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Brief Notes

Deputy FM Says Talks With U.S. are 'Meaningless': Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi said the U.S. has "shown no readiness to negotiate on an equal footing" with the Islamic Republic, calling any talks with predetermined outcomes "meaningless." Speaking to reporters in Muscat today, following his Thursday meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Takht-Ravanchi said the U.S. approach leaves "no justification" for Tehran to continue discussions. He said Tehran's nuclear program and related positions were discussed in his meeting, stressing that meaningful progress requires "a spirit of cooperation." Separately, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi spoke with his Egyptian counterpart "about the nuclear issue" and Israel's alleged "ceasefire violations."

Pezeshkian Admin Comments on Halloween Ban: Pezeshkian administration spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani commented on the recent ban on the celebration of Halloween in Iran, saying, "We have so many national festivals, where does Halloween even come from?" She added, "We have plenty of other celebrations, and we can focus on those instead." Mohajerani also referred to the expansion of hijab enforcement measures, saying, "The issue of how people behave in society is being pursued as a cultural matter."

Friday Prayer Calls for 'Unity' While Attacking Former President

Leading Tehran's Friday Prayers today, senior cleric Mohammad Javad Haj Aliakbari condemned figures he perceived to have opposed the Supreme Leader in recent months, including former President Hassan Rouhani (2013–2021). He accused these individuals of suffering from "Stockholm syndrome," sympathizing with Tehran's "oppressors," and rejecting the regime's path of "resistance," saying that "the U.S. has been in a 72-year war with us," presumably referring to the events of 1953. Aliakbari then continued that the only way to "win against U.S. hegemony is through unity and cohesion."

His remarks, nationally broadcast live on state radio, aligned with recent speeches by senior officials such as Armed Forces Chief of Staff Abdolrahim Mousavi and Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Larijani, who both urged unity amid growing factional divisions.

Haj Aliakbari also defended the enforcement of the hijab law, calling chastity "a right of the people" and "a duty of an Islamic government."

On the Radar

- Australia has officially listed Tehran-run Press TV as a foreign government agent. The move follows recent criticism that the outlet continued to operate freely in the country despite being sanctioned by Australia in September 2023. Press TV previously sparked controversy in February when it aired an interview with Australian Senator Fatima Payman, who claimed women were treated better in Iran than in the West, a comment for which she later apologized.
- The IRGC Navy seized a vessel carrying 240,000 liters (~63,400 gallons) of allegedly smuggled fuel in the Persian Gulf, arresting 11 individuals. The IRGC claims that the seized fuel was transferred to the National Iranian Oil Products Distribution Company for re-entry into the legal supply chain. Hormozgan judiciary chief Mojtaba Qahremani said the suspects are facing charges of organized fuel smuggling, with bail set at over three billion rials (~$2,800).
- Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has appointed Ali Mojani, an advisor to the Foreign Ministry, as the new ambassador to Georgia and Khalil Shirgholami, the deputy director at the Foreign Ministry's research center, as the new ambassador to Armenia. The announcement was made during the second "provincial diplomacy" meeting in Tabriz, a new initiative aimed at enabling border provinces to build direct economic and political ties with neighboring countries to mitigate the impact of sanctions. Araghchi said the next meeting will involve officials from Iran's northwestern provinces and the ambassadors to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

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