

Business and Politics in the Muslim World

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Summary

Politico-strategic Front

MP Urges FM to Summon South Korea’s Ambassador

Reacting to the South Korea’s inappropriate treatment of the Iranian businessmen and industrialists a senior Iranian MP urged the Foreign Ministry to summon the South Korea’s ambassador.

Majlis Urges Government to Reciprocate U.S. Action

National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis issued a declaration on Tuesday in which the foreign ministry is urged to reciprocate the U.S. action against 8 Iranian officials.

Bushehr Plant to Reach Full Power Generation Capacity in Spring

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi announced here on Tuesday that the Bushehr nuclear power plant will reach its nominal capacity and generate electricity with full power in spring.

Iran Pursues Technical Problem in Bushehr Plant

An Iranian Parliament Member Alaeddin Boroujerdi said yesterday that the country pursues technical problem in Bushehr nuclear plant which delayed its start-up."We

declared a three-month timetable since taking initial steps for the plant until the time of its operation, but the timetable has not been over yet," the Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Chief told reporters on the sidelines of the Parliament's open session.

Iran Environment Chief in Tunisia

Iran's Vice President and Director of Department of the Environment Mohammad-Javad Mohammadzadeh is in Tunisia for the 4th conference of environment ministers of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) member states.

South Africa Supports Iran's Nuclear Right

South African Ambassador to Tehran Ebrahim Mohamed Saley said that no one can deprive Iran of its legitimate nuclear right. Talking to IRNA, he added that all signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have the right to pursue nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Spokesman Warns Outsiders Over 3 Iranian Islands

A senior Iranian Foreign Ministry official here yesterday asked all third parties to stay outside Iran-UAE disputes over the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf, cautioning that their interfering remarks could entail negative impacts on the region's security.

Iran Opens Airspace to China Warplanes

The Islamic Republic of Iran has reportedly opened its airspace to Chinese warplanes taking part in joint military maneuvers with Turkey. Ankara and Beijing conducted the drills in Turkey's Central Anatolia region last month. The war games, codenamed the Anatolian Eagle, were the first involving Turkey and China. Turkey had previously carried out Anatolian Eagle maneuvers with the US and other NATO members as well as Israel.

Iran Reiterates Ownership of PG Islands

A senior Iranian lawmaker has reiterated that the three Persian Gulf islands of the Lesser Tunb, the Greater Tunb and Abu Musa are integral parts of the Iranian territory. "Emirate's claim on the three Persian Gulf islands is unfounded," Fars news agency quoted Deputy Head of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Parliament (Majlis) Hossein Sobhani-Nia as saying late Sunday.

Outgoing Pakistan Envoy Meets Mottaki

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki here on Sunday called for further expansion of the Iran-Pakistan relations. Bidding farewell to the outgoing Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran Mohammed Bakhsh Abbasi, Mottaki praised the diplomat's role in promotion of Tehran-Islamabad relations and cooperation.

Larijani: Disagreements Detrimental to All

Majlis Speaker, Ali Larijani, warned on Friday that disagreements of any kind inside the country will be detrimental to all and urged the officials to avoid unnecessary

controversies. During a visit to Mazandaran province he said “in the today’s volatile situation and the enemies’ move against us, the internal disagreements will be detrimental to all. The officials at all levels should reduce the disagreements and know that the unnecessary controversies will be against the interest of the people and country. We have to try to get united so that no one can find out any defect and penetrate in it

Ejei: Enemy Has Launched Soft War Against Iran

National Prosecutor General Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei has stated that the enemy has launched an all-out soft war against Iran. The enemy is aware of its inability to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran, and thus it has initiated a new war on a new battlefield to interfere with Iran’s police and general public, he said during a military war game held.

Enemy Seeking to Divide Clergy

A senior Iranian cleric says the enemy seeks to pit the clergy against the country's officials and make out that top religious figures do not support the establishment. The enemy has a 'murky scheme' to spread lies and inculcate a sense of indifference in clergymen to alienate them from the establishment, Tehran's Interim Friday Prayer Leader Ahmad Khatami was quoted by Mehr news agency as saying.

Iran, Syria Offer Exemplary Model for World

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday that the friendly, brotherly and revolutionary relations between Iran and Syria are an exemplary model for countries in the region as well as the entire globe.

Ahmadinejad Calls for Bolstering Tehran-La Paz Ties

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said here in a meeting with Bolivia's ministers of 'planning and development' and for 'presidential affairs' that there is a need for promotion of ties between the two countries, it was reported on Thursday.

Iran, Ecuador Presidents Call for Further Ties

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Ecuadorian counterpart Rafael Correa in a telephone conversation called for fostering bilateral and brotherly ties between the two countries, it was reported on Thursday.

Iran Turns Sanctions Into Opportunity to Advance National Goals

First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Rahimi said on Thursday that the Islamic Republic of Iran has powerfully turned the sanctions imposed by the enemies into opportunities to advance national aspirations for the country’s development and independence.

FM: Obama Advised to Be Tough on Iran Before Nov. Elections

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki says some politicians in the U.S. have advised U.S. President Barack Obama to show tough reaction to Iran until November parliamentary elections. Speaking to IRNA before leaving New York for Tehran, Mottaki said, 'In our opinion, such a decision and wrong approach will be of no help to the country's elections.'

Baath party involved in Mahabad attack'

The commander the IRGC Ground Forces Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has identified two of the perpetrators of the Mahabad attack as officers of Iraq's Baath Party, a military official says.

Economic Front

BP Accused of Violating U.S. Sanctions on Trade With Iran

BP is one of 16 international companies that may have violated U.S. sanctions against selling gas to Iran, according to a new report by the Government Accountability Office. Under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act (CISADA) signed by President Obama in July 2010, companies or individuals that sell refined petroleum products to Iran in excess of \$1 million during a year are subject to three or more out of a possible nine sanctions.

Petronas Stays in Iran Despite U.S. Threat

Malaysia's oil and gas company, Petronas, says it currently has no plans to leave Iran's energy market despite the US threat of punishing any firm that continues trade with the country. Datuk Shamsul Azhar Abbas CEO of Petroliam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) said yesterday that the company has no intention of leaving Iran's market at the present time.

More Foreign Firms to Attend Tehran Industry Fair

784 local and foreign companies from 26 countries will attend Tehran's 10th international industry fair, head of the fair's organizing committee Majid Hedayat said yesterday. He regarded the enthusiasm of foreign countries for attending this fair as indicative of the ineffectiveness of western sanctions against Iran.

Mottaki to Visit Oman for Joint Economic Commission Meeting

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki is scheduled to pay a visit to Muscat, Oman, on Sunday to participate in a high-profile economic meeting, an Iranian diplomat announced on Tuesday. "Our country's foreign minister will travel to Muscat next Sunday to take part in the 13th meeting of Iran-Oman joint economic commission," Iran's Ambassador to Oman Hossein Noushabadi told FNA.

Iran to Set Up Exclusive Exhibition in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul is scheduled to host an exclusive exhibition on Iranian goods later this month, an Iranian diplomat in Kabul announced yesterday. Trade attaché of Tehran's embassy in Kabul Farhad Mojallali told FNA that in addition to Afghan companies, over 50 Iranian companies will take part in the exhibition.

Philippines Baffled by Iran Banana Ban

Philippine banana exporters met on Monday to discuss the implications of Iran's unexpected Cavendish banana import ban. The Philippine banana industry was left stunned last week when Iran announced a ban on certain fresh fruit imports, including Cavendish bananas from the Philippines, reports the Sun Star.

