

## NEWS IN BRIEF

Taliban allow  
Iran experts  
to visit  
Kajaki Dam

IFP – The caretaker of Iran's Embassy in Kabul announced that the Taliban have granted permission for a team of Iranian experts to inspect the reservoir of the Kajaki Dam, amid a water dispute between Iran and Afghanistan. "Agreements have been reached so that our experts can go visit the region [where Kajaki Dam is located] and pave the way for the release of water," said Hassan Kazemi Qomi.

Blinken  
denies  
prisoner  
swap deal  
with Iran

AP

## International Desk

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken rejected reports on Friday that Washington and Tehran were close to making a deal on swapping prisoners or nuclear matters.

"We haven't taken any option off the table, but there is no agreement, and reports to the contrary are simply inaccurate," he said in a press conference. He stressed that Washington continues to work intensely on a regular basis on both matters.

Situation at  
Afghanistan  
border  
normal:  
Minister

TASNIM – Calm has returned to the common border between Iran and Afghanistan after a recent brief armed clash, Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said, noting that cross-border travels are taking place normally. Vahidi said the rulers of Afghanistan have been reminded that they must inform their forces about the rules at the border and take care of their activities, stressing that the Iranian border guards are protecting the national interests vigorously and won't allow anybody to violate the territorial integrity of Iran.

Tehran should be more assertive  
on northern borders: *Iran MP*

By Sadeq Dehqan  
Staff writer



ICANA

Referring to recent developments in the southern Caucasus region, a member of the Iranian Parliament emphasized that the country's diplomatic apparatus should do away with its reservations when it comes to Iran's northern borders. In an exclusive interview with Iran Daily, Ara Shaverdian called on Tehran to be more vigilant with regard to any development that lays the groundwork for changes in the region's internationally-recognized borders, echoing the Leader of the Islamic Republic's stress on the principle of the inviolability of borders.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always pursued a balance in its ties with neighboring countries, but if geopolitical changes are to occur in internationally-recognized borders, it should no longer have such considerations," the lawmaker stated. "As the Leader underlined, the country's officials must stay vigilant and not let Iran's historical and cultural borders be erased," he said, noting that the border between Iran and Armenia dates back to long ago. Alluding to the controversy surrounding the Zangezur Corridor, the vice presi-

dent of the Iran-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group added, "We support the establishment of peace and security in the region but also react to any agreement or event that lays the groundwork for geopolitical and border changes." As Shaverdian pointed out, the Armenian government has repeatedly voiced its objection to border changes that the opening of the Zangezur Corridor entails, but the "third-party countries such as the Zionist regime that are also present in the region" have put pressure on the Caucasus states to "restrict Iran's access". The International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC), he noted, already connects Iran both to the East through Chabahar port and India, and to Western Europe through Armenia, Georgia, and the Black Sea. "But the opening of the Zangezur Corridor diminishes our presence in the southern Caucasus."

"We are not to allow the presence of Western coun-



iswnews.com

tries, the Zionist regime, and NATO in the region to restrict Iran in such a way," Shaverdian warned. The Zangezur Corridor is supposedly designed to link the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic to the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and, in a broader sense, to Turkey. "It is worth noting, however, that the three were always linked through Iran," he said. "Iran has never imposed any restriction or customs duties

on the transit or vehicular traffic along the route, and this corridor is, in a way, currently open through Iran. But the Zangezur Corridor would cut Iran's link both to Armenia and the INSTC, which is essential for us." The member of Parliament who represents the Armenians of Tehran and Iran's northern provinces lauded the incumbent government's successful implementation of its policy of increasing cooperation and interaction

with regional and, especially, neighboring countries. "In line with this policy, our ties with other Persian Gulf littoral states including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain have been strengthened," Shaverdian stated, calling for further effort to be made in forging closer ties with the states of the Caucasus region. "The improvement in our diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, for instance,

will lead to a rise in the level of our trade and economic relations between the two countries as well, which is quite instrumental now that Iran is under cruel sanctions of the West, particularly the United States." The Iranian lawmaker also expressed hope that the recent Tehran-Kabul dispute over Iran's water rights from the Hirmand (Helmand) River and border clashes would be solved through dialogue and diplomacy.

## Turkey, main obstacle ...

If this crossing is internationalized, Armenia will be stripped of its sovereignty while Russian forces, or multinational armies, will take control of it. This situation means a violation of Armenia's territorial integrity, which is opposed by Yerevan. Armenia's position is logical; it is supported not only by Iran, but also by the international community and the UN, because the territorial integrity of the countries should not be violated. In addition, if Zangezur is

removed from Armenia's territorial integrity, internationally recognized borders will change, and the border between Iran and Armenia will also be closed. This is another reason for Iran's position regarding the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and access roads of the Caucasus, which is completely principled and in line with international standards. Iran welcomes the opening of routes between its neighbors and considers it a path to economic progress for itself and neighboring countries.

For this reason, Iran has allowed Azerbaijan to connect to Nakhchivan via the Iranian route for over twenty years. At the same time, Iran respects its neighbors' territorial integrity, including that of Azerbaijan and Armenia, and opposes any change in internationally recognized borders. That is why Tehran is against the internationalization of the Zangezur passage-way, which violates the territorial integrity of Armenia and changes the geographical boundaries. By maintaining its sovereignty, Armenia is ready

to open the Zangezur pass to Azerbaijan, allowing it to enter Nakhchivan, provided that Baku respects its territorial integrity. Obviously, since Armenia does not have relations with Turkey, it does not allow this country to use this passage, and this is Armenia's right. In this situation, Turkey is abusing its friendly ties with Azerbaijan and is urging President Ilham Aliyev to push for the internationalization of Zangezur, and even threatens Armenia with military action to open the corridor.

In fact, today Ankara is the main obstacle to solving the disputes between Baku and Yerevan, because Turkey will be the main loser in the establishment of peace in the Caucasus. Ankara's differences with Yerevan are serious and complex, and the process of resolving them will be long. At the same time, if Turkey opens its borders in the north of Armenia and allows this country to reach Europe through Turkey, Armenia will allow Turkey to use this passage, assuming the resolution of differences

between the two countries. Currently, Turkey is against this and has temporarily opened this border just to help Armenian earthquake victims. Armenia is also interested in being able to enter Iran via the Nakhchivan route and connect to Iran's transport routes if the dispute with Azerbaijan is settled. In any case, the transit routes are the prime issue of the Caucasus and, of course, if Turkey stops its provocations, the disagreements between Armenia and Azerbaijan will be resolved sooner.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi  
Cartoonist

Azerbaijan to stop issuing visas  
to Iranians at airport

The Republic of Azerbaijan plans to stop issuing visas to Iranian citizens on their arrival at its airport from June 23. The Iranian Embassy in Baku said the decision was announced by the Azeri Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IFP reported. It added that Iranian nationals who want to travel to the Republic of Azerbaijan need to visit the Azeri diplomatic missions in Iran to get their visas, or apply for them on [www.mfa.gov.az](http://www.mfa.gov.az), which is a website launched by the Azeri Ministry of Foreign Affairs for this purpose. Relations between Tehran and Baku soured several months ago after a man attacked the Azeri Embassy in Tehran. Iran arrested the attacker, saying the man did the attack on a personal motive.



IRNA

Other developments also increased tensions between Iran and Azerbaijan including Baku's push to carve out a chunk of land for its Zangezur Corridor that would obliterate Iran's border with Armenia. Tehran objected to this plan, vowing not to allow any changes in the region's geopolitical map.