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Iran

Digest

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Iran hosts 7th trilateral summit in the Astana format on Syria

On 19 July, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi hosted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin for the 7th trilateral summit in the Astana format on Syria. The three leaders resolved to continue trilateral cooperation in Syria amid Turkey's warning that it will launch another military operation in northern Syria. Turkey has long sought to create a 30-kilometer-deep security zone in northern Syria to clear its southern borders from threat of terrorism from Kurdish People's Defense Units (YPG), viewed in Ankara as an extension of separatist group Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The three countries reaffirmed their ongoing cooperation in the fight against terrorist groups and a joint stand against "separatist agendas aimed at undermining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and threatening the national security of neighboring countries". Russia and Iran, which support Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity, also made joint call for withdrawal of the 'unjustifiable' presence of US forces from the east of the Euphrates River in northeast Syria. Following the trilateral summit, Erdogan and Raisi co-chaired the 7th meeting of the Turkey-Iran High Level Cooperation Council. Crucially, the two countries agreed to extend the gas supply for another 25 years and to increase bilateral trade to \$30 billion.

Iran and Afghanistan form a Joint Committee to prevent border clashes

After fresh border skirmishes erupted between Iranian border guards and Afghan Taliban close to Hirmand city in Iran's Sistan and Balochistan province on 31 July, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, special representative of Iran to Afghanistan, stated that the two countries have formed a [Joint Committee to prevent border conflicts](#). Iran's Deputy Interior Minister for Security

Affairs [Seyed Majid Mir-Ahmadi](#) said "the clashes erupted when a small group of Taliban border guards opened fire on Iranian border guards after entering an area they were not authorized to, which prompted the Iranian side to respond in kind". The clashes lasted for an hour and resulted in the killing of a Taliban member and wounded another one. On repeated border violation by Taliban, [Shahriar Heydari](#), chairman of the committee on border issues of the Foreign Policy and National Security Committee of the Iranian Parliament noted "the fact is that these clashes are happening is because of the instability in Afghanistan's government." He added that "the Taliban aren't familiar with border regulations and laws, so sometimes they violate the borders beyond the laws".

Iran hosts regional environmental ministers meeting

On July 12, Tehran hosted a [conference of environmental ministers](#) and officials from 11 neighbouring countries, aiming to boost cooperation for resolving extant environmental problems, especially sand and dust storms. In May 2022, western Iran experienced major disruption after dust storm moved eastwards having impacted Syria and Iraq. President Raisi during visit to Kurdistan province on 8 July, underlined the importance of a regional approach to dealing with dust pollution. He observed that an [Iranian team of experts](#) has travelled to Kuwait, Iraq, the UAE, and other neighboring states. On the sidelines of the regional meeting of environment ministers, Ali Salajegheh, the chairman of the Iranian Department of Environment and Mariam Almheiri, the UAE Minister of Climate Change and Environment signed an [agreement on environmental cooperation](#) focussed on the exchange of scientific and research capacities. Iran signed a similar [agreement with Iraq](#) on 14 July.

Abdollahian acknowledges efforts to normalise ties with Egypt

On 3 July, Iran's foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian clarified "we have not had direct talks with the Egyptian side. However, some efforts are underway to [restore relations](#) between Tehran and Cairo". Abdollahian's remarks came two days after Iraqi foreign minister [Fuad Hussein](#) in an interview to a Saudi news channel noted that concurrent with Tehran-Riyadh negotiations, talks are underway between Iran and Egypt as well as Iran and Jordan. On 6 July, a Qatari newspaper cited Egyptian diplomatic sources that a [high-level meeting](#) between Iranian and Egyptian officials took place during the visit of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi to Oman in June 2022. The meeting "was of a security nature in general, and touched upon the situation in the Gaza Strip and Syria," adding that "that the coming period may witness direct coordination between Cairo and Tehran on issues and matters related to the Strip." Iran severed relations with Egypt in 1979 and since 2011, the two countries have maintained diplomatic representation at the level of Interests Section offices.

Iran starts construction of fully indigenous nuclear research reactor

During a visit to Uranium Conversion Facility in Isfahan, Mohammad Eslami, the head of the Atomic Energy Organization of announced that the construction of a [fully indigenous nuclear research reactor](#) will soon get underway. The research reactor will test fuel for nuclear reactors. Underlining the importance of project for an indigenous 'nuclear fuel cycle industry', Eslami said "foreign countries did not cooperate with Iran on completing the nuclear fuel cycle, adding even some countries came to do the project, but they abandoned the work halfway and left it".

Russia is the primary contractor for Iran's only nuclear power plant in Bushehr and in 2014 it has signed a contract for constructing [2nd and 3rd phases of the plant](#), which are planned to be completed in 2024 and 2026. Iran-Russian nuclear energy cooperation has been effected negatively by multilateral and US sanctions on Iran. On 17 July, [Levan Dzhagaryan](#), the Russian's ambassador in Tehran gave an interview to *Shargh*, an Iranian reformist newspaper. When asked about [recurring shutdowns](#) at Bushehr, Dzhagaryan complained that the real problem is that Iran owes Russia "hundreds of millions of euros."

Iran Navy introduces home-made Destroyer in the Northern Fleet in the Caspian Sea

During the annual naval exercise '[Sustainable Security 2022](#)' conducted in the Caspian Sea on 9-10 July, Rear Admiral Shahram Irani, the Commander of Navy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, introduced Damavand vessel (destroyer) to Iran's northern fleet. Damavand, a domestically produced Moudge-class 100-meter-long destroyer weighing more than 1300 tons was introduced to the Navy's northern fleet in March 2015. It was damaged in 2017 when entering Anzali port and has been rebuilt by Iranian experts. Regarding the naval drill, Irani said that "the level of security will definitely increase significantly if the drill is conducted in cooperation with friendly, neighboring and brotherly countries". The naval drill came less than two weeks after the [6th summit of Caspian Sea littoral states](#) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Iran has the shortest coastline among the five Caspian littoral countries and remains nervous about an unfavourable outcome in the finalisation of maritime boundaries building on the 2018 Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea.