

## Caspian Sea faces alarming shrinkage amid river inflow blockage



### National Desk

The head of Iran's Department of the Environment (DoE) warned about the decrease in the water level of the Caspian Sea, attributing it to the blockage of river inflows into the Caspian Sea by neighboring countries.

Due to the blockage of river inflows into the Caspian Sea by neighboring countries, particularly the Volga River, the water level of the sea is steadily decreasing, Ali Salajegheh said on Saturday.

The DoE official said that based on some statistics and data, there has been about one meter of recession in the Caspian Sea in the past five years. If this situation persists, the northern sea of Iran could face an average annual recession of up to 20 centimeters, he added.

He expressed hope that neighboring countries will reach an agreement and release the water rights,

allowing water to reach the Caspian Sea.

Experts specializing in environmental matters have identified the primary cause of the Caspian Sea's water level decline. Reduced water inflows from the Ural and Volga rivers are a significant contributing factor. Factors such as escalated water consumption, water retention for power generation, and inadequate rainfall in the region have led to the reduction of river inflows from these vital sources.

Concerns about the decreasing water level have also been voiced by other coastal countries of the Caspian Sea including Kazakhstan, reflecting the shared apprehension over the environmental challenges faced by the region.

Despite repeated warnings from experts and officials about the severity of the situation, effective measures to address the crisis have not been implemented thus far.

## Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran corridor to increase Central Asia attractiveness: Uzbek president

Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has underscored the significant role of the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran corridor in the development of Central Asia and increasing the attractiveness of the region.

"The development of the Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran corridor and the active use of the potential of the Trans-Caspian route provides the possibility of increasing the attractiveness of Central Asia as the transit center of the 'East-West' and 'North-South' international corridors," Mirziyoyev said on Saturday, according to PressTV.

He made the remarks in a tripartite meeting with the presidents of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, Serdar Berdimuhamedov and Emomali Rahmon, in Ashgabat. He underscored the expansion of ties between the regional countries, saying, "Joint transparent policy, unity and solidarity of the countries of the region leads to real results."

The Uzbek president also said the volume of trade exchanges and cooperative transactions, including in the fields of industries, agriculture, energy and logistics, has increased multiple times. According to Mirziyoyev, "acceptable decisions" would be made as a result of a mutual understanding on bilateral and regional issues.

The Uzbek president called for greater cooperation in areas such as the use of advanced water-saving technologies and renovation of irrigation systems, digitalization of water

management processes, and joint development of infrastructure for collecting and storing flood waters. "A close and fruitful cooperation between the countries of Central Asia has been established in the energy sector, including in the field of export and transit of energy resources," he said.

The Uzbek president also proposed the joint creation of favorable conditions for international transportation, acceleration of digitalization and increase in the efficiency of checkpoints.

He also underscored the importance of coordinating efforts and mutual support of the initiatives proposed by regional countries in the international arena under the framework of the United Nations. Uzbekistan plans to continue to support projects aimed at ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the Central Asian re-

gion, Mirziyoyev said.

In a meeting via video conference on Tuesday, the representatives of Iran, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan discussed the prospect of creating an international transit corridor.

The representatives discussed the issues of speeding up the signing of the agreement between the governments of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Iran regarding the corridor and the reduction of international road transport fares through Iran's territory.

They examined the possibilities of using Bandar Abbas and Chabahar ports for the export and import of goods, as well as the development of the international transport corridor of Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Iran.

A freight train crosses an Iranian border checkpoint into Turkmenistan in this file photo.



## Iran, Pakistan call for further cooperation in tourism



### National Desk

Iran and Pakistan called for more efforts to expand cooperation between the two neighboring countries in tourism.

On Friday, Iran's Minister of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Ezzatollah Zarghami and Pakistani President Arif Alvi held a meeting in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad.

During the meeting, the two sides committed to improve cultural relations between the countries, especially in the tourism field.

In a statement, the office of Pakistan's president said both officials expressed their shared desire to strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties between the two nations.

President Alvi said that Pakistan highly values its relationship with Iran, which is based on historical, cultural, and religious ties.

The Iranian minister traveled to Pakistan to attend a tourism meeting of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation.

Meanwhile, a Pakistani tourism brand called "Salaam Pakistan" was unveiled in a ceremony attended by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Zarghami.

## IRGC Navy enhances combat capabilities with AI-equipped missiles

### National Desk

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy has successfully integrated artificial intelligence technology into its missiles, empowering them with cutting-edge capabilities, IRGC Navy Chief Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri revealed. The IRGC Navy also took delivery of sophisticated homegrown missile systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and armaments featuring state-of-the-art technology

suited for electronic warfare during a Saturday ceremony attended by IRGC Chief Commander Major General Hossein Salami, Rear Admiral Alireza Tangsiri, and other top-brass military figures, IRNA reported.