Tehran, Moscow to Sign Foreign Investment MoU

Current trade volume between Iran and Russia does not satisfy us and should be raised, said Russia's ambassador to Iran, adding that the two countries are to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on foreign investment.

Iran-Moscow Highway Planned

Iran and Russia have prepared all the needed technical and economic plans to build a highway to link Iran's northern city of Rasht to the Russian capital city of Moscow via Azerbaijan, a provincial official announced on Sunday.

Non-Oil Exports Up 31%

Iran exported 28,958,000 tons of non-oil goods (excluding gas condensates) worth \$12.231 billion in the first six month of current Iranian calendar year (ended September 22). The amount shows 34.9 percent increase in terms of volume and 31.3 percent rise in terms of value in comparison to the same period previous year, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting reported.

China Invests in Tehran Metro

The deputy mayor of Tehran for financial and administrative affairs said China has invested in the Tehran subway system through a deal to provide 250 million euros in financing for Sadeghieh subway station project. Hossein Mohammad Pour-Zarandi told Fars New Agency on Saturday that the Chinese investments will be made over the next three to four years.

Tehran Stock Exchange Booming

The Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) has soared to record highs to become the second-best performing equity index in the world. The TSE all-share price index has risen by 65 percent to all-time highs this year. Its latest record was set on September 18, when it hit 18,658, up from 11,295 at the start of the year.

Main Shipping Lines Active in Iran

The CEO of TideWater Middle East Company said all main international shipping lines have an active presence in Iran despite sanctions against the country. Leading international shipping lines did not leave Iran and have representatives in the country while European countries have also increased their activities despite US-engineered sanctions against the Islamic Republic, Behzad Atabaki said yesterday.

Turkish Oil Refiner Cancels Contracts With Iran

Turkey said Friday a decision by the country's oil giant to call off its contracts with Iran was made by the company under the request of the United States, not as a government compliance to unilateral sanctions. Turkish Petroleum Refineries Co (TUPRAS) was included Thursday in a U.S. State Department list of companies which had announced they were discontinuing their activities in Iran's energy sector.

Europe's Oil Firms Resist U.S. Over Iran

European oil giants are resisting U.S. pressure to stop buying Iranian crude oil, saying they will leave the country only when their contracts expire. U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg said last Thursday that France's Total, Norway's Statoil, Italy's ENI and Royal Dutch Shell would suspend dealings with Iran voluntarily, in support of U.S.-engineered sanctions against Iran over its nuclear work.

Russia “Gives in” Iran for WTO Membership

The reasons of Russia's decision to ban arms exports to Iran have become obvious - immediately after the relevant embargo entered into force the U.S. opened for Russia a way to the World Trade Organization (WTO). In Friday's telephone conversation U.S. and Russian presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama confirmed completion of bilateral negotiations on Russia's accession to the WTO.

4 European Oil Companies to Stop Investing In Iran

Four major European oil companies have pledged to stop investing in Iran's energy sector in compliance with a new set of sanctions Washington had imposed on Iran in July over the Islamic Republic's controversial nuclear program, the U.S. State Department announced on Thursday.

U.S. Asks Japan to Withdraw From Iran Oil Project

The United States has asked the Japanese government to withdraw from Iran's Azadegan oil field project in which Japanese oil developer Inpex Corp has a stake to reflect Washington's sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear program, a Japanese newspaper reported yesterday. The Yomiuri newspaper quoted a Japanese government source as saying Washington has suggested Inpex could be mentioned in a new list of Iran-related firms to be targeted for U.S. sanctions and urged Tokyo to cooperate by dropping the investment.

Social Front

UK to Stage Iranian Play

Iranian theater director Mehrdad Rayani-Makhsous is slated to stage his latest play Human Is Human in two British cities in the near future. Liverpool's Kolectiv Theatre and Manchester's Exchange Theatre will stage the play for 20 nights each in mid November and late December respectively.

Police Prioritize Cultural Works for Hijab

Police Chief, Brigadier General Esmaeel Ahmadi Moghadam, ruled out on Tuesday the use of force in enforcing the Islamic dress code and said the police's priority is to do cultural works. "I believe that police should enter the issue of Islamic dress code. That is deeply rooted in the people's belief and must be solved by cultural works," he was quoted by Mehr news agency.

Bomb Explodes at Tehran Hospital

A percussion bomb has ripped through a hospital east of the Iranian capital Tehran, leaving no casualties or damage, Tehran police have announced. The bomb, which was planted at the entrance of the al-Ghadir hospital in Resalat Square, went off on Tuesday morning, but left no casualties, Fars news agency reported on Tuesday.

Iran's Proposal on Assisting Pakistani People Ratified at IPU

Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal on assisting the flood-hit people of Pakistan was ratified here at Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Monday. Head of the Iranian delegation, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabifard, in his address at the plenary opening session referred to the recent bitter developments including insulting the Glorious Qur'an in the United States and continuation of Zionist township building in occupied Palestine, which are in need of world nations' attention, adding, "The disastrous floods in Pakistan call for the immediate and extraordinary attention of the IPU."

Police Seize 22 Tons of Narcotics

Iran's border guard units have seized over 22 tons of narcotics in the bordering areas of the country's Southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan during the last six months, a provincial commander announced yesterday. Sistan and Baluchestan's Border Guard Coordinator Ahmad Shahraki said that the seizures have been made by the provincial border guard forces since the beginning of the current Iranian year (started on March 21).

Int'l Workshop on Marine Biogeochemistry of Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf Biotechnology Research Center and Iran's Vice-President Office for Science and Technology and Center for Innovation and Technology Cooperation plan to hold the International Workshop on Marine Biogeochemistry of Persian Gulf in Qeshm Island from October 24 to 27.

UNFPA Praises Iran's Gains in Maternal Death Control

The maternal mortality ratio in Iran has decreased from 150 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 30 in 2008, according to a report carried by IRNA. The report, "Trends in Maternal Mortality", released recently by UNFPA along with WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, a press release issued by the UN Information Center (UNIC) said here on Sunday.

Tehran, Kuala Lumpur Review Drug Campaign Cooperation

Drug smuggling is an organized crime which should be viewed as a security problem for all countries, said acting secretary general of Drug Control Headquarters, Taha Taheri. In a meeting with Malaysian Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Datuk Wira Abu Seman, he added that drug smugglers and their supporters should be dealt with seriously because they commit a big crime against humanity.

Iran 3rd in Control of Pregnant Women's Toll

On the basis of new statistics of the World Health Organization (WHO) Iran has the fewer death tolls among pregnant women in the western Asian countries, Health Minister

Dr. Marzieh Vahid-Dastjerdi said. "The rate of death of pregnant mothers in Iran in 2008 has announced 30 in one hundred thousands but we believe the number was 24 in one hundred thousands both in 2008 and 2010," Dr. Dastjerdi told IRIB.

Five killed in terrorist attack in Iran

Five people have been killed when two unknown gunmen opened fire on a police petrol vehicle and civilians in the western Iranian city of Sanandaj. "The gunmen connected to counter-revolutionary cells opened fire on a police petrol vehicle and pedestrians in the Azadi square of Sanandaj [in Kurdistan province]," said police official Ebrahim Kazeminejad on Thursday.

Detailed News

Politico-strategic Front

MP Urges FM to Summon South Korea's Ambassador

Reacting to the South Korea's inappropriate treatment of the Iranian businessmen and industrialists a senior Iranian MP urged the Foreign Ministry to summon the South Korea's ambassador.

