

Presumptive Republican nominee for the United States presidential election Donald Trump has attacked former British Prime Minister Tony Blair for the Iraq War "disaster," saying he did a "terrible job" by invading.

In an interview with ITV, Trump warned that the Chilcot Inquiry into the 2003 invasion, which will finally be published on July 6, will not look good for the former Labor PM. "I don't see it as war crimes. I just think he got down as somebody who did a terrible job."

"[President George W.] Bush got us into it, that's a terrible, terrible thing that happened," he said.

"Tony Blair made a mistake. You can't just go in haphazardly. You folks got involved in that mess just as we did and now look at it."

Trump said British leaders should put the needs of their own country before that of America, and would get more respect if they stood up to U.S. presidents.

"I'm surprised somebody would see the Bush relationship as being that important."

Trump also criticized Lord Alan Sugar, who hosts Brit-

Trump blasts Blair for Iraq War 'disaster,' says Britain should stand up to U.S. presidents



Ash version of the Apprentice, but is critical of the Republican's campaign.

"He's small time. Don't forget that Sugar works for me. Every time he makes money from that show he pays me." Trump also denied claims he saw Princess Diana as the "ultimate trophy wife" or had any interest in wooing her despite once claiming he could have "nailed" her.

His comments come a day after he said he is unlikely to have a "very good relationship" with Prime Minister David Cameron.

He also called newly elected London Mayor Sadiq Khan "ignorant" and in need of an IQ test because he criticized Trump's proposal to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. In response, Khan has invited Trump to London to meet his wife and teenage daughters.

The capital's first Muslim mayor is standing by his attack on "ignorant" Trump, but has now offered the Republican an olive branch.

"Are you doing the job of Daesh and the extremists for them by saying the West hates Islam? I am the West!" he said, using an Arabic pejorative term for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). (Source: RT)

No military solution to Syria crisis: Zarif

TEHRAN — Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday reiterated Iran's position that the crisis in Syria should be settled politically, noting there is no military solution to the conflict which has been raging for more than five years.

Speaking to reporters in Vienna, where he arrived to participate in the fresh round of talks on Syria, the minister also said, "It is essential to counter the terrorist groups and not to let the terrorist groups take more ter-

rorist actions through using the ceasefire."

Iran, Russia, Turkey and Saudi Arabia as well as representatives from the European Union and the Arab League are among the countries participating in the International Syria Support Group meeting on Tuesday. The 17-nation ISSG aims to discuss the stalled negotiations, challenges in maintaining the February ceasefire and the delivery of UN humanitarian aid to various areas across the war-ravaged country, Press TV reported.

Zarif said the conference has provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of observing the ceasefire.

Zarif also met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, discussing the latest developments in Syria.

He also held a separate meeting with UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura.

Sending humanitarian aid to Syria was discussed in the meeting with de Mistura.

Russia may counter NATO by deploying ballistic missiles near Romania: analyst

TEHRAN — What will be the probable response of Russia to this move?

A: If it is officially described by the U.S. to be a defense system against Iran's shorter-range ballistic missiles, then it clearly is that regardless of whether any other motive to guard against Russia exists or not. It is a defense shield to deter Iranian missiles and won't be active unless Iran in the indeterminable future actually launches an attack on a European country or maybe Israel. As a defense system it will of course be a strategic deterrent to Iran. Notably, the NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, has specifically said that the installation in Romania is not technically capable of knocking out incoming Russian missiles and that Moscow, in his view, is fully aware of this.

TEHRAN — What is the future step of NATO to get closer to Russian borders?

A: It has been reported that one idea being discussed is the deployment of small battalions of ground troops in the Baltic nations and Poland. NATO, however, with a small addition of ground troops will not have the capacity to stop a major Russian attack. These battalions, if they are deployed at all, may at best serve as hurdles in the way of a Russian offensive. Any larger scale deployment of troops plus armored brigades appears unlikely. Russia, of course, may take this opportunity as an excuse to boost 'coun-

ter-measures', maybe by placing shorter range ballistic missiles near the Romanian border.

TEHRAN — Don't you think that NATO will become weak if Britain exits the EU?

