

Business and Politics in the Muslim World

Weekly Report on Iran
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Summary

Political News

French Court Refuses Extradition of Iranian to U.S.

A French court on Wednesday turned down a U.S. request for the extradition of an Iranian engineer who is accused of violating an export embargo by purchasing U.S. technology for military firms involved in Iran's nuclear program. The United States says Majid Kakavand, 37, bought sensitive American electronics over the Internet and disguised that their final destination was Iran by routing them through Malaysia, where he had set up a front company.

Tehran, Islamabad to Support Peace, Stability in Afghanistan

Iran and Pakistan have agreed to coordinate their positions to support sustainable peace, stability and development in Afghanistan, within the Pakistan-Afghanistan- Iran trilateral framework. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Ameer Mansoor Borghei'e in a meeting with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Tuesday exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan, the Foreign Ministry said.

Ahmadinejad: Iran Does Not Accept Harsh, Illegal Words

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in an interview with US TV network "ABC" stressed that Iran does not accept hard and illegal words. He said the fact that certain countries which have atomic bombs want to stop Iran's peaceful nuclear program is against NPT and international laws and they cannot deprive Iran of its legitimate right by force and threat.

China, Russia to Discuss Iran

Amid a U.S.-led drive to impose fresh sanctions on Iran, two veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, China and Russia, will discuss Iran's nuclear issue. Chinese President Hu Jintao is set to hold talks with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin during a two-day visit to Moscow scheduled to take place on May 8.

Ahmadinejad: Another Resolution Closes Way to Iran-U.S. Ties

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says issuance of another resolution in the UN Security Council against Iran is equal to closure of Iran-US ties for ever. In an interview with U.S. daily "Boston Globe" on Tuesday, President Ahmadinejad also said that Iran is not worried about it.

Ahmadinejad, Chavez Converse over Phone

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez called President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is in New York, on Tuesday and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest. The two presidents' telephone conversation was mainly about Brazil's proposal on exchanging nuclear fuel.

University Students Call for Obama's Resignation

A large number of university students from all Iranian universities have called for the resignation of U.S. President Barack Obama in protest to his recent atomic threats against Iran. The call was made during a protest rally held by the students in front of the United Nations Office in Tehran.

Ahmadinejad: Iran Open to New Talks on Fuel Swap

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced at UN on Monday ball is in ground of those who should accept nuclear swap deal and cooperate. President Ahmadinejad's reference was to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's remarks, who had said in part of his opening address that Iran must accept the nuclear swap proposal now, adding that the ball is now at Iran's yard.

Mesbah Anti-Aircraft System Inaugurated

Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi opened the production line of Mesbah anti-aircraft system yesterday morning. Talking in the opening ceremony, he said the system was designed and programmed to confront air attacks, different kinds of aircraft, cruise missiles and helicopters as well as other air threats in low altitudes.

Official Strongly Dismisses Suspension of N. Activities

Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Undersecretary for International Affairs and Foreign Policy Ali Baqeri strongly rejected the possibility for suspending Iran's peaceful nuclear activities. "Suspension of nuclear activities has no place in our foreign relations and has never been an agenda for our political talks (with other countries)," Baqeri said Monday night, addressing a group of university students in the southwestern city of Ahwaz.

Iran Summons Afghan Charge D'Affaires

Foreign Ministry has summoned Afghanistan's charge d'affaires to Tehran over the irresponsible remarks made by some Afghan officials about Iran. The Foreign Ministry's West Asia director-general described the recent irresponsible statements made by some Afghan officials about Iran as suspicious.

Majlis to Opt for Ties with UK After Review

The deputy foreign minister for European affairs says Majlis will make a final decision on reducing ties with the UK after considering the opinions of the country's experts, organizations and power branches on the issue. Ali Ahani made the remarks while talking to IRNA and said the Parliament (Majlis) will opt for Iran's relations with other countries on the basis of mutual interests.

Spokesman Urges Arabs to Avoid Enemy Propaganda

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast has urged officials of the regional countries not to be influenced by enemies' propaganda. Answering a question over the UAE foreign minister's likening of Iran to 'Israel', Mehman-Parast said the Ministry had summoned the country's charge d'affaires and expressed its regrets over the statements.

Larijani: NATO Operation in Afghanistan Fruitless

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani says NATO forces' operations in Afghanistan would be fruitless and have no result except killings of people. In a joint meeting of the committee on national security and foreign policy with the ambassadors of European countries in Tehran on Monday, Larijani pointed to his talks with European officials and slammed NATO for talking with some terrorist groups secretly last years.

Top G15 Officials Confirm Tehran Trip

Indian Foreign Minister SM Krishna and Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammed Najib Abdul Razak have accepted Iran's invitation to attend a G15 Summit in Tehran. Krishna will also hold meetings with top Iranian officials on the sidelines of the Group of 15 Summit on May 17, Mehr New Agency reported.

Iran to Launch More Satellites in 2010

After signing an agreement to promote cooperation in the field of telecommunications, Iran and Russia prepare to launch two satellites in the coming year. Iran's Minister of Telecommunications Reza Taqipour visited Moscow late in April to ink a memorandum of understanding for broader telecoms cooperation with his Russian counterpart Igor Shchegolev.

Iran Needs Objective Assurances for N. Fuel Swap

Vice-President and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi said Tehran needs objective assurances from suppliers before it can embark on a nuclear fuel swap. "As regards the fuel swap, our conditions have remained unchanged, that is we give 3.5%-enriched uranium and receive 20%-enriched fuel," Salehi said on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting here in Tehran yesterday.

Fighter Jets with New Electronic Warfare Systems Unveiled

The Iranian Army's Air Force has recently equipped its fighter jets with newly-developed sophisticated electronic warfare systems, a senior Iranian army commander announced yesterday. Lieutenant Commander of the Iranian Air Force for Operations General Seyed Mohammad Alawi said in an interview with FNA that the newly upgraded fighters have been used during the ongoing massive wargames, codenamed Vellayat 89, in the Strait of Hormuz and northern Indian Ocean.

Economic News

Iran May Gasoline Imports Down 20%

Iran May gasoline imports were expected to drop by about 20 percent versus the previous month, as top independent traders and international oil firms cease sales to the Islamic republic, according to industry sources. European energy giant, Total of France, which continues to supply Tehran with gasoline was expected to ship up to 50 percent of Iran total purchases for May, traders said.

