

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iran to produce
20 GW of
nuclear power
by 2041

REUTERS

MEHR – Iran has started initial work to construct five nuclear power plants to generate 20 gigawatts (GW) of electricity by 2041, the Iranian first vice president said on Tuesday.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran also said initial steps have been taken and preparations have been made for the project. In certain cases, executive operations have begun after the signing of contracts with domestic industries, he added.

Defense
Minister:
No one can
threaten Iran

PRESS TV – Defense Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said Iran has achieved a level of power such that no one can threaten it. Ashtiani made the remark on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting in Tehran on Wednesday, two days after a Pentagon spokesperson confirmed the US military will send the destroyer USS Thomas Hudner and F-16 and F-35 fighter jets to the Persian Gulf region “in response to a number of recent alarming events in the Strait of Hormuz.” “The US is pursuing its own affairs. The Islamic Republic of Iran is basically at a level of power and capability such that no one can threaten it,” he said.

Erdogan
welcomes
restoration of
Iran-Saudi ties

MEHR – Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Ankara welcomes the restoration of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. “Turkey welcomes the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Kingdom [of Saudi Arabia] and Iran, and hopes that this development will strengthen security and stability.” Erdogan made the remarks during a visit to Saudi Arabia on Wednesday.

Amir-Abdollahian: Russia, China
not Iran's only choices

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian
IRNA

Iran's foreign minister said Tehran “will never allow Russia or China to think that they are our only choices.

In a televised interview on Tuesday, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian reiterated Tehran's firm determination to safeguard the country's national interests and independence following a joint statement issued last week by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and Russia that challenged Iran's sovereignty over the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater and Lesser Tunbs. Chinese President Xi Jinping also visited Saudi Arabia last year, where he also sat down with leaders of the PGCC countries. They issued a joint statement,

which contained several clauses that directly dealt with Iranian affairs, its nuclear program, and its regional activities, according to Press TV.

The Iranian minister said Iran would maintain its relations with countries while pursuing its “Look to Asia” policy, but hastened to add that the Islamic Republic “will never allow Russia or China to think that they are our only choices.” Iran interacts with Russia and China based on its own interests and would never let them harm Iran's independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity, Amir-Abdollahian said.

Trade ties with neighbors, Europe
Iran's foreign minister

said despite the sanctions imposed by the United States, Iran succeeded in increasing the value of its trade with its neighbors to more than \$90 billion. He said that Iran had also raised its economic exchanges with European countries in spite of certain political challenges. Amir-Abdollahian noted that Iran has maintained its ties with Britain, Germany and France – the three European parties to the 2015 nuclear deal – but argued that Europe is not confined only to these three countries. “There are other large sectors in Europe that we interact with without any challenge,” the Iranian minister said.

Membership in SCO,
BRICS

Elsewhere in his remarks, Iran's foreign minister said the country's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and potential accession to the BRICS group of emerging economies will promote multilateralism and counter unilateral policies, including sanctions. At the end of the 23rd virtual summit of the SCO Council of Heads of States on July 4, Iran gained full membership in the world's largest regional organization in terms of geographic scope and population. Pointing to Iran's potential accession to BRICS, he said that Iran's potential membership in the five-state bloc would provide the

country with an opportunity to make use of great capacities from Africa to Asia, Latin America and other countries.

Iran-Saudi ties

Referring to the opening of a new chapter in Iran-Saudi Arabia relations, Amir-Abdollahian said restoration of ties between Tehran and Riyadh would secure mutual interests and result in positive outcomes for the entire region.

The top Iranian diplomat dismissed the notion that Tehran and Riyadh have reached just an economic agreement, explaining that the two sides agreed to improve mutual relations and investment through sustainable economic cooperation despite different political views in some areas. Following several days of intensive negotiations in Beijing, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed on March 10 to resume their diplomatic ties and reopen their embassies within two months. During the Tuesday interview, Amir-Abdollahian also pointed to the situation in Afghanistan, saying that any development in Afghanistan can have impacts on Iran's security. “Any instability in Afghanistan has a direct impact on our border areas,” he said, describing the massive influx of Afghan refugees into Iran as one of the Islamic Republic's “serious” challenges.

Russia's isles stance ‘strategic mistake’: Iran MP



National Desk

EXCLUSIVE

An Iranian lawmaker criticized Russia's recent

decision to sign a joint statement with Arab countries of the Persian Gulf concerning Iran's three islands calling it a “political and strategic mistake.”

Mehdi Saadati, in an interview with Iran Daily, stated that he advises Russians to rectify their stance on this matter.

This comes after Russia and the six member countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council earlier this month jointly requested the case of the

three islands of the Greater and Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa to be referred to the International Court of Justice for resolution. Saadati dismissed the ownership claims over the three islands as “political maneuvers,” saying that the isles are “unquestionably” belong to Iran. “Iran is resolute in defending its territory,” said the lawmaker, adding; “Iran respects the territorial integrity and rights of all nations, expecting the same respect for its

principles and interests in return.”

“Iran has consistently proven that it does not seek to encroach upon the interests or territories of other nations... but it will not compromise on its national interests.” Regarding Russia's position in the recent joint statement, Saadati disclosed that necessary warnings were conveyed to Moscow.

“Iran finds Russia's stance unacceptable, leading to objections raised through

the summoning of the Russian ambassador and Iran's ambassador to Russia highlighting the nation's sensitivity to such issues in a meeting with the country's deputy foreign minister.

Saadati declared that the path taken by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council toward Iran's three islands since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, despite being raised multiple times in different ways, will not yield any positive outcomes.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist

Iraq gets new waiver to pay
Iran's energy debts

The United States on Tuesday moved to let Iraq pay Iran for electricity via non-Iraqi banks, a US official said, a step Washington hopes may keep Tehran from forcing unpopular power cuts during the sweltering Iraqi summer.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken signed a 120-day national security waiver allowing Iraq — heavily dependent on Iranian electricity — to deposit such payments into non-Iraqi banks in third countries instead of into restricted accounts in

Iraq, the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. Monies put into non-Iraqi accounts, like those deposited into Iraqi banks, will also be restricted, still requiring US permission for Iran to get access to them and only for spending on humanitarian goods.

Tehran has in the past pushed Baghdad to secure US permission to release such funds by cutting Iranian natural gas exports to Iraq, limiting Iraq's ability to generate power and forcing deeply unpopular

electricity cuts.

The latest waiver was expanded to permit payments to banks outside Iraq at the request of the Iraqi government, apparently in the hopes that this might transfer some of the pressure to other countries.

“The Iraqis have requested, and now we have agreed, to expand the waiver,” said the US official, saying this might help ensure better compliance with the US requirement that any disbursements be for humanitarian purposes.