A: If the UK exits from the EU, there might be several negative outcomes for the world in economic and strategic terms, in my careful opinion, despite the conviction of Brexit supporters in the UK that it'll be good for Britain to restore a sovereignty which they see as lost in the EU. But whether it will weaken NATO is difficult to surmise at this point. Britain's exit will free up Germany and France to

explore further their tentative desire formally to build an EU military headquarters; that might help NATO or it might not. But any weakening of the EU system, which might happen with Britain's exit, could incline each European nation to look after its specific economic and strategic interest. Russia will most likely welcome such a loosening of joint resolve that might impact NATO's capacity for quick decision-making. But, as I said, it is difficult right now to pinpoint the fallout of Brexit, if it happens, on NATO. One impact could be a lowering of the level of Anglo-U.S. understanding on European strategic issues; that is probably one reason, among others, why President Obama has urged British voters to reject the call for Brexit.

TEHRAN — "NATO... with a small addition of ground troops will not have the capacity to stop a major Russian attack."

Opportunity for Iran to deepen integration into global economy is coming: IMF

TEHRAN — Labor market reforms can be particularly effective in drawing people into the workforce. This approach could be considered in Iran, where unemployment remains high, and demographic pressures will continue to bring large numbers of new entrants to the labor market in the coming years. But it is important that some measures—tax cuts and training programs—that have fiscal implications are able to fit within the broad fiscal framework.

Another area of structural reform is the policy mix that can help to foster innovation. This can be achieved by removing barriers to competition and foreign investment, reducing the hold of monopolies and special interests, cutting red tape, and increasing investment in education and research. Countries are finding that increased openness to foreign investment can facilitate technology transfers and enhance access to foreign

markets. They are trying to reduce the cost of doing business, address vulnerabilities in the corporate and banking sectors, advance privatization, and foster financial transparency and a level playing field for all investors and entrepreneurs.

Iran faces a unique set of issues related to the re-integration of its banks to the international financial system. The Iranian authorities have made recent progress in the establishing of a framework aimed at combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism. This is a critical element for reconnecting with the international financial system. The IMF will continue to support the Iranian authorities' efforts in this area.

TEHRAN — IMF looks forward to working with Iran

The opportunity for Iran to deepen integration into global economy is coming. Development that builds on

the economic stabilization already achieved, combined with new reforms, can unleash creativity and entrepreneurship that hold great promise. By continuing to strengthen its economy, Iran can change the lives of its own people, particularly the younger generation, and build a legacy for the future. That is a challenge befitting a country with a heritage like Iran's.

A more prosperous Iran also can help to put the global economy on a sounder footing. The process of reintegrating with the global economy will not be without its challenges, but the potential rewards are worth the effort.

Iran has been a respected voice of economic cooperation at the IMF for many years. Its voice can only be enhanced by taking the steps now to build strong, sustainable and inclusive growth. The IMF looks forward to working with Iran on this endeavor.

BSI Managing Director: Activists in Public Relations and Communications Dept. shouldering great responsibilities

TEHRAN — Concurrent with May 16, which marks "National Public Relations and Communications Day", Chief Executive of Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) Esmail Lalehghani congratulated the auspicious occasion to the industrious activists and said: "Managers of Public Relations Department burden the sensitive and great responsibilities at any organization."

Turning to the significance of special status of public relations in any organization, he said: "Considering the ever increasing developments in the field of technologies, concerned activists should make their utmost efforts to take advantage of state-of-the-art technical know-how for invigoration of pertinent activities."

Establishing interaction with media circles and making effort to boost synergy especially in economic issues at the

current condition is of paramount importance to clarify the relevant services, he maintained.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the senior official of the bank appreciated and extolled unflinching endeavors of activists of public relations and media companions in dissemination of achievements of banking system of country especially Bank Saderat Iran (BSI). In the end, Chief Executive of Bank Saderat Iran (BSI) Esmail Lalehghani diagrammed a rosy and bright future for banking system of the country under the auspices and sublime recommendations of supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution in current year named after "Resistance Economy, Action and Implementation" and advised managers of Public Relations Department to take effective steps in line with materializing objectives of resistance economy in the country.

