

Presidents Assad, Raisi Hold Phone Talks

TEHRAN -- President Ebrahim Raisi told his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad over phone Sunday that the world system is changing in favor of the resistance front and against the global arrogance and the occupying regime of Israel.

"The crimes of this regime are a sign of its weakness and desperation and it is proof that the future is bright and promising for the resistance front," Raisi said. He stressed the importance of respecting Syria's territorial integrity and added that support for the Arab country's national sovereignty is the only way to counter terrorism.

Kayhan

International

Macron: Europe Should Not Follow U.S. on Taiwan

PARIS (Reuters) -- French President Emmanuel Macron said in comments published on Sunday that Europe had no interest in an acceleration of the crisis over Taiwan and should pursue a strategy independent of both Washington and Beijing. Macron has just returned from a three-day state visit to China, where he received a warm welcome from President Xi Jinping. "The worst thing would be to think that we Europeans must become followers on this topic and adapt to the American rhythm or a Chinese overreaction," Politico quoted him as saying. Europe must better fund its defense industry, develop nuclear and renewable energy and reduce dependence on the U.S. dollar to limit its reliance on the United States, he was quoted as saying.

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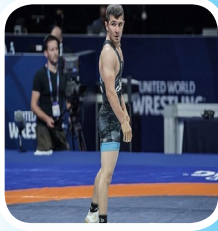
Viewpoint

Winds of Change Blowing Across West Asia

Basij to Parade Vessels in Solidarity With Palestinians



Iranian Wrestlers Win 2 Gold Medals on 1st Day of Asian Championships



Rallies Held in U.S., UK in Support of Palestine



Ignoring Netanyahu's Compromise, Hundreds of Thousands Protest in Occupied Territories

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- Demonstrators crowded Tel Aviv late Saturday for another protest against prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to protect himself from prosecution, despite the process being put on hold.

Organizers said around 258,000 people attended, but authorities gave no figures of their own.

The demonstration came a day after a car-ramming attack on the city's seafloor killed one and injured seven others.

Tensions have surged since Zionist forces stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque in Al-Quds on Wednesday. The occupying regime bombarded both Gaza and Lebanon after rockets were fired by Palestinian resistance fighters in retaliation.

Protesters on Saturday brandished signs reading "Netanyahu is leading us to war".

Other, smaller, demonstrations took place in the central city of Kfar Saba, at Haifa in the north and in Al-Quds.

Thousands of protesters, sometimes hundreds of thousands, have been taking to the streets each week since the controversial plans were announced in January by Netanyahu's cabinet, which was formed in December.

On March 27, he announced a "pause" to allow for dialogue on the changes which were moving through parliament and split the entity.

Netanyahu last month had announced the firing of his war minister, Yoav Gallant, who cited a threat to the entity's security because "the growing social rift" had made its way into the army and security agencies.

The proposals would curtail the authority of the supreme court and give politicians greater powers over the selection of judges.

Opponents have raised fears of a plunge into a totalitarian system but

the regime, a coalition between Netanyahu's Likud party and extreme-right and ultra-Orthodox Jewish allies, argues the changes are needed to rebalance powers between lawmakers and the judiciary.

Israel's attorney general had warned Netanyahu, just prior to the pause, against any intervention in changes to the judicial system because of conflicts of interest. The prime minister is on trial over charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, which he denies.

The Zionist regime on Sunday rejected claims raised in documents allegedly leaked from the Pentagon that leaders of its foreign intelligence service Mossad had supported the protests.

The New York Times on Saturday published an assessment it attributed to a Central Intelligence Update from March 1 that Mossad leadership had encouraged its staff and settlers to join the mass protests. The paper said that while the leaked documents seemed authentic, it did not mean they were accurate.

