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دفتر آمریکا (نیویورک) تلفن: (۲۱۲) ۲۴۶۴۵۲۱

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Iran, Saudi Arabia form subcommittees to boost cooperation

TEHRAN - Iran and Saudi Arabia formed five subcommittees to follow cooperation in all sectors between the two major Muslim countries. The subcommittees were formed during the first meeting of the joint Iranian-Saudi committee opened in Riyadh Tuesday.

The subcommittees are linked with cooperation in such sectors as economy, trade and investments, science, technology, health and environment, culture, education, media, sports and youth, transport, post and electricity connections. Trade exchanges between Iran and Saudi Arabia were very modest and do not correspond with the enormous possibilities available between the two neighboring countries. Officials say that the most important means of boosting bilateral trade ties was to benefit from various programs and means of finance and exports credit, especially those offered by the Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic Institution for Insurance and Investment.

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Iran wins karate gold in Bangkok games

TEHRAN - Iran's Alireza Kataie on Wednesday afternoon beat Takahiro Niki of Japan 1-0 to win the gold medal of men's individual category up to 75 kg. Ahmed Hussein of Kuwait and Arivalagan Ponniah of Malaysia beat Hassan Abu Hajar of Palestine and Osama Ali of Syria, respectively, to jointly win the bronze medal of the category.

Also on Wednesday, the Iranian national freestyle wrestling team swept the first round of the Asian competitions in the first four weights category.

In 54 kg, Behnam Tayebi, the bronze medalist in the 1996 Asian games, beat his Japanese opponent 3-2.

In 63 kg, Mehdi Kaveh blanked the Kazakh wrestler 8-0.

In 76 kg, Pejman Dorostkar came from behind to edge his Kazakh opponent 3-2 in overtime.

In 97 kg, world champion Abbas Jadidi dominated the Chinese wrestler 10-0.

Leader receives Kenyan president:

Iran attaches special importance to relations with Africa

TEHRAN - The Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, here on Wednesday received the visiting Kenyan President, Daniel Arap Moi.

Noting that Iran attaches special significance to its relations with African states, Ayatollah Khamenei stressed the importance of expanding Tehran-Nairobi ties, IRNA reported.

The Leader further stated that expansion of Africa-Asia relations would be beneficial to both sides, adding that in pursuing such an objective, the countries should distance themselves from "some policies opposing expansion of ties between Asian and African states."

Ayatollah Khamenei also noted the significant number of Muslims in Kenya, and expressed pleasure over the suitable cooperation between the Kenyan government and the Muslim community in the country.

In the meeting also attended by President Mohammad Khatami, the Kenyan president expressed delight over the opportunity to meet with the esteemed Leader.

Terming the Iranian progress over the recent years as significant, Moi called for expansion of Tehran-Nairobi ties especially in the economic and industrial fields.

Moi arrived here Tuesday for a three-day visit.

In another development, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and his Kenyan counterpart Bonaya Godana on

Wednesday reviewed bilateral, regional and international issues.

The two foreign ministers studied the ways to reinforce political and economic relations between Tehran and Nairobi as well as facilitating visa issuance, developing tourism and resuming Tehran-Nairobi air flights.

Kharrazi and Godana emphasized the need to introduce facilities to strengthen trade and economic relations and cooperation between the private sectors of Iran and Kenya.

Godana said the Islamic Republic of Iran has vital role in the region with economic and industrial capabilities and called for exchange of experience and capabilities with Kenya.

He said Iran and Kenya have the same role in safeguarding stability in their own regions which serves as a ground for mutual cooperation.

Kharrazi said the two countries have common backgrounds and there exist a variety of grounds for cooperation.

He said regular consultations between Iran and Kenya, both located in important points of the world, would serve to boost communication, political and economic cooperation between the two regions.

Kharrazi said exchange of views on regional crises and dialogue between the two countries would help restore regional peace and stability.

The two foreign ministers also discussed Tehran.

Hadi Ravanat, a resident of Khorramshahr, said all windows in his house were shattered to pieces and nearby houses were partly damaged when the missile hit the area.

U.S. and British forces stationed in the Middle East, launched air strikes and missile attacks on Iraq in reprisal for Baghdad's alleged refusal to cooperate with U.N. arms inspectors.

