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Summary

Political News

Iran Outlines Solutions to Afghan Crisis

At the international conference on Afghanistan, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki outlines Tehran's solutions to the Afghan crisis.

Speaking at an international conference on Afghanistan yesterday, Mottaki called for a regional solution to the Afghanistan crisis and blamed growing insecurity and drug trafficking on foreign military presence in the war-ravaged country.

During his speech, he outlined five Iranian proposals to bring back stability to Afghanistan. He said that any solution to the Afghan crisis needs to take into account the following issues:

No Talks With U.S. in Afghanistan

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast rejected any probable meeting or talks between Iranian and the U.S. delegations on the sidelines of Kabul international conference in Afghanistan. "There is no possibility of talks or meeting due to the U.S. antagonistic policies towards Iranian nation, imposition of resolutions on the country and inappropriate treatment with Iranian nationals," Mehman-Parast told a press conference yesterday. He also emphasized finding new solutions to settle Afghanistan problems and added, "neighboring and regional states can have a leading role in Afghan peace and security and combating extremism, terrorism and drug."

Supreme Leader Underlines Preparedness to Thwart Military Threats

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said yesterday that the nation and armed forces must observe preparedness to thwart possible military aggression on Iran. "Every now and then, they renew their military threat. It looks as if they raise the matter to highlight the dangers and give sense of confrontation. However, the nation and the armed forces must observe preparedness to thwart the threat," the Supreme Leader said in a meeting with a group of commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps. The Supreme Leader felicitated the nation and the audience on the auspicious occasion of the lunar month of Shaban. The holy month included the birth anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) Infallible Household.

Georgia, Iran Move to Visa-Free Regime

Visa-free regime will be set between Georgia and Iran in September, Iranian ambassador to Georgia Madjid Samadzade Saber told the Georgian Maestro Television Company. He stressed that this will allow intensifying the Georgian-Iranian relations and will promote further rapprochement of two peoples. Saber also expressed hope for the normalization of the Russian-Georgian relations. "We dream of a time when relations between Russia and Georgia will improve and again become good-neighborly," he said.

Merkel - Iran not working seriously with IAEA

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Tuesday Iran did not seem to be working seriously to solve disagreements over its nuclear programme and she was sceptical a new round of talks would yield much. "At the moment Iran does not seem to be working on solving the problems with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with real seriousness," Merkel told a news conference. "We have already started many rounds of negotiations with Iran, and it will surprise no one that I am a little sceptical whether that will lead anywhere."

Mottaki Meets His Afghan Counterpart

Foreign ministers of Iran and Afghanistan Manouchehr Mottaki and Zalmay Rasoul here Monday evening asked for broader and stronger bilateral ties. In a meeting on the sidelines of the UN sponsored Kabul International Conference, Mottaki expressed satisfaction over holding the international event on Afghanistan in Kabul, reiterated, "This is the first time that a conference of this type is being held in Afghanistan and hosted by the Afghan government" expressing hope that the event would guarantee the advancement and prosperity of Afghanistan and the Afghan nation.

MP Underscores Unity Among Shiites, Sunnis

Vice-Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Mohammad Hassan Aboutorabi Fard stressed unity and solidarity among the Iranian Shiite and Sunni Muslims, specially in the southeastern Sistan and Balouchestan province which has recently come under a slate of deadly terrorist attacks. "Today the Shiite and Sunni populations of Sistan and Balouchestan are, in a true sense, the eminent and glorious symbol of unity of the Islamic Ummah and they defend the unity, honor and power of the Islamic Ummah while standing in a single row," Aboutorabi Fard reiterated yesterday.

Majlis Snubs U.S. Offer of Talks

Head of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi announced yesterday that the legislative body would not study the US congress offer of talks with Tehran. "Given the United States' continued inimical positions against Iran, studying the issue at the Commission was fully obviated," Boroujerdi told FNA. "The parliament's National Security Commission will not conduct any special study on the issue because the US always acts against the interests of the Iranian nation through its stances and measures," he added.

Talabani: No One Can Hinder Tehran-Baghdad Ties

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said Monday no one could set up barriers against expansion of Tehran-Baghdad cooperation, IRIB reported from Baghdad. Speaking in a farewell meeting with IRI ambassador to Iraq, Hasan Kazemi Qomi, Talabani said the two countries enjoy such close relations that could not be ignored. The Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq move in a common path and have common enemies, he added. Plots hatched against the Iraqi nation are also against Iranians and vice versa, Talabani said, expressing hope that the two nations would achieve victory in foiling the plots.

Iran to Ban "Liar" Foreign Media

A deputy minister of culture and Islamic guidance has announced that foreign media "spreading lies" would be barred from this year's press festival. Mohammad Ali Ramin, in charge of press affairs, said the ministry would not invite Western media disseminating false reports. He said the ministry will invite independent media worldwide and the festival will be the best place for them to introduce themselves.

Iran Keen to Expand All-Out Ties with Africa

Tehran is eager to expand and strengthen relations with the African states in all fields, a senior Iranian legislator said yesterday. "Development and expansion of all-out relations with the African states, specially parliamentary ties, sets a priority in the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy," Head of the parliament's Cultural Commission Gholam Ali Haddad Adel said. Haddad Adel made the remarks in a meeting with Zimbabwean Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry Walter Mzembe here yesterday.

Ahmadinejad Blames NATO for Arming Terrorists

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday that the country holds documents showing the terrorist group involved in recent attack in Iran is equipped by NATO forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Making the remarks in Qazvin Province after opening two

industrial projects yesterday, he said, "We have documents showing that these groups are equipped by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan and are guided by their intelligence."

Iran Deserves ME Leadership

Despite leveling accusations against Tehran's nuclear program, Saudi Arabia's top diplomat says Iran "deserves" to be treated as a leading force in the Middle East. "Iran wants to be treated as a regional leader and it deserves it. But it must behave as a leader and help stabilize the Middle East, and not create conflicts. Iran discusses all issues unilaterally," the Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal told French daily Liberation on Saturday. Disregarding Tehran's insistence that it requires 20 percent enriched fuel for its medical research reactor, Faisal said, "Tehran claims to have purely civilian targets. So why build such overcapacity of enrichment?"

Iran Seals "Zero Point" Border With Pakistan

Trade activities between Pakistan and Iran have been suspended after the latter closed the 'zero-point' in Taftan border because of the July 15 suicide attack in Zahedan. At least 20 people were martyred when a suicide bomber blew himself up near a mosque in Zahedan. Responsibility for the attacks was claimed by Jundullah, who said it was in revenge for the execution of their leader by the Iranian government. "Iran has closed the zero-point, suspending all trade activities," The Dawn quoted Tufail Baloch, a senior official of the Chagai District administration, as saying.

Iran Turns Down U.S. Offer to Talk

Iran yesterday turned down an offer made by U.S. Senator John Kerry to talk because the U.S. Democrats proved inconsistency in word and action. Head of the Majlis Commission on National Security and Foreign Policy Alaeddin Boroujerdi said that Iran turned down a request made by U.S. Senator John Kerry to pay a visit to Tehran. He said that the request had been conveyed to Iran by the Swiss ambassador in Tehran. Boroujerdi said the case is now regarded as closed and there is no room to be followed up.

Supreme Leader Raps U.S., UK, Zionists Over Zahedan Blasts

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei yesterday held the U.S., Britain and the Zionist regime responsible for raising terrorists to escalate sectarian Shia-Sunni tension in Iran. The Supreme Leader expressed condolence to the bereaved families of the martyrs of Zahedan Mosque and prayed to immediate recovery of those injured in the two separate bombings. In his message of condolence to mark

seventh day of martyrdom of victims of the terror bombings, the Supreme Leader said that in this bloody incident the deviated Wahabi intruders backed by secret services of aliens took life of innocent people and inflicted human losses.

Merkel: Iran Not Working Seriously With IAEA

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday Iran did not seem to be working seriously to solve disagreements over its nuclear program and she was skeptical a new round of talks would yield much. "At the moment Iran does not seem to be working on solving the problems with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with real seriousness," Merkel told a news conference.

Khatibi: Iran Will Adapt to New Sanctions

International sanctions against Iran are not new and it will adapt to the latest round of more severe U.S. and European measures that specifically target the oil and gas industry, Iran's OPEC governor told Reuters. He also said Iran was willing to be flexible about which currencies it used for oil trade following statements it was contemplating the United Arab Emirates' currency for its European transactions. "The point is the sanctions are not new. The shape is different. We can carry on," Iran's OPEC governor Mohammad Ali Khatibi said in a telephone interview yesterday.

Larijani: U.S. Dare Not Strike Iran

Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani discusses a possible U.S. attack on Iran, saying Washington lacks the courage to attack Tehran. "Iran is ready for any possible incidents and is well aware of the ongoing developments in the region. If the US makes such a mistake, it will pay dearly," Larijani said in a meeting with head of the Cuban Parliament Ricardo Alarcon on the sidelines of the third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Geneva on Tuesday. The Iranian official also pointed to "very complicated" situation in the Middle East and said the U.S. approach to Iran's nuclear case has been a complete farce, ISNA reported.

FM Denies Detention of Swiss Envoy

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said here on Saturday evening that the news concerning the detention of Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Livia Leu Agosti is neither accurate nor true. According to the report of the Foreign Ministry Media Department, Mehman-Parast said that the news published in some news sites concerning the arrest of the Swiss envoy in one of the cities of North Khorasan province was reflected neither accurate nor true and the incident, as they described it, is not correct.

Majlis Passes Bill on Safeguarding Nuclear Achievements

The Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) approved here yesterday the bill on safeguarding the nuclear achievements to counter the US and UK plots in this regard.

The emergency bill was finalized after being reviewed by the MPs after the outline of it garnered 181 votes in favor, three against and six abstentions from the members of parliament who were present in the Majlis open session. By finalization of the bill, the Iranian government is obliged to make the country self-sufficient in various fields of peaceful nuclear technology.

Economic News

UAE Dismisses Iran Idea of Dirham Oil Trade

The United Arab Emirates central bank governor dismissed yesterday reports that Iran may seek payment in dirhams for its oil exports to Europe to get around sanctions, saying the UAE had no time for jokes.

An Iranian official said on Sunday Tehran was discussing internally the idea of switching to dirhams from euros as a possible way to deal with tougher EU sanctions that could block Iranian transactions in the single European currency. "Is this a joke? We have no time to entertain jokes," Sultan Nasser al-Suweidi said in a response sent to Reuters by email by his office following a request for comment on the reports.

