

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani on Tuesday called for stronger banking relations with Iraq to allow for a growth in bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

In a meeting with Iraq’s Parliament Speaker Salim al-Jabouri here, Rouhani said further expansion of economic and trade ties between the two neighbors hinges on enhanced banking relations. The central banks of Iran and Iraq need to promote cooperation and keep working together to contribute to the bilateral trade, he added.

SANTIAGO (Reuters) – Pope Francis expressed “pain and shame” on Tuesday over a sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church in Chile, seeking forgiveness for a crisis that has scarred its credibility and left many faithful skeptical of reform. Francis spoke as the number of Catholic churches that have been attacked in the country in the past week rose to eight, both in the capital and in southern regions that are home to indigenous people. Police in riot gear dispersed some 200 demonstrators trying to make their way to a park where the pope said Mass for some 400,000 people after making his remarks about abuse.

Viewpoint

By: S. Nawabzadeh

Iran’s Dynamism Spells the Doom of Global Arrogance, Zionism


Health Minister Inaugurates “IRANOME” Project



Federer Joins Djokovic, harapova in 2nd Round in Australia



UN: Over 75 Percent of Yemenis in Need of Aid



Turkey Deploys More Tanks Along Syrian Border

HATAY, Turkey (Dispatches) -- Turkish armed forces have deployed more than 40 armored vehicles along the Syrian border after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan promised to stop a force being created by the U.S., military sources said Tuesday.

Two dozen armored vehicles entered Reyhanli district of southeastern Hatay province “for reinforcement reasons”, the Anadolu news agency reported.

A convoy of 20 tanks has also arrived in Viransehir district of southeastern Sanliurfa province, according to the sources. They have been sent from southeastern Mardin province to assist military units on the Syrian border.

Erdogan on Monday said final preparations were under way to invade the Kurdish canton of Afrin, as tensions rose once again between the ostensible allies over Syria.

His speech in Ankara came a day after the U.S. announced it would form a 30,000-strong border force led by the Kurdish YPG militia - a group Turkey regards as terrorist and linked to the PKK organization in Turkey.

“A country we call an ally is insisting on forming a terror army on our border,” said Erdogan. “What can that terror army target but Turkey? Our mission is to strangle it before it’s even born.”

“This is what we have to say to all our allies: don’t get in between us and terrorist organizations, or we will not be responsible for the unwanted consequences,” Erdogan said.

“Either you take off your flags on those terrorist organizations, or we will have to hand those flags over to you... Our operations will continue until not a single terrorist remains along our borders, let alone 30,000 of them.”

Erdogan also said that Turkey’s armed forces had completed preparations for an operation against the Kurdish-controlled region of Afrin in northwest Syria. On Sunday, he told members of his AKP party: “If the terrorists in Afrin don’t surrender, we will tear them down.”

Russia also opposed the U.S. plan, warning that it could lead to the partitioning of Syria.

Iran: U.S. Force Breach of Int’l Law

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Tuesday the new U.S. force inside Syria constituted a breach of international law and Syrian sovereignty, joining Syria, Turkey and Russia in a vehement rebuke of the plan.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has vowed to crush the new force and drive U.S. troops from Syria.

“The new plan that the Americans have in mind for Syria is violation of international laws and a plot against sovereignty and security of Syria and region,” Rouhani said during a meeting with the speaker of the Syrian parliament Hammouda Youssef Sabbagh.

Sabbagh was in Tehran for a conference of parliamentary speakers.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi said earlier on Tuesday that the planned U.S. force inside Syria would “fan the flames of war” and raise tensions.

“The U.S. announcement of a new border force in Syria is an obvious interference in the internal affairs of this country,” Qasemi was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA.

Qasemi urged all U.S. forces to leave Syria immediately.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Iranian counterpart Muhammad Javad Zarif discussed the conflict in Syria in a phone conversation, the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

The plans for a border force include 15,000 militants from the so-called Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a militia dominated by the Kurdish YPG.

The forces are expected to be deployed along the border with Turkey, in northern Syria, the Iraqi border in the southeast, and along the Euphrates River valley.

Fawaz Gerges, a professor of international relations at the London School of Economics, warned that for Turkey, the U.S. border force was a “slap in the face” and has inflamed tensions between the two countries.

“Even though the relationship has come under duress, they are not going to cut the umbilical cord the two sides have,” Gerges told Middle East Eye.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei: Muslims Should Counter ‘Conspiracy of Silence’



Ayatollah Khamenei meets senior Muslim parliamentarians who attended a session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Conference in Tehran, Jan. 16, 2018.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei here on Tuesday urged Muslim countries to counter the “dangerous and horrific Western propaganda empire” which is run by the Zionists.

In a meeting with the Muslim world’s senior parliamentarians, the Leader stressed the importance of countering the “conspiracy of silence” aimed at consigning to oblivion the main issues of the Muslim world, particularly the Palestinian cause.

