

T Grand ayatollah will air thoughts 'at proper time'

Tehran Times Political Desk
TEHRAN — Iranians should wait until the political situation calms down if they want to establish national unity, Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem Shirazi says.

"Wherever a war takes place, first no peace agreement is signed, first a ceasefire is declared... (and) when the atmosphere calms down, they sit and talk in a calm climate. I believe that a ceasefire should be implemented. If we want to achieve unity, there are paths to unity," Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi said in an interview published by the ISNA news agency on Monday.

The current situation is not a deadlock, he added.

The grand ayatollah also said he has something to say, but now is not the proper time to air his thoughts.

Iranian delegation to attend Copenhagen climate conference

Tehran Times Political Desk
TEHRAN — A high-ranking Iranian delegation will attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference which is underway in Copenhagen, Denmark.

An informed source at the Foreign Ministry told the Mehr News Agency that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki may head the delegation.

192 countries are expected to attend the conference which opened on Monday.

Mottaki to attend Manama security summit

Tehran Times Political Desk
TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki will attend the sixth annual regional security conference in Bahrain which will run from December 11 to 13.

The regional conference entitled Bahrain Dialogue is being arranged by International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a British think tank.

Iran did not attend the previous two annual conferences.

The permanent members of the UN Security Council will also attend security summit.

Iran regrets Morocco's decision to cut ties with Iran

Tehran Times Political Desk
TEHRAN — Iran became very disappointed at Morocco's decision to cut its ties with Iran, Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said on Monday.

Morocco severed diplomatic ties with Iran in mid-February just a few weeks after the Iranian foreign minister had visited Rabat.

The Islamic Republic has always opposed any conflict between the Islamic states, Mehmanparast told the Mehr News Agency.

Certain countries are taking advantage of conflicts between Islamic nations and the Islamic world must be vigilant to identify and end these conflicts, he added.

SAC monitoring Oil Ministry's deposits into treasury: official



Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — Supreme Audit Court Director Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli has announced that the SAC monitors the Oil Ministry's deposits into the state treasury on a monthly basis.

Speaking at a press conference in Tehran on Monday, he pledged that there would not be a repetition of incidents like the case of the \$1 billion in oil revenues that the Oil Ministry failed to deposit into the state treasury.

In September, the Supreme Audit Court reported that the Oil Ministry failed to deposit \$1.058 billion in surplus oil revenues for Iranian calendar year 1387 (March 2008- March 2009) into

the state treasury.

Asked why the Supreme Audit Court reported the case of the \$1 billion as if the money had gone missing, Rahmani Fazli said he was not in charge of the SAC at that time.

He stated that the case was described in a report presented to the Majlis, and the report neither called the issue a case of fraud nor said the money had gone missing, but said in technical terms there was a deficit in the account.

And in the 2009 presidential election campaign, the case was used by some people who were uninformed and certain people who were biased, he added.

Asked whether Transparency International's recent report on administrative corruption in Iran corresponds to the findings of the Supreme Audit Court, Rahmani Fazli said the TI report is based on certain criteria that the SAC does not recognize.

However, he said this does not mean that Iran rejects the report, and the country should make efforts to fulfill their criteria.

Transparency International is an international non-governmental organization fighting corruption and trying to raise public awareness of it. Every year it publishes its Corruption Perceptions Index, a comparative listing of corruption worldwide.

Rahmani Fazli said that in a recent meeting, he told one of Transparency International's senior officials that TI does not have an office in Iran and thus its reports about the country are not based on concrete evidence.

Govt. awaiting GC ruling on subsidy reform plan: Ahmadinejad

Tehran Times Political Desk
TEHRAN — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said here on Monday that the administration is waiting for the Guardian Council to make a decision on the subsidy reform plan.

The subsidy reform plan has been ratified by the Majlis and sent to the Guardian Council for final approval.

However, the administration says the

Majlis changed the bill and it is now not the same bill that the administration proposed.

The president said in Isfahan on Wednesday that he would withdraw his subsidy reform plan.

If the administration is not given a free hand in this regard, the plan cannot be implemented, he added.

However, MP Hossein Sobhaninia has said that the subsidy reform plan has been

sent to the Guardian Council for final approval, and the administration cannot withdraw the plan.

If the Guardian Council does not approve the plan, it will be returned to the parliament and then the administration's points can be considered; otherwise, the plan will be passed into law, Sobhaninia, who is a member of the Majlis Presiding Board, told the Mehr News Agency on Wednesday.