"Resistance Economy" considered main topic of "Intl. Urban Economy Seminar"

TEHRAN — Objectives of "Resistance Economy, Action and Implementation" will be materialized when existing potentials and capabilities of the country are taken into serious consideration.

Head of Intl. Urban Economy Seminar Dr. Hossein Mohammad Pourzarandi announced the above statement and said: "Presently, 70 percent of country's total population live in urban areas, expandable to 80 percent in the next 10 years."

Urban economy is of the most important topic that should be addressed in an expert-level session, he maintained. Turning to the current year's motto named after by supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution as "Resistance Economy, Action and Implementation", he placed special emphasis on the significance of "urban economy" which will

be held in current year with the aim of exchanging views with other countries in this field.

He, who is the Chief Executive of Bank-e Shahr (City Bank), pointed to the other topics of this seminar such as "banking systems, social banking and urban economy" and said: "Given the significance of the said issue, the subject of banking is taken into serious consideration as a driving force of economy in the country."

It should be noted that Intl. Urban Economy Seminar will be held on Thursday May 19 in Central Building of Bank-e Shahr in the presence of distinguished guests from 15 world countries, senior directors and managers of top municipalities across the country as well as top neighborhoods, focusing on 10 main pivots in the field of urban economy, he ended.

who was involved in major investments in Iran, describing the Iranian workforce as "high on education, and low on training".

Many participants disputed this view, however, maintaining that US banking sanctions remained the biggest unresolved barrier to the opening of the economy.

Despite the challenges raised, the overall mood remained positive and extremely upbeat, with one senior European business leader speaking at the conference describing the Iran opportunity as the "fastest new market opening I have ever seen".

TEHRAN — Attracting and retaining employees with the right skills a key challenge facing foreign companies in Iran

As the race to enter the newly opened Iran market gains momentum, European multi-nationals are starting to grapple with the practical realities of setting up and operating profitably in the country, according to speakers attending a major Iran business conference held in Zurich. The 3rd Europe-Iran Forum, attended by over 400 senior executives, heard from the leadership of major European firms as well as Iranian state-owned

JUMP

Iraq in the midst of crisis

TEHRAN — On the other hand, Muslims had to endure severe psychological pressure during those years of invasion. The people in charge, members of the occupying forces humiliated the Muslims by ill-treatment, massacred them and treated them with disrespect for years; they dealt with them through a manner of atrocity and mercilessness. Thus, many Muslims lost any sanity in their minds and have turned into killing machines, exacerbated further with a conceptual misunderstanding of Islam which is divorced from the authentic teachings of the Qur'an. The country has turned into a complete disaster which it cannot recover from even now. What we witnessed afterwards was the reaction to the disgrace the Muslims were exposed to. The occupational forces were cutting their fingers or ears, drying them and taking them to America and making them necklaces. The disclosure of the Abu Ghraib prison and the inconceivable oppression Muslims were exposed to are still fresh in our minds. They were maltreated beyond belief and were subjected to all sorts of severe torture. I'm sure most of you remember the horrible footage of Lynnie England's pulling the leash of an Iraqi prisoner around his neck. Regrettably, this video was only one small clue of the actual tortures experienced there.

Colonel Janis Karpinski, the former head of Abu Ghraib, stated that the prison was run by military intelligence and all those abuses implied on Iraqi prisoners were in compliance with the U.S. official policy and that CIA agents participated in interrogations. Such cruelty certainly not only affected the victims but also those in charge of implementing these brutalities. With regards to this, it is strikingly important to see the remarks of Eric Fair, one of the interrogators in 2004: "I am not [someone to be proud of]. I was an interrogator at Abu Ghraib. I tortured." Haunted by his memories, Fair also reminded the following in terms of the torture techniques applied in that notorious prison: "[T]he Senate released its torture report. Many people were surprised by what it contained: accounts of waterboarding far more frequent than what had previously been reported, weeklong sleep deprivation, a horrific and humiliating procedure." I'm not surprised. I assure you there is more; much remains redacted. Most Americans haven't read the report. Most never will. But it stands as a permanent reminder of the country we once were."

