

NEWS IN BRIEF

Russia, Iran
working on
strategic
deal

MEHR – Preparing the draft of a new interstate agreement on the Iran-Russia strategic partnership continues, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson said. Maria Zakharova made the remark in response to questions about possible complications in drafting the treaty after the protests of the Iranian side in connection with the joint statement by Russia and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

IRGC warns
against
unloading
Iranian oil

PRESS TV – The commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy warned that any oil company unloading hundreds of thousands of barrels of seized Iranian oil sitting in a Greek tanker off the coast of Texas would be held accountable.

Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri said on Thursday, "The era of hit and run is over," adding that if they hit, they should expect to be struck back.

Fierce
dust storm
hits SE Iran

FARS

IFP – A dust storm packing winds of up to 126 kilometers per hour hit the city of Zabol, in Iran's southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, in the early hours of Friday.

The storm decreased visibility to 400 meters horizontally, according to the director of meteorology for Sistan and Baluchestan Province.

An emergency official for the province said around 1,000 people had sought medical help because of the dust storm within the last three days. Dozens more had to be hospitalized.

Muslims strongly condemn new desecration of Qur'an in Sweden

International Desk

Muslim-majority nations and governments expressed outrage over the second incident of a state-authorized desecration of their holy book in Stockholm, Sweden, in less than a month.

Salwan Momika, a Sweden-based Iraqi refugee who burned a copy of the Qur'an in Stockholm on June 28 under the protection of the Swedish police, stomped and kicked another copy of the Qur'an, but left the protest outside Stockholm's main mosque without burning the holy book.

Following the announcement, millions of Muslims took to the streets of Iran and other Muslim-majority countries to voice their strong condemnation of the desecration.

In a communiqué issued after the rallies on Friday, the demonstrators called on the Iranian Foreign Ministry to reconsider diplomatic relations with the Swedish government in tandem with other Muslim countries.

Momika's fellow Iraqi citizens, who were angered the most, even stormed the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad early Thursday, overran the diplomatic compound, and started a small fire. The embassy staff had been evacuated a day earlier in anticipation of the strong response.

Hours later, Iraq's prime minister cut diplomatic ties with Sweden in protest over the desecration of the Islamic holy book, Press TV reported.



Salwan Momika, who stomped on a copy of the Qur'an, is escorted by police to a location outside the Iraqi Embassy in Stockholm, Sweden, on July 20, 2023.

AFP

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also summoned the Swedish ambassador to Tehran and conveyed the Islamic Republic's vehement condemnation of the heinous act.

Following repeated desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden, Iran's Foreign Min-



ister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian wrote to Antonio Guterres on Thursday, urging the UN secretary-general to take a hard line on such acts of religious sacrilege. Amir-Abdollahian reminded the UN chief that Momika's previous act of sacrilege had caused "serious harm"

to the sentiments of Muslims and other followers of divine religions across the world. "The shock and concern about such insulting actions are on the rise," the foreign minister added. Iran strongly denounces the Swedish authorities' issuance of their approval

for the provocative act, the letter went on. In a telephone conversation on Thursday, Amir-Abdollahian and his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden, calling for an urgent meeting of the Organiza-

tion of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss the matter. The two diplomats described the defiling of the Qur'an as an insult to rationality and freedom of speech and condemned the irresponsible behavior of the Swedish government.

Escalation of tensions in no one's interest



By Ebrahim Beheshti
Staff writer

OPINION

Following Robert Malley's removal from his position as the US special representative for Iran affairs, recent news regarding the stances of Washington and Tehran indicates a shift away from earlier optimism and a non-productive trajectory between the two sides. Despite political analysts foreseeing a positive turn in negotiations between Iran and the United States following the king of Oman's visit to Iran in late May, current developments suggest that both nations are heading toward increased tensions. The dismissal of Malley, who was known for his successful talks with Iranian parties in Oman, Qatar, and New York, has altered

the course of events in both countries. Instead of constructive engagement, the United States continues to assert unfounded claims against Iran. Recently, they announced plans to deploy more ships and soldiers to the Persian Gulf, citing Iran's alleged destabilizing activities as a pretext. Last week, a senior official from the US Defense Department stated that they will increase the use of F-16 fighter jets in the region to protect ships from Iran's actions.

