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Weekly Report on Iran
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Summary

Ahmadinejad to give opening speech at Iran nuclear summit

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will give the opening speech at a weekend nuclear disarmament conference to be attended by 24 foreign and deputy foreign ministers, official media reported.

"Ahmadinejad is due to give the opening address at the conference," which has as its theme "Nuclear Energy For All, Nuclear Weapons For No-one," state news agency IRNA. Fourteen foreign ministers and 10 deputy ministers, as well as representatives from regional and international organisations were expected to participate in the two-day gathering.

Six powers intensify Iran sanctions talks: envoys

The five permanent U.N. Security Council members and Germany are accelerating negotiations on a new round of sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, U.N. diplomats said on Thursday.

Ex-president Khatami 'barred from leaving Iran

Iran has barred reformist former president Mohammad Khatami from leaving the country ahead of a trip he planned to make to Japan for a nuclear disarmament conference, a pro-reform website said Thursday.

MP: Majlis Supports Expanded Ties with Armenia

Majlis (Iranian parliament) supports development of relations and mutual cooperation with Yerevan, Head of Iran-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group Arsalan Fathipour said. Fathipour made the remarks in a meeting with Armenian Envoy to Tehran Grigor Arakelian on Tuesday, stressing the ample potentials in both countries to expand bilateral

relations and cooperation as well as promotion of ties in different political, economic and cultural fields.

Iran slams Obama nuclear conference

Iran's envoy to the UN nuclear watchdog slammed the US nuclear summit opening on Monday, saying any decision taken at the conference is not binding on nations absent from the event. Ali Asghar Soltanieh also accused Washington of being the "real" threat to global peace given its large nuclear arsenal.

Iran to hit US forces if attacked

Iran would respond to any military attack from the United States by targetting American forces stationed in the Middle East, its military commander said on Thursday. "If America presents Iran with a serious threat and undertakes any measure against Iran, none of the American soldiers who are currently in the region would go back to America alive," Major General Hassan Firouzabadi was quoted as saying by the Iranian *Fars* news agency.

Turkey, Brazil agree on diplomatic solution for nuclear Iran

The Turkish FM said that Turkey and Brazil thought similarly regarding Iran's nuclear program. The Turkish foreign minister said on Friday that Turkey and Brazil thought similarly regarding Iran's nuclear program.

BRIC countries for more diplomacy on Iran

As the UN Security Council appears set to impose fresh sanctions against Iran, the BRIC countries -- India, Russia, China and Brazil -- have made it clear that the punitive action would not help solve the issue of the nuclear programme and the path of diplomacy should be pursued to address it.

Italy Urged to Release 2 Iranians

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has renewed calls for the release of Iranian nationals, including a senior broadcast journalist, detained in Italy. Italy arrested two Iranians in March, accusing them of involvement in arms exports to Iran in violation of western sanctions against Iran.

Iran wants 'atomic criminal' US suspended from IAEA

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the use of nuclear weapons was "haram", meaning religiously prohibited, and branded Washington as the world's "only

atomic criminal." Tehran: Iran slammed "atomic criminal" the United States on Saturday and called for its suspension from the UN nuclear body, urging changes at the UN Security Council and in the Non-proliferation Treaty.

Scenarios: Global impact if Israel strikes Iran

The scale of that response could be the difference between a brief spike in oil prices and pushing the world back to economic crisis. Below are possible scenarios together with projected potential market reactions suggested by analysts, economists and foreign policy strategists

Iran publicly hangs three convicted rapists

April 15 - Iran has publicly hanged three men convicted of raping 13 women in the northern town of Babolsar, the government newspaper Iran reported on Thursday.

The men, identified by their first names as Ali, 26, Rahmatollah, 27, and Amir Hossein, 33, were executed in a main square in the Caspian Sea coastal town on Wednesday

FM: Release of Attarzadeh, arresting Rigi proof for Iranian intelligence organ's might

Foreign minister said here Monday release of Heshmatollah Attarzadeh and arresting Abdolmalek Rigi were both proof for Iranian intelligence organ's exemplary might and competence.

Weekly briefing of the Foreign Ministry Spokesman

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said the reaction of Iran and regional countries to any attacks would be very harsh. Talking to reporters during his weekly press briefing session on Tuesday(2010/04/13), he said the military threats posed against Iran by the US and the Zionist regime every now and then were just hollow remarks which served only propaganda purposes

Economic News

Malaysia warns Iran after cutting off gasoline supplies

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak confirmed that his country has cut off gasoline supplies to Iran, warning Tehran it was close to facing new international sanctions over its controversial nuclear program.

Najib's announcement on Thursday came three days after he held talks with US President Barack Obama, who had called for the world to move "boldly and quickly" on additional sanctions on the sidelines of a 47-nation nuclear security summit.

Chinaoil Sells Gasoline Direct to Iran-Trade

State-run Chinaoil has sold two gasoline cargoes for April delivery to Iran, industry sources said on Wednesday, stepping into a void left by fuel suppliers halting shipments under threat of U.S. sanctions. The cargoes were Chinaoil's first direct sales to Iran since at least January 2009, according to Reuters Data. Chinese firms have previously sold through intermediaries, traders said.

Iranian Co. Wins Bid for S.Korea Daewoo Elec

Iranian appliance maker Entekhab Industrial Group has been named as the buyer for South Korea's Daewoo Electronics in a deal reportedly worth more than \$540 million, beating Swedish giant Electrolux.

Brazilian Company Seeks Boosting Technological Ties With Iran

A leading Brazilian industrial company called for boosting Iran and Brazil ties in technological fields. Representative of Ppepp Fios Esmaltados S.A Company said his company mulls expanding ties with Iran in technological fields.

New Options Mulled For Gas Export to Europe

Managing director of the National Iranian Gas Export Company (NIGEC) said on Friday implementing the project for constructing the ninth nationwide gas pipeline depends on selection of the route for exporting natural gas to Europe while the Iraq-Syria-Italy route can compete efficiently with other routes studied so far.

