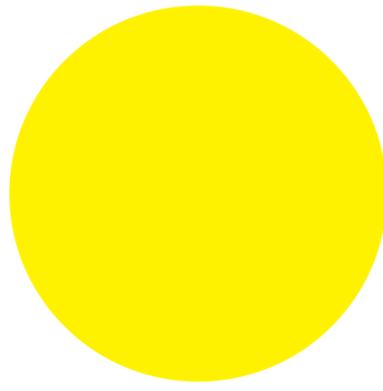




China, Ukraine leaders speak for first time since war began 3 >



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Iran's cinema halls once again resonant with cinemagoers

EXCLUSIVE 7 >



Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber (L) and Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov inspect a guard of honor during a welcoming ceremony in Tehran on April 26, 2023. ● FARS

Iran, Kazakhstan eye \$3b trade level

International Desk

Kazakhstan's Prime Minister Alikhan Smailov arrived in Tehran on Wednesday to meet Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Mokhber. Smailov is in Tehran to review the latest status of bilateral relations between Tehran and Astana, as well as co-chairing the Iran-Kazakhstan Joint Economic Commission with Mokhber.

Upon his arrival, the Kazakh premier was welcomed by acting Agriculture Minister Mohammad Aghamiri. According to the political deputy to Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi, Mohammad Jamshidi, planning and coordination to improve the level of cooperation between Tehran and Astana in the field of transportation, exports, technical and engineering services, transit, cooperation in the field of energy and banking relations will be among the most important topics on the agenda of the two dele-

gations during the visit of the Kazakh premier to Tehran. Jamshidi added that implementing the agreements of the presidents of the two countries will be the focus of Smailov's consultations with Mokhber. Mokhber held a meeting with Smailov, followed by a press conference at the Sa'dabad Complex in Tehran on Wednesday afternoon. After his meeting with Smailov, Mokhber said, "It was decided to increase

the economic relations between the two countries to three billion dollars annually." He added, "Although our economic relations have increased by 20%, to more than \$500 million, the economic relations still do not match the high-level political relations." Good decisions were made and it was decided to quickly develop a temporary roadmap between Iran and Kazakhstan, Mokhber added. Smailov, for his part,

thanked Mokhber for his warm welcome, saying that Iran and Kazakhstan have friendly relations. "Constructive political dialogues have been established between the two countries, and economic and cultural relations are developing. Expanding cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran continues," the Kazakh prime minister noted. He then concluded his remarks by saying that Astana views Iran as an important foreign market.

Iran, Russia pursue independent foreign policy: Duma chief



● TASS

National Desk

Chairman of the State Duma of Russia, Vyacheslav Volodin, said that Moscow and Tehran pursue an independent foreign policy in the world amid the growing pressure on both countries by the West. Volodin said that Russia and Iran have close cooperation regarding countries that have a sense of superiority over others and only try to obtain their interests. The Russian official made the remarks in a message to an international conference entitled "Russian-Iranian Cooperation in a Changing World,"

which was held in the Russian capital, Moscow, on Wednesday, according to IRNA. After the recent sanctions and pressures imposed by Western countries on Russia, the country has now understood that those who had earlier underlined the importance of the development of cooperation with Iran, were right, the official noted. For more than four decades, Iran has been under sanctions imposed by Western countries, and now Russia has been targeted by the West's sanctions for its military operation in Ukraine. Therefore, today, the officials have come to a conclusion that close cooperation between the two countries is of great importance, Volodin said. The Russian official also stressed the need to increase the level of trade between the two countries.

Member of Assembly of Experts shot dead in northern Iran

A member of Iran's Assembly of Experts was assassinated in an armed attack in the country's northern province of Mazandaran. Ayatollah Abbasali Soleimani, a former representative of Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khomeini in the southeastern Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, died in hospital on Wednesday after being shot in a bank in the city of Babolsar in the northern province of Mazandaran. Authorities have announced three days of mourning in the province, just north of the capital, Tehran.



● TASNIM

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi and Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi called for a quick investigation into the incident. Governor General of the province, Seyyed Mahmoud Hosseini, said that the investigation is underway to find out the circumstances surrounding the deadly incident and the motive behind the assassination.



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Iranian MP: Tehran-Riyadh ties fast-thawing

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

The vice chairman of the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission says: The ice between Iran and Saudi Arabia started melting at a rapid pace. The bilateral ties are on the right track, Abbas Moqtadaei said in an interview with Iran Daily, adding that they will benefit all Muslim countries and establish peace and security in the region. Moqtadaei maintained that in the current situation, it is imperative

that Islamic nations, especially influential states, become more aware of their missions regarding the issues of the Islamic world and play their role well. Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations last month in a deal brokered by China, which ended seven years of estrangement and jolted the geopolitics of the oil-rich region. Describing Iran and Saudi Arabia as two influential countries in the Islamic world, he said: Iran, for its part, has shown selflessness by trying to spread empathy and synergy between Islamic and neighboring countries. Page 2 >

Cooperation between Tehran and Astana accelerating

By Afifeh Abedi
Expert on Central Asia

EXCLUSIVE

Kazakhstan's prime minister has arrived in Tehran at the head of an economic delegation and at the invitation of the first vice president of Iran. Last year, the Kazakh president had also visited Iran and multiple cooperation agreements were signed between the two countries. Kazakhstan is one of the Central Asian countries that have had good relations with Iran since independence. Page 2 >

However, economic relations between the two countries have not been at the level of the vast capacities available to the two countries. One of the most important obstacles to improving the level of cooperation between the two countries has been the influence of the West and the sanctions imposed by the United States against Iran. Yet it seems that with the decreasing role of the U.S. in the Central Asian region, and considering the more prominent presence of Russia and China in the region, conditions for the development of Iran-Kazakhstan cooperation have become more promising. Page 2 >