

News in Brief

Investment Talks
With Bahrainis

Iranian and Bahraini businessmen discussed investment opportunities in their fifth joint meeting in Manama on Saturday.

Iran's economic attaché in Manama, Mostafa Sadat told IRNA that during the five days of talks, the two sides will study the establishment of shipping, airline and medicine companies.

"Iran-Bahrain trade exchanges have increased from \$20 million to \$170 million in a decade. There are over 20 weekly flights between Tehran, Shiraz, Mashhad and Manama," he said.

Sadat said that the establishment of joint companies in the food and industrial sector will also be brought up in the discussions.

The Iranian delegation is headed by Yahya Al-e Eshaq, head of Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines. Bahrain MP Jassim Hussain, a member of parliament's finance and economic committee told Reuters that the US has exerted heavy pressure on Persian Gulf Arab states, including Bahrain, to restrain economic and financial ties with Iran, adding that Manama cannot ignore its trade with Tehran.

"There has been a lot of pressure on Bahrain by the US. Iran is a major trading partner of Bahrain and has a lot to offer in fields such as food, energy and tourism."

Tajik Tractor Production
To Resume

Head of Iran Tractor Manufacturing Company and two senior officials of the company in a meeting with the Tajik Industry and Energy Minister Shirali Gulev in Dushanbe Friday discussed issues of mutual interest, including the resumption of tractor production in the central Asian state.

According to IRNA, Iranian ambassador to Dushanbe Ali Asghar She'rdoust was also present in the meeting.

At the meeting, Iranian industrialists spoke of problems encountered by their company in Tajikistan and the Tajik minister pledged to remove the obstacles and create necessary conditions for the resumption of the company's operations.

Both sides agreed that Tajiran, which assembles Iran Tractor company products, will resume its operation in Tajikistan.

The Iranian delegation also asked the minister to create opportunity for Tajik farmers to buy tractors based on leasing.

Iran Tractor Assembly Plant 'Tajiran' was established in 2006 with an investment of \$10 million in Tajikistan but had to suspend operations because of problems.

US Concerned
About Energy Deals

The US and its allies fear that a recent gas deal between Iran and Switzerland may encourage other deals between Tehran and Europe.

"The worry is that the Swiss deal will lead others, such as the Austrians, to confirm energy investments in Iran, and that companies like (France's) Total could then follow suit and sign contracts," an unnamed western diplomat told Financial Times.

Despite US pressure for tougher sanctions against Iran, Tehran and Bern signed a 25-year supply agreement in March, worth up to \$42 billion. "There is a lot of attention on sanctions on Iranian banks, but investment in the energy sector is much more important for Iran's economy," he added.

Washington and its allies are concerned that new energy agreements between Iran and European companies may further lessen the effect of sanctions against Tehran as Asian firms have long defied the US and signed such deals.

Flynt Leverett, a former US National Security Council adviser on Middle Eastern issues, said Sinopec of China and SKS of Malaysia had concluded deals with Tehran even after sanctions forced US companies to stop signing supply contracts with Iran.

Leverett said Washington has limited options. "The EU would effectively take us to court at the World Trade Organization and the US would probably lose."

Meanwhile, senior Iranian oil industry official Hojjatollah Ghanimifard maintained that Tehran has a right to meet the energy needs of consumers. "Would it be wise to deprive the common people living in consuming countries of supplies from Iran?" he asked.

Corruption
Revisited

Corruption prevails among the people irrespective of their level of education; wittingly or otherwise.

Economic and financial corruption, in all its forms and manifestations, exists in both developing and advanced countries. Efforts of governments and organizations to counter this ugly phenomenon are essentially viewed as a sign of efficacy and health of a government.

According to IRNA, following the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, steps were taken to fight the scourge. However, apparently these measures have not yet produced the desired results. About eight years ago, the leader issued an eight-article decree urging officialdom and the people to launch an all-out drive to confront and eventually uproot corruption.