Poland Calls on Expanding Ties With Iran

The director of Poland Chamber of Commerce has announced his country's readiness to boost ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran in high-tech industries. "Dutch merchants and business people are keen to boost commercial ties with Iran's private sector," Aren Darski said.

Social News

275 German Tourists Arrive in Bushehr Port

Christopher Columbus Ship stopped on Tuesday noon in the southern port of Bushehr and its 275 German tourists were welcomed by provincial officials of Tourism

Organization. Head of Bushehr province Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization said that the German tourists visited city old area, old bazaar and the Anthropology Museum during their short stay in Bushehr.

Iran's Police Seize 1000 Tons of Opium-Based Narcotics

Iran's anti-narcotic police squads have seized around 1,000 tons of various types of narcotics derived from opium during the last Iranian year (ended on March 20), a senior Iranian police commander announced on Tuesday.

Commander Highlights Iran-Turkey Cooperation in Drug Campaign

A senior Iranian anti-narcotics official lauded the close cooperation between Iran and Turkey in fighting drug-trafficking, and said the two countries' police forces disbanded 15 drug cartels through joint cooperation last year.

Iran, S. Korea Discuss Expansion of Cultural Cooperation

Head of Iran's state-run TV Ezatollah Zarqami, who is in South Korea on an official visit, conferred with the East Asian state's cultural and media officials on cultural cooperation between the two countries

Detailed News

Political News

Ahmadinejad to give opening speech at Iran nuclear summit

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will give the opening speech at a weekend nuclear disarmament conference to be attended by 24 foreign and deputy foreign ministers, official media reported. "Ahmadinejad is due to give the opening address at the conference," which has as its theme "Nuclear Energy For All, Nuclear Weapons For No-one," state news agency IRNA. Fourteen foreign ministers and 10 deputy ministers, as well as representatives from regional and international organisations were expected to participate in the two-day gathering.

The names of the countries represented were not given in the report, but European officials are not likely to attend.

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Iran criticised the 47-nation nuclear disarmament summit hosted in Washington earlier this week by US President Barack Obama, on the grounds the United States holds one of the world's largest stocks of nuclear weapons.

At the biggest US nuclear summit in over six decades, Obama pressed China and other UN Security Council skeptics to back a fourth set of sanctions against Iran for its controversial uranium enrichment programme that Western states say masks a drive for atomic arms.

Tehran counters that it is entitled to enrich uranium as a Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) member and strongly denies it wants nuclear weapons.

"At the Tehran conference, we will discuss nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the use of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, which are the bases of the Non-Proliferation Treaty," Iran's atomic chief Ali Akbar Salehi was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency on Friday.

Salehi has also said in recent days that the conference would serve as preparation for the next NPT review meeting in New York early next month, which Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki plans to attend.

Six powers intensify Iran sanctions talks: envoys

The five permanent U.N. Security Council members and Germany are accelerating negotiations on a new round of sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, U.N. diplomats said on Thursday.

U.N. ambassadors from the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China had an inconclusive meeting earlier on Thursday, and the four Western envoys reconvened without Moscow and Beijing in the afternoon. Diplomats said the six would meet regularly in the coming days and weeks.

"The talks are intensifying," one Western diplomat told Reuters. Another said the six might begin discussing the issue on an almost daily basis as they work to prepare a draft sanctions resolution for the full 15-member Security Council.

German Ambassador Peter Wittig told reporters ahead of the afternoon session that it was a "continuation of the exchange of views" that the major powers began in New York last week.

Speaking to reporters after a meeting of the six ambassadors on Wednesday, China's U.N. envoy Li Baodong said the six now have "a better understanding of each other's positions."

The envoys have been discussing a U.S. draft proposal, first circulated weeks ago, that provides for a fourth round of sanctions on Iran for its refusal to stop uranium

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enrichment. The West accuses Tehran of seeking to produce atomic arms but Tehran says it aims only to generate electricity.

The U.S. draft proposes new curbs on Iranian banking, a full arms embargo, tougher measures against Iranian shipping, moves against members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and firms they control and a ban on new investments in Iran's energy sector.

DILUTING THE DRAFT

Diplomats told Reuters this week that China's Li had indicated displeasure at the proposals affecting Iran's energy sector at a first meeting with his counterparts a week ago.

The Russians also have problems with proposals related to energy, shipping, arms and finance, Western diplomats said.

"We're right at the beginning of the discussion on a text here, and it should be no surprise that they're quite far apart," a Western diplomat said ahead of Wednesday's talks.

Moscow and Beijing, which have close trade ties to Iran, reluctantly supported three rounds of U.N. sanctions against Tehran in 2006, 2007 and 2008 but worked to dilute the measures before they were approved by the Security Council. Iran is the third-largest crude oil supplier to energy-hungry China.

U.S. President Barack Obama said last month that he wanted a new Iran sanctions resolution adopted "in weeks." He has raised the issue of Iran during bilateral meetings with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

Although the U.S. and European delegations would like a resolution adopted this month, diplomats say negotiations could continue at least until June as China and Russia are expected to push to water down the proposed punitive steps before handing a draft resolution to the council

Ex-president Khatami 'barred from leaving Iran

Iran has barred reformist former president Mohammad Khatami from leaving the country ahead of a trip he planned to make to Japan for a nuclear disarmament conference, a pro-reform website said Thursday.

The Parlemannews.ir website of the reformist bloc in parliament did not provide details of any reasons given for the travel ban.

Another source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP that the "police have informed Khatami that he may not leave the country."

By mid-afternoon, there had been no confirmation from official media of the order.

Khatami, whose 1997-2005 presidency saw a thaw with the West under his "dialogue of civilisations," had been invited to attend the annual nuclear disarmament conference in Hiroshima.

