

Iranian cultural festival kicks off in Turkey

TEHRAN - The Turkish eastern city of Erzurum has held an Iranian cultural week in an attempt to introduce Persian cinema and culture to the people of Turkey.

Organized by Iran's cultural office in Ankara and Iranian consul general in Erzurum in collaboration with the Turkish Dash Film Festival, the event was inaugurated during a ceremony held on May 13.

The festival was scheduled to screen about 12 Iranian cinematic productions with Turkish subtitles such as Asghar Farhadi's *Nader and Simin: A Separation*, Ahmad-Reza Motamed's *Alzheimer*, Alireza Rayisyan's *40 Years Old* along with some other movies. Photo exhibition of Iranian cinema was also mounted at this cultural week presenting 51 photos and tablets of the country's renowned filmmakers and actors in different genres.

Iran's IAEA envoy:

Iran-IAEA talks very constructive



TEHRAN - Iran's Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Ali Asghar Soltanich has hailed the atmosphere of the ongoing negotiations between Tehran and the nuclear body as "very constructive."

"We had good talks. Everything is (on the) right track. The environment is very constructive," Soltanich said in the Austrian capital of Vienna on Tuesday, Press TV reported.

The meeting between Iran and the IAEA kicked off on

Monday in Vienna, three months after the last round of talks in Tehran.

Iran and the IAEA held two rounds of talks in the Iranian capital in January and February.

Prior to the talks on Monday, IAEA Deputy Director General Herman Nackaerts told reporters, "We are here to continue our dialogue with Iran in a positive spirit."

The IAEA aims to reach an agreement on an approach to resolve all the remaining issues on Iran's nuclear energy

program, Nackaerts added.

The new round of the talks between Iran and the IAEA comes as Tehran and the P5+1 (Britain, France, Russia, China and the United States plus Germany) are preparing to hold another meeting in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad on May 23.

Iran and the P5+1 wrapped up the first round of their latest multifaceted negotiations on April 14 in the Turkish city of Istanbul. Both sides hailed talks as constructive.

Senior IRGC commander:

Iran closely monitors moves in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian naval commander has warned against "evil" deeds of certain countries in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, stressing the Islamic Republic fully and closely monitors all moves in the region.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran carefully and completely scrutinizes bids by countries which are taking steps in line with the US objectives in the [Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz] region," said Navy Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Rear Admiral Ali Fadavi in a meeting with Oman's Assistant Chief of Staff Brigadier General Rashid bin Saif al-Shidi in Tehran on Tuesday.

Iran keeps a close watch on military and non-military vessels of these countries in line with its policy of deterrence, he added, Press TV reported.

He emphasized that countries in the region should prepare no ground for the US to carry out evil acts and stated that regional interaction would be the only factor that can lead to a proper trend in this regard.

The commander said that Iran's efforts to improve security in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz are aimed at providing security for the world's energy.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran and regional countries are definitely making efforts to prepare an appropriate sit-

uation for their own people and all in the world due to their humane and Islamic responsibility," Fadavi pointed out.

On January 2, Iranian Navy wrapped up Velayat-90 naval drills, conducted in an area stretching from the east of the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Aden.

The drills, which were launched on December 24, 2011, had four stages, namely the preparedness, expansion of forces, tactical, and power phases, which were carried out successfully.

The Islamic Republic has also extended a public invitation to regional states to conduct joint naval drills with Iranian forces.

Iran unveils plaque of UNESCO World Heritage List on Naqqali



TEHRAN - The dedicated plaque of UNESCO World Heritage List on the Persian art of storytelling, Naqqali, has been unveiled during a ceremony in the Iranian city of Tous. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad along with a number of officials attended the ceremony held on May 14, 2012 in hon-

oring the epic poet Ferdowsi.

About 150 prominent artists in Naqqali along with several Persian literature Professors and scholars from Tajikistan attended the ceremony held at the Ferdowsi tomb in Tous, Press TV reported.

Naqqali is a style of storytelling in Persian literature dedicated to epic stories from

Ferdowsi's masterpiece *The Shahnameh*.

Ferdowsi's worldly known book, *The Shahnameh* (Letter of the Kings), is a classic among epic Persian poetry and recounts Iran's mythical and historical past.

Dating back to the Saffavid Dynasty, Naqqali is performed in verse or prose with a single person playing the roles of all characters with a special tone and expression.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) registered Naqqali, as the oldest form of dramatic performance in Iran, on its World Intangible Cultural Heritage List in November, 2011.

Iran, Iraq to hold new round of oil talks

TEHRAN - Iran and Iraq are set to hold a new round of talks focusing on the development of a joint oilfield as well as the establishment of a joint oil company, a report says.

According to the Mehr news agency, energy officials from the two countries will discuss the issues in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on May 26.

Tehran and Baghdad are scheduled to form a joint 6-member technical committee to conduct related studies

and monitor the implementation of joint plans, the report added.

