

## Tehran, Riyadh improve...

It is also worth noting that talks are underway between Iran and Saudi Arabia to establish security agreements, which include strengthening border security and increasing cooperation to combat terrorism. Preparations for this framework have reached their final stages.

On October 24, Saudi Ministry of Defense spokesperson Turki Al-Maliki stated that the Royal Saudi Naval Forces participated in a multinational joint naval exercise in the Gulf of Oman, alongside Iran. Furthermore, the two countries are planning joint military exercises in the Red Sea. During his meeting with his Saudi counterpart, Major General Baqeri formally invited the Saudi navy to participate in Iranian naval exercises next year.

The meeting between the heads of the Iranian and Saudi armed forces can be seen as a breakthrough in Iran-Saudi relations. Regional political and defense experts believe that increased defense cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia will help stabilize the region, which is considered a significant advancement for Muslim countries.

Historically, due to decades of rivalry and opposing stances in the region, military cooperation or joint exercises between Iran and Saudi Arabia were not possible. Since the end of the monarchy in Iran, external forces have exploited the animosities between Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, with China's mediation, the two countries restored diplomatic ties on March 10, 2023. With the ongoing efforts to restore defense cooperation and plan for joint military exercises, the prospects for future collaboration have greatly improved. The nature of the defense cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is still in its initial stages, and its primary goal is to normalize relations and address shared threats. If this cooperation continues to grow, it could not only contribute to the stability of both countries but also benefit the entire Middle East and help counter the aggressive actions of a common adversary, Israel.

**Mohammad Ali Rajabi**  
Cartoonist



# Pezeschkian: Expedite construction of Rasht-Astara railway

## Economy Desk

Iranian President Masoud Pezeschkian emphasized the need to expedite the construction of the Rasht-Astara railway, the ultimate segment of the North-South corridor rail line.

During a meeting with his minister of roads and urban development and ambassador to Russia, the president reviewed the latest reports on the project and made the remarks, according to president.ir. Minister of Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadegh explored the obstacles facing the project, citing limited resources for land acquisition as the main challenge. The president issued instructions to facilitate assistance in this area and stressed the need

to speed up land acquisition along the route.

Iran and Russia see the 162 km Rasht-Astara railway as an important link in the International North-South Transport Corridor.

Kazem Jalali, Iranian ambassador to Russia, reported on the Russians' enthusiasm for implementing the project and their desire to expedite the transportation of goods from the south.

"The Russians are willing to invest in a railway line with a standard Russian gauge from Parsabad to Bandar Abbas, in addition to the Rasht-Astara line," Jalali reported.

The President welcomed the construction of both railway lines, saying that "the expansion of railway lines from north to south is in the interest of the peo-

ple and the country's economy, and we welcome it."

## Calling for energy-saving movement

Later in the day, the president highlighted the need to honestly disclose the country's energy crisis to the people during a meeting with the minister of energy and the minister of petroleum.

"We must ask the people to take the first step in conserving energy to overcome the current critical situation," Pezeschkian said. The president noted the high energy consumption in the country, saying that it is not logical that Iran consumes three times more electricity than European countries.

"We must examine all ways to reduce consumption and implement the most



Iranian President Masoud Pezeschkian (L) meets with Iran's minister of roads and urban development and ambassador to Russia on November 16, 2023.  
● president.ir

cost-effective solutions. We can contribute to energy conservation by reducing the temperature in governmental offices, which will help us allocate more electricity and gas to people's homes."

Pezeschkian noted that the further development of

energy distribution networks, including electricity and gas, does not work well with the existing infrastructure, and that there is no alternative to conserving energy, especially gas, in the current cold weather conditions.

The minister of petroleum

reported an increase in crude oil production over the past three months, adding that gas supply to the network has also increased during this period. "However, this year, the cold weather started earlier, and we are witnessing increased consumption."

## Iran's plasma technology enters industrial phase: AEOI chief

### Economy Desk

In a groundbreaking move, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) has elevated plasma technology from research to industrial application, inaugurating the country's first plasma-based dry fruit processing and decontamination plant in Rafsanjan, southeastern Iran.