The former president has been the target of virulent criticism by regime hardliners since he backed former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi against incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in last June's presidential election.

Khatami, 66, has repeatedly denounced government crackdowns on the opposition, which denounced Ahmadinejad's re-election as fraudulent.

He has also called for the release of hundreds of people arrested during opposition demonstrations, some of whom have been sentenced to stiff prison terms.

MP: Majlis Supports Expanded Ties with Armenia

Majlis (Iranian parliament) supports development of relations and mutual cooperation with Yerevan, Head of Iran-Armenia Parliamentary Friendship Group Arsalan Fathipour said. Fathipour made the remarks in a meeting with Armenian Envoy to Tehran Grigor Arakelian on Tuesday, stressing the ample potentials in both countries to expand bilateral relations and cooperation as well as promotion of ties in different political, economic and cultural fields.

Noting that Iran enjoys abundant economic and tourism potentials to strengthen the bilateral relations, he reiterated, "The economic and industrial progresses and tourism attractions of the Islamic Republic of Iran have created abundant potentials for the expansion of bilateral ties which should be utilized through precise planning."

Arakelian, for his part, expressed pleasure in the growing trend of mutual cooperation between the two countries, and called for the consolidation of economic exchanges in an effort to increase mutual understanding and deepen all-out friendly relations.

He also laid emphasis on the importance of the development of parliamentary relations between the two countries, and urged an increase in reciprocal visits by the two sides' legislators.

Iran and Armenia have expanded their bilateral relations in recent years, especially in political, economic, trade and cultural fields

Iran slams Obama nuclear conference

Iran's envoy to the UN nuclear watchdog slammed the US nuclear summit opening on Monday, saying any decision taken at the conference is not binding on nations absent

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from the event. Ali Asghar Soltanieh also accused Washington of being the "real" threat to global peace given its large nuclear arsenal.

"The outcome of the Washington conference is already known. Any decision taken at the meeting is not binding on those countries who are not represented at the conference," Soltanieh told *ISNA* news agency.

US President Barack Obama is opening the nuclear security summit which is being attended by leaders of 46 other countries. Iran is not represented at the conference.

Soltanieh said it was Washington that was "the real threat to international security with its nuclear weapons." "The new US (nuclear) policy proves Islamic Republic of Iran's argument that the US is not committed to any global rules and regulations," he said.

Iran celebrates nuclear energy achievements

Iran said on Friday that it had designed and tested the country's third generation of domestically-built centrifuges as the nation celebrated its nuclear energy achievements. The new centrifuges, each 200 millimeters in diameter, are ten times as powerful as the ones operating in the Natanz uranium enrichment plant.

The head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Ali Akbar Salehi, made the announcement at a ceremony commemorating the annual national nuclear day. "[The devices] have successfully gone through mechanical tests," he told an audience, including President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Joint Armed Forces Chief of Staffs Major General Hassan Firouzabadi and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Saeed Jalili, in Tehran's Milad Tower conference room.

Salehi added that the Ahmadinejad government had instructed the AEOI to look for locations where new enrichment facilities could be built.

President Ahmadinejad, speaking later, said 60,000 centrifuges of the new generation that are to be installed at the Natanz enrichment plant can fuel six nuclear power plants for a year.

During his speech, President Ahmadinejad expressed his gratitude for Iranian scientists who had answered his call for making Iran a "nuclear nation." On reasons why Iran is pursuing its nuclear objectives, Ahmadinejad said nuclear energy is known to be "cheap," compared to other sources of energy, and "clean" at the same time.

Iran to hit US forces if attacked

Iran would respond to any military attack from the United States by targetting American forces stationed in the Middle East, its military commander said on Thursday. "If America presents Iran with a serious threat and undertakes any measure against Iran, none of the American soldiers who are currently in the region would go back to America alive," Major General Hassan Firouzabadi was quoted as saying by the Iranian *Fars* news agency.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a military ceremony, Firouzabadi said a strike on Iran would also put oil supplies at risk. "If America wants to have the region's oil and its markets then the region's markets would be taken away from America and the Muslims' control over oil would increase," he said, according to state broadcaster *IRIB*.

Meanwhile, Iran's Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar blamed the United States and Israel for heightening the level of terrorist activities in the world. "The US and the Zionist regime of Israel promote terrorism in the world and killing people in Guantanamo, Afghanistan and Iraq is a clear examples of such a pattern," *Fars* quoted Mohammad-Najjar as saying on Thursday.

"The Islamic Republic has revealed the lies of arrogant powers, especially the US, in various junctures," he added. "Iran has taken off the ugly masks of the United States and Israel since the 1979 Islamic revolution," he further explained. "We are very proud of this," the Iranian minister concluded.

Turkey, Brazil agree on diplomatic solution for nuclear Iran

The Turkish FM said that Turkey and Brazil thought similarly regarding Iran's nuclear program. The Turkish foreign minister said on Friday that Turkey and Brazil thought similarly regarding Iran's nuclear program.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said Turkey and Brazil would continue to work together on this matter.

"Two countries are becoming more influential in global issues each passing day," Davutoglu told a joint press conference with his Brazilian counterpart Celso Amorim.

Davutoglu said Turkey and Brazil were members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council and G-20 countries.

Turkey and Brazil would continue their efforts to find a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear program controversy, he said.

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Davutoglu said what was important was to rebuild confidence first of all, and the Middle East should be purified from nuclear weapons.

However, using nuclear energy for peaceful means was the right of all countries including Iran, he said.

Davutoglu said Turkey and Brazil would continue talks with Iran, and hoped to ensure global peace.

Turkey did not want to see any military intervention or activity in the region, and therefore was working on a diplomatic solution, he said.

Davutoglu said Turkey did not want to see any economic sanctions in its region.

"The more economically dependent regional countries are on each other, the easier it would be to restore peace," he said.

