

Business and Politics in the Muslim World

Weekly Report on Iran
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Summary

Political News

Turkey Keen to Form Alliance With Iran, Syria to Confront Israel

Lebanon correspondent Amal Shehadeh reported on Tuesday that director of the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations (Mossad) Meir Dagan said that Turkey is trying to form an alliance with Iran and Syria in order to confront Israel. He added that statements by Turkish leaders confirm their effort to form such a coalition. This comes after Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyep Erdogan said that his people have “grown sick and tired of Israel’s lies,” after Israeli commandos raided Gaza-bound aid ships – the majority on board reportedly being Turkish nationals – and left at least nine dead.

Powers Should Consider Iran Fuel Offer

World powers should seriously consider a newly-drafted fuel swap plan for Iran to part with some of its nuclear material, even if it is not perfect, a group of high-profile experts said. The nine experts, including former weapons inspector David Kay, former U.S. Under Secretary of State Tom Pickering and arms control experts Jeffrey Lewis and Daryl Kimball, said the offer should be seen as a possible diplomatic opportunity.

Int'l Gathering on Imam Khomeini Kicks off

The 4th International gathering on Imam Khomeini and Foreign Policies kicked off in Tehran yesterday morning. The gathering this year focuses on the status of justice in politics and international system and relations. The notion of justice in politics, international relations, theoretical foundations of justice, Islam's viewpoints towards the issue of justice in international relations, relationship between justice and national interests and role of justice in international security are among issues which will be considered in the meeting.

Iranians to Hold Anti-Zionist Rallies

Iranians are to hold anti-Zionist rallies tomorrow to express outrage at massacre of human rights activists on board the aid convoy ships ferrying toward Gaza. The nationwide rallies will be held after the Friday congregational prayers, the Islamic Propagation Coordination Council said in a statement on Wednesday. The statement called on the Iranian people to massively turn out in the rallies to condemn the criminal and deadly attack of the Zionist regime on the Gaza aid convoy.

Powell: Sanctions Won't End Iran Nuclear Program

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell said that proposed stricter United Nations sanctions won't bring an end to Iran's nuclear program.

“I don’t see that this causes sufficient pain,” Powell said on ABC’s “This Week” program. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on May 18 that the permanent members of the UN Security Council -- Russia, China, the U.S., U.K. and France -- and Germany have drafted a sanctions resolution designed to pressure Iran into stopping its pursuit of enriched uranium, a material that can be used for a bomb. “The Iranians have been around for thousands of years, trading and selling and getting around various constraints and what not,” Powell said. “They’re very clever. And they know what sanctions might be coming. And I’m sure that they have done their own planning and have their own counter-sanction strategy.”

Police Chief Lashes Out at U.S., UK Support for Drug Rings

Police Chief Brigadier General Esmail Ahmadi Moqaddam blasts the U.S. and Britain for providing strong support and backup for drug-trafficking rings through their spy agencies. "Drug-trafficking rings enjoy the support of the U.S., British intelligence agencies," Ahmadi Moqaddam, who is also Secretary-General of Iran' Anti-Drug Headquarters, said at a conference on fighting drugs and money laundering here in Tehran today.

President Urges Muslims to Support Palestinians

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday that support for the oppressed Palestinian nation is the most important task of Muslim states across the world. He made the remarks in a meeting with the visiting Speaker of Indonesia’s House of Representatives Marzuki Ali. The approach of the Zionist regime towards the Palestinian nation is an insult to the entire humanity, he added. “The issue of Palestine is neither an Arabic nor an Islamic, but it is a global issue,” the President noted.

Senior Japanese Lawmaker Underlines Iran's N. Rights

Head of Japan-Iran Friendship Group Masahiko Komura in a meeting with visiting Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki in Tokyo stressed the right of all signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to acquire and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Komura reiterated that none of the members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is entitled to deprive other members of their rights. He further voiced support for the Tehran Declaration on the swap of nuclear fuel between Iran and potential suppliers via Turkey.

Mottaki calls for Strategic Relations between Iran, DR Congo

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has called for strategic relations between the two countries of Iran and Congo. In a meeting with a visiting parliamentary delegation from Democratic Republic of Congo, Mottaki called relations between Iran and Democratic Republic of Congo “strategic” upon mutual respect and interests and added that there are vast grounds for cooperation between the two countries and parliamentary deputies can play an effective role in developing bilateral ties.

Economic News

Ecuador Not to Work With Sanctioned Iranian Banks

Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa said Tuesday that his government won't deal with Iranian banks sanctioned by the United Nations, but he does want to establish relationships with all countries. "We will respect all United Nations resolutions. If there is an Iranian bank sanctioned by the United Nations, we won't make transactions with that bank," Correa said in an interview with Radio Quito. "Nobody can impede us from having sovereign relationships with countries that we want," Correa added referring to Iran as a country with a huge potential market and a great financing capacity.

ECO Representatives Meet in Northern Iran

Iran Meteorological Organization signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) on Tuesday. The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the 150th Council of Permanent Representatives of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which was held in Iran's city of Rasht in the northern province of Gilan. The MoU is related to equipping the regional centre for disaster management in the city of Mashhad in Razavi Khorasan province, northeastern Iran.

Iran's Exports to Turkey Reaches \$8b

The total value of Iran exports to Turkey will reach 8.8 Billion dollars, Iran's commercial councilor to Turkey, Faraz Chamani said.

He pointed out that Turkey is being regarded as a bridge for Iran "trough which we can reach European markets and increase our exports to Europe to these countries."

The total value of trades between Iran and Turkey reached above 10 billion dollars in 2009 due to shared views in different aspects, he added.

Chamani announced that establishing free trade zones and industrial complexes in Iran and Turkey will result in growth of investment in different sectors by both nations.

He also mentioned that both sides are going to take effective steps to increase foreign trade volume between the two countries and one of the efforts is to prepare for a free trade agreement.

