

Expediency Council begins revisiting FATF case

International Desk

Iran's Expediency Council began on Sunday re-examining the anti-money laundering and terrorism financing conventions adopted by the global financial crime watchdog FATF, with a lawmaker saying that "positive signals" have been received from the council's meeting. The spokesman of Iran's Expediency Council Seyyed Mohsen Dehnavi said that various clauses of the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions will be reviewed during the meetings. Abbas Golrou, a member of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee said on Sunday that, "We have heard positive signals from the Expediency Council" meeting. He expressed hope that cooperation

among the country's political institutions would lead to a right decision to overcome the country's complicated situation.

The Sunday meeting of the Expediency Council came after Iran's Finance Minister Abdolnasser Hemmati said in December that the country's top leadership had allowed renewed discussions on FATF conventions in the Expediency Council several years after the body stopped such debates fearing that the conventions may undermine Iran's financial independence.

FATF restrictions imposed on Iran's banking system will be removed once the country enacts the Palermo and the Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) conventions.

The Iranian parliament has approved the Palermo and the CFT, but Iran's Guardian Council, which is responsi-

ble for vetting parliament legislation, has refused to ratify them, citing the need for some amendments.

Iran has ratified other conventions and regulations adopted by the FATF. The renewed push to examine Iran's full accession to the FATF comes amid efforts by President Masoud Pezeshkian and his administration to open up to the world and to improve an economy affected by global inflation and foreign sanctions.

In his presidential election campaign in mid-summer, Pezeshkian criticized the lack of action on FATF issues.

Deputy Finance Minister Hadi Khani said on Sunday that FATF is not allowed to collect economic information from member states or pressure them in this regard, but it evaluates documents it has obtained from "certain entities" in their relevant countries to determine whether they have



properly implemented the standards defined by the international organi-

zation about fighting money laundering and terrorism financing.

Iran launches new drills in protection of nuclear sites



The Iranian military launched new exercises in the country's western and northern air defense zones including Fordow and Khondab which host uranium enrichment and heavy water facilities.

The drills – dubbed Eqtedar or "might" in Farsi – began on Sunday in completely real battlefield environments, with the air defense force of the Army playing a central role under the command of the country's integrated air defense network, IRNA reported.

It features offensive and defensive missions by missile, radar, electronic warfare, electronic intelligence and reconnaissance units, as well as deception systems of the Iranian Army's Air Defense Force, along with the Air Force's manned and unmanned aircraft.

During the drills, the Air Defense Force will defend critical sites against simulated aerial and missile attacks. It will also conduct reconnaissance, identification, interception, and engagement operations against mocked enemy and repel offensive assaults. In the first phase of the exercises, the Air Defense Force destroyed invading unmanned aircraft using Khordad 15 and Talash systems.

It also practiced passive defense scenarios and tactical movement of defense systems, in addition to testing the mobility and fire tactics of missile systems.

Meanwhile, an aerial interception operation took place using the manned aircraft belonging to the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force.

The exercises aim to evaluate the operational effectiveness and combat readiness of the air defense systems against potential enemy assaults. They also seek to assess both tactical and technical performance in battlefield conditions, as well as the practice of passive defense for air defense systems.

The drills are part of nationwide

exercises, the first phase of which began last week in the air defense zone of the Natanz nuclear facility under the orders of the air defense headquarters commander, national broadcaster IRIB said.

The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) air forces, the report said, were undertaking "an all-out point defense" of the site "against a multitude of air threats in tough electronic warfare conditions".

IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini said the drills, which will also cover other parts of Iran until mid-March, are being conducted in response to "new security threats". Several branches of the IRGC, including the navy and the Basij forces, will also take part in the exercises, he added.

Last month, US news website Axios reported that White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan had presented President Joe Biden with options for a potential US strike on Iran's nuclear facilities before January 20, when Donald Trump takes office.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei lambasted the reports, saying threats against the country's nuclear facilities are "a gross violation of international law". Members of Trump's incoming administration have vowed to resume the former president's "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran.

Foreign cadets in Iran visit southern island of Bu Musa



Cadets from eight countries, who are taking a defense course at the National Defense University based in Tehran, visited Bu Musa Island and the Strait of Hormuz in southern Iran.

The delegation was accompanied by Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, a senior advisor to Leader of Iran's Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, IRNA reported.

Elaborating on the objectives of the three-day visit, Safavi said on Sunday that it aims to introduce Iran's defense and security advances in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

The visit is also aimed at introducing Iran's advances in transit, energy, and industry sectors, as well as strengthening Iran's relations with countries like India, China, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Iraq, Oman, and Yemen, he added.

Safavi also referred to exchange of cadets between armies across the world, describing it as a way to enhance defense diplomacy.

He said that a large number of cadets are now taking courses at the National Defense University of Iran. The mutual understanding of countries about threats and common interests requires active defense diplomacy, he noted, adding that Iran has always tried to establish defense, security, intelligence, economic, cultural and political relations with its 15 neighboring countries and major Asian powers such as India, China and Russia.

As a regional power, he further said, the Islamic Republic aims to play its role in maintaining sustainable security and stability, especially within the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



West has no ...

These events are a wake-up call for regional countries. They should know that the US, the UK and the West, in general, have never had a genuine peace plan for the Middle East. They are solely focused on their interests, and if their true intentions were laid bare, their conspiracies would crumble, and the region might find some respite from devastation.

The West's economic agenda is fundamentally built on a bourgeois foundation. The global capitalist system demands that nations toe the line and serve the economic interests of the so-called First World nations. Consequently, the United States and the West, who

claim superiority and First World status, argue that the resources of the Third World should be at their disposal. When digging deeper into their foreign policies, it becomes clear as day that their endgame is to get their hands on oil reserves and safeguard their economic interests.

In line with Western interests, Israel has been working to carve out a safe haven for itself in the region over the past year. The regime, emboldened by the developments in Syria, aims to weaken the Axis of Resistance. By taking out resistance leaders, they mistakenly believe they can dismantle the Resistance movement, failing to grasp that Resistance is an ideology, a

school of thought that cannot be snuffed out by killing individuals. By the grace of God, the ideology of resistance is gaining momentum, fostering anti-Israel sentiment and challenging Western-backed oppressive forces in the region. Israel harbors expansionist ambitions, rooted in its doctrine of "From the Nile to the Euphrates." It has its greedy eyes on Muslim lands. Therefore, countries that support or turn a blind eye to Israeli aggression should be aware that their time will come. If they do not take action now to counter the Israeli regime's crimes now, the regime and its backers might come for them once they achieve their current goals.