"According to the articles 192 and 88 of the constitution, the foreign ministry should give appropriate reaction to the inappropriate treatment of the Iranian businessmen and industrialists by the South Korean government and it should summon the South Korea's ambassador," ISNA quoted Ahmad Latifi Ashtiani as saying.

Majlis Urges Government to Reciprocate U.S. Action

National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Majlis issued a declaration on Tuesday in which the foreign ministry is urged to reciprocate the U.S. action against 8 Iranian officials.

"The U.S. action against the Iranian officials is against all international laws and norms. The Iranian parliament strongly condemns such move and regards it as against Iranian nation. The committee requests the government and specially the foreign ministry to take necessary and retaliatory measures as emphasized by the UN charter and the Iranian parliament in order to defend the rights of Iranian nation," IRNA quoted as saying.

The declaration adds "the history of the Iranian resistance has shown that people are united against all the foreign conspiracies and any unwise action against the country will be crushed by the people's united and cohesive response."

Referring to the historical hostility of the U.S. against Iranian declaration says “national unity will be stronger as the hostility increases and Iranians have learnt how to turn the threats in to opportunities for the country’s development. At the moment they are facing an Iran that has forcefully stood against them and is able to defend its rights.”

It added “this has been done at a time when the post-war situation in Middle East is deteriorating. This has revealed America’s role as a crisis-creator in the region. On the other hand the public opinion in the Islamic world confesses to the positive role of Iran in the region’s developments.”

Bushehr Plant to Reach Full Power Generation Capacity in Spring

Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi announced here on Tuesday that the Bushehr nuclear power plant will reach its nominal capacity and generate electricity with full power in spring.

"I hope that the Bushehr nuclear power plant can generate (electricity) with full nominal power next spring," Salehi told reporters.

Noting that his organization plans to inject fuel into the Bushehr nuclear power plant reactor by mid November, he pointed out that the power plant will start generating electricity with 40% of its nominal power in mid December.

The first nuclear power plant in Iran, region and the Middle East will start operation when the fuel is sent to the center of the reactor.

Iran transferred nuclear fuel into the main building of its first nuclear power plant in the southern port city of Bushehr in a ceremony attended by senior Iranian and Russian nuclear officials on August 21.

Salehi had announced late last month that the plant would join the national power grid in fall.

Iran Pursues Technical Problem in Bushehr Plant

An Iranian Parliament Member Alaeddin Boroujerdi said yesterday that the country pursues technical problem in Bushehr nuclear plant which delayed its start-up.

"We declared a three-month timetable since taking initial steps for the plant until the time of its operation, but the timetable has not been over yet," the Iranian Parliament National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Chief told reporters on the sidelines of the Parliament's open session.

He added, he was unaware of another delay on the issue.

Iran Environment Chief in Tunisia

-Iran's Vice President and Director of Department of the Environment Mohammad-Javad Mohammadizadeh is in Tunisia for the 4th conference of environment ministers of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) member states.

Mohammadizadeh leading a delegation was welcomed by Tunisian Minister of Environment, Iranian ambassador to the African country as well as some staff of the embassy upon his arrival.

The two-day conference starts on October 5 with environment ministers of 50 member states of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) and is chaired by Tunisian President Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali.

Mohammad-Javad Mohammadizadeh is to meet Tunisian officials during his stay.

The conference is to focus on environment protection, water resources management, renewable sources of energy and sustainable development.

The members are to discuss establishment of an environment information center for the OIC member states and to set the date of the upcoming ISESCO meeting.

Also the OIC Secretary General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and the ISESCO Director General Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijri welcomed the Iranian delegation as it arrived in the meeting in the city of Hamamet.

South Africa Supports Iran's Nuclear Right

South African Ambassador to Tehran Ebrahim Mohamed Saley said that no one can deprive Iran of its legitimate nuclear right.

Talking to IRNA, he added that all signatories to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have the right to pursue nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

He voiced his country's support for Iran's peaceful nuclear program, criticizing discriminatory attitude towards different countries regarding their nuclear activities.

Referring to the unfair structure of the United Nations and its Security Council, Saley called for restructuring of several international bodies including the UN, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

He regretted that the fate of all world countries is in hands of a few powerful countries at the UN Security Council.

On Iran-South Africa economic cooperation, he announced that 30 percent of his country's needed oil is provided by the Islamic Republic.

Underlining the need for further expansion of all-out ties between the two countries, he expressed hope that the existing obstacles in the way of promotion of bilateral cultural relations would be removed.

Spokesman Warns Outsiders Over 3 Iranian Islands

A senior Iranian Foreign Ministry official here yesterday asked all third parties to stay outside Iran-UAE disputes over the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb in the Persian Gulf, cautioning that their interfering remarks could entail negative impacts on the region's security.

"Interference of the others in the repeated dispute over Iran's trio Islands will have no (positive) effect on its settlement and will not help its solution," Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehman-Parast told reporters in his weekly press conference today.

His remarks alluded to the recent comments made by Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) Secretary-General Abdul Rahman Bin Hamad Al Attiyah on the three Iranian islands and his recommendation to Iran to refer the issue to the International Court of Justice.

Mehman-Parast advised all third party officials and countries, which are willing to see stability, security and tranquility in the region, to avoid making comments on the issue.

Iran Opens Airspace to China Warplanes

The Islamic Republic of Iran has reportedly opened its airspace to Chinese warplanes taking part in joint military maneuvers with Turkey.

Ankara and Beijing conducted the drills in Turkey's Central Anatolia region last month.

The war games, codenamed the Anatolian Eagle, were the first involving Turkey and China. Turkey had previously carried out Anatolian Eagle maneuvers with the US and other NATO members as well as Israel.

Turkish F-16, Chinese Su-27 and Mig-29 fighter jets took part in mock dogfights during the drills.

The maneuvers come ahead of a planned visit by Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to Turkey.

Turkey and China took their first step in military cooperation in the late 1990s with joint missile production, manufacturing weapons with a 150-kilometer range, the Hurriyet daily reported on its website.

The multinational Anatolian Eagle exercise is hosted by the Turkish Air Forces and is aimed at boosting aerial cooperation and training. The exercises have been performed since June 2001.

Iran Reiterates Ownership of PG Islands

A senior Iranian lawmaker has reiterated that the three Persian Gulf islands of the Lesser Tunb, the Greater Tunb and Abu Musa are integral parts of the Iranian territory.

"Emirate's claim on the three Persian Gulf islands is unfounded," Fars news agency quoted Deputy Head of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of Iran's Parliament (Majlis) Hossein Sobhani-Nia as saying late Sunday.

He added that Iran has announced time and again that it does not recognize the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) claim on the ownership of the three islands.

"The three islands are inseparable parts of Iranian soil," the Iranian parliamentarian underlined.

However, he added, the Islamic Republic has many times announced that it is ready to hold talks with the UAE without any mediators to remove the existing misunderstandings over the issue.

There are a lot of documents which prove Iran's ownership of the three islands, the MP went on to say.

"Based on the same valid and legal documents, Iran is the real owner of the islands and is ready to present the documents to the Emirati side in direct talks to remove the [existing] differences as soon as possible" Sobhani-Nia concluded.

Outgoing Pakistan Envoy Meets Mottaki

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki here on Sunday called for further expansion of the Iran-Pakistan relations.

Bidding farewell to the outgoing Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran Mohammed Bakhsh Abbasi, Mottaki praised the diplomat's role in promotion of Tehran-Islamabad relations and cooperation.

Abbasi in turn praised historical and traditional relations between Iranian and Pakistani people and governments, thanking Iran for extending help to the flood-torn Pakistanis.