In March 2009, Iran and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing to cooperate in air, land, and sea transportation as part of an effort to raise the two countries' bilateral trade to 20 billion dollars.

Iran Exports 800 Megawatt of Surplus Electricity

Iran exports more than 800 megawatt of its surplus electricity to the world countries, said managing director of Tavanir Company. Homayoun Haeri said Iran's electricity transmission is based on import-export through which, the country will export its surplus electricity and will import electricity in the time of peak domestic consumption. Haeri also pointed out that such transmission only occurs between Iran and those neighbors that are supposed to have electricity transmission with Iran. At present, Iran exports over 800 megawatt of its surplus electricity to various nations, he said.

Minister Calls Sanctions on Iran's Shipping Industries Futile

The move made by a number of western states to impose a ban on Iran's shipping lines and activities is destined to failure, Iranian Minister of Commerce Mehdi Ghazanfari stressed. "These countries will not be successful in restricting Iran's trade and shipping activities and Iran will manage its sea transportation and trade system more powerfully than before," Ghazanfari said, addressing a ceremony held in Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas on Monday evening to mark endorsement of documents of two Iran-made ocean liners.

Iran, Lebanon Sign Cooperation Agreement

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon signed a cooperation agreement at the ending ceremony of the Pursuing Committee's 6th meeting for the Forum of the Joint Commission. The agreement was signed by Iran's Deputy Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Ali Lotfizadeh and the Directorate of Economic Affairs for Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mustapha Hamdan in Tehran. The expansion of economic ties and commercial trades and a visit to Lebanon by an Iranian industrial-commercial delegation in August were among the terms of the agreement. The Pursuing Committee of Iran-Lebanon economic cooperation will meet once every four months at the capital city of either Iran or Lebanon.

Iran to Expand Shipping Line to West Atlantic

Iran plans to extend its shipping activities to Latin America, an Iranian minister announced yesterday. "Consultations have started with the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) to extend Iran's shipping lines to Latin American states, including Brazil and Venezuela," Iranian Commerce Minister Mehdi Ghazanfari told FNA. The minister's remarks came on the sidelines of a ceremony in Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas to sign documents of two ocean liners, namely Iran-Arak and Sadra, which have recently joined Iran's shipping lines.

Larijani: Iran, S. Africa Enjoy Numerous Grounds for Cooperation

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani in a meeting with South Africa's envoy to Tehran underlined expansion of mutual cooperation between the two countries, given the

extensive grounds and capacities existing on both sides. "The two countries enjoy extensive grounds and facilities for strengthening and consolidating their cooperation in various fields," Larijani said on Monday, expressing pleasure with the growing trend of bilateral relations between Iran and South Africa.

Iran Interested in Gas Transportation Via Georgia, Ukraine to Europe

Iran is interested in transportation of gas via territories of Georgia and Ukraine to West European countries, Iranian Ambassador to Ukraine Akbar Ghasemi Aliabadi informed while he spoke about new possible trends of cooperation between Ukraine and Iran. "We can renew negotiations on transportation of Iranian gas via the territories of Georgia and Ukraine to West European countries," head of the Iranian diplomatic mission has said pointing out to a "principally new chapter" in relations of the two countries.

Iranian, Bahraini Officials Discuss Boosting Energy Cooperation

Senior Iranian and Bahraini officials in a meeting in Manama on Monday discussed further bolstering of the two countries' cooperation in the oil and gas sectors. The issue went under discussion in a meeting between Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Nouredin Shahnazizadeh and Bahraini Oil and Gas Affairs Minister Abdulhussain Mirza. At the meeting, also attended by Iran's Ambassador to Manama Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the two sides explored possible ways of boosting ties and cooperation between the two countries.

Caspian Oil & Gas Expo 2010 Opens in Baku

The 17th International Caspian Oil & Gas Exhibition & Conference Incorporating Refining and Petrochemicals 2010 opened yesterday in Baku. 280 companies from different countries have taken part in the event which will run to 4 June. Also the conference is to kick off today. Caspian Oil & Gas Exhibition & Conference 2010 is held annually under the patronage of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic Ilham Aliyev, who also gave a speech at the opening ceremony of the event.

Iran to Establish Offices Abroad for Free Trade Zones

Iran is to open its first office for free trade zones in India on June 22, caretaker of Iran's free trade zones announced yesterday. We decided to establish some offices in different countries to be authorized to seek foreign investment capital, Hamid Baqaei was quoted by ISNA as saying. India, Pakistan, Turkey, Russia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Italy, Spain and Germany are among the countries considered for this purpose, he added. "World Tourism Organization has established 15 offices in foreign countries to introduce Iran to travelers", he said. "We decided to ask them to share their facilities in order to settle active businessmen and traders in these offices to introduce Iranian free trade zones and attract investors".

Envoy: Iran Ready to Export Gas to Pakistan

A senior diplomat has voiced Tehran's preparedness to export natural gas and electricity to the neighboring Pakistan as soon as Islamabad expresses preparedness. "We are ready to supply it (natural gas) whenever Pakistan is ready to receive it," Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Mashallah Shakeri said in an interview with FNA yesterday. "Given Pakistan's acute need to durable, new and clean energy resources we hope to witness exports of gas to the country within the next 4 or 5 year," Shakeri said, adding that Iran has continued construction of the pipeline on its soil and already stretched the line to an area 250 km from the Iran-Pakistan border.

Social News

Iran, Iraq to Fight Dust Pollution

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says two governments of Iran and Iraq have agreed to solve dust pollution. Speaking to Ilam's people in a TV live program, he said six major sources of air born dust pollution have been discovered in Iraq. He described the case as an important problem adding the country's dust pollution mostly comes from the southwestern neighbors of Iran such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria as well as from some African countries.