Pakistani Banks Refuse to Handle Transactions With Iran

Economic sanctions on Iran by the United States has also affected Pakistan's exports as all major banks have refused to conduct transactions with the troubled nation, exporters said on Monday. Although there is no official ban on the transactions of Pakistani banks with Iran, banks are hesitant to incur the superpower's wrath, they said. Several Pakistani exporters' dues were withheld in Iran as no bank was ready to conduct transactions, they added. The head of a private bank on the condition of anonymity said that they were in no position to challenge this power structure. He agreed that a majority of Pakistani banks were not conducting transactions with Iran.

Global Firms Invited to Join Iran Energy Projects

Global energy majors are welcome to help develop oil and gas projects in Iran despite new sanctions imposed on the Islamic republic, a top official told reporters on Monday.

"We welcome all international companies, eastern or western. The oil industry cannot be deprived of cooperation," said Mohammad Hossein Mousavizadeh, adviser to Pars Oil and Gas Co, which is developing the giant South Pars fields in Persian Gulf waters. Mousavizadeh said the development of South Pars, which holds about eight percent of world gas reserves, was not affected as Iranian companies were replacing global firms or foreign firms were staying on as associates.

China's Cooperation in Gasoline Production

China announced its readiness to cooperate in gasoline production projects in the country and to finance some oil refineries, said deputy petroleum minister.

Referring to the new round of Tehran-Beijing negotiations on the abovementioned fields, Alireza Zeighami said at present Chinese companies cooperate in the construction of Shazand Arak Oil Refinery. Zeighami was quoted by Mehr News Agency as saying that Chinese companies expressed their preparedness to cooperate in building the new seven oil and gas condensate refineries in the country. Last year, Deputy Petroleum Minister for International Affairs Hossein Noghrekar said China invested some 705 billion euros in the construction of Iran's new oil refineries.

Carpet Exports Up \$104m

The Islamic Republic of Iran exported 104 million dollars of various Persian carpets during the first quarter of the current Iranian year (started March 20, 2010), said head of Iran National Carpet Center. "The exports show 37 percent growth over the same period last year," Feisal Mardasi added. According to him, currently Iran has 30 percent share of the world's carpet export market.

Announcing that Iranian carpets have numerous buyers in global markets, he said that European countries, USA and Persian Gulf littoral states were among major buyers of Persian carpets.

Iran's Share of Global Exports to Rise

Economist predicted that Iran's share of global exports will rise in the current year (2010). According to the report, Iran's share in global exports reached 0.56 percent in 2010 from 0.53 percent the year before. The index will stand at 0.53 percent in 2011, 0.51 percent in 2012, 0.46 percent in 2013 and 0.43 percent in 2014. Economist predicted that Iran's share in global export will witness the highest fall in 2014 standing at 0.43 percent. Economist predicted that Iran's exports in 2010 will increase to 80.1 billion dollars in 2010 from 67.4 billion dollars in 2009.

Tajikistan: Iran Trustful Partner in Trade Cooperation

Head of Tajikistan's Customs Service Nemat Rahmatov described Iran as a stable and trustworthy partner of his country in economic and trade ties and cooperation. "Iran, along

with China, Russia, Turkey and Kazakhstan, is one of the countries which have stable and growing exchanges with Tajikistan," Rahmatov told FNA yesterday. He mentioned that Iran and Tajikistan have exchanged 94.4 million dollars worth of goods during the current year, adding that Tajikistan has imported 66.4 million dollars worth of commodities from Iran while Iran's imports from Tajikistan stood at 28 million dollars during the said period.

Azadegan Oilfield MDP Approved

Director of the Azadegan oilfield development plan, Nasereddin Eftekhar said National Iranian South Oil Company has accepted the Master Development Plan (MDP) of China National Petroleum Corporation International (CNPCI) to develop the field. The contract for participation of CNPCI in Azadegan oilfield development plan was signed after six months of negotiations with Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO) during which the Iranian company agreed to transfer 70 percent of its shares in the field to the Chinese company. Under the contract from 90 percent share of NICO, 70 percent transferred to CNPCI and the share of NICO reduced to 20 percent. The other 10 percent shares of the project belong to Japanese company, INPEX Corporation.

Agro Product Exports Up

Iran's agricultural products exports increased 27.4 percent in the first quarter of the current Iranian year (started March 21), Iranian commerce minister announced on Sunday. Speaking in Iran's Parliament, Mehdi Ghazanfari said also agricultural products imports saw 18 percent decrease over the same period. Meanwhile Iran exported some 162 million dollars worth of fruits during the mentioned time, he added. "The figure shows a 52 percent growth compared with the same period last year."

Turkmen Delegation Due in Tehran

A delegation of Turkmen officials is scheduled to pay a visit to Iran on Saturday in a bid to continue talks about the two neighboring countries' cooperation in the energy sector. The delegation will be headed by Deputy Chairman of Turkmenistan's Cabinet of Ministers for International Relations Rasit Meredow. Asked to comment on the trip by the Turkmen delegation to Iran, Iranian Ambassador to Ashgabat Mohammad Mousa Hashemi Golpayegani told FNA that the visit would take place at the invitation of Iranian Oil Minister Masoud Mir-Kazemi.

U.S. Watchdog Moves to Smother Iran Trade

A top U.S. financial watchdog outlined fresh measures to isolate Iran Tuesday, as Washington attempts to ramp up pressure on the Islamic Republic over its nuclear

program. Securities and Exchange Commission chairman Mary Schapiro told Congress she was working on measures that would make it easier for companies to abandon their stake in firms that trade with Iran. The rules would "make it clear that an investment company cannot be sued for divesting itself from stocks of companies that deal with Iran," said Schapiro.

Iran to Establish Bank in Algeria

The Islamic Republic of Iran tends to establish a bank in Algeria, Tehran ambassador to Algiers. In an interview with Moj News Agency yesterday, Iranian ambassador, Hossein Abdi Abyaneh, announced approval on establishment of a joint investment fund between Iran and Algeria, adding that the two countries have entered serious negotiations on establishment of an Iranian bank in Algeria, as well. "Once the joint investment fund is established, the major problems on the way of making joint ventures between the two countries will be removed," Abyaneh said. Referring to a visiting Iranian delegation arrived in Algeria this week to attend "Isfahan Cultural Week Ceremony", he regarded such events as a way to boost bilateral ties.

Sanctions to Hurt Foreign Firms

Iran minimizes U.S. unilateral sanctions on its energy sector, saying the embargoes have nothing to do with Iran's oil and gas industries, but will rather cripple foreign firms. "Sanctions will affect foreign companies, making them face difficulties in world trade. Sanctions are the West's decision. However, Iran is seeking cooperation," Shana quoted senior advisor of Iran's Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), Mohammad Hassan Mousavizadeh as saying on Tuesday. Speaking to reporters on their visit to Pars Special Economic Energy Zone, Mousavizadeh reiterated that the recently approved sanctions have nothing to do with Iran's oil and gas industries.

Self-Sufficiency in Urea Production to Be Reached

The second unit of Pardis Petrochemical Company was test launched with the capacity of 3,250 tons of urea production a day (1,075,000 tons a year). By putting the second unit of Pardis Petrochemical Company into operation, the complex's agricultural urea production would reach to 2,150,000 tons a year, which would meet the country's need for the material. The country's current agricultural urea production is 4,442,000 tons and it means that by launching the unit, Iran would be self-sufficient in producing urea.

Iran Keen on Buying 40% of Nigeria Unity Bank's Share

Two Iranian banks have announced their readiness to buy 40 percent stake of Nigeria's Unity Bank, Compass Newspaper reported. "Unity Bank has entered new serious negotiations with two major Iranian banks that wished to secure a 40 percent equity stake," the bank's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Mallam Falalu Bello was quoted by the newspaper as saying. "Recently, the Governor of Central Bank of Iran

came to my office and said that there are some Iranian banks that want to invest in Nigerian banks," he said adding that "If they come and we agree with them, all we are after is to get somebody who will come into the bank and add value to it."

UAE Dismisses Iran Idea of Dirham Oil Trade

The United Arab Emirates central bank governor dismissed yesterday reports that Iran may seek payment in dirhams for its oil exports to Europe to get around sanctions, saying the UAE had no time for jokes. An Iranian official said on Sunday Tehran was discussing internally the idea of switching to dirhams from euros as a possible way to deal with tougher EU sanctions that could block Iranian transactions in the single European currency. "Is this a joke? We have no time to entertain jokes," Sultan Nasser al-Suweidi said in a response sent to Reuters by email by his office following a request for comment on the reports.

Iran, Egypt to Create Joint Bank

Head of Iran Foreign Investment Company (IFIC) said that Egypt and Iran will create a joint bank in Tehran for the first time, Mehr News Agency reported. The new bank will be a branch of the Misr Iran Development Bank (MIDB). IFIC head Mehdi Razavi told Mehr News Agency that last year MIDB transferred funds worth \$50 million to Iran. According to Razavi, it is planned to expand activity of the new bank created by the two countries. Iran and Egypt's diplomatic relations have been severed since 1979.

Iran, Turkey to Launch Joint Investment Companies

Iranian Labor Minister Abdolreza Sheikholeslami in a meeting with Turkish Minister of Public Works and Housing Mustafa Demir proposed establishment of joint investment companies by Tehran and Ankara. "Establishing joint companies which would run activities in the two countries or in the third countries is a good proposal for promoting the level of relations between Iran and Turkey," Sheikholeslami said Saturday evening. He stressed that Iran spares no efforts to settle problems in its mutual cooperation with Ankara, and reminded that success in achieving goals and fulfilling plans depends on the level of attention the officials of the two countries pay to the issues under discussion.

Iran's GDP to Increase by \$54b

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will exceed 416 billion dollars in 2010, Economist said in its report. In its June edition report on Iran's macro economic indexes, Economist predicted that Iran's GDP will increase to 416.1 billion dollars in 2010 from 361.2 billion dollars in 2009. According to the report, the figure will show 54.9 billion dollars growth. Iran's GDP in 2011 will stand at 4490.1 billion dollars

showing 74 billion dollars growth over 2010, according to the report. It is predicted that the index shows a 94.8 billion dollars growth in 2012 exceeding 584.9 billion dollars.

Iran Floats Idea of Using UAE Dirhams in Oil Trade

Iran may seek payment for its oil exports to Europe in UAE dirham rather than euros because tougher EU sanctions could block Iranian transactions in the single European currency, an Iranian official said yesterday. "This matter of changing over to UAE dirham is under discussion among Iranian officials at the moment but has not been implemented yet," the official from the Iranian Embassy in the United Arab Emirates told Reuters on condition of anonymity. "The weak position of the euro and the dollar, in addition to the fear of blocking transactions if these currencies are used in trade, is what led Iran to consider the switch."

