

Iran Has Condemned in the Strongest Terms an Earlier Attack by the Israeli Regime on a Hospital in Gaza City That Has Claimed the Lives of Hundreds of People

Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) for Economic Affairs Mohammad Shirijian Said That the Situation of Iran's Foreign Exchange (Forex) Reserves Is Increasing Due to the Growth of Oil and Non-Oil Exports



Top General Urges Int'l Bodies to Break Silence on Israeli Massacre in Gaza

TEHRAN (PressTV) - Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Mohammad Baqeri has urged human rights organizations and international institutions to break their silence on the Israeli massacre of defenseless people and stop the occupying regime's genocide. Baqeri, in a statement on Wednesday, denounced the Israeli bombardment of the Anglican-run al-Ahli al-Arab Hospital, also known as the Baptist Hospital, in central Gaza, which resulted in the loss of at least 500 lives and wounded hundreds of others, including women and children. Remaining silent on Israeli atrocities or issuing a merely diplomatic statement would be tantamount to cooperation and collaboration with the bloodthirsty Zionist regime, the top Iranian general noted. Baqeri asked the United Nations to convene an extraordinary meeting to put an end to Israeli war crimes and put the senior officials of the "criminal" Tel Aviv regime on trial for their actions. The high-ranking Iranian general also called on Muslim states to mobilize their forces and join hands

to avert the "insane genocide" being perpetrated by Israel in Gaza, and prepare the ground for the medical treatment of thousands of Palestinians, mostly women and children, who have been injured in Israeli strikes. Meanwhile, the secretary of Iran's High Council for Human Rights said full-fledged ethnic and racial cleansing is taking place in Gaza. "More than a thousand people were killed and wounded in cold blood in an attack by the Zionist regime on a hospital. This came on the same day that [the United States of] America, Britain and France vetoed a [Russian-drafted] resolution to stop the war," Kazem Gharibabadi wrote in a post published on X, formerly known as Twitter. Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after the Palestinian Hamas resistance group waged a surprise attack, dubbed Operation Al-Aqsa Storm, against the occupying entity. So far, 3,500 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli air raids, including more than 1,000 children and 1,000 women.



Tehran, Tashkent to Discuss Expanding Tech Cooperation

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Vice President for Science, Technology and Knowledge-based Economy Rouhollah Dehqani Firouzabadi has traveled to Tashkent to discuss developing technological cooperation with Uzbekistan's Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation Ibrahim Abdurakhmanov. Dehqani Firouzabadi has been invited to attend the International Inno-week 2023, IRNA reported. He is also scheduled to meet Uzbekistan's industry minister. Apart from visiting the exhibition in which 25 Iranian knowledge-based companies are taking part, Dehqani Firouzabadi plans to visit the Iran House of Innovation and Technology in Tashkent, lay the groundwork for concluding several technology contracts, and expanding knowledge-based exports. The Inno-Week of Uzbekistan has been held annually since 2018. It is attended by local and foreign companies, investors, representatives of foreign diplomatic missions, entrepreneurs, as well as representatives of ministries and departments. This year, the event is being held from October 16 to October 20. On June 18, the Iran House of Innovation and Technology (iHiT) in the city of Tashkent was inaugurated, aimed at introducing knowledge-based, technological, and creative products of Iran to Uzbekistan, and facilitating scientific interactions and cooperation between the two countries, IRNA reported. The private sector invested about \$4 million to establish the iHiT Tashkent. The two sides signed a technological cooperation agreement worth \$10 million in the field of energy under the support of the house of innovation and technology. Exporting technological products of Iranian knowledge-based companies is one of the important and key programs of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, and in this regard over the past years, with the support of the Vice Presidency for Science and Technology, the Iranian houses of innovation have been set up in several countries to develop the global market for knowledge-based products. These centers have already been set up in countries such as Russia, Turkey, China, Syria, Kenya, Armenia, and Iraq.