Davutoglu said, "we do not want to see negative scenarios regarding Iran, but we want a diplomatic solution," Davutoglu said.

Turkish minister Davutoglu denied allegations that ousted leader of Kyrgyzstan, Kurmanbek Bakiyev fled to Turkey, and said Turkey was closely monitoring developments in that country.

On bilateral relations, Davutoglu said Turkey's Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan would visit Brazil at the end of May for a meeting of the Alliance of Civilizations Initiative.

Davutoglu also said two countries were willing to institutionalize their further developing relations, and have a strategic cooperation

BRIC countries for more diplomacy on Iran

As the UN Security Council appears set to impose fresh sanctions against Iran, the BRIC countries -- India, Russia, China and Brazil -- have made it clear that the punitive action would not help solve the issue of the nuclear programme and the path of diplomacy should be pursued to address it.

The Iran issue was discussed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Chinese President Hu Jintao and Brazilian President Lula Da Silva at the Summit meeting here under the Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) format for the first time yesterday.

All the four leaders were of the opinion that sanctions are not the answer to Iran's nuclear issue as these punitive actions hurt only the common people while the establishment feels no impact, sources said.

"It (Iran issue) came up for discussion at the BRIC summit. There was free and frank

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exchange (over the issue)," Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said.

He said India's position on the issue is clear and the Prime Minister had said that there is a need for resolving the issue.

The Summit was also of the view that Iran has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

However, the BRIC leaders said Iran has the obligation to adhere to its international commitments and address fears of the international community over its nuclear programme and underlined that the country should cooperate with IAEA and UN Security Council.

Iran, a signatory of the NPT, has been saying that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes but the international community doubts that and feels that it is developing a bomb.

The sources said fresh sanctions against Iran looked imminent as there is a growing feeling in the international community that negotiations are not making progress.

Singh has already conveyed to US President Barack Obama that no sanctions should be imposed that would affect the common people of Iran.

There is an understanding in the Indian government that the new sanctions may be only financial and not target commodities.

The UNSC has already imposed three sanctions against Iran.

Italy Urged to Release 2 Iranians

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has renewed calls for the release of Iranian nationals, including a senior broadcast journalist, detained in Italy. Italy arrested two Iranians in March, accusing them of involvement in arms exports to Iran in violation of western sanctions against Iran. Officials in Tehran insist the accusations, which are directed at the Islamic Republic, are unfounded and unacceptable. In a Wednesday telephone conversation with Ali Damirchilou, one of the detainees, Mottaki said Iran expects Italy to release the two jailed Iranians immediately. "We have called on the Italian government not to get involved in this failed game and immediately release the [two] Iranian nationals," Presstv quoted Mottaki as saying during his phone conversation with Damirchilou, an Italy-based Iranian expatriate. Mottaki added that Iran would use all "legal, consular and political" means at its disposal to secure the release of Damirchilou and Hamid Masouminejad, a senior correspondent for Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) in Rome. Prior to the arrest of Masouminejad and Damirchilou in March, the Italian Prime Minister

Silvio Berlusconi had visited Israel--an arch-foe of the Islamic Republic--during which he had promised Tel Aviv to spare no efforts in increasing pressures against Iran to force Tehran into abandoning its peaceful nuclear program.

Africa Ties
During a joint press conference with the visiting Central African Republic's Foreign Minister Antoine Gambi in Tehran on Thursday, the top Iranian diplomat stressed that Iran's relations with African countries are not in contradiction to any other country. "Our relations with the Central African Republic are not against any third party, but at the same time we will not allow anyone to affect or interfere in our good relations with the country," PressTV quoted Mottaki as saying in response to a question about US concern over Iran's rising ties with African states. He further said Tehran's relations with other states "are based on mutual respect and interests".

Regarding Israel, the top Iranian diplomat said the regime is the root cause of most problems in the Middle East as it resorts to military methods against other countries in the region "whenever it feels like it". Mottaki stressed that after its defeat in Lebanon in 2006 and in Gaza Strip in 2009, Israel is on the losing side. He was referring to Israel's aggression against Lebanon's Hezbollah Movement in the summer of 2006 and against the Palestinian Islamic resistance movement Hamas during December 2008-January 2009.

Swap Offer
Also speaking in a live televised interview on Wednesday, Mottaki said Tehran's offer for a nuclear fuel swap is still on the table if the West is willing to accept equal conditions.

"We need 100 kilograms [of 20-percent enriched uranium] and we currently have the equivalent of that amount in 3.5-percent enriched uranium. That is what we can negotiate on," Mottaki told IRIB channel 2 on Wednesday night. "We can wait and reach a consensus as they process fuel up to 20 percent. Our 3.5 percent uranium is available and this exchange can be carried out under the supervision of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)." Iran rebuffed the West's year-end deadline in 2009 to accept an IAEA-drafted deal calling on Iran to ship out the bulk of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) abroad in return for fuel for the Tehran research nuclear reactor that produces radioisotopes for radiomedicine.

The Islamic Republic then called for the exchange to be made in Iranian territory or in stages, an offer that was refused by the West once again. Tehran says it does not trust the West as it has a history of depriving Iran of its rights.

Iran wants 'atomic criminal' US suspended from IAEA

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the use of nuclear weapons was "haram", meaning religiously prohibited, and branded Washington as the world's "only atomic criminal." Tehran: Iran slammed "atomic criminal" the United States on Saturday and called for its suspension from the UN nuclear body, urging changes at the UN

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Security Council and in the Non-proliferation Treaty.

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in an opening message to a two-day nuclear disarmament conference hosted by Tehran, said the use of nuclear weapons was "haram", meaning religiously prohibited, and branded Washington as the world's "only atomic criminal."

Hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad went a step further and called for Washington's suspension from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) along with all other nations who possess nuclear arms.