Ornamental Fish Exports to Iraq Up

The Islamic Republic of Iran's ornamental fish exports to Iraq exceeded 142,000 dollars, Iran Fisheries Organization reported. During the first three months of the current Iranian year (started on March 21), Iran has exported 104,800 pieces of various ornamental fish to Iraq, according to the report. The exports are valued at 142,733 dollars, showing 50 percent growth over the same period last year. Cichlid, Oscar, Zebra and Barb were among major ornamental fish Iran exported to Iraq during the mentioned period.

Politico-Strategic News

AEOI Obligated to Enrich Uranium to 20%

Lawmakers in Majlis yesterday obliged the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to provide the country's research reactors with their needed 20% enriched nuclear fuel. Iranian research reactors need the 20% uranium for medical, industrial and agricultural goals. The parliamentary instruction came after the Majlis approved the outlines of a bill on Sunday which demanded the government to protect the country's achievements in the field of peaceful nuclear technology.

Iran Dismayed at Medvedev Perception About Its Nuclear Program

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast yesterday expressed dismay over Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's perception about Iranian nuclear program.

Mehman-Parast made the remarks in his weekly press briefing with domestic and foreign reporters. He said that Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has already given response to misunderstanding of state of affairs about Iranian nuclear program by the Russian president. He has a misunderstanding about peaceful nuclear program of Iran which should be corrected, Mehman-Parast said adding that close cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency is a strong reason to prove that the country's nuclear program is of peaceful nature.

Military Threats to Iran Borders "Inefficient Move"

A senior Iranian commander said that military threats to Iran's border regions would yield no fruit for the enemies. "Posing military threats to the bordering areas has lost its effectiveness as a method," Commander of Iran's Border Guards Hossein Zolfaqari said. Meantime, the commander reminded that Iran shares 9,000km of borderlines with its neighbors, and underlined the necessity of serious attention to the protection of the country's bordering areas. "The importance of this issue is more felt when considering the presence of trans-regional powers in the neighboring countries," he added.

New Submarines to Be Unveiled

Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi says Iran is to unveil its new domestic submarines next month. Vahidi said the submarines are totally made in the country and will be delivered to Iran's Navy by mid-August. Asked about the Russian S-300 defense system deal, Vahidi said the deal is not cancelled and Tehran is seriously following up on the issue through negotiations. Under a contract signed in 2005, Russia was required to provide Iran with at least five S-300 air-defense systems. However, Moscow has continually delayed the delivery of the sophisticated defense system prompting Tehran to express displeasure with the Russian procrastination.

No Missile System to Iran

Israel reacted positively on Tuesday to Moscow's announcement that it will not deliver S-300 surface-to-air missile defense systems to Iran. Russia's Interfax news agency quoted a top military official as saying the United Nation's latest Iran sanctions, which Moscow had backed, ruled out the delivery of missile systems. Russia sold the systems to Iran in 2007, but has yet to deliver them, although Iranian military officers are reportedly being trained on the systems at a base near Moscow. Russian military official Alexander Fomin on Tuesday did not refer to the S-300s by name, but pledged Moscow would desist from supplying "large missile systems," in accordance with the sanctions, Interfax reported. During a visit to Jerusalem three weeks ago, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that a presidential decree on what weapons would and would not be sold was

being formulated, following the UN Security Council resolution in June to impose a fourth set of sanctions on Iran.

Iran Outlines Solutions to Afghan Crisis

At the international conference on Afghanistan, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki outlines Tehran's solutions to the Afghan crisis. Speaking at an international conference on Afghanistan yesterday, Mottaki called for a regional solution to the Afghanistan crisis and blamed growing insecurity and drug trafficking on foreign military presence in the war-ravaged country. During his speech, he outlined five Iranian proposals to bring back stability to Afghanistan. He said that any solution to the Afghan crisis needs to take into account the following issues:

Social News

Iranian Artist Sadeq Tabrizi to Display Artworks in London

Veteran artist and collector Sadeq Tabrizi is planning to display a collection of his calligraphic-paintings at Barbican Center in London in the near future. Tabrizi has been working on this collection for the past six months. "I will be putting on show 40 large size artworks that I've created," he told the Persian service of MNA. Barbican Center is a large performing arts center in London. The center hosts classical and contemporary music concerts, theater performances, film screenings and art exhibitions. Its art gallery presents major exhibitions by leading international figures.

Minister Welcomes Expatriate Physicians Back

Minister of Health Dr. Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi here yesterday welcomed the return of Iranian physicians who are living abroad. Dastjerdi made the remark during a visit to a center in Tehran dedicated to the affairs of Iranian living in other countries. She termed the return of this group of Iranian physicians as a helpful approach benefitting Iran's health system. Minister of Health added that Islamic Republic of Iran has a say in producing medicine in the region by supplying some 96 percent of its needed medicine inside the country.

Smokers to Be Banned From Executive Jobs

Smokers are to be banned from entering high-ranking executive jobs in the government, the news agency ILNA reported. According to new regulations approved by the cabinet, relevant applicants should neither smoke nor drink alcohol or take any kind of drugs, to maintain the mental and physical health of future executive officials. The smoking ban is new and part of the government's general anti-smoking campaign. In case of protests by rejected applicants, the final decision is to be made by a medical council from the medical university of their hometowns on whether the required health conditions are met or not, said ILNA.

Iran Ranks 1st in Medicine Production in Region

Iranian Minister of Health and Medical Education Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi said the Islamic Republic of Iran ranks first in medicine production among regional countries. "96 percent of the medicine required for the treatment of different diseases is being produced inside the country," she added. "The remaining four percent imported medicines are needed for treatment of cancer and blood diseases," the minister said. She also said Iranian expatriates are welcomed to join the drive to produce medicine inside the country and make investment in this regard. "Iranian government welcomes their participation," she added.

Iran Re-Takes Crown in Sitting Volleyball World Championships

Iran took last year's revenge against Bosnia-Herzegovina in five sets final to re-take the men's crown in the 2010 Sitting-Volleyball World Championship in Oklahoma yesterday. Iran beat Bosnia-Herzegovina in a thrilling final 3-2 to take back its title from Bosnia. Iran won the first two sets but their archrival opponents fought back to win the next two sets. In the final set, Iran won it 15-11 to celebrate the championship. Both teams secured a berth in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London by advancing to the championship. "It feels good to win after working so long toward it," said Iran coach Hadi Razei through a translator. Iran was up a set before Bosnia stormed back to win the fourth set and force the decisive fifth frame.

Political News

Iran Outlines Solutions to Afghan Crisis

At the international conference on Afghanistan, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki outlines Tehran's solutions to the Afghan crisis.

Speaking at an international conference on Afghanistan yesterday, Mottaki called for a regional solution to the Afghanistan crisis and blamed growing insecurity and drug trafficking on foreign military presence in the war-ravaged country.

During his speech, he outlined five Iranian proposals to bring back stability to Afghanistan. He said that any solution to the Afghan crisis needs to take into account the following issues:

- 1) The Afghan Constitution is the greatest achievement of the country and hence needs to set the criterion for any measures to be taken in the country. Besides that, the process of government formation and the reinforcement of civil institutions should be supported by the international community.
- 2) The presence and increase of foreign forces will not help the situation in Afghanistan. Afghan people and government need to be trusted and a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces should be set as well.
- 3) A double standard policy on fighting terrorism has to be avoided.
- 4) Security and development are two inseparable factors; hence the reconstruction of Afghanistan and its infrastructures should become the focus of more attention. In doing so, Iran continues to contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and welcomes other countries' participation as well.
- 5) Regional cooperation needs to be supported as the proper approach to the issue. Iran for its part continues to hold regional meetings on Afghanistan and expects other non-regional countries to support the move. Iran believes that increased regional cooperation in transportation, energy and other sectors will contribute to development in Afghanistan.

The international conference on Afghanistan opened in Kabul on Tuesday, with Afghan President Hamid Karzai delivering the opening speech.

Delegates from more than 70 countries and several international bodies, including United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki- moon, are attending the one-day conference.

Iran has attended the meeting as an immediate neighbor of Afghanistan.

Increasing the capacity of the Afghan security forces and reconciliation with Taliban militants are the main topics of the Kabul Conference.

No Talks With U.S. in Afghanistan

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast rejected any probable meeting or talks between Iranian and the U.S. delegations on the sidelines of Kabul international conference in Afghanistan.

"There is no possibility of talks or meeting due to the U.S. antagonistic policies towards Iranian nation, imposition of resolutions on the country and inappropriate treatment with Iranian nationals," Mehman-Parast told a press conference yesterday.

He also emphasized finding new solutions to settle Afghanistan problems and added, "neighboring and regional states can have a leading role in Afghan peace and security and combating extremism, terrorism and drug."

Mehman-Parast welcomed transfer of responsibilities to Afghan nation and government

Supreme Leader Underlines Preparedness to Thwart Military Threats

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said yesterday that the nation and armed forces must observe preparedness to thwart possible military aggression on Iran.

"Every now and then, they renew their military threat. It looks as if they raise the matter to highlight the dangers and give sense of confrontation. However, the nation and the armed forces must observe preparedness to thwart the threat," the Supreme Leader said in a meeting with a group of commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps.

The Supreme Leader felicitated the nation and the audience on the auspicious occasion of the lunar month of Shaban. The holy month included the birth anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS), the third Imam of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) Infallible Household.

After culmination of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the third of Shaban has been named IRGC Day, and the fourth of Shaban, the birthday of Abul Fazl al-Abbas, the War Veterans Day.

The fifth of Shaban is the birthday of Imam Zeinul Abedin (AS), the fourth Imam of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) Infallible Household and the 15th of Shaban is the birthday of Imam Mahdi (May God Hasten His Reappearance).

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The Supreme Leader said that the nation and the military forces are well-prepared to thwart any aggression on Iran and take measures to neutralize the sanctions.

The Supreme Leader said that since victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iranian nation and officials have always been aware of the hostile measures of the enemies which have been imposed on Iran in the form of sanctions or war.

Referring to experience of the Iranian nation and the armed forces, the Supreme Leader said that they are experienced enough to carry out their duties and maintain their readiness to deal with emergency situation as before and there is no doubt that the great nation will become victorious in any challenge.

The Supreme leader praised the leading role of IRGC in the country at different junctures.

"IRGC has roots in the heart of all Iranian people and the body has always served the Iranian nation both in the fronts as well as reconstruction era without hesitation."

The Supreme Leader recommended the IRGC to boost spiritual aspect of their responsibility something which will make them strong enough to deal with any threats.