Iran Seizes 33 Tons of Illicit Drugs

A provincial official has announced that the country's anti-drug police squads have seized several tons of narcotics in the eastern province of South Khorassan during the last Iranian year (ended on March 21). "Last year, over 33 tons of different types of narcotics were discovered in South Khorassan," Undersecretary of South Khorassan's Drug Campaign Coordination Council Mansour Sabbaq-Gol said. The official further described addiction and narcotics as an all-out war declared by the arrogant powers against the world nations and states, and called for robust cultural efforts to fight and prevent addiction and use of illicit drugs.

Filmmaker Milani to Try Her Hand at Painting

Tahmineh Milani will be starting painting when she reaches the age 50 in a few months, the well-known Iranian woman filmmaker was quoted by Mehr News Agency as saying. "This is an old pledge. When I reach 50, I would begin painting seriously," said Milani while she was visiting the newly established Sareban Gallery in Tehran along with her film producer husband Mohammad Nikbin. "I am in love with painting. I even intended to

study painting at the university but I was accepted in the architecture program and studied that instead.

Quake Hits Southeastern Iran

An earthquake measuring 3.2 on the Richter scale jolted the town of Kerman in Iran's southeastern Kerman province yesterday. The Seismological network of the Geophysics Institute of Tehran University registered the quake at 10:11 hours local time (0541GMT). The epicenter of the quake was located in an area 57.2 degrees in longitude and 30.5 degrees in latitude. There are yet no reports on the number of possible casualties or damage to properties by the quake.

Iran, Qatar to Bolster Cultural, Social Relations

Iranian Ambassador to Doha Abdullah Sohrabi yesterday said that his embassy plans to hold cultural events in Doha in an effort to further expand the two countries' cultural and social ties. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of "Iranian Foods Festival" in al-Sharq Hotel in Qatar's capital city, Sohrabi said that age-old, friendly and honest relations between Iran and Qatar are an invaluable source for deepening the two neighboring and Muslim countries ties in all fields.

Minister of Justice: No More Than 3% of Iranians Abroad Have Criminal Records

Minister of Justice Morteza Bakhtiari says no more than three percent of Iranians living abroad have criminal records, with the other 97% being involved in high-profile economic activities in their respective countries. Bakhtiari, who was visiting the headquarters for Supreme Council for Foreign-Based Iranians' Affairs, told reporters on Saturday night that the Supreme Council is resolved to speed up the process of looking into the various judicial affairs of Iranian expatriates.

Detailed News

Political News

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World powers should seriously consider a newly-drafted fuel swap plan for Iran to part with some of its nuclear material, even if it is not perfect, a group of high-profile experts said.

The nine experts, including former weapons inspector David Kay, former U.S. Under Secretary of State Tom Pickering and arms control experts Jeffrey Lewis and Daryl Kimball, said the offer should be seen as a possible diplomatic opportunity.

Turkey and Brazil last month resurrected parts of a U.N.-backed offer for Tehran to part with 1,200 kg of its low-enriched uranium in return for special fuel rods for a medical research reactor.

The original U.N. plan, backed by the United States, Russia and France, had been seen as a way to help defuse international tension by removing an amount of material from Iran that could be enough for an atom bomb if enriched to higher levels.

But Western officials have made clear that they are unsure about the new offer, which comes some eight months after the idea was first outlined with the help of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The United States has said the new plan was a last-minute Iranian attempt to deflect pressure from a push for new U.N. sanctions against its atomic program, which Tehran says is for peaceful uses only.

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The group of foreign policy and nuclear non-proliferation experts said in a statement on Tuesday however that the new offer should not be dismissed.

"We urge the so-called Vienna Group (Russia, France, the United States, and the IAEA) to seriously pursue this proposal as an opening for further diplomatic engagement with Iran on outstanding issues of concern," they said.

The statement was distributed by the Washington-based National Iranian American Council, a think tank supported by Iranian Americans and U.S. foundations. The non-proliferation experts are independent figures who work for other think tanks and include respected analysts in the field.

They acknowledged Western concerns that the new proposal did not address Iran's escalated enrichment work, the size of its growing uranium stockpile or its need to cooperate with the IAEA by allowing enhanced inspections.

An acceptance of the plan however, could be the first step in a broader diplomatic engagement, they said.

"Iran's agreement to export a large portion of its low-enriched uranium outside of its border for up to a year is worthy of consideration," they wrote, adding that Iran had made concessions on its previous position in accepting these terms.

Iran had backtracked on the original fuel offer, asking for a simultaneous swap on its home soil.

The experts said the new deal however appeared to have wide backing in the Iranian leadership and so was less likely to become a victim of internal politics.

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The nationwide rallies will be held after the Friday congregational prayers, the Islamic Propagation Coordination Council said in a statement on Wednesday.

The statement called on the Iranian people to massively turn out in the rallies to condemn the criminal and deadly attack of the Zionist regime on the Gaza aid convoy.

The attack once again unveiled the real nature of the Zionist regime and the so-called advocates of democracy and human rights, it added.

Such moves prove the desperation of the Tel Aviv regime, the statement said.

"The regime is reaching its end."

It urged all international bodies, particularly the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab League and all freedom loving nations and human rights organizations to bring to justice the Israeli leaders for the crimes against humanity they perpetrated against the human rights activists on board the Gaza flotilla aid ships.

Israeli helicopters intercepted and took control of the six-ship aid convoy, which was carrying 10,000 tons of relief aid. They opened fire on hundreds of human rights activists on board the flotilla ships in the international waters.

At least 20 people were killed in Israeli violence on one or more of the vessels.

The six-ship flotilla had 682 passengers from 42 countries.

Tens of thousands of people took to streets across the world to protest the Israeli savage attack on human rights activists on board the aid convoy ships in the international waters ferrying toward Gaza.

The activists called on Tel Aviv regime to lift siege on Gaza and ease the hardship from which 1.5 million Palestinians are suffering.

