

Iran, Saudi Arabia to resume banking ties

Economy Desk

The Iranian economy minister said he negotiated with his Saudi counterpart to resume financial and banking ties between the two countries.

Ehsan Khandouzi told reporters that good agreements were achieved with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) during its recent annual meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, Fars news agency reported.

He stressed that the Iranian economic delegation, headed by him, discussed with the Saudi side, "The facilitation of the Hajj rituals process, banking issues, flight issues, and the travel of Iranian business people," which were welcomed by the Saudis. The minister added that during the financial forum it was decided that the implementation of construction and investment projects, which had been delayed for several years, would speed up.

"It was agreed that within the next three months, the CEOs of Iranian and Saudi companies and delegations representing their private sectors should have constructive meetings to reach an agreement," Khandouzi said.

bilateral meetings

Referring to the bilateral meetings he held with officials of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and other countries attending the meeting, the Iranian economy minister described the approach of Muslim countries of the region regarding the expansion of ties with Iran as "practical", IRNA reported.

"I found that investing in Iran was quite appealing for officials of the regional countries attending the IsDB meeting in Jeddah, and they were stressing the importance of launching investment projects in Iran as quickly as possible," Khandouzi said.

As such, customs agreements, joint investment projects, and cutting double taxation between Iran and the countries in attendance were set to be finalized in the future.

"During the upcoming trip of the Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al Said to Tehran, the first agreement regarding Oman's investment in Iran is to be signed," the minister announced, adding that Iran will similarly sign other bilateral agreements with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Khandouzi further said that the Saudi side also decided to make joint investments in Iran's oil and gas sector, as well as in fields where Iran's economy has good export potential including knowledge-based products, nano-biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, power plants, transit, and road and transportation fields.

Leader: Hajj aims to forge unity among Muslims against Israel, arrogance



Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei addresses Iranian officials in charge of Hajj pilgrimage in a meeting in Tehran on May 17, 2023. khamenei.ir

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said the Hajj rituals aim to forge unity among the Islamic Ummah in the face of the Israeli regime and global arrogance. The Leader made the remarks in a Wednesday meeting with Iranian officials

in charge of Hajj pilgrimage affairs and people who will travel to Saudi Arabia's holy cities of Mecca and Medina to perform the annual rituals. Ayatollah Khamenei said the Hajj pilgrimage is meant to reinforce unity among Muslim nations in the face of profanity, op-

pression, arrogance, human and non-human idols and all those things that Islam seeks to destroy or confront. The Leader added that the entire Muslim world must gather and send a message against the Israeli regime. The influence of arrogant powers is the current

issue of the world, the Leader stated, emphasizing that all should demonstrate their power in the face of hegemonic powers. Ayatollah Khamenei highlighted the issues of taking a correct view toward Hajj and understanding its significance, saying, "Hajj is an international and civilizational issue."

In the case of the absence of the Hajj pilgrimage, the Islamic Ummah would collapse, the Leader cautioned.

He added that Muslims who perform the great annual Hajj rituals should demonstrate their strength in the face of the Israeli regime and arrogant powers and stand firm against the oppressive powers in the world. Ayatollah Khamenei underlined the importance of clarifying global issues, including the developments in Palestine, saying, "The Hajj time is an appropriate opportunity to become aware of nations and international topics." The Leader noted that the

disclosure of Islam's practical opposition to the geographical, racial and class distinctions is among the main points of the Hajj rituals.

The leader added the self-proclaimed civilized countries are still struggling with black and white as well as European and non-European racial bias. Ayatollah Khamenei also said as it has been repeatedly announced, the Iranian people and officials should pay serious heed to the enemy's plots, methods, policies and points of strengths and weaknesses so that they would not be deceived.

"If we are aware of global issues, we can understand the enemy's real goal and the reason for his insistence on some issues," he noted.

He added that wherever Iranian officials were careful and acted correctly, they succeeded in achieving very good progress in regional and global issues which have angered the US.

Iran's FM: Iran's water rights issue could impact ties with Kabul



International Desk

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the issue of Iran's water rights from Hirmand River, known as Helmand in Afghanistan, could impact Tehran's relations

with Kabul. Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a phone call with Taliban's acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Wednesday, according to IRNA. The Iranian foreign minister said that Tehran is seri-

ously pursuing the issue of supplement of Iran's water rights from Hirmand River in a practical way.

Amir-Abdollahian underscored that the complete implementation of the 1973 treaty is of great importance to Iran.

Referring to many problems facing Iranians in the southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan due to the water shortage, the Iranian top diplomat expressed hope that the Afghan side would take the necessary measures to release the water stored behind the dams constructed on the river.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi recently ordered the ministries of foreign affairs and energy in Iran to pursue the case of water rights, given the sig-



nificance of the issue for people living in east of the country.

The Helmand River, the longest water course in Afghanistan, rises in the Hindu Kush Mountains, west of Kabul, and flows in an arc southwest until it empties out into the Hamoun wetlands, located in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

Following more than a century of rifts over the river's water supply, Iran and Afghanistan signed the 1973 treaty, which established a means of regulating each country's use of the river.

Iran should receive an annual share of 820 million cubic meters from Helmand River under the accord, which Afghanistan has grossly violated in letter and spirit.

Afghanistan has largely cut off the Helmand's flow into Iran, endangering the lives of many Iranians who rely on the Hamoun wetlands for drinking water, agriculture, and fishing.

Afghanistan has further built dams on the Helmand River, which have constricted water flow into Iran.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Nuclear chief: IAEA head in no position to comment on JCPOA talks

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran criticized the director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for making comments on the political process of negotiations on a revival of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

Mohammad Eslami reacted to the recent remarks by IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi, who, in an interview with CBC News, cast doubt on "the prospects of a swift return" to the Iran nuclear deal,

officially named the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran Front Page reported.

Eslami reminded Grossi that the IAEA is solely in charge of monitoring the technical aspect of the JCPOA's implementation, and that the nuclear watchdog is not a party to the talks, which have been at a stalemate since late 2021.

"The IAEA is not in charge of the negotiations, and that responsibility lies on the P5+1 group," including

the U.S., which abandoned the deal in 2018, France, Britain, Russia China plus Germany, Eslami added.

Elsewhere, he said Iran continues cooperation with the agency based on the Safeguards Agreement and the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and that there has been "no disruption" in interactions between the two sides.

Grossi had claimed in the interview that the level of interactions with Tehran could not currently be "assessed to be good."