

Globalized Business and politics; A View from Muslim world

Weekly report on Iran

Report # 134

22nd August 2010 to 28th August 2010

Presentation Date: 1st September 2010

Muhammad Rasheed

Summary of Report..... 3

IRAN

Politico-Strategic Front 8

- Iran Unveils Its First Locally Made Long-Range Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
- Iran: no concern over refueling planes
- Iran Begins Producing Missile-Carrying Speedboats After Announcing Drone
- Interior minister: Iran has produced 100 kilograms of enriched uranium
- Tehran seeking energy cooperation with UAE: ambassador
- Iran test fires surface-to-surface missile
- Kuwait expresses concerns over Iran's Bushehr reactor
- Iran Willing to Give Military Aid to Lebanese Army, Defense Minister Says
- Official: Kurdish rebels attack gas pipeline
- In Israel, UN atom watchdog asked to curb Iran
- France warns Iran of regional conflict
- Iran to launch Rasad 1 satellite in 2011
- 'Iran's nuclear gains benefits Muslims'
- 'US pressuring Iran for Israel recognition'
- Iran lawmaker: Soft war threat real

- Iran Asks Russia to Make Production of Nuclear Reactor Fuel a Joint Effort

Economic Front 20

- LyondellBasell ending Iran operation
- Iran Says Turkey May Help Build Two Petrochemical Units in Country's South
- Iran offers setting up economic bloc
- Tehran shuts Swedish cosmetics firm, arrests five
- Iran says has no problem securing gasoline imports
- \$1bn investment in Iran's power plants
- Iran begins oil production in joint field
- Iranian firm to buy Daewoo Electronics
- Iran to boost gasoline production
- Turkey vows to continue Iran projects
- Iran withdraws assets from Europe

Social Front..... 29

- Iranian activist sues telecoms firm over 'spying system'
- FIFA president invited to Iran
- MPs considering a plan to tighten women's security
- 3 Iranian judicial officials suspended over Kahrizak
- Carla Sarkozy Urges Clemency for Iran Mother Sentenced to Death by Stoning
- Iran recognises protesters dead in jail as 'martyrs'
- Iran envoy visits Pakistan flooded areas
- Kalhor plans concert in Tehran
- Iranian gardens in Venice biennial
-

Summary of Report

Politico-Strategic Front:

Iran Unveils Its First Locally Made Long-Range Unmanned Aerial Vehicle President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unveiled Iran's first locally made long-range unmanned aerial drone, saying his country's military arsenal is aimed solely at deterring enemies. Iran has hailed its recent military advances as proof that it is technologically self-sufficient and ready to confront threats, even as the country remains under four sets of United Nations sanctions for refusing to scale back its nuclear program.

Iran: no concern over refueling planes Parvaresh says now most of the European airports offer fuel to Iranian airplanes. Despite the recent anti-Iran sanctions, Iran Air's chairman says the carrier has no problem in supplying airplane fuel in European airports.

Iran Begins Producing Missile-Carrying Speedboats After Announcing Drone Iran announced it has begun producing two types of missile-equipped speedboat, a day after the country unveiled a long-range drone that can carry bombs.

Interior minister: Iran has produced 100 kilograms of enriched uranium Iran has produced 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of enriched uranium, interior minister was quoted Friday as saying. The semiofficial ISNA news agency carried comments by Mostafa Purmohammadi, the interior minister, who said that Iran now has 3,000 hooked-up centrifuges actively enriching uranium.

Tehran seeking energy cooperation with UAE: ambassador Iran is determined to open a new chapter in its cooperation with the United Arab Emirates especially in oil and energy sector, Tehran's new ambassador to Abu Dhabi says. Iran and the UAE as two oil-rich countries in the region are expected to increase their cooperation in the energy sector, he suggested.

Iran test fires surface-to-surface missile Iran has test fired its home—built surface—to—surface Fateh 110 missile, state television reported on Wednesday, less than a week after a similar test was carried out on another missile. State television showed a sand—coloured missile being launched from a vehicle and blasting into the sky from a desert terrain, leaving behind a thick plume of smoke. It did not say when the missile was fired.

Kuwait expresses concerns over Iran's Bushehr reactor Kuwait has expressed safety concerns over Iran's new nuclear reactor on the opposite side of the Gulf, fearing fallout from possible leaks, the official news agency KUNA reported. Kuwait is the nearest country to the Russian-built nuclear plant in the Iranian city of Bushehr, located like Kuwait in the northern Gulf.

Iran Willing to Give Military Aid to Lebanese Army, Defense Minister Says Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said his country is willing to provide military help to Lebanon, a day after Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah called on the Lebanese army to seek Iran's support.

Official: Kurdish rebels attack gas pipeline An official says suspected Kurdish rebels have blown up part of an Iranian-Turkish pipeline, shutting down the natural gas supply to Turkey. Gov. Ali Yerlikaya of Agri province says no one was injured in the blast late Tuesday. The gas flow was immediately cut and repairs to the pipeline were under way Wednesday. Iran is a major supplier of natural gas to Turkey, after Russia.

In Israel, UN atom watchdog asked to curb Iran Israel, facing new scrutiny at the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency for its assumed atomic arsenal, lobbied the agency's visiting director on Wednesday to regard Iran as the region's real proliferation risk. International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano arrived on Monday with a mandate to discuss an Arab-led resolution to bring Israel's secret Dimona reactor under inspections, officials said. The resolution will likely be debated again at next month's IAEA assembly in Vienna.

France warns Iran of regional conflict Sarkozy has warned of a "military conflict" if Iran "follows its nuclear path." Amid Israel's threats to attack Iran, France has warned Tehran of military conflict in the region if a nuclear agreement with world powers is not reached. Sarkozy warned that if Iran "follows its nuclear path," it would lead to a "general proliferation in the region or even military conflict,"

Iran to launch Rasad 1 satellite in 2011 Iran will put the domestically-made Rasad 1 satellite into orbit by March next year, Iran's minister of Communications and Information Technology says. The Iranian minister further explained that final tests and preparation for launching the satellite are being carried out.

'Iran's nuclear gains benefits Muslims' Former head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) hails Iran's entry into the 'atomic club' as a positive development in the Muslim world. "Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant is a victory for Iran and indicates that Iranians do their best to achieve their peaceful objectives but the US and Israel are not ready to accept this achievement", said Lt. General Hamid Gul in an interview with Iran's Fars News Agency.

'US pressuring Iran for Israel recognition' Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement says US efforts to rally international pressure against Iran are aimed at maintaining the interests of the Israeli regime. "The main reason [behind US and Westerns pressure] is to force Iran to get along with Israel and recognize this fabricated, illegitimate regime," he noted, referring to US-brokered UN Security Council sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program.

Iran lawmaker: Soft war threat real Senior Iranian lawmaker Gholam Ali Haddad Adel says the West has launched a "serious soft war" campaign against the Islamic Revolution. The former parliament speaker named media as a soft war weapon and highlighted its role in recent velvet revolutions across the globe.

Iran Asks Russia to Make Production of Nuclear Reactor Fuel a Joint Effort Iran's government has asked Russia to turn the production of reactor fuel for a new Iranian power plant into a joint project that may supply similar facilities planned across the Persian Gulf nation, Vice President Ali Akbar Salehi said.

Economic Front:

LyondellBasell ending Iran operations LyondellBasell Industries NV will terminate all its operations in Iran, a country long subject to U.S. government sanctions where the big European-based plastics maker has had some non-U.S. subsidiaries doing business. LyondellBasell's decision was first reported Tuesday by The Wall Street Journal.

Iran Says Turkey May Help Build Two Petrochemical Units in Country's South Turkey and Iran may jointly build two petrochemical units, state-run Press TV news channel reported, citing Iran's Deputy Oil Minister. Iran and Turkey are discussing construction of an urea and an ammonia unit in the industrial hub of Assaluyeh in southern Iran, Press TV said, citing Abdolhossein Bayat, who is also the managing director of National Iranian Petrochemical Co.

Iran offers setting up economic bloc Iran is ready to hold a meeting with economy ministers of Syria, Iraq, and Turkey to discuss setting up an economic bloc in the region, the Iranian Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance stated.