Minister: Venezuela Willing to Import Food, Agricultural Products from Iran

Venezuelan Minister of Nutrition Felix Osorio Guzman has announced his country's willingness to import food and agricultural products from Iran. In a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Caracas Abdolreza Mesri, Osorio pointed to Venezuela's plans to change the nutrition standards in the country, and criticized the western companies for their

destructive advertisements which have created an improper nutrition model for his country's people.

Petrochemical Exports Up

Imam Khomeini Port Petrochemical Complex output reached 319,000 tons in the first month of the Iranian year (started March 20, 2010), said the company's official. Hamid Vafaei said the products are exported to 14 Asian and European countries adding that propane, butane, pentane, ethylene, benzene were the main exported products, Moj News Agency wrote. "The complex exported its products to Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Qatar, Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore, India, Taiwan, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and France,"

Iran Pavilion Drawing Thousands At China Expo

Iran pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010 continues thrilling and wooing thousands of admirers from different countries worldwide daily, said the head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce. He added, "China Expo provides an opportunity for the country's economy to have a better prospect."

Islamabad Desires Boosting Economic Ties With Tehran

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani has expressed his government's desire to strengthen relations with Iran and to cement ties that will lead to concrete economic linkages through commerce and trade. Talking to Seyed Ameer Mansoor Borghei'e, deputy economic minister at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the Prime Minister's House on Monday, he said both countries had the capability of facing and resolving economic and security challenges bilaterally.

Iranian, Azeri Ministers Confer on Better Ties

Visiting Minister of Interior Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar conferred yesterday with Azeri Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev on ways to enhance economic cooperation. The two ministers focused on tourism and energy as the fields for economic cooperation.

Iran Set to Limit Ties With UAE

Iran has been outraged over comments by Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahayan. With Tehran still reeling from recent Emirati claims on three Persian Gulf islands, Iranian lawmakers move to reduce ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Europe Eager to Expand Economic Cooperation with Iran

A majority of the European countries are keen to develop economic relations and cooperation with Iran but political issues remain an obstacle in this way, an Iranian official said on Monday. "Europe's economy is seriously interested in the expansion of cooperation with Iran for different reasons, including energy security, but political obstacles have caused some problems," Head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines Mohammad Nahavandian said.

Iran, Pakistan Study Expansion of Economic Ties

Deputy Foreign Minister in economic affairs, Sayyed Mansour Borqei, accompanied with a high ranking delegation on Monday met and conferred with the Finance Advisor of the government of Pakistan, Hafiz Sheikh. Hafiz Sheikh called for expansion of economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran and activeness of Iran-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission, IRIB reported from Islamabad.

Biggest Middle East' Car Plant Opens in Kashan

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad yesterday opened what is being dubbed as the Middle East's biggest car plant set up by Iranian state-run automobile company Saipa. The plant, 'biggest' in the Middle East and located in the central city of Kashan, would manufacture 150,000 vehicles annually.

Iran, World's 18th Economic Power in 2009

Iran exported \$25.6 billion of non-oil goods last year, the Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs Seyyed Shamsoddin Hosseini announced yesterday. "In recent years, we made a remarkable leap in the field of investment and non-oil exports," he told a gathering titled "Threats to Exports and Investment and Proper Reaction to them."

14th Int'l Oil, Gas, Petrochem Seminar in Tehran

The 14th International Seminar on Oil, Gas and Petrochemical focusing on the application of modern technologies in the oil industry will be held here from May 19-20. Announcing this, secretary of the event, Baqer Mohajerani yesterday told a news conference on the programs of the event that four committees titled upstream, downstream, energy and environment and management of technology have been formed to review the articles submitted to the secretariat of the seminar.

Iran, Belarus Ink Agreement on Auto Making

Iran will launch the second phase of the production line for its national car brand, Samand, in Belarus. The decision was made based on two Memoranda of Understanding which were inked between Industries Ministers of Iran and Belarus.

Social News

Iranian Photographer's Images Used in the Book by American Writer

Several black and white photos by Iranian Ahmad Motalaei will appear in the third edition of the American book "Images that Injure Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media." Mehr News Agency reported. The book by editors Paul Martin Lester and Susan Ross will be published by Praeger early next year in 2011 and will contain Motalaei's photos featuring Iranian culture.

Swiss Ambassador Confers with Iranian Human Rights Official

Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Livia Leu Agosti has held talks with Secretary General of the Judiciary's Human Rights Headquarters Mohammad Javad Larijani on human rights. Larijani said that Tehran is ready to give response to western allegations about human rights violations in Iran.

Tehran Opens 23rd Int'l Book Fair

The 23rd Tehran International Book Fair was inaugurated on Tuesday evening by Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Rahimi. In the augural speech, the vice-president said the government intends to form a specialized group in the book category which will play an important role in publishing and distributing books.

Shahnameh of Baysunqur on Display at Tehran's Golestan Palace

The Shahnameh of Baysunqur, one of three ancient copies of Ferdowsi's epic masterpiece is put on display at Tehran's Golestan Palace. The document is kept in the library of Golestan Palace. The masterpiece was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list in 2007.

European Diplomats Praise Iran's Drug Fight

Lawmaker Kazem Jalali has outlined the details of the meeting between the members of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee and the European ambassadors in Tehran held yesterday. Envoys from 26 European states including Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and England met with MPs Alaeddin Boroujerdi, Kazem Jalali, Esmail Kosari, Zohreh Elahian, Hossein Sobhaninia and Mohammad Karamirad.

Political News

French Court Refuses Extradition of Iranian to U.S.

A French court on Wednesday turned down a U.S. request for the extradition of an Iranian engineer who is accused of violating an export embargo by purchasing U.S. technology for military firms involved in Iran's nuclear program.

The United States says Majid Kakavand, 37, bought sensitive American electronics over the Internet and disguised that their final destination was Iran by routing them through Malaysia, where he had set up a front company.

Kakavand's case and several others have showcased how the United States is doggedly going after people accused of procuring technology or weapons for Iran's military, in many cases seeking help from foreign countries.

Yet the court's ruling shows that such cooperation is not simple. Kakavand's case has dragged on for 14 months since his arrest as officials tried to determine if his business dealings violated French law as well as U.S. law. The court could not hand him over merely for breaking U.S. laws that have no counterpart in France.

The case has sensitive diplomatic implications in three countries — especially in France, which has taken a tough stance on Iran's nuclear ambitions but nonetheless has business and oil interests there. Another source of diplomatic tension is the case of a young French academic in Iran who pleaded innocent to spying charges at a mass trial.