Moreover, the United States, with Britain's support, exerted pressure on the United Nations to revoke Tehran's hosting of the World Maritime Day. This further exacerbates the strained relations between the nations. In addition to these developments, the US federal prosecutor has issued an order to auction 800,000

barrels of Iranian oil, which was allegedly seized by American forces. Responding to this move, Alireza Tangsiri, the commander of the IRGC Navy, issued a stern warning. He declared that any American oil company attempting to remove the oil from the tanker would be held accountable, and he also held the US responsible for these actions. With these recent events, the prospects for productive dialogue between Iran and the United States appear dim, and both sides seem to be heading toward an escalation of hostilities.

Iran's Defense Minister Mohammadreza Ashtiani responded to the deployment of American warships and fighters to the Persian Gulf, asserting that the Islamic Republic is currently at a stage of authority and capability where it cannot be threatened by anyone. He

emphasized that Iran plays a significant regional and international role. While Iran has been managing regional tensions in West Asia with an interactive approach and striving for de-escalation, the recent threatening positions and behavior of the United States toward Iran are concerning. The reasons behind America's hardening stance may stem from Israel's isolation in the region, internal rivalries within the United States, or the ambiguous situation of the war in Ukraine. Regardless of the origins, the path taken by the United States and Europe toward Iran does not appear to serve the interests of any party involved. Expectations were that the United States would support the de-escalation process in the West Asian region by endorsing the agreement between Iran

and Saudi Arabia. However, there are concerns that the escalation of tensions between the United States and Iran could have ripple effects on regional dynamics, potentially leading to the return or intensification of instability in the Middle East. This situation is not in the interest of the United States, especially considering its ongoing competition with China and entanglement in the conflict in Ukraine. In the event that the United States persists in its tension-inducing positions toward Iran, Tehran is prepared to utilize its capabilities to respond. The continuation of the current situation could further complicate Tehran-Washington political dialogue regarding the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal and the lifting of sanctions. The failure of US Democrats to reach an agreement or political

understanding with Iran would likely be a serious blow to their prospects in the upcoming presidential elections. Alternatively, it is possible that these threats and tension-causing positions from America are part of a verbal or psychological warfare strategy to strengthen their position in potential political talks and win concessions from Iran. However, historical experience has shown that such tactics have not been effective. The past years of maximum pressure imposed by the United States against Iran have not succeeded in forcing the Islamic Republic to back down from its nuclear program. Hence, both sides should acknowledge that escalating tensions will not lead to a reasonable solution for managing disputes. Resuming stalled talks with greater seriousness would be a more viable approach benefiting Iran, America, the region, and Europe.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Ulyanov: Prospects of JCPOA revival currently dim

The prospects for restoring the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, are currently extremely dim, said Russia's permanent envoy to the international organizations in Vienna. Mikhail Ulyanov made the remarks in an interview with the Russian newspaper Izvestia, published on Friday, according to Mehr news agency. He reminded everyone that negotiations on the

restoration of the Iranian nuclear deal were held in Vienna from April 2021 to March 2022. "A detailed decision was then prepared, which provided for the phased lifting of all US sanctions against Iran and the simultaneous return of Tehran to those parameters of its nuclear program that were included in the JCPOA," he said. However, he added, "the favorable and appropriate moment" was lost, and absolutely nothing

has happened in the last year and a half. The Russian diplomat noted that the problem lies mainly in the position of Berlin, London, and Paris, as well as Washington, which unilaterally withdrew from the deal back in 2018. "In my opinion, they are making a strategic mistake, because the issue is in limbo, and tensions can escalate at any moment, bearing extremely unpleasant consequences," Ulyanov warned.