

News in Brief

Nahavandian Lobbies
With ICC Members

Head of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines (ICCIM) has described the Islamic Chamber of Commerce (ICC) General Assembly in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as a success. Mohammad Nahavandian told IRNA that the assembly reviewed the international project on 'Halal' brand and trade mark with the aim of standardizing Halal products. On the sidelines of the meeting, Nahavandian exchanged views with ICC head, Saleh Kamal on Iran's participation in establishing an investment company and a multinational tourism company.

In a separate meeting with Ahmad Mohammed Ali, president of Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Nahavandian discussed the participation of Iran's private sector in developmental plans.

An agreement on Iran's involvement in the Union of Business Owners in ICC member states was inked on the sidelines of the meeting, he added.

The ICCIM head also held talks with economic and trade delegations from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, Turkey, Egypt and Jordan on ways of consolidating cooperation.

Nahavandian, heading an economic-trade delegation arrived in Saudi Arabia on April 22 to attend the ICC General Assembly meeting which focused on joint investments, boosting trade cooperation between Islamic countries and expanding IDB's participation in major projects. The meeting started on Thursday and ended on Sunday.

\$2b for Developing
Western Energy

More than \$2 billion will be spent on projects to develop oil and gas fields in the west of the country during the Fifth Five-Year Economic Development Plan (2010-15).

Director of Planning Affairs Department at Iran Central Regions Oil Company Abdolrahim Torabizadeh told IRNA that under the Oil Ministry's plan, some \$1.085 billion will be invested in developing oilfields such as Tang-e Bijar and Kermanshah in the west of the country during the period.

Torabizadeh said a billion dollars will also be invested in the development of gas fields such as Tang-e Bijar and Cheshmeh Khosh in Dehloran.

With new investment in the oil and gas sector, the western regions will be transformed into a major oil and gas hub.

With appropriate division of tasks and delegation of responsibilities to subsidiaries/affiliates, National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has been able to forge meaningful coordination within its organizational set up.

NIOC directors are basically involved in policymaking and supervision while subsidiaries serve as the executive arm in coordinating operations such as exploration, drilling, production and delivery of oil and natural gas, for export and domestic consumption.

Ahmadinejad to
Boost Lanka Ties

Tehran-Colombo relations are expected to get a big boost with the arrival in Sri Lanka of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Monday.

According to Fars news agency, the two-day state visit is the first to the country by an Iranian president. Ahmadinejad is visiting Sri Lanka at the special invitation of President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

On Tuesday, President Ahmadinejad and President Rajapaksa will lay the foundation stone for the Iranian-financed Uma Oya mega-hydropower project, in Wellawaya, in the Moneragala district.

The 450-million-dollar project will generate 100 megawatts of electricity and supply water for industrial and agricultural sectors of Hambantota and Moneragala districts.

Under the project, two dams will be constructed across the Uma Oya. One of the river's tributaries will channel water through a 23-kilometer tunnel to an underground power plant in Wellawaya.

Sri Lanka will also sign an agreement with Iran to upgrade Sapugaskanda oil refinery. The refinery will process light crude for Iran. President Rajapaksa's visit to Iran last year resulted in the Iranian government agreeing to provide \$1.9 billion for major Sri Lankan projects.

Sri Lankan Irrigation and Water Management Minister Chamal Rajapaksa said the Uma Oya multi-purpose project will add 100 megawatts of electricity to the national grid and irrigate 8,000 acres of paddy.

He said a dam will be built at Welimada, Puhulpola across the Uma Oya while water will be brought to Kirindi Oya in Wellawaya through a 22 km long tunnel, to cultivate 5,000 acres of paddy field in Wellassa Handapanagala together with 3,000 acres of paddy lands in Kuda Oya.

Pomegranate Trees Destroyed
By Cold Weather

By Sadeq Dehqan



Nearly 8,500 hectares are under pomegranate cultivation in Saveh, Markazi province.

Cold weather damaged a large number of pomegranate orchards in the year to March 2008 and the current drought has further aggravated the situation. Saveh, in Markazi province, is one of the main centers of pomegranate cultivation in Iran.

