

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran welcomes normalizing ties with Egypt, Morocco



MEHR

TASNIM – Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said his country is prepared for the normalization of ties with Egypt and Morocco. In a meeting with the ambassadors of Muslim countries in Iran, Amir-Abdollahian hailed the restoration of ties with Riyadh and emphasized that relations with the Islamic and regional nations is a top priority in Tehran's foreign policy agenda.

US envoy for Iran put on leave



PRESS TV – The United States' special envoy for Iran, Robert Malley, has been placed on leave as his security clearance is being allegedly reviewed over his handling of classified materials. "I have been informed that my security clearance is under review. I have not been provided any further information, but I expect the investigation to be resolved favorably and soon," Malley told Reuters. "In the meantime, I am on leave," he added.

EU to keep ballistic missile sanctions on Iran



REUTERS – European diplomats have told Iran they plan to retain European Union ballistic missile sanctions set to expire in October under the defunct 2015 Iran nuclear deal, four sources said, a step that could provoke Iranian retaliation. The sources cited "depriving Iran of the nuclear deal's benefits" as one of the reasons for keeping the sanctions.

Global outcry over desecration of Qur'an in Sweden

International Desk

The burning of the Holy Qur'an outside the main mosque in the Swedish capital city of Stockholm on one of the holiest days in Islam sparked outrage in many Muslim countries and widespread condemnations of Swedish authorities.

Two men, watched by a crowd of people and protected by the Swedish police forces, first waved two Swedish flags as the national anthem blasted over a speaker system and then, tore pages out of a Qur'an and burned them outside a mosque on Wednesday.

A Swedish court and police authorities have given permission to anti-Islam extremists to desecrate the holy book of Muslims.

In an application for the permit, one of the men, Salwan Momika, identified by Swedish media as an Iraqi immigrant living in Sweden, said he wanted to "express his opinion about the Qur'an" by tearing it up and burning it. The police had granted a permit for the demonstration after a Swedish court ruled that banning it would impinge on the right to freedom of speech.

The timing of the burning of Islam's holy book, during the important Mus-

A man, protected by rows of Swedish police forces, holds a copy of the Holy Qur'an before tearing its pages and burning them in Stockholm, Sweden, on June 28, 2023.

AFP

lim holiday of Eid al-Adha, further angered and pained Muslims in many countries, who were celebrating the holiday, which honors the end of the Hajj pilgrimage. On Friday, Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi said that disrespecting the Holy Qur'an is actually disrespecting all divine religions, humanity, and divine values, adding that the Muslim world will not let it pass.

Dismissing the claim that such acts are in support of freedom of expression, Raeisi said that those people "oppose freedom and want to impose their despotism as freedom of expression on humanity".

Iran's Foreign Ministry has also summoned Sweden's chargé d'affaires in the capital Tehran in protest at the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in the European country amid the approval of Swedish authorities in the name of "freedom of speech".

"Branding such moves as acts of democracy and freedom will only fuel further terrorism and extremism,



and will boomerang on the West," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian wrote in a post published on his Twitter page on Thursday.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani also said that acts of insult against holy books serve as an instance of inclination towards aggression and

hatemongering, and counter authentic human rights values.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation also roundly condemned the desecration. It warned in a statement on Thursday about the dangers and consequences of such actions, emphasizing that the move is in contradiction to efforts

to promote coexistence and moderation.

Morocco went beyond a statement of condemnation and recalled its ambassador to Sweden for an indefinite period.

The United States condemned the burning but failed to show restraint and shoehorned that issuing the permit for the demon-

stration supported freedom of expression.

In another move that lays bare Washington's lack of prudence, a US Department of State spokesperson, Vedant Patel, expressed the government's opposition to the burning of the Qur'an while also urging outraged Turkey to approve Sweden's NATO bid.

Iran-Saudi Arabia ...

