

Iran Oil Output to Hit 4 Million bpd

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iranian Minister of Petroleum Bijan Zangeneh said the country's crude output would reach four million barrels per day (bpd) by March 2017, state television reported on Wednesday.

"In the annual budget, the amount of oil export has been predicted around 2,250,000 bpd. This means our production this (Iranian) year will reach four mbpd," Zangeneh was quoted as saying by state TV. The Iranian new year started on March 20. Zangeneh said Iran's oil output has increased after the lifting of sanctions in January.

Kayhan International



Saudis Invite Iranian Hajj Officials

TEHRAN (Tasnim) -- An Iranian delegation is scheduled to visit Saudi Arabia later this month at the invitation of Saudi Hajj officials, head of Iran's Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization Saeed Ohadi said Wednesday.

He said Saudi officials have invited the Iranian delegation for talks on new agreements on the upcoming Hajj. "Based on the Saudi invitation, we will hold a meeting on April 14 with Saudi Hajj Minister (Bandar Al Hajjar) on Hajj pilgrimage," he said.

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Viewpoint

By Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

America's Shenanigans on Paper

U.S.: No Iran Access to Financial System

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- A senior State Department official reassured concerned lawmakers on Tuesday that the Obama administration is not planning to allow Iran access to the U.S. financial system or use of the U.S. dollar for transactions.

"The rumors and news that have appeared in the press ... are not true," Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

U.S. lawmakers, mostly Republicans who opposed last year's Iran nuclear deal, have expressed deep concern about recent reports that the administration might let Iran use the dollar in some business transactions.

Republicans running for president have pledged to rip up the Iran deal or back away from it. Shannon said doing so could be calamitous. "We would argue that any effort to step away from (the Iran deal) would reopen a Pandora's Box in that region that we do not think we could close again," he said.

During the hearing, some senators said they remained concerned, because of comments they see as ambiguous, such as Shannon saying the administration was open to discussing renewal of the Iran Sanctions Act if it does not conflict with the nuclear agreement.

"You're like Exhibit A about why there was so much concern about this agreement," said Republican Senator Bob Corker, the committee's chairman.

Republican Senator Marco Rubio promised to block all of Obama's nominees for Treasury Department posts until the White House addresses concerns related to Iran and

the dollar.

Later Tuesday, White House spokesman Josh Earnest denied Washington is preparing to reinstate "U-turn" authorization, which would allow foreign banks to use the U.S. financial system to transfer funds for some Iran-related trade.

The Iran Sanctions Act expires at the end of 2016. Some lawmakers, particularly Republicans opposing the nuclear deal, are working on renewing it months before it expires.

They say it would send a strong message that Washington condemns Tehran's ballistic missile tests and other actions contrary to U.S. interests. Nuclear deal supporters say action, without seeing whether Iran violates the pact, would undermine an agreement signed by Washington and its allies.

Iran test-fired ballistic missiles this month, prompting U.S. calls for more sanctions. The Obama administration imposed new sanctions in January over an October missile test.

Shannon claimed the tests "violated the intent" of a UN resolution, but would not say they violated the resolution itself.

Some senators are also writing legislation to formally bar Iran from the U.S. financial system and sanctions to punish its ballistic missile tests.

Shannon also told the committee the administration would use its veto power in the Security Council to block any sale of Russian Su-30 fighter aircraft to Iran.

The remarks came after U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Iran deserved access to the U.S. financial system because it has met its obligations under the nuclear agreement.

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Russia Rejects Ban on Jet Sales to Iran

MOSCOW (Dispatches) -- Russia has rejected a U.S. claim that the sales of Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets to Iran were prohibited under a United Nations Security Council resolution.

On Tuesday, the U.S. Department of State Undersecretary for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon said Washington would use its veto power in the Security Council to block the possible sales of the fighter jets to Iran.

"The sale of Su-30 fighter aircraft is prohibited under UNSCR 2231 without the approval of the UN Security Council and we would block the approval of any sale of fighter aircraft under the restrictions," Shannon said, referring to the UN resolution.

Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for non-proliferation and arms control, Mikhail

Ulyanov, dismissed the claim.

"Such deliveries are not prohibited, they are allowed, and this follows from the text of the resolution," the Interfax news agency quoted him as saying.

Resolution 2231, adopted by the Security Council on July 20, 2015, endorsed a nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 group, comprising Russia, China, France, Britain, the US and Germany.

Shannon claimed that under the resolution, such weapon deliveries "require the submission of relevant notification to the Security Council and this notification's endorsement by the Security Council."

Ulyanov said Moscow has not forwarded such a notification to the Security Council so far.

Political analysts say Resolution

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Anti-Zionist Film Nominated for 4 Awards at French Filmfest.



Iran Still TOP ASIA Team In AMF Rankings



'Yemeni Rocket Kills 70 Saudi Mercenaries in Jawf'



Ayatollah Khamenei: U.S. Leaders Unreliable



Ayatollah Khamenei addresses a group of state officials during a meeting in Tehran, April 6, 2016.