Head of Saveh's Agricultural Jihad Office Hassan Sharifi told Iran Daily that cold weather has dried up pomegranate trees destroying the entire produce.

Pomegranate trees cannot bear fruit in the coming years and have to be replaced by new pomegranate trees.

He maintained that it will be uneconomical to harvest pomegranates in the next five years.

Sharifi said that if farmers turn to reviving trees in the current year, no pomegranate will be produced in the next two years.

He said that 135,000 hectares are under cultivation in Saveh, of which 16,200 hectares pertain to orchards. Nearly 8,500 hectares are under pomegranate cultivation in Saveh.

"An average of 150,000 tons of first and second grade pomegranates are picked from the orchards each year," he said, and noted that 22 tons of the delicious fruit were produced per hectare in the year to March 2008.

Some 15,000 and 60,000 tons of pomegranates are exported annually from Saveh in the form of fruit and concentrate respectively, he noted.

Sharifi said that Markazi province ranks second in terms of area under pomegranate cultivation, adding Fars province stands first.

"Given the high quality and quantity of pomegranate produced in Saveh, it has the top place nationwide in this respect," he noted.

Nine cities of Fars province have pomegranate orchards while in Markazi province, the fruit is cultivated only Saveh.

Pomegranates from Saveh were exported to Romania, Japan, France, South Korea, Turkey and Persian Gulf state in recent years.

Sharifi stated that the government

agreed to compensate losses inflicted on pomegranate growers but nothing has been done so far to reimburse them.

The official said that only a small part of pomegranate orchards in Saveh are covered by insurance, adding that insurance companies only pay 10 percent of the damages. "A large portion of the city's economy is dependent on pomegranate cultivation," he noted.

He called on the government to pay more attention to pomegranate farmers of Saveh.

Sharifi said that thanks to its diverse climatic conditions, some 70 horticultural and agricultural products are produced in Saveh (also known as Savah) which is located about 100 km southwest of Tehran.

Pomegranate is native to the region extending from Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Himalayas in northern India and has been cultivated and naturalized over the whole Mediterranean region and the Caucasus since ancient times.

ADB Will Consider
Funding IPI Pipeline

ADB will consider financing the 'peace pipeline' if a request to the effect is made by the countries involved in the project, said the bank's Pakistan representative.

In case Tehran, New Delhi and Islamabad request financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the construction of the gas pipeline project between the three countries, the bank will seriously consider the request, said Peter Fiden in Islamabad on Sunday evening.

According to The Post daily, India and Pakistan held talks on Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project, also known as the 'peace pipeline', and agreed to continue negotiations.

"We have agreed on the fundamentals of the agreement," Pakistan's Oil Minister Khawaja Mohammed said on Friday adding that following further consultations the 'agreement will be concluded' in a few days or weeks.

The proposed \$7.5-billion IPI pipeline has long been delayed due to disagreement between India and Pakistan on transit fee for gas transfer via Pakistan.

India suggested transit fee is reportedly 15 cents per million of BTU while Pakistan's requested figure is 60 cents per million BTU.

India's Petroleum Minister Murlis Deora has said India intends to raise its suggested transit fee. "We have two-three small differences on transit fees. But I am very optimistic we can sort out the problems," he added recently.

Arak Refinery Boosting
Gasoline Production

National Iranian Oil Engineering and Construction Company has announced that gasoline production capacity of Arak Refinery will increase to 100,000 barrels a day once the refinery development project is complete.

NIOECC managing director, Asghar Salehi told PIN that gasoline production at the refinery would increase by 11 million liters a day.

He pointed out that with the implementation of Arak Refinery development project, the refinery would increase its production capacity from 175,000 b/d to 250,000 b/d.

Salehi added that once the development project is complete, the refinery's products will conform to global standards and sulfur production would rise to 650 tons per day.

"The plan is to be implemented in two phases. The first phase is scheduled for completion within the next 39 months and the second by 45 months."

Total investment in the project will amount to two billion euros, he said adding that the project will comply with the latest European standards.