UNSC Sanctions on Missile-Related Activities End

TEHRAN (PressTV) - The Iranian Foreign Ministry has announced that the Islamic Republic, as of October 18, will no longer be subject to any restriction with regard to its ballistic missile-related activities and transfers by the United Nations Security Council. The Ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that the entire restrictions imposed on the Islamic Republic's ballistic missile-related activities and its associated services and technology have "unconditionally" ended. The termination came into force on October 18, eight years after the 2015 Iran nuclear deal with major world powers, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). "As of today, 18 October 2023, the last part of unjustly imposed restrictions by the United Nations Security Council on missile-related activities and its associated services and technology to/from Islamic Republic of Iran, including asset freeze and financial restrictions on certain Iranian individuals and entities, terminated unconditionally," the statement said. "According to the provisions of 2231 UNSC Resolution, termination of these restrictions, does not require any resolution, statement or any other action in the context of the UNSC and occurred automatically," it added. The Iranian Foreign Ministry also said cooperation in all military and defense areas would be carried out, without any restriction, based on the needs and discretion of the Islamic Republic of Iran, within the framework of bilateral contracts with other countries. Pointing to the provisions of UNSC 2231, the statement noted, "In accordance with paragraph 3 of Annex B, Iran is no longer 'called upon' by the Security Council 'not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles.'" The Foreign Ministry said the Islamic Republic, by recalling the provisions of the UN charter, in particular article 25 as well as provisions of UNSC 2231, emphasizes the commitments of all member states to effectuate the termination of the above-mentioned restrictions at the national level. "Iran expects all States to modify and revise, in the case of existence, any relevant restriction or sanction, according to their domestic legal system," it added. The statement underlined that any measure, at the national or regional level, aiming at imposing sanctions or restrictions on defensive engagements and cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, is in contradiction with the termination of restrictions of UNSC 2231, and that Tehran reserves its right to take appropriate measures to secure its national interests. "The defense doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been on the basis of domestic capabilities and capacities, and deeply rooted in resistance and power of Iranian Nation. Unconventional arms and weapons of mass destruction has no place in the defense doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran," the statement said. "Moreover, the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue to take necessary measures to strengthen its defense capabilities in order to protect its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity against any aggression and to counter the menace of terrorism in the region," it added. Stressing that the Iranian military capabilities, including ballistic missiles, are exclusively for self-defense, the statement said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran continues to insist that all sanctions and restrictive measures introduced and applied against Iran, including those imposed under the pretext of its nuclear program, have been baseless, unjust and unlawful." Last month, the three European signatories to the JCPOA -- the UK, Germany, and France -- said they plan not to terminate their anti-Iran sanctions, including ballistic missile bans, arguing that Iran has been in non-compliance with the deal since 2019.



Lukashenko Urges Expansion of Cooperation With Iran

TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has called for the expansion of cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran in the face of Western pressure and sanctions. In a meeting with Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber in the Belarusian capital of Minsk on Tuesday, Lukashenko pointed to US-led attempts to stoke tensions across the West Asia region amid ongoing Israeli aggression on the besieged Gaza Strip. "The West is spearheading the Middle East war against Iran, and Tehran and Minsk should cooperate more closely to counter Western attacks," the Belarusian president said. Touching on the sanctions against Iran and Belarus, Lukashenko added, "The pressure on our countries is unprecedented, but you have already learned to resist such pressures to some extent and your experience is valuable for us." He expressed his surprise about the Islamic Republic's great capabilities to withstand the West's restrictive measures, saying "Iran has not reduced the level of its development; on the contrary, it has significantly increased it." Underlining the need to "work faster" to expand Tehran-Minsk cooperation, Lukashenko said if the two sides reach an agreement on something, it should be implemented in due course. "The most important issue for us is time, not sanctions or pressure; we must not lose time," he added. Mokhber, at the head of a high-ranking delegation, arrived in Minsk earlier in the day to confer with the country's senior officials on the most important mutual and international issues. The day-long visit, which came after an official invitation by the Belarusian prime minister, is expected to result in the signing of cooperation documents between Tehran and Minsk as well as further consolidation of their ties. In a meeting with Belarusian Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko, Mokhber called for

the expansion of economic and trade relations between the two sides in parallel with their bilateral political ties. Pointing to the 30-year-long political relations between Iran and Belarus, Mokhber said the economic ties between the two countries have not expanded in proportion to their high level of political relations, and that Iran and Belarus are determined to deepen and strengthen their economic and commercial cooperation. "By boosting interaction and removing obstacles, the level of commercial and economic exchanges between Iran and Belarus can be increased to one billion dollars per year," he added. Mokhber also underlined that the two countries should use their national currencies in payments for their agreements and exchanges.