The court did not immediately release its reasoning.

A state prosecutor had opposed the U.S. request, contesting the basic claim that products Kakavand bought could be used for military purposes.

The court had based its opinion on a report from France's General Directorate for Armaments. It said the technologies in question, including capacitors, inductors, resistors,

sensors and connectors, were not considered "dual use" items having both commercial and military applications.

Tehran, Islamabad to Support Peace, Stability in Afghanistan

Iran and Pakistan have agreed to coordinate their positions to support sustainable peace, stability and development in Afghanistan, within the Pakistan-Afghanistan- Iran trilateral framework.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Seyed Ameer Mansoor Borghei'e in a meeting with Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Tuesday exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan, the Foreign Ministry said.

They reaffirmed their support to the process of national reconciliation and reintegration initiated by President Hamid Karzai, the Ministry said in a statement.

The two sides exchanged views on matters of mutual interest, with special emphasis on economic cooperation between the two countries, it said.

They expressed satisfaction at the increase in the volume of bilateral trade which crossed 1.2 billion U.S. dollars during the last financial year.

They particularly appreciated the progress achieved in energy projects, especially the signing of agreements for the Iran- Pakistan gas pipeline project.

The two sides reiterated their resolve to expedite its implementation. The two sides agreed to hold regular consultations to review progress in bilateral cooperation.

The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister also held bilateral talks with Pakistan Foreign Secretary, where the entire gamut of bilateral relations came under discussion

Ahmadinejad: Iran Does Not Accept Harsh, Illegal Words

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in an interview with US TV network " ABC" stressed that Iran does not accept hard and illegal words.

He said the fact that certain countries which have atomic bombs want to stop Iran's peaceful nuclear program is against NPT and international laws and they cannot deprive Iran of its legitimate right by force and threat.

Replying to a question concerning stances of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Ahmadinejad said her stances and efforts are in direction of denying Iran's right and this is quite clear and needs no interpretation.

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"Do you think that Mrs. Clinton is a friend of Iran?" President Ahmadinejad asked the ABC's reporter, adding that he believes there is a difference between President Obama and Mrs. Clinton.

"We are friends of the US nation, but when a country with 10,000 bombs in its arsenal is trying to place pressures on others and even on International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), then we are against it."

Ahmadinejad continued that Mrs. Clinton is eager to direct Iran-US relations into a conflicting point, but upon our information, President Obama does not have such an opinion.

Time for such threats has gone and it would be beneficial for them to behave with Iranians upon law, friendship and justice, said Ahmadinejad.

Iranian president added according to NPT, those countries which own atomic weapons must be disarmed and according to the article 4 of the treaty, all members are obliged to give enrichment technology and necessary materials to other members without condition and there is no reason to prevent enrichment and this is the exact text of the NPT and political pressures have no place.

He said, "We are against the existing unjust order and we believe the roots of these conflicts are in such unjust order."

"Now most of the world countries agree with us. Those which are permanent members of the Security Council and have the right of veto are imposing their views on IAEA."

He asked why after 60 years disarmament has not been fulfilled? Which one is more dangerous? Countries with thousands of atomic bombs or a country which you say might access to atomic bomb in the future?

China, Russia to Discuss Iran

Amid a U.S.-led drive to impose fresh sanctions on Iran, two veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, China and Russia, will discuss Iran's nuclear issue.

Chinese President Hu Jintao is set to hold talks with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin during a two-day visit to Moscow scheduled to take place on May 8.

"The leaders of the two countries will exchange views on international and regional issues of shared interest, which of course includes the Iranian nuclear issue," Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Cheng Guoping said.

"China and Russia have similar views on this issue," he explained.

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The discussions come as Russia has remained vague on its stance on the Iranian nuclear row, shifting from support for Tehran's civilian nuclear program to veiled cautions that it may join ship with the US for more sanctions.

Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov stressed last week that the Kremlin would never support the use of force against Iran as it would entail catastrophic consequences for Europe along with "the Middle East, Near East, Central Asia, and the Caucasus region."

However, Lavrov also showed the strongest signal yet of support for the US-pursued sanctions against Iran and warned Tehran that passing the measure could become "inevitable."

China, one of the five permanent veto holders of the 15-member Security Council, has been reluctant to slap tougher sanctions on Iran and has urged diplomacy for finding a solution to the nuclear deadlock.

Ahmadinejad: Another Resolution Closes Way to Iran-U.S. Ties

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says issuance of another resolution in the UN Security Council against Iran is equal to closure of Iran-US ties for ever.

In an interview with U.S. daily "Boston Globe" on Tuesday, President Ahmadinejad also said that Iran is not worried about it.

He said the second meaning of approving a new resolution against Iran would be that no changes had occurred in the USA and it would be the end of President Barack Obama's era.

He added that end of Obama's era means the end of U.S. historic opportunity to recover its reputation in the world.

Answering a question concerning Israel' threat against Iran, Ahmadinejad said that nobody can attack Iran.

"You do not know Iran. Iran is a big country and in our military doctrine, the Zionist regime has no position."

President Ahmadinejad continued that President Obama came to power with the motto of change and with the aim of recovering US reputation in the world, but no changes have occurred in significant issues; the basic issues should change. Issues which can alter US reputation in the world are Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan as well as Washington plans for confronting Iran.

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He said if President Obama could change ties with Iran, other issues would be improved too, but there are people inside the U.S. and also a number of UN Security Council members who are pushing Obama toward taking a harsh decision against Iran.

Concerning relations between U.S. and Iran, he said that in case of fair conditions with respect for us, we will be for recovering relations.

"We sent them good indications for recovering ties, but the response was not appropriate."

About nuclear fuel swap, Ahmadinejad said that for reaching an agreement, they can prepare 50 percent of the needed fuel and we deliver 50 percent of low enriched fuel to the IAEA and then we are all ready for exchange of the total amount.

President Ahmadinejad said Iran needs 100 kilograms of 20 percent enriched fuel and we are producing this amount now, but for confidence building, we are ready to do this swap.

Ahmadinejad, Chavez Converse over Phone

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez called President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is in New York, on Tuesday and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest.

The two presidents' telephone conversation was mainly about Brazil's proposal on exchanging nuclear fuel.

President Ahmadinejad has announced his agreement in principle on Brazilian President Lula Da Silva's proposal and has called for continuation of talks on technical issues in Tehran.