The Supreme Leader acknowledged that the Islamic Revolution is treading the path on the same track set by the late Imam Khomeini -- a direct response to certain individuals criticizing that there appeared diversion in the path of Imam Khomeini.

The Supreme Leader dismissed the suggestion made by U.S. officials that Iran may change attitude toward the United States, and said they meant derailing the Islamic Revolution from its right path.

The Supreme Leader said that the Iranian nation proved their faith in genuine Islam which has created a strong and impenetrable bastion for the country to save it from aggressors and the bullying powers.

"Based on the global statistics, the country's multi-fold development and progress is on a good track compared with its global average but all should endeavor to conquer peaks of success and development.

"The talented Iranian youth and its people with good knowledge on politics can make timely decisions as they did during seditions erupted last year.

"The U.S. is a bullying power which seeks to blackmail others but it fails to materialize its sinister goals," said the Supreme Leader.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran with reliance upon its pious nation is successful in the frontline of struggle with global arrogance.

Weekly report on Iran

"Once the U.S. administration claimed for setting up new world order but the country is now engaged with protests and demonstrations of world people and has no way out."

Given to failures of the U.S. in Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Palestine, the Supreme Leader said the U.S. along with the Zionist regime could not topple Hamas in Gaza which indicates their mounting weakness in dealing with global affairs.

"Imposing sanctions on Iran leaves no impacts on the country's success and development."

"U.S. plans are mostly politically-motivated as they did during the sedition erupted last year in the country and never hesitated to fully back those behind such heinous move but the brave Iranian nation gave them a crushing response," said the Supreme Leader.

"The massive propaganda campaign against the IRGC proved that the organization is now on its right track."

Georgia, Iran Move to Visa-Free Regime

Visa-free regime will be set between Georgia and Iran in September, Iranian ambassador to Georgia Madjid Samadzade Saber told the Georgian Maestro Television Company.

He stressed that this will allow intensifying the Georgian-Iranian relations and will promote further rapprochement of two peoples.

Saber also expressed hope for the normalization of the Russian-Georgian relations. "We dream of a time when relations between Russia and Georgia will improve and again become good-neighborly," he said.

He said if Moscow and Tbilisi officially appeal to Iran for mediation, then "this will be reviewed".

Merkel - Iran not working seriously with IAEA

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Tuesday Iran did not seem to be working seriously to solve disagreements over its nuclear programme and she was sceptical a new round of talks would yield much.

"At the moment Iran does not seem to be working on solving the problems with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with real seriousness," Merkel told a news conference.

"We have already started many rounds of negotiations with Iran, and it will surprise no one that I am a little sceptical whether that will lead anywhere."

Mottaki Meets His Afghan Counterpart

Foreign ministers of Iran and Afghanistan Manouchehr Mottaki and Zalmay Rasoul here Monday evening asked for broader and stronger bilateral ties.

In a meeting on the sidelines of the UN sponsored Kabul International Conference, Mottaki expressed satisfaction over holding the international event on Afghanistan in Kabul, reiterated, "This is the first time that a conference of this type is being held in Afghanistan and hosted by the Afghan government" expressing hope that the event would guarantee the advancement and prosperity of Afghanistan and the Afghan nation.

Referring to the trilateral Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan gathering, and its achievements he said that regional approaches are among the best ways for solving the existing problems in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Zalmay Rasoul expressing delight over his recent visit of Iran and satisfaction over Mottaki's presence in his country, presented a report on latest moves made for hosting the Kabul Conference, briefing him on the topics included in the conference.

The minister of foreign affairs of Afghanistan then emphasized the importance of regional plans and cooperation aimed at solving the ongoing crisis in his country, as well as establishment of security and stability in Afghanistan.

MP Underscores Unity Among Shiites, Sunnis

Vice-Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Mohammad Hassan Aboutorabi Fard stressed unity and solidarity among the Iranian Shiite and Sunni Muslims, specially in the southeastern Sistan and Balouchestan province which has recently come under a slate of deadly terrorist attacks.

"Today the Shiite and Sunni populations of Sistan and Balouchestan are, in a true sense, the eminent and glorious symbol of unity of the Islamic Ummah and they defend the unity, honor and power of the Islamic Ummah while standing in a single row," Aboutorabi Fard reiterated yesterday.

His remarks came after two bomb blasts in front of the Zahedan Grand Mosque in Sistan and Balouchestan province on Thursday night killed at least 27 people and injured over 270 more.

Political sources said that the Pakistan-based Jundollah terrorist group, directly sponsored and supported by Washington, has claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Aboutorabi Fard called on the Pakistani government to confront the terrorists who misuse the country to attain their devilish goals inside Iran and adopt proper and prompt measures against them.

He also urged the Iranian Interior and Foreign Ministries to put the issue on their agenda and pursue the case seriously.

Majlis Snubs U.S. Offer of Talks

Head of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi announced yesterday that the legislative body would not study the US congress offer of talks with Tehran.

"Given the United States' continued inimical positions against Iran, studying the issue at the Commission was fully obviated," Boroujerdi told FNA.

"The parliament's National Security Commission will not conduct any special study on the issue because the US always acts against the interests of the Iranian nation through its stances and measures," he added.

Boroujerdi had earlier informed Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Livia Leu Agosti whose embassy represents the US interests in Iran that Tehran had decided to reject the offer of talks presented by the head of the US Congress Foreign Affairs Committee, stressing that the conditions are unripe for negotiations between the two arch foes.

Talabani: No One Can Hinder Tehran-Baghdad Ties

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said Monday no one could set up barriers against expansion of Tehran-Baghdad cooperation, IRIB reported from Baghdad.

Speaking in a farewell meeting with IRI ambassador to Iraq, Hasan Kazemi Qomi, Talabani said the two countries enjoy such close relations that could not be ignored.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq move in a common path and have common enemies, he added.

Plots hatched against the Iraqi nation are also against Iranians and vice versa, Talabani said, expressing hope that the two nations would achieve victory in foiling the plots.

Iran's outgoing ambassador to Iraq Hasan Kazemi Qomi, for his part said both Tehran and Baghdad have benefited from bilateral economic cooperation.

He said that the two countries are determined to promote cooperation as evidenced by a 7 billion dollar trade between the two and close to 2.5 million passengers being exchanged between the two neighbors every year.

Establishment of 8 consulates general, bank, 6 trade crossings and 12 border markets indicates the two countries' will to promote their mutual relations, he added.

Meanwhile, Kazemi Qomi will be replaced by the IRI's Head of the Headquarters for Renovation of Iraq's Holy Shrines, Hassan Danaifar, as the new Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad.

Iran to Ban “Liar” Foreign Media

A deputy minister of culture and Islamic guidance has announced that foreign media “spreading lies” would be barred from this year’s press festival.

Mohammad Ali Ramin, in charge of press affairs, said the ministry would not invite Western media disseminating false reports. He said the ministry will invite independent media worldwide and the festival will be the best place for them to introduce themselves.

He said some 700 scientific journals from universities of Islamic countries have been reviewed and majority of them will be invited to Tehran festival.

Ramin said this year’s press festival and exhibition will be held in three categories. Advertising centers, digital media and media and news agencies will attend in this year’s press festival.

He reiterated that this year’s festival will be very different from the previous ones.

Ramin also said the ministry has especial program for “Journalist Day” where for the first time media men will meet president. He did not elaborate it.

He said the ministry will dispatch media men to Syria and Lebanon in near future.

Iran Keen to Expand All-Out Ties with Africa

Tehran is eager to expand and strengthen relations with the African states in all fields, a senior Iranian legislator said yesterday.

"Development and expansion of all-out relations with the African states, specially parliamentary ties, sets a priority in the Islamic Republic of Iran's foreign policy," Head of the parliament's Cultural Commission Gholam Ali Haddad Adel said.

Haddad Adel made the remarks in a meeting with Zimbabwean Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry Walter Mzembe here yesterday.

Noting that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always supported the anti-colonialist campaigns of the African states, he reiterated that development and progress of the black continent in all the economic, social and cultural spheres depend on its independence and severance of its relations with the aggressive powers.

Ahmadinejad Blames NATO for Arming Terrorists

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday that the country holds documents showing the terrorist group involved in recent attack in Iran is equipped by NATO forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Making the remarks in Qazvin Province after opening two industrial projects yesterday, he said, "We have documents showing that these groups are equipped by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan and are guided by their intelligence."

He also referred to wrath of domineering countries of Iran's progress and said, "enemies are angry with us, they say that Iran will make atomic bombs in next five years, it is a sheer lie, supposing they are right, they have declared that they hold 5000 bombs (referring to the number of the U.S. bombs), does a person with 5000 atomic bombs fear one bomb?"

"It is certainly not true and they know that we are not seeking atomic bombs?"

He added, "they (the West) is not angry at atomic bombs or Iran's missiles, their major concern is due to vigilance of Iranian nation."

Ahmadinejad went on to say that Zahedan terrorist attacks were in fact clear interpretations of the recent remarks by the U.S. president against Iran and came in continuation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

He reiterated that the U.S. rendered financial, logistic and intelligence supports to terrorists and agents behind such incidents in the region.

The President warned Iran's enemies, stressing that the Iranian nation will act with unity and strongly confront the enemies' plots to get its country to the peaks of progress and development and to pave the way for rule of justice worldwide.

Also concerning banking sanctions against Iran and inspection of its ships, he said, "they think we will hand Iran to them with these measures, but it is a mistake."

He also criticized the West's double standards against Iran (issuing resolutions on Iran and speaking of dialogue) and said, the cowboy attitude ere has no place in Iran."

He concluded that despite the imposition of sanctions against Tehran, the West is concerned about the awakening of the Iranian nation.

"Western powers are neither concerned over atomic bombs nor worried about nuclear missiles, but are concerned over the awakening of the Iranian nation," he said.

Germany Rejects Report on Hamburg-Based Iranian Bank

A German finance ministry spokesman yesterday dismissed a report by the U.S. daily Wall Street Journal which alleged that an Iranian-owned bank based in Hamburg is conducting business on behalf of blacklisted Iranian companies.

Talking to media representatives in Berlin, Michael Offer said, "So far, there are no indications of such breaches."

He was referring to Wall Street Journal claims that the European-Iranian Trade Bank (EIH) had conducted more than one billion U.S. dollars worth of business for Iranian companies, blacklisted by the UN, EU and U.S.

The U.S. daily had quoted a spokesman for Germany's banking oversight agency, BaFin, as saying the UN Security Council -- not the U.S. -- sets the standard by which Germany imposes sanctions on Iranian banks operating in Germany.

EIH "is not mentioned in the U.N. Security Council resolutions," and therefore may operate freely under German banking law, the BaFin spokesman said.

