



A picture taken on Monday shows the Transocean Winner oil rig after it ran aground at Dalmore on the Isle of Lewis in northern Britain during a storm. — AFP

## EXECUTED IRAN NUKE SCIENTIST UNFAIRLY TRIED: MOTHER

DUBAI/WASHINGTON: Iranian security forces may have pressured nuclear scientist Shahram Amiri, hanged last week for spying for the United States, to admit to crimes he did not commit, his mother said in an interview this week. Amiri leapt to the global spotlight in 2010 when he claimed first that U.S. agents had abducted him and then that he was in the United States of his own free will. The same year, he returned to Iran where he was welcomed as a hero but then detained and tried on charges that he divulged nuclear secrets.

"When I was saying goodbye to him before his execution, he told me not to be sad as he had done nothing wrong," Marzieh Amiri told Reuters in a telephone interview. "He asked me to tell everyone that he was innocent. He was saying his conscience was clear," she

said. Her son's closed-door trial was unfair and he was not properly represented, she said. She did not know the full name of the lawyer, who as a result could not be reached for comment.

"They should have held a public trial," she said. "I am not angry with the government or the Supreme Leader (of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei). I am angry with extremist security forces who were on his case, trying to prove he was a spy and who maybe forced him to confess to things he hadn't done." Iranian judiciary officials could not be reached for comment. Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, spokesman for Iran's judiciary, told reporters Amiri received a fair trial and the case followed standard judicial procedure. "He ... had contacted Iran's number one enemy, America, and had given our

most secret and vital information to them," Mohseni Ejei said on Sunday, according to the state broadcaster.

### 'I am an Iranian'

In June 2010, Iranian state television showed Amiri, then 32, saying in a video he was in Arizona after US and Saudi intelligence forces kidnapped him a year earlier during a religious pilgrimage abroad. In a second video soon afterwards, Amiri said he was in the United States voluntarily and wanted to dispel "rumors" that had been spread about him. "I am an Iranian, and I have taken no step against my homeland," he said. As a young man with a talent for electronics in the Iranian city of Kermanshah, Amiri would tote his toolbox to friends' houses and fix their broken appliances, his mother said. He won a coveted scholarship from the defense ministry to further his studies and eventually became a researcher in radiation safety at the defense ministry-affiliated Malek Ashtar University of Technology, visiting sites associated with Iran's nuclear program. According to a US official involved in the case, the Central Intelligence Agency recruited Amiri in Iran and helped extract him using the pilgrimage.

But US officials had doubts about the depth of Amiri's knowledge and access to the most sensitive

information. Amiri was questioned, given a new identity and a home in Arizona, and paid around \$5 million, the officials said. However he began telling his handlers he missed his young son and wanted to return to Iran, though they warned he likely would face imprisonment or worse and might never see his son. Arriving in Tehran in July 2010, he was greeted by his son, reporters and Iran's deputy foreign minister. Someone placed a wreath around his neck and he flashed a "V" for victory while clutching his son.

### Clear Conscience

Marzieh Amiri said her son was free on his return and even took a vacation in Iran with his family. "But one day they suddenly arrested him ... When we followed up, (the security forces) said, 'It's for his own protection. He is our guest.'" He was held in isolation in Tehran, his mother said. His wife filed for divorce, and he became nervous and suffered from high blood pressure. "His loneliness was killing him," she said, adding she visited him once or twice a month. "He told me he prefers to die as he could not tolerate the isolation anymore." Last week, officials brought his corpse to Kermanshah. Rope marks on his neck indicated he had been hanged, his mother said. — Reuters

## BUDGET DEFICIT AFTER 16 YEARS OF SURPLUSES

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In previous years, Kuwait built up a sovereign wealth fund worth around \$600 billion that is invested mostly in the United States, Europe and Asia. Kuwait is projecting a deficit of \$28.9 billion in the current fiscal year which began on April 1. As part of efforts to reduce the shortfall, the Cabinet last week decided to raise the

price of petrol by up to 83 percent, the first increase in almost two decades. Last year, it raised the prices of diesel and kerosene. It has also decided to lift electricity and water charges on foreign residents. The ratings agency Moody's said late Monday that the fuel price reforms will boost Kuwait's credit ratings because they will lower current expenditures and bolster government finances. — AFP

## GOVT MULLS COMPENSATING CITIZENS AFTER...

Continued from Page 1

He said the government told MPs that it was time for Kuwait to follow the steps taken by other Gulf states, because Kuwait is the last member of the six GCC states to take the petrol hike decision, while other states took it several months ago.

The minister said the government heard proposals by MPs, particularly the financial committee proposal, to an amount of fuel free of charge and another amount at subsidized prices to citizens, adding that the government is keen to cooperate with the Assembly regarding the issue. He however stated that the government

would go ahead with the new price rises.

MP Abdullah Maayouf said lawmakers presented proposals to the government, mainly the financial committee's study, which can achieve reforms, rationalization and not harm citizens. He said the lawmakers told the government that the hike decision represents an embarrassment for them and the Assembly before the Kuwaiti voters. MP Humoud Al-Hamdan said lawmakers urged the government to prevent any increase in the prices of commodities as a result of the petrol price hike, and the government team said they will prevent any price rises. He expected that the government will respond to proposals by MPs before the hike decision becomes effective on Sept 1.

## PUTIN, ERDOGAN PLEDGE RESET AFTER RIFT

Continued from Page 1

Now with Russia mired in economic crisis due to Western sanctions over Ukraine and low oil prices along with Turkey's outlook flagging, both men want to get business started again. Erdogan said that he now wanted to see the TurkStream project "done as fast as possible", while Putin said construction could start "in the nearest future". The Turkish leader also insisted that the two sides were once again targeting a very ambitious trade turnover of \$100 billion by 2024.

The earlier uptick in relations between Turkey and Russia was built on a macho friendship between Putin and Erdogan, two combative leaders in their early 60s credited with restoring confidence to their nations in the wake of financial crises but also criticized for clamping down on human rights. But after such a bitter dispute -

which saw Putin accuse Erdogan of stabbing Russia in the back and profiting from an illegal oil trade with the Islamic State group - it will take a lot for the pair to reheat relations.

The two strongmen leaders conspicuously skirted one major issue dividing them and that lay at the heart of their falling out - the war in Syria. Putin and Erdogan said they would start discussing the conflict after the press conference but the Russian leader insisted both sides were committed to finding a peaceful solution. Russia is flying a bombing campaign in support of President Bashar Al-Assad while Turkey is fiercely opposed to the Syrian leader. Erdogan insisted in an interview with Russian media ahead of the talks that Assad must still go - a position opposed by Putin - but said that the conflict could now become the focus for renewed cooperation between the two sides. —AFP

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