both countries are scheduled to meet next month. Simon Mordue, chief diplomatic adviser to European Council president Charles Michel, will chair the talks, Michel's spokeswoman said. Azerbaijan and Armenia, along with EU heavyweights France and Germany, will be represented by their national security advisers. Several days after the fighting, the first refugees arrived in Armenia on Sunday and 6,650 people have so far entered, Yerevan said on Monday. AFP reporters saw the refugees crowding into a humanitarian hub set up in a local theatre in the city of Goris to register for transport and housing. Nagorno-Karabakh: the evolution of the conflict "We lived through terrible days," said Anabel Ghulasyan, 41, from the village of

Rev, known as Shalva in Azeri. She arrived in Goris with her family by minibus, carrying her belongings in bags. An explosion at a fuel depot wounded more than 200 people, according to Armenian separatist authorities which have been supplying those seeking to leave the territory with petrol and diesel. "As a result of the explosion in the fuel warehouse, the number of injured exceeds 200. The health condition of the majority is severe or extremely severe," the region's rights ombudsman Gegham Stepanyan said on social media. "The medical capacities of (Nagorno-Karabakh) are not enough," he added, calling for air ambulances to be allowed to land. An official had earlier indicated there were fatalities, without giving a toll. Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars in the last three decades over Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority ethnic Armenian enclave within the internationally recognised border of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan's lightning operation on September 19 to seize control of the territory forced the separatists to lay down their arms under the terms of a ceasefire agreed the following day.



Kosovo in Mourning, Manhunt Under Way After Deadly Clashes

BELGRADE (Dispatches) - Kosovo was in mourning Monday after a deadly clash between authorities and gunmen near the Serbian border that has prompted a large police operation and raised many unanswered questions. The killing of a police officer during the ambush and ensuing firefight on Sunday marks one of the gravest escalations in Kosovo for years, following months of mounting tensions and stalling talks between the government in Pristina and Serbia. Kosovo's Prime Minister Albin Kurti said a police operation

was still underway while the site of the ambush was sealed off, as investigators sifted through evidence following a late-night gun battle that saw the standoff end. "Many things will be resolved during the investigations," Kurti told Manuel Sarrazin—the German envoy for the Western Balkans—during their meeting on Monday. The chaotic confrontation began when a police patrol was ambushed near the village of Banjska early Sunday leaving one Kosovo law enforcement officer dead and another wounded. The gunmen fled to a nearby monastery where they barricaded themselves and traded gunfire with Kosovo police for hours, with at least three assailants shot dead in the melee. Kosovo's Interior Minister Xhelal Svecla said authorities had already recovered

"an exceptionally large number of heavy weapons, anti-infantry weapons, explosives, uniforms, logistics, food reserves, and equipment for barricades." "We can easily say that the equipment was destined for several hundreds of other assailants," Svecla added. The two major border crossings between Serbia and Kosovo also remained closed after they were sealed by Kosovo police on Sunday morning. Questions remained, however, hours after the standoff ended with just a handful of alleged suspects arrested by Kosovo authorities during the clearance operation. Asked if any assailants managed to escape from the Banjska monastery, interior minister Svecla said that an "operation" was ongoing but offered no more details.



Taliban Weighs Using U.S. Mass Surveillance Plan

KABUL (Dispatches) - The Taliban are creating a large-scale camera surveillance network for Afghan cities that could involve repurposing a plan crafted by the Americans before their 2021 pullout, an interior ministry spokesman told Reuters, as authorities seek to supplement thousands of cameras already across the capital, Kabul. The Taliban administration — which has publicly said it is focused on restoring security and clamping down on Islamic State, which has claimed many major attacks in Afghan cities — has also consulted with Chinese telecoms equipment maker Huawei about potential cooperation, the spokesman said.

Preventing attacks by international militant groups — including prominent organisations such as Islamic State — is at the heart of the interaction between the Taliban and many foreign nations, including the U.S. and China, according to readouts from those meetings. But some analysts question the cash-strapped regime's ability to fund the program, and rights groups have expressed concern that any resources will be used to crackdown on protesters. Details of how the Taliban intend to expand and manage mass surveillance, including obtaining the U.S. plan, have not been previously reported. The mass camera rollout, which will involve a focus on "important points" in Kabul and elsewhere, is part of a new security strategy that will take four years to be fully implemented, Ministry of Interior spokesman Abdul Mateen Qani told Reuters. "At the present we are working on a Kabul security map, which is (being completed) by security experts and (is taking) lots of time," he said. "We already have two maps, one which was made by U.S.A for the previous government and second by Turkey." He did not detail when the Turkish plan was made. A U.S. State Department spokesperson said Washington was not "partnering" with the Taliban and has "made clear to the Taliban that it is their responsibility to ensure that they give no safe haven to terrorists." A Turkish government spokesperson didn't return a request for comment. Qani said the Taliban had a "simple chat" about the potential network with Huawei [RIC:RIC:HWT. UL] in August, but no contracts or firm plans had been reached.