President Chavez told Ahmadinejad that Venezuela supports his stances on international issues

University Students Call for Obama's Resignation

A large number of university students from all Iranian universities have called for the resignation of U.S. President Barack Obama in protest to his recent atomic threats against Iran.

The call was made during a protest rally held by the students in front of the United Nations Office in Tehran.

Chanting slogans in support of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the protestors also criticized the silence of the international organizations such as the United Nations and its Security Council on the US president's blatant threats against Iran.

The protestors carried banners reading “U.S., world’s only atomic suspect,” “Nuclear energy for all, Nuclear weapon for no one,” and “So-called human rights advocates threaten by atomic weapons.”

They also called on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, in other banners written in English and Arabic languages, to give a “crushing response” to U.S. nuclear threats against other countries.

Ahmadinejad: Iran Open to New Talks on Fuel Swap

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced at UN on Monday ball is in ground of those who should accept nuclear swap deal and cooperate.

President Ahmadinejad’s reference was to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon’s remarks, who had said in part of his opening address that Iran must accept the nuclear swap proposal now, adding that the ball is now at Iran’s yard.

President Ahmadinejad said, “We had accepted the fuel swap deal from the very beginning, and that is what we are saying today, as well” adding, “The ball, therefore, is shot into the yard of those who should accept the deal and cooperate in this field.”

After those remarks President Ahamdinejad began his main address, during which the entire audiences in the hall were silently listening.”

Meanwhile Ban Ki-Moon repeating some western countries’ accusations, said here at NPT conference, “I hereby ask Iran to accept the nuclear swap deal.”

Opining that the ball is in Iran’s yard now, he said, “The Western countries have proposed their deal and it is now Iran that should accept it.”

Ban added, “Let me state quite clearly, it is Iran’s duty to end the hesitations and the worries regarding its nuclear program.

Mesbah Anti-Aircraft System Inaugurated

Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi opened the production line of Mesbah anti-aircraft system yesterday morning.

Talking in the opening ceremony, he said the system was designed and programmed to confront air attacks, different kinds of aircraft, cruise missiles and helicopters as well as other air threats in low altitudes.

He said enhanced capability in destroying air threats, reduced number of the crew needed, prompt reaction to threats, higher fire power and increased targeting accuracy are some of the important attributes of the system.

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He also noted that the system made use of 3-d searching radar and optical devices which would recognize friendly planes from those of the enemy, and provide the fire-control system with information as to direction and altitude of the target.

The minister stressed that the launching of the system which was also capable of destroying drones was another proof of the high capabilities of Iranian experts.

Official Strongly Dismisses Suspension of N. Activities

Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Undersecretary for International Affairs and Foreign Policy Ali Baqeri strongly rejected the possibility for suspending Iran's peaceful nuclear activities.

"Suspension of nuclear activities has no place in our foreign relations and has never been an agenda for our political talks (with other countries)," Baqeri said Monday night, addressing a group of university students in the southwestern city of Ahwaz.

He underlined that adoption of a proactive approach is the best possible way to deter enemy threats, adding that firm and active positions would also bring honor and success for the country.

Iran Summons Afghan Charge D'Affaires

Foreign Ministry has summoned Afghanistan's charge d'affaires to Tehran over the irresponsible remarks made by some Afghan officials about Iran.

The Foreign Ministry's West Asia director-general described the recent irresponsible statements made by some Afghan officials about Iran as suspicious.

Seyd Masoum Badakhsh, the Afghan charge d'affaires, expressed regret over the incident and said that he would notify his government of Tehran's displeasure.

Some Afghan newspapers launched a propaganda campaign against the Islamic Republic by covering baseless reports about the alleged "mistreatment" of Afghan refugees residing in the country.

There are nearly one million UN-registered Afghan refugees in Iran, with another million estimated to be unregistered. Iran and Afghanistan share a 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) border.

Iran has provided more than 350 million dollars in aid to Afghanistan since the removal of the Taliban from power in 2001.

The Afghan charge d'affaires was summoned due to the absence of Afghanistan's ambassador in Iran.

Majlis to Opt for Ties with UK After Review

The deputy foreign minister for European affairs says Majlis will make a final decision on reducing ties with the UK after considering the opinions of the country's experts, organizations and power branches on the issue.

Ali Ahani made the remarks while talking to IRNA and said the Parliament (Majlis) will opt for Iran's relations with other countries on the basis of mutual interests.

Majlis will give priority to the national interest if it takes any decision about the country's cooperation with the UK.

Spokesman Urges Arabs to Avoid Enemy Propaganda

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast has urged officials of the regional countries not to be influenced by enemies' propaganda.

Answering a question over the UAE foreign minister's likening of Iran to 'Israel', Mehman-Parast said the Ministry had summoned the country's charge d'affaires and expressed its regrets over the statements.

Over Kuwaiti daily's claim that an IRGC's spy network was discovered in Kuwait, Mehman-Parast urged regional media to cover news with more responsibility.

He said the media should not cover baseless news because expansion of ties with Islamic countries will secure interests of these countries.

He also rejected baseless remarks by some of Kuwaiti parliament's representatives and said false propaganda in the region sometimes affect figures and media in the region and they should act with more responsibility.

Elsewhere in the press briefing, Mehman-Parast urged Western states to give a reasonable answer to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's remarks at the NPT review conference in New York.

He referred to Ahmadinejad's address to the UN Non-Proliferation review conference in New York as "honest," "transparent" and "logical."

In his address to the UN meeting, President Ahmadinejad criticized nuclear-weapon-states for using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states.

"It is normal that countries accused of possessing nuclear weapons and using them to threaten other nations become unhappy with the president's remarks," Mehman-Parast said.

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He added that President Ahmadinejad's speech was indeed "a combination of the views of all independent and free states of the world."

"This is the demand of all world nations that a mechanism be set up for the NPT which would include all necessary grounds for every nation to use nuclear energy peacefully," said the spokesman.

He urged Western states to increase their tolerance and "give reasonable answers to reasonable statements."

Mehman-Parast also pointed to the international conference on fighting terrorism late August.

The conference will coincide with the martyrdom anniversary of former Iranian President Mohammad-Ali Rajaei and his Prime Minister Mohammad-Javad Bahonar who were killed during a terrorist bomb attack in 1981.

He said the conference will provide an opportunity for all organizations and countries who are frankly working on anti-terrorism issues to explore the topic from its different perspectives.

He also noted that the meeting will focus on the dangers and threats being posed to the global and regional security in a bid to provide practical guides to launch a real campaign against terrorism in the world.