Raisi Urges Brazil to Mediate in Gaza Crisis for Peace

TEHRAN (IRNA) - President Ebrahim Raisi said that Brazil should mediate to stop the Israeli regime and its western backers' war on Gaza for the sake of world peace. President Raisi made the remarks in a telephone conversation with his Brazilian counterpart Lula da Silva. The Iranian president said that the Resistance's recent actions in the occupied Palestine were a response to the decades-long occupation, highlighting "the Zionists' foolish actions against the oppressed people of Gaza will not help to resolve the problem, but instead escalate the conflict and spread it to other parts of the region." He noted that the Israeli regime is taking revenge for its defeat against Palestinians in the recent Al-Aqsa Storm Operation, strongly condemning the siege on the Gaza Strip and cutting off water, food and humanitarian supplies to the oppressed people as inhuman actions by the Tel Aviv regime in a bid to make up for its huge defeat at the hands of the Resistance groups. President Raisi described the Zionist regime's actions as a clear example of war crimes and crimes against humanity and emphasized the need for all countries to play a role in countering such savage actions. The Iranian president called on Brazil, as the interim president of the UN Security Council and a big BRICS member, to intervene for the sake of world peace before it is too late, voicing Iran's preparedness to help Brazil in playing that role on the international stage. Elsewhere in the telephone conversation, Raisi noted that the relations between Iran and Brazil are developing and growing in the framework of BRICS. He pointed to the importance of the role and position of the two countries in international relations as leading countries in maintaining and developing world peace, expressing hope that Tehran and Brasilia

could play a role in promoting peace and stability in the world by cooperating and mobilizing a diplomatic capabilities. Brazilian President, for his part, asked Raisi to convey his warm greetings to Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and the people of Iran. He agreed with Raisi about the factors behind the crisis in Gaza and the need to immediately stop the attacks on Gaza, establish a ceasefire and reopen the crossings. The Brazilian president emphasized the need for the safe corridors leading to Gaza to send humanitarian aid and relief to the wounded in that besieged enclave. Lula da Silva considered the Israeli regime's policy of forced evacuations of Gaza residents as impossible and unacceptable, adding that the Zionists attack defenseless women and children and destroy schools and hospitals under the guise of targeting the resistance groups. He pointed out that a draft resolution, which entails the views and priorities emphasized by the Islamic Republic of Iran has been submitted to a Security Council meeting. The president of Brazil also expressed satisfaction with the growing trend of Tehran-Brazil relations and assured that there is firm will in his country to strengthen and develop relations with Iran in all fields.



Private Sectors of Iran, UAE Stress Planning to Boost Cooperation



TEHRAN (Dispatches) - Head of the Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA) Hossein Selahvarzi, and Chairman of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the United Arab Emirates Abdullah Al Mazrui have stressed the need for planning to boost cooperation between the two chambers, the ICCIMA portal reported on Wednesday. Speaking in a meeting with Al Mazrui, Selahvarzi said: "Identifying the obstacles and problems on the way to the development of the relations between the two countries and the effort and follow-up of the chambers to remove these obstacles is a prerequisite for increasing the level of trade relations between Iran and the UAE." He called on the Emirati official to follow up on solving the problems of Iranian companies in his country, saying: "Problems related to the issuance of work visas for Iranian experts based in the UAE, adopting new mechanisms to solve the problem of banking and financial transactions between the businessmen of the two countries, activating a corresponding joint chamber in the UAE and the lack of an arbitration mechanism to resolve possible disputes between Iranian and Emirati businessmen through a joint institution are among the problems on the way of Iranian companies' activities in the UAE." Iran exported non-oil commodities valued at \$3 billion to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the first six months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 21-September 22), the head of the Islamic Republic of Iran Customs Administration (IRICA) announced. According to Mohammad Reza Zamanfar, the UAE was the third top export destination of Iranian non-oil goods in the mentioned six-month period. On September 10, the Financial Times reported that trade between Iran and the United Arab Emirates has increased significantly as Abu Dhabi eased restrictions on business activity between the two neighbors. The UAE has eased some limitations on corporate registrations and the issuance of visas to companies from Iran in recent months, Financial Times reported, quoting business people and officials. Iranian financiers are also exploring how to enhance bilateral trade by creating financial mechanisms to fund legitimate transactions, the report added quoting the sources. The UAE is Iran's second-largest trade partner. The trade between Iran and the UAE has recovered from a pandemic slump of \$11 billion in 2020/2021 to \$24 billion in the 12 months ending in March, according to Iranian data.

