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## Tehran-Muscat joint political meeting underlines promotion of bilateral ties

TEHRAN - The 7th Irano-Omani joint political meeting concluded its work in Muscat Monday. The 3-day meeting was convened last Saturday in the presence of the directors general of the two countries' foreign ministries, IRNA reported.

The two countries' political, economic, military and cultural relations were reviewed during the meeting besides planning a time-table for the promotion of their bilateral relations for the coming year.

Expressing satisfaction over the expansion of ties between Muscat and Tehran in an all-out area, the two sides also reviewed possible ways for an speedy implementation of their earlier accords.

# ETTELA'AT

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## Phase-1 of Kordestan steel mill ready next year

TEHRAN - Phase-1 of Kordestan steel mill is to become operational in the autumn of 1999, according to Iran's Minister of Mines and Metals Eshagh Jahangiri.

The raw materials to be used at the mill will be collected from three minefields of the region with an estimated total reserve of 60 million tons. The final output of the mill will be about 200,000 tons annually.

Construction of the steel mill that occupies an area of about 8,000 square meters started in 1995.

It has been built with a total capital investment of Rls. 40 billion.

# Iran, Georgia call for cooperation among regional states

TEHRAN - Iran and Georgia signed a joint communiqué and a memorandum of understanding here Monday, calling for consolidation of Tehran-Tbilisi ties in political, economic, cultural and parliamentary areas.

According to the communiqué, issued at the end of a four-day visit to Tehran of the Georgian Foreign Minister Irakli Menagarishvili, the two sides underlined importance of dialog among civilizations as a factor to forge closer cooperation among nations and governments.

Both Iran and Georgia exchanged views on regional issues and crisis in the Caucasus with the Georgian side briefing his Iranian counterpart on the latest developments in Abkhazia.

The two officials stressed peaceful settlement of regional disputes and the Iranian side supported Georgia's territorial integrity, expressing the hope that the issue of Abkhazia will be solved through peaceful means within the framework of safeguarding Georgia's sovereignty and respect for its citizens.

The communiqué underscored significance of security in the Caucasus as an effective factor to accelerate the pace of economic development of regional countries, adding that security of the region should be preserved to the benefit of all regional countries.

While Iran assessed as positive the 'peace-seeking Caucasus' plan, Georgia viewed the Islamic Re-

public's efforts for consolidation of multilateral cooperation as an effective factor for the establishment of security and materialization of economic development in the region.

According to the communiqué, the two foreign ministers reached agreement on issues pertaining to energy resources in the Caspian Sea and said transfer of oil and gas from the region will be possible on the basis of economic priorities.

The two sides also exchanged views on various international issues including environment, narcotic drugs, fight against terrorism and human rights and called for serious campaign against all forms of terrorism.

The Georgian foreign

minister on behalf of his government condemned the recent acts of terrorism in Tehran.

On campaign against drug trafficking, the two sides underlined importance of cooperation among regional states, Iran-Georgia in particular.

Meanwhile, foreign ministers of the two countries also signed a memorandum of understanding in which agreements were reached on visa facilities for nationals of both countries in an effort to boost bilateral economic cooperation and increase volume of trade exchanges.

Earlier on the day the two sides held second round of their talks in which Kharrazi said regional cooperation will prepare the ground for preservation of

peace and security in the region.

The two foreign ministers also discussed cooperation in such fields as roads and communication, transfer of optic fibers, transit of goods and health care.

The Georgian foreign minister concluded his four-day visit to Tehran Monday afternoon and was seen off by his Iranian counterpart.

## Iran, Turkey discuss security issues

TEHRAN - Iran's Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs Gholamhussein Bolandian, heading a delegation, arrived in Ankara on Monday evening to attend the session of joint Iran-Turkey supreme security commission.

Bolandian was welcomed by his Turkish counterpart Yahya Gour who said that he attached special importance to the visit of the Iranian delegation to Turkey.

Referring to Tehran-Ankara friendly relations, he called on the two countries' officials to work to strengthen the relations.