Mehman-Parast further said such international gatherings will be apt opportunities for all to work out ways to fight international terrorism.

Larijani: NATO Operation in Afghanistan Fruitless

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani says NATO forces' operations in Afghanistan would be fruitless and have no result except killings of people.

In a joint meeting of the committee on national security and foreign policy with the ambassadors of European countries in Tehran on Monday, Larijani pointed to his talks with European officials and slammed NATO for talking with some terrorist groups secretly last years.

Parliament Speaker said preserving security of the region needs more accurate mechanism and it is doubtful that a permanent security would be established through occupation of some countries.

He added that "if we adopt a realistic approach, the issue of campaign against terrorism could be a ground for talks between Iran and Europe."

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Larijani reiterated that some European countries made mistakes over Iran because of their false understanding, adding that talks should be continued to reach an understanding.

Larijani said there was also some false information over Iran's nuclear program.

Top G15 Officials Confirm Tehran Trip

Indian Foreign Minister SM Krishna and Malaysian Prime Minister Mohammed Najib Abdul Razak have accepted Iran's invitation to attend a G15 Summit in Tehran.

Krishna will also hold meetings with top Iranian officials on the sidelines of the Group of 15 Summit on May 17, Mehr New Agency reported.

The summit brings together high-ranking officials from 18 developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

During his recent tour of Africa, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki invited Senegal President Abdoulaye Wade and Algerian head of state Abdelaziz Bouteflika to attend the summit.

Mottaki also noted at a joint press conference with his visiting Brazilian counterpart last week that President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva would also attend this month's summit. The office of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has also confirmed the leader's attendance at the meeting.

The membership of the G15 has expanded to 18 countries, but the name has remained unchanged.

Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Jamaica, Mexico, Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Zimbabwe, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Iran are members of the group.

Iran to Launch More Satellites in 2010

After signing an agreement to promote cooperation in the field of telecommunications, Iran and Russia prepare to launch two satellites in the coming year.

Iran's Minister of Telecommunications Reza Taqipour visited Moscow late in April to ink a memorandum of understanding for broader telecoms cooperation with his Russian counterpart Igor Shchegolev.

Mohammad Hosseinpour, a senior advisor to Taqipour, told the Mehr News Agency on Monday that if everything went according to the plan, the two telecommunications satellites would be launched by year's end.

The new satellites, which are designed and produced to decrease telecom traffic between Russia and Europe, will be equipped with filming applications and data-image transmission sensors.

After launching its first home-produced satellite, named Omid (Hope), in February last year, Tehran has unveiled three new satellites and a satellite carrier, Tolou, Mesbah II and Navid respectively.

Iran is one of the 24 founding members of the United Nations' Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNCOPUOS), which was set up in 1959.

Iran Needs Objective Assurances for N. Fuel Swap

Vice-President and Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi said Tehran needs objective assurances from suppliers before it can embark on a nuclear fuel swap.

"As regards the fuel swap, our conditions have remained unchanged, that is we give 3.5%-enriched uranium and receive 20%-enriched fuel," Salehi said on the sidelines of a cabinet meeting here in Tehran yesterday.

He also said that western suppliers sought to impose a series of conditions on Tehran, although Iran has not accepted such demands.

"And receiving objective assurances has been our condition" for the nuclear fuel swap," the nuclear official added.

Asked about Iran's fresh proposals for supplying nuclear fuel for its Tehran research reactor, Salehi mentioned, "Different countries have raised some proposals and we are currently studying these proposals. We plan to discuss their details in our talks with the countries (that have offered them)."

"Our intention of swapping nuclear fuel is preparing a ground for the western countries which are seeking to get out of this issue with a good face but after we receive objective assurances," he stressed.

Fighter Jets with New Electronic Warfare Systems Unveiled

The Iranian Army's Air Force has recently equipped its fighter jets with newly-developed sophisticated electronic warfare systems, a senior Iranian army commander announced yesterday.

Lieutenant Commander of the Iranian Air Force for Operations General Seyed Mohammad Alawi said in an interview with FNA that the newly upgraded fighters have been used during the ongoing massive wargames, codenamed Vellayat 89, in the Strait of Hormuz and northern Indian Ocean.

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"This system (electronic warfare) has recently been designed and manufactured by the self-sufficiency Jihad (department) of the Iranian Air Force and it has demonstrated acceptable performance," he added.

General Alawi also said that Iran-made Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) used in the different stages of the war-games have shown a satisfactory performance.

He also said that the Iranian army has exercised electronic eavesdropping by a special type of aircraft and also used sea patrol airplanes during the ongoing war-games.

The Iranian Army started the six-staged war-games last Wednesday. The exercises will last for 8 days.

According to Iranian army officials, the main message of Vellayat 89 war-games is security, peace and friendship for the neighboring countries

Economic News

Iran May Gasoline Imports Down 20%

Iran May gasoline imports were expected to drop by about 20 percent versus the previous month, as top independent traders and international oil firms cease sales to the Islamic republic, according to industry sources.

European energy giant, Total of France, which continues to supply Tehran with gasoline was expected to ship up to 50 percent of Iran total purchases for May, traders said.

Iran was expected to import around 102,300 barrels per day (bpd) of gasoline from the spot market this month, or about 12 cargoes, traders said.

Last month, senior management at Russia's No.2 oil company, LUKOIL, gave verbal direction instructing traders involved in gasoline sales to Iran to cease business activity with Tehran.

Malaysia's state oil company, which had been a key supplier of gasoline to Iran in the fourth-quarter of 2009, and the first few months of 2010, told Reuters it had ceased sales to the world's fifth-largest oil exporter.

Total's chief executive Christophe de Margerie said in April that if the U.S. passed its legislation targeting companies selling the motor fuel to Iran, it would cease doing business with it.

Last month state-run ChinaOil sold two gasoline cargoes to Iran, the first known direct sales to the OPEC-member.

Previously sales from China were mostly done via third-party companies.

Minister: Venezuela Willing to Import Food, Agricultural Products from Iran

Venezuelan Minister of Nutrition Felix Osorio Guzman has announced his country's willingness to import food and agricultural products from Iran.

In a meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Caracas Abdolreza Mesri, Osorio pointed to Venezuela's plans to change the nutrition standards in the country, and criticized the western companies for their destructive advertisements which have created an improper nutrition model for his country's people.

"We are resolved to use less American food products and we try to supply our needs to foodstuffs from friendly countries," he said.

