

NEWS IN BRIEF

Building barriers on Iran's eastern border continues



● TASNIM

IRNA – Describing eastern borders as significant for Tehran, Iran's Minister of Interior Ahmad Vahidi said that building barriers in the country's eastern border continues.

"There are always various plans for building barriers in the eastern borders," Vahidi maintained on Monday. He added that a combination of physical and electronic barriers for the eastern borders is being implemented by the armed forces.

Iran, Pakistan to enhance naval collaboration



TASNIM – Top commanders from Iran and Pakistan engaged in discussions on bolstering bilateral cooperation in education, student exchange, and the exchange of naval delegations.

Rear Admiral Arya Shafaqat Rudsari, the commander of Imam Khomeini Naval University of Noshahr, held talks with Rear Admiral Muhammad Khalid, the commander of the Pakistan Naval Academy, to explore avenues for expanding educational cooperation between the two countries.

Azeri nationals don't need visas to visit Iran



IFP – The Iranian Embassy in the Republic of Azerbaijan said all land and air borders of Iran are open to Azeri nationals, and that they do not need to obtain visas to travel to Iran.

This comes as Baku has stopped issuing visas to Iranian citizens upon their arrival at the airport as of June 23.

Relations between Tehran and Baku soured several months ago after a man attacked the Azeri Embassy in Tehran, killing an embassy staff member.

Tehran serious about nuclear talks, prisoner swap: **FM spokesman**

International Desk

The spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry said the Islamic Republic is serious about exchanging prisoners with the U.S., holding negotiations for the removal of sanctions, reviving the 2015 nuclear deal, and achieving results in the talks.

Nasser Kanaani, in his weekly press conference on Monday, added that Iran will use every diplomatic means to achieve positive results in the talks for the removal of sanctions, and has taken advantage of goodwill steps by regional parties such as Oman, IFP reported.

The spokesman also said Iran is serious about getting results, but one needs to wait and see whether the U.S. has the will to cor-

rect its past policies. The U.S. withdrew from the Iran nuclear deal in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions on Tehran unilaterally.

"It is natural that Iran's attitude towards the U.S. will not change until America's behavior changes fundamentally," he said, hinting at speculations about an agreement with the U.S. to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman also commented on the move by the foreign policy committee of the U.S. Congress on making anti-Iran sanctions permanent.

"This is an open duplicity; they ask for negotiations, on one hand, and take steps on sanctions, on the other. Continuation of U.S. sanctions against Iran will lead nowhere as it has not

born results so far," he said. Kanaani also talked about the issue of swapping prisoners with the U.S., saying this is still on Iran's agenda. He added that it is for the U.S. government to decide whether it is ready in this regard.

Meanwhile, the spokesman announced that the Iranian Foreign Ministry will publish its annual report on the situation of human rights in the United States on the occasion of the American Human Rights Review and Exposure Week (June 27–July 3).

Commenting on new sanctions imposed by the European Union (EU) on Iran, Kanaani said the bloc is moving in the "wrong direction" by taking the "disproportionate measure" of simultaneously calling for dialogue and slapping bans



on Tehran.

"Europe should refrain from following in the footsteps of the U.S.," he added, according to Press TV.

Earlier on Monday, the European Council decided to impose the ninth package

of sanctions on an additional seven individuals over alleged human rights violations in Iran.

The EU restrictive measures now apply to a total of 223 individuals and 37 entities.



Spokesman for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Nasser Kanaani talks to reporters during a press conference in Tehran on June 26, 2023.

● MARZIEH SOLEIMANI/IRNA

'Look to the East' policy ...

Global experience has shown that countries prioritize their national interests. As an example, Saudi Arabia was a U.S. strategic ally for decades. But the Kingdom has revised its policy and shifted to the east (Russia and China) while maintaining ties with Washington.

Do you think the government's foreign policy has contributed to maintaining a balance of diplomacy in the past two years?

