



Tehran Times/ Mohammad Moheiny



ARTICLE
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Iraq's Kurdistan referendum: What to expect for oil markets

Against the opposition of Iraq's central government and despite the warning signals from much of the international community, thousands of Iraqi Kurds headed to polls on September 25 for a referendum on independence.

An action which many believe could raise serious issues for Iraq's economy in the upcoming months and also result in some short and/or long term changes in the oil market.

■ What is at stake for Iraqi government?

With the Kurds claiming independence, Iraq's government which is currently wrestling to rebuild its energy industry after decades of conflict and war could be facing further instability in the region.

Since 2014 when the Iraqi forces retreated from Kirkuk in war with Daesh, Kurds have been controlling the northern regions in Iraq, and they have been also in conflict with the central government over the city of Kirkuk which is the home for some of Iraq's oldest producing oil fields.

Northern Iraq is believed to hold about 45 billion barrels of crude reserves, more than OPEC member Nigeria.

According to Bloomberg, the region pumped about 544,600 barrels of oil a day in 2016 and is expected to boost output to 602,000 barrels this year making it a significant contributor to the country's economic growth.

Although the Kurds get a 30-percent share from their controlled regions' oil revenues, recent drops in oil prices have imposed economic pressures on KRG and they haven't been able to pay their dues to the oil companies operating the fields in the region. This situation added to the territory conflict over Kirkuk has led the KRG to claim for a higher and "more just" share of the country's oil revenues. ➔4

Leader pays tribute to national icon

POLITICS

TEHRAN

— Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Islamic Revolution, on Wednesday morning paid tribute to Mohsen Hojaji, who was decapitated by Daesh in Syria last month.

Citizens also participated in a huge funeral procession in honor of Hojaji. The procession began in Tehran's Imam Hussein Square on Wednesday morning.

Hojaji was a member of the Iranian military advisory team, which assists the Syria army in its counter-terrorism operations against terrorists. He was taken hostage by Daesh terrorists near the Iraqi border on August 7 and beheaded two days later.

Ayatollah Khamenei attended the Imam Hussein Mosque at the square, where Hojaji's body had been brought to, performing prayers for the martyr prior to the funeral ceremony. ➔2

Iranian parliament condemns Iraqi Kurdistan referendum

POLITICS

TEHRAN

— Iranian MPs issued a strongly worded statement on Wednesday condemning the independence referendum in the Iraqi Kurdistan region.

The statement was signed by 210 parliamentarians.

"Any action that seeks disintegration is harmful to the Iraqi people and the entire region and we condemn this action of the Iraqi Kurdistan region," the statement read.

"During the past years, Iraq was targeted by various plots hatched by the U.S. and the Zionist regime of Israel, however, the Iraqi people's resistance and solidarity foiled all the hegemonic system's plots and the Iraqis approved the constitution and formed the central government and restored peace to Iraq."

The statement called the independence referendum "illegal" and harmful to Iraq's "national solidarity" and "territorial integrity".

The statement urged the Kurdistan region to cooperate with the Iraqi central government and stop the Zionists' "adventurism" in the Middle East region.

Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government held independence referendum on Monday. KRG President Masoud Barzani turned a cold shoulder to international calls against the referendum.

Iran closed on Sunday its airspace to the Kurdistan region upon a request by the Iraqi government.

■ Iran's top security official: Iraqi Kurdistan region to go under more boycotts

The secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council underlined more negotiations between Tehran, Baghdad and Ankara after the recent independence referendum in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, noting that more sanctions will be imposed on Kurds in Iraq.

"Mr. Ali Shamkhani believed that tri-lateral negotiations among Iran, Iraq and Turkey will continue concurrent with talks with the Kurdistan region's groups and parties, and boycott pressures will be exerted too," Jabbar Khouchakinejad, a legislator, quoted Shamkhani as saying in a private session at the parliament on Wednesday.

According to the MP, Shamkhani stressed that different measures will be adopted to make the Kurds withdraw from their stances and the Iraqi government can even resort to military force because this separatist move has happened in Iraq and the referendum is against the Iraqi constitution, he added.

"The Security Council secretary also emphasized that Iran will support the Iraqi government's measures," Kouchakinejad said.

Elimination of nuclear weapons is 'moral responsibility', Iran says

Abbas Araqchi, Iranian deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, said on Tuesday that total elimination of nuclear weapons is a "legal, political and moral responsibility".

"We need to take this responsibility responsibly and continue our collective efforts resolutely," Araqchi told a UN General Assembly meeting intended to promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

Araqchi also said, "On its part, Iran will continue to remain a strong supporter of nuclear disarmament."

Following is full text of Araqchi's speech published by IRNA:

I would like to begin by thanking you for convening this meeting and your statement. I also associate myself with the NAM statement delivered by the honorable foreign minister of Venezuela.

Promotion of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which was proposed by H.E. President Rouhani of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement in 2013, is indeed the promotion of the main purpose of the United Nations i.e. "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace. This is also in line with the realization of the objective of the very first resolution of this Assembly that called for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Over the past seven decades, the existence of nuclear weapons has been the most serious challenge to the international peace and security. Despite the cessation of nuclear arms race for some years in the past, recently we hear alarming announcement by a nuclear-weapon State that it intends to continuously strengthen and expand its nuclear arsenal to ensure its place at the top of the pack. Such a statement is a clear indication of, and an explicit invitation to, the start of a new nuclear arms race. ➔2

UNESCO experts in Iran weighing historical Sasanian cities

HERITAGE

TEHRAN

— Experts form the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) accompanied by archaeologists from Germany and Italy visited parts of the historical Sasanian ancient cities and ruins on Wednesday as part of the process for inscribing the ensemble on UNESCO World Heritage List, IRNA reported on Wednesday.

Following nearly a decade of expectation, Iran is further moving towards possible inscription of 'The Ensemble of Historical Sasanian Cities' and 'Arasbaran Protected Area' that comprises several Sasanian-era (224-651) sites, namely Bishapour, Firouzabad and Sarvestan in the southern province of Fars. ➔10



ARTICLE
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Muharram: The reunion of society

Once again the Iranian nation is overwhelmed by the month of Muharram. Black banners and draperies are seen all over the country. People in dark dresses attend mourning congregations.

Traditionally, Iranians hold mourning rituals during the first ten days of Muharram - the first month of the Islamic calendar - to commemorate the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions in the battle of Karbala in 680.

Muharram, as a time of intense grief and mourning, is also an opportunity for people to practice cooperation.

It is a good reason for people to gather for a common purpose and to cooperate with each other to hold rituals in a proper way.

People commemorate Imam Hussein (AS) in chorus attending mosques and other religious places like hussainiyas.

Sorrowful and poetic recitations and eulogies are chanted in memory of the 10th of Muharram, Ashura, the day Imam Hussein (AS) and his companions were martyred. There are also chest-beating ceremonies.

During Muharram, some people provide free meals, called nazri, which is distributed mainly among the poor. Taking part in the process of cooking and distributing nazri amongst neighbors and relatives is considered as a good deed.

Although some benevolent persons prefer to order nazri to be cooked by restaurants or catering companies, but it is still a great opportunity for relatives and neighbors to come together in a place for distributing it.

Almost nobody mourns during Muharram individually. The month is an occasion for all to show reunion of the society, cherish religious values, and remind each other of the importance of social unity.