The United Nations Security Council condemned the massacre in an emergency meeting convened in New York Monday night and called for an impartial inquiry into the human tragedy

Powell: Sanctions Won't End Iran Nuclear Program

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Weekly report on Iran

“I don’t see that this causes sufficient pain,” Powell said on ABC’s “This Week” program.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on May 18 that the permanent members of the UN Security Council -- Russia, China, the U.S., U.K. and France -- and Germany have drafted a sanctions resolution designed to pressure Iran into stopping its pursuit of enriched uranium, a material that can be used for a bomb.

“The Iranians have been around for thousands of years, trading and selling and getting around various constraints and what not,” Powell said. “They’re very clever. And they know what sanctions might be coming. And I’m sure that they have done their own planning and have their own counter-sanction strategy.”

Powell’s comments echoed those of a top Iranian dissident, Mohsen Kadivar, a senior cleric and a visiting professor at Duke University’s department of religion, who predicted last week that “they will not manage to isolate Iran with sanctions.”

Iran says its nuclear program is aimed at generating electricity for a growing population. It also complains of a double standard on international nuclear agreements, saying Israel hasn’t been prevented from developing atomic weapons, and has called the proposed new sanctions “illegitimate.”

Iran is already under three sets of UN sanctions for defying the council’s demands to suspend the enrichment of uranium. The proposed economic sanctions would bolster an arms embargo, restrict financial transactions and enhance authority to stop and seize Iranian cargo.

Iran has experience in evading sanctions, and found ways to get hold of arms during the war against Iraq in the 1980s when it was under similar restrictions, Kadivar said. It will use oil revenue to counter the new measures.

Powell was secretary of state to Republican President George W. Bush during the run-up to the Iraq War and the first years of the conflict and considered running for president as a Republican candidate in 1996. In the 2008 election, he crossed party lines to endorse Democrat Barack Obama for president. He was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the first Gulf War against Iraq in the early 1990s.

Powell also said on ABC that recent violence in Iraq should not dissuade the White House from proceeding with plans to reduce the U.S. troop presence in the country.

“I think the president is correct to keep it on track and continue with the draw-down,” Powell said. “We cannot maintain this level of deployment forever. It not only is a burden on our troops, it is enormously expensive in a time of budget deficits and national debt.”

Weekly report on Iran

Powell said the Iraqi government and military “is ready” to function with fewer U.S. troops. “If they continue to show the effectiveness that their army has shown recently, they should be able to contain this and hold it as we continue our withdrawal,” Powell said.

Powell said the success of efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan will depend heavily on establishing an effective national army, reducing corruption and building public confidence in the government.

“We can do just so much,” Powell said. “It ultimately is going to be in the hands of the Afghans.

Police Chief Lashes Out at U.S., UK Support for Drug Rings

Police Chief Brigadier General Esmail Ahmadi Moqaddam blasts the U.S. and Britain for providing strong support and backup for drug-trafficking rings through their spy agencies.

"Drug-trafficking rings enjoy the support of the U.S., British intelligence agencies," Ahmadi Moqaddam, who is also Secretary-General of Iran' Anti-Drug Headquarters, said at a conference on fighting drugs and money laundering here in Tehran today.

"Illicit drugs are among the first three important threats to the national security of the great powers," he said, adding that "despite all the efforts and campaigns against narcotics we are witnessing an increasing trend" in drug plantation and trafficking.

The police chief further pointed out that 38-40% of Afghan drug is smuggled into Iran per year, adding that the Iranian police have seized 1500 tons out of the 2700 tons of the illicit drugs smuggled into Iran in 2009.

The commander added that Iran plans to completely block the country's eastern borders within the next three years in a bid to ensure its security and hinder the negative consequence of illicit drugs.

President Urges Muslims to Support Palestinians

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said yesterday that support for the oppressed Palestinian nation is the most important task of Muslim states across the world.

He made the remarks in a meeting with the visiting Speaker of Indonesia's House of Representatives Marzuki Ali.

The approach of the Zionist regime towards the Palestinian nation is an insult to the entire humanity, he added.

Weekly report on Iran

“The issue of Palestine is neither an Arabic nor an Islamic, but it is a global issue,” the President noted.

The Zionists’ anti-human measures toward the Palestinian nation is an indication to weakness of that regime, he said, condemning the brutal attack of the Tel Aviv regime on aid convoy ships ferrying toward Gaza Strip.

Support for the Palestinian nation is support for all world nations as well as the global peace and freedom, President Ahmadinejad said.

He reiterated that Tehran and Jakarta can play an effective role to help improve the life conditions of the Palestinians.

Iran-Indonesia bilateral cooperation would benefit the two nations and the entire world, he said, voicing Tehran’s readiness to further boost all-out ties between the two states.

Tehran and Jakarta enjoy close cooperation on several issues including the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and aspirations of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), he said, stressing that bilateral cooperation is to the benefit of global peace and security.

The Indonesian speaker for his part announced his country’s readiness to bolster ties with the Islamic Republic of Iran, particularly the parliamentary cooperation.

Jakarta fully supports Iran’s right to use peaceful nuclear technology, he said, praising the Tehran Declaration on fuel swap on March 17.

He expressed hope that the Tehran Declaration would be fully materialized.

Referring to the deadly attack of the Zionist forces on aid convoy ships for Gaza on Monday, he called on world leaders to oblige Israel to end such brutal and inhuman crimes.

Tehran and Jakarta share identical view regarding the Palestinian issue, he reiterated.

A convoy of nine ships carrying 10,000 tons of aid supplies including foodstuff and drug products for the people in the Gaza Strip was stormed by the Zionist navy forces on Monday.

The convoy includes nine ships from Turkey, Greece and several other countries and hundreds of European Parliament representatives, ex western diplomats, journalists and human rights activities are on board.

