

MPs Tour Bushehr Nuclear Plant

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- A team of lawmakers from the Iranian parliament's Energy Committee visited the Bushehr nuclear power plant in the south of the country on Monday. As many as ten committee members toured the facility and discussed different issues relevant to the power station, IRNA reported. "The visit by the members of the Parliament's Energy Committee is in line with their supervisory duties," said chairman of the committee Ali Marvi. The Bushehr plant officially began its operations in September 2011, generating electricity at 40% capacity.

Kayhan International



EU: S-300 Not to Affect Nuclear Talks

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- Russia's decision to lift a ban on the delivery of S-300 missile defense system to Iran will not affect the nuclear negotiations between the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 countries, a European Union official said on Monday. "We took note of the Russian decision to ship some air defense systems to Iran. This is not a new issue... The negotiations are still ongoing and we do not believe that will affect the ongoing negotiations," Catherine Ray, an official representative of the EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, said.

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Viewpoint

By: Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

America: Black Lives Don't Matter

Italy Impressed by Exhibition of Iranian Handicrafts



Ali Moradi Elected as President of Iran Weightlifting Federation



Thousands Attend Funeral of Palestinian Youth



U.S. Has to Accept Iran's Power As Reality

By: Muhammad Ali Shabani*

STOCKHOLM — If the West wants Iran to be part of the solution to the crises in the Middle East, it needs to engage with Iran directly. Dialogue has so far been restricted to the nuclear issue. But recent progress in the talks — amid worsening regional turmoil — makes failure to reciprocate Iran's outreach a missed opportunity.

The Iranian foreign minister, Muhammad Javad Zarif, has made clear that Iran is willing to talk about issues "far beyond nuclear negotiations". His words are not the isolated wishes of a Western-educated moderate. The Iranian leadership, including the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is behind him.

Iran's regional policy is less about gaining allies than it is about depriving rival powers of anti-Iranian allies. This dynamic opens space for mutually beneficial engagement. The question is how to proceed in a manner that reduces conflict, rather than exacerbating it.

The record of Iranian-American coordination in the fight against terrorism has been positive. In 2001, it took only months to overthrow the Taliban and set up a new Afghan government. And last year a new cabinet was peacefully formed in Iraq while the Islamic State's blitz there was halted.

It is no coincidence that the Iranian point men in these episodes of tacit coordination have been the same. Contrary to popular perceptions, Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who heads Iran's powerful Quds Force, is not a hardliner but a pragmatist. And despite portrayals of Mr. Zarif as his moderate nemesis, the two actually have long experience working together and delivering results. Together, they have devised proposals for Syria and Yemen built on ceasefires, national dialogue and establishment of inclusive governments.

And despite the occasional "Death to America" chants in Tehran, the reality is that the United States has a far greater problem working with Iran. In Washington, Iran is shamelessly used as a political football, and in the Middle East, America is cornered by allies who are anxious that dealings with Tehran will come at their expense.

President Obama's defense of the nuclear negotiations succeeded thanks to the forceful argument that there are no realistic alternatives. It is now time for Mr. Obama to clarify this reality with respect to the region, too.

On Yemen, he has shown courage and vision by not allowing America's commitments to its allies to corner him with the false choice of abandoning friends and unconditionally supporting their folly. Critics of dialogue with Iran must now be made to understand that engagement to stabilize the region is not an untimely boon to the Islamic Republic. They must also be made aware of the many interests that the West shares with Iran in the triangle between Kabul, Sana and Beirut.

To make Iran part of the solution in the region, Mr. Obama should first end the decades-long "no-contact" policy and put the onus on Iran to back up talk with action. Despite all the recent negotiations, American diplomats technically remain restricted from exchanging anything but pleasantries with their Iranian counterparts, without the explicit authorization of the secretary of state.

To improve the chances of engagement, the quality and quantity of communication with Iran must increase. Mr. Obama does not need approval from a hostile Congress to achieve this aim. He can reverse the "no-contact" policy entirely on his own. Having courageously overhauled policy toward Cuba, removing antiquated restrictions that are relics of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and its aftermath would put the onus to engage back on Iran.

Second, the West should lead by example in ending the phobia regarding Iran's role in the region. Initial steps toward this end must entail adoption of new language. Progress in the nuclear negotiations has been enabled by joint "win-win" discourse. In the regional context, it would be greatly useful to adopt language that portrays Iranian influence as a reality, rather than a reversible nuisance.

Third, the United Nations should be put to good use, if only to provide an umbrella for dialogue. The 2001 Bonn Conference, which prevented civil war and ushered in a new Afghan state, was made possible because it occurred under United Nations auspices and because previous multilateral interactions had brought together America and Iran as well as Afghanistan's other neighbors and Russia.

Iran prefers regional dialogue to be kept to regional powers. But past precedent indicates that this may not work. In 2012, efforts to establish a contact group for Syria, gathering Iran, Egypt, Turkey and Saudi Arabia, failed because the Saudis refused to sit at the table, fearing that it would legitimize an Iranian role. This dynamic is now being repeated in Yemen, where Iran's outreach has been rejected on the grounds that "it is not part of the Arab world," even as Saudi Arabia has requested assistance from Pakistani troops.

Saudi attitudes will likely remain fixed as they primarily serve domestic purposes. Mr. Obama recognizes this, and he has boldly asserted that the greatest threat to Arab states stems not from Iran, but "dissatisfaction inside their own countries." Sadly, the region cannot wait for America's allies to address the roots of their anxieties.