Ayatollah Khamenei warned that the important issue of Palestine is

being totally ignored by the international community as he has met participants at the 13th session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Conference.

The Leader also called on Muslim nations to help resolve the crises in Yemen and Bahrain as they are among the important issues of the Muslim world.

“Today, the United States of America does not answer the simplest questions that public opinion in the world has,” the Leader said.

“Public opinion in the world is asking the U.S., “Do you know that

it has been years now that a regime is bombarding Yemen and destroying its cities? Do you or do you not know of the matter? If you know of it, why do you support it? If you know of it, then why do you not protest? If you know of this crime, then why do your fuel-providing planes help them? Why do you help them? Why do you support them?”

Ayatollah Khamenei touched on the most heinous crimes which are being committed in Yemen and denounced the silence of the U.S. and other allies of Saudi Arabia which is leading a military campaign

against the impoverished country.

“You who claim to be supporting human rights should answer public opinion of the world. When thousands of children and thousands of men, women and civilians are killed inside their houses and in hospitals and schools without any defense, is this not terrorism? Is this not the most brazen and cruel form of state terrorism? Why do you support it? However, the U.S. does not answer these questions. They have no shame and they make claims about advocating human rights.”

“Now this is about Yemen. The other side of the matter is Palestine with a history of suffering from such crimes for 60, 65 years,” Ayatollah Khamenei said.

“You see what they are doing to the people of Palestine, you see that they are destroying their houses and their farms, you see that they are building settlements, and you see that they are placing Zionist elements – that are holding guns - at Palestinian doors and that they keep them armed. You see such things.

“So, why do you defend them? Why do you give them money? Why do you constantly get along with – as you yourselves say – the Zionist lobby inside the United States? Why do you constantly flatter them? Why? These are simple questions posed by public opinion in the world,” the Leader said.

Ayatollah Khamenei said touched on the hypocrisy of U.S. leaders who occasionally claim to be

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Airbus: Iran Deal to Take Longer to Complete

PARIS (Reuters) -- The sales chief of European planemaker Airbus predicted Iran would take delivery of dozens of European jets it has ordered under a nuclear sanctions deal with major powers, but warned the transactions could take longer to complete than planned.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who has strongly criticized the 2015 deal to lift a raft of sanctions in return for restrictions on Iran’s nuclear program, urged European allies on Friday to help fix “disastrous flaws” in the pact or face a U.S. exit.

European planemaker Airbus and its U.S. rival Boeing have agreed to sell a combined total of 180 jets to renew the aging fleet of state carrier IranAir, but depend on U.S. support for the deal because of the number of U.S. parts in all their jets.

“I think those deals will get fulfilled, maybe not on the original schedule,” Airbus sales chief John Leahy told Reuters in an

interview, referring to the company’s agreement to sell 100 planes to IranAir.

“We have to arrange financing; they have to understand about making pre-delivery payments,” he added.

So far IranAir has taken delivery of three Airbus jets and a handful of turboprops built by its Franco-Italian affiliate ATR.

Bankers say further business with Iran has been held up by the reluctance of Western financial institutions to deal with Tehran because of concerns that the nuclear deal could unravel or that they could fall foul of ongoing U.S. financial controls.

Posting the vast majority of the 100 sales to Iran as firm orders allowed Airbus to beat Boeing in their annual race for new business in 2016. Airbus again won more orders in 2017.

Airbus has secured a batch of export licenses from the U.S.

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Saudi Crown Prince Set to Seize Hariri’s Assets

LONDON (Dispatches) -- Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman - known as MbS - is poised to seize the assets of Lebanon’s Prime Minister Saad al-Hariri in the kingdom, Al-Araby Al-Jadeed has reported.

“Riyadh is moving to acquire assets still owned by Hariri in the now defunct Saudi Oger construction company in return for cancelling outstanding debts,” the London-based pan-Arab media outlet said, citing an unnamed source.

The alleged move comes amid a crackdown that many critics have labeled as a shakedown of the kingdom’s business and political elite.

“The restructuring of Saudi companies whose owners are involved in corruption cases are steaming ahead, starting with the Binladin group and now moving towards Saudi Oger,” Al-Araby Al-Jadeed cited a source close to the Saudi

authorities as saying.

“Although Saudi Oger does not have many assets left after liquidating its businesses, the authorities are determined to reclaim all funds and assets that were sold off,” the source added.

The source claimed that the recent arrest of Jordanian-Saudi businessman Sabih al-Masri was linked to Saudi Oger and Hariri.

Saudi Oger was a once-mighty construction giant, founded by Lebanon’s billionaire late Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, Saad’s father, until it was closed in July 2017.

It had built some of the most grandiose complexes in Riyadh, including the palatial Ritz-Carlton hotel, which became a luxury prison for Saudi royals and other elites caught in MbS’ power grab.

Falling oil prices, a new leadership in Riyadh, construction

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