Senior Japanese Lawmaker Underlines Iran's N. Rights

Head of Japan-Iran Friendship Group Masahiko Komura in a meeting with visiting Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki in Tokyo stressed the right of all signatories to the

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Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to acquire and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Komura reiterated that none of the members of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is entitled to deprive other members of their rights.

He further voiced support for the Tehran Declaration on the swap of nuclear fuel between Iran and potential suppliers via Turkey.

A majority of the international community has voiced support for the Declaration which was signed by senior Iranian, Turkish and Brazilian officials in Tehran on May 17 and envisaged sending some 1200 kg of Iran's 3.5% enriched uranium to Turkey in exchange for a total 120 kg of 20% enriched fuel.

Mottaki calls for Strategic Relations between Iran, DR Congo

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has called for strategic relations between the two countries of Iran and Congo.

In a meeting with a visiting parliamentary delegation from Democratic Republic of Congo, Mottaki called relations between Iran and Democratic Republic of Congo “strategic” upon mutual respect and interests and added that there are vast grounds for cooperation between the two countries and parliamentary deputies can play an effective role in developing bilateral ties.

He said that having common points of view about different international issues is an appropriate ground for cooperation in international circles.

Referring to the high capacities in Africa, Mottaki said that convergence in the continent is increasing and its huge assets will give Africa the ability to have its own choice in international system.

Head of Congolese parliamentary delegation Moussa Kalima Sango Luzako said that currently a strong friendship group has been formed in Congo parliament for developing ties with Islamic Republic of Iran and paying this visit will make the group more acquainted with Iran's realities.

Referring to the western media propaganda and their related lobbies against Iran, Kalima said that the media are trying to deviate the world public opinion against Iran by destructive propaganda and leveling baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

He also praised Iran's foreign policy toward expansion of ties with African countries upon late Imam teachings.

Economic News

Ecuador Not to Work With Sanctioned Iranian Banks

Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa said Tuesday that his government won't deal with Iranian banks sanctioned by the United Nations, but he does want to establish relationships with all countries.

"We will respect all United Nations resolutions. If there is an Iranian bank sanctioned by the United Nations, we won't make transactions with that bank," Correa said in an interview with Radio Quito.

"Nobody can impede us from having sovereign relationships with countries that we want," Correa added referring to Iran as a country with a huge potential market and a great financing capacity.

In February, the Financial Action Task Force, or FATF, a multilateral organization, placed Ecuador on a list of countries with shortcomings in their ability to prosecute money laundering and fight terrorist financing.

The FATF said Ecuador had failed to deliver a high-level political commitment to address these problems.

Correa said the FATF had included Ecuador in the list because of its ties with Iran.

In December 2008, Ecuador's Central Bank, or BCE, and the Export Development Bank of Iran, or EDBI, signed a protocol of cooperation to expand bilateral cooperation.

According to the agreement, seen by Dow Jones Newswires, the EDBI offered credit facilities to Ecuador's BCE of \$40 million to finance imports of Iranian goods and services to Ecuador under the insurance coverage of Export Guarantee Fund of Iran, EGFI.

On Tuesday, Correa said that Ecuador didn't receive any funding from Iran.

In May, Central Bank President Diego Borja met with officials from the U.S Treasury Department and Federal Reserve, the International Monetary Fund and the Export-Import Bank of the United States to dispel concerns over Ecuador's financial relationship with Iran.

Borja also has said that any deposits from Iran were made at the Central Bank.

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In the same radio interview, Correa said the visit of U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Ecuador next week is proof of the cordial relationship between Ecuador and United States.

Correa said that he and Clinton will discuss the FATF, regional security, migration policies and the U.S use of military bases in Colombia, among other topics.

ECO Representatives Meet in Northern Iran

Iran Meteorological Organization signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) on Tuesday.

The MoU was signed on the sidelines of the 150th Council of Permanent Representatives of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) which was held in Iran's city of Rasht in the northern province of Gilan.

The MoU is related to equipping the regional centre for disaster management in the city of Mashhad in Razavi Khorasan province, northeastern Iran.

In the opening ceremony, Deputy Foreign Minister Amir Mansour Borghei said one of the reasons of holding such meetings out of Tehran is acquaintances of the ECO members with capacities of Iran's provinces.

According to a report by IRIB, ECO Secretary General Yahya Ma'roufi also said the meeting of the council is usually held in capitals, but Iran as a host country sometimes holds the meetings in other provinces.

Governor General of Gilan province Ruhollah Ghahremani, for his part, welcomed meeting participants and said current world economic crisis and its political consequences and weakening of U.S. hegemonic power with the emerging of new regional powers makes it necessary to form and develop new regional unions and strengthen ties between countries.

Considering old constructive interactions among member countries of ECO as well as their long term goals, they can rely on their economic, social and cultural capacities and set up a new long term strategic participation.

The 150th meeting of ECO Council of Permanent Representatives was held with participation of representatives from Iran, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Iran's Exports to Turkey Reaches \$8b

The total value of Iran exports to Turkey will reach 8.8 Billion dollars, Iran's commercial counselor to Turkey, Faraz Chamani said.

He pointed out that Turkey is being regarded as a bridge for Iran “trough which we can reach European markets and increase our exports to Europe to these countries.”

The total value of trades between Iran and Turkey reached above 10 billion dollars in 2009 due to shared views in different aspects, he added.

Chamani announced that establishing free trade zones and industrial complexes in Iran and Turkey will result in growth of investment in different sectors by both nations.

He also mentioned that both sides are going to take effective steps to increase foreign trade volume between the two countries and one of the efforts is to prepare for a free trade agreement.

In March 2009, Iran and Turkey signed a memorandum of understanding agreeing to cooperate in air, land, and sea transportation as part of an effort to raise the two countries’ bilateral trade to 20 billion dollars.

Iran Exports 800 Megawatt of Surplus Electricity

Iran exports more than 800 megawatt of its surplus electricity to the world countries, said managing director of Tavanir Company.

