

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran slams
Germany's
meddling

IRNA – Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani on Thursday urged Germany to stop "encouraging terrorists" and "spreading terrorism" after the European country reacted to a death sentence against Jamshid Sharmahd, an Iranian-German national who led the U.S.-based Tondar terrorist group that was responsible for major deadly attacks in Iran over the past years.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has called the Iranian Supreme Court's verdict "completely unacceptable" and demanded that Iran reverse the ruling.

U.S. sanctions
Iran's IRGC,
Russia's FSB

Siamak Namazi in 2006
● REUTERS

AFP – The United States added new sanctions on Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) and Russia's FSB intelligence agency Thursday for allegedly taking "hostage" Americans like the Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich arrested in Russia last month.

At least three U.S. citizens are being held in Iranian prisons including businessman Siamak Namazi, held in Tehran's Evin prison since 2015 on spying charges.

The U.S. Treasury also placed sanctions on four top officials of the IRGC intelligence body.

Jewish outlet
convicted
over anti-Iran
claim

IRNA – The UK-based pro-Israel weekly newspaper Jewish Chronicle has been convicted by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) of spreading anti-Iran falsehoods.

IPSO judged the Jewish Chronicle's November 2022 offending claim that Iran "has repeatedly vowed to wipe ... Jews off the face of the Earth" as unsupported by the information, ordering the outlet to publish a full correction in both print and online.

Iran ready for joint naval drills
with SCO members

National Desk

Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani expressed the country's readiness to stage joint naval exercises with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member states.

He also added that Iran is ready to play a more active role in the SCO, exchanging security intelligence in the fight against terrorism, sharing experiences in the battle against all forms of terrorism, responding to natural disasters, and dealing with pandemics.

The Iranian general made the comments in a meeting attended by the SCO defense ministers, held in New Delhi on Friday, Tasnim news agency reported. Brigadier General Ashtiani reiterated in his speech that Iran's defense doctrine has a fixed message, which is peace, stability, friendship, and security for all neighboring countries, the region, and the whole world.

"As a result, we are seriously seeking today to activate multilateral defense diplomacy and have an active engagement in regional and international security arrangements," the Iranian defense minister added.

Highlighting the signifi-



Iranian Defense Minister Mohammad-Reza Ashtiani (2nd-R) shakes hands with his Indian counterpart Rajnath Singh in a meeting with the SCO defense ministers in New Delhi, India, on April 28, 2023.
● IRAN PRESS

cance of plans to ensure the development, prosperity, and security of the SCO members, General Ashtiani proposed the "Shanghai Maritime Security Belt" mechanism.

The mechanism needs the participation of the armed forces of all SCO member states in order to protect the security of maritime routes and ensure the safety of global trade with collective efforts.

Considering the emergence of new threats, it is imperative that the SCO makes the necessary long-term

arrangements and sets up appropriate structures in the "cyber defense" and "cognitive defense" sections, the Iranian minister stressed.

NATO seeks unipolar
world

Moreover, Brigadier General Ashtiani said that NATO and the West are trying to create a unipolar world, while urging SCO to play a bigger role in creating a new world order.

He added that the expansionist policies of the West and NATO have accelerated

in a bid to revive the unipolar world, according to Mehr news agency.

"The West and NATO's actions in connection with the Ukraine crisis are signs of this fact," the Iranian minister said, continuing that proxy wars and terrorism are means in the hands of some big powers who seek domination.

"The principles of the arms control system, non-proliferation, and international treaties are under serious threat," the Iranian minister said.

Ashtiani went on to note

that Iran seeks a world order based on the people's participation.

The Iranian defense minister, Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu, Russia's Sergei Shoigu, Tajikistan's Colonel General Sherali Mirzo, and Kazakhstan's Colonel General Ruslan Zhaksylykov were among the dignitaries attending the meeting in Delhi, chaired by Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh.

The meeting focused on pressing regional security challenges as well as other related issues.

Navy seizes fleeing oil tanker ...



Bayandor warship of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy
● IRNA

The Marshall Islands-flagged oil tanker

then attempted to flee the scene in serious breach of international laws and regulations, which require the provision of medical treatment and the supply of proper and sufficient medicine to seamen in case of sickness or injury.

Recovering from the shock, the fishermen managed to issue a distress call. Shortly after, the Iranian naval forces, which were deployed to Chabahar Port in southern Iran on a Center for International Maritime Security (CIMSEC) mission, intercepted and

seized the foreign ship in the Sea of Oman after having been contacted by the Maritime Surveillance and Rescue Center (MRCC).

The vessel was seized by Bayandor corvette of the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy in compliance with a confiscation order issued by Iranian judicial authorities.

The US Navy's 5th Fleet identified the captured vessel as the Marshall Islands-flagged Advantage Sweet, which issued a distress call during the incident.

The Navy statement made no mention of the tanker's destination, but data from

MarineTraffic.com showed it in the Gulf of Oman just north of Oman's capital, Muscat, on Thursday afternoon local time.

It had just come from Kuwait and its destination was listed as Houston, Texas.

Manifest information from data firm Refinitiv showed the Advantage Sweet carried Kuwaiti crude oil for American energy firm Chevron Corp. of San Ramon, California. Chevron said it was "aware of the situation."

"We are in contact with the vessel operator with the hope of resolving this situation as soon as possi-

ble," Chevron spokesperson Christine Dobbyn said in a statement.

The incident came as several American senators urged President Joe Biden to enable a federal government agency to seize Iranian oil and gas shipments amid an increase in Iran's oil export despite illegal sanctions over its nuclear program.

Iran's oil exports have reached their highest level since the reimposition of US sanctions in 2018, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji said last month. He said that 83 million more oil barrels were exported in the last year than the previous year.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iran backs any agreement ...

The Lebanese caretaker foreign minister told reporters, "I am optimistic that every regional agreement and any deal between regional countries is good for Lebanon."

"The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is important for peace in the region," Bou Habib said. He was referring to a recent rapprochement between Tehran and Riyadh.

The deep divisions in Lebanon have left the country without a president since the term of former president Michel Aoun ended

in late October. Since then, the Lebanese parliament has failed to elect a new president.

Since late 2019, Lebanon has been mired in a deep financial crisis that has caused the Lebanese pound to lose around 90 percent of its value against the U.S. dollar and led its banking system to collapse, plunging the bulk of Lebanese people into poverty.

The economic and financial crisis is mostly linked to the sanctions that the United States and its allies have imposed on Lebanon

and the West's intervention in the Arab nation's domestic affairs.

Amir-Abdollahian arrived in Lebanon on Wednesday for a two-day visit. He held talks with senior Lebanese officials, including Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Najib Mikati and Secretary-General of the Hezbollah movement Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Before his visit to Lebanon, Amir-Abdollahian traveled to Oman for high-level talks with the Arab country's officials.