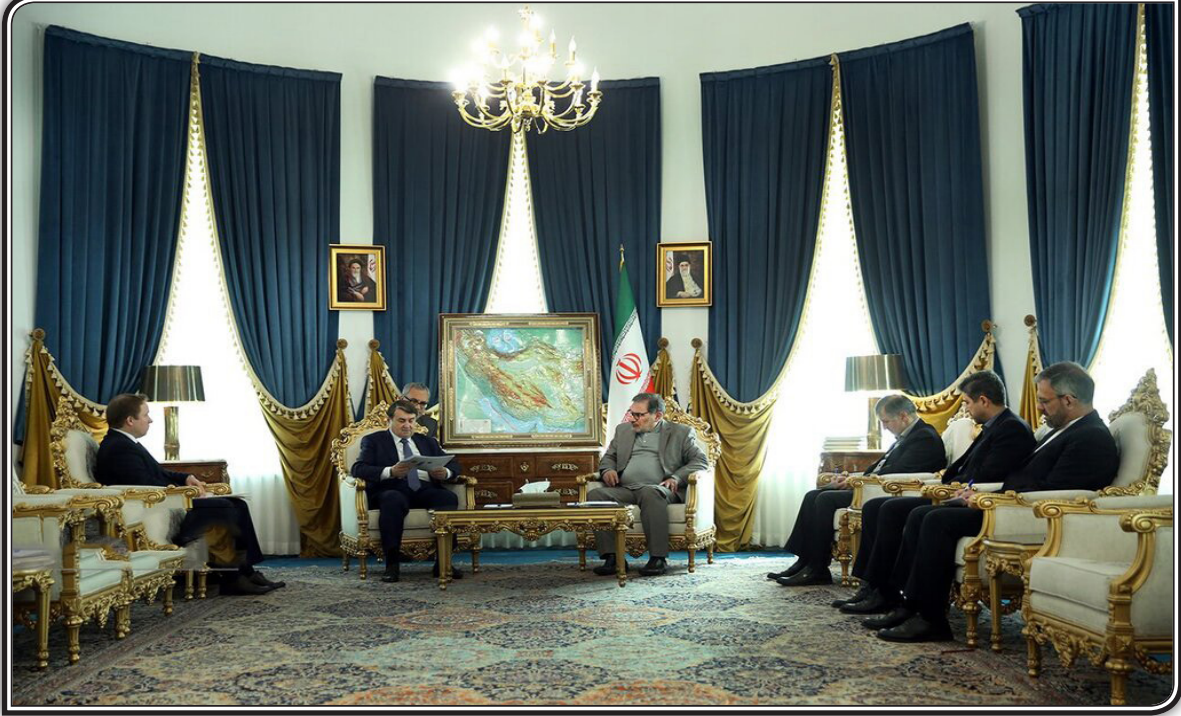
Netanyahu's office said in a statement that the report was "mendacious and without any foundation whatsoever".

"The Mossad and its senior officials did not -- and do not -- encourage agency personnel to join political demonstrations or any political activity," it said.

After weeks of intensifying demonstrations, Netanyahu in late March relented and said he would delay the contested changes to allow for compromise talks with opposition parties.

The U.S. Justice Department said on Friday it was in touch with the Pentagon and had begun a probe into the leak of the alleged documents, covering several subjects relating to national security. It declined further comment.

De-Dollarization Discussions in Tehran



Russian Presidential Aide Igor Levitin, center left, and Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Council Ali Shamkhani hold talks in Tehran on Sunday.

TEHRAN -- Russian and Iranian officials are working to ditch the U.S. dollar, discussing their shared interests in a meeting in Tehran on Sunday.

Russian Presidential Aide Igor Levitin, on a two-day trip in Tehran, met with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Council Ali Shamkhani, and the two discussed ways to thwart Western sanctions.

During the meeting, Shamkhani expressed his satisfaction with

the volume of economic cooperation between Russia and Iran, praising "the path that started to reduce the influence of the dollar in regional and international economic exchanges."

These plans, he said, "will limit the dominance of the West over the world economy to the minimum."

The representatives also discussed the ongoing joint project, the North-South Transport Corridor, which Shamkhani described as having a "decisive role in changing the geometry of goods transit in the region."

The North-South Transport Corridor (NSC) is a transport network for moving freights between Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan and other countries in Asia and Europe.

The transport corridor aims to create new networks to avoid the U.S. and the West.

Levitin, for his part, expressed

Moscow's readiness to invest in Iran's steel, oil and petrochemical industries.

The West imposed a price cap on Russian oil - the lifeblood of the Russian economy - late last year.

Shamkhani and Russian President Vladimir Putin had extensive talks on de-dollarization of trade during the Iranian official's visit to Moscow earlier this year, according to a Wednesday report by Al-Araby Al-Jadeed.

The hours-long, off-the-record meeting between Shamkhani and Putin early February was mostly focused on initiatives to offset the impacts of Western sanctions on Iran and Russia, including efforts to ditch the U.S. dollar from bilateral trade, it said.

The two agreed that Iran and Russia could increase the share of other major currencies, including the Chinese yuan, the Emirati dirham and the Indian rupee, in their foreign exchange reserves, it said.

The report said that the agreement was a base for Shamkhani's following consultations in China, the United Arab Emirates and Iraq to boost Iran's access to international trade.

