

PEJAK commander shot dead in Kurdistan

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — A commander of the rebel group PEJAK, a breakaway faction of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), was shot dead in the northwestern province of Kurdistan on April 9, an informed official at the governor general's office told the Mehr News Agency.

He was killed near Nejmar village in Marivan.

PEJAK (Party of Free Life of Kurdistan), which is fighting the Turkish army, has been behind a string of deadly attacks in Iran in recent months.

"This member of PEJAK had entered Kurdistan province for acts of sabotage but was identified by the province's intelligence and security forces before any action," he added.

Aqazadeh to meet ElBaradei on Monday

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Director Gholamreza Aqazadeh will meet International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Mohamed ElBaradei in Vienna on Monday.

The purpose behind the meeting is to promote Iran's cooperation with the UN nuclear watchdog.

AEOI Deputy Director Mohammad Saeedi will accompany Aqazadeh in the trip.

Interior, intelligence, foreign ministers to respond to MPs' questions

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — Iranian ministers of foreign affairs, interior, and intelligence are expected to attend the parliament on Tuesday and Wednesday to answer questions from lawmakers sitting on the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee.

The committee will hold talks with intelligence and foreign ministers Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejeii and Manuchehr Mottaki.

'Wipe aggression off your minds'

TEHRAN (Press TV) — A top Iranian commander warns enemies against harboring any thought of attacking Iran as they will certainly receive a crushing response.

"Enemies of the Islamic Republic must avoid the 'folly' and drop any thought of attacking this country from their minds," said Brigadier General Ali Fazli, director of operations in Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps' (IRGC) Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The armed forces of Iran, including IRGC and the country's volunteer Basij forces are more prepared than ever before and have sufficient means for defending the country against aggression, the commander stated late Friday in the northern Iranian city of Gorgan.

"Today, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps has been tasked with the responsibility of defending the Persian Gulf, the Persian Gulf islands, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, and the Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tunbs," he said, adding, "The IRGC's role in protecting the region from foreign aggression is undeniable."

Iranian army ready to foil any aggression: commander

Iranian army has changed into a modern armed force



Tehran Times Political Desk
TEHRAN — Army Commander

Major General Ataollah Salehi on Saturday said Iranian armed forces are prepared to respond to "any threat and act of aggression" against the Islamic Republic's security.

"Since the early days of the victory of the Islamic Revolution (in 1979), the brave army officers, under the unflinching support of (the

founder of the Islamic Republic) Imam Khomeini and the noble nation of Iran... stood up to all aggressions by making thousands of martyrs whose resistance and brave actions led to the enemy's disgrace," Salehi said in a message on the eve of the Army Day.

Today, Iran's powerful army has made considerable progress in sci-

entific, military, and educational spheres in efforts to present itself as one of the most powerful armies in the world, he stated.

The commander asserted that Iranian army has developed into a modern armed force through producing high-tech defensive equipment and is ready to foil any military invasion against its territory.

Armenia condemns blasphemy

MOSCOW (IRNA) — An Armenian judicial official on Saturday condemned blaspheming religions sanctities by certain Western extremist circles.

Head of Armenian Constitutional Court, Gagik Harutyunyan, made the remarks in a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Armenia, Ali Saqaian.

Tehran-Yerevan judicial cooperation was discussed by the two officials.

Referring to a Dutch film blaspheming Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and Holy Quran, he said the Yerevan government condemns insult to divine religions.

A Dutch far-right MP, Geert Wilder, launched a

15-minute film, Fitna, on Internet on March 27, also featured one of the Danish cartoons whose publication sparked violent protests in several countries two years ago.

Several Islamic countries have strongly condemned Wilder's heinous, blasphemous and anti-Islamic film which set verses from the holy Quran against a background of violent images from terrorist attacks.

The Jeddah-based Organization of the Islamic Conference has also added its voice to the growing criticism of the anti-Islam film.

The OIC said in a statement that the film defamed and denigrated "the Holy Quran, causing

insult to the sentiments of more than 1.3 billion Muslims in the world."

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was also one of the senior international figures who condemned the film, calling it "offensively anti-Islamic" while urging calm.