Tehran shuts Swedish cosmetics firm, arrests five Iranian authorities have arrested five employees of Swedish direct-sales cosmetics firm Oriflame and shut its Tehran office amid reported Iranian allegations of a massive pyramid scheme. The Oriflame Tehran branch was on Sunday "abruptly shut down with authorities coming into the office," the company's chief financial officer Gabriel Bennet told AFP.

Iran says has no problem securing gasoline imports Iran denied on Wednesday reports that sanctions are making it harder to import gasoline, one of the most vulnerable parts of the Iranian economy, which lacks sufficient domestic refining capacity.

\$1bn investment in Iran's power plants Foreign investors including companies from Germany and UAE have invested more than one billion dollars in Iran's power plant industry, a report says. According to a recently released market study, Iran will account for 17.08% of Middle East and Africa regional power generation by 2014.

Iran begins oil production in joint field The Hengam oilfield was developed by Iranian contractors in less than two years. Iran has officially begun pumping crude oil from the Hengam oilfield shared with neighboring Oman in the Persian Gulf, after a \$400mn two-year development. He said Iran's oil ministry invested around \$400 million in a record time of two years to develop the project.

Iranian firm to buy Daewoo Electronics South Korea's Daewoo Electronics will likely be sold to Iranian company. Creditors of Daewoo Electronics are about to ink a deal to sell the South Korea's number 3 electronics firm to Iranian home appliance maker Entekhab Industrial Group. The South Korean company's creditors including Woori Bank, chose in April Iran's Entekhab Industrial Group as the preferred bidder for their 97.5 percent stake in Daewoo Electronics, Yonhap news agency quoted financial sources as saying on Tuesday.

Iran to boost gasoline production Iranian Oil Minister Masoud Mir-Kazemi says 20 million liters of gasoline will soon be added to the nation's current output. Iran's gasoline production will soon be increased by 20 million liters, making the country self-sufficient despite sanctions, the Iranian oil minister has said. The Nabucco pipeline is a proposed natural gas pipeline from Turkey to Austria

Turkey vows to continue Iran projects Turkey vows to continue joint projects with Iran despite sanctions imposed by some western countries, Turkish Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergun has said. The Turkish official made the comments during an interview with NTV broadcaster on Thursday, Reuters reported. Earlier in August, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz had said Ankara would support Turkish firms in exporting gasoline to Iran despite US unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

Iran withdraws assets from Europe A top Iranian official says Tehran has withdrawn its assets from European banks to counter new financial sanctions imposed on the country over its nuclear program. The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said on Friday that the preemptive measure was a precautionary response to a potential European decision to freeze Iranian asset.

Social Front:

Iranian activist sues telecoms firm over 'spying system' An imprisoned Iranian activist is suing Nokia Siemens Networks (NSN) over allegations that the telecommunications company provided the Islamic regime with a monitoring system it used to spy on the opposition Green movement. Isa Saharkhiz, a prominent journalist and political figure, was arrested after last summer's disputed presidential election.

FIFA president invited to Iran FIFA president Sepp Blatter has been invited to Iran to assess the development of women's football in the country. Blatter watched Iran and Turkey's girls soccer match in the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore. Iran's participation in the inaugural

event was in doubt after FIFA refused them permission to wear a uniform in line with the nation's Islamic dress code. But following personal intervention by Blatter, the world governing body finally approved an altered kit that swapped the proposed headscarf for a cap that covers the hair, but not the neck.

MPs considering a plan to tighten women's security The Majlis is mulling over a major plan to provide greater security for women, MP Zohreh Elahian announced recently. Women's security from all aspects of making culture to legal issues are spotlighted in the proposal, the MP noted, expressing hope that the plan will be approved by the end of the current Iranian year.

3 Iranian judicial officials suspended over Kahrizak Three high-ranking judicial officials at the Tehran Prosecutor's Office who were connected with the case of the Kahrizak detention center have been suspended from duty, an informed source has told the Mehr News Agency. The three officials were stripped of their judicial immunity and are to be held accountable like ordinary citizens.

Carla Sarkozy Urges Clemency for Iran Mother Sentenced to Death by Stoning French first lady Carla Bruni- Sarkozy published a letter today in three national media outlets supporting an Iranian mother sentenced to death by stoning after being convicted of adultery.

Iran recognises protesters dead in jail as 'martyrs' Three anti-government protesters who died in a notorious jail have been dubbed "martyrs" by an Iranian official body, a move which would ensure benefits for their families, a report said on Wednesday.

Iran envoy visits Pakistan flooded areas The deputy consul general of Iran in Pakistan has visited flood-stricken areas of the country to assess how to provide medical services to the affected people. The envoy offered his sympathy to the Pakistani victims and said the Iranian government will provide Islamabad with medical assistance.

Kalhor plans concert in Tehran Internationally acclaimed Iranian musician Kayhan Kalhor will perform duet concerts with celebrated Turkish instrumentalist Erdal Erzincan at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on September 12-14. A performance is also scheduled for September 15-16 in Shiraz, Fars province.

Iranian gardens in Venice biennial A collection of photos of Iranian gardens will be showcased in the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennial scheduled to start on August 28. Announcing this, head of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry's Visual Arts Office, Mohammad Shaloui, told Fars News Agency that 46 images of Persian gardens would be among the highlights of the event. Sixty-three countries, including Russia, Canada and the UK, will be attending the event.

Detailed News:

Politico-strategic Front:

Iran Unveils Its First Locally Made Long-Range Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

By Ladane Nasserli - Sun Aug 22 08:48:01 GMT 2010

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad unveiled Iran's first locally made long-range unmanned aerial drone, saying his country's military arsenal is aimed solely at deterring enemies.

"We are not after adventurism," Ahmadinejad said at a ceremony in Tehran marking Iran's annual Defense Industry Day, his comments aired live by state-run Press TV. "Iran will never attack anywhere."

The Iranian leader was shown standing on a podium next to the newly introduced aircraft, known as the Karrar, which can also carry out bombing missions against ground targets, the news channel said.

Iran has hailed its recent military advances as proof that it is technologically self-sufficient and ready to confront threats, even as the country remains under four sets of United Nations sanctions for refusing to scale back its nuclear program.

The U.S. and several of its allies say Iran's nuclear activities are a cover for development of a bomb, a claim that Iran rejects, saying it needs the technology to generate power for its growing population. Israel, which hasn't ruled out attacks against Iran's nuclear sites, views the work as a threat to its existence.

"The main message of our defense achievements is to deter any type of confrontation," Ahmadinejad said at the launch of the Karrar.

Iran: no concern over refueling planes

Sun Aug 22, 2010 1:24PM

Parvaresh says now most of the European airports offer fuel to Iranian airplanes.

Despite the recent anti-Iran sanctions, Iran Air's chairman says the carrier has no problem in supplying airplane fuel in European airports.

"There were some problems that caused trouble for Iran Air for 20 days," Farhad Parvaresh said on Sunday, adding that the company nevertheless continued its flights over Europe by supplying fuel from other sources.

Parvaresh said now most of the European airports offer fuel to Iranian airplanes.

In July, the US imposed new unilateral sanctions against Iran aimed at preventing Tehran access to imports of refined oil products.

There were reports that Britain and Germany refused to provide fuel for Iranian passenger planes following US unilateral sanctions. The reports were later denied.

Germany's Transport Ministry was quoted by Reuters as saying that the refueling of Iranian planes was not banned under European Union or United Nations sanctions and that a future ban of this order was not foreseeable.

Iran Begins Producing Missile-Carrying Speedboats After Announcing Drone

By Ladane Nasserli - Mon Aug 23 11:23:20 GMT 2010

Iran announced it has begun producing two types of missile-equipped speedboat, a day after the country unveiled a long-range drone that can carry bombs.

“Enemies should be careful not to play with fire,” Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said on state television today at the opening ceremony for the vessels’ production lines. “If they attack Iran our response will not be limited to one region and will be unpredictable.”

The Seraj-1 is a rapid-assault vessel that can operate in stormy weather, while the Zolfaqar can travel at 82 miles per hour and is equipped with the Nasr missile to strike enemy ships, Vahidi said, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency. Both speedboats will “significantly boost the Iranian navy’s defense capability,” he said. Further details on the new boats weren’t available.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who attended a ceremony in Tehran yesterday to mark Defense Industry Day, said the aim of his country’s military program is “to deter any type of confrontation.