Larijani: Disagreements Detrimental to All

Majlis Speaker, Ali Larijani, warned on Friday that disagreements of any kind inside the country will be detrimental to all and urged the officials to avoid unnecessary controversies.

During a visit to Mazandaran province he said “in the today’s volatile situation and the enemies’ move against us, the internal disagreements will be detrimental to all. The officials at all levels should reduce the disagreements and know that the unnecessary controversies will be against the interest of the people and country. We have to try to get united so that no one can find out any defect and penetrate in it.” He also said “there is a doubt that some talk about the unity but behave in a way that creates discord. The officials must be devoted and think about the country’s collective interests.”

He went on to say “the only criterion for unity is the supreme leader. Different tastes must be adjusted to such a criterion. If we do so, all doubts would be removed.”

Pointing to the economic independence of the country he said “the sanctions are in fact opportunities for the country to solve the unemployment problem. The unchecked importation must be stopped and the ways for productivity must be paved.”

Ejei: Enemy Has Launched Soft War Against Iran

National Prosecutor General Gholam-Hossein Mohseni-Ejei has stated that the enemy has launched an all-out soft war against Iran.

The enemy is aware of its inability to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran, and thus it has initiated a new war on a new battlefield to interfere with Iran’s police and general public, he said during a military war game held.

Iran’s sworn enemies, the United States and the Zionist regime, have launched a soft war against the Islamic Republic, he added.

However, Mohseni-Ejei stated that the enemy has not abandoned the traditional means of confrontation with Iran and the enemy is training terrorist groups to create insecurity in the country.

Elsewhere in his remarks, he dismissed the recent economic sanctions the West imposed on Iran over its nuclear program.

“The enemies think they can bring the Iranian people to their knees through economic pressure,” he added.

Commenting on the political and social unrest that occurred after the Iranian presidential election of 2009, he said, “The enemy had seriously counted on the soft war it started last year,” but became disappointed as their efforts proved futile.

On Saturday, Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari said that Iran is in “a state of soft war.”

This war is cultural and political in nature and is more dangerous than a military confrontation, he added.

Enemy Seeking to Divide Clergy

A senior Iranian cleric says the enemy seeks to pit the clergy against the country's officials and make out that top religious figures do not support the establishment.

The enemy has a 'murky scheme' to spread lies and inculcate a sense of indifference in clergymen to alienate them from the establishment, Tehran's Interim Friday Prayer Leader Ahmad Khatami was quoted by Mehr news agency as saying.

Having 'insight' holds the key to countering the enemy and 'sedition instigators,' Khatami added in his meeting late Sunday with clerics in Zanzan Province in northwest of the country.

"We should get to know the enemy and see what tactics it uses," the top religious figure further explained.

According to Khatami, among the key objectives of the 'sedition movement' are to inculcate wrong ideas, subvert the Islamic system and undermine the clergy.

The enemy also seeks to paint a gloomy picture of the problems in the Iranian society and make out that a 'dark future' is looming ahead for the nation, he noted.

The prominent cleric then described Iran's self-sufficiency in gasoline production as a significant step in countering enemy sanctions.

"They wanted to bring Iran to its knees by banning gasoline sales [to the country], but the nation has come to a point where it can export gasoline at the moment," he underscored.

Iran, Syria Offer Exemplary Model for World

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday that the friendly, brotherly and revolutionary relations between Iran and Syria are an exemplary model for countries in the region as well as the entire globe.

The remarks made by the Iranian President in a special ceremony at Iran's Foreign Ministry to confer Highest Medal of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

President Ahmadinejad said that close ties between Iran and Syria play significant role in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

The Syrian government and nation have stood against aggression of the Zionist regime in absence of which no country in the region was immune from occupation of the Zionists, he said.

Not only the Muslim World or Arabs, but also, the entire humanity are indebted to Syria, underlined the Iranian President.

Syria under the wise and courageous leadership of President al-Assad has stood shoulder to shoulder with Lebanon and Palestinian resistance movement to end occupation, he said.

President Ahmadinejad said that Syria has attained significant success and progress in various fields as agriculture, irrigation and water supply networks at the rural and urban areas, health and medical treatment, science and education as well as industrial development.

The name and character of President al-Assad represents a well-known and beloved individual for nations as well as countries in the region mainly the Lebanese people, he said.

“We hope to witness promising cooperation in tourism, commerce and investments between the two countries in the near future,” said President Ahmadinejad.

The brave Iranian nations always back justice-seeking nations in the world, he said adding that the Islamic Republic of Iran along with Syria, Lebanon and Palestine back the oppressed nations across the globe.

Visiting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for his part said that exemplary relations between Iran and Syria should be promoted to serve as a model for all countries around the globe.

Iran and Syria are determined to promote such consolidated ties, said the Syrian president.

“We are to attain independence for the Middle East region, he said, adding that the same path had been taken by late Hafiz Assad and late Imam Khomeini,” he said.

“I would like to thank the Iranian nation for backing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian nation,” underlined the Syrian president.

Syria never forgets Iran’s noble stands after its revolution, he said.

After the triumph of the Islamic revolution, the country expelled the Zionist ambassador from Tehran and opened Palestinian embassy, he said.

The medal does not belong to me but is dedicated to the Syrian government and nation for sharing efforts with the Islamic Republic of Iran in defending the oppressed Palestinian nation, said the Syrian president.

Ahmadinejad Calls for Bolstering Tehran-La Paz Ties

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said here in a meeting with Bolivia's ministers of 'planning and development' and for 'presidential affairs' that there is a need for promotion of ties between the two countries, it was reported on Thursday.

President Ahmadinejad also expressed the Islamic Republic of Iran's readiness to foster multilateral and mutual relations with Bolivia in various fields, including agriculture, commerce, industry and politics.

Meanwhile, the Bolivian planning minister said his country is keen on expansion of cooperation with Iran in all fields.

Iran, Ecuador Presidents Call for Further Ties

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Ecuadorian counterpart Rafael Correa in a telephone conversation called for fostering bilateral and brotherly ties between the two countries, it was reported on Thursday.

On phone, President Ahmadinejad said nothing can separate the two nations from each other.

For his part, President Correa said nothing can damage the Tehran-Quito cordial ties, adding that he will let no states interfere in the two countries' relations.

The Ecuadorian president further said Iran and Ecuador should seize the existing opportunities for promotion of bilateral cooperation.

Iran Turns Sanctions Into Opportunity to Advance National Goals

First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Rahimi said on Thursday that the Islamic Republic of Iran has powerfully turned the sanctions imposed by the enemies into opportunities to advance national aspirations for the country's development and independence.

He made the remarks in a meeting with Friday Prayer Leaders from across the country in Tehran.

Friday Prayer Leaders played significant role in backing the government in its struggle with the psychological warfare launched by the enemies, he said.

Rahimi said that people and mainly the country's young population rely on Friday Prayer Leaders in their key role in backing the Islamic Revolution.

Significant success and development of Iranian society has infuriated the enemies, he said.

The first vice-president said that Iranian people are determined to conquer peaks of success and developments with might and courage.

He said that the enemies have adopted various sets of sanctions to bring the country on its knees, but to no avail.

Vigilant Iranian nation under the wise leadership of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei are to seriously deal with all threats, Rahimi said.

FM: Obama Advised to Be Tough on Iran Before Nov. Elections

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki says some politicians in the U.S. have advised U.S. President Barack Obama to show tough reaction to Iran until November parliamentary elections.

Speaking to IRNA before leaving New York for Tehran, Mottaki said, 'In our opinion, such a decision and wrong approach will be of no help to the country's elections.'