Iran on Thursday condemned the use of force against Iraq and called for immediate stop to the U.S.-Britain air strikes against that country.

Such attacks will only worsen the hardships of the Iraqi nation and lead to further instability of the region, said Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi, calling the strikes as a serious threat to the regional security.

"It is quite unacceptable for us that certain states launch wilful military attacks on a country," he added.

Assefi further called on the United Nations Security Council to hold an emergency session to end the crisis and prevent further deterioration of the situation.

Iran by no means will accept disintegration of Iraq and will never keep mum on such an incident, he made it clear.

He, at the same time called on Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations and comply with the Security Council resolutions.

The air strikes against Iraq, under operation codenamed Desert Fox, began with U.S. and British missiles pounding Baghdad early Thursday.

Meanwhile, head of the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Mohammad Hussein Rezaei, said all Iranian pilgrims who are on pilgrimage to the holy shrines in Iraq are safe and necessary measures have been taken for their immediate return to home.

He added that the dispatch of pilgrims to Iraq has been suspended as of Thursday until further notice.

Iran has notified Iraq that the Iranian pilgrims should be returned home immediately, he said.

Further explaining the

Parliament to consider national thrift plan

TEHRAN - Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) voted Wednesday to consider a 'national thrift plan' urgently to curtail government expenses which will include the government proposed budget bill for the coming Iranian fiscal year.

Inked by 105 deputies, the plan was submitted to the Majlis by a deputy from Isfahan constituency, Naser Khatami, who told the Majlis that the plan is in conformity with people's situation and calls on the government to reduce its expenses.

Outlining the plan, Khatami said the plan calls for 70 percent decrease in travel expenditures of government employees, merger of publications of those ministries with similar news, 50 percent cut in the expenditures of Iranian embassies abroad, cutting down of foreign currency budgets for foreign travels of officials, including ministers, deputy ministers, head of the three branches of government and their deputies.

The plan calls for reduction of current expenditures of state-owned organizations, he said, adding however, this does not apply to the salaries of their employees.

The plan also calls for banning use of government vehicles for personal affairs and 50 percent reduction in holding national and international seminars.

The thrift plan will also include those employees whose salaries are more than one million rials. According to the plan their salaries will be reduced by 15 percent under the legislation.

In continuation of Majlis open session Wednesday a letter, signed by 152 deputies, was read in the parliament.

He added that the time was ripe for boosting Tehran-Cairo relations and hailed the active participation of the Egyptian delegates at the summit meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tehran last December.

Turning to the recent developments in the region, Rowhani said the Persian Gulf countries can safeguard the security of the region themselves and by adopting a unified front and prevent presence of aliens who have turned the region into a warehouse for destructive weapons.

"Iran and Egypt are two powerful Islamic countries with numerous points in common for bilateral, regional and international cooperation," the majlis vice-speaker added.

Rowhani who is also the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), referred to campaign against Israeli threats in the region, contribution to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and issues related to stockpiling weapons of mass destruction as prominent grounds for Tehran-Cairo cooperation.

Stressing Iran's significance and glory in the region, Amin Mubarak termed Iran as a powerful and important country

Iranian foreign minister, U.N. envoy discuss Afghan issue

Iran ready to cooperate in bringing about peace, stability in Afghanistan

TEHRAN - Visiting U.N. envoy on Afghan affairs Lakhdar Brahimi on Wednesday in a meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi discussed latest developments in the neighboring country of Afghanistan.

The U.N. official in the meeting presented a report on the U.N. efforts for settlement of Afghan crisis and said that the international community should seriously demand the implementation of the relevant U.N. resolutions, IRNA reported.

Kharrazi voiced Iran's support for decisions made by the international community about Afghanistan and underlined Iran's readiness for cooperation in bringing about peace and stability in Afghanistan. He stressed that Iran's demands including identification and punishment of culprits involved in the slaying of Iranian diplomats and IRNA journalist Mahmoud Saremi in Mazar-e Sharif should be duly considered. Noting that Afghan crisis has no military solution, Kharrazi said a

broad-based government should be formed in Afghanistan through negotiation among various Afghan groups.

The special envoy of the U.N. secretary general on Afghanistan arrived here Tuesday night to discuss the situation in Afghanistan with Iranian officials.

