

Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian Felicitated His Counterparts in Islamic Countries Over the Birthday Anniversary of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Islamic Unity Week Which Starts as of Today

IRAN NEWS

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Emphasized That the Terrorist Attacks During the Processions of the Birthday Anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Pakistan Demonstrate That the Perpetrators Are Far Removed From the Teachings of Islam's Beloved Prophet

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Iran's Ranking Soars in Global Innovation Index



TEHRAN (IRNA) - A recent report by the Global Innovation Index (GII) reveals that Iran has climbed 50 positions from 113th in 2013 to 63rd in 2023, making it the 63rd most innovative country out of the 132 featured in the GII. The GII is published by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a specialized agency of the United Nations. According to the GII 2022 report, Iran has shown the fastest performance in innovation growth and ranks as the second most innovative country in the Central and South Asia region. The report also highlights that India, Iran, the Philippines, Turkey, Vietnam, and Indonesia are among the top 65 economies that have risen fastest in the rankings over the last decade.

President Officially Inaugurates 5th Mustafa Prize Ceremony in Isfahan

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi officially inaugurated the 5th Mustafa Prize ceremony in the central city of Isfahan in the presence of more than 130 luminaries from across the Muslim world. The prestigious biennial event kicked off to host high-profile scientists from 57 Islamic countries and their ambassadors in addition to Isfahan's academic elites, university faculty members and scholars in the field of artificial intelligence from September 28 to October 4. The ceremony will also host the 9th round of Science and Technology Exchange Program (STEP), which is a platform organized by Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation to expand the scientific network among the Islamic world's scholars by holding international events and laying the groundwork for enhancing scientific synergy and cooperation. "We strongly believe that the honors of the science and technology as in the past are on the shoulders of Muslim figures, and Muslim scientists are the ones who can bring a new message and a new civilization to the Islamic world and humanity again," Raisi said in an address to the gathering. Stressing that the roots of many modern Western sciences and technologies are in the Islamic civilization, the Iranian president said, "The Islamic civilization seeks to make humanity prosper in the fields of justice, ethics and spirituality as the cornerstone of society." Raisi also said the Mustafa Prize should be recognized as an "innovative move" as it enjoys a human-, society- and civilization-building perspective. This year, five scholars and scientists have been nominated for the prestigious award over their scientific excellence, including Professor Omid Farokhzad in nanomedicine and Professor Ahmed Hassan in software engineering.

Mustafa Prize was established in 2012 as one of the symbols of scientific excellence and has been held biennially since 2015, recognizing leading researchers and scientists of the Islamic world. The laureates are awarded \$500,000, which is financed through the science and technology endowment. They are also adorned with Mustafa Medal and Honorary Diploma. The prize is awarded in the four categories of information and communication science and technology, life and medical science and technology, nanoscience and nanotechnology, and all areas of science and technology. In 2016, the Science Magazine called the prize "the Muslim Nobel."

Tehran, Baku Discuss Bilateral Relations



TEHRAN (IRNA) - Iranian Ambassador to Azerbaijan and an assistant to the president of the Republic of Azerbaijan on special assignments, Khalaf Khalafov, has discussed the bilateral relations between Tehran and Baku. In his meeting with Khalafov on Friday, the two politicians held talks on expanding bilateral ties and issues including the Nagorno-Karabakh region's current situation. The tensions between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region have increased in recent days. Baku considers this region as part of its territory and reclaimed part of it during the second war with Armenia in 2020. Last week, following Baku's attacks on the remaining parts of Nagorno-Karabakh, the ethnic Armenians of the region were disarmed and have since been leaving the region.