Of the four Iranian banks registered in Germany, only EIH is free of any sanctions or controls, according to German officials.

That's because EIH hasn't been sanctioned by the UN, and Germany and other EU governments take their cue on sanctions from the UN, not from the U.S.

EIH was founded by a group of Iranian merchants in Hamburg in 1971.

It operates openly under the supervision of German bank regulators.

Iran Deserves ME Leadership

Despite leveling accusations against Tehran's nuclear program, Saudi Arabia's top diplomat says Iran "deserves" to be treated as a leading force in the Middle East.

"Iran wants to be treated as a regional leader and it deserves it. But it must behave as a leader and help stabilize the Middle East, and not create conflicts. Iran discusses all issues unilaterally," the Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal told French daily Liberation on Saturday.

Disregarding Tehran's insistence that it requires 20 percent enriched fuel for its medical research reactor, Faisal said, "Tehran claims to have purely civilian targets. So why build such overcapacity of enrichment?"

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Faisal added that Riyadh "would have preferred to avoid sanctions. But the Iranians should have seized the proposal of the 5 +1 [the permanent members of Security Council plus Germany, the United Nations], which was in line with what they say they want."

The minister went on to downplay a recent scandal that erupted over an article published in Le Figaro, with French diplomatic sources saying that Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz had told French Defense Minister Hervé Morin that Israel and Iran "do not deserve to exist."

The Saudi Monarch canceled his trip to France and sent his foreign minister. Arab sources said the Saudi King had found the French invitation to attend the July 14 celebrations marking the fall of monarchy in France 'unwise.'

"This is not a cancellation but a postponement because time was too short. The King and President [Nicolas Sarkozy] agreed to meet in the fall," Faisal stressed.

Iran rejects Western claims that it is following a military nuclear program, arguing that as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) it has the right to civilian nuclear technology.

Iran Seals “Zero Point” Border With Pakistan

Trade activities between Pakistan and Iran have been suspended after the latter closed the 'zero-point' in Taftan border because of the July 15 suicide attack in Zahedan.

At least 20 people were martyred when a suicide bomber blew himself up near a mosque in Zahedan.

Responsibility for the attacks was claimed by Jundullah, who said it was in revenge for the execution of their leader by the Iranian government.

"Iran has closed the zero-point, suspending all trade activities," The Dawn quoted Tufail Baloch, a senior official of the Chagai District administration, as saying.

Local traders have said that they are facing serious problems, as most of the edible items come from across the border through the zero-point.

"If the border is not opened soon there will be a shortage of food and other items in Pakistan's border areas," a local trader said.

Iran Turns Down U.S. Offer to Talk

Iran yesterday turned down an offer made by U.S. Senator John Kerry to talk because the U.S. Democrats proved inconsistency in word and action.

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Head of the Majlis Commission on National Security and Foreign Policy Alaeddin Boroujerdi said that Iran turned down a request made by U.S. Senator John Kerry to pay a visit to Tehran.

He said that the request had been conveyed to Iran by the Swiss ambassador in Tehran.

Boroujerdi said the case is now regarded as closed and there is no room to be followed up.

According to Swiss ambassador to Tehran, the U.S. Senator John Kerry had voiced willingness to pay a visit to Iran and hold talks with the country's officials, Boroujerdi said.

Since there is no change in the U.S. policy concerning the Islamic Republic of Iran, there will be no change in Iran's policy as well, Boroujerdi underlined.

U.S. President Barack Obama, a Democrat, said in his statements after taking office that he extends hand of friendship to Iran, but, he did to the contrary.

He extended all the former sanctions on Iran signed by the former presidents and signed a new unilateral sanctions in a publicized ceremony to block Iranian development in the field of oil and gas.

Supreme Leader Raps U.S., UK, Zionists Over Zahedan Blasts

Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei yesterday held the U.S., Britain and the Zionist regime responsible for raising terrorists to escalate sectarian Shia-Sunni tension in Iran.

The Supreme Leader expressed condolence to the bereaved families of the martyrs of Zahedan Mosque and prayed to immediate recovery of those injured in the two separate bombings.

In his message of condolence to mark seventh day of martyrdom of victims of the terror bombings, the Supreme Leader said that in this bloody incident the deviated Wahabi intruders backed by secret services of aliens took life of innocent people and inflicted human losses.

"The blind-hearted, ignorant murderers who are opposed to Islam and Muslims have targeted Muslims at different junctures, and their enmity with the Islamic Republic of Iran has roots in the role of the country in urging unity and solidarity among world Muslims which has brought the Muslims dignity and strength."

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The Supreme Leader said that the enemies seek to sow discord among Muslims through such bloody incidents, and that the Islamic Republic of Iran as the main supporter of oppressed Muslims in Gaza, Palestine, Afghanistan and Kashmir has currently been the target of secret services of the U.S., Britain and the Zionist regime.

They are ignorant to the fact that Iranian Sunnis along with their Shia brothers have proved their loyalty to the genuine Islam and have very bravely confronted the global arrogance and its mercenaries at various junctures.

“In our region, the blind and savage terrorism has roots in arrogant policies of the U.S., Britain and their lackeys, and it is incumbent upon all Muslims to fight the corrupt on earth.”

The Supreme Leader said that followers of all the Islamic schools of thought in Iran and the neighboring countries shoulder a much grave responsibility to thwart the plots hatched against Islam.

The Supreme Leader gave assurances that the Islamic Republic of Iran under no circumstances will let the global arrogance use Wahabiat or the other schools of thought to undermine the Islamic Ummah.

The Supreme Leader assigned the "three branches of government and their relative organizations to seriously deal with the enemies who targeted Iranian national unity."

Merkel: Iran Not Working Seriously With IAEA

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday Iran did not seem to be working seriously to solve disagreements over its nuclear program and she was skeptical a new round of talks would yield much.

"At the moment Iran does not seem to be working on solving the problems with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) with real seriousness," Merkel told a news conference.

Khatibi: Iran Will Adapt to New Sanctions

International sanctions against Iran are not new and it will adapt to the latest round of more severe U.S. and European measures that specifically target the oil and gas industry, Iran's OPEC governor told Reuters.

He also said Iran was willing to be flexible about which currencies it used for oil trade following statements it was contemplating the United Arab Emirates' currency for its European transactions.

Weekly report on Iran

"The point is the sanctions are not new. The shape is different. We can carry on," Iran's OPEC governor Mohammad Ali Khatibi said in a telephone interview yesterday.

The European Union is also expected to adopt new sanctions on Monday.

Analysts have said the tougher measures would make it even more difficult for Iran to develop its dilapidated oil industry and to import refined products to make up for the country's lack of refining capacity.

Khatibi said Iran could cope.

"Still we are developing projects and we can expand our gas industry, refining, petrochemicals industry," he said.

"We can change our industry to produce more gasoline. We are constructing some refineries."

"We are going to adjust our local prices, not only for gasoline but for other fuels," said Khatibi.

"I am sure when the price is adjusted from very low levels to international levels consumption will reduce significantly."

Khatibi said Iranians would understand and the reduction of subsidies, in line with fuel-conserving initiatives across the world, was positive.

"People understand this limitation is because we are engaging with something like war. There are some difficulties I know, but everybody understands that there is some difficulty," he said.

"We have planned to change and we are using this as an opportunity."

Iran's adaption to successive waves of sanctions has included a shift to euros, rather than dollars for some of its oil trade.

Now the new European measures raise the possibility banks could block euro transactions with Iran, an Iranian official said on Sunday Iran could seek payment in UAE dirhams instead for European customers.

Khatibi said it was up to the Iranian central bank to comment, but what he could say was that Iran was flexible.

"I can say that we are flexible if we feel that the euro is good, also the dollar, also the dirham, the yuan, the yen. We're flexible," he said.

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An official from the central bank told Reuters, the change of currency was not an issue for it either.

"This is an issue between the Iranian exporters and importers," he said.

"Right now we have no problems accepting euros but in the future this might change because there might be some transaction blocks due to the sanctions and this is an issue that everyone is looking into right now but no decision has been made on what to do."

Khatibi did not directly say whether he was comfortable with a U.S. futures price of nearly \$78 a barrel on Wednesday, but he saw room for it to rise.

"It depends on the cost of other commodities because, as you know, in the oil industry we have to use some other commodities for equipment. It's a dynamic issue," he said.

"From a producer point of view, in some areas production costs are very high."

He cited the BP deepwater spill in the U.S. Gulf as a driver of costs, with knock-on effects for the price.

"Deepwater might be tougher than before. I think there is room for some price improvement," he said.

Larijani: U.S. Dare Not Strike Iran

Majlis Speaker Ali Larijani discusses a possible U.S. attack on Iran, saying Washington lacks the courage to attack Tehran.

"Iran is ready for any possible incidents and is well aware of the ongoing developments in the region. If the US makes such a mistake, it will pay dearly," Larijani said in a meeting with head of the Cuban Parliament Ricardo Alarcon on the sidelines of the third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in Geneva on Tuesday.

The Iranian official also pointed to "very complicated" situation in the Middle East and said the U.S. approach to Iran's nuclear case has been a complete farce, ISNA reported.

Larijani further pointed out that Tehran and Havana enjoy amicable relations and stressed the importance of enhancing parliamentary ties between the two countries.

The Cuban speaker denounced U.S. media propaganda against the Islamic Republic.

"The U.S. tries to hide facts. It pursues an illogical attitude to Iran," Alarcon stated.

According to the Cuban official, Israel is a tool in the hands of the United States and urged Iran, Cuba and countries which seek to become independent from the U.S. to strengthen their ties.

FM Denies Detention of Swiss Envoy

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast said here on Saturday evening that the news concerning the detention of Swiss Ambassador to Tehran Livia Leu Agosti is neither accurate nor true.

According to the report of the Foreign Ministry Media Department, Mehman-Parast said that the news published in some news sites concerning the arrest of the Swiss envoy in one of the cities of North Khorasan province was reflected neither accurate nor true and the incident, as they described it, is not correct.

Majlis Passes Bill on Safeguarding Nuclear Achievements

The Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) approved here yesterday the bill on safeguarding the nuclear achievements to counter the US and UK plots in this regard.

The emergency bill was finalized after being reviewed by the MPs after the outline of it garnered 181 votes in favor, three against and six abstentions from the members of parliament who were present in the Majlis open session.

By finalization of the bill, the Iranian government is obliged to make the country self-sufficient in various fields of peaceful nuclear technology.

The bill also gives permission to the government to counter actions by those states who strive for inspection of the Iranian ships or refuse to supply fuel to the country's planes.