Four Majlis deputies, in a written note to Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki on Tuesday, called for review of bilateral relations with the Netherlands in protest at anti-Islam film made by the Dutch MP.

The MPs strongly called for review of Iran's political and economic ties with the Netherlands.

Reformists will form an "influential minority" in next parliament: former VP

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — Mohammad-Reza Aref, an Expediency Council member, said that the reformists will form an "influential minority in the next Majlis (parliament)," ISNA reported on Saturday.

Aref who was speaking to a group of university students in Yazd said the reformists are "followers of the late Imam Khomeini's thoughts... and they are not allowed to distance from the nature of revolution."

The former first vice president in the Khatami administration boasted that reformists are the most devoted group to "the revolutionary ideals."

Asked about the Bush administration's support for reformists, the



MAR'ASHI

former chancellor of the University of Tehran firmly rejected report.

He also censured the disqualification of certain reformist candidates and said his withdrawal from the March 14 parliamentary race was in fact a "protest to disqualifications."

Reformist coalition changes name

The reformist coalition has



AREF

changed its name to "reformist election headquarters", Hossein Mar'ashi, director of the reformist coalition, told Mehr News Agency.

Since "more reformist groups (like National Confidence Party) will support the reformist coalition in the runoff Majlis elections" the name has been changed, Mar'ashi said.

Hedayat Aqaei of the reformist

faction argued that the change in name would help the front "develop and expand electoral campaign in the runoff elections."

Aqaei explained that the campaign plans will not change.

Mar'ashi also announced that the expression of "the Khatami Friends" is erased from the coalition's logo.

The expression, he explained, was a "tactic for the first round of the election."

"Now... we want those who are not Khatami's friends to support the reformist election headquarters."

He also predicted that the reformist election headquarters will prop up some independent nominees from provincial constituencies for the April 25 election.

Iran, Turkey to discuss PKK, PJAK

Iran and Turkey will seek initiatives against the outlawed Kurdish insurgents during the 12th Iran-Turkey High Security Commission meeting.

An eight-member Iranian delegation, led by a deputy interior minister, is expected to arrive in Ankara tomorrow to attend the five-day meeting which will open in Ankara on Monday, Turkey's Zaman newspaper reported on Saturday.

During the meeting the two neighboring countries will look at joint measures to deal with terrorist threats posed by the armed militia groups of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan (PJAK), a PKK offshoot operating in Iran.

The latest meeting of the com-

mission was held back in February 2006 in Tehran.

The Turkish military launched a ground offensive against the PKK in northern Iraq on Feb. 21 and announced that it had destroyed dozens of PKK targets, killing at least 240 Kurdish insurgents before the operation was called off in February.

The PKK is considered a terrorist organization by a large majority of the international community, including the European Union and the United States. U.S. officials have repeatedly stressed that Washington considers both the PKK and the PJAK to be terrorist organizations, saying the U.S. would not get involved in any kind of contact or relations with the insurgents.

(Source: Press TV)

Iran denies confrontation at sea with U.S. Navy

TEHRAN, Iran (CNN) — Iran denied a report that several of its boats taunted a U.S. Navy vessel in the Persian Gulf on Thursday night, according to IRNA, Iran's official news agency.

A U.S. military official told CNN Friday that the USS Typhoon, a small patrol craft, was approached by three small Iranian boats in a "taunting manner."

"There has been no confrontation between Iranian boats and the U.S.

[Fifth] Fleet," IRNA quoted an unnamed Iranian source as say-

ing.

The U.S. military source said U.S. Navy officers conducted bridge-to-bridge communications with the Iranian boats and two of them then turned away. But one came within 200 yards of the Typhoon, prompting it to fire a warning flare. The Iranian boat then turned away.

IRNA said the U.S. media "tries to portray the Persian Gulf as a turbulent area in order to prepare the grounds for the permanent presence of U.S. forces in the region."

Iranian parliamentary delegation to attend IPU session

TEHRAN (IRNA) — An Iranian parliamentary delegation left Tehran for South Africa on Saturday to attend the 118th session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to open in Cape Town on Sunday.