Ukraine Claims Russia Black Sea Fleet Commander Killed



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukraine's Special Forces said they had killed Moscow's top admiral in Crimea along with 33 other officers in last week's missile attack on the headquarters of Russia's Black Sea Fleet in the port of Sevastopol. The Russian Defence Ministry did not immediately respond when asked by Reuters to confirm or deny that Admiral Viktor Sokolov, the commander of the Black Sea Fleet and one of Russia's most senior navy officers, had been killed. Moscow-installed authorities in Sevastopol, however, were taking extra measures to address Ukraine's increased attacks on Crimea, a critical region providing a platform from which Russia has launched many of its air attacks on Ukraine in the 19-month-long war. If confirmed, Sokolov's killing would be one of Kyiv's most significant strikes on Crimea, which Russia seized and annexed from Ukraine in 2014. "After the strike on the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, 34 officers died, including the commander of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. Another 105 occupiers were wounded. The headquarters building cannot be restored," Ukraine's Special Forces said on the Telegram messaging app. It was not immediately clear how Ukraine's Special Forces counted the dead and wounded in the attack. Reuters could not

independently verify the report. Each side has at times exaggerated enemy losses in the war and says little about its own losses. In a statement after the attack, the Russian defence ministry said one serviceman was missing, revising an earlier statement that the man had been killed. Air defences had downed five missiles, the ministry said. Ukraine has stepped up its attacks in the Black Sea and on the Crimean Peninsula and started using missiles in addition to assault drones. Kyiv has said that destroying the Russian Black Sea fleet would significantly speed up the end of the war. Earlier this month, Russia's defence ministry said that Ukraine attacked a Black Sea naval shipyard with 10 cruise missiles. In a possible indication of how serious the recent Ukrainian attacks on Sevastopol have been, the Russian-installed governor of the city held a meeting on Monday to work out better defence and attack warning systems for the city. "We understand that we have moved into a new situation that requires a systemic response," Russian agencies cited the governor, Mikhail Razvozhayev, as telling its government. "Earlier, we and our military faced attacks from unmanned vehicles ... Now everything has changed and we must be prepared for this kind of threat."

China Willing to Play Constructive Role in APEC's Success

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China is willing to play a "constructive" role in the success of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in San Francisco, its top diplomat said on Tuesday, after President Xi Jinping's absence at the annual Group of 20 summit in India. "As the world's largest developing country and an important member of APEC, China is willing to comply with the expectations of the international community and play a constructive role in the success of APEC this year," said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Xi, with no official explanation, did not go to the G20 summit in New Delhi this month, with the Chinese premier, Li Qiang, attending in his place. That prompted the United States to say China was "giving up" on the G20 and was building an alternative world order. "Of course, we and all parties hope that the United States will recognise its responsibility as the host, demonstrate openness, fairness, inclusiveness, and

responsibility, and create better conditions for the smooth holding of the meeting," Wang said at a news conference, when asked whether Xi would attend APEC. Dialogue between China and the United States has been gradually resuming despite tensions between the two superpowers, especially over Taiwan. Expectations are building that Xi would meet with Biden on the sidelines of APEC, after missing a chance for a face-to-face meeting at G20 in India. At the same news conference, Wang said, without naming any country, that China opposed "wanton" expansion of military alliances that squeeze the security space of other countries. Beijing has been critical of Washington's continued attempts to deepen military alliances in the Asia-Pacific region. It has particularly disapproved of bases that the U.S. military is building in the north of the Philippines facing democratically governed Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory.

U.S. Gov't Shutdown Looms



NEW YORK (Dispatches) - Millions of Americans braced Monday for pay and welfare checks to stop within days as Congress careened toward a damaging government shutdown, with Republican right wingers blocking attempts to pass a budget. Four months after barely avoiding the more serious prospect of a credit default, the world's largest economy is once again on the verge of a convulsion, with the lights due to go out at the weekend. Republicans leading the House of Representatives — hamstrung by hardline rebels demanding deep spending cuts — have been unable to pass the usual series of bills setting out departmental budgets for the next financial year, which begins on Sunday. The party's leadership does not even have the votes to advance a short-term funding bill at 2023 spending levels — known as a continuing resolution — to keep the government open past midnight on Saturday. A shutdown would put at risk the finances of workers at national parks, museums and other sites operating on federal funding, but it could also carry significant political risk for President Joe Biden as he runs for re-election in 2024. "Funding the government is one of the most basic, fundamental responsibilities of the Congress," the Democrat told reporters at the White House. "And if Republicans in the House don't start doing their job we should stop electing them." The Biden administration also warned that seven million people who rely on the food aid program for women and children could also see their money stopped. The funding deadlock arose after House Republicans refused to support the government spending levels agreed between Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy, the top Republican in Congress, that would keep government gears turning. Another major sticking point has been a request for additional aid for Kyiv, after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited Congress last week pleading for more weapons to battle Russian forces 18 months into the war. Both parties in the Senate support the \$24 billion aid bill. But a handful of hardline Republicans in the House are threatening to block any funding measures that include the aid. "UNLESS YOU GET EVERYTHING, SHUT IT DOWN!," former president Donald Trump demanded in a post on his Truth Social platform late Sunday as he led calls for the Republican hardliners to dig in. The budget vote in Congress regularly turns into a standoff, with one party using the prospect of a shutdown to seek concessions from the other, usually without success. Trump, who is also running for re-election, forced a 35-day shutdown over border controls in 2018 but ended up reopening the government after failing to secure a single concession from Democrats. The impasse is invariably resolved before the standoffs become crises but this year the showdown is exacerbated by new levels of polarisation on Capitol Hill. In the Senate, debate is led by two political heavyweights, Democratic majority leader Chuck Schumer and Mitch McConnell, his Republican counterpart. Congress was out Monday but Schumer has been paving the way for a continuing resolution, including Ukraine aid, in talks with McConnell and the White House.