The Karrar is Iran’s first domestically built drone and can carry as many as four cruise missiles and two 250-pound (113- kilogram) bombs and has a range of 1,000 kilometers (620 miles), according to state television.

Iran has hailed its recent advances as proof it is technologically self-sufficient and ready to confront threats, even while under four sets of United Nations sanctions for refusing to scale back its nuclear program.

The U.S. and several of its allies say Iran’s nuclear activities are a cover for development of a bomb, a claim that Iran rejects, saying it needs the technology to generate power for its growing

population. Israel views the work as a threat to its existence and hasn't ruled out attacks against Iran's nuclear facilities.

Interior minister: Iran has produced 100 kilograms of enriched uranium

TEHRAN (AP) - Iran has produced 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of enriched uranium, interior minister was quoted Friday as saying.

The semiofficial ISNA news agency carried comments by Mostafa Purmohammadi, the interior minister, who said that Iran now has 3,000 hooked-up centrifuges actively enriching uranium. "In the first steps, we were halted and they (the West) did not allow our only 20 centrifuge machines to work," Purmohammadi said. "But right now, 3,000 of the machines have been operational and more than 100 kilograms of enriched uranium has been ready and stored." Purmohammadi also said that more than 150 metric tons of primary materials of uranium gas have been stored in the Iranian nuclear facilities. Centrifuge machines spin uranium hexafluoride gas and convert it into enriched uranium. Purmohammadi did not elaborate on the percentage of enrichment of the stored enriched uranium. The comments came as Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, was scheduled to meet Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog agency in Vienna, Austria, for talks expected to push for a new round of negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program. In its latest report last month, the UN watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, said it was analyzing 269 metric tons of uranium gas — the precursor of enriched uranium — that Iran had submitted as its inventory of the substance and that Tehran was continuing the process of producing small amounts of non-weapons grade enriched uranium. Larijani was on Saturday to travel to Lisbon, Portugal, for talks with the European foreign commissioner, Javier Solana

Tehran seeking energy cooperation with UAE: ambassador

TEHRAN – Iran is determined to open a new chapter in its cooperation with the United Arab Emirates especially in oil and energy sector, Tehran's new ambassador to Abu Dhabi says.

"I hope we can strengthen our relations in all areas," Mohammad Reza Fayyaz told the Mehr News Agency.

Fayyaz said during his tenure as ambassador he will do his best to increase Iran's trade ties with the UAE more than before.

Iran and the UAE as two oil-rich countries in the region are expected to increase their cooperation in the energy sector, he suggested.

Asked about the effect of sanctions on Iran's economic ties with the UAE, he said, "Our bilateral relations are good and (we) try to make it better."

He also advised the media outlets not to be influenced by those who are trying to undermine the amicable relations between the two countries

Iran test fires surface-to-surface missile

Tehran: Iran has test fired its home—built surface—to—surface Fateh 110 missile, state television reported on Wednesday, less than a week after a similar test was carried out on another missile.

State television showed a sand—coloured missile being launched from a vehicle and blasting into the sky from a desert terrain, leaving behind a thick plume of smoke. It did not say when the missile was fired.

Iran's English—language Press TV said the Fateh 110 (Conqueror) missile is nine metres long and weighs 3,500 kilograms.

The channel's website quoted Defence Minister Ahmad Vahidi as saying that the third generation Fateh 110 was a “single stage solid propellant” missile with a longer range.

He did not specify the range of the missile but Iran has previously paraded a version of Fateh 110 which it said could travel between 150 and 200 kilometres.

“More accurate”

Mr. Vahidi said the latest version of Fateh 110 was “more accurate.”

The launch of Fateh 110 follows an announcement by Vahidi on Friday that Iran had successfully test fired its Qiam (Rising) short range missile, which was propelled by liquid fuel.

The test firing of Fateh 110 comes two days after Iran began mass—producing two high—speed variants of missile—launching assault boats, the Seraj and Zolfaqar. — AFP

Kuwait expresses concerns over Iran's Bushehr reactor

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait has expressed safety concerns over Iran’s new nuclear reactor on the opposite side of the Gulf, fearing fallout from possible leaks, the official news agency KUNA reported.

“Kuwait’s concern is based on fears of any leaks due to natural causes that may have future consequences,” KUNA quoted Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Khaled al-Jarallah as saying late on Monday.

Kuwait is the nearest country to the Russian-built nuclear plant in the Iranian city of Bushehr, located like Kuwait in the northern Gulf.

Iran loaded the Bushehr facility with nuclear fuel last Saturday and the United States said there was no “proliferation risk” from the civilian plant because of Russian involvement.

A number of Kuwaiti MPs, however, have called on the government to take precautionary measures against any incident from Iran’s first nuclear plant.

But Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told reporters at his weekly press conference on Tuesday that the Bushehr plant adheres to “high standards” and had the seal of approval of the UN nuclear watchdog.

“Due to the high standards with regards to safeguards in the Bushehr nuclear power plant, there should be no concern about it,” he said. “The International Atomic Energy Agency has approved the safeguards in the Bushehr plant.”

Later on Tuesday, a Kuwaiti envoy met Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Tehran and expressed his country’s desire to increase cooperation with Iran.

“It is necessary that the two countries increase cooperation and ties in different fields,” Mohammad Abdullah Abolhassan was quoted as saying by Mehr news agency after delivering a written message from the Kuwaiti emir to Ahmadinejad. “Today, Kuwait is seeking to strengthen and deepen its ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran in every aspect.”

Ahmadinejad also expressed “trust” in Iran’s ties with Kuwait. He said the two countries were proceeding “jointly on issues ... Iran and Kuwait have cultural similarities. They can raise the level of cooperation and ties between the two countries,” Ahmadinejad said.

According to Kuwaiti media, a senior Iranian official is expected in the emirate within days, possibly to discuss the nuclear plant issue. Meanwhile, during a brief visit to Kuwait Monday, following talks in Tehran, Qatar’s Premier Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani said in a statement carried by KUNA that the Bushehr plant was Iran’s business.

“If the plant is peaceful and for power use according to our information, then this is a legitimate right for Iran under international law and we do not want to change this framework at the present time,” he said. – AFP

Iran Willing to Give Military Aid to Lebanese Army, Defense Minister Says

By Ladane Nasserli and Massoud A. Derhally - Wed Aug 25 12:29:21 GMT 2010

Iranian Defense Minister Ahmad Vahidi said his country is willing to provide military help to Lebanon, a day after Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah called on the Lebanese army to seek Iran’s support.

“Lebanon is our friend and its army is also our friend,” Vahidi was cited by Iranian state television as saying after a cabinet meeting in Tehran today. “If this country makes a request we are ready to help them and have a military exchange.”

Iran, ruled by Shiite Muslim clerics, is a backer of the Shiite Hezbollah movement. The organization is part of a coalition government under Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who heads a pro-Western bloc.

In a televised speech late yesterday, Nasrallah said Lebanon’s government should seek military aid for the country’s army from Arab states, and that he’s prepared to mediate with Iran to secure arms for Lebanese forces if necessary. A \$100 million U.S. aid package for Lebanon’s military was put on hold this month by two Democrats in the House of Representatives.

“It’s difficult to give probability on something that is obviously for the government to decide and it hasn’t decided yet; I don’t want to speculate,” said Mohamad Chatah , Hariri’s chief political adviser, in a phone interview today when asked whether Lebanon would accept Iranian military aid. “There is a principle here that we need to keep our army well equipped and well trained. The discussion on the sources of the equipment is something that needs to be decided by the government.”

Border Clash

The U.S. aid was frozen after Howard Berman of California, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Nita Lowey of New York said they need to know more about a fatal border clash in southern Lebanon between the Lebanese military and Israel, and the military’s relationship with Hezbollah.

Until that review is finished, “I cannot in good conscience allow the United States to continue sending weapons to Lebanon,” Berman said in a Aug. 9 statement.

The Aug. 3 shooting left four people dead, including two Lebanese soldiers and an Israeli officer, after Israeli troops tried to trim a tree along the United Nations’ Blue Line separating the two countries.