"Only the US government has committed an atomic crime," said a message read out from the all-powerful Khamenei, who formulates Tehran's foreign policy, including its nuclear strategy.

"The world's only atomic criminal lies and presents itself as being against nuclear weapons proliferation, while it has not taken any serious measures in this regard," he said.

Ahmadinejad, under whose presidency Iran has aggressively pushed ahead with its controversial nuclear programme despite three sets of UN sanctions, attacked the present structure of the UN Security Council, the IAEA and even the NPT.

"An independent international group which plans and oversees nuclear disarmament and prevents proliferation should be set up," he said as he opened the conference attended by several foreign ministers and UN officials.

He said those who "possess, have used or threatened to use nuclear weapons be suspended from the IAEA and its board of governors, especially the US which has used a weapon made of atomic waste in the Iraq war."

Ahmadinejad did not elaborate on that charge but his remark is expected to irk allies Russia and China. Both are nuclear states and have veto powers in the UN Security Council, but have so far hesitated to back a fourth set of sanction against Tehran.

Ahmadinejad said "the right to veto, which is undemocratic, inhumane and unfair, should either be annulled or if some insist on having this right, then some countries from Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe should also have the right to veto in order to reduce its negative outcomes."

Khamenei and Ahmadinejad have been particularly infuriated in recent days with Washington over its new nuclear policy unveiled last week.

The policy limits the countries against which Washington might use its nuclear arsenal, but singles out Iran and North Korea as exceptions for flouting UN Security Council regulations over their nuclear programmes.

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Ahmadinejad even called for the review of the NPT of which Iran is a member and so considers its right to enrich uranium, the most controversial aspect of its nuclear programme.

"The review of the NPT must be done by independent countries who do not possess nuclear arms," he said, adding that "the presence of those possessing weapons especially US prevents the drawing up of a fair treaty."

Iranian atomic chief Ali Akbar Salehi said on Friday that the Tehran meeting will serve as preparation for the next NPT review in New York early next month, which Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki plans to attend.

The Tehran conference comes just days after Washington ended its high-profile nuclear summit which Iran criticised on the grounds that the United States holds one of the world's largest stocks of nuclear weapons. At the summit, Obama pressed China and other UN Security Council skeptics to back a fourth set of sanctions against Iran for its controversial uranium enrichment programme that Western states say masks a drive for atomic arms.

Foreign ministers from Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, the Central African Republic, Oman, Turkmenistan, Armenia and Swaziland are participating in the Tehran conference, while Russia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are represented by their deputy foreign ministers, an official said.

A special aide of the Chinese foreign minister, representatives of the United Nations and IAEA and the chief of Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) will also be present, he said.

Scenarios: Global impact if Israel strikes Iran

The scale of that response could be the difference between a brief spike in oil prices and pushing the world back to economic crisis. Below are possible scenarios together with projected potential market reactions suggested by analysts, economists and foreign policy strategists.

NO IMMEDIATE REACTION

Tehran announces that Israel's military attacked civilian locations but inflicted little damage. It hurls furious rhetoric at Israel but stops short of any military response.

"It may make sense for the Iranians to play the victim," said IHS Global Insight Middle East analyst Gala Riani. "They may also use it to build the regime's legitimacy internally."

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-- news of the strike would see oil prices spike \$10-\$20 and wider investor flight to safer assets such as U.S. treasuries, while equities and risky currencies would suffer. But without further action, sentiment would recover.

-- relatively used to conflict, Israeli markets might prove more resilient to the initial news. Some analysts suggest that a successful strike that significantly put back an Iranian nuclear program could be positive for Israeli markets.

Key unknowns:

-- assessing the effectiveness of an attack on Iranian facilities could prove almost impossible. The longer-term impact of the strikes on Iran's internal politics, regional politics and Western support for Israel would be hard to predict.

-- can Israel achieve its aims with a single strike, or would it require a more sustained operation potentially lasting several days and hitting markets much harder?

PROXY RETALIATION

Iran steers clear of any overt response, but backs intensifying attacks by Hamas from the Palestinian territories and by Hezbollah from Lebanon. It might also back proxy attacks on Western forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The most likely response would be to increase their subversive activity across the Middle East," said IHS's Riani. "It would most likely be focused in Palestine, Lebanon and to a lesser extent around the Gulf."

-- might have some short-term impact on oil prices -- particularly if the attacks included Iraq -- but generally global markets would be little affected.

-- Israeli markets would likely take initial attacks in their stride, but a prolonged campaign would drag on the economy, driving up defense spending and undermining markets as they did during the Palestinian Intifada.

Key unknowns:

-- the duration of increased violence. Proxy violence could escalate to include militant attacks on Western and oil targets.

-- If Hezbollah strikes Israel, Israel will retaliate in a way that quickly expands the conflict. Israel has threatened to hold the governments of Lebanon and Syria responsible for any Hezbollah attacks.

MISSILES STRIKE ISRAEL

Iran retaliates by launching ballistic missiles with conventional warheads. While more accurate than the Scuds launched by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein at Israel during the 1991 Gulf War, damage from each strike would be limited.

"It's certainly not something you can rule out," said Metsa Rahimi, intelligence analyst for risk consultancy Janusian. "The Iranians are going to want to retaliate. But they know if they do this, they are going to get hit back again."

-- oil prices would certainly spike higher, although attacks on Israeli cities would not directly have any impact on oil production. Wider global markets would sell off and watch nervously for any further escalation.

-- Israeli markets might again prove more resilient. They actually rallied in January 1991 during the missile attacks as it became clear the strikes were not chemical and not causing significant damage. Much would depend on the level of damage and for how long any missile barrage continued.

Iran publicly hangs three convicted rapists

April 15 - Iran has publicly hanged three men convicted of raping 13 women in the northern town of Babolsar, the government newspaper Iran reported on Thursday.