TEHRAN (Press TV) -- **Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Wednesday said the American officials have proven to be unreliable, noting that some Western governments are following in the footsteps of the U.S. government.**

Addressing a group of senior

Iranian officials on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei described the U.S. as a symbol of dishonesty and peckishness, saying: "We cannot trust the Americans, and besides the Americans, some other Western governments are like that. Therefore we have to rely on our own capabilities and

the American official' positions and performance endorse such a view."

The Leader noted that Almighty God would assist the Iranian nation, if it embraces sincerity in its actions.

"In the course of personal and social life, there are always ups

and downs and hardship and ease, but the important thing is that under all these circumstances, the main course and orientation must not be forgotten," said Ayatollah Khamenei.

In another part of his speech, the Leader called on officials to take the necessity of supporting domestic production seriously, saying, "Production in both industrial and agriculture sectors must be given serious attention."

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution added that Iranian officials have always been united despite their differences of views.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always enjoyed the privilege of national unity, but alongside this national unity there must be unity and empathy among officials and such unity is in no contrast with differences of attitudes and views," said Ayatollah Khamenei.

The Leader called on Iranian officials of whatever attitude or view to move in line with the objectives set by the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Ayatollah Khamenei also stated that "empathy and rapport and unity" among officials will prepare the ground for the realization of the Economy of Resistance, noting: "Without cooperation among officials, country's affairs will not go ahead."

African Sex Victims on Hunger Strike in Paris

PARIS (Dispatches) -- Nine female refugees from Djibouti have entered the 13th day of a hunger strike in France to denounce alleged rapes and sexual exploitation by soldiers in their home country.

Ten Djiboutian women stopped eating food at a charity in Arcueil commune of the southern suburbs of Paris on March 25. One of them had to end her travail because of health issues. The hunger-strikers are accepting water, apple juice and sweet tea.

Four of the hunger strikers claim to have been raped by soldiers of Djibouti's army in their homeland several years ago. Before taking refuge in France, they lived in areas where the FRUD Afar rebel movement has been operating for 25 years.

"It's not pleasure that I starve myself," 30-year-old Fatou Ambassa, whose is fasting in memory of her cousin, Halima, said.

"There were several soldiers. They raped her in front of her parents. That was in 2003, she was 16 years old, they left her to die," Ambassa said.

Aicha Dabale, a spokeswoman for the France-based advocacy

group Women Solidarity, said, "We demand that these rapes are recognized as war crimes and that an international investigation be launched."

She also accused France of "closing its eyes to the actions of Djiboutian soldiers."

Dabale further said that doctors in Djibouti are afraid of issuing medical certificates attesting to the rapes.

"People are afraid that practices would be closed. There is tremendous pressure, and therefore, if we talk about the assault of a soldier, no doctor wants to testify," she explained.

The Djiboutian government has dismissed the allegations that army soldiers have raped civilians who are seen as sympathetic to the ethnic Afar rebels. The rebels, who have been fighting the government for 25 years, say they are fighting to keep their minority from being marginalized by the ethnic majority group Issa, whose members hold key positions in the government.

In a separate development, French judicial authorities on Tuesday opened an investigation into the latest allegations of degrading sexual

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Europol: Terrorism Feeds on Europe Drugs

BRUSSELS (AFP) -- **EU citizens spend more than 24 billion euros (\$27.3 billion) every year on illegal drugs such as cannabis and heroin, a European watchdog said Tuesday, warning of links between the trade and terrorism.**

The report said cannabis, which accounts for the biggest illegal retail market, was mainly grown in the European Union, while heroin, the second biggest market, was now being produced in some EU member states.

Alexis Goosdeel, the head of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), which produced the report, estimated the annual spending on the illegal drugs at the massive 24 billion euro figure. "The EU drugs market is driven by profit and power," Goosdeel said at a press conference with other officials in Brussels.

Europol director Rob Wainwright told the press briefing that about one third of all organized crime groups his organization helped identify "are involved in the drug trafficking trade."

He added that more than 20 percent of those involved in smuggling migrants to Europe were also involved in drugs trafficking.

The report warned that the Internet was making it easier to sell illicit drugs.

"The Internet has become the new battleground in the war on drugs," Dimitris Avramopoulos, the European commissioner for security and migration affairs, told journalists.

"This abuse of the Internet has to stop," he added.

The report says "many" people involved in terrorist attacks, "often recently radicalized young people, may have a history of low-level criminality, including drug use or involvement in the drug market, and exploit their criminal links to conduct their terrorist activities in a range of ways".

It warned of "some links being overlooked" as narcotics agents and counter-terror officials had separate functions and specializations.

The link between drug trafficking and terrorism is to "a certain extent indirect," Wainwright said.

"We have terrorist suspects responsible for the atrocities in Paris and we

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