Further promotion of Iran-Turkey cooperation will lead to removal of the existing

obstacles, he said expressing the hope that the talks between Iranian and Turkish officials will be fruitful.

Bolandian pointed out that President Mohammad Khatami favors establishment of friendly relations with neighboring countries. Security must always prevail on joint borders, he stressed adding, the current visit of the Iranian delegation is an indication of Iran's interest in further expansion of bilateral ties and strengthening border security.

Iran and Turkey, as two Muslim countries, can solve their problems by themselves, the Iranian officials reiterated.

## Jordan keen to expand relations with Iran

TEHRAN - Iranian Ambassador to Jordan Mohammad Ali Sobhani in a meeting with Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister in

Develo- pment Affairs and Minister of Foreign Affairs Javad al-A'nnani in Amman Monday presented to him a message from the Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi.

The Iranian foreign minister in his message has invited Al-A'nnani to pay a visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran aimed at reviewing the Irano-Jordanian bilateral relations and latest developments in the region, IRNA reported from Damascus.

Al-A'nnani saying that his country is keen to expand its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, underlined the significance of the Iranian role in the region. Referring to the recent establishment of an air link between the two countries' capitals, the Jordanian deputy prime minister point-

ed out that Amman-Tehran bilateral relations have been promoted during the recent months.

Also, referring to the chairmanship of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami over the organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Al-A'nnani said that Khatami's policies have fully influenced the regional policies as well as relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Arab and non-Arab nations.

The Iranian ambassador on his part expressed hope that promotion of relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Arab nations would further strengthen the Arab Islamic front against the expansionist policies of the Zionist regime and would be able to help Palestinian Muslim nation to achieve its legitimate right.

## Trade commissioner: U.S. waivers good for EU

TEHRAN - European Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan says that the cease-fire agreed with the U.S. on sanctions against Iran, Libya and Cuba is beneficial both for the EU and its business.

It is a good deal for European companies "because they no longer have the threat of U.S. sanctions hanging over their heads" and for the EU as a whole, which has "shown it can act together, united on foreign policy issues," he says, IRNA reported from Cardiff.

The trade commissioner was commenting on the benefits of the deal on sanctions waivers agreed with the U.S. last month in an article for Britain in Europe - the next phase, published to coincide with the EU summit in Cardiff, June 15-16.

It took over a year of "painstaking negotiation" but the EU "remained firm and united and dealt with the U.S. not merely as a partner, but as an equal," he insisted.

If approved by the American Congress, Brittan said that the deal means European countries will "no longer have to do business with the threat of sanctions hanging over their heads."

He said it was the major irritant to EU-U.S. relations.

By succeeding in solving the dispute, it had most importantly cleared the way for new transatlantic initiatives on trade, he said.

## Turkmenistan to ink new accord for transfer of gas

TEHRAN - Turkmenistan's President Saparmurat Niyazov said in Almaty Monday that "the government of Ashkhabad intends to sign an agreement soon for the transfer of gas to Iran."

Khazakhstan's government TV quoted the Turkmenistan press as saying that "President Niyazov welcomed Iran's initiative in the construction of Neka-Tehran pipeline grid for the transfer of oil and gas from the Central Asian republics and that he considered such a plan "beneficial", IRNA reported from Almaty.

The Islamic Republic of Iran gave the tender at the beginning of June 1998 so that foreign investors could decide to participate in the laying of the 392-kilometer Neka-Tehran pipeline networks.

The project is assessed at a mark of Dirs. 400 million and once the project is accomplished, the grid is expected to convey 325,000 barrels of oil per day.

Turkmenistan transferred its gas through Iranian soil last year.

## Karbaschi attends third session of trial

TEHRAN - The third session of trial of Tehran's suspended mayor, Gholamhussein Karbaschi, on charges of complicity in graft started at Imam Khomeini Judicial Complex at 09:00 hours local time (4:30 GMT) here Tuesday.