Mesri, for his part, referred to Iran's capabilities and rich experience in producing food and agricultural products, and declared Tehran' preparedness to provide Venezuela with its needs and also transfer food industries technology to the Latin American nation.

Iran has moved to expand ties with Latin America in recent years and it has worked out an eye-catching number of economic, political and cultural agreements on mutual cooperation with what was formerly known as the U.S. backyard. The move by Tehran which gained a much faster momentum under President Ahmadinejad has raised eyebrows in Washington.

Venezuelan Ambassador to Tehran had announced in December that over 300 agreements and contracts as well as 80 special projects have recently come into effect between the two countries.

Petrochemical Exports Up

Imam Khomeini Port Petrochemical Complex output reached 319,000 tons in the first month of the Iranian year (started March 20, 2010), said the company's official. Hamid Vafaei said the products are exported to 14 Asian and European countries adding that propane, butane, pentane, ethylene, benzene were the main exported products, Moj News Agency wrote.

"The complex exported its products to Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Qatar, Japan, China, South Korea, Singapore, India, Taiwan, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium and France," he added.

Imam Khomeini Petrochemical Complex is located on the northwest coast of Persian Gulf. This location has been chosen due to its easy access to feed stokes, the main national roads, railroad network, as well as international waterway. In the early seventies, National Petrochemical Company (NPC) of Iran and a consortium of Japanese firms signed a joint venture agreement to construct this giant petrochemical complex, under the name of Iran-Japan Petrochemical Company. Exports from Tabriz Petrochemical Company rose by 67 percent in the first month of

new Iranian year (started March 20) in comparison to the same period a year ago. IRIB quoted the company's Managing Director Azim Abdolnejad Mamaqani as saying that the company exported 5,000 tons of polymer products worth \$6.5 million in the mentioned period of time. He added that Turkey, Switzerland and Australia were the main export destinations. The company produces about 750,000 tons of polymer products annually. According to statistics released by National Iranian Petrochemical Company, petrochemical production reached 26.5 million tons in the 2008-09, up 69 percent over 2005 and around 17% percent up on the previous year.

Iran Pavilion Drawing Thousands At China Expo

Iran pavilion at Shanghai Expo 2010 continues thrilling and wooing thousands of admirers from different countries worldwide daily, said the head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce.

He added, "China Expo provides an opportunity for the country's economy to have a better prospect."

Pointing to the active presence of Iran in the show, Ale-Es'haq said such exhibitions can pave the way for a stronger cooperation with international economy, Mehr News Agency reported.

It is a place where Iran can showcase its technology and innovations, he said, adding it would form the basis for negotiations on joining World Trade Organization (WTO), the body that regulates global commerce. Iran is one of the largest economies outside the WTO, along with Russia, Kazakhstan, Iraq and Algeria.

The 2010 World Expo opened on May 1 in Shanghai. Almost 250 countries and international organizations are showcasing their culture in the 6-month event themed "Better City, Better Life".

The Iranian pavilion has so far proven very popular with Chinese visitors, who have not had the chance to visit the country or learn about its culture. Iran and China share a long history together. Having first been connected via the Silk Road, the two countries have continued as trade partners for nearly 2,200 years. The current bilateral trade between the two countries is dominated by Iran's energy exports, while the main Chinese exports to Iran include machinery, equipment, textiles and consuming goods.

After the Beijing Olympics, this is the next great Chinese spectacular. The whole world has been invited to Shanghai to be amazed at the scale of what modern China has to offer. The fact that China has largely succeeded in steering clear of the worst effects of the global financial crisis, and that credit is still flowing like water there, is likely to make the show even more impressive.

Islamabad Desires Boosting Economic Ties With Tehran

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani has expressed his government's desire to strengthen relations with Iran and to cement ties that will lead to concrete economic linkages through commerce and trade.

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Talking to Seyed Ameer Mansoor Borghei'e, deputy economic minister at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at the Prime Minister's House on Monday, he said both countries had the capability of facing and resolving economic and security challenges bilaterally.

Later, speaking at the National Conference that marked the World Intellectual Property Day, Gilani said the government would strengthen and implement laws to protect intellectual property and curb counterfeiting and piracy. "The government loses enormous revenue from not being able to collect appropriate taxes from legitimate market players, who lose earnings to counterfeiters selling their goods in the black market," he said

Iranian, Azeri Ministers Confer on Better Ties

Visiting Minister of Interior Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar conferred yesterday with Azeri Economic Development Minister Shahin Mustafayev on ways to enhance economic cooperation.

The two ministers focused on tourism and energy as the fields for economic cooperation.

The interior minister called for removal of obstacles in the way of Tehran-Baku cooperation in transport and commerce.

Meanwhile, the Azeri minister appreciated the Islamic Republic of Iran for its support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

The two countries have already signed almost 80 agreements on economic cooperation, Mustafayev said adding the grounds are well-prepared for promotion of ties.

The minister arrived in Baku, Azerbaijan, on April 3 for talks on the issues of mutual interest.

He has held separate talks with the Azeri president, his counterpart in that country and minister of emergency situations so far.

Mohammad-Najjar was due to meet with Azerbaijan's minister of defense later in the day.

Iran Set to Limit Ties With UAE

Iran has been outraged over comments by Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahayan.

With Tehran still reeling from recent Emirati claims on three Persian Gulf islands, Iranian lawmakers move to reduce ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Weekly report on Iran

Last week, Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahayan raised hackles in Tehran when he likened Iran's ownership of the three Persian Gulf islands to Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory.

He outraged Iranian officials even further when he repeated the claims on Sunday and urged Tehran to, once and for all, end the "occupation" of the three islands of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa.

In the wake of these controversial remarks, the Iranian Parliament (Majlis) has instituted measures to lower the level of relations between Iran and the tiny Arab sheikhdom.

Zohreh Elahian, a member of the Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, said Monday that the country's "quick and severe" response to Sheikh Abdullah is probably not enough to teach UAE officials a lesson.

"Tehran's reaction to the outrageous claims was appropriate and well-suited, but it does not change the fact that some serious...rethinking needs to be done...to prevent such provocative behavior [recurring] in the future," she continued.

Elahian said the Parliament will convene later this week to hand down a final decision on limiting ties with the UAE.

"Iran is the UAE's number one trade partner in the region and persistence on baseless claims by Emirati officials will come at their own expense," she noted.