Currently, the oil officials of the two neighboring countries have agreed to develop the Sohrab oilfield in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan, said the report, adding that Iranian contractors will develop the joint oilfield under a proposal by Iraq. On January 9 last year, Iran and Iraq announced that they had reached an agreement to develop joint oilfields on border areas to increase their

crude output.

Based on the new deal, Tehran and Baghdad would set up joint expert committees to finalize technical and financial details of the agreement to develop the joint oilfields.

The two countries have 23 joint oilfields in the border regions. Energy officials in Tehran said in July 2011 that as much as 35 percent of the country's energy development budget will go to the development of joint oil and gas fields.

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Foreign Ministry spokesman:

PGCC claims on 3 islands meddling in Iran affairs

TEHRAN - The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman says the recent remarks made by some Arab officials on the three Iranian Persian Gulf islands are interference in the Islamic Republic's internal affairs.

Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's (PGCC) 14th consultative summit meeting convened in the Saudi capital of Riyadh on May 14 to discuss a proposal for the establishment of a union between the council's member countries. The proposal has been considered by experts as a measure by Riyadh to merge with its smaller neighbor, Bahrain, which has been the scene of popular unrest since February 2011, Press TV reported.

Speaking to reporters following the meeting, the Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal charged Iran with threatening the Persian Gulf Arab states. He also upheld the recent claims by the United Arab Emirates that Iran has occupied the three Persian Gulf islands of Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa.

"Raising or repeating any claim about the three Iranian islands is considered by the Islamic Republic of Iran as an uncalculated remark which... lacks political and legal authenticity since it is incompatible with the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs," Ramin Mehmanparast said on Tuesday.

Reacting to Saud al-Faisal's remarks about a possible merger of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the spokesman noted that paying attention to people's legitimate demands is the best solution to the ongoing crisis in Bahrain.

"Any form of foreign interference [in Bahrain] or [proposing] baseless plans without paying attention to people's votes will only deepen the existing wounds," he added.

Mehmanparast said Iran believes that people's support is the real source of power for the regional countries.

"[Iran] believes that regional cooperation within this framework will meet the interests of the Islamic world and foil the Zionist conspiracies that aim to create rifts," he noted.

UK threatens Iran with wider sanctions

TEHRAN - Ahead of an upcoming round of talks between Iran and the P5+1, British Foreign Secretary William Hague has threatened Tehran with wider sanctions if the Islamic Republic fails to take "concrete steps" regarding its nuclear energy program.

"Now we wait to see some concrete steps and proposals from Iran," Hague said on Monday before a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Brussels.

"Without that, of course we have sanctions we have imposed. They will not only be enforced but, over time, intensified," he added, Press TV reported. The US and EU have imposed financial and oil sanctions against Iran since the beginning of 2012, claiming that the country's nuclear energy program includes a military component.

Iran argues that as a signatory to the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it has every right to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

The remarks by Hague came despite a warning by Iran's top nuclear negotiator

Saeed Jalili on March 13 that any miscalculation by the West in its upcoming talks with Tehran will thwart the success of the negotiations.

The Islamic Republic has repeatedly declared that it has no intention of developing nuclear weapons and that those world powers in possession of such arms have to undergo nuclear disarmament.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei issued a fatwa (religious decree) on February 22, announcing that the pursuit and possession of nuclear weapons is "a graven sin" from every logical, religious and theoretical standpoint.

Furthermore, all of Iran's nuclear sites are under the surveillance of the IAEA and the agency has never found evidence of diversion in the country's civilian nuclear program in its numerous inspections of the Iranian sites.

Iran and the P5+1 (Britain, France, Russia, China and the United States plus Germany) held the first round of their latest negotiations on April 14 in the Turkish city of Istanbul. The next round of the talks will be held on May 23 in Baghdad.

South Korea, Japan ask EU to extend oil insurance on imports of Iranian oil



TEHRAN - The South Korean Economy Ministry says Seoul and Tokyo have asked the European Union to extend insurance contracts on tankers carrying Iranian crude after the bloc's oil embargo comes into effect on

July 1.

"To the EU members, we explained the problems that could be caused to non-EU members by the EU insurance embargo," the ministry said in a Monday statement. "In close cooperation with Ja-

Iran non-oil exports exceeded \$45bn last year

TEHRAN - The Iranian Deputy Minister of Industry, Mine and Trade Vajihollah Jafari says Iran's non-oil exports has exceeded USD 45 billion in the past Iranian year (started March 20, 2011).

Jafari made the comments during a visit to an international aluminum fair in the central city of Arak on Tuesday. He added that Tehran plans to export as much as

USD 70-billion worth of non-oil products in the current Iranian year.