LICENCE HOLDER: SOKHAN GOSTAR INSTITUTE

Switchboard: (+98) (21) 44253448
 Public Relations Tel: (+98) (21) 44253450
 Editorial Board: 44253449
 Public Relations Fax: (+98) (21) 44253395
 Advertising Department:

Tel/Fax: (+98) (21) 44253335-9/44253234
 Website: http://www.irannewsdaily.com
 E-Mail Address: info@irannewsdaily.com
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IRAN NEWS

In Deadly Day for Gaza, Hospital Strike Kills Hundreds



GAZA (Dispatches) - Gaza's health ministry spokesman said an Israeli air strike on Tuesday killed hundreds of people at a hospital in the Palestinian enclave, but Israel said a Palestinian barrage had caused the blast. The death toll was by far the highest of any single incident in Gaza during the current violence, triggering protests in the occupied West Bank, Istanbul and Amman. The Palestinian Authority's health minister, Mai Alkaila, accused Israel of "a massacre" at Al-Ahli al-Arabi Hospital. The strike killed hundreds of people and occurred during Israel's intense 11-day bombing campaign in Gaza. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said "barbaric terrorists" in Gaza had attacked the hospital, not Israel's military. The health ministry spokesman, Ashraf Al-Qudra, said early on Wednesday that hundreds were killed and that rescue workers were still removing bodies from the rubble. In the first hours after the blast, a Gaza civil defense chief said 300 people were killed, while health ministry sources put the figure at 500. Israeli Military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari told reporters rockets fired by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad militant group passed by the hospital at the time of the strike, which he said hit the facility's parking lot. Another spokesman, Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Conriscus, told CNN the military intercepted a conversation in which militants acknowledged a misfire. He said the military would release a recording of the conversation. Islamic Jihad denied that any of its rockets were involved

in the hospital blast, saying it did not have any activity in or around Gaza City at that time. Iran-backed Islamic Jihad took part in the Hamas-led assault on Israel on Oct. 7 and, like Hamas, has fired numerous salvos of rockets into Israel. News of the hospital strike and high death toll prompted condemnation from many countries on the eve of U.S. President Joseph Biden's visit to Israel. Russia and the United Arab Emirates demanded a U.N. Security Council meeting and clashes erupted in the West Bank. Earlier on Tuesday the United Nations said an Israeli strike had hit one of its schools where at least 4,000 people were sheltering. The agency said six people were killed and dozens injured by the strike. Israel's military said it was looking into that report. While briefing reporters, Hagari cast doubt on the Palestinian death count in the hospital strike and claimed there was no direct hit on the facility. He said military drone footage showed "a kind of hit in the parking lot." He said the military did have an Israeli air force operation in the area around the time of the hospital blast, "but it was with a different kind of ammunition that does not ... fit the footage that we have (of) the hospital." On the death count, Hagari said: "I don't know how many people (were) hit here, even. Nobody can verify it yet." Biden said he was "outraged and deeply saddened by the explosion" at the hospital and loss of life. In a statement, he said he spoke with the leaders of Jordan and Israel and "directed my national security team to continue gathering information

about what exactly happened." Health authorities in Gaza said prior to Tuesday's incident at least 3,000 people had been killed in Israel's 11 days of bombing since Hamas militants rampaged into Israeli towns on Oct. 7, killing more than 1,300 soldiers and civilians. Displaced people fleeing the Israeli bombardment have flocked to hospitals, seeking refuge around them in hopes they will be safer. Last week Israel ordered all people living in the northern half of the Gaza Strip, which is only 45 km (25 miles) long and home to 2.3 million people, to leave their homes and go south. However, the air strikes have pounded targets throughout the enclave and despite expectations of an Israeli ground offensive, some displaced people have started returning north. The World Health Organisation said the attack on the hospital was "unprecedented in its scale". It said earlier on Tuesday there had been 115 attacks on healthcare facilities in Gaza and the majority of its hospitals were not functioning. Israel has cut off all power, water, food, fuel and medicine supplies into Gaza since the Hamas attack, intensifying an existing blockade of the enclave. Countries including Canada, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and Qatar condemned the strike on the hospital. In the West Bank, where the internationally recognised Palestinian Authority operates, Palestinian protesters clashed with Palestinian security forces, who fired tear gas to disperse them. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas cancelled a meeting with Biden.