The bill is comprehensive and consists of five articles within the framework of Iran's commitments to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Recently, the United Nations Security Council and the U.S. along with some European states have taken measures to make the country cease its "peaceful" nuclear activities.

Economic News

UAE Dismisses Iran Idea of Dirham Oil Trade

DUBAI (Dispatches) - The United Arab Emirates central bank governor dismissed yesterday reports that Iran may seek payment in dirhams for its oil exports to Europe to get around sanctions, saying the UAE had no time for jokes.

An Iranian official said on Sunday Tehran was discussing internally the idea of switching to dirhams from euros as a possible way to deal with tougher EU sanctions that could block Iranian transactions in the single European currency.

"Is this a joke? We have no time to entertain jokes," Sultan Nasser al-Suweidi said in a response sent to Reuters by email by his office following a request for comment on the reports.

Analysts say the United Arab Emirates, a U.S. ally and major oil exporter whose ties with Iran are already strained, would likely resist such a change given its wish to avoid being sucked deeper into the dispute over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Diplomatic relations between the UAE and Iran, which have strong trade links, are growing increasingly fraught.

Earlier this month, the UAE ambassador to Washington appeared to suggest that Abu Dhabi would support the U.S. using force to stop Iran's nuclear program, although the UAE's state news agency later said his remarks were taken out of context.

Pakistani Banks Refuse to Handle Transactions With Iran

Economic sanctions on Iran by the United States has also affected Pakistan's exports as all major banks have refused to conduct transactions with the troubled nation, exporters said on Monday.

Although there is no official ban on the transactions of Pakistani banks with Iran, banks are hesitant to incur the superpower's wrath, they said. Several Pakistani exporters' dues were withheld in Iran as no bank was ready to conduct transactions, they added.

The head of a private bank on the condition of anonymity said that they were in no position to challenge this power structure. He agreed that a majority of Pakistani banks were not conducting transactions with Iran.

One of the major trade routes with Iran is via sea to Bandar Abbas from the Pakistani ports, while the land route to Taftan in Iran is from the Chaman border in Balochistan.

An exporter said that the land route remains unfeasible for exporters from Karachi. This route is also used as a means of smuggling. According to reports, Iran closed its Taftan border with Pakistan on Sunday amid threats of suicide attacks in its territories.

Pakistan had been conducting trade with Iran via Dubai. After dollar transactions from Iran stopped under the sanctions, Dubai banks started transactions in euro, but now it is carried out in the UAE dirham, a source said.

According to the data of the Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS), exports to Iran declined by 55 percent to \$116.79 million during the eight months from July 2009 to February 2010 against \$259.70 million during the corresponding period last year.

Kazim Khandawala, one of the leading basmati rice exporters, told The News that a majority of the banks in Pakistan stopped transactions with Iranian banks since one-and-a-half-year.

“We had been doing our business via Dubai. If we state Bandar Abbas as our port of destination in the State Bank of Pakistan’s export form, banks refuse to handle the money.”

Global Firms Invited to Join Iran Energy Projects

Global energy majors are welcome to help develop oil and gas projects in Iran despite new sanctions imposed on the Islamic republic, a top official told reporters on Monday.

"We welcome all international companies, eastern or western. The oil industry cannot be deprived of cooperation," said Mohammad Hossein Mousavizadeh, adviser to Pars Oil and Gas Co, which is developing the giant South Pars fields in Persian Gulf waters.

Mousavizadeh said the development of South Pars, which holds about eight percent of world gas reserves, was not affected as Iranian companies were replacing global firms or foreign firms were staying on as associates.

"The development of South Pars is a closed chapter. The contracts have been closed with big consortiums," he told reporters after they were given a tour of phases 14, 15, 16, and 18.

"These (Iranian) consortiums have foreign associates ... In the past, foreign companies came as leaders of consortiums such as (France's) Total which was in charge of construction, technology and finance," he said.

"But that model is over now," Mousavizadeh said, indicating that Iranian companies were now leading the projects and sanctions were not affecting the development of South Pars.

"The sanctions are mainly for their companies not ours. We are not worried about sanctions in terms of technology. If we face any problem, we have to plan for it."

China's Cooperation in Gasoline Production

China announced its readiness to cooperate in gasoline production projects in the country and to finance some oil refineries, said deputy petroleum minister.

Referring to the new round of Tehran-Beijing negotiations on the abovementioned fields, Alireza Zeighami said at present Chinese companies cooperate in the construction of Shazand Arak Oil Refinery.

Zeighami was quoted by Mehr News Agency as saying that Chinese companies expressed their preparedness to cooperate in building the new seven oil and gas condensate refineries in the country.

Last year, Deputy Petroleum Minister for International Affairs Hossein Noghrekar said China invested some 705 billion euros in the construction of Iran's new oil refineries.

Noghrekar added China's Sinosure was among these companies.

Currently Persian Gulf Star, Kuzestan, Hormoz, Pars, Anahita, Shahriar and Caspian are among Iran's new seven crude oil and gas condensate refineries.

He added, "Some 23 billion dollars are needed for the construction of these refineries."

"With the implementation of these projects, the country's refining capacity of crude oil and gas condensate will reach 3.2 million barrels per day from the current 1.67 million barrels daily."

Carpet Exports Up \$104m

The Islamic Republic of Iran exported 104 million dollars of various Persian carpets during the first quarter of the current Iranian year (started March 20, 2010), said head of Iran National Carpet Center.

"The exports show 37 percent growth over the same period last year," Feisal Mardasi added.

According to him, currently Iran has 30 percent share of the world's carpet export market.

Announcing that Iranian carpets have numerous buyers in global markets, he said that European countries, USA and Persian Gulf littoral states were among major buyers of Persian carpets.

"Iran has planned to export 500 million dollars of its carpets by the end of the current Iranian year (ending March 20, 2011)," he said adding that the figure shows 10 percent growth over the last year.

Referring to Iran's subsidies cut plan, he added the Commerce Ministry will support the country's carpet industry in this regard.

Meanwhile carpet center of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Shahr Kord University.

Iran's Share of Global Exports to Rise

Economist predicted that Iran's share of global exports will rise in the current year (2010).

According to the report, Iran's share in global exports reached 0.56 percent in 2010 from 0.53 percent the year before.

The index will stand at 0.53 percent in 2011, 0.51 percent in 2012, 0.46 percent in 2013 and 0.43 percent in 2014.

Economist predicted that Iran's share in global export will witness the highest fall in 2014 standing at 0.43 percent.

Economist predicted that Iran's exports in 2010 will increase to 80.1 billion dollars in 2010 from 67.4 billion dollars in 2009.

Iran's exports in terms of value are expected to be 82.4 billion dollars in 2011, 86.6 billion dollars in 2012, 85 billion dollars in 2013 and 85.4 billion dollars in 2014.

Tajikistan: Iran Trustful Partner in Trade Cooperation

Head of Tajikistan's Customs Service Nemat Rahmatov described Iran as a stable and trustworthy partner of his country in economic and trade ties and cooperation.

"Iran, along with China, Russia, Turkey and Kazakhstan, is one of the countries which have stable and growing exchanges with Tajikistan," Rahmatov told FNA yesterday.

He mentioned that Iran and Tajikistan have exchanged 94.4 million dollars worth of goods during the current year, adding that Tajikistan has imported 66.4 million dollars worth of commodities from Iran while Iran's imports from Tajikistan stood at 28 million dollars during the said period.

Rahmatov also underlined that the dire consequences of the global economic meltdown as well as the obstacles created by certain regional countries for the transit of goods to Tajikistan have not affected the volume of his country's trade exchanges with Iran.

Iran and Tajikistan have recently accelerated expansion of their ties and cooperation and observers believe that the good achievements of their mutual cooperation, especially in

energy and industrial fields, should be deemed as a result of the efforts made by the two countries' officials.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, visited Dushanbe on January 4 on the first leg of his bi-nation tour of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan to confer on the further bolstering of bilateral ties and cooperation in several meetings with senior officials of the two Central Asian states.

The two countries inked three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and two documents with Iran on mutual cooperation as well as a joint statement during Ahmadinejad's trip to Dushanbe.

Azadegan Oilfield MDP Approved

Director of the Azadegan oilfield development plan, Nasereddin Eftekhar said National Iranian South Oil Company has accepted the Master Development Plan (MDP) of China National Petroleum Corporation International (CNPCI) to develop the field.

The contract for participation of CNPCI in Azadegan oilfield development plan was signed after six months of negotiations with Naftiran Intertrade Company (NICO) during which the Iranian company agreed to transfer 70 percent of its shares in the field to the Chinese company.

Under the contract from 90 percent share of NICO, 70 percent transferred to CNPCI and the share of NICO reduced to 20 percent. The other 10 percent shares of the project belong to Japanese company, INPEX Corporation.

National Iranian South Oil Company Managing Director, Gholamreza Hasan Beiglou has already said the second phase of the early development of Azadegan oilfield has been completed and production of the field has risen to 50,000 barrels per day.

Azadegan as a mega oilfield and the largest oil discovery in the last 30 years was discovered in 2000. In place reserves of the field has been estimated at 42 billion barrels. The oilfield is located 83 kilometers south east of Ahwas city and its Northern and Southern fields cover an area more than 900 kilometers.

He said that all executive, technical and engineering planning of the project as well as providing the equipments have been done by the company's staff. He also noted that operational and executive activities are underway to stabilize production from the field.

Hasan Beiglou pointed out that the ability to produce 50,000 of oil from the field indicates the optimizing methods to produce oil without foreign investment have been successful, noting that the produced oil is transferred to number 3 exploitation unit of Ahwas city through two 10 and 12 inch pipelines.

Agro Product Exports Up

Iran's agricultural products exports increased 27.4 percent in the first quarter of the current Iranian year (started March 21), Iranian commerce minister announced on Sunday.

Speaking in Iran's Parliament, Mehdi Ghazanfari said also agricultural products imports saw 18 percent decrease over the same period.

Meanwhile Iran exported some 162 million dollars worth of fruits during the mentioned time, he added.

"The figure shows a 52 percent growth compared with the same period last year."

Based on Iran's Fourth Development Plan (2005-2010), it was estimated that 12.8 billion dollars worth of non-oil products should be exported in the last year of this plan while the figure reached 21.3 billion dollars, he added.

Referring to the imported agricultural products' tariff, he said tariff in last year's budget bill were significantly increased.

"We witnessed 90 percent rise in some products' tariff."

He went on to say that Iran ranked 14 in imported agricultural products among 200 world countries.

Turkmen Delegation Due in Tehran

A delegation of Turkmen officials is scheduled to pay a visit to Iran on Saturday in a bid to continue talks about the two neighboring countries' cooperation in the energy sector.