Elsewhere in the interview, Mottaki said, 'We went through a five-month process, held talks with Brazil and Turkey on the US call and eventually Iran gave a positive response concerning fuel swap deal.'

Referring to the Tehran Declaration, Mottaki said, 'When they were expected to take the next positive step, they took a fully wrong move, pushing for resolution. Of course the reason for the move is clear to us.'

The U.S. officials on the one hand showed they are ready for talks and on the other hand, given the country's internal problem, US policy makers took advantage of any issue to pour pressure on Iran.

He recalled President Amadinejad's statement upon arrival in New York, saying 'The Iranian President announced in New York that if G5+1 wants to hold talks, we are ready for talks here.'

'That was a golden opportunity for the Vienna Group to hold talks at the foreign ministers' level. They first became happy and welcomed the offer but later missed the chance due to their differences of opinion.'

All the G5+1 members were in New York, said the Foreign Minister, adding that missing such chances shows that they do not have any political determination to reach an comprehensive formula.

Baath party involved in Mahabad attack'

The commander the IRGC Ground Forces Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) has identified two of the perpetrators of the Mahabad attack as officers of Iraq's Baath Party, a military official says.

A bomb explosion in West Azarbaijan Province on Wednesday left 12 people dead and at least 80 others injured. The blast took place while people were watching a military

parade.

"During investigations after the terrorist bombing ... we found out that some of the former Baath Party elements in particular two Baath officers and some counter-revolutionary elements were behind the attack," commander of the IRGC Ground Forces Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour said on Wednesday.

In late September, Iran's Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi had said that the group behind the terrorist attack had been identified.

The IRGC commander added that some of the perpetrators of the terrorist attack were killed and the fugitives were being tracked down.

Pakpour stressed the role of extra regional intelligence services in the terrorist attack and said, "The Israeli intelligence service (Mossad) and the US intelligence service (CIA) have control over the northern parts of Iraq and the support team behind the Mahabad terrorist attack."

Economic Front

BP Accused of Violating U.S. Sanctions on Trade With Iran

BP is one of 16 international companies that may have violated U.S. sanctions against selling gas to Iran, according to a new report by the Government Accountability Office.

Under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act (CISADA) signed by President Obama in July 2010, companies or individuals that sell refined petroleum products to Iran in excess of \$1 million during a year are subject to three or more out of a possible nine sanctions.

Investigators at the GAO claim that BP sold the petroleum between January 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, based on open sources, which includes trade publications and company statements. Though the GAO examined sales before the signing of the updated sanctions in July 2010, the report "highlights open source information that, following further investigation by the State Department, could contribute to the identification of persons of firms whose activities may be sanctionable under ISA [Iran Sanctions Act of 1996], as amended by CISADA."

Yet BP notified GAO that it stopped selling gasoline to Iran in October 2008 and maintains that information that reported "BP sold gasoline to Iran in 2009 or 2010 was inaccurate," according to the report.

The GAO stands by its research, emphasizing that "we required multiple corroborating sources of information for every entry in our tables of firms reported to have sold refined petroleum products to Iran at any time during the period between January 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010."

BP stopped selling gas to Iran in the second half of 2009, reported Time magazine in June. But it remains one of the most active Western oil companies engaged in energy projects in Iran -- through a joint venture with Swiss-based NaftIran:

In the last five years, BP has begun extracting around 4 million cubic meters per day of natural gas from a field in Britain's North Sea in a 50-50 joint venture with Iran, worth \$1 million a day at June 15, 2010 spot prices. And BP operates one of the world's largest gas fields in Azerbaijan in a joint venture with Iran and other foreign oil companies, producing 8 billion cubic meters of gas per year, worth up to a reported \$2.4 billion per year.

BP was one of three companies, along with France's Total and United Arab Emirates' Emirates National Oil Company, which are reported to have sold gas to Iran and to have U.S. government contracts. According to the GAO, BP has almost \$2.2 billion in contracts with the U.S. government, largely with the Department of Defense for the purchase of jet and turbine fuel.

Petronas Stays in Iran Despite U.S. Threat

Malaysia's oil and gas company, Petronas, says it currently has no plans to leave Iran's energy market despite the US threat of punishing any firm that continues trade with the country.

Datuk Shamsul Azhar Abbas CEO of Petroliaam Nasional Bhd (Petronas) said yesterday that the company has no intention of leaving Iran's market at the present time.

"At this point in time, there are a couple of opportunities to which I don't think it is the right time for us to leave Iran," Malaysian National News Agency BERNAMA quoted him as saying yesterday in response to a question whether Petronas would leave Iran to avoid U.S. sanctions.

Shamsul Azhar, however, pointed out that Petronas had no plan to take over Inpex Corp's stake in Iran's giant Azadegan oilfield project.

The UN Security Council adopted the fourth round of sanctions against Tehran in June under intense U.S. campaign claiming that Iran's nuclear program may have potential military applications.

Shortly after the UN sanctions, the U.S. imposed fresh unilateral sanctions on Iran's financial and energy sectors, encouraging other countries to abandon investment in Iranian markets.

Despite the U.S. threat, major European oil giants say they would continue to buy Iranian crude.

France's Total, Norway's Statoil, and Italy's Eni have defended their right to continue trade with Iran, insisting that they will only withdraw from the Iranian market when their existing contracts expire, Reuters reported on Friday.

The Islamic Republic has described the sanctions as illegal, insisting that the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, to which it is a signatory, gives it the right to pursue peaceful nuclear technology.

More Foreign Firms to Attend Tehran Industry Fair

784 local and foreign companies from 26 countries will attend Tehran's 10th international industry fair, head of the fair's organizing committee Majid Hedayat said yesterday.

He regarded the enthusiasm of foreign countries for attending this fair as indicative of the ineffectiveness of western sanctions against Iran.

"This fair will include different subgroups such as industrial equipments and machinery, technical and engineering services, office automation equipment, and specialized journals and will be attended by knowledge-based companies," Hedayat said.

"The number of foreign and local companies in the 10th fair has increased 29 and 27 percent respectively in comparison with the previous fair," he added.

The fair will be open to visitors for 4 days from October 6th.

Mottaki to Visit Oman for Joint Economic Commission Meeting

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki is scheduled to pay a visit to Muscat, Oman, on Sunday to participate in a high-profile economic meeting, an Iranian diplomat announced on Tuesday.

"Our country's foreign minister will travel to Muscat next Sunday to take part in the 13th meeting of Iran-Oman joint economic commission," Iran's Ambassador to Oman Hossein Noushabadi told FNA.

The diplomat added that Mottaki, heading a delegation of Iranian officials, will arrive in the Omani capital city on October 10.

He added that Mottaki will also meet with a number of high-ranking officials of Oman to discuss bilateral and regional issues.

Noushabadi further said that delegations of the two countries' officials and experts are due to attend a preparatory meeting on Friday.

"During the (experts) meeting, they will pursue the decisions approved in the previous (commission) meeting and assess the activities that have been done so far," Noushabadi stated, adding that the two countries' experts will also assess the extent of progress made on the agreements earlier signed by the two sides.

Also a number of new areas of economic cooperation, including the agreements on customs and Iran-Oman joint insurance, establishment of a joint shipping line between Oman and Iran and transit of Omani or non-Omani goods to the Central Asia, are among the other topics to be discussed by in the experts meeting.

Iran to Set Up Exclusive Exhibition in Afghanistan

Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul is scheduled to host an exclusive exhibition on Iranian goods later this month, an Iranian diplomat in Kabul announced yesterday.