Upon arrival, he said that his visit is aimed at seeking ways to settle the Afghan crisis.

Brahimi stressed that establishment of peace and stability in war-torn Afghanistan and implementation of resolution 1214 of the U.N. Security Council will be top on the agenda of his talks with the Iranian officials.

Meanwhile, Mohsen Aminzadeh, deputy foreign minister for Asia and the Pacific affairs expressed satisfaction over the visit of the U.N. special envoy to Tehran.

He said that punishment of those responsible for murdering the Iranian diplomats and IRNA correspondent in Mazar-i Sharif, implementation of the U.N. Security Council resolutions and establishment of peace and a broad-based government in Afghanistan will be discussed during Brahimi's talks with Iranian officials.

During his two-day visit, Brahimi is to meet senior Iranian officials.

The U.N. envoy will visit Islamabad after his talks in Iran.

Vice-speaker of parliament:

Tehran ready to enhance all-out ties with Cairo

TEHRAN - Vice-Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis), Hassan Rowhani here Wednesday voiced Iran's readiness for all-out political, economic and cultural cooperation with Egypt.

"The present climate is very appropriate to boost Tehran-Cairo ties... and we declare the Islamic Republic's preparedness for all types of political, economic and cultural ties (with Egypt)," he said at a meeting with an Egyptian parliamentarian, IRNA reported.

Speaking at a meeting with the visiting head of the foreign policy commission of the Egyptian Parliament, Amin Mubarak, Rowhani said that the policy of President Mohammad Khatami's administration is based on elimination of tension and establishing relations with all countries on the basis of mutual respect and preservation of national interests.

He added that the time was ripe for boosting Tehran-Cairo relations and hailed the active participation of the Egyptian delegates at the summit meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tehran last December.

Turning to the recent developments in the region, Rowhani said the Persian Gulf countries can safeguard the security of the region themselves and by adopting a unified front and prevent presence of aliens who have turned the region into a warehouse for destructive weapons.

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Rowhani who is also the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), referred to campaign against Israeli threats in the region, contribution to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and issues related to stockpiling weapons of mass destruction as prominent grounds for Tehran-Cairo cooperation.

Stressing Iran's significance and glory in the region, Amin Mubarak termed Iran as a powerful and important country

which plays an active and determining role in the region, the world of Islam and international scenes.

Head of the foreign policy commission of the Egyptian Parliament stressed that senior officials in both the countries are determined to boost Tehran-Cairo ties and that Egypt believes the holy Qods can be liberated through cooperation of Muslim states and adopting a unified strategy.

On behalf of Egyptian officials, Amin also praised Iran for making efforts to forge unity in the world of Islam.

Iran and Egypt are two very important and powerful countries which can boost bilateral relations in all fields by relying on the existing common points.

Swiss, British envoys summoned to Foreign Ministry

TEHRAN - Iran Thursday lodged a strong protest with Switzerland, which looks after U.S. interests in Iran, and Britain following the missile strike on Khorramshahr Thursday morning.

The Swiss ambassador and the British charge d'affaires were summoned to the Foreign Ministry where the director general of the America and West Europe desk told them that Iran holds the U.S. and Britain responsible for the damage incurred as a result of the missile strike, IRNA reported.

Iran also expressed deep concern over the safety and security of Iranian pilgrims and the staff of Iranian establishments in Iraq.

The Swiss envoy and the British charge d'affaires said the missile deviated off course and by mistake landed on Iranian territory. While expressing deep regrets over the incident, the envoys said they would immediately convey the matter to their respective governments and inform the Foreign Ministry of the results.

An informed source on Thursday announced that following the attack of U.S. and British forces on Iraq, a missile fired by the forces hit the center of Khorramshahr city in the southern province of Khuzestan, at 1:25 hours local time Thursday (21:55 GMT Wednesday).

The source told IRNA that the missile had apparently targeted one of Iraqi installations in the city of Basra but instead hit Khorramshahr.

The missile hit Dorreh district in central Khorramshahr, damaging residential units within a radius of 200 meters.

But the missile caused no casualty as it hit a vacant open area.

An informed source at Khorramshahr law enforcement agency said that there is a strong possibility that the missile had been fired from the U.S.-British naval fleet.