The delegation will be headed by Deputy Chairman of Turkmenistan's Cabinet of Ministers for International Relations Rasit Meredow.

Asked to comment on the trip by the Turkmen delegation to Iran, Iranian Ambassador to Ashgabat Mohammad Mousa Hashemi Golpayegani told FNA that the visit would take place at the invitation of Iranian Oil Minister Masoud Mir-Kazzemi.

The envoy said that the Turkmen president has ordered the delegation's visit to Tehran following Mir-Kazzemi's recent visit to the Central Asian state.

"The delegation to be dispatched by Turkmenistan to Iran will study and pursue the new proposals raised in grounds of the expansion of the two countries' cooperation in the energy sector, specially in oil and gas fields," Hashemi Golpayegani continued.

He added that another delegation of Turkmen oil and gas experts and officials will arrive in Tehran on Thursday to pave the way for the upcoming visit by Meredow.

U.S. Watchdog Moves to Smother Iran Trade

A top U.S. financial watchdog outlined fresh measures to isolate Iran Tuesday, as Washington attempts to ramp up pressure on the Islamic Republic over its nuclear program.

Securities and Exchange Commission chairman Mary Schapiro told Congress she was working on measures that would make it easier for companies to abandon their stake in firms that trade with Iran.

The rules would "make it clear that an investment company cannot be sued for divesting itself from stocks of companies that deal with Iran," said Schapiro.

It would also make it clearer when companies face sanctions for dealing with Iran.

"There are punitive sanctions that can be levied against companies that violate the Iran sanctions Act," Schapiro told the congressional committee.

"That can create material contingent liabilities that need to be disclosed by public companies."

Earlier this month President Barack Obama signed into law the toughest ever U.S. sanctions on Iran.

Iran to Establish Bank in Algeria

The Islamic Republic of Iran tends to establish a bank in Algeria, Tehran ambassador to Algiers.

In an interview with Moj News Agency yesterday, Iranian ambassador, Hossein Abdi Abyaneh, announced of approval on establishment of a joint investment fund between Iran and Algeria, adding that the two countries have entered serious negotiations on establishment of an Iranian bank in Algeria, as well.

"Once the joint investment fund is established, the major problems on the way of making joint ventures between the two countries will be removed," Abyaneh said.

Referring to a visiting Iranian delegation arrived in Algeria this week to attend "Isfahan Cultural Week Ceremony", he regarded such events as a way to boost bilateral ties.

The Iranian delegation is headed by Isfahan Governor General, Zaker Isfahani.

Inviting Iranian investors to take part in various projects in Algeria, Abyaneh said that currently Iranian companies have 200 million dollars projects underway in Algeria.

He referred to Algeria's second economic plan adding that based on the Fifth Five-Year Development Plan (2010-2015), the Algerian government will fund 286 billion dollars to reconstruct the country.

He said that the plan could be regarded as a wonderful opportunity for Iranian investors to take part in the various projects covered by the plan in different sectors including transportation, housing, education, medicine and health, oil and gas.

Sanctions to Hurt Foreign Firms

Iran minimizes U.S. unilateral sanctions on its energy sector, saying the embargoes have nothing to do with Iran's oil and gas industries, but will rather cripple foreign firms.

"Sanctions will affect foreign companies, making them face difficulties in world trade. Sanctions are the West's decision. However, Iran is seeking cooperation," Shana quoted senior advisor of Iran's Pars Oil and Gas Company (POGC), Mohammad Hassan Mousavizadeh as saying on Tuesday.

Speaking to reporters on their visit to Pars Special Economic Energy Zone, Mousavizadeh reiterated that the recently approved sanctions have nothing to do with Iran's oil and gas industries.

The POGC advisor stressed that approved sanctions against the Islamic Republic would not prevent foreign firms from joining South Pars development projects, noting that such firms can participate in the pending phases through negotiations with Iranian contractors.

Mousavizadeh, however, said that managing the projects by Iranian companies does not rule out the participation of foreign firms in South Pars projects.

The Iranian official further announced that European countries can plan on importing gas from Iran's South Pars gas field in the future.

Russia is currently Europe's main gas market.

Self-Sufficiency in Urea Production to Be Reached

The second unit of Pardis Petrochemical Company was test launched with the capacity of 3,250 tons of urea production a day (1,075,000 tons a year).

By putting the second unit of Pardis Petrochemical Company into operation, the complex's agricultural urea production would reach to 2,150,000 tons a year, which would meet the country's need for the material.

Weekly report on Iran

The country's current agricultural urea production is 4,442,000 tons and it means that by launching the unit, Iran would be self-sufficient in producing urea.

Iran Keen on Buying 40% of Nigeria Unity Bank's Share

Two Iranian banks have announced their readiness to buy 40 percent stake of Nigeria's Unity Bank, Compass Newspaper reported.

"Unity Bank has entered new serious negotiations with two major Iranian banks that wished to secure a 40 percent equity stake," the bank's Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Mallam Falalu Bello was quoted by the newspaper as saying.

"Recently, the Governor of Central Bank of Iran came to my office and said that there are some Iranian banks that want to invest in Nigerian banks," he said adding that "If they come and we agree with them, all we are after is to get somebody who will come into the bank and add value to it."

UAE Dismisses Iran Idea of Dirham Oil Trade

The United Arab Emirates central bank governor dismissed yesterday reports that Iran may seek payment in dirhams for its oil exports to Europe to get around sanctions, saying the UAE had no time for jokes.

An Iranian official said on Sunday Tehran was discussing internally the idea of switching to dirhams from euros as a possible way to deal with tougher EU sanctions that could block Iranian transactions in the single European currency.

"Is this a joke? We have no time to entertain jokes," Sultan Nasser al-Suweidi said in a response sent to Reuters by email by his office following a request for comment on the reports.

Analysts say the United Arab Emirates, a U.S. ally and major oil exporter whose ties with Iran are already strained, would likely resist such a change given its wish to avoid being sucked deeper into the dispute over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Diplomatic relations between the UAE and Iran, which have strong trade links, are growing increasingly fraught.

Earlier this month, the UAE ambassador to Washington appeared to suggest that Abu Dhabi would support the U.S. using force to stop Iran's nuclear program, although the UAE's state news agency later said his remarks were taken out of context.

Iran, Egypt to Create Joint Bank

Head of Iran Foreign Investment Company (IFIC) said that Egypt and Iran will create a joint bank in Tehran for the first time, Mehr News Agency reported.

The new bank will be a branch of the Misr Iran Development Bank (MIDB).

IFIC head Mehdi Razavi told Mehr News Agency that last year MIDB transferred funds worth \$50 million to Iran.

According to Razavi, it is planned to expand activity of the new bank created by the two countries.

Iran and Egypt's diplomatic relations have been severed since 1979.

Iran, Turkey to Launch Joint Investment Companies

Iranian Labor Minister Abdolreza Sheikholeslami in a meeting with Turkish Minister of Public Works and Housing Mustafa Demir proposed establishment of joint investment companies by Tehran and Ankara.

"Establishing joint companies which would run activities in the two countries or in the third countries is a good proposal for promoting the level of relations between Iran and Turkey," Sheikholeslami said Saturday evening.

He stressed that Iran spares no efforts to settle problems in its mutual cooperation with Ankara, and reminded that success in achieving goals and fulfilling plans depends on the level of attention the officials of the two countries pay to the issues under discussion.

Materialization of the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) signed by the two countries requires continued monitoring and supervision, Sheikholeslami continued.

Iran and Turkey have in recent years boosted their cooperation in different fields of economy, security, trade, education and culture.

Iran's GDP to Increase by \$54b

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will exceed 416 billion dollars in 2010, Economist said in its report.

In its June edition report on Iran's macro economic indexes, Economist predicted that Iran's GDP will increase to 416.1 billion dollars in 2010 from 361.2 billion dollars in 2009.

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According to the report, the figure will show 54.9 billion dollars growth.

Iran's GDP in 2011 will stand at 4490.1 billion dollars showing 74 billion dollars growth over 2010, according to the report.

It is predicted that the index shows a 94.8 billion dollars growth in 2012 exceeding 584.9 billion dollars.

Economist believes that the growing process will go on in 2013 and 2014 and Iran's GDP will stand at 692.7 billion dollars and 4806.6 billion dollars, respectively.

Iran Floats Idea of Using UAE Dirhams in Oil Trade

Iran may seek payment for its oil exports to Europe in UAE dirham rather than euros because tougher EU sanctions could block Iranian transactions in the single European currency, an Iranian official said yesterday.

"This matter of changing over to UAE dirham is under discussion among Iranian officials at the moment but has not been implemented yet," the official from the Iranian Embassy in the United Arab Emirates told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

"The weak position of the euro and the dollar, in addition to the fear of blocking transactions if these currencies are used in trade, is what led Iran to consider the switch."

The dollar is the standard currency for oil trade, but Iran had shifted to the euro for European deals in response to many years of U.S. sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Last month Europe also toughened its sanctions against Iran in a stepped-up international effort to make Tehran suspend a nuclear program. Iran said it seeks only civilian energy from its uranium enrichment process.

The Iranian official said talks were internal at this stage, and that Tehran had not yet broached the subject with Abu Dhabi.

Oil transactions can in theory be carried out in whatever currency the parties involved decide.

Industry sources have said Iran and China, one of Iran's main trading partners, were also discussing possible payments in Chinese yuan.

Ornamental Fish Exports to Iraq Up

The Islamic Republic of Iran's ornamental fish exports to Iraq exceeded 142,000 dollars, Iran Fisheries Organization reported.

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During the first three months of the current Iranian year (started on March 21), Iran has exported 104,800 pieces of various ornamental fish to Iraq, according to the report.

The exports are valued at 142,733 dollars, showing 50 percent growth over the same period last year.

Cichlid, Oscar, Zebra and Barb were among major ornamental fish Iran exported to Iraq during the mentioned period.

Politico-Strategic News

AEOI Obligated to Enrich Uranium to 20%

Lawmakers in Majlis yesterday obliged the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to provide the country's research reactors with their needed 20% enriched nuclear fuel.

Iranian research reactors need the 20% uranium for medical, industrial and agricultural goals.

The parliamentary instruction came after the Majlis approved the outlines of a bill on Sunday which demanded the government to protect the country's achievements in the field of peaceful nuclear technology.

Yesterday, more details of the bill were debated.

According to the first article of the bill the government is obliged to confront oppressive measures of certain hegemonic countries through investment in different fields of peaceful nuclear technology including nuclear fuel cycle and make the country self-sufficient in this regard.