Trade attaché of Tehran's embassy in Kabul Farhad Mojallali told FNA that in addition to Afghan companies, over 50 Iranian companies will take part in the exhibition.

"The exhibition has been set up by the Islamic Republic of Iran and is considered as an exclusively Iranian exhibition, but other companies and countries are welcome to take part in it," Mojalali stated.

The diplomat further stated that the decision was made after Afghanistan's ministry of trade proposed that other countries be invited to the event.

He also viewed agricultural, construction and detergent materials and products as the basic needs of Afghanistan, and said the exhibition will put much of its efforts on covering these needs.

In the same regard an Afghan trade delegation is currently in Iran to visit the Tehran International Industrial Fair due to be held in the Iranian capital on October 6-9, the official added.

Trade between the two nations has increased dramatically since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.

Philippines Baffled by Iran Banana Ban

Philippine banana exporters met on Monday to discuss the implications of Iran's unexpected Cavendish banana import ban.

The Philippine banana industry was left stunned last week when Iran announced a ban on certain fresh fruit imports, including Cavendish bananas from the Philippines, reports the Sun Star.

The Philippine Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA) Managing Director Stephen Antig told the Sun Star, "The industry was shocked by the ban. Currently we are still at a loss with what happened."

Banana exporters from Davao growing region met on Monday to discuss the ban's implications and explore possible actions to limit the impact of Iran's embargo, which has been imposed indefinitely.

The ban is expected to hit the Philippines banana sector hard, since Iran is the Philippine's fourth largest export market for Cavendish bananas, after Japan, China and Korea.

As well as bananas from the Philippines, Iran has also reportedly banned the entry of 48 other agricultural products including apples from France, pears from China and oranges from Egypt

Tehran, Moscow to Sign Foreign Investment MoU

Current trade volume between Iran and Russia does not satisfy us and should be raised, said Russia's ambassador to Iran, adding that the two countries are to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on foreign investment.

Speaking at a meeting on Iran-Russia Trade and Investment Opportunities, Alexander Sadovnikov said the two countries' chambers of commerce and companies play significant role in bilateral relations and can help find good markets for their products.

"Iran and Russia have failed to make a good relation between their political officials and businessmen," he added. "Russia's Tourism Organization will hold a meeting in Tehran in the near future which aims to introduce business tourism.

Referring to the member states of Economic Cooperation Organization, he said Iran has broader relations with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

He went on to say that Russia's trade volume stood at 2.1 trillion dollars during the first quarter of 2010. This country has witnessed 9.2 percent growth in its gross domestic products.

Iran-Moscow Highway Planned

Iran and Russia have prepared all the needed technical and economic plans to build a highway to link Iran's northern city of Rasht to the Russian capital city of Moscow via Azerbaijan, a provincial official announced on Sunday.

"The project to link Rasht to Moscow through the construction of Baku-Astara highway is under implementation," Governor-General of Iran's northern Gilan province Rouhollah Ghahremani-Chabok told reporters.

Rasht is a major trade center between Caucasia, Russia and Iran using Anzali Port. Rasht is also a major tourist center with the resort of Masouleh in adjacent mountains and the beaches of Caspian Sea the major attractions.

Ghahremani-Chabok made his remarks elaborating on the achievements of his recent visit to Azerbaijan.

He added that a decision was also made during his recent visit to Baku to accelerate the construction of Rasht-Astara-Russia railway.

The official also announced that Iran has plans to link Gilan province to Europe in the future.

A working group comprising representatives from Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia held a meeting in Tehran late March 2008, during which the railway organizations of the three countries signed a memorandum of understanding on practical cooperation in the project.

Under Tehran agreement, feasibility studies in relation to the Iranian segment were due to be completed in six months and submitted to Azerbaijan and Russia. Once the feasibility studies were confirmed, terms of construction were determined, according to the agreement.

The cargo transportation volume by this route will total around 5-7 million tons in the first phase with a further increase of up to 15-20 million tons.

In August 2004, the parties concluded an agreement on the creation of a joint stock-company for constructing and exploiting Ghazvin-Rasht-Anzali-Astara railway with initial charter capital of 6 million dollars (2 million dollars from each country).

Under Iranian experts' calculations, Rasht-Anzali segment would cost 600 million dollars and Anzali-Astara would need a 200-million-dollar construction budget.

Iran and Azerbaijan had earlier signed an agreement on a railway link at the two countries' borders.

Creation of North-South corridor will simplify transit cargo from Asian-Pacific Ocean region to the Persian Gulf. The delivery will cost 10-15 percent cheaper and will save 20 days compared to the Suez Canal route.

Non-Oil Exports Up 31%

Iran exported 28,958,000 tons of non-oil goods (excluding gas condensates) worth \$12.231 billion in the first six month of current Iranian calendar year (ended September 22).

The amount shows 34.9 percent increase in terms of volume and 31.3 percent rise in terms of value in comparison to the same period previous year, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting reported.

China, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, India, and Afghanistan were the main destinations for Iranian goods.

During the mentioned period Iran exported 32,358,000 tons of non-oil goods (including gas condensates) worth \$14.448 billion which shows 23 percent increase compared to previous year's figure.

Iran imported over 23,822,000 tons of goods worth over \$29.569 billion in the same time span.

The amount shows 2 percent increase in terms of volume and 24 percent rise in terms of value in comparison to the same period previous year.

The United Arab Emirates, China, Germany, South Korea, and Turkey were the main exporters.

China Invests in Tehran Metro

The deputy mayor of Tehran for financial and administrative affairs said China has invested in the Tehran subway system through a deal to provide 250 million euros in financing for Sadeghieh subway station project.

Hossein Mohammad Pour-Zarandi told Fars New Agency on Saturday that the Chinese investments will be made over the next three to four years.

The official added that Iranian state funding was provided to purchase 60 carriages and 28 locomotives for the Tehran subway system last June.

China has also invested in the Sadr-Niyayesh Highway project and has also plans to cooperate in the Imam Ali Highway project.

Due to worsening air pollution and traffic congestion in the sprawling capital, most experts and urban planners have called for urgent action to expand the subway system crisscrossing Tehran now said to cover close to 100 square kilometers.

Tehran Metro consists of four operational lines, with construction underway on two other lines. It is one of the biggest metros in the Middle East and is one of the cleanest in the world.

Tehran Stock Exchange Booming

The Tehran Stock Exchange (TSE) has soared to record highs to become the second-best performing equity index in the world.

The TSE all-share price index has risen by 65 percent to all-time highs this year.

Its latest record was set on September 18, when it hit 18,658, up from 11,295 at the start of the year.

While U.S. diplomats were busy intensifying the heat on Iran's economy by imposing unilateral sanctions over its peaceful nuclear program, Iranian shares went through the roof.

In comparison, New York's S&P 500 Index has made no major gains this year as the U.S. economy struggles to recover from the financial crisis.

According to Iranian officials, privatization, cheap valuations, and moves to cut red tape and encouraging private investors have lured Iranians away from the once-booming property market that stagnated in late 2008.

Iran hopes to raise 12.5 billion dollars by privatizing over 500 state firms during the current Iranian year (March 2010-March 2011) and plans to sell all of its refineries and petrochemical units, promising potential investors a solid stream of initial public offering.

The deputy director of the Iranian Privatization Organization announced in April that the country aimed to raise 12.5 billion dollars by privatizing more than 500 state-owned firms.

Mehdi Aghdayi said that 524 state firms would be privatized during the current Iranian year.