Refining Capacity, Oil Products Quality Promoted Under 13th Administration



TEHRAN (Shana) - Oil Minister Javad Owji on Friday said the country's refining capacity and quality of oil products have been promoted under the 13th administration. Delivering speech during the inauguration ceremony of Isfahan Refinery's Diesel Hydrotreating (DHT) Unit, also attended by President Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, the minister added eight gas condensate and oil refinery and integrated refinery and petrochemical complex projects are underway. Owji said the Oil Ministry has given top priority to the completion of unfinished projects since the 13th administration took office. He added several half-done projects were completed with an investment of \$12 billion in the previous Iranian calendar year, which ended on March 20, 2023. The ministry will inaugurate 67 megaprojects and semifinished plans worth \$15.1 billion in the current year, mentioned the top official, adding 15 new megaprojects worth \$14.3 billion are on this year's agenda, out of which several have been either inaugurated or prepared for inauguration through investing \$7 billion. "All these projects have direct impacts on increasing oil, gas, and petrochemical production capacities as well as refining capacity of the country," underlined the minister. Some of the projects such as the refinery of Phase 14 and Phase 11 of the South Pars gas field, the Persian Gulf Hoveyze Refinery, the second phase of Abadan Refinery in Khuzestan Province, and Gachsaran Petrochemical Complex in Kogilouyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province came on stream in the presence of President Raisi and now Isfahan Refinery's DHT, utility, and offsite projects became officially operational, he continued. Investment and completion of unfinished projects have led to the increase in production and exports and consequently helped the oil sector stand top in Iran's economic growth ranking in the past two years, Owji stated. The Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and the Statistical Center of Iran (SCI) registered 16.4 percent and 19.8 percent economic growth for domestic oil industry, respectively, he said, adding the Monthly Oil Market Report (MOMR) of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) also showed that Iran has regained its position as the third-largest crude oil producer.

2nd Phase of Project to Bring Water From Sea of Oman to Isfahan Launched

IRAN NEWS NATIONAL DESK



TEHRAN - President Ebrahim Raisi visited the central province of Isfahan and launched the second phase of a large-scale national project that transfers water from the Sea of Oman to the drought-prone province. Raisi arrived in Isfahan on Friday and was briefed upon arrival by the provincial officials, contractors and workers on the latest stages of progress in the implementation of the 980-kilometer water supply project. "Reports indicate that the implementation period of this project has whittled down to a third," the Iranian chief executive said, stressing that water supply is a very important issue as it can help promote agriculture and industry in Isfahan Province. "This project has gained further momentum and 50% of it has been completed so far, and on the whole, we are witnessing the implementation of a very good and valuable work," Raisi added. Expressing his gratitude to the entire personnel and staff involved in the major project, Raisi then ordered the launch of the second phase of the water transfer scheme from the Sea of Oman to the central Iranian province. The project was initiated in September last year, transferring 70 million cubic meters of water to Isfahan in the first stage and 400 million other in the next stage. The length of the water transfer route from the Sea of Oman to Isfahan is 980 kilometers, of which 520 km has been completed, 420 km has been excavated and 214 km has been laid with pipes. The water supply project is part of a plan to revive Isfahan's Zayandeh Rud River and provide water for drinking, agriculture and local industries. Iran faces a race against time to tackle its serious water shortage challenge as water depletion in the country is one of the highest in the world, with studies expecting a 25 percent decline in surface water runoff by 2030. The Iranian authorities have been toiling away at various projects to resolve the crisis, including schemes that economize on water consumption in the industrial field and state-of-the-art seawater desalination plants.

Saboteur Targeting Data Network Nabbed

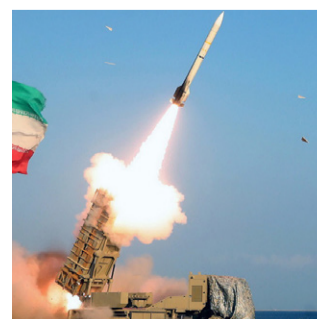


TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Intelligence forces have arrested an individual involved in numerous acts of sabotage against the data network of the electrical grid at one of the major industrial parks in the country's central province of Isfahan. Following multiple acts of sabotage due to the theft of cables in the data network and subsequent disruption of electricity distribution, the issue was placed high on the agenda of security and intelligence forces, the intelligence department of Isfahan's provincial police announced in a statement on Friday. It added that the individual, whose identity was not immediately released, was detected and finally arrested in his hideout. He has openly confessed to his wrongdoing, according to the statement. It also noted that the saboteur has been handed over to the country's judicial authorities. Earlier this month, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) intelligence forces disbanded a team planning to carry out acts of sabotage and terrorist operations in the northern Iranian province of Gilan. The public relations office of the Quds Force of Gilan said in a statement on September 14 that the 25 members of the band have been arrested. The statement added that the sabotage design had in the cross hairs sensitive and strategic installations.