Currently, the easing of tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia marks the beginning of a new season of relations with several Persian Gulf countries. This will impact external players' interests, including China, Russia, the US, Lebanon, and Syria.

The Ukrainian crisis changed the global energy market. Russian oil, previously sold to the West, is now directed east. It has also revealed differences in interest between some OPEC+ actors, especially Saudi Arabia, and the US. If, on the one hand, the Chi-

nese mediation in the Iranian-Saudi reconciliation is not a success for Washington, on the other hand, the easing of tensions between Riyadh and Tehran could favour negotiations between Iran and the United States and lead to a temporary agreement between the two actors.

While competing interests in Syria and Lebanon and the normalisation of relations between Riyadh and Tel Aviv remain complicated dossiers, this historic rapprochement may help improve the maritime security in the Persian Gulf, where Iran has a predominant

position, and stabilising Yemen. The recent oil cooperation between the Kingdom and Iran announced by Mohsen Khojastehmehr, the CEO of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), not only marks a departure from past Saudi allegations of attacks on its oil infrastructure by Iran but will also contribute to the common interest of securing the Persian Gulf waters through which passes a consistent part of international oil exports.

Moreover, Iran entering the Eurasian markets, particularly the Central Asian one, could be aided by better

relations with Persian Gulf monarchies. The recent Kazan Forum showed the importance of the Islamic world in Moscow's strategy against sanctions, and Russia and some Arab states are key investors in Central Asia. The third fundamental player in the area is China, who has negotiated the agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, it is one of Riyadh's main oil buyers and has signed an agreement worth billion with Tehran. While Tehran, Moscow and Beijing already cooperate in several fields, stabilising the Persian Gulf might increase Central Asian republics' interests in Iran and its connection infrastructures. Indeed, at the

recent Astana International Forum, the Kazakh minister of economy highlighted the importance of Iran for regional and international connectivity due to its strategic geographic position. An increase in Persian Gulf integration might support corridors and supply chains running from Russia and China, through Central Asia and Iran till India and contrast the Turkish role as a regional transit hub.

Divergent religious goals and views in terms of external interferences in the Persian Gulf region might represent a challenge in Iran-Saudi Arabia relations. In this regard, Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, in a message

to Iranian pilgrims on their way to Mecca, stressed that Muslims should be united in fighting the plots designed by the enemy which set Islamic denominations, nations, races, languages, and the diverse cultures of the Islamic world against each other, remarking Iranian stances towards Western involvement in the region, while since the early '30 Saudi Arabia has opened to the US presence in the area. Finally, the normalisation of relations between Riyadh and Tel Aviv could represent a further breaking point in the future. Nevertheless, diplomatic rapprochement has been helpful so far and is motivated by economic imperatives for both countries.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Iranians urge Albania to end MKO camp

Dozens of Iranian protesters and relatives of members of the terrorist Mujahedeen Khalq Organization (MKO) have called upon Albanian authorities to shut down a camp that hosts anti-Iran elements and make preparation for the repatriation of their family members. On Friday, demonstrators and members of the independent civil society organization, Nejat Society, converged outside the Turkish embassy in downtown Tehran, which represents Albania's interests in the Islamic

Republic, Press TV reported. The protesters expressed their gratitude for the latest raids by Albanian police forces on the Ashraf-3 camp in the northwest of the capital Tirana. Albanian police forces raided the camp anew on Thursday morning, more than a week after they stormed the same place over indications that a number of cyberattacks against foreign institutions were being orchestrated there. The protesters released a communiqué during the gathering, asking Albanian



Iranian protesters and relatives of members of the MKO terrorist cult gather outside the Turkish Embassy in Tehran on June 30, 2023.

ERFAN KOUCHARI/
TASNIM

authorities to shut down the camp and put the notorious ringleaders of the MKO terrorist cult on trial. The relatives of MKO members also urged the Albanian government not to allow leaders of the cult to use their loved ones as human shields against security forces.