

Jannati re-elected as chief of Iran's Assembly of Experts



● MOHAMMADHOSEIN MOVAHEDINEJAD/TASNIM

Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati was re-elected as the chairman of Iran's Assembly of Experts on Tuesday. Ayatollah Jannati was re-elected during a meeting of the Assembly of Experts in Tehran, Tasnim News Agency reported. Incumbent President Ebrahim Raeisi and Seyyed Hashem Hosseini Bushehri were also elected as the body's first and second deputies respectively. The high-ranking body elects and oversees the activities of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei. The 88 members of the assembly are directly elected by people for an eight-year term. It holds biannual meetings to appoint a new chairman.

Iran envoy: EU sanctions 'another failed miscalculation'



Reacting to the EU's list on Monday night, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said Tehran would soon announce a list of its reciprocal sanctions in response to the bloc's recent bans.

In the wake of the Western-instigated riots erupted in Iran after the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, the United States and its Western allies have imposed several rounds of sanctions on Iran in recent months, accusing the country of "cracking down" on rioters. Tehran has repeatedly dismissed the accusations, saying it has been lawfully dealing with rioters disrupting public security. Iran says the West is using human rights as a tool in its pressure campaign against the country. Iran's intelligence community has said several countries, including the United States and Britain, have used their spy and propaganda apparatuses to provoke violent riots in the country.

Raeisi: Avenging Iranians main motive behind US sanctions

The president noted that given the agreements reached with the Chinese side during his visit, the trip could be perceived as a turning point in expanding ties and cooperation with China in the political, economic, scientific and technological areas.

Raeisi visited China from February 14-16, meeting his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping as well as other East Asian state's officials. A number of MoUs were also signed during the trip.

Upon arrival in Tehran from his China trip, the Iranian president described the visit as fruitful, adding the two sides followed good discussions in the fields of energy, industry and trade, road and urban development.

Referring to the Tehran-Beijing cooperation in the international arena, Raeisi said China has wel-



Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi (L) speaks to China's Xinwen Lianbo news program during his recent visit to Beijing. ● president.ir

comed the notion of Iran's membership in the BRICS organization.

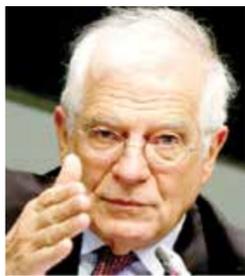
This will be followed "seriously" by the Foreign Ministry so that Iran could benefit from the capaci-

ties of such international blocs, the president said. Iran and China signed a strategic 25-year partnership agreement in 2021 in defiance of unilateral sanctions against the two

countries imposed by the United States. The deal officially documents the Sino-Iranian Comprehensive Strategic Partnership that had been announced during a visit by the Chi-

nese president to Tehran in 2016. It sets the outlines of cooperation in political, cultural, security, defense, regional, and international domains for the next 25 years.

European officials rule out IRGC blacklisting



● DAVID FERNANDEZ/EPA

The German foreign minister and EU foreign policy chief on Monday rejected the possibility of blacklisting Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) as a "terrorist organization". Speaking after a meeting of the EU foreign ministers in Brussels, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said her country's experts had found no legal grounds to justify such a move against the IRGC, according to Mehr News Agency.

"As of now, we don't have legal grounds in the EU to list the [Islamic] Revolutionary Guards [Corps] as [a] terrorist organization," she said.

Also in remarks to BBC, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the EU's laws vis-à-vis the IRGC will not change under pressure from anti-Iran groups, which had gathered in front of the EU headquarters in Brussels.

The new developments come as the 27-nation bloc has been slapping sanctions on Iran over what it calls the country's approach toward foreign-backed riots that erupted in some Iranian cities in September.

The riots broke out after the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman, who died in a Tehran hospital a few days after fainting at a police station.

An official report by Iran's Legal Medicine Organization concluded that Amini's death had been caused by illness rather than alleged blows to the head or other vital body organs, Press TV reported.

Following her death, rioters went on a rampage, brutally attacking security officers and causing massive damage to public property. Dozens of people and security personnel were killed throughout the riots. Iran's intelligence bodies have found footprints of American and other Western spy agencies in the violent riots.

Last month, the European Parliament adopted an amendment calling on the EU and its member states to include the IRGC on their terror list. It also passed another resolution, calling for more sanctions against Iranian individuals and entities and putting the IRGC on the EU's so-called terror list over alleged human rights violations during the recent riots.

Also in a press release issued on Monday, the European Council said it has decided to impose restrictive measures on additional 32 Iranian individuals and two entities in a fifth round of sanctions over what the bloc claimed to be Tehran's crackdown on the recent foreign-backed riots.

FM: Iran ready to host 3+3 format meeting of top regional diplomats



Iranian FM Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (L) and Russia's Deputy FM Alexander Grushko meet in Tehran on February 20, 2023. ● MFA.GOV.IR

The Iranian foreign minister said Tehran is ready to host a foreign ministerial meeting within the framework of a 3+3 group comprising three southern Caucasus countries and their three neighbors while stressing the importance of bolstering regional cooperation.

Hossein Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a meeting with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko in Tehran, Press TV reported. Iran has repeatedly declared its readiness to help resolve the longstanding conflict between estranged neighbors, Azerbaijan and Armenia, through different formats and mechanisms.

The 3+3 format includes three South Caucasus countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) and three neighboring countries (Russia, Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran).

Amir-Abdollahian also emphasized the importance of promoting bilateral and regional cooperation between the Iran and Russia.

For his part, Grushko welcomed the idea of enhanced cooperation between the two staunch allies in the bilateral, regional, and international spheres.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran hands down death sentence to terrorist ringleader

An Iranian court sentenced Jamshid Sharmahd, a terrorist group ringleader, to death on conviction for masterminding and directing terrorist activities in Iran. The Justice Department of Tehran Province announced on Tuesday that Sharmahd has been convicted of "corruption on earth" through masterminding and directing terrorist actions and has been sentenced to death, Tasnim News Agency reported.

Sharmahd, 67, the ringleader of Tondar (Thunder) ter-

rorist group, is an Iranian national who also holds German citizenship and used to reside in the US.

Tondar terrorist group was founded in the UK in 2003 by a number of monarchists, led by Fat'hollah Manouchehri and Forud Fooladvand, with the purpose of theorizing anti-religious terrorism.

The Iranian court ruled that Sharmahd has been involved in plots to carry out 23 terrorist attacks and had managed to implement five cases.



Iran's Intelligence Ministry said in August 2020 that it had arrested Sharmahd, adding that its forces dealt a "heavy and serious blow" to Tondar terrorist group by nabbing the ringleader of the anti-Iran terrorist group.