Shamkhani also traveled to Abu Dhabi and Baghdad last month in visits that many said were aimed at boosting Iran's economic ties with its two Arab neighbors.

Hezbollah, Hamas Discuss Readiness of Axis of Resistance

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- The leaders of the resistance movements Hezbollah and Hamas have met in Beirut to discuss "the readiness of the axis of resistance" against the occupying regime of Israel, a Hezbollah statement said Sunday.

Ismail Haniyeh, the head of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, which administers the Gaza Strip, has been in the Lebanese capital since Wednesday.

The occupying regime of Israel blamed Hamas for firing 34 rockets the following day toward the occupied territory from southern Lebanon, the stronghold of Hezbollah.

The Zionist regime carried out strikes on both southern Lebanon and Gaza early Friday, after rockets targeting Israeli targets were also fired from the coastal enclave.

During Haniyeh's meeting with Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah, the pair discussed "the readiness of the axis of resistance" and cooperation between its members in the face of recent developments, the Hezbollah statement said.

The "axis of resistance" refers to Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian and other resistance groups opposed to the occupying regime of Israel.

The two also discussed "the intensification of resistance in the West Bank and Gaza" and "events at Al-Aqsa Mosque" in Al-Quds, according to the statement, which did not specify when they met.

On Wednesday, Zionist forces stormed the prayer hall of Al-Aqsa Mosque, Islam's third-holiest site, in a pre-dawn raid.

Following the strikes on Lebanon and Gaza, the Zionist regime announced early Sunday it had struck targets in Syria after six rockets were fired from Syrian territory.

The Zionist military said two rockets landed in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

The latest operations, which were not immediately claimed, came after three people were killed in two separate attacks targeting Zionists in recent days.

On Saturday, Zionist forces fatally shot another Palestinian

Iranian Delegation Due in Saudi Arabia This Week

TEHRAN -- An Iranian technical delegation will visit Saudi Arabia this week to prepare for the reopening of Iran's embassy in Riyadh, officials here said on Sunday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Ali-Reza Enayati said two separate delegations will head to Riyadh and Jeddah.

The announcement comes days after the foreign ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia met in Beijing on Thursday for the first formal gathering of their top diplomats in more than seven years, after China brokered a deal to restore relations between the top regional powers.

"The Iranian technical delegation will visit Tehran's embassy in Riyadh and make arrangements for the reopening of Iran's embassy in Saudi Arabia," ISNA reported.

The Saudi foreign ministry had said on Saturday that officials had visited Iran to discuss procedures for reopening Riyadh's diplomatic missions in the Islamic Republic.

"The Saudi delegation visited

the Saudi embassy in Tehran this morning," ISNA added.

A Saudi delegation arrived in Tehran Saturday to discuss reopening the kingdom's diplomatic missions in the Islamic Republic.

The Saudi diplomatic delegation arrived in Iran to discuss the reopening of its missions after a seven-year absence, Riyadh's foreign ministry said.

Cited by the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the ministry called the visit part of "implementing the tripartite agreement" reached on March 10 between the two regional powers, brokered by China, to restore ties ruptured in 2016.

The two countries have now pledged to work together.

When Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and his Iranian counterpart Hussein Amir-Abdollahian met in Beijing on Thursday they vowed to bring security and stability to the turbulent Persian Gulf region.

"The two sides emphasized the

IRGC Tests Me'raj Kamikaze Drone

TEHRAN - The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC)'s Ground Force has successfully tested a new suicide drone, dubbed Me'raj 532, designed and manufactured by young Iranian experts.

General Ali Kouhestani, head of IRGC Ground Force's Research and Self-Sufficiency Jihad Organization (RSSJO), said the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) with a piston engine has a one-way range of 450 kilometers.

The kamikaze drone, he added, is capable of flying up to a height of 12,000 feet for 3 hours and taking off from a vehicle.

"With its 50-kilogram warhead, the drone can hit the desired targets with high accuracy. Additionally, the drone's design is of the easy set-up type, reducing the time of its preparation and increasing the speed of reaction and use," Kouhestani told Tasnim news agency.

He also noted that the process of developing drones at IRGC Ground Force's RSSJO is progressing at a proper speed, and that in the near future, other combat, training and suicide UAVs will be added to the combat fleet.

Iranian military experts and technicians have in recent years made great progress in indigenously developing a broad range of equipment, making the Armed Forces self-sufficient in this regard.

Iranian officials have repeatedly underscored that the Islamic Republic will not hesitate to build up its defense capabilities, emphasizing that such abilities are entirely meant for the purpose of defense and will be never subject to negotiations.

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