Ukraine Uses U.S. Long-Range Missiles to Strike Moscow-Occupied Territories



KYIV (Dispatches) - Ukrainian forces used U.S.-supplied long-range ATACMS missiles for the first time, inflicting heavy damage on two airfields in Russian-occupied areas, with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saying on Tuesday that the weapons had "proven themselves". The Ukrainian military had issued reports throughout the day about successful, high-precision strikes on airfields near Luhansk in Ukraine's east and in Berdiansk in the south, on the Sea of Azov, both under Russian control. "Today, special thanks to the United States. Our agreements with President Biden are being implemented. Very accurately - ATACMS proved themselves," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address. Ukraine had repeatedly asked the U.S. administration for ATACMS (Army Tactical Missile Systems). Kyiv pledged not to use them inside Russia's territory but said the powerful weapons would alter the course of the 20-month-old war. Deploying the weapons would allow Ukrainian forces to disrupt previously unreachable supply lines, air bases and rail networks used by Russia in occupied territories, senior officials said. Ukrainian Special Forces, without initially mentioning the ATACMS, said that nine helicopters, an air defense missile launcher, runways and other equipment had been destroyed, and heavy losses inflicted on Russian forces. There was no official comment from Russia. But a Moscow-installed official in partially Moscow-controlled Zaporizhzhia region, which is home to Berdiansk, said that cluster munitions from the ATACMS missiles were found there on Tuesday. Earlier, Rogov said that Russian air defences had ensured that a Ukrainian air attack near Berdiansk was not successful. Zelenskyy's comments mark the first confirmed use in Ukraine of the ATACMS, which can fly up to 190 miles (310 km). The country's Defence Ministry promised on X, formerly Twitter, that there would be "more news to come". "As you can see, it is now possible to hit targets impeccably, with great precision, giving the enemy no chance," Ukrainian Air Force spokesperson Yuriy Ilnat told national television. Kyiv's Western partners have been careful about supplying long-range missiles needed for its four-month-old counteroffensive, fearing it would provoke the Kremlin. It is not clear how many ATACMS missiles Ukraine has. ATACMS are designed for "deep attack of enemy second-echelon forces," a U.S. Army website says. Ukraine's presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said a new chapter of the war had begun. "There are no more safe places for Russian troops within the ... internationally recognized borders of Ukraine," he wrote on X. Russian military bloggers commented on the attacks during the day, with Telegram channel Fighterbomber saying Russian forces had suffered losses of personnel and equipment in strikes carried out with ATACMS. Citing two unidentified U.S. officials, CNN said Washington had secretly delivered ATACMS to Kyiv. The Wall Street Journal said Ukraine had fired the ATACMS for the first time on Tuesday. Since starting a counteroffensive in June, Kyiv has frequently attacked military targets in Russian-occupied areas, but it has failed to liberate significant territory from Russian occupation. Oleksandr Shtupun, spokesperson for Ukraine's southern group of forces, told national television that there had been no letup in Russia's week-old assault on the devastated town of Avdiivka in the east, with Ukrainian forces repelling 10 attacks. Shtupun also said Ukrainian forces advancing southward to the Sea of Azov had registered "partial success" west of Verbove, one of a cluster of villages it is trying to capture. The Ukrainian military said Russia was hoping to advance as far as possible towards the town of Kupiansk in northeastern Ukraine before winter.



Indonesia Ruling Party's Presidential Candidate to Announce Running Mate

JAKARTA (Dispatches) - The presidential candidate of Indonesia's ruling party will announce his choice of running mate, amid last-minute maneuvering by the country's political heavyweights to shore up alliances ahead of the 2024 election. The world's third-largest democracy is set to vote in February to replace President Joko Widodo or Jokowi, who has served the maximum two terms allowed. Ganjar Pranowo, 54, of the Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle (PDI-P) will "most likely" pick senior cabinet minister Mahfud MD, according to Osman Sapta Odang, head of one of four parties backing the ticket. Opinion polls show that Ganjar, a former Central Java governor, is neck-and-neck with Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, 72, who is making a third run at the presidency after having narrowly lost to Jokowi in 2014 and 2019.



Putin Praises Dear Friend Xi, Pitches Russia's Northern Sea Route

BEIJING (Dispatches) - President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday praised Chinese President Xi Jinping for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and invited global investment in the Northern Sea Route which he said could deepen trade between east and west. Speaking on his second known trip outside the former Soviet Union since the Ukraine war, Putin thanked the Chinese leader for his invitation and said Russia could play a key role in China's modern day revival of the ancient Silk Road. Putin called Xi his "dear friend" and heaped praise on the Belt and Road Initiative for bringing the world together. Shortly before Putin starting speaking, a handful of European delegates, including former French Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin, walked out of the room, a Reuters witness said. "Russia and China, like most countries of the world, share the desire for equal, mutually beneficial cooperation in order to achieve universal sustainable and long-term economic progress and social well-being, while respecting the diversity of civilization and the right of each State to its own development model," Putin said. Putin said the BRI fitted with Russia which he said was developing a host of transport infrastructure to criss-cross the world's biggest