"The exports of mine and industrial products in the past [Iranian] year exceeded USD 12.5 billion, which represents a 42-percent growth compared to the year before," Jafari further noted, Press TV reported. Earlier in May, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad-Reza Rahimi

announced that the Islamic Republic aims to increase its non-oil exports to USD 70 billion in the current year. The Iranian deputy minister also lauded the positive effect of international conferences and fairs on trade development, saying they are an opportunity for the exchange of experiences between the domestic and international companies.

London to exhibit Iranian artwork

TEHRAN - The British capital city of London is slated to host an exhibition of paintings by internationally-renowned and award-winning Iranian painter and calligrapher Sadeq Tabrizi. The exhibition, to be held in London's Gallery 8, is set to kick off in October 2012 and showcase 30 to 40 paintings created by the Iranian artist.

The graduate of Tehran Academy of Decorative Arts has made a great contribution to the creation and development of modern art in Iran.

He employs miniature painting techniques and incorporates Persian and religious motifs in his large-scale paintings which are warmly received by the art-lovers around the world. Tabrizi has held numerous individual and group exhibitions in Iran and overseas. His works are also part of the collections held at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and Henan Museum in China.

Oil minister:

No decrease in Iranian crude exports

TEHRAN - Iran's Oil Minister Rostam Qasemi has dismissed some recent reports which claim that the Islamic Republic's oil exports have decreased by 6 percent.

"The country's oil exports have not decreased," said the minister in the northeastern Iranian city of Mashhad on Tuesday afternoon.

The Iranian oil minister also refuted other reports which claim that some 30 million barrels of the Iranian oil have been left in limbo, Press TV reported.

Iran has repeatedly stressed

that the country's crude continues to have many customers worldwide, despite the Western sanctions on its oil sector.

The US and the European Union (EU) imposed new financial sanctions as well as oil embargoes against Iran earlier this year, under the baseless allegation that Tehran's nuclear energy program may include a military component.

On January 23, the EU approved new embargoes that are meant to prevent its member states from buying

the Iranian crude or doing business with its central bank. The sanctions will come into force as of July 1.

The embargo also bans the European companies from transporting, purchasing or insuring crude and fuel originating in Iran and intended for anywhere in the world.

Tehran refutes such allegations, noting that the frequent inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency have never found any diversion in the country's nuclear energy program toward military purposes.

Defense minister:

Baseless, repetitive remarks increase

Iran might

TEHRAN - Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi has said that "repetitive, hollow and baseless" statements against Iran only serve to boost its power and will show its might to the world.

Vahidi made the comments in the Iranian northeastern city of Mashhad on Tuesday, in response to a question about the recent shift in the Israeli regime's position on the military action against Iran.

"When these statements cannot be translated into action, [then] it shows that such remarks are repetitive, hollow and baseless, which is why they [Israeli officials] themselves decided to talk less about these issues and

a military attack," he noted, Press TV reported.

The Israeli regime, which has been publicly engaged in threatening Iran with military action over its nuclear energy program, has recently toned down its war rhetoric.

"The Zionist regime has many problems and tries to cover up these problems by [making] such statements," the Iranian defense minister added.

He went on to say that through talk of war, the Tel Aviv regime tries to pressure other countries, particularly the Western ones, into opposing Iran.

"But when the realities [on the ground] were discussed, this regime carefully took

[them] into consideration and noticed that these remarks constitute the greatest danger to it," Vahidi further explained.

The United States, Israel's greatest ally, has also made repeated threats of keeping all "options on the table" against the Islamic Republic in case America's numerous economic and trade sanctions against Iran fail to force the country into abandoning its nuclear energy program.

Iranian officials, however, have vowed a crushing response to any military strike against the country, warning that any such measure would lead to a major war that will spread beyond the Middle East region.

Iran, Oman to hold joint naval drill next January

TEHRAN - A top Iranian military official has announced that Iran and Oman plan to stage another round of joint naval relief and rescue drill under an agreement to carry out bilateral exercises every year.

Deputy Head of Iran's Armed Forces General Staff Brigadier General Mostafa Salami stated that the maritime maneuvers would be held sometime next January off the coast of Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas, some 1560 kilometers (969 miles) south of the Iranian capital of Tehran.

Brigadier General Salami added that logistical support for Iranian warships docking at the Omani ports, joint naval relief and rescue drills, exchange of over-seeing teams and admission of cadets have been discussed during the talks between the Iranian and Omani military



officials earlier this week, Press TV reported.

He also underlined that regional security should be established solely by regional countries.

Iran and Oman staged their second joint naval relief and rescue drill in February 2011. Four Omani vessels, two fighter jets and one maritime helicopter as well as four Iranian naval ships participated in the drill which aimed at enhancing readiness for providing relief services and rescue operations, and im-

proving the level of regional cooperation, and exchanging experience.

Iran's Navy has increased its presence in the international waters since last year, deploying vessels in the Indian Ocean and sending two ships to the Mediterranean Sea for the first time in February 2011 via the Suez Canal.

The Islamic Republic has extended a public invitation to the regional states to conduct joint naval drills with Iranian forces.

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