The Lebanese government said the delay to the aid package was “unwarranted” and that the U.S. help was allowing Lebanon’s army to extend its authority to the region bordering Israel.

Israel believes Hezbollah has an arsenal of 40,000 short- and medium-range rockets and a force of 20,000 fighters, around a third of whom have received combat training in Iran, Israel’s Haaretz newspaper reported last month.

Israel and Hezbollah fought a month long war in the summer of 2006 along the border. Part of Hezbollah's popularity stems from its role in forcing Israel's army to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000. The U.S. and Israel consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

Official: Kurdish rebels attack gas pipeline

ANKARA, Turkey—An official says suspected Kurdish rebels have blown up part of an Iranian-Turkish pipeline, shutting down the natural gas supply to Turkey.

Gov. Ali Yerlikaya of Agri province says no one was injured in the blast late Tuesday. The gas flow was immediately cut and repairs to the pipeline were under way Wednesday.

Yerlikaya did not say when the pipeline would be operational.

Kurdish rebels have attacked pipelines close to the border with Iraq and Iran in the past as part of their campaign for autonomy. Two people were killed in a similar attack on an Iraqi-Kurdish oil pipeline on Aug. 10.

Iran is a major supplier of natural gas to Turkey, after Russia.

In Israel, UN atom watchdog asked to curb Iran

By Dan Williams

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - Israel, facing new scrutiny at the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency for its assumed atomic arsenal, lobbied the agency's visiting director on Wednesday to regard Iran as the region's real proliferation risk.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano arrived on Monday with a mandate to discuss an Arab-led resolution to bring Israel's secret Dimona reactor under inspections, officials said.

The resolution will likely be debated again at next month's IAEA assembly in Vienna. The Japanese diplomat's talks were interspersed with a helicopter tour designed to showcase Israel's geographical vulnerability.

His Israeli hosts made little public mention of Israel's nuclear capabilities, pointing instead at arch-foe Iran, whose uranium enrichment the West suspects is to make for bombs, though Tehran denies having hostile designs.

Israel's Atomic Energy Commission issued a statement quoting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials warning Amano of "the danger inherent to the Iranian nuclear programme and the need for the international community to enlist to halt it".

Alluding to criticism at the IAEA of Israel's policies, the commission said Amano had also been urged "not to allow tendentious attempts to steer the international community's attention away from the real nuclear proliferation challenges of the Middle East".

Arab and some other members of the IAEA want Israel to sign the 1970 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which would require it forswear nuclear weaponry while making it eligible for assistance in civilian atomic energy production.

By staying outside the NPT, Israel has maintained secrecy over a programme widely believed to have yielded the region's only atomic arsenal -- perceived as an irritant and threat among its neighbours.

Israel's veiled arguments that such capabilities are justified by its small size and numerically superior enemies won endorsement from U.S. President Barack Obama last month.

An IAEA resolution from September 2009 asked Amano to consult "concerned states" on how to bring Israel into the NPT, and to report back to the next assembly.

Israel has conditioned its joining the NPT on comprehensive Middle East peace -- something unlikely when powers like Iran refuse to recognise the Jewish state.

NEUTRAL REPORT

One Vienna-based diplomat predicted the Amano report would be "absolutely neutral".

Appointed in December, Amano has presided over more critical IAEA assessments of Iran, which is an NPT signatory. That has been welcomed by Israelis who had long distrusted Amano's Egyptian predecessor, Mohamad ElBaradei.

"Since you have taken office ... we feel a sense of professionalism, objectivity, and fairness," Israeli President Shimon Peres's office quoted him as telling Amano.

"Your position requires someone that all sides rely upon, someone who differentiates between good and evil, between those who try to deceive the international community and those who don't." Amano was not available for comment during his visit which ended on Wednesday but the statement from Peres's office quoted Amano as praising an Israeli hospital that practises nuclear medicine as "a good example in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes".

France warns Iran of regional conflict

Sarkozy has warned of a "military conflict" if Iran "follows its nuclear path." Amid Israel's threats to attack Iran, France has warned Tehran of military conflict in the region if a nuclear agreement with world powers is not reached.

"If a credible agreement cannot be reached, Iran's isolation would only worsen," French President Nicolas Sarkozy said on Wednesday, a few days after the inauguration of Iran's first nuclear power plant.

Iran on Saturday began loading fuel to its first nuclear power plant in the southern city of Bushehr in the presence of the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) inspectors and senior Iranian and Russian officials.

Sarkozy warned that if Iran "follows its nuclear path," it would lead to a "general proliferation in the region or even military conflict," Reuters reported.

Western powers accuse Iran of developing a military nuclear program. Iran rejects the allegations, arguing that its nuclear activities, which are within the framework of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and monitored by the IAEA, are totally peaceful.

Under the allegation that Iran is a threat to its existence, Israel has threatened to attack the country's nuclear facilities.

"I hope that we can find a good agreement in the coming months ... and that the concerns of the international community are lifted," Sarkozy concluded.

Iran to launch Rasad 1 satellite in 2011

Wed Aug 25, 2010 3:35PM

Iran will put the domestically-made Rasad 1 satellite into orbit by March next year, Iran's minister of Communications and Information Technology says.

"The satellite, its carrier, earth stations and launch pad will be designed and built by domestic specialists," Reza Taqipour said on Wednesday.

Taqipour went on to say that Rasad 1 (meaning observation in Persian) will carry photographic and remote measuring equipment, adding that the images taken by the satellite will be used in meteorology and identifying sea borders, and in "national projects."

The Iranian minister further explained that final tests and preparation for launching the satellite are being carried out.

Iran launched its first domestically produced satellite, Omid (meaning hope) into orbit in 2009.

To date, only eight countries have put domestically-made satellites into orbit. Tehran also plans to send its first astronaut into space by 2021.

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

'Iran's nuclear gains benefits Muslims'

Fri Aug 27, 2010 12:6AM

Former head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) hails Iran's entry into the 'atomic club' as a positive development in the Muslim world.

Former head of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) hails Iran's entry into the 'atomic club' as a positive move in the Muslim world, vowing that fierce anti-Iran campaigns by US and Israel stems from Tehran's Islamic nature.

"Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant is a victory for Iran and indicates that Iranians do their best to achieve their peaceful objectives but the US and Israel are not ready to accept this achievement", said Lt. General Hamid Gul in an interview with Iran's Fars News Agency.

The Americans plotted with Israelis to impose sanctions on Iran to weaken its economy, but they have failed to realize that Iranians have grown immune to sanctions by adopting appropriate measures in response, said Gul.

General Gul was referring to the US-led anti-Iran sanctions passed by the UN Security Council in June and the additional unilateral sanctions imposed by US and EU in an effort to exert extra pressure on the Islamic Republic, forcing it to abandon its civilian nuclear program that has been under intense monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Hamid Gul served as the director general of Pakistan's ISI during 1987-89, mainly at the time when Benazir Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan. He was also instrumental in channeling the anti-Soviet support for the Mujahedin in the Afghanistan War of 1979-89. He began his military career in 1958 and helped lead forces allied to the United States during the effort to end the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

Gul was also among those who immediately challenged the US version of the 9/11 terror events in New York and Washington and the subsequent Bush era's so-called "War on Terror," warning the United States was being manipulated from within and without.

'US pressuring Iran for Israel recognition'

Fri Aug 27, 2010 2:9PM

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement says US efforts to rally international pressure against Iran are aimed at maintaining the interests of the Israeli regime.

"The mounting US and Western pressure on Iran is not solely over [the country's] peaceful nuclear activities," IRNA quoted Senior Hezbollah official Sheikh Mohammed Yazbek as saying on Friday.

"The main reason [behind US and Westerns pressure] is to force Iran to get along with Israel and recognize this fabricated, illegitimate regime," he noted, referring to US-brokered UN Security Council sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program. The cleric, however, downplayed the influence of "the political and economic pressure by the global arrogance and the West" on Iran, and underscored that such measures would not propel Tehran into making concessions regarding recognition of Israel.

"Under no circumstances will Iran recognize the Zionist regime (Israel)," he said.

Addressing US President Barack Obama, Sheikh Yazbek said, "Neither you, nor your predecessors have been able to undermine the grandeur, magnanimity and independence of the Islamic Republic."