He said that remains of the missile have been transferred to another place for experimental examinations. However, the official made no mention of the place.

Meanwhile, residents in Khorramshahr told IRNA that the missile which hit the city at midnight terrified the people.

He said regular consultations between Iran and Kenya, both located in important points of the world, would serve to boost communication, political and economic cooperation between the two regions.

Kharrazi said exchange of views on regional crises and dialogue between the two countries would help restore regional peace and stability.

The two foreign ministers also discussed Tehran.

President Khatami:

Iran best route for transfer of Central Asian oil, gas to Europe

TEHRAN - President Mohammad Khatami here on Wednesday predicted that Iran would emerge a winner in its campaign to become the main route for transfer of Central Asian oil and gas to Europe.

Addressing an audience of the Oil Ministry personnel, the president said despite all efforts to prevent transfer of the Central Asian energy to Europe and open waters through Iran, "I am of the belief that Iran would be the route for transfer of the energy," IRNA reported.

Opining that the European countries would put their national interests in the matter above and beyond those of the big powers, Khatami said that the scenario puts Iran in an outstanding position which should be taken advantage of properly.

Elsewhere in his speech, the president highlighted the paramount place of the oil industry in the national economy, adding "the American sanctions focusing on our vast oil resources, accentuates the place of the oil industry in our existence."

Further explaining the vital role of the oil industry in Iran's economy, the president noted that over the past half-century, 90 percent of the country's foreign exchange revenues as well as 60 percent of its domestic income has been from the oil industry.

The head of the national economy council expressed dismay over what he called the "routine spirit" prevailing over the national oil industry, and called for major and fundamental changes in the industry.

"Is the budget allocated to research in the oil industry sufficient?" the president asked.

He also highlighted that in the economic rehabilitation plan unveiled by his administration, oil is treated as "capital and not a source of revenue."

The chief executive also stressed the importance of oil exploration projects, adding that the known oil reserves might be only a fraction of the total existing reserves in Iran.

The president said that the country should give more attention to downstream oil industries to complement its revenues from direct sale of oil.

In a bid to clean up the environment, Khatami continued, natural gas should become the main source of energy, and to that end the country should develop its gas transfer facilities.

The president also expressed regret at "extravagance and unchecked consumption" in the country, adding "to campaign against extravagance necessitates a jihad and a national resolve, and both the people and the officials should work to combat excesses specially unchecked usage of energy."

Speaking more about the energy policies of the government, Khatami said that while his administration would continue offering subsidies on energy, it intends to expand the public

transportation network and hasten the subway construction project as means of reducing the air pollution.

Turning to some pressing issues facing the nation, the president said that the government is determined to fight those who disrupt the security and stability in the country.

Stating that there are parties who directly or indirectly work to impede the progress of the country, and to create an unsuitable atmosphere, Khatami said "the Zionists have always

tried to present Iran as an unstable place."

Today's gathering at the Oil Ministry was attended by top officials of the ministry including Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh.

Prior to this general gathering, the president held a meeting with the ministry's upper management, during which Oil Minister Zanganeh presented a report on the state of the national petrochemical industry, gas exploration projects, Iran's international buy-back agreements and other world issues facing the industry.

Hashemi Rafsanjani:

West has a wrong perception of realities in Iran

TEHRAN - Expediency Council Chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani here Wednesday said that the 'global arrogance' is unable to appreciate the potential and capabilities of the Iranian people. Therefore, he added, through its wrong analysis of the existing realities in Iran, the arrogant powers raise degrading issues.

Addressing a seminar on comprehensive planning for the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) for the next Iranian calendar year (begins March 21, 1999), Rafsanjani also regretted that immature and childish analysis by certain local news media irrespective of the gravity of the plots, caused the enemies to become hopeful, IRNA reported.

Stressing that the U.S., Israel and Europe have formulated a plan for themselves on the basis of their wrong and deviating interpretations, Rafsanjani said, "we should vigilantly adopt a suitable attitude towards this plan."

The Expediency Council chairman said the grudge the arrogant powers have borne against the Islamic Revolution has been deepened because they feel there is an uncompromising contradiction between Islamic thoughts and religious system and certain Western thoughts.