Iran's Air Defense Force Absolute Power in Region

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The commander of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force has underlined the unit's remarkable military capabilities as an irrefutable fact, saying the force is an "absolute power" in the West Asia region. Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi-Fard made the statement on the sidelines of a ceremony held on Friday to commemorate 108 martyrs of the Army's Air Defense Force during Iraq's imposed war on Iran in the 1980s. "We started eight years of imposed war with hardly any equipment, all of which was bought from abroad and we were totally dependent," Sabahi-Fard said. "Today, the powerful air defense force of the Army has the most advanced and adequate indigenous equipment in the fields of detection, interception, conflict, and information systems in the world," he added. Stressing that Iran's assertion of being an "absolute power in air defense in the region" is an undeniable fact, Sabahi Fard said, "[Our] Air defense has something to say at the world level. Of course, our enemies are cognizant of this power." The general also affirmed that

the Islamic Republic of Iran's airspace is the safest in the whole world thanks to the efforts of the country's Air Defense Force and its cutting-edge equipment. Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the armed forces self-sufficient. Iranian officials have made clear that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will be never open for negotiations.



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U.S.-Saudi Defense Pact Tied to Israel Deal, Palestinian Demands Put Aside

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Saudi Arabia is determined to secure a military pact requiring the United States to defend the kingdom in return for opening ties with Israel and will not hold up a deal even if Israel does not offer major concessions to Palestinians in their bid for statehood, three regional sources familiar with the talks said. A pact might fall short of the cast-iron, NATO-style defence guarantees the kingdom initially sought when the issue was first discussed between Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Joe Biden during the U.S. president's visit to Saudi Arabia in July 2022. Instead, a U.S. source said it could look like treaties Washington has with Asian states or, if that would not win U.S. Congress approval, it could be similar to a U.S. agreement with Bahrain, where the U.S. Navy Fifth Fleet is based. Such an agreement would not need congressional backing. Washington could also sweeten any deal by designating Saudi Arabia a Major Non-NATO Ally, a status already given to Israel, the U.S. source said. But all the sources said Saudi Arabia would not settle for less than binding assurances of U.S. protection if it faced attack, such as the Sept. 14, 2019 missile strikes on its oil sites that rattled world markets. Riyadh and Washington blamed Iran, the kingdom's regional rival, although Tehran denied having a role. Agreements giving the world's biggest oil exporter U.S. protection in return for normalisation with Israel would reshape the Middle East by bringing together two longtime foes and binding Riyadh to Washington after China's inroads in the region. For Biden, it would be a diplomatic victory to vault before the 2024 U.S. election. The Palestinians could get some Israeli restrictions eased but such moves would fall short of their aspirations for a state. As with other Arab-Israeli deals forged over the decades, the Palestinian core demand for statehood would take a back seat, the three regional sources familiar with the talks said. "The normalisation will be between Israel and Saudi Arabia. If the Palestinians oppose it the kingdom will continue in its path," said one of the regional sources. "Saudi