The facility, unveiled on Saturday, represents the culmination of two decades of research into plasma technology, which was previously limited to medical applications, said AEOI director Mohammad Eslami at the opening ceremony, IRNA reported.

"Plasma technology has been used in the medical field for 20 years, but with the efforts of our colleagues and by passing the research phase, we have entered the industrial phase, the result of which you saw today in Rafsanjan," he said.

Eslami explained that plasma technology is now



● TASNIM

being utilized both in pistachio orchards and in the processing of their products, representing a critical step in reducing damage to pistachios and improving their quality.

He expressed hope that it will mitigate damage to exports and encourage broader adoption of plasma technology in agriculture.

The factory aims to process up to 6,000 tons of nuts annually in its initial phase. It can handle a range of products, including pistachios, almonds, peanuts, corn, grains, oilseeds, and legumes, with a processing capacity of three tons per hour.

Food irradiation is the process of exposing foodstuffs to rays to kill bacteria that can cause food-borne diseases, increasing shelf life. It has the same benefits as when food is heated, refrigerated, frozen, or treated with chemicals, but does not change the temperature or leave residues.

According to FAO, nuclear techniques help authorities in over 50 countries enhance food safety by addressing the problem of harmful residues and contaminants in food products and improving their traceability systems with stable isotope analysis, according to Mehr news agency.

## New BRICS partner states named

Indonesia has been awarded "partner status" by the BRICS economic group, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Pankin said on Friday. Russian media reports said that Malaysia and Thailand also received the designation.

Pankin made the statement on Thursday while addressing the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministerial Meeting in Lima, Peru, according to RT.

The new 'partner country' status was approved at the BRICS Summit hosted by Russia in Kazan last month and is intended to serve as an alternative to membership after more than 30 nations applied to join the organization.

'Partner country' status provides for permanent participation in special sessions of BRICS summits and foreign ministers' meetings, as well as other high-level events. Partners can also contribute to the group's outcome documents.

Russian media quoted Pankin as saying that Malaysia and Thailand had also become partners, but the two nations were not named in the foreign ministry's statement.

BRICS was initially comprised of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, and expanded when Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates officially became members on January 1, 2024.



Foreign Minister of Indonesia Sugiono (front) is welcomed to Russia during a ceremony at the Kazan airport on October 22, 2024.  
● ALEXEI DANICHEV/BRICS

Earlier this week, Russian ally Belarus announced that it had also officially become a BRICS partner country. In a statement, Minsk described the organization as "a pillar of a multipolar world" that gives many nations "hope for a fairer world order."

On Thursday, Bolivian Foreign Minister Celinda Sosa Lunda revealed that her nation had received an invitation from Russia to become a partner country of BRICS. "We responded positively to this invitation," she said.

The list of aspiring partners has not been officially announced, but media reports have also mentioned Algeria, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Nigeria, Turkey, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam as potential candidates.

## Economy minister targets non-inflationary growth

### Economy Desk

Iran's Economy Minister Abdolnaser Hemmati said that to get out of the 3% growth trap of the past three decades, the country must target non-inflationary growth, not its inflationary counterpart.

Addressing a conference on financing the production sector, he noted that during the past three decades, the average growth rate of Iran has not been more than 3%. "Based on our historical experience," he added, "If we are just to wait for economic growth to pick up pace, it may not happen, so we

should not rely on it at all." "The law approved by the Parliament will be the main basis for financing, and we will execute it seriously. We will put this law on the agenda seriously, and I hope we will take good measures in this field within the next one or two years."

Hemmati stressed, "We can easily solve a set of complex problems; the law on financing production and infrastructure was a good law that was approved last year. The solutions provided by this law can make some movement in our economic growth."



● MEHR

The minister of economy emphasized that the uncertainty prevailing in the economic environment also affects production. Emphasizing the importance of "physical and institutional capital," he stated that the aforementioned law considers all these is-

suues and reduces the pressure on the banking system. "Instead of allowing banks to over-withdraw, we must stop it and reduce the legal deposit to reduce pressure on banks. We have reached good agreements with the president to provide facilities for production sectors."