In the previous session of the hearing last Thursday, the court judge Hojatoleslam Gholamhussein Mohseni Ejei rejected Karbaschi's objection to judges on grounds of competency.

The judge raised the issue of purchase of a building for 'Aftabgardan' newspaper.

Drawing money from the

municipality directors' account, a bank account which is at the disposal of the mayor, and embezzlement of Dirs 90,000 for purchase of software and hardware for Tehran Municipality were among other charges raised in the second session.

Karbaschi is charged by branch 1402 of the Public Court of Tehran with complicity in embezzlement of Rls 14.53 billion plus Dirs 90,000 as well as 60 full size gold coins, 80 half size gold coins, receiving bribes, mismanagement of public funds, illegitimate ownership of public properties and fraud.

In the first session of the hearing, Karbaschi rejected all charges levelled against him terming them as "baseless". The suspended mayor was arrested on April 4 and was released 11 days later after the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei intervened at the request of President Mohammad Khatami. A large number of domestic and foreign journalists covered Karbaschi's trial.

## Iran resumes efforts to defuse crisis in Afghanistan

TEHRAN - Iran's special envoy on Afghanistan, Alaeddin Boroujerdi who is in Mazar-e Sharif leading a high ranking Iranian delegation to initiate a new round of talks to defuse the newly ignited crisis, held a meeting with the leader of Afghan Islamic National Movement, General Abulrahshid Dostum on Monday.

The two sides exchanged views on the recent development in Afghanistan, IRNA reported.

Thanking the Islamic Republic of Iran for its endeavors in trying to bring peace to that country, General Dostum said, "Afghanistan has been able to identify its true friends during its hard times

and that the Islamic Republic of Iran is "the best friend and neighbor of Afghan nation."

"What the United Front is doing today is in line with the sacred defense and that the world should recognize the difference between 'defense' and 'transgression' and not embark on a biased judgement," the general stated.

"Afghan Islamic National Movement and the United Front are fully prepared to re-enter negotiation based on political mutual respect in forming a government that would embrace all Afghan factions and groups," General Dostum stated.

Boroujerdi elaborating

on Iran's policy toward Afghanistan said, "the Islamic Republic of Iran is here to help end the ongoing conflict and that the people in the region and in the world are opposed to any form of war in Afghanistan."

"Both the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) have been concentrating their efforts to terminate the crisis in Afghanistan, which clearly shows that the world again any war in Afghanistan," the Iranian envoy stated.

Boroujerdi once more stressed the support of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the United Front in association with its policy of political mutual respect to attain a peace settlement in Afghanistan.

## Official portrays positive outlook of Iran-Egypt trade

TEHRAN - The head of the Iranian interest office in Cairo, Qassemi, has portrayed a positive outlook of economic cooperation between Iran and Egypt, adding "the Egyptian visit of the Iranian Chamber of Commerce delegation was a positive step in removing obstacles in the way of relations between the two countries."

Qassemi added "presently we witness the activation of Iran-Egypt joint bank as well as the two countries'

joint institutions and companies in textile and shipping industries.

"Over the past two years the trade between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt has been fairly active. During the period, Iran has exported 1,000 tractors, 100,000 tons of petrochemical products and Dirs. 1.5 million worth of faucets to Egypt."

The Iranian official added that Iran has signed an agreement with Egypt to export 1,000 Iranian built Pride

(Kia) vehicles to Egypt annually.

The Iranian interest section in Egypt aims to introduce Iran's economic capabilities to Egyptian firms and businessmen, Qassemi said, adding "we are determined to fill the information vacuum brought about by a 20-year interruption in trade relations between the two countries."

An Iranian trade delegation is currently visiting Egypt to explore new avenues of cooperation between the two countries.

## Austria willing to expand economic ties with Iran

TEHRAN - Spokesman of the Austrian Ministry of Economic Affairs Georg Pein has voiced his country's willingness to expand economic ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He told IRNA in Vienna that the Austrian Economic Minister Hannes Farnleitner during his recent visit to Tehran discussed further promotion of Tehran-Vienna economic cooperation.