Arabia supports a peace plan for the Palestinians, but this time it wanted something for Saudi Arabia, not just for the Palestinians." The Saudi government did not respond to emailed questions about this article. A U.S. official, who like others declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter, said the parameters of a defense pact were still being worked out, adding that what was being discussed "would not be a treaty alliance or anything like that ... It would be a mutual defense understanding, less than a full treaty." The official said it would be more like the U.S. relationship with Israel, which receives the most advanced U.S. weapons and holds joint air force and missile defense drills. A source in Washington familiar with the discussions said MbS had asked for a NATO-style treaty but said Washington was reluctant to go as far as NATO's Article 5

commitment that an attack on one ally is considered an attack on all. The source said Biden's aides could consider a pact patterned on those with Japan and other Asian allies, under which the U.S. pledges military support but is less explicit about whether U.S. troops would be deployed. However, the source said some U.S. lawmakers might resist such a pact. Another template, which would not need congressional approval, would be the agreement signed with Bahrain on Sept. 13, in which the U.S. pledged to "deter and confront any external aggression" but also said the two governments would consult to determine what, if any, action would be taken. The source in Washington said Saudi Arabia could be designated a Major Non-NATO Ally, a step which had long been considered. This status, which several Arab states such as Egypt have, comes with a range of benefits, such as training. The second of the regional sources said Riyadh was compromising in some demands to help secure a deal, including over its plans for civilian nuclear technology. The source said Saudi Arabia was ready to sign Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act, establishing a framework for U.S. peaceful nuclear cooperation, a move Riyadh previously refused to take. The Persian Gulf source said the kingdom was prepared to accept a pact that did not match a NATO Article 5 guarantee but said the U.S. had to commit to protecting Saudi Arabia if its territory was attacked. The source also said a deal could be similar to Bahrain's agreement but with extra commitments. In response to emailed questions about details in this article, a U.S. State Department spokesperson said: "Many of the key elements of a pathway towards normalisation are now on the table and there is a broad understanding of those elements, which we will not discuss publicly." "There's still lots of work to do, and we're working through it," the spokesperson added, saying there was not yet a formal framework and stakeholders were working on legal and other elements. The spokesperson did not address specifics about the U.S.-Saudi defense pact in the response.

Slovaks Head to Tight Polls Mulling Ukraine Aid



BRATISLAVA (Dispatches) - Slovak voters cast ballots on Saturday in a tight early election seen as key to the country's foreign policy focus and support of Ukraine for the years ahead. Polling stations across the EU and NATO member of 5.4 million people opened at 0500 GMT and closed at 2000 GMT, with exit polls expected shortly afterwards and the final results due on Sunday morning. Two parties fared equally well in the final opinion polls -- the left-wing Smer-SD of populist former premier Robert Fico and the centrist Progressive Slovakia of European Parliament vice-speaker Michal Simecka. Both parties scored around 20 percent backing, which means the likely election winner will need help from smaller parties to form a majority coalition in the 150-seat parliament. The new government will replace a wobbly centre-right coalition in power since 2020, which has seen three cabinets installed over the period. In the heated election campaign involving several brawls between candidates, Fico has taken aim at the EU and NATO as well as the LGBTQ+ minority. He has also rejected providing any further military aid to Ukraine, which has been battling a Russian invasion since February 2022. Simecka has vowed to rid Slovakia of "the past", with reference to Fico's three terms as prime minister in 2006-2010 and 2012-2018, and is urging Slovaks to "elect the future". "These elections, I think they are deciding about the future orientation of our country in foreign policy, defence and security policy, but also about... the future of democracy," independent political analyst Grigorij Meseznikov told AFP. The campaign was marked by disinformation affecting half of the nation, according to analyses. Even during the two-day campaign moratorium ahead of the vote, Simecka was targeted by a deepfake video. Sitting on a park bench in central Bratislava with a friend, one voter, Sona Hankina, said she would back Progressive Slovakia after using an "elimination method" -- for lack of a better option. "The stakes are high, but it's obvious that nothing will really change," the young woman told AFP. "If I didn't have a little daughter, I would not even live in this country. So it's primarily because of her that I'll go to the polls." Slovak President Zuzana Caputova told AFP she would tap the election winner to form the next cabinet. The choice of coalition partners is fairly broad, with 11 parties expected to win parliamentary seats. Fico is likely to woo Smer-SD's spin-off Hlas-SD, led by former Smer-SD vice-chairman Peter Pellegrini. Pellegrini replaced Fico as premier in 2018 after Fico had to step down amid nationwide protests following the murder of journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée. Kuciak uncovered links between the Italian mafia and Fico's government in his last article published posthumously. Also rejecting Ukraine aid, Fico's other potential partners are the newly formed far-right Republic and the Slovak National Party (SNS), with whom he had already ruled twice. Progressive Slovakia will in turn be looking at the parties of the outgoing centre-right coalition -- Freedom and Solidarity, OLaNO, We Are Family and For People. "Today, the positions of both groupings, national populist and pro-democratic, are more or less equal concerning the support of these parties," said Meseznikov. "But the advantage of the anti-system forces is that they are less fragmented and... more consolidated."