Iran receives first cargo of H1N1 flu vaccine

Tehran Times Social Desk
TEHRAN — The first cargo of swine flu vaccine arrived in Iran Monday from France, the Health Ministry reported. The flu shots will be available across the country within a couple of days, general director of the public relations department of the ministry, Abbas Zarenejad said here on Monday.

"The ministry plans to buy two million other doses of swine flu vaccine from France, which brings the total number of vaccine in the country to four million doses," Zarenejad added.

He said that high-risk groups, including people with chronic condition and healthcare staffs, will be vaccinated in the first phase of vaccination.

The vaccines will be checked and tested for quality before being distributed among the high-risk groups.

People aged 65 and over, pregnant women, people with chronic diseases

and those who live with someone whose immune system is compromised (for example, people with cancer or HIV/AIDS), are among the at-risk groups.

According to the latest figures of the Health Ministry, swine flu has claimed lives of 147 individuals across the country over the past seven months, and no Iranians have lost their lives due to the disease over the past two weeks.

Some 3,762 individuals have been diagnosed with A-H1N1 virus, and a total of 147 flu deaths have been reported across the country since the disease emerged in Iran," deputy health minister said on Saturday.

"The second wave of swine flu has ended in Iran. And we successfully controlled the spread of the disease over its first and second waves. ... A number of schools were closed across the country following the outbreak of the disease," Hassan Emami-Razavi noted.

The deputy health minister also stated that Iran is ready to respond to the third wave of H1N1 virus and urged Iranians to take basic precautionary measures.

Emami-Razavi had earlier said that the government had allocated \$20 million for two million doses of the A-H1N1 flu vaccine, which can be used to immunize one million individuals.

Iran's first swine flu case was a 16-year-old Iranian-American boy, who tested positive for the disease on June 22, upon his arrival in Tehran.

Compared with the countries in the East-Mediterranean region, Iran's death toll rate of the disease with regards to its total population of over 70 million is not high.

The A-H1N1 virus has now become the dominant influenza virus around the globe, with high levels and an increase of activity in many regions, since the disease burst onto the scene in Mexico in April.

Ex-VP appointed director of presidential strategic studies center

Tehran Times Political Desk
TEHRAN — In a decree issued on Monday President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad appointed Parviz Davoudi as the director of the presidential center for strategic studies.

In his decree the president stated Davoudi is a well-educated person who can handle the job.

The center was headed by Alireza Zaker Isfahani before taking over as the governor of Isfahan province on October 4.

Davoudi served as first vice president in Ahmadinejad's first administration. Davoudi took the title of senior presidential advisor since Ahmadinejad began his second term.

'U.S. pressure on Iran is a futile effort'

The experiences of the past 30 years have shown that the U.S. pressure on Iran has been futile, an Iranian political analyst says.

Sadeq Zibakalam, a political science professor at Tehran University, told BBC Radio's Persian Service on Sunday that it is unlikely that the U.S. administration will pursue the strategy of exerting pressure on the Iranian government.

However, U.S. President Barack Obama's policies during the beginning of his first year in office were more effective than his policies over the past three months, he observed.

And pressure can only take us back to the situation of the George W. Bush era, he noted.

Zibakalam stated that Iran will not bow to the West's sanctions no matter how difficult things might get.

"The U.S. government might believe that due to the post-election situation in Iran, this country will bow to the West's pressure, which is not true," he added.

(Source: Press TV)

Turkey's moves towards Iran concerning United States

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish prime minister, has introduced a "good neighbors" foreign policy that has tilted the axis of Ankara's diplomacy in the direction of Iran, Russia and bordering states.

Turkish frustration with a series of setbacks for its bid to join the European Union triggered a search for a foreign policy that reflect its historical interests in the Middle East, Caucasus and Islamic world.

Foreign intelligence officials sounded an alarm over Turkish manoeuvring closer to Iran, which has undermined the campaign to isolate the Islamic country.

Turkey was one of a handful of countries that refused to support a resolution against Iran at the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors late November.

The elevation of Herman Van Rompuy, a strident opponent of Turkish membership, to the EU presidency, has cast further doubt over the eventual accession of a country of 70 million Muslims to a club of Christian nations. The Muslim democracy has returned to the preoccupations of its Ottoman Empire predecessor as an alternative.

"Parts of the U.S. are apprehensive and are questioning Turkish foreign policy. With the EU accession process essentially on life support, there is a tacit unspoken understanding between the EU members and Turkey that it is pursuing a more nationalist foreign policy," said Fadi Hakura, a Turkey watcher at Chatham House, a foreign policy think tank. "But with recent moves Turkey has not even been prudent in balancing competing interests."