The Hezbollah official said the Israeli regime would not be able to continue its existence in the Middle East with peace, reminding that thousands of displaced Palestinians are looking forward to returning to their occupied motherland.

He also denounced the international community's inaction toward the plight of the Palestinian nation -- especially in the Gaza Strip -- saying sympathy alone would not do any good to those who remain under Israeli occupation.

Iran lawmaker: Soft war threat real

Fri Aug 27, 2010 4:6PM

Senior Iranian lawmaker Gholam Ali Haddad Adel says the West has launched a "serious soft war" campaign against the Islamic Revolution

"Soft war' is not a joke.... It is a serious reality facing the Islamic Revolution," The head of the cultural committee of the Iranian parliament (Majlis) said late on Thursday.

"Therefore, to defend the [Islamic] Revolution we need to identify weapons used in 'soft war,' and equip ourselves to the very weaponry in order prepare for this war and defend ourselves," he urged.

The former parliament speaker named media as a soft war weapon and highlighted its role in recent velvet revolutions across the globe.

Haddad Adel described media conviction behind the recognition of the fabricated, illegitimate Israeli regime as the biggest lie on face of the planet, saying Tel Aviv's legitimacy could never be proved.

"The occupying Israeli regime drove out a nation through conspiracy, killing and terror... this is unrivaled throughout history... but we see this giant lie has continued to exist over the past 62 years thanks to its media power."

Major television networks with a large number of viewers, satellites and most internet websites are dominated by Israelis, he noted.

Haddad Adel referred to the frenzy following the country's 2009 presidential election as part of a soft war campaign against the Islamic Republic.

He blamed the post-elections unrest on Western media and satellite channels, which purposefully pursued the developments in Iran and provoked distrust and discord among the Iranian nation.

Iran Asks Russia to Make Production of Nuclear Reactor Fuel a Joint Effort

By Ladane Nasseri -Thu Aug 26 08:28:30 GMT 2010

Iran's government has asked Russia to turn the production of reactor fuel for a new Iranian power plant into a joint project that may supply similar facilities planned across the Persian Gulf nation, Vice President Ali Akbar Salehi said.

"We have offered to set up a consortium with Russia, so that part of the work is led in Russia and part in Iran," Salehi, who heads Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, was quoted as saying today in Tehran by the official Islamic Republic News Agency. "Russia is currently reviewing the proposal."

Russian engineers started a 1,000-megawatt power reactor near the southern Iranian city of Bushehr on Aug. 21, making Iran the first country in the Middle East with a nuclear-energy facility. Under Iran's agreement with Moscow-based Rosatom Corp., the state-owned Russian company will supply uranium for the Bushehr plant and take away spent fuel.

The United Nations passed a fourth round of sanctions against Iran in June over its nuclear work, which the U.S. and many of its allies say may be cover for a weapons program. At concentrations beyond reactor-grade, enriched uranium can form the core of a bomb. Iran, a signatory to the global nuclear Non-Proliferation-Treaty, says it needs the technology to generate electricity for a growing population.

Iran aims to build enough nuclear plants to produce 20,000 megawatts of power within 20 years. It says it is not opposed to using an outside source of fuel for the projects, while keeping open the option of producing its own supply. While Iranian officials have said they've enriched uranium to reactor-grade, they haven't yet produced the material in a form usable in a power station.

Iran needs to “show the world community that it is capable of transforming uranium into nuclear fuel,” Salehi said.

Economic Front:

LyondellBasell ending Iran operations

WASHINGTON (AP) -- LyondellBasell Industries NV will terminate all its operations in Iran, a country long subject to U.S. government sanctions where the big European-based plastics maker has had some non-U.S. subsidiaries doing business.

The company also will cease all business with Syria and Sudan, where it had more limited operations, David Harpole, a LyondellBasell spokesman in Houston, said Tuesday. The company is seeking approval from U.S. regulators to allow employees who are U.S. citizens help unwind the activities from outside the countries, he said.

President Barack Obama signed a bill last month imposing tough new sanctions against Iran over its alleged nuclear weapons program. The new law targets exports of gasoline and other refined petroleum products to Iran, and bans U.S. banks from doing business with foreign banks that provide services to Iran's Revolutionary Guard. Penalties against companies violating the sanctions could follow.

"LyondellBasell is committed to complying with all applicable sanctions, laws and regulations imposed by the United States," Harpole said in a telephone interview.

He said the company's new management team decided late last year not to conduct any new business in the three countries. LyondellBasell, one of the world's biggest plastics, chemicals and refining companies, soon will begin trading on the New York Stock Exchange - a factor that Harpole said figured in the decision.

Much of the company's business in the three countries involves licensing technology for plastics production, he noted. LyondellBasell's decision was first reported Tuesday by The Wall Street Journal.

Iran Says Turkey May Help Build Two Petrochemical Units in Country's South

By Ladane Nasserli - Mon Aug 23 06:36:13 GMT 2010

Turkey and Iran may jointly build two petrochemical units, state-run Press TV news channel reported, citing Iran's Deputy Oil Minister.

Iran and Turkey are discussing construction of an urea and an ammonia unit in the industrial hub of Assaluyeh in southern Iran, Press TV said, citing Abdolhossein Bayat, who is also the managing director of National Iranian Petrochemical Co.

Talks include construction of a petrochemical plant in Miyandoab in western Azerbaijan province that can produce 539,000 tons of petrochemical products annually, the TV station reported.

Bayat, who didn't name any Turkish companies, said businesses from Oman, Indonesia, Malaysia, Venezuela, Russia and South Africa have shown interest in cooperating with Iran in the development of petrochemical units, Press TV reported.

International sanctions have prevented Iran from realizing its potential as an energy supplier. Iran is the world's fourth-largest oil producer and has the second-biggest gas reserves after Russia.

Iran is under four sets of United Nations sanctions for refusing to scale back its nuclear activities. Iran says its nuclear program is solely for civilian purposes, a claim the U.S. and many of its allies reject.

In July, the U.S. blocked access to the American financial system for banks doing business in Iran. The European Union followed, banning investment and sales of equipment to Iran's oil and natural-gas industries.

Iran aims to implement 47 petrochemical projects by the end of 2015 to add a total of 43 million tons a year of capacity, the report published on Press TV's website said. Once those projects are completed, Iran's production will represent about 5.3 percent of global petrochemical output and about one third in the Middle East, it said.

Iran offers setting up economic bloc

Iran is ready to hold a meeting with economy ministers of Syria, Iraq, and Turkey to discuss setting up an economic bloc in the region, the Iranian Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance stated.

Shamseddin Hosseini made the remarks in a meeting with Syrian Economy and Trade Minister Lamia Assi in Tehran on Saturday.

Hosseini expressed hope that the neighboring states increase their economic ties in an effort to form a regional bloc in the Middle East, the Mehr news agency reported.

The minister also added that Iranian and Syrian officials plan to discuss setting up a joint investment company and the expansion of banking and insurance cooperation within two months.

Assi also welcomed further development of economic ties with Iran as well as setting up the joint investment company.

The talks came as Tehran on Friday signed a draft agreement on free trade with Syria in a move which can boost the country's economy in the face of Western sanctions.

The deputy commerce ministers of Iran and Syria inked the draft, and a final agreement is expected to be signed by Iranian Commerce Minister Mehdi Ghazanfari and the Syrian economy and trade minister.

The 23-article document applies to a wide variety of commodities in the fields of industry and agriculture, and is applicable to any product as long as 50 percent of it is produced in either country.

"This agreement can increase the 400-million-dollar volume of commercial exchange between the two countries to \$2 billion," IRNA quoted Ghazanfari as saying.

He added that the promotion of commercial relations with Syria will give Iran access to new markets, given the imposition of sanctions by the West against the country.

The Iranian minister said under the agreement, all existing tariffs would be reduced to four percent within a five-year period, adding that the deal does not interfere with the partnership of either side in economic cooperation with other states.

Tehran shuts Swedish cosmetics firm, arrests five

STOCKHOLM — Iranian authorities have arrested five employees of Swedish direct-sales cosmetics firm Oriflame and shut its Tehran office amid reported Iranian allegations of a massive pyramid scheme.

"The authorities have now closed Oriflame's operation in Tehran (and) have also detained three members of staff and two sales consultants without disclosed reasons," the company said in a statement on Monday.