China's Economy Stabilizes, Factory Activity Returns to Expansion



BEIJING (Dispatches) - China's factory activity expanded for the first time in six months in September, an official survey showed on Saturday, adding to a run of indicators suggesting the world's second-largest economy has begun to bottom out. The purchasing managers' index (PMI), based on a survey of major manufacturers, rose to 50.2 in September from 49.7, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, edging above the 50-point level demarcating contraction in activity from expansion. The reading beat a forecast of 50.0. The PMI, the first official statistics for September, adds to signs of stabilisation in the economy, which had sagged after an initial burst of momentum early in the year when China's ultra-restrictive COVID-19 policies were lifted. Preliminary signs of improvement had emerged in August, with factory output and retail sales growth accelerating while declines of exports and imports narrowed and deflationary pressures eased. Profits at industrial firms posted a surprise 17.2% jump in August, reversing July's 6.7% decline. "The manufacturing PMI, plus the good industrial profit figures, suggest that the economy is gradually bottoming out," said Zhou Hao, chief economist at Guotai Junan International. China's non-manufacturing PMI, which incorporates sub-indices for service sector activity and construction, also rose, coming in at 51.7 versus August's 51.0. The composite PMI, including manufacturing and non-manufacturing activity, climbed to 52.0 in September from 51.3. Near-term data on the radar of economists include consumer spending for the longest public holiday this year. "Golden Week" kicked off on Friday with the Mid-Autumn Festival,

which will be followed by the National Day break through Oct. 6. Passenger travel by rail on Friday reached 20 million trips, a single-day record, state media reported on Saturday, in a bullish start to what authorities had forecast to be "the most popular Golden Week in history". More stable economic indicators will be welcomed by policymakers as they continue to grapple with a property sector debt crisis that has rattled global markets. The authorities have announced a series of measures to shore up the property market, including cutting mortgage rates, although the sector is far from being out of the woods. New home prices fell the fastest in 10 months in August and property investment declined for an 18th straight month. China Evergrande Group), the world's most indebted property developer with more than \$300 billion in liabilities, said on Thursday its founder was being investigated over suspected "illegal crimes". The Asian Development Bank last week trimmed its 2023 economic growth forecast for China to 4.9% from a July forecast of 5.0% due to the weakness in the property sector. Analysts say more policy support will be needed to ensure China's economy can hit the government's growth target of about 5% this year. "China's economy stabilized partly driven by the loosening of property sector policies," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief economist of Pinpoint Asset Management. "The key issue going forward is whether fiscal policy will become more supportive. I think it will, but timing-wise the change of fiscal policy stance may happen next year instead of this year."

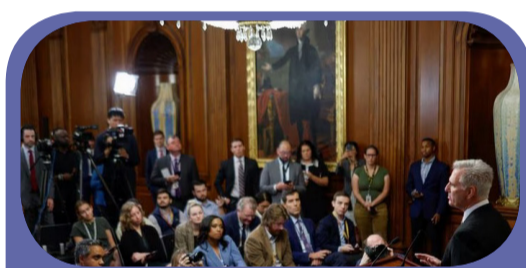
Suicide Bombings at Two Mosques in Pakistan Kill at Least 57

QUETTA (Dispatches) - Suicide bombings ripped through two mosques in Pakistan, killing at least 57 people, including seven children, as believers marked the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, police and health officials said. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks, from which the death toll could climb, with many people seriously injured and others having been trapped beneath the wreckage. In the first blast, in Mastung in the southwestern province of Balochistan, the bomber detonated his explosives near a police vehicle where people were gathering for a procession, senior police official Munir

