

NEWS IN BRIEF

KSA eyes cooperation with Iran in petchem

TASNIM – Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Iran on Monday voiced his country's readiness to broaden cooperation with Tehran in the petrochemical sector.

Abdullah bin Saud al-Anzi expressed his country's willingness during his visit to the pavilion of Iran's National Petrochemical Company (NPC) at the 17th IranPlast International Exhibition.

Al-Anzi pointed to areas in which Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) and NPC can cooperate, expressing hope that the two sides will hold talks on petrochemical projects.

Sports minister gets confidence vote



TASNIM – Lawmakers in the Iranian Parliament on Monday gave a vote of confidence to Kioumars Hashemi as the country's new Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs.

During an open session of Parliament in Tehran on Monday, out of 237 parliamentarians present, Hashemi secured 167 votes in favor, with 57 against, 12 abstentions, and one invalid vote.

Hashemi had been introduced to Parliament by the president's deputy for parliamentary affairs on September 11.

He was chosen as the ministry's caretaker on August 1 as Hamid Sajjadi's replacement.

Scenario of isolating Iran failed: Spox

ISNA – Iran's government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi on Monday referred to a number of the government's achievements, saying that the scenario of isolating the Islamic Republic had failed.

The country's volume of commercial exchanges has increased, Iran's blocked assets have been released, and it has been accepted as a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS.

He made the comments in a post on his X account.

Iran, US conclude prisoner swap agreement

International Desk

Iran on Monday completed a prisoner swap deal with the United States, which saw the release of five Iranian prisoners in the US in exchange for five American prisoners.

Under the deal, the five Americans were flown from Tehran to Qatar before transferring to flights to Washington, D.C.

The five Iranian detainees were identified as Mehrdad Moein Ansari, Kambiz Attar Kashani, Reza Sarhangpour Kofrani, Amin Hassanzadeh, and Kaveh Lotfollah Afrasiabi.

Two of the five Iranians imprisoned in the US arrived in Doha where they

will later transit back home.

Nournews, affiliated with Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said on Monday afternoon that Moein Ansari and Sarhangpour Kafrani are now in Doha, Qatar.

"Simultaneously, the three other Iranian prisoners who lived in the US have been freed," the news outlet said.

The agreement also included the release of nearly \$6 billion in Iranian funds which had been illegally blocked in South Korean banks since 2018 due to US sanctions.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran Mohammad Reza Farzin said on

Monday that funds have been transferred to the accounts of six Iranian lenders in two Qatari banks.

The US administration has insisted that Iran will only be allowed to use the money to buy food, medicine and other humanitarian goods. However, Iran has denied restrictions have been placed on the spending of funds.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani has insisted that the money will allow Tehran to "purchase all non-sanctioned goods," not just food and medicine.

Meanwhile, Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi, who is currently in New York to attend the UN General

Assembly meeting, underscored Tehran's full authority over its assets, saying it is the Islamic Republic that decides how to spend the funds, and that the money will be spent "wherever we need it".



Mehرداد Moein Ansari (L) and Reza Sarhangpour, Iranian nationals who had been imprisoned in the US, pose for a photo at Doha International Airport in Doha, Qatar, on September 18, 2023. **NOURNEWS AGENCY**



US citizens, who had been imprisoned in Iran, Siamak Namazi (R), Emad Sharqi (L) and Morad Tahbaz (C) disembark from a plane upon their arrival at the Doha International Airport on September 18, 2023. **KARIM JAAFAR/AFP**

Raeisi: UN should be voice of nations, not powers



National Desk

Iranian President Raeisi, who has traveled to the United States to attend the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, said that the United Nations should be the voice of nations, not powers.

"Nations expect the United Nations to be an organization of 'nations' because if it becomes an organization of 'states', the voice of nations will not be heard," he told reporters upon his arrival in New York on Monday.

Raeisi emphasized that the capacities of the UN and the

General Assembly can be used to communicate the Iranian nation's voice and outline the Islamic Republic's foreign policy.

Raeisi stressed the importance of outlining the "important messages" of the Iranian nation's achievements in the face of the enemies. He said the great nation of Iran has something to say in its demand for justice and rights, and the fight against discrimination and corruption.

Raeisi is scheduled to address the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday. He will also hold talks with

senior officials from other countries and participate in separate meetings there.

The 78th UNGA session will take place on September 18-26. The presence of high-ranking officials from different countries at the annual event provides a good opportunity for international political consultations and bilateral dialogues.

Iranian President Raeisi speaks with reporters upon his arrival at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, US, on September 18, 2023. **president.ir**

Demand for Iranian drones much greater than production: Top general



The chief of staff of the Iranian Armed Forces said that demand for the purchase of Iran's homegrown sophisticated drones is much greater than the country's production.

Speaking at a Monday conference in Tehran on the role of the Sacred Defense against the former Iraqi regime's eight-year war on Iran in national security, the high-ranking general highlighted Iran's dramatic progress in the defense industry, Press TV reported.

"Today, the number of customers of our drones are several times more than our production capacity," Major General Baqeri said, adding that "major world powers" are vying to purchase Iranian weapons.

He also pointed out that once the Islamic Republic was banned from purchasing foreign-made weapons, but now it is faced with bans on the export of its domestically-developed military products.

Iran has turned into a "big drone power" that is outperforming major world powers, the commander added.

Last month, Defense Ministry spokesman also highlighted the increasing demand for Iran-made advanced unmanned aerial vehicles, revealing a strong interest from numerous countries in procuring these drones.

"We have received numerous requests from various countries, notably from Western and European countries," Reza Taleai-Nik said in August.

Iranian military experts and engineers have in recent years made remarkable breakthroughs in manufacturing a broad range of indigenous equipment, making the Armed Forces self-sufficient.

Iranian officials have declared that the country will not hesitate to strengthen its military capabilities, including its missile power, which are entirely meant for defense, and that Iran's defense capabilities will never be subject to negotiations.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Minister: Iran won't let NATO presence in region

National Desk The Iranian Defense Minister emphasized that his country is against NATO's presence in the region, as well as any changes in the region's geopolitics.

Regarding the United States' entry into the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict and the potential introduction of NATO forces in the region, Mohammadreza Ashtiani told ILNA, "We firmly oppose external interference in regional affairs".

He underscored Iran's commitment to resolving regional issues through diplomatic channels and cooperation with neighboring countries.

Referring to recent tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the presence of Iranian forces on the bor-

der, Ashtiani affirmed that Iran does not accept any changes in the geopolitics of the region.

"While we maintain relations and engage with Armenia and Azerbaijan as our neighbors and partners, we actively contribute to the issues," he added.

that upcoming border exercises are routine annual drills with minimal relevance to the current geopolitical situation.

Military posts along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. **OFFICE OF THE UN AMBASSADOR**