I encountered thousands of photos related to the tortures in Abu Ghraib all over Facebook accounts of Muslim youth. Either their brothers or their fathers were tortured, or their wives and sisters were raped. Misery lies all over the place in the Islamic world and this pain made some young Muslims aggressive, so much that they became radicalized and also resorted to recruiting others to radical groups to take their revenge. Moreover, many analysts believe the rise of ISIS was the repercussion of the U.S. invasion. Consequently, the Middle East has become a boiling cauldron. However, it is the responsibility of Muslims not to fall into this trap and be forgiving as a command of God and continue to form a peaceful unity to protect the entire Islamic world. Such unity would be a deterrent and the rest of the world would then think twice about whether to harm even one single Muslim. This would also put an end to radicalism and pave the way for a global peace.

These days Iraqis in deep political, economic, and military crisis. The sole reason for this predicament is not the weak administration or even corruption. There are many other factors such as the dramatic plunge in oil prices, internal migration, etc. Iraq has an economy largely dependent on oil. The decline in oil revenues is not only a result of the decrease in prices but also from the serious damage to important oil pipelines and their infrastructures. As a result, crude oil production does not exceed 4.5 million barrels per day. In terms of politics, the government is in urgent need of radical reforms to make the government functional. This cannot be done overnight due to some sectarian conflicts and Sadr's peaceful protests which some consider as a "white coup-d'etat." All are indications that some actions need to be taken at once. The primary action would be to abolish the sectarian quota system and form a transition government that gives voice to Sunnis, Shias and Kurds in an equal respect. It would be a good step for Abadi to take the call of Sadr and collaborate with him as they both denounced the sectarian quota system. Additionally, two of its neighbors, Turkey and Iran are always ready to support to fix Iraq's defective government systems, while at the same time raised concerns over sectarian divisions and its effects in the Islamic world. In conjunction with this, Iran's spokesperson for Foreign Ministry, Hossein Jaber Ansari, has already expressed Iran's readiness to use its entire network in line with paving the way for Iraqi talks. After this transition government starts to function in healthy way by embracing all the sects within, they can then call for free and fair elections in Iraq. Only when a functional, corrupt-free government is formed with members represented equally from all ethnic and religious groups, then international investors will feel at ease and begin investing to make the country flourish economically.

IKCO to Return to Belarus

TEHRAN — Leading Iranian vehicle manufacturer Iran Khodro Company has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Belarusian car assembly company Unison.

The MoU is part of IKCO's strategy to expand its export markets. It came after Unison expressed its interest in restoring ties with IKCO. The agreement was signed on the sidelines of Iran-Belarus Joint Economic Commission in Tehran. Given the membership of Belarus in the Eurasian Customs Union, the MoU is of great importance for IKCO and can help it to market its products in the region at competitive prices.

With earning the required certificates and standards for exporting vehicles to the member states of the Eurasian Customs Union as well as restoring its cooperation with Unison, IKCO can regain its share of CIS markets in the near future.

Unison is among the main car assembly companies in Belarus which has been involved in assembling IKCO products in the country. IKCO established its site in Belarus's capital Minsk back in 2006 with the partnership of Unison. Now the Iranian car company is intended to take advantage of the site as a regional hub for exporting its vehicles to the CIS markets.

Europe's business leaders meet to discuss Iran entry strategy

TEHRAN — Attracting and retaining employees with the right skills a key challenge facing foreign companies in Iran

As the race to enter the newly opened Iran market gains momentum, European multi-nationals are starting to grapple with the practical realities of setting up and operating profitably in the country, according to speakers attending a major Iran business conference held in Zurich. The 3rd Europe-Iran Forum, attended by over 400 senior executives, heard from the leadership of major European firms as well as Iranian state-owned

and private sector firms. The speakers alluded to the practical challenges faced as Iran re-enters the global economy, notably in the area of human capital. "When we started our business 13 years ago, 80 percent of our clients were multinational companies, but now most left Iran due to sanctions," said Aseyeh Hatami, founder and CEO of IranTalent.com, the largest online recruitment firm in Iran. Hatami suggested that to succeed in Iran, international firms have no choice but to invest heavily in training, skills transfers and capacity building.

Jeroen van der Veer, former CEO of Royal Dutch Shell