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Uzbek President Lauds Iran's Advances Despite Sanctions

TASHKENT(Dispatches)—**President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev has hailed Iran's scientific and industrial advances, saying his country is willing to take advantage of Iran's experiences in various technological fields.**

The Uzbek president met Iranian Foreign Minister Hussein Amir-Abdollahian who visited Tashkent to attend the ministerial meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

In their meeting, Amir-Abdollahian pointed to key issues on the agenda of both countries, including a planned visit by Uzbekistan's parliament speaker to Tehran in the spring and separates sessions of the two countries' joint security and economic cooperation commissions, calling for serious development of their economic and trade relations.

The minister stressed the need to sign a preferential trade agreement and operationalizing 18 documents

signed between the two states during a visit by Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Samarkand.

The Uzbek president sent his greetings to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and his Iranian counterpart, welcoming Iran's invitation to visit Tehran.

He said ties between Iran and Uzbekistan are growing and moving forward in different fields.

Mirziyoyev also called for the formation of a joint committee by the foreign ministries of the two countries to draw up a roadmap for economic cooperation.

He said the prospect of relations between the two countries is bright and promising.

He said Afghanistan is a common issue of the regional countries, announcing that the foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbors will hold a meeting in Tashkent soon to exchange views on the situation in the war-torn country.

237 Iranian MPs Condemn Desecration of Qur'an in



People protest outside the Swedish consulate in Istanbul to condemn the sacrilegious burning of the Holy Qur'an.

TEHRAN – A total of 237 Iranian members of parliament on Wednesday issued a statement, condemning the outrageous desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Europe.

The statement, read out at an open session of parliament, said the “unforgivable act” is an organized warfare waged by the hegemonic powers against Muslims.

“Under the false pretexts of advocating freedom of expression, the Western leaders allow extremist and radical elements to move on the path of spreading hatred against religious sanctities and institutionalize Islamophobia in their societies,” the statement said.

The Iranian parliamentarians called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to take necessary measures to counter the organized sacrilege of Islamic sanctities.

Elsewhere in Muslim countries, Egypt's top religious institution on Wednesday called on Muslims world over to boycott Swedish and Dutch products over the desecration of Islam's holy book by far-right activists in the two European countries.

The call by Egypt's Al-Azhar, the Sunni Muslim world's foremost religious institution, is the latest in a series of condemnations from the Muslim world over the incidents in Sweden and the Netherlands.

On Saturday, anti-Islam Danish activist Rasmus Paludan burned the Qur'an outside the Turkish Embassy in the Swedish capital, Stockholm. On Sunday, Edwin Wagensveld, Dutch leader of the far-right Pegida movement, tore pages out of the Qur'an near the Dutch parliament in The Hague and stomped on

them.

Egypt's Al-Azhar called the desecrations an “offense” to Muslims and said a boycott of both countries would be an appropriate response to governments that protect “barbaric crimes under the inhuman and immoral banner they call freedom of expression.”

In Pakistan's eastern city of Lahore, hundreds protested on Tuesday and condemned the desecration. Protests also took place in the two main Turkish cities, Istanbul and Ankara.

After the incident in Stockholm, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Sweden not to expect Ankara's support in its ongoing bid to join NATO's military alliance.

European countries have long defended the blasphemous acts. Both Paludan and Wagensveld were granted permission by authorities for their egregious moves.

West Curbing Funds for Iran's Anti-Drug Campaign

TEHRAN – The secretary general of the Headquarters for the Campaign against Drug Trafficking on Wednesday stressed the importance of international support for fighting narcotics, saying that Iran spends \$700 million to \$1 billion a year on the campaign.

According to reports by international organization, Iran accounts for about 92% of opium catches, but it is entirely alone in the fight, Eskandar Momeni told IRNA news agency.

It includes securing the border, countering smuggling, identifying and monitoring transit routes, providing treatment to drug addicts and their rehabilitation, without any contribu-

tions from related international bodies, he added.

