

NEWS IN BRIEF

Foreign Ministry: Iran, Azerbaijan enjoy 'unbreakable' bonds

International Desk

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani says that the nations of Iran and Azerbaijan enjoy unbreakable ties.

During his weekly press conference on Monday, the diplomat responded to the news on the expulsion of four Azerbaijani diplomats from Iran. Kanaani confirmed the report, saying it came in response to Azerbaijan's "unconstructive action" of expelling four Iranian diplomats. "We have always expressed our views on relations with Azerbaijan clearly and transparently," he said.

"The relations between the two nations are unbreakable, and we should not take any action that is not in the interests of the two countries, but is in the interest of the parties who want to harm those relations," he added.

Armenia to become operator at Iran's Chabahar port



IRNA

International Desk

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan signed a decree on Monday on setting up an inter-agency task force for launching a new international cargo transportation route and becoming an operator at Iran's Chabahar port.

According to the decree, the task force will deal with organizing a multimodal high-speed route of international cargo transportation via Armenia, ARKA news agency reported.

The task force's goals include discussions and development of a new corridor for cargo transportation with the participation of Armenia, which will connect India and Iran with Europe through Georgia and the Black Sea, and in the opposite direction, as an alternative to the North-South international transport corridor.

The task force will be headed by the Armenian minister of economy. The minister will have to report to the prime minister the progress on a quarterly basis, with final results to be submitted before November 1, 2023. The task force must establish contacts and discuss technical issues with relevant departments of India, Georgia and Iran.

Iran's military chief calls for joint drills between Tehran, Muscat



Chief of General Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Mohammad Baqeri (2nd L) meets his Omani counterpart in Muscat on May 8, 2023. **TASNIM**

Joint counterterror effort

Continuing his consultations in Oman, Baqeri held a meeting with the Omani Deputy Prime Minister Shahab bin Tariq.

During this meeting, Iran's top military official emphasized the need to fight drug trafficking in the region, saying that with the blocking of the eastern borders of Iran, the smuggling route has changed and the smuggling gangs have become more active in the sea.

"This is dangerous for all countries, including Oman. Therefore, we are ready for any joint intelligence and operational collaboration to confront with this sinister phenomenon," he highlighted. Elsewhere in his talks, Baqeri expressed Tehran's readiness to transfer its knowledge and experiences regarding fighting terrorism and modern weapons.

"Relations between the two countries can be considered as a pattern for other countries in the region, as this path and its expansion among other countries helps provide and improve security in the region," Baqeri emphasized.

exercises.

Iran's top military official then noted that Iran's Armed Forces have reached self-sufficiency in various fields and Tehran can benefit from further cooperation with Muscat through interaction in the fields of equipment, training and joint drills.

Elsewhere in his talks with the Omani top army official, Baqeri discussed the Palestinian cause, saying that Israel is under pressure both internally and from outside, and the world is witnessing a deep political division in Israel.

For his part, Admiral General Abdullah bin Khamis noted that such visits help strengthen bilateral ties between Iran and Oman, noting that regional countries have a better understanding of their own interests. "Through unity, we can provide the security of the region," Oman's top army official highlighted.

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Chief of the General Staff of Iran's Armed Forces Brigadier General Mohammad Baqeri, who is in Oman on an official visit has called on Muscat to participate in joint hybrid military exercises with Iran.

Baqeri made the remarks

in a meeting with his Omani counterpart on Monday.

During the meeting, Iran's top military official said, "Today, new signs of the change in the balance of power from the west to the east can be seen. It must be emphasized that the future belongs to our region and Asia."

Hailing the rapid development of Iran-Oman defense ties, Baqeri stated that among the many forms of such cooperation are joint exercises to establish maritime security and conduct hybrid maritime exercises, inviting Oman to participate in international hybrid maritime

Iran's state-of-the-art weapons 'game changer' in intl. affairs: Defense official

Head of the International Affairs department of Iran's Defense Ministry has hailed the country's advanced technology used to manufacture weapons, saying Iranian arms are today perceived as a "game changer" in the international arena.

Second Brigadier General Hamzeh Qalandari said the world was surprised by Iranian weapons after the lifting of a 13-year UN arms embargo in October 2020, Press TV reported. "A country that had problems in all areas and was prohibited from any technology, has today reached a place on the edge of technology, with its weapons described in international media as a 'game changer,'" he

told IRNA.

"This fact led many countries to buy Iranian weapons or renovate and rebuild their own defense equipment using Iranian technology and equipment following the removal of the embargo."

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 never bow to pressure to scale down its military programs, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense.

Iran's Hajj official in Saudi Arabia to explore technicalities

International Desk

The deputy for Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization departed on Monday for Saudi Arabia to explore the technical issues before the next Hajj pilgrimage. Prior to his departure, Gholamreza Rezaei told IRNA that he was heading to Saudi Arabia to explore the technicalities regarding the kitchens' readiness to cook for Iranian pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, among other issues.

"The officials sent to Saudi Arabia are also following up on executive issues in the country, and during this trip there are issues that have been discussed with Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah," Rezaei said.

During a meeting in Tehran held on Monday morning between

the Foreign Ministry's Persian Gulf Director General Alireza Enayati and Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization officials, Enayati briefed the Hajj Organization officials on the measures taken regarding Tehran-Riyadh bilateral relations, the reopening of the embassies and consulates of the two countries, and the talks held regarding the Umrah pilgrimage. In this meeting, Ali Mar'ashi, head of the medical office of the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization of Iran said that medical examination of Hajj pilgrims is nearing its end, stating that 82,150 pilgrims have registered for the Hajj pilgrimage.

"The medical examination of 79,304 pilgrims have been completed," Mar'ashi said, adding that 1,100 pilgrims are under examination.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



EU's Borrell says Iran, IAEA cooperation 'gained momentum'



EP

International Desk

The European Union's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell hailed the cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Organization (IAEA), saying

that this cooperation must continue.

The EU official made the remarks in a phone call with Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Monday.

After the phone call, Borrell tweeted, "We also discussed Iran-@iaeaorg cooperation, which gained momentum recently. I stressed that Iran must continue this."

On May 2, 2023, Laurence Norman, Wall Street Journal's Brussels correspondent said on Twitter that the IAEA has begun re-installing

the removed cameras in Iran's nuclear site.

"Expectation is to wrap up the process over the next few days," he added.

During his weekly press briefing on Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said that the Islamic Republic firmly pursues the policy of resolving problems and misunderstandings with the IAEA and that Tehran's policy is based on preventing issues relating to Iran's peaceful nuclear energy activities from turning into obstacles.