Farnleitner, heading an economic delegation, arrived in Tehran on Saturday on a two-day visit at the invitation of Iran's Minister of Industries Gholamreza Shafei. He also chaired the two

countries joint economic commission.

Iran is Austria's major economic partner, Pein said adding, Austria's exports to Iran stood at 3.3 billion Austrian schillings in 1997 which is expected to increase this year.

Machinery, spare parts, chemical and plastic substances, pharmaceutical products, steel, iron, wood and paper are major items imported from Austria.

### IDB president:

## Iran's OIC presidency, turning point in its history

TEHRAN - The President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Ahmad Mohammad Ali told IRNA that "the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) under three-year leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken unprecedented vital strides in the materialization of its goal both quality and quantity-wise."

"President Mohammad Khatami's acceptance of tabling a motion from the IDB at the eight summit of the OIC held in Tehran last December is regarded as 'a turning point in the OIC history' in relation to the issues of cooperation between member countries," IRNA

quoted IDB president as saying.

Mohammad Ali who attended here the second preliminary session of preparing OIC's entry into the twenty first century said, "working groups have been set up with the proposal of Iran."

"Iran being at the side of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait, Libya and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and as one of the six important members of IDB has bolstered its share in the bank budget," Mohammad Ali said.

"IDB has provided over Dirs. 20 billion to OIC member countries from the time it was set up in the form of

aid and infrastructure works such as airport construction and the boosting up of the health and sanitary programs," stated IDB chief.

Mohammad Ali stated that IDB is closely cooperating with Iran in several joint projects.

"Some of the objectives of the IDB include promotion of human resources, boosting up of investments and trade between member countries, and upgrading of health, education and food services," IDB president said.

percent of world drugs is produced in Afghanistan and that 100 heroin producing units are currently active throughout that country, IRNA reported from Tashkent.

Statistics on the amount of narcotic drugs seized in Central Asian countries indicate that the region is rapidly being affected by the drugs produced in Afghanistan, he added.

Tashkent announced that over 33,000 kg of various kinds of narcotic drugs have been seized in Uzbekistan in 1997. Meanwhile, Almaty, Bishkek and Ashkhabad also announced that during the same year 17,000 kg, 2,428 kg and 4,600 kg of narcotic drugs were seized in the three countries, respectively.

The Iranian ambassador called on regional countries to launch campaign both at regional and international level against smuggle of drugs produced in the neighboring Afghanistan via Central Asia.

He voiced Iran's readiness to exchange experiences in the field of anti-narcotic campaign with Central Asian states.

Pak-Ayeen stressed that the problem will be solved only through establishment of a national and powerful government in Afghanistan and urged the regional countries to cooperate to this end.

## Iranian delegation in Rome sponsored war crimes conference

TEHRAN - An Iranian delegation led by Deputy Foreign Minister for International and Legal Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif arrived in Rome Monday to attend an international one-month conference on war crimes court.

The U.N. war crime conference started its work in Rome Monday at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) under the auspices of the United Nations, IRNA reported.

The objective of the conference is to prepare the draft stipulating punishments for any possible crime or ethnic cleansing committed by any party during the wars.

The Iranian delegation to the conference is composed of deputies from Iran's Foreign Ministry and the Judiciary.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is one of the deputies from Asian countries working under the chairman of the conference.

## Turkmenistan seeks Iran's expertise in building new water network

TEHRAN - Turkmenistan has called on the Iranian experts to assist Marv in executing the new water supply project.

President Saparmurat Niyazov made the remark while inaugurating Marv's water purification plant which has been built by Iranian experts.

The water grid of Marv is outdated, creating problems for the residents.

According to informed sources, negotiations are underway between Iran and Turkmenistan to sign a water supply project agreement, IRNA reported. Following the successful implementation of Marv water purification plant by the Iranian experts, Turkmenistan may seek Iran's assistance in building similar projects in other cities.

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