Since the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime opened its office in Tehran in 1999, Iran has established good cooperation with the United Nations on fighting drugs, Momeni said.

Despite hailing Iran's efforts, the United Nations is dependent on donor nations, mainly the U.S. and Europeans, for funds which they are unwilling to give to the Islamic Republic.

Momeni said the most important problem in Iran's fight against narcotics is its proximity to Afghanistan, which is the world's largest producer of narcotics, and recently a major producer of methamphetamines.

Official Refutes 'Lies' About Iran's Nuclear Program

TEHRAN – Iran's atomic energy chief on Wednesday praises the country's progress in developing radiopharmaceuticals, especially those for fighting cancer, rejecting “lies” spread by the occupying regime of Israel about diversion Tehran's nuclear activities.

Speaking to reporters, Muhammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), said the Islamic Republic has significantly boosted radiopharmaceuticals at home, which now act more accurately in detecting diseases and fighting cancer.

Iran now ranks the fifth in the world for developing radiopharmaceuticals, he said, adding the Islamic Republic has been exporting the products to nine countries.

Elsewhere, he referred to accusations leveled by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) under the Israeli influence about the existence of “undeclared” nuclear sites and activities in Iran.

“They themselves know that the accusations are big lies, but they used them as a pressure lever against the Islamic Republic. In their official documents... they have admitted that there is no sign of any deviation in the nuclear program, and there is continuing interaction with the agency,” he said.

“We are not locked in any standoff with the Agency,” said the official, adding that preparations are underway for a visit by IAEA Director-General Rafael Grossi to Iran next month.

On Tuesday, Grossi said, “I

might be back in Tehran... in February, perhaps, for a much-needed political dialogue, or reestablishment thereof, with Iran.”

Regarding talks about restoring the 2015 Iranian nuclear deal, formerly known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Grossi pointed to a “big, big impasse” on the matter, claiming that Iran's pull-back from it – including disconnecting 27 IAEA cameras monitoring its declared nuclear sites in response to anti-Iran measures – meant that the IAEA was no longer effectively monitoring Tehran's nuclear program.

“I've been blind on this aspect for at least a year,” he added.

Grossi stated he hoped to “be making some progress” on restoring cooperation with Iran

The Holy Qur'an

High above all is God, the King, the Truth! Be not in haste with the Qur'an before its revelation to thee is completed, but say, “O my Lord! advance me in knowledge.”

The Holy Qur'an 20:115

PRAYER TIMINGS

Noon (Zohr)	12:17
Evening(Maghreb)	17:45
Dawn(Fajr)“ Tomorrow”	07:09
Sunrise “Tomorrow”	05:42

Foreign Ministry Spokesman:

IRGC a Pillar of Iran's National Power

TEHRAN – The U.S. is angry with the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) because the force is a pillar of Iran's national power which has humiliated the occupying regime of Israel and disrupted U.S. plans for domination in the region, Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said on Wednesday.

“Hostile measures by the U.S. regime against Iranians are countless. Different and diverse aspects of the U.S. administrations' crimes against the Iranian nation expose fake, political human rights posturing of the U.S. officials and instrumental use of human rights,” Nasser Kanaani said.

“Devising coup d'état, providing support to the eight-year imposed war, intentional downing of the passenger plane, waging a hybrid warfare, sponsoring MKO terrorists, imposing bans and maximum pressure against Iranians are only examples of the U.S. regime's countless crimes against the Iranian nation.

“The reason behind the U.S. anger at IRGC, spread of lies and baseless allegations against it is clear; the IRGC is a pillar of

Iran's national power, has humiliated the apartheid Zionist regime and disrupted the U.S.' domineering strategies in the region,” he added.

The EU on Monday backed down on its plan to blacklist the IRGC, with the bloc's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell saying this could only happen once a court in a member country hands down a ruling.