“The opportunities and good factors affecting the growth of the capital market and attracting investors are more important, and they outweigh the bad factors,” Tehran Stock Exchange Managing Director Hassan Ghalibaf-Asl said last week.

Tehran Stock Exchange, founded in 1967, today lists 337 companies with a total value of 732 trillion Iranian rials (about 81 billion dollars).

An average of 1.2 billion shares were traded daily in the Iranian month of Khordad, which ended on June 21, and an average of 9,886 trades were completed per day, according to the data released on the exchange's website.

Main Shipping Lines Active in Iran

The CEO of TideWater Middle East Company said all main international shipping lines have an active presence in Iran despite sanctions against the country.

Leading international shipping lines did not leave Iran and have representatives in the country while European countries have also increased their activities despite US-engineered sanctions against the Islamic Republic, Behzad Atabaki said yesterday.

He said sanctions on Iran's port activities have been ineffective as international shipping lines have increased their activities in Iranian ports.

"Iran's port activities during the second quarter of the current Iranian year (May 22-September 22) is a good proof of failed plans by Western countries to damage economic and commercial activities in Iranian ports," he added.

The TideWater managing director further said European shipping lines paid no heed to unilateral sanctions imposed by the European Union in addition to the UN Security Council resolution.

European shipping lines increased their container operations between five to 145 percent, Atabaki concluded.

Turkish Oil Refiner Cancels Contracts With Iran

Turkey said Friday a decision by the country's oil giant to call off its contracts with Iran was made by the company under the request of the United States, not as a government compliance to unilateral sanctions.

Turkish Petroleum Refineries Co (TUPRAS) was included Thursday in a U.S. State Department list of companies which had announced they were discontinuing their activities in Iran's energy sector.

U.S. State Department said in a statement Thursday that TUPRAS told the State Department in August it had cancelled contracts to supply gasoline to Iran.

It described TUPRAS' move as a result of the U.S. efforts to press Iran over the nuclear issue by urging foreign governments and companies to avoid commercial activity in Iran's energy sector until Iran complies with its international obligations.

Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Taner Yildiz told reporters Friday it was the decision of the privately-owned company itself, rejecting government involvement.

"TUPRAS is in that list within the scope of the decisions made by the U.S. instead of the UN resolution, because that issue is not included in the UN-adopted sanctions," he said.

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution in June to impose the fourth round of sanctions against Iran over its controversial nuclear program.

Europe's Oil Firms Resist U.S. Over Iran

European oil giants are resisting U.S. pressure to stop buying Iranian crude oil, saying they will leave the country only when their contracts expire.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg said last Thursday that France's Total, Norway's Statoil, Italy's ENI and Royal Dutch Shell would suspend dealings with Iran voluntarily, in support of U.S.-engineered sanctions against Iran over its nuclear work.

All four firms, however, said on Friday they would maintain dealings with Iran.

Moreover, France's Total announced Friday that it was still purchasing Iranian crude while Royal Dutch Shell noted that it was not illegal to take delivery of Iranian crude under the latest United Nations sanctions, Reuters reported.

Norway's Statoil, meanwhile, stated that it was providing Tehran with technical assistance.

Italy's ENI also said it would exit Iran only when existing deals expire.

Russia "Gives in" Iran for WTO Membership

The reasons of Russia's decision to ban arms exports to Iran have become obvious - immediately after the relevant embargo entered into force the U.S. opened for Russia a way to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In Friday's telephone conversation U.S. and Russian presidents Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama confirmed completion of bilateral negotiations on Russia's accession to the WTO. The Russian media report that the two countries' heads also discussed simultaneous ratification of the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Arms (START), situation around Iran and other issues on international agenda.

President Medvedev has commissioned the government to make technically the arrangements achieved with U.S. on Russia's accession to the Organization. He also ordered to intensify multilateral negotiations about Russia's accession to the WTO that will be the final stage of joining the WTO.

Besides, yesterday Russian finance minister Alexey Kudrin stated that the procedure of Russia's WTO entering in the WTO will start in 2-4 months. The process itself will take from 6 months to a year.

4 European Oil Companies to Stop Investing In Iran

Four major European oil companies have pledged to stop investing in Iran's energy sector in compliance with a new set of sanctions Washington had imposed on Iran in July over the Islamic Republic's controversial nuclear program, the U.S. State Department announced on Thursday.

Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg identified the four oil companies that have agreed "to terminate their investments and avoid any new activity in Iran's energy sector" as Royal Dutch Shell, based in Britain and the Netherlands; France's Total; Eni of Italy; and the Norway-based Statoil.

In addition to the four, Kuwait's Independent Petroleum Group, India's Reliance Industries, Turkish refiner Tupras, Swiss energy firms Vitol, Glencore and Trafigura, Russian oil firm LUKOIL and BP have already informed the U.S. that they have stopped sales of refined petroleum products to Iran.

Earlier this week, Japan had indicated that the country's oil giant Inpex was in the process of halting its investments in Iran's largest on-shore energy project, the Azadegan oil fields. Though Japan gets almost one-fourth of the oil it required from Iran, it made the move to avoid the U.S. sanctions.

"These companies have provided assurances that they will stop or are taking significant verifiable steps to stop their activity in Iran," Steinberg said, adding that these firms have avoided Washington's sanctions that would have prevented them from doing business in the United States or with U.S. firms.

"However, some international oil companies have not yet committed to any new activities in Iran's petroleum sector. And for this reason the State Department is launching investigations into those companies," he said, without identifying those firms.

Steinberg said the U.S. administration had decided to impose sanctions on Naftiran Inter-trade Company, or NICO, a Swiss-based subsidiary of Iran's state oil company. Though the move might not have a direct impact on NICO, it is expected to discourage other companies from doing business with the firm.

U.S. Asks Japan to Withdraw From Iran Oil Project

The United States has asked the Japanese government to withdraw from Iran's Azadegan oil field project in which Japanese oil developer Inpex Corp has a stake to reflect Washington's sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear program, a Japanese newspaper reported yesterday.

The Yomiuri newspaper quoted a Japanese government source as saying Washington has suggested Inpex could be mentioned in a new list of Iran-related firms to be targeted for U.S. sanctions and urged Tokyo to cooperate by dropping the investment.

Japan's government is the biggest shareholder of Inpex, with an 18.9 percent stake after a recent multi-billion dollar share sale.

Earlier this month, Japan imposed additional sanctions on Iran, following the United States and European Union in pressuring Tehran despite Tokyo's reliance on oil imports from the country.

At that time, Japan's then trade minister, Masayuki Naoshima, said he did not expect any major change in Inpex's investment, currently Japan's sole energy-related stake in Iran.

When tension was growing in 2006 between the United States and Iran over the country's uranium processing and nuclear power development, Inpex cut its stake in the Azadegan oil field project to 10 percent from 75 percent.

Social Front

UK to Stage Iranian Play

Iranian theater director Mehrdad Rayani-Makhsous is slated to stage his latest play Human Is Human in two British cities in the near future.

Liverpool's Kolectiv Theatre and Manchester's Exchange Theatre will stage the play for 20 nights each in mid November and late December respectively.

Written and directed by Rayani-Makhsous, Human Is Human is currently being performed by three British and one Iranian actor at the Tehran City Theater Complex.

Members of the Manchester-based Kolectiv Theatre Company Krystyna Musiol, Robin Sidwell and Wayne Jackson have joined Iranian actress Sepided Mazaripour for the performance.

Human Is Human is inspired by German playwright Bertolt Brecht's Man's a Man and recounts the story of an animal who is locked up in a mental institution and eventually transforms into a woman.