The men, identified by their first names as Ali, 26, Rahmatollah, 27, and Amir Hossein, 33, were executed in a main square in the Caspian Sea coastal town on Wednesday.

The trio were arrested in 2007 after a pregnant, married woman went to the police and charged that she had been abducted and raped by a young man.

Among the victims, there were also three university students who had met the men on the beach and two other students who took a ride in the group's car from a nearby town, the report said.

The five students all fell unconscious after drinking coffee offered by the men and were dumped on the street after being raped, the paper said.

But the defendants denied committing any crime, insisting the women were friends who had willingly gone home with them, it added

FM:Release of Attarzadeh, arresting Rigi proof for Iranian intelligence organ's might

Foreign minister said here Monday release of Heshmatollah Attarzadeh and arresting Abdolmalek Rigi were both proof for Iranian intelligence organ's exemplary might and competence.

The Foreign Ministry's Information and Media Head Office further reported Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki as appreciating the efforts made by the Intelligence Ministry officers aimed at release from captivity of the kidnapped Iranian diplomat Attarzadeh at a celebration in the presence of his family members and the Foreign Ministry deputies and some staffs.

He added, "Various concerned offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, too, at highest level constantly pursued Mr. Attarzadeh's case till his release."

Weekly report on Iran

Mottaki reiterated, “The emphases made by the Supreme Leader regarding Mr. Attarzadeh’s case were guidance lights for the concerned organs to pursue doubly as serious our comprehensive efforts.”

The IRI Minister of Foreign Affairs praised the exemplary resistance and patience of both Attarzadeh and his family during the course of his captivity in the hands of the terrorists, arguing, “Diplomatic missions abroad have certain hardships and have at times led to extraordinary problems for the Iranian diplomats away from home.”

Mottaki referring to some of the emerged problems for the Iranian diplomats and embassy staffs during the post revolution era, adding, “During that period we have been witnesses to the martyrdom, captivity, loss of limbs, and getting injured of a number of our country’s diplomats abroad.”

Setting example of the captivity of the Iranian diplomats Mottaki referred to the illegal arrest of a number of them at the Head Consular Office of Arbil, Iraq, by the occupier US forces.

The foreign minister reiterated, “The foreign ministry staffs are very glad that they have side by side with the great Iranian nation created lasting and immortal epics, and of course the entire values of a foreign ministry staffers are condensed as the core in their such selfless endeavors.”

During the ceremony both Attarzadeh and his wife appreciated the close attention and pursuing the case by the top officials and concerned organs of the system that led to his release from captivity

Weekly briefing of the Foreign Ministry Spokesman

Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said the reaction of Iran and regional countries to any attacks would be very harsh. Talking to reporters during his weekly press briefing session on Tuesday(2010/04/13), he said the military threats posed against Iran by the US and the Zionist regime every now and then were just hollow remarks which served only propaganda purposes.

He said the very nature of the illegitimate Zionist regime relied on militarism and occupation and its survival was bound to creating wars and committing bloodsheds.

Stressing that Iran was fully ready to confront any attacks by its enemies, he said the US, the Zionist regime and their allies were, too, fully aware of Iran’s potential so would never embark on making stupid decisions.

In answer to another question on the ongoing nuclear security conference in Washington, he first referred to the recent remarks of US President Barack Obama who threatened some world countries with use of nuclear bombs as well as the Monday night remarks of French President Nicolas Sarkozy who said his country would not abandon its nuclear weapons.

Mehman-Parast said such countries could never be regarded as truly pioneering a conference on nuclear security issues.

Weekly report on Iran

He further stressed the importance of the upcoming international meeting on disarmament to be held in Tehran next week.

Saying that about 200 guests from 60 world countries will participate in the event, the spokesman said 15 countries will dispatch delegations to the conference at the foreign ministerial level.

Commenting on Iran's nuclear issue, he said Tehran's nuclear performance has been very transparent, noting that Iranian officials have repeatedly stressed the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program which is developed solely for humanitarian purposes.

On ways to provide needed fuel for the Tehran nuclear reactor, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said Iran has always been ready for talks on providing the needed fuel for its research reactor through purchase or swap deals.

Meanwhile, he said, Tehran has already taken practical steps to provide the fuel by producing it domestically

Economic News

Malaysia warns Iran after cutting off gasoline supplies

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak confirmed that his country has cut off gasoline supplies to Iran, warning Tehran it was close to facing new international sanctions over its controversial nuclear program. Najib's announcement on Thursday came three days after he held talks with US President Barack Obama, who had called for the world to move "boldly and quickly" on additional sanctions on the sidelines of a 47-nation nuclear security summit.

"It's going to be quite inevitable that additional sanctions will be imposed in the near future unless there is some movement in the right direction by Iran," Najib, on a US visit, told reporters in Washington.

"The onus is on Iran now to react expeditiously to prevent additional sanctions."

The 15-member Security Council, including China, has already imposed three sets of sanctions on Iran over its refusal to halt sensitive uranium enrichment and is considering the prospect of a fourth round of UN sanctions.

The United States and its allies believe Iran is covertly working on a nuclear weapon but the Islamic republic says it is pursuing only civilian power.

Weekly report on Iran

Najib said the gasoline supplies suspension was decided by Petronas after consultations with his government.

He did not say when Petronas stopped supplying gasoline to Iran but some reports said it was done in the middle of March.

Petronas is among a small group of non-Chinese oil companies supplying gasoline to Iran, the world's fifth-largest crude oil exporter.

Najib said that while Malaysia maintained that Iran had the right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, it must comply with the UN Security Council decision ordering it to suspend uranium enrichment activities until the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can verify they are exclusively peaceful as Iran claims.

"They must earn the trust of the international community and the only way they can earn the trust is to be fully transparent in whatever they do and allow full verification by the IAEA and there are some serious doubt as to whether this has been carried out or has been complied with by Iran," he said.

