



## IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM: PAST AND PRESENT

Iran's nuclear program started in the 1950's. Iran's first nuclear activities were held by Shah Pahlavi under the "Atoms for Peace" program with the U.S. It has continuously been stated that the program was for peaceful purposes and obtaining nuclear energy. The U.S. and the European countries have continued to support Iran's nuclear program until 1979 Islamic Revolution. Iranian government policies and the Iran-Iraq War lasting 8 years had a negative impact on nuclear activities. Nuclear activities were found to be against the religion by the Islamic government. Besides, economic difficulties of the War caused to halt nuclear activities.

In the middle of the 1980s when Islamic regime was strengthened, new decisions were made to continue nuclear activities. After the Islamic Revolution, Iran has become a serious political opponent of the U.S. in the Middle East and so was left alone by the Western countries. In order to find supporters and improve the country's military capacity after the War, Iran has found support from Russia. Besides, Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant project was put into operation in 2006 after signing an agreement with Russia.

In 1968, Iran has signed and ratified the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Iran declared that they have the right to establish an uranium enrichment facility in Natanz and did not need a special permit according to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) additional security agreement. Iran signed the IAEA additional protocol about avoiding to

produce nuclear weapons, but didn't pass it through the Parliament.

Iran has been severely criticized by Western countries that the nuclear program was not for producing energy, but for making nuclear weapons, because Iran had adequate energy sources and they did not need nuclear energy. In response, Iran declared that instead of obtaining energy in the form of burnt oil and gas, they aim to use these resources in chemical industry and preserve them for future generations. Iran reminded that also Russia, although being an oil-exporting and natural resource rich country, has been providing energy from nuclear plants.

Despite these arguments, in 2003, 35 IAEA member countries gave an ultimatum to Iran, to oblige Iran to supply proof for their civilian nuclear facilities and to open their activities for auditing of the IAEA until October, 31, 2003. Iranian government stated that the facilities have already been under the audit of the IAEA and ignored this ultimatum.

In 2006, Iran's former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad stated that Iran could enrich uranium and declared the 9th of April as "National Nuclear Technology Day". Iran achieved 3.5% percent enriched uranium and announced to use it as fuel for nuclear reactors. Here, the aim was determined to be self sufficient as a country in supplying nuclear fuel.

In 2006, former U.S Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice called the UN Security Council to take the necessary measures to force Iran to change their attitude. After this declaration, Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad announced that uranium enrichment is the legal right for Iran which arises from the NPT and they will not accept such pressure.

In these circumstances, P5+1 (five permanent members of the UN SC and Germany) offered an agreement to Iran which included special incentives for giving up uranium enrichment, accelerating Iran's entry to the WTO and helping to renew telecommunication networks. Iran announced that Argentina and Brazil continue to enrich uranium program and ignored this proposal. In 2006, the UN Security Council reported that they will implement economic sanctions to Iran, unless Iran stops uranium enrichment. In 2010 Iran has reached the 20% enriched uranium and this incident has brought new sanctions against Iran from UN and Europe.

In 2012, after putting the EU "unprecedented" resolution to embargo all Iranian oil into operation, Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei stated that Iran could also implement sanctions about natural gas to European countries and other countries. With his speech, Ali Khamenei reminded the world that Iran was and would be the only country that has the largest oil and gas reserves in the world.

Nowadays nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 still continues. The most recent talks were held in Geneva in November 2013, in Vienna in July 2013 and in November 2014. Diplomats have indicated that the parties are still far away from achieving a consensus and announced that negotiations have been extended until July 2015.

## Politics, Foreign Affairs and Security

- The People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan has won the parliamentary elections according to preliminary results, getting 65% of the votes. The Communist Party and oppositional Islamic Revival Party failed to meet the 5% threshold needed to win parliament seats.
- Representatives from Central Asian states took part in the 9th senior officials' meeting of the "Central Asia plus Japan Dialogue" at the level of deputy foreign ministers in Tokyo.
- Turkish President Recep Erdogan and his Turkmen counterpart Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov discussed the ways to transfer Turkmen gas to Europe during the official visit of the head of Turkmenistan to Turkey.
- Two-day talks of the working group on the defining the Caspian Sea's status was held in Baku. During this meeting the parties agreed on six additional points of a draft Convention on the Caspian Sea's legal status.
- Representatives of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic and the Donetsk People's Republic informed the joint commission about their completed withdrawal of heavy weapons.
- US President Barack Obama has extended for one year some of the sanctions, introduced against Russia in relation to the crisis in Ukraine.
- Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko has signed decree No. 119/2015 on the establishment of a constitutional reform commission to make changes to the country's basic law.
- President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and President of the Republic of Bulgaria Rosen Plevneliev have signed The Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership in Sofia.

- According to NATO Maritime Command, six NATO warships, including Turkish, Bulgarian and Romanian vessels, start joint training exercises in the Black Sea.

## Economy, Finance and Energy

- British Tethys Petroleum Ltd, which is specialized on oil and gas exploration and production in Central Asia and the Caspian region, announced that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with PetroChina International Kazakhstan Ltd to explore the feasibility of a long-term and mutually beneficial cooperation in natural gas and crude oil deliveries.
- Russian "Gazprom" has received an additional \$15 million from Ukraine for March gas deliveries. The total prepaid gas volume was amounted to 63.3 million cubic meters, excluding Donbas supplies.
- During the meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation in Abu Dhabi, Uzbekistan and the United Arab Emirates agreed on a joint program of investment cooperation with leading UAE companies, implementation of financial and technical assistance projects worth US \$119.5 million.
- The Parliament of Kazakhstan approved the draft law "On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on insurance and Islamic finance".
- Ukraine's central bank has sharply raised interest rates from 19.5% to 30% in an effort to curb inflation and prop up its currency, which has lost 80% of its value since last April.
- The Kyrgyz Government has approved a draft agreement with Kazakhstan on the development of economic cooperation under the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU). Under the agreement, Astana would give

Bishkek financial aid of \$100 million in order to facilitate the process of joining the EAEU.

- The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors has approved a \$40 million loan to help enhance the competitiveness and management capacity of small and medium sized enterprises in Kazakhstan.
- In January and February 2015, Turkmenistan's GDP grew by 10.1% and industrial production increased by 10.2%.

## Society and Culture

- The US ambassador to South Korea Mark Lippert has been slashed by a political extremist armed with a razor at a function in Seoul where he was to give a lecture.
- The United Nations Development Program, the Governments of Tajikistan and Japan signed a two and half year project in the sphere of cross-border cooperation. The \$4.2 million project would provide construction of a new border crossing point in Langar, upgrading of five other border crossing points nearby and training for Tajik border and customs officials.
- Tajik opposition leader Umarali Kuvvatov, who had been living in exile in Turkey, was shot dead by an unknown assailant in Istanbul.
- The Islamic State group has destroyed the ancient Iraqi fortress city of Hatra, just two days after "bulldozed" the ruins of Nimrud and weeks after smashed artefacts in the Mosul museum.
- The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN in Tajikistan started the implementation of a new project under Khatlon Livelihoods Support Project, which would be financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development.