The government has been pursuing this goal. The Raeisi government has made efforts in this line in the past two years. Some parts of these efforts are the continuation of the previous government's policies, such as long-term cooperation with China. Other parts pertain to the initiatives of the Raeisi government, like the expansion of ties with neighbors and easing tensions with regional countries, in particular Saudi Arabia, as well as the development

of relations with Latin American and East Asian countries. Concurrently, the government has been pursuing talks with Western countries, which show that it has tried to maintain a balance in foreign policy. Nonetheless, two years are not enough to evaluate the government's foreign policy. The government should be given enough time to fulfill its plans. Declaring goals is not enough. Achieving results in foreign policy hinges on detailed planning and active diplomacy. We can see signs of such planning and active diplomacy.

Do you believe national interests require that the government continues cooperation with Asia and the region concurrently with talks with the West?

That's right. Western countries are not satisfied with Iran's multilateral approach. But the world has gone through many changes. Developing countries such as Iran can benefit from various new potentials across the world, in particular in

East and Southeast Asia. As an example, China mediated between Iran and Saudi Arabia to ease tensions, which was a boon to Tehran. Hence, the Islamic Republic can keep the balance in foreign policy by easing tensions with the West and trying to resolve bilateral disputes concurrently with regional de-escalation and expansion of ties with China.

Presently, it seems that Iran's overriding priority pertains to economic cooperation and the resolution of economic problems. How can ongoing diplomatic efforts ensure economic interests?

As I mentioned, ensuring national interests is the main goal of foreign policy. Basically, economic interests play a significant role in this regard. But economic cooperation hinges on political and security understandings. The government has placed this approach on the agenda which includes pursuing political talks to secure economic cooperation. On the whole, the

main goal of nuclear talks pertained to the removal of sanctions and gaining economic interests. However, this goal was not achieved and sanctions remained in place. But establishing ties with organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and Eurasian Economic Union provide economic opportunities. If Iran adopts long-term cooperation plans like the one with China, it can define economic interests for itself. As a result, political ties and understandings must lead to economic cooperation.

Some critics believe that Iran has shifted its approach from the West to the East under the influence of domestic developments. How do you interpret the incumbent government's 'Look to the East' policy?

I should mention that the 'Look to the East' policy is an accepted global policy and conforms to international developments. A series of developments has encouraged Iran's regional

rivals such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and even Israel to place the 'Look to the East' policy and expansion of ties with China on the agenda. But the 'Look to the East' policy does not mean falling under the influence of the East and severing ties with the West. National interests require that countries establish closer ties with some other countries. Opportunities created in the East rather than internal political fighting, have pushed Iran to adopt the 'Look to the East' policy. Global policy is not based on unilateralism. Iran needs to keep a balance in its foreign policy, which means that it can pursue its national interests whether in the East or the West. New opportunities have been created in the East, and Tehran should seize them. But this does not mean that ties with the West should be severed. As you see, concurrently with its 'Look to the East' policy, the government is pursuing talks with the West to remove sanctions and resolve disputes.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



China: Dialogue 'effective way' to unfreeze JCPOA

Signaling its support for "indirect talks" between Iran and the U.S. over the 2015 nuclear deal, China on Monday said the "effective way" to resolve the issue is to hold dialogue.

"It is an effective way to resolve the issue to resume the full and effective implementation of the [Joint] Comprehensive Plan [of Action] (JCPOA) through dialogue and negotiation," said Mao Ning, spokeswoman of China's Foreign Ministry, Anadolu Agency reported.

Mao said the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the JCPOA, was "a significant achievement of multilateral diplomacy".

The U.S. unilaterally withdrew from the agreement in May 2018, after which Iran gradually ramped up its nuclear enrichment activities, higher than the limit stipulated in the deal. Talks to revive the landmark deal have remained stalled since last year, but Tehran and Washington are said to have quietly resumed indirect talks.

The efforts to salvage the agreement got fresh impetus after the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said earlier this month that a deal on Iran's nuclear program was possible if the country's nuclear industry infrastructure remained untouched.

"China has maintained close contact with all relevant parties and urged them to step up diplomatic efforts to bring the comprehensive plan back on the right track soon, safeguard the international nuclear non-proliferation system, and promote peace and stability in the Middle East," Mao said in Beijing.