Regional dialogue forums must be pursued in the meantime. These should include Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey plus the United States and Russia. As the nuclear negotiations have made clear, rival veto-wielding Security Council members can move past acrimony and be useful. And a contact group for Yemen could set a precedent for tackling more complex challenges like Syria.

As diplomats sit down to draft a final nuclear deal, the region must consider the benefits of broader engagement with Iran. The West and Iran's neighbors have nothing to lose, and much to gain.

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Courtesy: The New York Times

IRGC Chief: Saudi Arabia Following in Israel's Footsteps



IRGC chief Gen. Muhammad Ali Jafari, center, is seen at a medical festival of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps in Tehran.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) — Chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps said on Monday Saudi Arabia is verging on collapse as Tehran's position strengthens, putting the kingdom in the same camp as the occupying regime of Israel over its

military intervention in Yemen. "Saudi Arabia is shamelessly and disgracefully bombing and mass killing a nation that is fighting against the arrogant system," Gen. Muhammad Ali Jafari was quoted as saying.

He was apparently referring to Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has been waging a month-long air campaign in order to return former fugitive president Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi to power. Iran has repeatedly criticized the

airstrikes and said the Saudi-led campaign is doomed to fail. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has called the airstrikes in Yemen "genocide".

Gen. Jafari said the Saudi monarchy is facing collapse and called on his government to adopt a tougher stance toward Riyadh.

"Now that these attacks have taken place, reservations should be put aside," he said.

"Today, treacherous Saudi Arabia is stepping in the footsteps of Israel and the Zionists. This wasn't the case in the past and right now the Islamic Revolution's opponents are becoming clearer."

Gen. Jafari says Iran's ascendancy is growing. "Every day we are witnessing the strengthening of the Islamic revolution's power and dimensions outside. Enemies and America have submitted to it."

The United Nations says more than 1,000 people have been killed in fighting in Yemen since March 19.

The Houthis, who have overrun large parts of Yemen prompting Hadi to flee to Riyadh, have demanded an end to the air war as a condition for resuming UN-sponsored peace talks.

Jafari's comments come after deputy foreign minister Hussein Amir (Continued on Page 7)

Zarif-Kerri Talks on Sidelines of NPT Conference

NEW YORK (Dispatches) -- Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif was to meet U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry at the opening of a UN conference on the global anti-nuclear weapons treaty on Monday, as they try to make progress in talks on a long-term atomic deal.

Iran's top diplomat is the first state party to the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to address its 190 signatories at the United Nations headquarters in New York on behalf of 118 non-aligned nations that have signed the NPT, the world's benchmark disarmament pact.

Zarif and Kerry were to meet on

the sidelines to discuss negotiations on a landmark nuclear deal with the United States and five other global powers as they try to secure a final agreement with Iran by a June 30 deadline.

"Beside taking part in the conference, we have come here to listen to Americans' explanations on the U.S. administration's undertakings and its domestic policies," Zarif told Iranian state television.

"We consider the U.S. government responsible for fulfilling its international commitments and under international laws," he said. "No government can evade such commitments because of its domestic

issues." Zarif appeared to be referring to U.S. Republican senators' pledge to try to toughen a bill giving Congress the power to review a nuclear agreement with Iran, a move that could further complicate the talks.

In a tentative deal reached on April 2 in Lausanne, Switzerland, between Iran and the six powers, Tehran agreed to curb sensitive nuclear work in return for ending sanctions.

Diplomats need to iron out details about the timing of sanctions relief, the future of Iran's atomic research and development program, the exact nature of the IAEA's monitoring regime, and what kind of uranium

stockpiles Tehran will be allowed to keep under any final accord.

Sanctions are proving to be a key hurdle. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has said all sanctions, including the most severe restrictions on its energy and financial sectors, should be lifted the moment a deal is signed.

Western officials say that means sanctions will be lifted only after the IAEA verifies compliance.

Zarif again referred to sanctions in remarks to Iranian television.

"We have always said that sanctions and an agreement cannot go (Continued on Page 7)

Iran to Start Oil Production From South Pars

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran plans to start extracting oil from the world's largest gas field next year as part of the OPEC member's strategy to boost its crude oil production to at least 3 million barrels per day, an official said on Monday.

Ali-Reza Zeighami, manager of the South Pars oil layers project, said new wells were being drilled and would become operational in the second half of the next Iranian year, which starts in March 2016,

the official news agency IRNA reported.

"In the first phase, 20,000 to 35,000 barrels of oil are forecast to be recovered from the oil layer of South Pars," oil ministry website Shana cited him as saying.

He said seven wells had so far been spudded in the oil layer of South Pars and new rigs were being transferred to provide an accurate estimate of its hydrocarbon reserves. South Pars is shared be-

tween Iran and Qatar.

The oil layer of South Pars is estimated to have 7 billion barrels of oil in reserves, IRNA reported.

Separately, the National Iranian South Oil Company (NISOC), which is a subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) and is responsible for 83% of the country's output, plans to boost crude production to 3 million bpd during this Iranian year, which continues until March 2016.

Bijan Alipour, managing director of NISOC, told Shana his company planned to deploy 47 rigs for drilling development and work over wells.

Iran's current oil production is around 2.8 million barrels per day. Sanctions have halved its oil exports to just 1 million bpd from 2.5 million bpd in 2012.

Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zangeneh has said Tehran is ready to (Continued on Page 7)