He said that in the early stage of the revolution the Western world wrongly thought that the exodus of the so-called "competent" manpower would disrupt management in the country.

Therefore, they thought of such schemes as armed uprising, coup d'etat and imposed war (Iraqi war) which were all defeated, he said.

But, he stressed, such issues are coming to surface once again and regretted that certain domestic media encouraged the West through their immature analyses disguised as scholarly academic interpretations.

Pointing to the latest CIA analysis that Iran would submit due to the prevailing economic crisis, Rafsanjani said: "the global arrogance and the U.S. have launched an expanded assault against Iran, accompanied by a green light and a conciliatory but very wicked gesture. But,

Iran to host international gathering on sturgeon fish

RASHT, Gilan - Head of international institute for research on sturgeon fish Mohammad Pourkazemi, said here Wednesday that the fifth international conference on sturgeon fish will be held in Iran in the year 2005.

Making the remark in the first national symposium on sturgeon fish, he said the international gathering will be held to work out long-term programs for sustained use of sturgeon fish resources of the Caspian Sea.

According to Pourkazemi, experts and scientists from the countries making use of the Caspian Sea sturgeon fish resources as well as other states of the world will exchange views on the latest scientific findings on breeding and farming the sturgeon fish, and the human and environmental factors responsible for diminishing sturgeon fish resources of the Caspian Sea in recent years.

The outcome of the conference will be introduced to the Caspian Sea littoral countries as executive guidelines, he added.

Saying that the sturgeon fish resources of the Caspian Sea have declined by 50-85 percent over the past decade, Pourkazemi noted that extraction of caviar from the Caspian Sea sturgeon has dropped from an annual 3,000 tons to about 400 tons per year.

The Caspian Sea provides about 90 percent of world's caviar at present while the rest is supplied through farming sturgeon fish in European countries.

they are seriously mistaken and indeed interpret the issues badly."

Drawing a parallel between current economic, political and cultural situation in the country and early days of the Islamic Revolution, Rafsanjani said at present many committed cultural forces have been trained which cannot be compared to the past.

He ruled out as a blunder the Westerners' latest analysis of the recent (presidential) elections in which a "revolutionary scholar" who was a close associate of the Imam (Khomeini), served as minister and held key posts for several years was elected.

"This analysis that the Iranian people have voted for something other than the Islamic Revolution is deceitful, because they mistakenly think that the motto of political development is not compatible with religious issues," said Rafsanjani.

Rafsanjani rejected as "false" the notion that the Iranian people cannot solve their economic problems and said with the establishment of infrastructures and access to the required raw materials, the nation will be more successful in recovering its economy than before.

Rafsanjani termed the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting as a pivotal body which is trusted by the people and lauded the services of IRIB managers and staff in promoting affairs in the country.

Sirri E oil-field to go on stream soon

TEHRAN - Production director of off-shore oil-fields of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) Ismail Jalilian said on Wednesday four wells of Sirri E oil-field will go on stream in January 1999 with preliminary output of 7,000 to 10,000 barrels per day (bpd).

He said the output from 15 wells of Sirri E oil-field would reach 50,000 bpd combined by March 20, 1999 and with coming on stream of 31 other wells at the oil-field the maximum production would hit 100,000 bpd. He said currently Iran's off-shore output stood at 527,000 bpd, but the figure is to increase to 600,000 bpd by commissioning Sirri E oil-field.

Jalilian said according to NIOC plan, the Iranian off-shore oil output would stand at 700,000 bpd by the end of the next calendar year (March 21, 2000).

He said investment in Sirri E and A has amounted to Dlr 610 million and Total of France has carried out the development plan in accordance with buy-back scheme.

Jalilian said the duration of the accord with Total, Petronas of Malaysia and Gazprom of Russia is five years, adding that the project has started since 1995.

With digging of 20 more wells at Sirri E and A oil-fields, they would become fully operational by 1999.

He said it would take seven years to repay the capital of the foreign partners from, 60 percent of the sale of the oil from the oil-fields. The total oil yields of Sirri A is estimated to stand at 200 million barrels and Sirri E at 750 million barrels within 30 years of their commissioning, Jalilian said.

He said Total would buy 100 million cubic feet of gas produced at Sirri E and would set up pipeline to export the Iranian gas to Dubai.

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