Homayoun Haeri said Iran’s electricity transmission is based on import-export through which, the country will export its surplus electricity and will import electricity in the time of peak domestic consumption.

Haeri also pointed out that such transmission only occurs between Iran and those neighbors that are supposed to have electricity transmission with Iran.

At present, Iran exports over 800 megawatt of its surplus electricity to various nations, he said.

Earlier in April, Iran expressed its readiness to provide Pakistan with 1,000 megawatt of electricity to help Pakistan overcome the crisis of electricity shortages in the country.

Tehran is exporting electricity to Turkey, Armenia and Afghanistan and its price is extremely attractive for Pakistan

Minister Calls Sanctions on Iran's Shipping Industries Futile

The move made by a number of western states to impose a ban on Iran's shipping lines and activities is destined to failure, Iranian Minister of Commerce Mehdi Ghazanfari stressed.

"These countries will not be successful in restricting Iran's trade and shipping activities and Iran will manage its sea transportation and trade system more powerfully than

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before," Ghazanfari said, addressing a ceremony held in Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas on Monday evening to mark endorsement of documents of two Iran-made ocean liners.

The ocean liner ships, namely Iran-Arak and Sadra, have been built by Iranian experts and joined the country's shipping lines very recently.

Ghazanfari underlined that the advancements made by Iran in shipyard industries would strengthen Iran's sea transportation, and noted, "Ill-wishers should know that Iran has not only brought its sea transportation system to strength in a proper way but is also able to build its needed sea fleets inside the country."

He called on Tehran's opponents to get the message and start just and fair interactions with Iran to avoid further losses.

Iran comes one step closer to shipbuilding independence with the launch of its first indigenous ocean-going container ship in the Persian Gulf.

Iran, Lebanon Sign Cooperation Agreement

The Islamic Republic of Iran and Lebanon signed a cooperation agreement at the ending ceremony of the Pursuing Committee's 6th meeting for the Forum of the Joint Commission.

The agreement was signed by Iran's Deputy Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Ali Lotfizadeh and the Directorate of Economic Affairs for Lebanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mustapha Hamdan in Tehran.

The expansion of economic ties and commercial trades and a visit to Lebanon by an Iranian industrial-commercial delegation in August were among the terms of the agreement. The Pursuing Committee of Iran-Lebanon economic cooperation will meet once every four months at the capital city of either Iran or Lebanon.

According to the terms of the agreement, the latest information and regulations of Lebanon should be provided for Iran to construct joint projects in Lebanon.

In the past few years, Iran and Lebanon have increased their bilateral trade, as well as their political ties. Trade between the two countries increased from 78.4 million dollars in 2006 to 119.7 million dollars in 2008.

Iran and Lebanon had 160 million dollars of trade exchanges during the last Iranian year (ended March 20) and Lebanon's export to Iran was 85 million dollars

Iran to Expand Shipping Line to West Atlantic

Iran plans to extend its shipping activities to Latin America, an Iranian minister announced yesterday.

"Consultations have started with the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Line (IRISL) to extend Iran's shipping lines to Latin American states, including Brazil and Venezuela," Iranian Commerce Minister Mehdi Ghazanfari told FNA.

The minister's remarks came on the sidelines of a ceremony in Iran's southern port city of Bandar Abbas to sign documents of two ocean liners, namely Iran-Arak and Sadra, which have recently joined Iran's shipping lines.

Ghazanfari further stated that Iranian experts' ability to manufacture the two giant ocean liners marks a turning point in the country's marine industries, adding that "Given the investments made in the shipyard industries, we will witness a hike in the shipbuilding capacity of the country in the current and the following years."

Iran comes one step closer to shipbuilding independence with the launch of its first indigenous ocean-going container ship in the Persian Gulf in August 2009.

Manufactured by the Iran Shipbuilding and Offshore Industries Complex Co. (ISOICO), the 2200 TEU Iran-Arak container ship weighs 7500 tons on land, can accelerate to 32 knots and is able to sail 25 days non-stop.

The vessel, which has cost 50 million dollars to construct, is 185 meters long, 30 meters wide, has 10 meters of draft and uses more than 16.7 megawatt to reach 21.5 knot

Larijani: Iran, S. Africa Enjoy Numerous Grounds for Cooperation

Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani in a meeting with South Africa's envoy to Tehran underlined expansion of mutual cooperation between the two countries, given the extensive grounds and capacities existing on both sides.

"The two countries enjoy extensive grounds and facilities for strengthening and consolidating their cooperation in various fields," Larijani said on Monday, expressing pleasure with the growing trend of bilateral relations between Iran and South Africa.

Referring to the close viewpoints of the two countries over a vast majority of international issues, he stressed the importance of continued consultations between Tehran and Pretoria.

Larijani also pointed to the importance of parliamentary relations for the development and facilitation of bilateral exchanges, and announced the Iranian parliament's support for reinvigoration of ties between the two countries.

During the meeting, the African ambassador underlined his country's resolve to develop ties with Iran, and said implementation of the two countries' joint projects and ventures in different economic sectors is moving on "a very good" trend.

Iran Interested in Gas Transportation Via Georgia, Ukraine to Europe

Iran is interested in transportation of gas via territories of Georgia and Ukraine to West European countries, Iranian Ambassador to Ukraine Akbar Ghasemi Aliabadi informed while he spoke about new possible trends of cooperation between Ukraine and Iran.

“We can renew negotiations on transportation of Iranian gas via the territories of Georgia and Ukraine to West European countries,” head of the Iranian diplomatic mission has said pointing out to a “principally new chapter” in relations of the two countries.

Re-export of grain crops and steel by using ports of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf was called as another perspective trend of cooperation with Ukraine that will allow substantially increasing goods turnover with African, South Asian and the Persian Gulf countries.

Emphasizing on an advantageous geopolitical situation of Ukraine, Akbar Ghasemi Aliabadi pointed out to possibility of cooperation in expansion and set-up of new air, automobile and railway corridors.