The Oriflame Tehran branch was on Sunday "abruptly shut down with authorities coming into the office," the company's chief financial officer Gabriel Bennet told AFP.

"We are working with the embassy to find out why this is, and to try to secure (our employees') release," he said, adding that a Swede and another foreigner were among those arrested.

Bennet said the company so far had received no explanation from authorities about the closure and arrests, but believed they may be linked to its business model.

“Our business model is to sell cosmetics and give 40,000 Iranians, mainly women, a possibility to earn money through direct sales,” he said, adding that the arrests could be seen as a sign that business conditions in Iran were worsening.

Iranian media meanwhile reported Monday that the closure and arrests were linked to suspected fraud in connection to a massive pyramid scheme.

According to hardline Iranian daily Kayhan, the Oriflame headquarters in Tehran had on Sunday morning been “searched and sealed” and “four top managers were arrested on accusations of 250,000 cases of fraud” linked to a 70-million-dollar (55-million-euro) pyramid scheme.

The conservative Tehran Emrouz newspaper also said tax officials had seized Oriflame documents and had halted all its operations over suspected fraudulent operations.

“The company managers did not have a convincing answer when asked about compulsory sales of products, charging membership fees and recruiting members as consultants,” Hassan Radmard, the head of the Traders’ Centre at the Iranian commerce ministry, told the paper.

Oriflame “has over 200,000 members so it is a pyramid scheme with unlimited members,” he added.

Oriflame’s Bennet said he would not comment on these “rumours” further than to say any reference to a pyramid scheme was “ridiculous.”

“We work the same way in Iran as in the rest of the world, in over 60 countries ... A pyramid firm could not run an internationally recognised business for more than 40 years,” he said.

Oriflame acknowledged in its statement that business conditions were difficult in Iran, but said it was intent on staying in the country, which is an important part of its growing Asian business.

The company’s business in the country represents 20 percent of its sales in Asia, a region which produced fast growing sales totalling 39.2 million euros during the second quarter, according to an earnings report published this month.

Oriflame’s annual sales last year reached 1.32 billion euros worldwide.

The company said a definitive closure in Iran may lead to extraordinary costs of approximately 10 million euros this year, although it maintained its overall sales target.

Following the news Monday, Oriflame’s share price fell 3.36 percent in early afternoon trading on the Stockholm stock exchange, which was up 0.1 percent overall.

A spokeswoman for the Swedish foreign ministry meanwhile confirmed that one of the people detained held dual Swedish-Iranian nationality, something that could limit Swedish authorities' ability to help him, since Tehran does not recognise dual nationalities.

Iran says has no problem securing gasoline imports

TEHRAN (Reuters) – Iran denied on Wednesday reports that sanctions are making it harder to import gasoline, one of the most vulnerable parts of the Iranian economy, which lacks sufficient domestic refining capacity.

"We do not have any problem in securing the country's gasoline and we have not been facing any fuel deficiency," Oil Minister Massoud Mirkazemi was quoted as saying by the students news agency ISNA.

According to Reuters calculations based on trade sources, Iran's gasoline imports for August look set to be around half those of the previous month and down by almost 90 percent from a year ago.

A new round of U.S. and EU sanctions has choked off many potential suppliers to Iran, whose limited refining capacity means it has had to import up to 40 percent of its gasoline needs, even though it is the fifth-biggest oil exporter.

The sanctions are aimed at pressuring Iran to curb its nuclear program, which some countries fear is aimed at making weapons, something Tehran denies.

"Domestic gasoline production will be increased by 20 million liters (a day) soon and, because of this, we announce that we won't need to import gasoline," Mirkazemi said, without giving a time frame.

According to figures published by the oil ministry's news website Shana, Iran produces some 45 million liters of gasoline per day and consumes 63 million liters of the automobile fuel.

Iran started fuelling its first nuclear power station on Saturday, part of an ambitious program for a huge nuclear energy supply to reduce its consumption of fossil fuels, freeing up more for export.

\$1bn investment in Iran's power plants

Foreign investors including companies from Germany and UAE have invested more than one billion dollars in Iran's power plant industry, a report says.

“Germany has invested \$445 million in construction of the Parih-Sar combined cycle power plant in northern Iran, while the UAE has invested \$720 million in construction of a gas power

plant as well as a combined cycle power plant in Isfahan and Shiraz,” a report released by Iran's Ministry of Energy said, IRNA reported Monday.

According to a recently released market study, Iran will account for 17.08% of Middle East and Africa regional power generation by 2014.

Gas was the dominant fuel in Iran in 2009, accounting for an estimated 56.8% of primary energy demand (PED), followed by oil at 40.8% and hydro with a 1.4% share of PED.

Iran's Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance, Shamseddin Hosseini, announced earlier in August that the country has attracted billions of dollars of foreign investment despite the current decline in the flow of capital and foreign investment throughout the world.

“Iran ranked the sixth in attracting foreign investment in spite of the fact that foreign investment witnessed a 35 percent growth decline in the world,” Hosseini, who is also the Iranian government's economy spokesman, told reporters.

The minister announced that Iran attracted over \$3 bln of foreign investment in 2009 which showed an 87% increase compared with the same period in 2008.

Deputy Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance Behrouz Alishiri said in July that according to the International Monetary Fund, foreign investment in Iran has risen from \$900 million in 2007 to \$3 billion in 2009.

Iran begins oil production in joint field

Wed Aug 25, 2010 6:38AM

The Hengam oilfield was developed by Iranian contractors in less than two years.

Iran has officially begun pumping crude oil from the Hengam oilfield shared with neighboring Oman in the Persian Gulf, after a \$400mn two-year development.

“The field is to produce ten thousand barrels a day of the finest and lightest of Iranian crude in the first phase, but its production level will reach 16 thousand barrels in two months,” IRNA quoted Iranian Oil Minister Massoud Mirkazemi as saying on Tuesday.

He said Iran's oil ministry invested around \$400 million in a record time of two years to develop the project.

All aspects of the project, including field studies, design, construction and installment of machinery and pipelines have been carried out by Iranian contractors without any foreign aid.

Energy officials in Tehran said in July that as much as 35 percent of the energy development budget in Iran will go toward the development of joint oil fields.

Iran shares oil fields with most of its neighbors in the Persian Gulf region as well as Turkmenistan.

The Hengam oilfield is located along the maritime border with Oman. Tehran said the field is estimated to hold nearly 600 million barrels of oil.

Iranian firm to buy Daewoo Electronics

Wed Aug 25, 2010 7:48AM

South Korea's Daewoo Electronics will likely be sold to Iranian company.

Creditors of Daewoo Electronics are about to ink a deal to sell the South Korea's number 3 electronics firm to Iranian home appliance maker Entekhab Industrial Group.

The South Korean company's creditors including Woori Bank, chose in April Iran's Entekhab Industrial Group as the preferred bidder for their 97.5 percent stake in Daewoo Electronics, Yonhap news agency quoted financial sources as saying on Tuesday.

The final decision will be reached after the creditors end negotiations with Entekhab on the sale price during a meeting to be held next week.

The sale price is estimated to be at a range of 470 billion won (\$395.7 million) to 520 billion won which is considerably lower than the 605 billion won (508 million U.S. dollars) Entekhab had originally offered to pay.

"Majority creditors are expected to agree on the sale plan even though the sale price is lower than before," a creditor bank official said. "The sale of Daewoo Electronics sale has been delayed so long and there is no guarantee that we can receive higher prices from other prospective buyers."

Daewoo Electronics, a former subsidiary of the Daewoo Group which collapsed during the Asian financial crisis, was put under a debt workout program in January 2000.

Creditors' previous attempts to sell the company in 2006 and 2008 went in vain due to disputes over the bidding price.

A person familiar with the situation said in July that Entekhab sought to lower its initial bid price after identifying losses in Daewoo's books.

Iran to boost gasoline production

Wed Aug 25, 2010 2:58PM

Iranian Oil Minister Masoud Mir-Kazemi says 20 million liters of gasoline will soon be added to the nation's current output.

Iran's gasoline production will soon be increased by 20 million liters, making the country self-sufficient despite sanctions, the Iranian oil minister has said.