A member of the OPEC cartel, Iran has been languishing in a dearth of investment in petroleum refineries as a result of US sanctions. It has resorted to importing about 40 percent of its gasoline needs.

Asked whether Malaysia was reviewing any current projects or possible joint ventures in Iran, Najib said, "We will see how it goes, we do not want to send the wrong signals.

"We appreciate the importance of our economic relations with Iran as well."

Ambassadors from the five veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- plus Germany -- met for a second straight day in New York Thursday in what they described as "constructive" substantive talks on the sanctions issue.

On the table was a US draft resolution outlining sanctions in five areas: arms embargo, energy, shipping, finance and targeted punitive measures against Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards, a diplomat familiar with the discussions said.

Iran insists it needs the higher-enriched uranium to fuel a research reactor which makes radioisotopes for medical purposes, such as the treatment of cancer, where the current fuel is expected to run out by the end of this year.

But Tehran has snubbed an IAEA-brokered deal that would have seen Russia and France fashion the fuel out of Iran's own stockpile of low-enriched uranium. Najib said Petronas would "certainly" lift its suspension on gasoline supplies if Iran complied with the IAEA.

"We believe in engagement but Iran has to respond as well and there are some clear indications of their non compliance.

Chinaoil Sells Gasoline Direct to Iran-Trade

State-run Chinaoil has sold two gasoline cargoes for April delivery to Iran, industry sources said on Wednesday, stepping into a void left by fuel suppliers halting shipments under threat of U.S. sanctions. The cargoes were Chinaoil's first direct sales to Iran since at least January 2009, according to Reuters Data. Chinese firms have previously sold through intermediaries, traders said.

"Prior to this there was some third party trades going on, but this was a direct sell," a trader said.

Iranian Co. Wins Bid for S.Korea Daewoo Elec

Iranian appliance maker Entekhab Industrial Group has been named as the buyer for South Korea's Daewoo Electronics in a deal reportedly worth more than \$540 million, beating Swedish giant Electrolux.

Daewoo's leading creditor Woori Bank said in a statement that creditors would sign a preliminary deal with Entekhab, aiming to close the final agreement by the end of July.

Daewoo said the Iranian company already sold Daewoo products in the Middle East.

Electrolux was named reserve bidder in case the deal with Entekhab falls through.

The financial terms of the deal were not disclosed, but local online news service eDaily said Entekhab offered slightly more than 600 billion won (\$540 million).

It is the fourth attempt to sell Daewoo Electronics, once the flagship unit of the failed Daewoo Group and now almost wholly owned by its creditors.

In the previous rounds, creditors held a series of unsuccessful sales talks with Ripplewood Holdings, a private equity unit of Morgan Stanley, and a consortium of India's Videocon Industries and RJH International.

During the period, Daewoo sold off non-core assets and unprofitable businesses to focus on washing machines and refrigerators.

Export-focused Daewoo competes with bigger local rivals Samsung Electronics, LG Electronics, and low-cost Chinese producers.

Brazilian Company Seeks Boosting Technological Ties With Iran

A leading Brazilian industrial company called for boosting Iran and Brazil ties in technological fields. Representative of Ppepp Fios Esmaltados S.A Company said his company mulls expanding ties with Iran in technological fields.

Jaime Urgell Riera made the remarks on the sidelines of the Industrial Trade and Cooperation Seminar of Iran and Brazil in Esteghlal Hotel.

He described the seminar as a great opportunity for Brazilian businessmen to become familiar with the activities of other Iranian businessmen and companies.

The Ppepp Fios Esmaltados S.A Co. is a leading company in producing magnet wire and transport cables in Brazil.

The seminar opened in Tehran in the presence of Minister of Industries and Mines Ali Akbar Mehrabian and his Brazilian counterpart Miguel Jorge.

Several Iranian and Brazilian companies and investors conferred on various economic issues on the sidelines of the day-long event.

Poland Calls on Expanding Ties With Iran

The director of Poland Chamber of Commerce has announced his country's readiness to boost ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran in high-tech industries. "Dutch merchants and business people are keen to boost commercial ties with Iran's private sector," Aren Darski said.

Referring to the proper political ties between Iran and Poland, he said that "there is no ban on the way of expanding trade between the two countries."

He said that his country is fully ready to boost ties with Iran in high-tech industries and technical and engineering services.

The two sides also discussed ways of expanding bilateral ties in various fields including cement, bridge and road building, power station and agriculture.

Iran-Poland trade valued at \$51 million in 2009.

New Options Mulled For Gas Export to Europe

Managing director of the National Iranian Gas Export Company (NIGEC) said on Friday implementing the project for constructing the ninth nationwide gas pipeline depends on selection of the route for exporting natural gas to Europe while the Iraq-Syria-Italy route can compete efficiently with other routes studied so far. "So far six routes, including the Persian Pipeline and Nabucco have been examined for

transporting Iranian gas to Europe. Based on examinations of two European companies, the option of transporting gas via Iraq-Syria-Italy is advantageous compared to other options. Implementing this gas transport project depends on the results of negotiations with related countries. This is while any route which entails more benefits for the country will definitely be the final choice in this regard,” added Seyed Reza Kassaeizadeh, www.shana.ir reported.

The ninth nationwide gas pipeline will be constructed by the private sector. It is aimed at exporting gas to Turkey and Europe and compensating for shortage of gas in the western regions of the country. Some five billion dollars have been stipulated for building the 1,800km pipeline.

“The ninth pipeline project will be executed in two sections. One part will be implemented inside the country and ... various phases involved will be determined accordingly. For implementing the second section of the pipeline, which will be built from the border areas of the country toward Europe, we can designate a period of four to 10 years,” noted Kassaeizadeh.