The delegation is headed by the secretary-general of Iran's Inter-Parliamentary Group, Mohsen Yahyavi.

Various political, economic and social issues will be discussed by participants in the IPU meeting.

Role of world parliaments in establishment of national security, parliamentary observation, role of parliaments in removing threats against democracy, migrant workers, human trafficking, issues re-

lated to women and human rights will be among major issues to be discussed at different IPU sessions to be held in the Cape Town.

Majlis Vice-Speaker Mohammad-Hassan Abutorabi-Fard who is also deputy chairman of Asian Parliamentary Assembly for executive affairs was member of the delegation along with Hadi Nejad-Hosseini, the assembly's secretary-general, to attend the Cape Town meeting as observers.

The Geneva-based IPU is the international organization of parliaments of sovereign states which has currently 147 members.

The IPU spring session is annually held in one of its member states.

Bush says seeks diplomacy with Iran

CRAWFORD, Texas (AFP) — U.S. President George W. Bush said Friday he has no intention of attacking Iran, in an interview in which he also gave some advice to his successor on how to deal with the Islamic Republic.

Questioned during an interview with ABC television whether his intention was to not attack Iran, Bush replied: "Exactly" -- although he refused to rule out the use of force altogether.

"I have always said all options need to be on the table, but my first effort is to solve this issue diplomatically," he said from his Texas ranch.

Bush said he was not planning an attack, adding: "I'm chuckling, because, you know, from my perch, my perspective, these rumors hap-

pen all the time ... I wouldn't say they're amusing. It's part of the job, I guess."

With less than ten months until he leaves office, the president also offered some advice to his successor in the White House, including thinly veiled criticism of Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama.

The Illinois senator has said he would open a dialogue with Iran if elected president, while Bush has said any talks must take place in a multilateral forum and on condition that Tehran suspend its sensitive nuclear activities.

"If you send the wrong signals as the president to the Iranians, they may pocket that signal, become even more difficult to deal with," Bush said.



Abhar Azad University wins water polo title

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — The Azad University of Abhar water polo team clinched the championship of the first Iran Water Polo Super League at Tehran's Azadi Swimming Pool on Friday evening.

The team defeated Naft-e Omidieh 12-9 and secured its place in the Asian clubs championship in Kuwait.

Iran Tose'e Karaj had already booked a berth in the competition.

Last year's top four teams competed in the three-day Iran Water Polo Super League tournament.

Meanwhile, Azad University of Abhar goalie Alireza Ghobadi was named the best player of the competition.

Iran prepares for Polish table tennis tourney

Tehran Times Sports Desk

TEHRAN — Iran's youth table tennis team will compete in the Polish Open Table Tennis Championships, which is being held in Wladyslawowo, Poland, from May 28 to June 1.

The Iranian Table Tennis Federation is going to dispatch the team that won the 2008 Qatar Open to the Polish tournament.

Noshad Alamian, Hamid Reza Taherkhani, and Masoud Yaqoubi are the members of the Iranian team, which is coached by Ahmad Jafarpour.

The organizers will not pay for the teams' travel expenses, so only teams that believe they have a good chance to win cash prizes are likely to compete in the event, the ITTF secretary said earlier this week.

Ghotbi to stay as Persepolis coach

TEHRAN (Press TV) — Persepolis' Managing Director, Habib Kashani, says Afshin Ghotbi will keep coaching the team despite their defeat Friday by Esteghlal Ahvaz.

Afshin Ghotbi will remain at Persepolis football club and continue coaching the team, but the latest matches needs to be analyzed, Kashani said after their loss to Esteghlal Ahvaz on Friday.

Kashani also pointed out that financial problems have had a negative impact on Teheran's most popular teams, Esteghlal and Persepolis.

The two teams are the only ones in the Iranian Premier League (IPL) not financially supported by the government. Therefore, other teams can get better results, he added.

Kashani also asked Iran's Physical Education Organization to pay more attention to both Teheran's popular teams in order to meet the fans' expectations.

Both popular Teheran teams were defeated 4-1 in their latest matches on Friday.

Persepolis is currently in third position in the IPL, while Esteghlal ranks sixth.