"With this increase in production, Iran will not be in need of further gasoline imports", Fars News Agency quoted Masoud Mir-Kazemi as saying after a cabinet meeting on Wednesday.

The UN Security imposed in June a fourth round of sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program.

Following the UN sanctions resolution, the US and the European Union imposed unilateral sanctions on the Islamic Republic which mainly target the country's energy sector.

Iran has stressed that it will soon reach self-sufficiency in gasoline production by constructing new refineries and improving the existing ones.

Mir-Kazemi further noted that the Oil Ministry has invested around \$1.8 billion in the exploration of new oil and gas fields.

Commenting on Iran's possible participation in the Nabucco pipeline project, Mir-Kazemi said, "Iran was not involved in the project from the beginning [in 2002], but Iran is considered as a gas exporter and other countries should step forward and ask for it."

The Nabucco pipeline is a proposed natural gas pipeline from Turkey to Austria.

The project is to connect natural gas-rich countries in the Caspian Sea and the Middle East to the European Union in a bid to reduce European dependence on Russian energy.

The pipeline, which is expected to become operational by 2015, will carry 31 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year.

Turkey vows to continue Iran projects

Fri Aug 27, 2010 5:35AM

Turkey vows to continue joint projects with Iran despite sanctions imposed by some western countries, Turkish Industry and Trade Minister Nihat Ergun has said.

The Turkish official made the comments during an interview with NTV broadcaster on Thursday, Reuters reported.

Earlier in August, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz had said Ankara would support Turkish firms in exporting gasoline to Iran despite US unilateral sanctions against the Islamic Republic.

"If the preference of the private sector is to sell these (petroleum) products to Iran, we will help them," he said. "There is no demand for Turkey to halt the trade of these products with Iran."

The pledge was made before an expected resumption of talks next month between the Vienna Group and Tehran on the Iranian nuclear program.

The sale of petrol, as well as other projects Turkey is planning with Iran, may indicate a shift in its energy policy to give priority to its energy-rich neighbors in the Middle East over conditions set by its traditional Western allies.

Yaldiz said plans by Turkey and Iran for the joint construction of power plants with a total capacity of 6,000 megawatts would continue, giving the two countries enough capacity to feed their own markets as well as other countries in the Middle East.

A planned natural gas pipeline from the Islamic Republic to Turkey by the private Turkish company SOM Petrol will be used to supply European gas markets as well Turkey's demands, the minister said.

Iran withdraws assets from Europe

Fri Aug 27, 2010 2:55PM

A top Iranian official says Tehran has withdrawn its assets from European banks to counter new financial sanctions imposed on the country over its nuclear program.

The Governor of the Central Bank of Iran (CBI) said on Friday that the preemptive measure was a precautionary response to a potential European decision to freeze Iranian asset.

"Assets of Iranian banks have been withdrawn from European banks," CBI head Mahmoud Bahmani, told Fars News Agency.

The official did not elaborate on the current location of the funds, but stressed that "the Central Bank of Iran... had predicted such a scenarios (asset freeze) six months ago and adopted the necessary countermeasures."

The June 9 UN Security Council sanctions imposed against Iran's financial and military sectors over allegations that Tehran is following a military nuclear program, were quickly followed by a set of unilateral US and EU measures.

The UN sanctions focus mainly on the military as well as Iranian shipping and banking sectors. However, the unilateral sanction aimed to tighten the screws on the energy-rich nation's economy, targeting banks and the oil and gas industry.

Rejecting the Western charges, Iran says that as a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency and a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty it has the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Iranian officials have dismissed the sanctions as ineffective, warning that they would stop doing business with countries that seek to impose limitations on its assets.

Earlier this week, Bahmani said Iran's foreign exchange reserves had been doubled in a short period time thanks to a change in our "foreign currency basket."

Last month, the CBI head announced that Iran had increased its foreign currency reserves by USD 9 billion through selling gold and foreign exchange transactions.

Social Front:

Iranian activist sues telecoms firm over 'spying system'

An imprisoned Iranian activist is suing Nokia Siemens Networks (NSN) over allegations that the telecommunications company provided the Islamic regime with a monitoring system it used to spy on the opposition Green movement.

Isa Saharkhiz, a prominent journalist and political figure, was arrested after last summer's disputed presidential election.

Saharkhiz, who is still in detention, discovered during his interrogation in Tehran's Evin prison that his whereabouts were revealed when security officials listened in to his mobile phone conversations using technology NSN allegedly sold Iran, his son Mehdi told the Guardian.

Moawad & Herischi, a Maryland law firm, has submitted an official complaint to a federal court in the US state of Virginia, alleging that Saharkhiz was tortured and mistreated because of the government's monitoring of his conversations.

NSN has confirmed to the Guardian that it sold the Iranian regime a monitoring system called Lawful Interception Management System (LIMS) in 2008. The company insists the technology is standard equipment in use in dozens of countries, but Saharkhiz's lawyers argue that NSN could have sold its mobile phone service without the monitoring technology, which should not have been made available to a country with a record of human rights abuses.

NSN said that the company halted all work related to monitoring in 2009.

"The monitoring system that NSN sold to Iran was subsidiary to the main network," Ali Herischi said. "They provided Iran with the network for many years before deciding to sell the spy system. My question is why they decided to provide Iran with the monitoring function when they knew that [the government] was abusing human rights and suppressing the opposition?"

NSN has acknowledged that LIMS has been used to suppress dissidents. "We believe that we should have understood the issues in Iran better in advance and addressed them more proactively," the company told a European parliament sub-committee on human rights in June. But it added: "When that technology is misused, accountability must sit with those who misuse it."

Herischi said: "My client is just one example of hundreds of prisoners who have been arrested and tortured because the government found them through the NSN system."

In a statement, the company said Saharkhiz's lawsuit had been "brought in the wrong place, against the wrong party, and on the wrong premise".

The company continued: "It is true that all modern mobile communications networks include a lawful interception capability; this capability became a standard feature at the insistence of the United States and European nations. These countries needed the capability for law enforcement reasons that are common throughout the world. It is unrealistic to demand, as the Saharkhiz lawsuit does, that wireless communications systems based on global technology standards be sold without that capability."

Herischi said the suit was brought in Virginia because NSN has an office there.

In July last year, the Guardian reported that NSN had been the target of a boycott inside Iran after consumers sympathetic to the post-election protest movement targeted it and several other companies for collaborating with the regime.

Vendors in Tehran said that the demand for Nokia handsets dropped by as much as half in the wake of the boycott call.

Although NSN has apparently stopped providing Iran with technical support for LIMS, the company continues to provide other mobile telephone services in Iran.

Meanwhile, two Chinese firms have stepped in to offer technical support for the monitoring system, according to an Iranian engineer who works for the Telecommunications Company of Iran (TCI).

"Since NSN stopped supporting Iran with the spy system, two Chinese companies, ZTE Corporation and Huawei, are helping Iran with the spy system in secret."

NSN's parent companies, Nokia, the Finnish telecoms firm and Siemens AG, the German engineering giant, have also been named in the lawsuit. Neither company has commented on Saharkhiz's complaint.

FIFA president invited to Iran

TEHRAN - FIFA president Sepp Blatter has been invited to Iran to assess the development of women's football in the country.

Blatter watched Iran and Turkey's girls soccer match in the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore. Iran's participation in the inaugural event was in doubt after FIFA refused them permission to wear a uniform in line with the nation's Islamic dress code. But following personal intervention by Blatter, the world governing body finally approved an altered kit that swapped the proposed headscarf for a cap that covers the hair, but not the neck.

"We invited Blatter to come to Iran to assess the development of Iranian women in the sport. Iran showed a good performance in Singapore in their first experience," secretary general of Iran's National Olympic committee said.

"The Iranian women's football teams just can compete in the international competitions observing the Islamic dress code. We wanted Mr. Blatter to allow them to participate in the other tournaments wearing hijab," said Bahram Afsharzadeh

MPs considering a plan to tighten women's security

TEHRAN – The Majlis is mulling over a major plan to provide greater security for women, MP Zohreh Elahian announced recently.

The plan focusing on social security and domestic violence against women is now being carefully studied by MPs, Elahian said. Women's security is a major concern in need of paying more attention, she added. "Women's security in Iran is currently satisfying, but more serious consideration should be given to internalize women's high dignity in the society based on Islamic views and teachings," she added.