“Between Iran and many countries in the region, in particular, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan, as well as the Latin American countries, joint projects are held on construction of electric stations, dams, oil refineries and setting up railroads. Ukraine can join these projects on contract basis,” Akbar Ghasemi Aliabadi said

Iranian, Bahraini Officials Discuss Boosting Energy Cooperation

Senior Iranian and Bahraini officials in a meeting in Manama on Monday discussed further bolstering of the two countries' cooperation in the oil and gas sectors.

The issue went under discussion in a meeting between Iranian Deputy Oil Minister Nouredin Shahnazizadeh and Bahraini Oil and Gas Affairs Minister Abdulhussain Mirza.

At the meeting, also attended by Iran's Ambassador to Manama Hossein Amir Abdollahian, the two sides explored possible ways of boosting ties and cooperation between the two countries.

The Iranian officials, for their part, underlined that Tehran is ready to provide Bahrain with its experiences in this field.

Shahnazizadeh arrived in Manama early on Monday to take part in the meeting of the Heavy Oil World MENA (Middle East and North Africa) 2010 Conference.

Heavy Oil World MENA 2010 will bring together petroleum industry leaders across the region to provide a country by country analysis of the latest projects and opportunities.

The commercial potential of heavy oil is limitless. With over 80 billion barrels of recoverable heavy oil today and a further 900 billion barrels of untapped potential in the Middle East alone. Heavy oil is an unrivalled opportunity for the petroleum industry.

It is estimated that Middle Eastern heavy oil reserves could trend upwards of one third of global reserves which would amount to more than 1 trillion barrels of untapped oil potential

Caspian Oil & Gas Expo 2010 Opens in Baku

The 17th International Caspian Oil & Gas Exhibition & Conference Incorporating Refining and Petrochemicals 2010 opened yesterday in Baku.

280 companies from different countries have taken part in the event which will run to 4 June. Also the conference is to kick off today.

Caspian Oil & Gas Exhibition & Conference 2010 is held annually under the patronage of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic Ilham Aliyev, who also gave a speech at the opening ceremony of the event.

Caspian Oil & Gas is a well-established business forum at which companies can present new products and projects. The exhibition and conference are supported by the Ministry of Industry and Energy, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) and for the first time, by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Over the 17 years of its existence, Caspian Oil & Gas has passed certain stages of development, while preserving its traditional character and scale.

The exhibition and conference will enable specialists, scientists and engineers to learn about the recent developments of international manufacturers in oil and gas production, transportation and processing; see the latest equipment and technologies for the oil and gas industry; and hold useful discussions and exchange views.

Iran to Establish Offices Abroad for Free Trade Zones

Iran is to open its first office for free trade zones in India on June 22, caretaker of Iran's free trade zones announced yesterday.

We decided to establish some offices in different countries to be authorized to seek foreign investment capital, Hamid Baqaee was quoted by ISNA as saying.

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India, Pakistan, Turkey, Russia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Italy, Spain and Germany are among the countries considered for this purpose, he added.

“World Tourism Organization has established 15 offices in foreign countries to introduce Iran to travelers”, he said. “We decided to ask them to share their facilities in order to settle active businessmen and traders in these offices to introduce Iranian free trade zones and attract investors”.

He went on to say that in this regard some foreign private companies applied to become our representative in other countries.

He referred to the establishment of the first office in Mumbai and said Mumbai Port and Persian Gulf countries enjoy good relations and can have such activities with Kish and Qeshm islands.

He also announced Iranian free trade zones will take part in Expo 2010 Shanghai and showcase their capacities and potentials in this six-month exhibition.

Pointing to export promotion campaign, he said this campaign consists of related organizations and the heads of Iran free trade zones which aims to resolve exports problems.

Envoy: Iran Ready to Export Gas to Pakistan

A senior diplomat has voiced Tehran's preparedness to export natural gas and electricity to the neighboring Pakistan as soon as Islamabad expresses preparedness.

"We are ready to supply it (natural gas) whenever Pakistan is ready to receive it," Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Mashallah Shakeri said in an interview with FNA yesterday.

"Given Pakistan's acute need to durable, new and clean energy resources we hope to witness exports of gas to the country within the next 4 or 5 year," Shakeri said, adding that Iran has continued construction of the pipeline on its soil and already stretched the line to an area 250 km from the Iran-Pakistan border.

The comment by the Iranian envoy came after Pakistan and Iran on Friday signed a "sovereign guarantee" agreement paving the way for the completion of a 7.5-billion-dollar gas pipeline project within the next four years.

Regarding supply of electricity to Pakistan, the envoy said, "We still believe that Iran is the best country for export of electricity to Pakistan, and we will start supplying electricity to the country whenever Pakistan prepares the needed infrastructures and voices readiness for starting imports.

Social News

Iran, Iraq to Fight Dust Pollution

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says two governments of Iran and Iraq have agreed to solve dust pollution.

Speaking to Ilam's people in a TV live program, he said six major sources of air born dust pollution have been discovered in Iraq.

He described the case as an important problem adding the country's dust pollution mostly comes from the southwestern neighbors of Iran such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria as well as from some African countries.

Iran Seizes 33 Tons of Illicit Drugs

A provincial official has announced that the country's anti-drug police squads have seized several tons of narcotics in the eastern province of South Khorassan during the last Iranian year (ended on March 21).

"Last year, over 33 tons of different types of narcotics were discovered in South Khorassan," Undersecretary of South Khorassan's Drug Campaign Coordination Council Mansour Sabbaq-Gol said.

The official further described addiction and narcotics as an all-out war declared by the arrogant powers against the world nations and states, and called for robust cultural efforts to fight and prevent addiction and use of illicit drugs.

Sabbaq-Gol also underlined the important role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in preventing drug abuse in the society.

He noted that 13 NGOs are currently active in the province in this ground, adding that the number would increase to 30 by the end of the current Iranian year.