Total Cooperation in South Pars
Regarding the latest conditions of Phase 11 of South Pars gas field and participation of the French giant Total in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) section of this phase, he noted, “The contract for implementing this project was concluded with a Chinese firm, as Total was merely wasting time. However, Total seeks to be present in the LNG section of Phase 11. The company intends to cooperate with the Chinese company that won the tender for the upstream sector of this phase for being present in the LNG section.”

Commenting on presence of Shell and Repsol companies for early development of phases 13 and 14 of South Pars gas field, Kassaeizadeh said, “National Iranian oil Company (NIOC) will follow up on negotiations for finalizing development of these phases and it is quite likely that the contract for these phases will be inked with the said companies in the near future.

Meanwhile, NIGEC is waiting for conclusion of contract for upstream sector of these phases with Shell and Repsol companies. As long as this does not happen, the activities of the midstream sector of phases 13 and 14, which pertains to constructing LNG units, will not commence.”

He also emphasized that the contract with Pakistan for export of gas which was inked last summer is among the most important activities of his company. He recalled that coming into effect of the contract included complicated and important additions, including the operational agreement for transit of gas from Pakistan to a third country.

“Based on the agreement reached with the Pakistani side, this contract will come into force by the end of April and both sides can adopt moves for constructing the pipeline. In the Iranian section of the Peace Pipeline the major portion of the job has been fulfilled and we are not worried about the rest of the project (the remaining 250km from Iranshahr to borders with Pakistan) either. If the conditions are suitable we may use foreign investments for the building the remaining portion of the pipeline,” he noted.

Social News

275 German Tourists Arrive in Bushehr Port

Christopher Columbus Ship stopped on Tuesday noon in the southern port of Bushehr and its 275 German tourists were welcomed by provincial officials of Tourism Organization. Head of Bushehr province Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization said that the German tourists visited city old area, old bazaar and the Anthropology Museum during their short stay in Bushehr.

Ahmad Dashti said that the visiting tourists started their journey from Singapore, then sailing to Thailand, Sri Lanka and Mumbai in India and arrived in Kish Island on Monday morning.

Iran's Police Seize 1000 Tons of Opium-Based Narcotics

Iran's anti-narcotic police squads have seized around 1,000 tons of various types of narcotics derived from opium during the last Iranian year (ended on March 20), a senior Iranian police commander announced on Tuesday.

"The Law Enforcement Police was able to discover and seize around 1,000 tons of opium-based narcotics during 1388 (March 20, 2009- March 20, 2010)," Iran's Police Chief Brigadier General Esmail Ahmadi Moqaddam said in a meeting with Turkey's high commissioner for drug campaign and organized crime Ahmet Pek.

He also announced that Iranian police forces discover and seize one-third of the drug cargos at the country's border lines.

Earlier on Monday, Commander of the anti-drug squad of Iran's Law Enforcement Police General Hamid Reza Hossein-Abadi had announced that the Iranian police have seized more than 557 tons of illicit drugs throughout the country in the last Iranian year.

He added that 214 smugglers have been killed and 34 police agents have been martyred in 1,717 heavy clashes.

The police official noted that 2,264 infamous drug bands have been arrested during the same period, and added that 214,684 traffickers have been handed over to judicial authorities.

Iran lies on a transit corridor between opium producing Afghanistan and drug dealers in Europe.

The Islamic Republic has emerged as the leading country fighting drug trafficking after having 85 percent of the world's total opium seizures

Commander Highlights Iran-Turkey Cooperation in Drug Campaign

A senior Iranian anti-narcotics official lauded the close cooperation between Iran and Turkey in fighting drug-trafficking, and said the two countries' police forces disbanded 15 drug cartels through joint cooperation last year.

"Drug trafficking and storing in Iran and Turkey is a very important issue and due to the same reason, the two countries are after common goals in the campaign against drugs, including confrontation against the source of drug production i.e. Afghanistan and confrontation against international drug-trafficking cartels," Commander of the anti-drug squad of Iran's Law Enforcement Police General Hamid Reza Hossein-Abadi told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting with Turkey's high commissioner for drug campaign and organized crime Ahmet Pek.

"During the last 2 years, effective steps have been taken in fighting narcotics and confronting huge drug-trafficking networks and gangs in cooperation with Turkey's police," the Iranian commander added.

Reminding that the two sides exchanged 108 police messages for identifying and disbanding drug-trafficking rings during the last meeting between the two countries' police officials, Hossein-Abadi stated, "Last year, 15 major drug-trafficking mafias were identified and disbanded through cooperation between Iran and Turkey's police forces."

During their meeting in Tehran, the two sides underlined further cooperation and interaction for fighting organized crimes and expansion of mutual cooperation in fighting drug-trafficking and terrorist groups.

Iran, S. Korea Discuss Expansion of Cultural Cooperation

Head of Iran's state-run TV Ezatollah Zarqami, who is in South Korea on an official visit, conferred with the East Asian state's cultural and media officials on cultural cooperation between the two countries.

Zarqami's visit to Seoul came at an invitation by his South Korean counterpart.

Speaking at a meeting with the head of South Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), Kim In-Kyu, Zarqami reminded the cultural commonalities between the two countries, and said that the two countries' state media could enjoy good cooperation.

Kim In-Kyu, for his part, underlined the significance of cooperation and exchange of technical experience for a better understanding of the two sides.

During the meeting, the Korean officials briefed Zarqami on program production in the KBS.

In a separate meeting with South Korean Minister of Culture, Tourism and Youth Yu In-Chon, Zarqami underscored the basic role of the media in promoting the culture and values of the nations.

Weekly report on Iran

The Korean official pointed to the excellent position of Iran in the fields of radio, TV and cinema, and welcomed expansion of media cooperation between the two countries.

The minister also reminded Iran's rich culture in producing thought, and said the issue makes exchanging information and experiences and media cooperation between Tehran and Seoul necessary.

Zarqami also attended meetings with other Korean officials, including the Head of South Korea's Cultural Promotion and Programming Center, Lee Ji-Wung.