The three Persian Gulf islands in question have long been owned by Iran, proof of which can be found and corroborated independently of each other in countless historical, legal and geographical documents in Tehran and other parts of the world.

Europe Eager to Expand Economic Cooperation with Iran

A majority of the European countries are keen to develop economic relations and cooperation with Iran but political issues remain an obstacle in this way, an Iranian official said on Monday.

"Europe's economy is seriously interested in the expansion of cooperation with Iran for different reasons, including energy security, but political obstacles have caused some problems," Head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines Mohammad Nahavandian said.

He further pointed out that establishment of relations between Iran and world economies through the chambers of different countries plays a key role in the expansion of Tehran's ties with the European states.

Nahavandian also reminded that after the global economic meltdown and despite political pressures, European companies maintained and expanded their ties with Iran.

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At present Iran's Chamber of Commerce has developed relations with 40 chambers and joint councils with different world countries.

Earlier in February, Nahavandian called sanctions against Tehran useless, reminding that Iran is increasing trade with non-western countries, including Asian and regional countries to confront West's sanctions.

"It has been proven that Iranian economy cannot be sanctioned...the stated goal of sanctions is political, which has never been achieved," he said.

"Yes, there have been some economic costs involved. Yes, the transaction costs go up ... but the trade will not stop and has not been stopped," Nahavandian added.

"Sanctions increase the economic costs not only on those under sanction but also on sanctioners too," Nahavandian stated.

Iran, which sits on the world's second largest reserves of both oil and gas, is facing U.S. sanctions over its civilian nuclear program.

Iranian officials have dismissed U.S. sanctions as inefficient, saying that they are finding Asian partners instead. Several Chinese and other Asian firms are negotiating or signing up to oil and gas deals.

Following U.S. pressures on companies to stop business with Tehran, many western companies decided to do a balancing act. They tried to maintain their presence in Iran, which is rich in oil and gas, but not getting into big deals that could endanger their interests in the U.S.

Yet, after oil giants in the West witnessed that their absence in big deals has provided Chinese, Indian and Russian companies with excellent opportunities to sign up to an increasing number of energy projects and earn billions of dollars, they started showing increasing interest to invest or expand work in Iran.

Iran, Pakistan Study Expansion of Economic Ties

Deputy Foreign Minister in economic affairs, Sayyed Mansour Borqei, accompanied with a high ranking delegation on Monday met and conferred with the Finance Advisor of the government of Pakistan, Hafiz Sheikh.

Hafiz Sheikh called for expansion of economic cooperation with the Islamic Republic of Iran and activeness of Iran-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission, IRIB reported from Islamabad.

He also underlined for joint economy investment between the two countries in different fields.

Sayyed Mansour Borqei, for his part, pointed to the special priority of the Islamic Republic of Iran in expansion of relation with Pakistan and called for more trade transaction between Tehran and Islamabad.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran is eager to expand the volume of trade and economy transactions with Pakistan," He asserted.

The two sides studied the articles of the 17th joint economic commission and talked about the date of holding the 18th joint economic commission between the two countries.

Biggest Middle East” Car Plant Opens in Kashan

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad yesterday opened what is being dubbed as the Middle East’s biggest car plant set up by Iranian state-run automobile company Saipa.

The plant, ‘biggest’ in the Middle East and located in the central city of Kashan, would manufacture 150,000 vehicles annually.

The facility, built at a cost of around 350 million dollars, would on full production offer direct employment to 4,000 people and launch a slew of locally designed sedans and small cars, called the Tiba (Deer).

Tiba, marketed as entirely domestically built, was unveiled by Ahmadinejad yesterday and is priced between 8,000 to 9,000 dollars, mainly targeting the lower middle-class buyers.

Ahmadinejad in his speech said the convoy of Iranian progress is moving at high speed as it was repeatedly admitted even by centers affiliated to big powers.

The president said circles belonging to big foreign powers have repeatedly acknowledged that Iran is among the very few countries which are increasingly making different progresses.

“Enemies are to halt Iranians and take their self-reliance by cultural invasion,” said the president.

He added that the colonial powers were afraid of other nations' self-reliance and that was why they tried to halt the Iranian people’s move towards development and progress.

“Iranians have proved that they could survive and continue their lives without others’ help despite all sanctions imposed on the country for its peaceful nuclear activities.

“Iran must change into one of the world’s producers of auto-making factories and this is possible,” the president stressed.

“Witnessing Iran’s progress would make other nations feel happy and encouraged,” President Ahmadinejad said, referring to the key role of Iran among other nations.

“This is the first Iranian vehicle with Iranian characteristics as it is designed and manufactured by Iranians,’ the president added.

‘Tiba is the symbol of our confidence in ourselves ... The Iranian nation has shown that despite sanctions and pressures from enemies, we have have resisted and have progressed.’

Iran is the largest automobile manufacturer in the Middle East with more than 1.4 million vehicles produced last year.

Following the official inauguration of the factory, the President and his entourage inspected different sections of the plant.

Iran, World's 18th Economic Power in 2009

Iran exported \$25.6 billion of non-oil goods last year, the Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs Seyyed Shamsoddin Hosseini announced yesterday.

"In recent years, we made a remarkable leap in the field of investment and non-oil exports," he told a gathering titled "Threats to Exports and Investment and Proper Reaction to them."

"According to world statistics, Iran was identified as the world's 18th economic power in 2009," the Minister said.

"Foreign investment reached \$2.74 billion last year which shows a remarkable growth," Hosseini added.

14th Int'l Oil, Gas, Petrochem Seminar in Tehran

The 14th International Seminar on Oil, Gas and Petrochemical focusing on the application of modern technologies in the oil industry will be held here from May 19-20.

Announcing this, secretary of the event, Baqer Mohajerani yesterday told a news conference on the programs of the event that four committees titled upstream, downstream, energy and environment and management of technology have been formed to review the articles submitted to the secretariat of the seminar.

An exhibition covering in an area of 1,000 square meters will be organized on the sidelines of the event with the participation of Iranian and foreign companies, he said.

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Representatives from Russia, Canada, Holland, Austria, France, Kuwait, the U.S., Germany, Poland, Britain, South Korea, UAE and Belgium will participate in the seminar, he noted.

One of the objectives of the seminar is to mark the 50th founding anniversary of the Oil Industry Research Center, Mohajerani said, noting that research activities began at a laboratory in Tehran University in 1959.

Iran, Belarus Ink Agreement on Auto Making

Iran will launch the second phase of the production line for its national car brand, Samand, in Belarus.