"By incorporating these specialized defense systems and equipment, the IRGC Navy has taken a significant and effective step in enhancing its naval combat capabilities," said Tangsiri.

The new military gears have been

developed by military experts at Aerospace Industries Organization (AIO), a subsidiary of the Iranian Defense Ministry and a leading high-tech complex headquartered in Tehran, the Marine Industries Organization, the Iran Aviation Industries Organization (IAIO), Iran Electronics Industries (IEI), and Iranian knowledge-based firms.

Various types of reconnaissance and combat drones, as well as different types of armored command

and logistics vehicles, surveillance systems, and electronic warfare systems were among the new homegrown armaments.

The IRGC Navy also took delivery of different types of cruise missile launcher trucks, radar and command systems, and several hundred cruise and ballistic missiles, with ranges between 300 and 1,000 kilometers.

In remarks at the event, Rear Admiral Tangsiri noted that the new cruise and ballistic missiles

are furnished with artificial intelligence, have longer ranges, can be prepared for launch instantly, destroy the enemy's electronic warfare systems, and hit designated targets from various directions.

The commander also explained that the new drones have longer flight endurance, are armed with larger and heavier munitions, can be used in electronic warfare, detonate mobile targets, and strike naval targets with great pinpoint accuracy.

## Iran to welcome...

He has also been a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam since April 2016. He was elected as the President of the National Assembly of Vietnam on March 31, 2021.

During the visit, Speaker Hue will meet and hold talks with the Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi, and his Iranian counterpart on various important topics related to legislation, economy, trade, science and technology, people-to-people exchanges, and witness the signing of important cooperation documents. He will also deliver a speech on Vietnam's foreign policy at the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS) and participate in the Vietnam-Iran Business Forum.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party and the National Assembly, Vietnam is undergo-

ing significant changes. Once one of the poorest countries in the world and ravaged by war, the country has now emerged as a developing nation, with a GDP of \$409 billion in 2022 and a scaled economy ranked 37th in the world. Vietnam has gained further international prestige through two successful non-permanent membership terms in the United Nations Security Council (during 2008-2009 and 2020-2021).

The National Assembly of Vietnam has actively participated in and made significant contributions to the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, supporting the development of its member countries, contributing to the protection of justice and peace, and implementing Vietnam's policy of multilateralization and diversification of foreign relations since the Doi Moi (Renovation) period, which

was initiated in 1986 and led by the Communist Party of Vietnam. To date, the National Assembly of Vietnam has established relations with over 140 parliaments worldwide.

Following its policy of openness and international integration, Vietnam has consistently recognized the Middle East as an important region with significant economic potential where it can forge good political relations with the regional countries including Iran. The two countries officially established diplomatic relations on August 4, 1973, following the signing of the historic Paris Peace Accords. Vietnam was one of the first countries to send congratulations and recognize the Islamic Republic of Iran on February 13, 1979, just two days after the victory of the Islamic Revolution. Iran opened its Embassy in Hanoi in 1991, and Vietnam opened its Embassy in

Tehran in 1997.

Over the years, the two countries have maintained friendly political and diplomatic relations, exchanging nine visits by their presidents and speakers of parliaments. These visits have continued to nurture and create favorable conditions for both sides, under which they exchanged experiences of undergoing development and strengthened the ties between their peoples.

The parliamentary relationship between Vietnam and Iran has been emphasized and developed well in recent years. Speaker Hue and Speaker Qalibaf have exchanged congratulatory letters on the occasion of national holidays and inaugurations. The two sides regularly exchange high-level delegations, with the most recent visit being made by the Deputy President of the National Assembly of Vietnam Tran Quang Phuung to Iran in Decem-

ber 2022.

In the field of politics, the two countries have established a joint-governmental economic commission, which held nine sessions to coordinate cooperation on various issues. They have also organized seven political consultations at the deputy ministerial level, with the most recent one taking place in March 2022. Both sides frequently support each other in international organizations and forums, particularly at the United Nations, to uphold multilateralism, build a multipolar world order, respect the sovereignty and legitimate interests of nations and peoples, respect international law, refrain from threatening or using force in international disputes, and ensure that no one is left behind.

In the economic field, the bilateral trade turnover has reached approximately \$100 million per year in recent years. Both coun-

tries enjoy strengths that can benefit and complement each other. Specifically, some of Iran's strengths lie in its energy sector, oil and oil-related products, mining, machinery, and construction, while Vietnam has advantages in exporting agricultural products, textiles, footwear, and electronics. Therefore, it is essential for the two countries to continue cooperating to explore their potential and better serve the livelihoods of their people.

Given the complex international and regional situation, Speaker Hue's visit to Iran once again demonstrates Vietnam's independent, self-reliant, multilateral, and diversified foreign policy. It holds great significance in promoting and deepening the Vietnam-Iran relationship, exploring economic cooperation potentials, and contributing to taking the bilateral relations to a new phase of development.