Ahmed said. At least 52 people were killed, according to district health official Abdul Rasheed, including the children who were aged nine to 11. At least 58 people were injured. "The injured were crying for help," witness Munir Ahmed Shahwani said. "I saw at least 25 bodies on the spot, which included small children," he said, adding people were looking for their loved ones. A deputy superintendent of police was among those killed as he oversaw security arrangements in the area, police said. "Nawaz Gishkori tried to stop the suicide bomber, but he blew himself up after getting close to him," Javed Lehri, a senior police officer said.

The gathering, in which people were carrying flags and banners, was at a mosque belonging to the Bareilvi sect, generally considered more moderate than hardline Islamic sects such as Salafism. Some hardline sects consider veneration of the Prophet Muhammad as heresy. The second attack, in neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, killed five people at a mosque, according to rescue officials. The roof collapsed, broadcaster Geo News said, trapping about 30 to 40 people under the rubble. The attack involved two explosions, one of which was at the mosque gate and the other in the compound, an official said. A surge in

militant attacks in Pakistan's western provinces has cast a shadow on election preparations and public campaigning in the run-up to January's national election, but until now the attacks had mostly targeted security forces. Both provinces border Afghanistan and have suffered attacks in recent years by Islamist militants aiming to overthrow Pakistan's government and install their own brand of strict Islamic law. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar, in Saudi Arabia for the religious pilgrimage of Umrah, condemned the blasts and called for full support for victims.



Republicans Reject Own Funding Bill, Gov't Shutdown Imminent

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - Hardline Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives on Friday rejected a bill proposed by their leader to temporarily fund the government, making it all but certain that federal agencies will partially shut down beginning on Sunday. In a 232-198 vote, the House defeated a measure that would extend government funding by 30 days and avert a shutdown. That bill would have slashed spending and restricted immigration, Republican priorities that had little chance of passing the Democratic-controlled Senate. The defeat left Republicans - who control the chamber by 221-212 - without a clear strategy to avert a shutdown that would close national parks, disrupt pay for up to 4 million federal workers and hobble everything from financial oversight to scientific research if funding is not extended past 12:01 a.m. ET (0401 GMT) on Sunday. After the vote, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy said the chamber might still pass a funding extension without the conservative policies that had alienated Democrats. But he declined to say what would happen next. The chamber is expected to hold more votes on Saturday. "It's only a failure if you quit," he told reporters. It was not clear whether the Senate would act in time, either. The chamber was due on Saturday afternoon to take up a bipartisan bill that would fund the government through Nov. 17, but procedural hurdles could delay a final vote until Tuesday. U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said on Friday that a government shutdown would "undermine" U.S. economic progress by idling programs for small businesses and children and could delay major infrastructure improvements. The shutdown would be the fourth in a decade and just four months after a similar standoff brought the federal government within days of defaulting on its \$31 trillion debt. The repeated brinkmanship has raised worries on Wall Street, where the Moody's ratings agency has warned it could damage U.S. creditworthiness. Biden warned that a shutdown could take a heavy toll on the armed forces. "We can't be playing politics while our troops stand in the breach. It's an absolute dereliction of duty," Biden, a Democrat, said at a retirement ceremony for Mark Milley, a senior general. McCarthy had hoped the Republican spending bill's border provisions would have won over holdouts who so far have defied efforts to avert a shutdown. In the end, 21 hardline House Republicans sided with Democrats to defeat the measure. "There are members who don't care whether the government stays open or it shuts down," said Republican Representative Kat Cammack told reporters. "The ones that I believe are OK with a shutdown have never been through a shutdown." Holdouts say Congress should focus on writing detailed spending bills that would cover the entire fiscal year, rather than temporary extensions, even if doing so prompts a shutdown. The House has passed four full-year bills so far, though they stand no chance of winning Senate approval.