The decision was made based on two Memoranda of Understanding which were inked between Industries Ministers of Iran and Belarus.

Managing Director of Iran's auto giant, Iran Khodro, which produces Samand, told IRIB in Minsk that according to the MoUs a painting section will soon be launched in the factory.

He added the project will be completed in 555 days.

Javad Najmeddin also said the agreement has the support of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

The project, expected to increase the company's annual production to 30 thousand vehicles, aims to expand markets for Samand in Belarus and the region

Social News

Iranian Photographer's Images Used in the Book by American Writer

Several black and white photos by Iranian Ahmad Motalaei will appear in the third edition of the American book "Images that Injure Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media." Mehr News Agency reported.

The book by editors Paul Martin Lester and Susan Ross will be published by Praeger early next year in 2011 and will contain Motalaei's photos featuring Iranian culture.

"As the editor of the third edition of 'Images that Injure Pictorial Stereotypes in the Media', I will feature some of Motalaei's images within the third edition to help offset the usual stereotypical pictures from Iran produced in most media," writes editor Paul Martin Lester.

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“I know that after seeing Ahmad’s photographs, readers, almost all instructors of visual communication and their students will want to see more of his work and will have a better understanding of everyday, Iranian culture.”

“Ahmad Motalaei is a rare photographic talent who concentrates on the humanity inherent in people everywhere. In that sense, his photographs cross cultural boundaries and illuminate the shared actions, traits, and emotions we all feel as residents of the planet.

“Whether young women visiting an important architectural site, friends enjoying good weather and each other in a park, or young boys sharing a ride on a bicycle, his photographs remind us of what is best about being human; we all are connected with each other. As such, his works help bring diverse cultures together and aid in our understanding,” he explains.

“Images That Injure” provides an examination of a particular set of pictures that do harm to others, and in turn to all of us. These images cause harm in both direct and indirect ways by presenting oversimplified, mostly negative, and often deceptive depictions.

In this collection of new and revised essays, noted scholars explore the ways in which these images are created, viewed, and ultimately ingrained into the American culture, by examining newspapers, books, films, advertisements, commercials, television shows, magazines, and the Internet.

Motalaei, a graduate of graphic design, has focused on both graphic art and photography. So far, he has participated in group exhibitions and festivals in Japan, Russia, and Austria.

Swiss Ambassador Confers with Iranian Human Rights Official

Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Livia Leu Agosti has held talks with Secretary General of the Judiciary's Human Rights Headquarters Mohammad Javad Larijani on human rights.

Larijani said that Tehran is ready to give response to western allegations about human rights violations in Iran.

Larijani said that Iranian legal code honors human rights of every individual, adding that the Western countries have leveled allegations about human rights violations in Iran for political objectives.

"The Western governments are under fire by their own people for poor human rights record. Instead of improving their own human rights record, they point their finger at Iran."

Larijani voiced Iran's willingness to hold regional and international conferences on human rights in presence of the Islamic countries scholars.

Pointing to Iranian invitation to United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Navi Pillay along with special journalists, Larijani said Tehran is ready to host them in near future.

He explained achievements of the Islamic Republic of Iran on human rights in the past three decades

Tehran Opens 23rd Int'l Book Fair

The 23rd Tehran International Book Fair was inaugurated on Tuesday evening by Vice-President Mohammad-Reza Rahimi.

In the augural speech, the vice-president said the government intends to form a specialized group in the book category which will play an important role in publishing and distributing books.

Rahimi said after the victory of the Islamic Revolution the culture of reading was revived among the nation and it was at least doubled.

He expressed hope that with new policies, the publishing industry and reading habit see better future.

Meanwhile Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, elaborated the importance of reading and its stance in the society.

He said the current per capita for reading is not satisfactory and according to the last statistics, it is 71 minutes per person.

The exhibition opened to the public yesterday morning.

The exhibition is a suitable place to provide a venue for international publishers to offer their latest published works.

The TIBF is regarded as one of the important international gatherings in the publishing industry and the most significant publishing event in Asia and the Middle East.

The book fair will play host to around 2,000 publishers exhibiting 200,000 books. Some 980 foreign publishers from across the globe are gathered together to put 170,000 titles on display.

The international event provides an opportunity for book dealers to negotiate for their business in future years.

Held in a 120,000 square meter venue, the 23rd Tehran International Book Fair is scheduled to be held from May 5 to 15, 2010 on the premises of Tehran's Mosalla Site.

Shahnameh of Baysunqur on Display at Tehran's Golestan Palace

The Shahnameh of Baysunqur, one of three ancient copies of Ferdowsi's epic masterpiece is put on display at Tehran's Golestan Palace.

The document is kept in the library of Golestan Palace. The masterpiece was inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World Register list in 2007.

The Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (CHTHO) Director Hamid Baqaii who was visiting the masterpiece on Sunday emphasized on putting the manuscript on show in the Persian-speaking countries.

"Displaying rare Persian documents like Shahnameh of Baysunqur will surely attract many visitors and will help boost cultural relationships between the regional countries," he said.

He also stressed that the collection of rare manuscripts in Tajikistan needs to be restored, the Persian service of Fars reported.

The Shahnameh of Baysunqur was created in 1430 for Prince Baysunqur (1399-1433) who was the grandson of Timur (1336-1405) the Turkic ruler of Central Asia.

The Shahnameh represents the quintessence of aesthetic and literary values of the elite rulers of the Timurid Renaissance who dominated Central and Western Asia in the 15th Century.

European Diplomats Praise Iran's Drug Fight

Lawmaker Kazem Jalali has outlined the details of the meeting between the members of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee and the European ambassadors in Tehran held yesterday.

Envoys from 26 European states including Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and England met with MPs Alaeddin Boroujerdi, Kazem Jalali, Esmail Kosari, Zohreh Elahian, Hossein Sobhaninia and Mohammad Karamirad.

During the meeting, National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Chairman Alaeddin Boroujerd elaborated on the Iranian Parliament's stance on various issues including Iran's nuclear program, terrorism and illicit drug trafficking, Jalali, the parliamentary committee spokesman, stated.

The European ambassadors all emphasized Iran's right to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes, he said.

On the issue of illicit drug trafficking, the committee spokesman said that the European ambassadors praised Iran for its efforts in fighting drug smuggling.

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The European ambassadors also acknowledged the fact that Iran is a victim of international terrorism and said the Islamic Republic was serious in its fight against terrorists, Jalali added.