This was indeed a good omen and marked a new era in the anti-corruption drive. The leader's decree stressed that the root causes of corruption should first be identified. It urged national determination to draw up a systematic plan of action. The decree further underlined that all state organizations and the people assume responsibility in the anti-corruption campaign. It noted that bias should be avoided in identifying and uprooting corruption.

Most officials maintain that the directives of the leader have not yet been fully implemented. It cannot and should not be doubted that continuation of this trend will result in nothing but wastage of resources and further corruption in all spheres. Economic corruption is a very complex and non-transparent phenomenon which mostly remains hidden to the society. Hence, methods to counter the ominous phenomenon must above all comply with its characteristics.

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It seems that corruption grows within the government. On one side there is a corrupt governmental official and on the other the people who break the law and offer bribes. Here governmental official refers to a wide spectrum of the public sector, ranging from senior political leaders to governmental employees in remote rural areas. Furthermore, implications of economic corruption can be sought among all members of the society as well as non-governmental people and companies in the private sector. In various theoretical considerations to uproot corruption, more attention has been given to corrupters, i.e. the people who offer bribes in return for privileges. This is while in some other theories the corrupted are attributed more attention.

Economic corruption in Iran dates back to several decades before the victory of the Islamic Revolution. Corruption prevails among the people irrespective of their level of education; wittingly or otherwise. It must also be understood that the frontiers of economic corruption are not clear.

It is obvious that any preventive measure should conform to the very characteristics of the phenomenon, as otherwise it is doomed to failure.

All in all, given the present circumstances a preventive plan must be devised which matches the outlines of the five-year developmental plans and the leader's decree.

It is crucial that the outlines of Article 44 must be implemented faster and more accurately. Furthermore, the role of the people in countering corruption must be clearly defined. It is also necessary that the macro plan is executed continuously and efficiently without hesitation.

Turks to Discuss
Gas Cooperation

A Turkish delegation will arrive in Tehran soon to discuss involvement in phases 22-24 of South Pars development project, announced a deputy oil minister.

Hossein Noqrehkar Shirazi said the delegation is due in Tehran before May 20. "During a visit of an Iranian expert group to Turkey earlier this year, Turkish officials sought details about the offshore and onshore aspects of phases 22-24 of South Pars gas field development project and we hope to clear things up in the Tehran meeting," he told Moj news agency.

The official added that gas exports and investment in this sector will top the agenda.

Export of 20 percent of gas extracted from Phases 22-24 of the South Pars field, which is equivalent to 35 billion cubic meters per annum, construction of a gas pipeline from South Pars to the Turkish border and permits to transport Iran's gas to Europe via Turkey and Turkmenistan's gas to Turkey via Iran are among the main provisions of agreements signed earlier between Iran and Turkey.

Based on the agreement signed by energy ministers of the two countries, Turkey will invest in developing Phases 22, 23 and 24 of South Pars field.

Self-Sufficiency
In Veterinary Drugs

Through planning and efforts of specialists, State Veterinary Organization has reached about 95 percent self-sufficiency in veterinary drug production, disclosed the head of the organization.

Currently about 120 Iranian pharmaceutical factories produce 200 kinds of drugs, Mojtaba Norouzi explained to IRNA.

Effective steps have been taken in cooperation with the private sector in synthesizing Vitamin E and producing other vitamins in synthetic forms, he said.

Close to 70 percent of the vaccines for livestock, poultry and aquatics are produced in the country, he said, adding the organization plans to achieve 100 percent production target within five years.

Drought reduces the livestock's immunity system and leads to increase in diseases, Norouzi continued.

Given Iran's special geographical condition, livestock diseases are common and this makes the responsibilities of the veterinary sector even heavier. To counter the diseases, the organization has embarked on extensive nationwide vaccination campaign for rural and tribal livestock with financial assistance from the government, the specialist concluded.