Filmmaker Milani to Try Her Hand at Painting

Tahmineh Milani will be starting painting when she reaches the age 50 in a few months, the well-known Iranian woman filmmaker was quoted by Mehr News Agency as saying.

"This is an old pledge. When I reach 50, I would begin painting seriously," said Milani while she was visiting the newly established Sareban Gallery in Tehran along with her film producer husband Mohammad Nikbin.

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“I am in love with painting. I even intended to study painting at the university but I was accepted in the architecture program and studied that instead.

She likes all different styles of paintings but “I prefer expressionism. I also like calligraphy-painting style among Persian artworks,” she remarked.

The gallery currently is hosting an exhibition of the gallery’s collections, which includes artwork by renowned Iranian artists the late Faramarz Pilaram, Mohammad Ehsaii, Taha Behbahani and Marco Garigurian.

“I am so excited to see works by Pilaram. He was my master and I so am happy to see his works here on show beside artworks done by other great artists,” she added.

“Payback”, “Superstar” “Cease-Fire”, “Fifth Reaction”, “Two Women”, and “Extra Wife” are among Milani’s credits.

Milani’s husband Nikbin also said, “I myself do painting. My style of painting is highly individual, though I don’t spend much time on it. Once master Ehsaii saw some of my works and suggested that I practice my style more.”

The current exhibit of Sareban Gallery will run until June 21 at the gallery located at No.8, Mehmandust St., off Shahid Beheshti Ave.

Quake Hits Southeastern Iran

An earthquake measuring 3.2 on the Richter scale jolted the town of Kerman in Iran's southeastern Kerman province yesterday.

The Seismological network of the Geophysics Institute of Tehran University registered the quake at 10:11 hours local time (0541GMT).

The epicenter of the quake was located in an area 57.2 degrees in longitude and 30.5 degrees in latitude.

There are yet no reports on the number of possible casualties or damage to properties by the quake.

Iran is criss-crossed with fault lines and is regularly hit by earthquakes, experiencing at least one slight tremor every day on average.

The worst in recent times hit Bam in southeastern Kerman province in December 2003, killing 31,000 people - about a quarter of its population - and destroying the city's ancient mud-built citadel

Iran, Qatar to Bolster Cultural, Social Relations

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Iranian Ambassador to Doha Abdullah Sohrabi yesterday said that his embassy plans to hold cultural events in Doha in an effort to further expand the two countries' cultural and social ties.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony of "Iranian Foods Festival" in al-Sharq Hotel in Qatar's capital city, Sohrabi said that age-old, friendly and honest relations between Iran and Qatar are an invaluable source for deepening the two neighboring and Muslim countries ties in all fields.

Sohrabi also stressed Iranian and Qatari authorities' resolve to expand bilateral ties, and said, "The embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran will try to pave the ground for further cultural and social closeness between the two countries in the Arab World's Year of Culture and through holding several festivals, including Iran's culture week in Doha."

The envoy also expressed the hope that festivals such as the current Iranian foods festival would prepare the ground for increased knowledge of the Qatari nationals about Iranian foods, culture and old traditions.

Sohrabi heralded the start of a new era in Iran-Qatar ties in economic, commerce and investment fields, reiterating that Iran has prepared proper grounds for increased investment in different sectors such as tourism and hotel construction.

He also said that the recently established direct shipping line between Iran and Qatar would provide a good opportunity for increased bilateral exchanges between the two countries' traders and tourists.

Iran's Valfajr 8 Shipping Line resumed its operation in Qatar with the anchoring of its first ship in the Doha port in December.

Iran and Qatar have recently augmented efforts to further expand ties and cooperation in all the different political, economic, defense and security fields.

Minister of Justice: No More Than 3% of Iranians Abroad Have Criminal Records

Minister of Justice Morteza Bakhtiari says no more than three percent of Iranians living abroad have criminal records, with the other 97% being involved in high-profile economic activities in their respective countries.

Bakhtiari, who was visiting the headquarters for Supreme Council for Foreign-Based Iranians' Affairs, told reporters on Saturday night that the Supreme Council is resolved to speed up the process of looking into the various judicial affairs of Iranian expatriates.

Bakhtiari commented on investment security in Iran, saying that the Iranian Judiciary has clear-cut and transparent views regarding Iranian expatriates' investment in their own country, firmly supporting their bids.

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“Iranians abroad can contact the Supreme Council for further information in this regard,” the minister went on saying.

Bakhtiari boasted the presence of highly-experienced and knowledgeable consular experts in the round-the clock center aimed at providing reliable judicial and consular services to Iranians overseas.

Asked to comment upon coordination and cooperation between Iranian Judiciary and Ministry of Justice concerning the judicial issues of Iranians abroad, Bakhtiari noted that the Judiciary has since long ago been prepared to deal with the judicial issues of Iranians abroad and with the recent judicial measures taken in the judicial task force of the Supreme Council, “all concerns in this regard have been removed”.

“In Tehran province prosecutor’s office, too, we have embarked upon a set of new measures to deal with Iranians’ judicial and consular problems.”

In his forth visit to the Supreme Council’s headquarters since it was inaugurated in December 2010, Bakhtiari hailed “the positive and constructive” activities undertaken by the Council in helping Iranian expatriates. “The center has gone a long way in creating hope in the hearts of all Iranians wherever they live,” Bakhtiari said.

The minister also answered, through direct phone calls, a dozen Iranian expatriates’ judicial and consular questions.

In his visit to the center, Bakhtiari, who is also the chairman of the judicial-consular task force of the Supreme Council for Foreign-Based Iranians’ Affairs, was accompanied, among others, by Mohammad-Sharif Malekzadeh, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Foreign-Based Iranians’ Affairs, Raeis-Sadati, deputy justice minister, and Dastgheib, representative of Shiraz in the Iranian Parliament.