country, notably from the Northern Sea Route which runs from Murmansk near Russia's border with Norway eastwards to the Bering Strait near Alaska. "As for the Northern Sea Route, Russia does not just offer its partners to actively use its transit potential, I will say more: we invite interested states to participate directly in its development, and we are ready to provide reliable ice breaker navigation, communication and supply," Putin said. "Starting next year, navigation for ice-class cargo ships along the entire length of the Northern Sea Route will become year-round." Putin, who has attended previous BRI summits, brought a senior delegation from Moscow. Among the senior Russian officials were Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who is due to visit North Korea shortly, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, his top oil and gas point man, and Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko. Also included were Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, Kremlin economic aide Maxim Oreshkin, Kremlin foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov, Economy Minister Maxim Reshetnikov and Igor Morgulov, Russia's ambassador to China.

Turkey Extends Syria, Iraq Operations by Another Two Years

ISTANBUL (Dispatches) - Turkey's parliament on Tuesday extended the military's authorization to launch cross-border operations in neighbouring Syria and Iraq by two more years. They were first approved in 2013 to support the international campaign against the Islamic State (IS) group, and has since been renewed annually. In 2021, it was renewed for the first time for two years, giving President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a longer window in which to pursue campaigns against Kurdish militias in the restive region. "It's essential to Turkey's national security to take necessary measures in line with the rights arising from international law against all kinds of risks, threats and actions that may pose a danger to Turkey's national security," the motion signed by Erdogan says. It also says Turkey would welcome the deployment of foreign troops on its soil with the ultimate goal of fighting terror groups as per circumstances set by the president. That clause drew strong criticism from the main opposition CHP party which has campaigned for "no foreign boots" on Turkish soil. "As a nationalist, I don't want any foreign troops to set foot on Turkish soil," the party's leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu said last week. CHP lawmakers voted against the motion on Tuesday. Turkey has intensified its cross-border air raids against Kurdish targets in northeastern Syria and northern Iraq in retaliation for the October 1 bombing in Ankara. That injured two policemen and was claimed by a branch of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK, which has waged a decades-long insurgency against Turkey, is considered a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies. Turkish officials said the two assailants who died in the Ankara attack came from Syria. Turkey's operation in Syria primarily targeted oil and other energy facilities controlled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). The group

comprises an integral part of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) -- the Kurds' de facto army in the area -- that spearheaded the battle to dislodge Islamic State group jihadists from the region in 2019. Ankara considers the YPG a terror group with links to the PKK.



Venezuela Gov't, Opposition Agree on 2024 Elections



BRIDGETOWN (Dispatches) - Venezuela's government and opposition agreed in a fresh round of negotiations Tuesday that presidential elections will be held in the second half of next year, with international observers present. An agreement to this effect was signed in Barbados in Norway-mediated talks, with an undertaking to invite "technical election observer missions" including from the European Union, United Nations, African Union and Inter-American Union of Electoral Organizations. An exact election date will be defined by the country's National Electoral Council, according to the signed text. The two sides resumed talks Tuesday seeking to end the country's political and economic crisis, after a nearly year-long suspension. "This is the first step in a much broader agreement," the head of the government delegation Jorge Rodriguez said in Bridgetown. For opposition representative Gerardo Blyde, Tuesday's agreement was a "solid step" forward. The opposition, backed by several countries including the United States, did not recognize President Nicolas Maduro's 2018 re-election in a vote widely dismissed as fraudulent. The following year, Washington ramped up sanctions against Caracas first imposed in 2015 over the brutal repression of anti-government protests. Maduro's government is hoping the latest rapprochement will lead to an easing of sanctions. The energy crisis sparked by Russia's war on Ukraine saw global efforts renewed to solve the crisis in Venezuela, which has the world's largest oil reserves. Last year, US delegates went to Caracas to meet Maduro, even though it does not recognize him as a legitimate leader. After initial talks between the government and the opposition, Washington granted a six-month license to US energy giant Chevron to operate in Venezuela and has voiced a willingness to ease sanctions further in return for progress. Earlier this month, the two countries struck a deal under which Venezuela would accept back nationals deported from the United States after arriving there illegally.