U.S. diplomats have tried to avoid criticism of Erdogan but no longer deny a divergence of views. In comments prior to Erdogan's arrival in Washington, Philip Gordon, an assistant secretary of state, acknowledged differences but said Turkey remained a close ally.

(Source: www.telegraph.co.uk)

Iranian teams drawn in tough ACL groups

Tehran Times Sports Desk

KUALA LUMPUR — The four Iranian football teams were all given difficult assignments on Monday for the 2010 ACL competition.

The 2010 AFC Champions League draw was held at AFC House in Kuala Lumpur.

Champion Iran has been drawn in Group A along with Al Ahli of Saudi Arabia, Qatar's Al Gharafa and Al Jazira of the UAE.

Zob Ahan of Isfahan was thrown into what could be West Asia's Group of Death – Group B- with Saudi Arabia's Al Ittihad, the former two-time champions and 2009 runners-up, big-spending Bunyodkor of Uzbekistan, and the West play-off winners.

Sepahan of Isfahan is in Group C which is one of the toughest of the competition, with inaugural ACL winners Al Ain of United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia's Al Shabab and Uzbek giants Pakhtakor.



Mes of Kerman has been drawn along with the UAE's Al Ahli, Qataris Al Sadd and Saudi runners-up Al Hilal in Group D.

THE GROUPINGS

West
Group A Al Ahli (KSA), Al Gharafa (QAT), Al Jazira (UAE), Esteghlal (IRN)

Group B Zob Ahan (IRN), Al Ittihad (KSA), Bunyodkor (UZB), Play-off Winner (West)

Group C Al Ain (UAE), Sepahan (IRN), Al Shabab (KSA), Pakhtakor (UZB)

Group D Al Sadd (QAT), Al Ahli (UAE), Mes (IRN), Al Hilal (KSA)

East
Group E Seongnam Ilhwa Chunma (KOR), Melbourne Victory (AUS), Beijing Guoan (CHN), Kawasaki Frontale (JPN)

Group F Kashima Antlers (JPN), Jeonbuk Motors (KOR), Persipura Jayapura (IDN), Changchun Yatai (CHN)

Group G Henan Jianye (CHN), Gamba Osaka (JPN), Suwon Bluewings (KOR), Play-off East winners

Group H Adelaide United (AUS), Shandong Luneng (CHN), Cup winners (JPN), Pohang Steelers (KOR)

Play-off draw

West SF1 - Al Karamah (SYR) v Al Wahda (UAE)
SF2 - Churchill Brothers (IND) bye into play-off final
Final - Winner (Al Karamah v Al Wahda) v Churchill Brothers
West winner goes to ACL. The two losers go to AFC Cup.

East SF1 - Armed Forces (SIN) v Sriwijaya (IDN)
SF2 - Da Nang (VIE) v Muangthong (THA)
Final - Winner SF1 v Winner SF2
East winner goes to ACL. The three losers go to AFC Cup.

Shojaei scores as Osasuna ties with Malaga

Tehran Times Sports Desk

Masoud Shojaei's goal was cancelled out by Antonio Apono in Malaga – Osasuna match at the Estadio La Rosaleda on Sunday.

Malaga earned a late 1-1 draw at home against Osasuna. Shojaei scored from six yards after 47 minutes as Osasuna took the lead despite being second best in the first half. Antonio Apono equalized the match firing in from a set-piece after 82 minutes.

This draw leaves Malaga second from bottom, one point above hapless Xerez, who crashed 2-0 Saturday at home to Atletico Madrid.

Osasuna has now collected a highly creditable 16 points this season and remains eight points above Malaga.

Esteghlal set to sign up foreign striker: coach

Tehran Times Sports Desk

KUALA LUMPUR — Esteghlal football coach Samad Marfavi said on Monday that it is going to strengthen the team by buying a foreign striker for their 2010 AFC Champions League campaign.

The Iran Professional League champion has been drawn along with Saudi Arabia's Al Ahli, Qatar's Al Gharafa and UAE's Al Jazira in Group A.

"Winning the AFC Champions League is our target but we are in the toughest group," Marfavi told www.the-afc.com.

"I closely follow Arab leagues, but I know Al Jazira particularly well because we were in the same group last year."

"Changes are necessary to revive the team and we will do our best to strengthen the squad. I have suggested to the club management to recruit a foreign striker," he said.