Women's security from all aspects of making culture to legal issues are spotlighted in the proposal, the MP noted, expressing hope that the plan will be approved by the end of the current Iranian year.

3 Iranian judicial officials suspended over Kahrizak

TEHRAN - Three high-ranking judicial officials at the Tehran Prosecutor's Office who were connected with the case of the Kahrizak detention center have been suspended from duty, an informed source has told the Mehr News Agency.

Based on an indictment previously issued by a military court, an investigation was conducted into the case and the court issued rulings calling for the suspension of three senior judicial officials at the Tehran Prosecutor's Office, the source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said on Sunday.

The three officials were stripped of their judicial immunity and are to be held accountable like ordinary citizens.

On March 9, the first session of the trial of 12 suspects in the Kahrizak prisoner abuse case was held at the headquarters of the Armed Forces Judicial Organization. The victims' families, the plaintiffs, and their lawyers all attended the court session.

During the last trial session on June 9, the AFJO read out the indictments for the 12 defendants and the presiding judge declared that the hearings were over.

On June 30, the AFJO announced that two of the convicts had been sentenced to death.

The court found nine other defendants guilty of lesser charges and issued verdicts for them calling for prison sentences, cash fines, and the payment of blood money, and temporarily suspended them from duty.

The court also exonerated one person of all charges.

The Majlis special committee on the post-election incidents announced on August 15, 2009 that 12 police officers and judges involved in the Kahrizak incidents had been dismissed and faced prosecution.

The Kahrizak detention center came into the spotlight after it was revealed that three inmates were beaten to death there. Mohsen Rouholamini, Mohammad Kamrani, and Amir Javadifar were the three men who died at Kahrizak.

The three victims had been detained during the post-election unrest in 2009.

The Kahrizak detention center, located south of Tehran, was closed on the order of Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei because it was substandard

Carla Sarkozy Urges Clemency for Iran Mother Sentenced to Death by Stoning

By Helene Fouquet - Tue Aug 24 07:50:12 GMT 2010

French first lady Carla Bruni- Sarkozy published a letter today in three national media outlets supporting an Iranian mother sentenced to death by stoning after being convicted of adultery.

The case of Sakineh Mohammadi Ashtiani has drawn international condemnation after the mother of two was sentenced to death. Bruni-Sarkozy called on the Iranian authorities to grant clemency. "Judges must understand it, Sakineh, your name has become a symbol across the globe," she wrote.

"My husband will plead your cause," Bruni-Sarkozy added in the letter published in Liberation newspaper, Elle magazine and La Regle du Jeu's web site.

Iran recognises protesters dead in jail as 'martyrs'

Three anti-government protesters who died in a notorious jail have been dubbed "martyrs" by an Iranian official body, a move which would ensure benefits for their families, a report said on Wednesday.

Mohammad Kamrani, Amir Javadifar and Mohsen Ruholamini have been named as "martyrs" by Iran's Foundation of Martyrs and Veteran Affairs, the hardline Kayhan newspaper reported.

"After the bitter events of last year's election which led to crimes in Kahrizak prison, the three deceased there were pronounced as martyrs," it reported, quoting an unnamed source from the foundation.

The family of a person declared a martyr will be "offered various facilities in the cultural, social, economical and welfare fields," the website of the foundation said.

The deaths of the three men caused major embarrassment to the Islamic republic, which after months of denial acknowledged the protesters had died at the Kahrizak detention centre due injuries inflicted while in custody.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei ordered the closure of Kahrizak following the reports of abuse.

In June, a military court sentenced two men to death in connection with the deaths. Tehran's feared ex-prosecutor Saeed Mortazavi was held responsible in a parliamentary probe for sending post-vote detainees to Kahrizak.

Dozens of people died in clashes with security forces in anti-government protests which broke out in Iran, mainly in Tehran, after President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's win in a June 2009 poll which the opposition charged was rigged.

Iran envoy visits Pakistan flooded areas

Thu Aug 26, 2010 10:24AM

The deputy consul general of Iran in Pakistan has visited flood-stricken areas of the country to assess how to provide medical services to the affected people.

Hadi Sheikh Ghafouri, accompanied by a team of doctors, visited Sukkur town in southern Pakistan, where he was briefed about relief and rescue work and medical assistance provided to the people of the district and the surrounding areas of Sindh province, a Press TV correspondent reported Thursday.

The envoy offered his sympathy to the Pakistani victims and said the Iranian government will provide Islamabad with medical assistance.

“Medicines, field hospitals and public health teams will be provided to the flood affected people of Sukkur,” he went on to say.

More than 1,600 Pakistanis have lost their lives in the heavy floods that have hit nearly one fifth of the country.

Iran was among the first countries to send aid to Pakistan as the UN was calling for aid for the victims.

Iran's Ambassador to Islamabad, Mashallah Shakeri, said on Wednesday that Iran has so far sent more than 400 tons of humanitarian supplies including tents, blankets, food stuff and medication to the country.

Shakeri said that a team of seven Iranian doctors were in Pakistan to assess the medical needs, adding that Iran would also establish three field hospitals in the country.

The situation caused by the floods is worsening as hunger, lack of hygiene and drinking water, and the threat of an epidemic have put lives of many Pakistanis at risk.

Kalhor plans concert in Tehran

Mon Aug 23, 2010 2:24AM

Internationally acclaimed Iranian musician Kayhan Kalhor will perform duet concerts with celebrated Turkish instrumentalist Erdal Erzincan at Tehran's Vahdat Hall on September 12-14.

The virtuoso of Kamancheh (Persian spiked fiddle) and Turkish Baglama player Erzincan had earlier released an album named Ta Bikaran-e Dourdast.

Baglama is a stringed musical instrument shared by various cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean, Near East, and Central Asia.

"We have had so many concerts in US and Europe. But this will be our first performance in Iran," Kalhor said, adding that the duo will feature impromptu pieces on Iranian and Turkish folklore music.

A performance is also scheduled for September 15-16 in Shiraz, Fars province.

Kalhor, accompanied by vocalist Hamidreza Nourbakhsh, presented a number of his compositions for Rumi poems last month in Tehran. He is a founding member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project and his compositions appear on all three albums of the ensemble.

The Silk Road Project is composed of internationally-renowned musicians, composers, arrangers, visual artists and storytellers from over 20 countries. Three of his recent recordings have been nominated for Grammy Award, including two previous World Village releases, Faryad and Without You.

His Silent City album was listed among the top ten releases of 2008. Silent City is a memorial to Halabcha, the Kurdish city that the ousted Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein attacked with chemical weapons during the 8-year Iraqi imposed war against Iran (1980-1988).

The piece sets the hoarse, gritty timbre of Kalhor's Kamancheh within a hazily harmonized, lightly dissonant string bed with an increasingly important drum part, played by James Michael Deitz.

Kalhor has worked with many prominent figures of Persian music such as Mohammad-Reza Shajarian and Shahram Nazeri.

He has also composed and performed with Indian Sitar player Shujaat Husain Khan and Indian Tabla player Swapan Chaudhuri, with whom he formed the group Ghazal.

Iranian gardens in Venice biennial

Sun Aug 22, 2010 3:30AM

A collection of photos of Iranian gardens will be showcased in the 2010 Venice Architecture Biennial scheduled to start on August 28.

Announcing this, head of Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry's Visual Arts Office, Mohammad Shaloui, told Fars News Agency that 46 images of Persian gardens would be among the highlights of the event.

The gardens include Shazdeh Garden near Mahan in Kerman province and Narenjestan-e Qavam in the city of Shiraz, Fars province.

"A conceptual work by Mojtaba Kalhor, a professor at the Venice Architecture University, will also be showcased," Shaloui said.

"Iranian artists have been invited to the architecture section of the prestigious event for the first time. Though, they had previously participated in the event's visual arts section," Shaloui added

Sixty-three countries, including Russia, Canada and the UK, will be attending the event.

Iran took part in the 50th edition of the biennial in 2003 with Hossein Khosrojerdi, Behrouz Darash, and Ahmad Nadalian. Mandana Moqaddam and Bita Fayyazi represented Iran in the 51st edition. Iran missed the 52nd edition in 2007.