Article 2 of the bill demands the government to follow NPT-stipulated safeguards related demands in keeping with the levels the safeguards rights of Iran are secured.

The government was also obliged to take actions in retribution if any country tried to inspect Iranian planes and ships or refused to deliver fuel to Iranian planes.

Iran Dismayed at Medvedev Perception About Its Nuclear Program

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast yesterday expressed dismay over Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's perception about Iranian nuclear program.

Mehman-Parast made the remarks in his weekly press briefing with domestic and foreign reporters.

He said that Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has already given response to misunderstanding of state of affairs about Iranian nuclear program by the Russian president.

He has a misunderstanding about peaceful nuclear program of Iran which should be corrected, Mehman-Parast said adding that close cooperation between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency is a strong reason to prove that the country's nuclear program is of peaceful nature.

"We have clarified our strategy in nuclear program to the international community and maintained that Iranian nuclear activities are totally peaceful," he said.

He said that the Iranian nation expects their government to make efforts to vindicate their legitimate rights enshrined by Non-Proliferation Treaty and in line with the Safeguards Agreement of the IAEA.

"If there would be any doubts on peaceful nature of a country's nuclear program, it should be supported with concrete documents," he underlined.

"Why aren't you concerned about the nuke military program of the Zionist regime that has stockpiled over 200 nuclear warheads, posing threats to the countries in the region?," Mehman-Parast questioned.

"We advise all countries to consider real threats prior to making any comments on nuclear activities of other countries," the spokesman said.

On Saudi Arabia, he said they believe conditions are now ripe for expanding and boosting ties and cooperation with Saudi Arabia.

"Iran and Saudi Arabia are two major countries of the region, with very high potentials for cooperation," he said in response to frequent questions about the recent remarks by Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal who had said in an interview with French daily Liberation on Saturday that Iran "deserves" to be treated as a leading force in the Middle East.

"We can play highly serious roles in the establishment of tranquility and development of our own region through cooperation," he continued.

"The ground is now prepared for promoting the (two countries') relations to the highest level possible," the spokesman reiterated.

Mehman-Parast reiterated that Iran and Saudi Arabia should increase their regional cooperation seriously, and cautioned that differences and disagreements among the regional countries merely serve the interests of the Zionist regime and enemies of the region and the Muslim world.

"It is fully clear that Iran considers a very high position for Saudi Arabia and we believe that all the regional countries should pursue a trend of convergence through cooperation and a collective plan in a bid to have the best conditions dominate our region," he said.

Military Threats to Iran Borders "Inefficient Move"

A senior Iranian commander said that military threats to Iran's border regions would yield no fruit for the enemies.

"Posing military threats to the bordering areas has lost its effectiveness as a method," Commander of Iran's Border Guards Hossein Zolfaqari said.

Meantime, the commander reminded that Iran shares 9,000km of borderlines with its neighbors, and underlined the necessity of serious attention to the protection of the country's bordering areas.

"The importance of this issue is more felt when considering the presence of trans-regional powers in the neighboring countries," he added.

His remarks came after two bomb blasts in front of the Zahedan Grand Mosque in Sistan and Balouchestan province in southeastern Iran on Thursday night killed at least 27 people and injured over 270 more.

New Submarines to Be Unveiled

Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi says Iran is to unveil its new domestic submarines next month.

Vahidi said the submarines are totally made in the country and will be delivered to Iran's Navy by mid-August.

Asked about the Russian S-300 defense system deal, Vahidi said the deal is not cancelled and Tehran is seriously following up on the issue through negotiations.

Under a contract signed in 2005, Russia was required to provide Iran with at least five S-300 air-defense systems. However, Moscow has continually delayed the delivery of the

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sophisticated defense system prompting Tehran to express displeasure with the Russian procrastination.

Concerning the sanctions against the country, Vahidi also said: "Sanctions had no effect on our activities".

On June 9, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution imposing a fourth round of sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program.

Tehran rejects Western accusations that it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons, arguing that the International Atomic Energy Agency in its reports has confirmed the non-diversion of nuclear material in Iran.

No Missile System to Iran

Israel reacted positively on Tuesday to Moscow's announcement that it will not deliver S-300 surface-to-air missile defense systems to Iran.

Russia's Interfax news agency quoted a top military official as saying the United Nation's latest Iran sanctions, which Moscow had backed, ruled out the delivery of missile systems.

Russia sold the systems to Iran in 2007, but has yet to deliver them, although Iranian military officers are reportedly being trained on the systems at a base near Moscow.

Russian military official Alexander Fomin on Tuesday did not refer to the S-300s by name, but pledged Moscow would desist from supplying "large missile systems," in accordance with the sanctions, Interfax reported.

During a visit to Jerusalem three weeks ago, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that a presidential decree on what weapons would and would not be sold was being formulated, following the UN Security Council resolution in June to impose a fourth set of sanctions on Iran.

One of the most advanced multi-target anti-aircraft-missile systems in the world, the S-300 has a reported ability to track up to 100 targets simultaneously while engaging up to 12 at the same time.

Iran Outlines Solutions to Afghan Crisis

At the international conference on Afghanistan, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki outlines Tehran's solutions to the Afghan crisis.

Weekly report on Iran

Speaking at an international conference on Afghanistan yesterday, Mottaki called for a regional solution to the Afghanistan crisis and blamed growing insecurity and drug trafficking on foreign military presence in the war-ravaged country.

During his speech, he outlined five Iranian proposals to bring back stability to Afghanistan. He said that any solution to the Afghan crisis needs to take into account the following issues:

- 1) The Afghan Constitution is the greatest achievement of the country and hence needs to set the criterion for any measures to be taken in the country. Besides that, the process of government formation and the reinforcement of civil institutions should be supported by the international community.
- 2) The presence and increase of foreign forces will not help the situation in Afghanistan. Afghan people and government need to be trusted and a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces should be set as well.
- 3) A double standard policy on fighting terrorism has to be avoided.
- 4) Security and development are two inseparable factors; hence the reconstruction of Afghanistan and its infrastructures should become the focus of more attention. In doing so, Iran continues to contribute to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and welcomes other countries' participation as well.
- 5) Regional cooperation needs to be supported as the proper approach to the issue. Iran for its part continues to hold regional meetings on Afghanistan and expects other non-regional countries to support the move. Iran believes that increased regional cooperation in transportation, energy and other sectors will contribute to development in Afghanistan.

The international conference on Afghanistan opened in Kabul on Tuesday, with Afghan President Hamid Karzai delivering the opening speech.

Delegates from more than 70 countries and several international bodies, including United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, are attending the one-day conference.

Iran has attended the meeting as an immediate neighbor of Afghanistan.

Increasing the capacity of the Afghan security forces and reconciliation with Taliban militants are the main topics of the Kabul Conference.

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Social News

Iranian Artist Sadeq Tabrizi to Display Artworks in London

Veteran artist and collector Sadeq Tabrizi is planning to display a collection of his calligraphic-paintings at Barbican Center in London in the near future.

Tabrizi has been working on this collection for the past six months. “I will be putting on show 40 large size artworks that I’ve created,” he told the Persian service of MNA.

Barbican Center is a large performing arts center in London. The center hosts classical and contemporary music concerts, theater performances, film screenings and art exhibitions. Its art gallery presents major exhibitions by leading international figures.

“The exact date for the exhibit has not been determined yet. I must first complete the artwork going on display and then submit a copy of them on a CD before determining the timeframe of the exhibit.

Tabrizi is also planning to publish his memoirs about Iranian artistic movements and cultural events he has experienced throughout his life in a book.

Born in 1939 in Tehran, Tabrizi is among the avant-garde Iranian painters. He has held many exhibits in Iran and foreign countries. His exhibit in 1970 was sponsored by French art critic Michel Tapie in Paris.

The artist possesses a collection of glasses, beads and icons of Qajar era, as well as tea-house paintings.

Minister Welcomes Expatriate Physicians Back

Minister of Health Dr. Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi here yesterday welcomed the return of Iranian physicians who are living abroad.

Dastjerdi made the remark during a visit to a center in Tehran dedicated to the affairs of Iranian living in other countries. She termed the return of this group of Iranian physicians as a helpful approach benefitting Iran's health system.

Minister of Health added that Islamic Republic of Iran has a say in producing medicine in the region by supplying some 96 percent of its needed medicine inside the country.

Smokers to Be Banned From Executive Jobs

Smokers are to be banned from entering high-ranking executive jobs in the government, the news agency ILNA reported.

According to new regulations approved by the cabinet, relevant applicants should neither smoke nor drink alcohol or take any kind of drugs, to maintain the mental and physical health of future executive officials.

The smoking ban is new and part of the government's general anti-smoking campaign.

In case of protests by rejected applicants, the final decision is to be made by a medical council from the medical university of their hometowns on whether the required health conditions are met or not, said ILNA.

The new regulations will take effect as soon as inked by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the report said.

Iran Ranks 1st in Medicine Production in Region

Iranian Minister of Health and Medical Education Marzieh Vahid Dastjerdi said the Islamic Republic of Iran ranks first in medicine production among regional countries.

"96 percent of the medicine required for the treatment of different diseases is being produced inside the country," she added.

"The remaining four percent imported medicines are needed for treatment of cancer and blood diseases," the minister said.

She also said Iranian expatriates are welcomed to join the drive to produce medicine inside the country and make investment in this regard.

"Iranian government welcomes their participation," she added.

Iran Re-Takes Crown in Sitting Volleyball World Championships

Iran took last year's revenge against Bosnia-Herzegovina in five sets final to re-take the men's crown in the 2010 Sitting-Volleyball World Championship in Oklahoma yesterday.

Iran beat Bosnia-Herzegovina in a thrilling final 3-2 to take back its title from Bosnia.

Weekly report on Iran

Iran won the first two sets but their archrival opponents fought back to win the next two sets. In the final set, Iran won it 15-11 to celebrate the championship.

Both teams secured a berth in the 2012 Paralympic Games in London by advancing to the championship.

"It feels good to win after working so long toward it," said Iran coach Hadi Razee through a translator.

Iran was up a set before Bosnia stormed back to win the fourth set and force the decisive fifth frame.

"Our players thought it was over after two sets, and they let up," Razee said.

"I told them it takes 25 points to win, not 24. That's the beauty of this sport."

Egypt won the third-place match to also qualify for the 2012 Games.

"It's great to be in a position where we don't have to worry about qualifying."

Iranian expats in Oklahoma who wildly cheered Iranian volleyball players during the games played a key role in their victory.

Iran on way to their titles had defeated Ukraine, China, Kazakhstan and Serbia earlier.

It is Iran's sixth title in the World Championship and just lost once in the last edition against Bosnia.