A PhD research student at the University of Manchester, Rayani-Makhsous is a former director of the Tehran City Theater, a member of the academic staff of Tehran's Azad University and a board member of the National Theater Critics Association of Iran.

He has written 20 plays, six of which were published. He is also the director of the 2nd MAH National Theatre Festival -- the second largest theatre festival in Iran.

Police Prioritize Cultural Works for Hijab

Police Chief, Brigadier General Esmaeel Ahmadi Moghadam, ruled out on Tuesday the use of force in enforcing the Islamic dress code and said the police's priority is to do cultural works.

"I believe that police should enter the issue of Islamic dress code. That is deeply rooted in the people's belief and must be solved by cultural works," he was quoted by Mehr news agency.

He said "in the people's view police are responsible for everything. Hijab is the social disturbance and people put the responsibility on police" and added "those who cross the red lines will be confronted by police."

He added "we have invited different organs including the interior ministry to form a common front for reinforcing the mortal security in the society."

Bomb Explodes at Tehran Hospital

A percussion bomb has ripped through a hospital east of the Iranian capital Tehran, leaving no casualties or damage, Tehran police have announced.

The bomb, which was planted at the entrance of the al-Ghadir hospital in Resalat Square, went off on Tuesday morning, but left no casualties, Fars news agency reported on Tuesday.

According to the report, the explosion only shattered the windows of the neighboring buildings.

Tehran police arrested one person on the suspicion of placing the bomb in the hospital. More investigation into the incident is under way.

Iran's Proposal on Assisting Pakistani People Ratified at IPU

Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal on assisting the flood-hit people of Pakistan was ratified here at Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Monday.

Head of the Iranian delegation, Hojjatoleslam Mohammad-Hassan Aboutorabifard, in his address at the plenary opening session referred to the recent bitter developments including insulting the Glorious Qur'an in the United States and continuation of Zionist township building in occupied Palestine, which are in need of world nations' attention, adding, "The disastrous floods in Pakistan call for the immediate and extraordinary attention of the IPU."

Referring to the unprecedented volume of the inflicted damages and loss of life, and the insufficient contributions of the world nations so far, asked for the special attention of the IPU to the matter.

He proposed including an emergency article to the 2010 IPU agenda in that respect, considering approving of the proposal as expressing sympathy on the part of the world nations' representatives with the Pakistani nation.

The Islamic Republic of Iran's proposal was then put to vote and ratified unanimously at the IPU.

The IPU began its annual meeting on Monday morning in the presence of the world parliament speakers and parliamentary delegations in Geneva would continue till Wednesday night.

The IPU is the international organization of Parliaments (Article 1 of the Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union). It was established in 1889.

Police Seize 22 Tons of Narcotics

Iran's border guard units have seized over 22 tons of narcotics in the bordering areas of the country's Southeastern province of Sistan and Balouchestan during the last six months, a provincial commander announced yesterday.

Sistan and Balouchestan's Border Guard Coordinator Ahmad Shahraki said that the seizures have been made by the provincial border guard forces since the beginning of the current Iranian year (started on March 21).

Shahraki added that the volume of seizures has witnessed a 116% increase compared with the same period last year.

The official also noted that Sistan and Balouchestan's provincial forces have killed 62 major drug-traffickers and outlawed trespassers during the last six months.

He further said that 2.5 million liters of smuggled fuel have also been confiscated by the police along the borders, and mentioned that the figure shows a 42% increase compared with the same period last year.

Int'l Workshop on Marine Biogeochemistry of Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf Biotechnology Research Center and Iran's Vice-President Office for Science and Technology and Center for Innovation and Technology Cooperation plan to hold the International Workshop on Marine Biogeochemistry of Persian Gulf in Qeshm Island from October 24 to 27.

The international workshop is the first effort made to motivate studies on biotechnology, geology and marine biogeochemistry of Persian Gulf and its topics cover all interdisciplinary areas related to marine biotechnology and ecosystem.

One of the central themes of the workshop concerns applications of bio and nanotechnology in marine bio-fouling and its control.

Several renowned international keynote speakers from countries, including South Korea, Egypt, Lebanon, and Germany, have been invited to the event.

Researchers at universities, research institutes and graduate students interested in the fields are welcome to attend the workshop. The real-time translation service will be available to aid the participants.

UNFPA Praises Iran's Gains in Maternal Death Control

The maternal mortality ratio in Iran has decreased from 150 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 30 in 2008, according to a report carried by IRNA.

The report, "Trends in Maternal Mortality", released recently by UNFPA along with WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank, a press release issued by the UN Information Center (UNIC) said here on Sunday.

Iran is among the countries that are on track in terms of reducing maternal mortality ratio by 80% between 1990 and 2008 with an annual average decrease of 8.9%. However, still every year approximately 420 women in Iran lose their lives due to pregnancy related causes, most of which are preventable, according to the report.

It is widely recognized that maternal health is a marker of a functioning health system and improving maternal health is intricately linked to improving women's overall health. Progress for women is progress for all. Investing in women is not only the right thing to do, it is smart economics.

The global report said that the number of women dying due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth has decreased by 34 per cent from 546,000 in 1990 to 358,000 in 2008.

Although the progress is notable and the report reveals fewer women dying from pregnancy-related causes, 1,000 still die giving life every day and more needs to be done to achieve the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially Goal 5 that specifically seeks to reduce maternal deaths.

Tehran, Kuala Lumpur Review Drug Campaign Cooperation

Drug smuggling is an organized crime which should be viewed as a security problem for all countries, said acting secretary general of Drug Control Headquarters, Taha Taheri.

In a meeting with Malaysian Deputy Minister for Home Affairs Datuk Wira Abu Seman, he added that drug smugglers and their supporters should be dealt with seriously because they commit a big crime against humanity.

Describing exchange of information as the main pillar for mutual cooperation between the two countries, he added that drug smuggling bands should be busted based on a one-year operation plan.

He also voiced Iran's readiness for cooperation in exchanging information in line with uprooting the evil menace.

Abu Seman, for his part, described Iran-Malaysia ties as brotherly and called for extensive cooperation with Iran in the field.

Drug smuggling is a crime against humanity and no country can fight it alone, he said.

He further noted that major decisions were made during meetings with Iranian officials such as Interior Minister Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar.

Iran 3rd in Control of Pregnant Women's Toll

On the basis of new statistics of the World Health Organization (WHO) Iran has the fewer death tolls among pregnant women in the western Asian countries, Health Minister Dr. Marzieh Vahid-Dastjerdi said.

"The rate of death of pregnant mothers in Iran in 2008 has announced 30 in one hundred thousands but we believe the number was 24 in one hundred thousands both in 2008 and 2010," Dr. Dastjerdi told IRIB.

She said that on the basis of the World Health Organization figures, the statistics was suitable and Iran ranked third on the basis of increasing index in this regard after the Maldives and Romania.

Five killed in terrorist attack in Iran

Five people have been killed when two unknown gunmen opened fire on a police petrol vehicle and civilians in the western Iranian city of Sanandaj.

"The gunmen connected to counter-revolutionary cells opened fire on a police petrol vehicle and pedestrians in the Azadi square of Sanandaj [in Kurdistan province]," said police official Ebrahim Kazeminejad on Thursday.

"Five people, including four police officers and one civilian, were killed in this terrorist attack," Mehr news agency quoted Kazeminejad as saying.

He added that five police officers and four civilians were also injured.

In September, a bomb explosion near a military parade in West Azarbaijan Province claimed 12 lives and injured at least 80 people.

Shortly afterwards, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said it had identified and killed all terrorists associated with the attack in an operation.