

## Clinton: U.S. still open to talks with Iran

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Monday that the Obama administration remains open to negotiating with Iran over its nuclear program, despite Iran's intransigence.

Clinton told reporters at the State Department it is clear that administration efforts to engage Iran in talks to restrain its nuclear program in 2009 fell short. President Obama had said that if Iran did not respond positively to his overtures by the start of 2010, he would move toward tougher sanctions.

The U.S. is consulting with other nations about new sanctions, but there is no hard-and-fast deadline for Iran to respond, Clinton said. The U.S., Clinton said, wants to "keep the door to dialogue open. But we've also made it clear we can't continue to wait and we cannot continue to stand by when the Iranians themselves talk about increasing their production of highly enriched uranium."

(Source: USA Today)

## China says diplomacy needed with Iran

BEIJING (UPI) — China, which opposes sanctions against Iran because of its nuclear program, said Tuesday there is still room for diplomacy.

"Dialogue and negotiations are the right ways of properly solving the Iran nuclear issue, and there is still room for diplomatic efforts," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told reporters in Beijing, Xinhua reported.

The report quoted U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton as saying her government has been discussing sanctions against Iran with other major powers. The U.S. reaction was in response to Iran's rejection of a year-end deadline relating to the swapping of its low-enriched uranium for nuclear fuel.

"We hope the relevant parties take more flexible and pragmatic measures and step up diplomatic efforts in a bid to resume talks as soon as possible," Jiang was quoted as saying.

## Larjani calls Tehran-Damascus ties strategic

TEHRAN (FNA) — Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larjani on Tuesday said that the strategic ties between Iran and Syria play a significant role in regional developments.

"In recent years, strategic cooperation between Iran and Syria has played a much influential role in forming regional developments," Larjani said in a meeting with Speaker of the Syrian People's Assembly Mahmoud al-Abrash here in Tehran today.

Pointing to the visit by the Syrian parliamentary delegation to Tehran, he said the trip proves that the two countries are resolved to continue and strengthen their brotherly ties.

"There reside a wide variety of grounds for developing and expanding the two countries' friendly cooperation and parliaments can play an important role in illuminating them (potential cooperation grounds)," Larjani went on to say.

He also underlined the parliament's readiness to extend support to the further deepening and consolidation of all-out ties between the two countries.

# Tehran, Ashgabat ink cooperation accords

Tehran Times Economic Desk

TEHRAN — The Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkmenistan signed three memorandums of understanding and a commercial deal in Ashgabat on Tuesday to give a boost to bilateral relations.

Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Manouchehr Mottaki and Turkmen Culture Minister Gulmurat Muradov inked one of the MOUs, according to IRNA news agency.

Mottaki also signed the two other MOUs with his counterpart Rasit Meredov and Turkmen Defense Minister Yaylim Berdiyev.

The commercial deal was sealed between Pas Energy Company of Iran and Turkmenistan's transport ministry.

Iranian and Turkmen presidents Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov attended the signing ceremonies.

The two presidents are set to inaugurate the second gas pipeline project transferring Turkmenistan's gas to Iran. It is one of the most important joint projects carried out by the two countries.

The new 65-kilometer-long pipeline will increase the volume of gas



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, during a joint press conference with his Turkmen counterpart in Ashgabat on Tuesday, said Iran supports the neutral policy of Turkmenistan. Ahmadinejad also said that the Afghan crisis should be resolved through a regional and humanitarian approach.

transferred from Turkmenistan to Iran up to 14 billion cubic meters annually.

Also, the \$650 million Atrak-Gorgan railway project's groundbreaking ceremony will be launched in the presence of the Iranian president during his stay in Turkmenistan.

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railway project will be launched in the presence of the Iranian president during his stay in Turkmenistan.

Ahmadinejad is on a tour of Central Asia. He signed five MOUs in Dushanbe on Monday with his Tajik counterpart Emomali Rahmon in efforts to expand all-out ties.

## Senior principlist urges keeping curb on extremism

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — Habibollah Askar-Oladi, the Followers of Imam and Leadership Front secretary general, has called for keeping a tight rein on extremist actions in the country.

"Today it is important not to allow the extremists to change the national scene into a battlefield," he said.

He also dismissed views that the country is in a special situation.

Since the early days of the revolution, once in a while some hostile groups who have been trying to derail the Islamic system's path and "the current situation is similar" to them, the senior conservative figure commented.

On Mir-Hossein Mousavi's controversial statement, he said that some media outlets claimed that Mousavi's statement has been drafted by American agents which is a example of "extremism." On the other hand, Mohsen Rezaei in his letter to the Supreme Leader has gone too far as "nowhere in Mousavi's statement an about-face is seen," he noted.

It is the obligation of all people to stand up against extremism,



ASKAR-OLADI

he added.

Mousavi, former presidential candidate, issued a statement on January 1 and suggested five proposals to calm down the situation in the country; then on the same day Rezaei, Expediency Council Secretary, sent a letter to the Supreme Leader and described the proposals as noteworthy for consideration.

The statement and the letter met with widespread approving and disapproving reactions by many political activists.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Askar-Oladi praised the recent demonstrations staged by people across the country to condemn disrespect to religious sanctities, saying people took to the streets spontaneously to express support for the velayat-e faqih (rule by the supreme jurisprudent).

Although some people are "resentful" over the June presidential election results, the country is not in a crisis, he opined.

He also urged the Judiciary to implement Islamic law in cases of those who disrespected Imam Hussein (AS) on Ashura day (the day marking the martyrdom anniversary of the third Shia Imam).

## Iranian police seize 34 tons of illicit drugs

TEHRAN (FNA) — A senior Iranian police commander announced on Tuesday that the country's police forces have seized 34 tons of different types of illicit drugs during the last 9 months.

"During the nine months of this (Iranian) year (started on March 21), 34 tons of different types of narcotics has been discovered and seized by border guards unit," Commander of the Iranian Police Border Guards Unit General Hossein Zolfagari said.

The commander added that the volume of police discoveries has increased by 17% compared with the similar period

last year.

He blamed poverty, unemployment, lack of good farmlands, shortage of facilities and under-development in border regions, eastern borders in particular, as the root causes of police problems in fighting drug trafficking in the country.

Zolfagari further announced that the Iranian police force has intensified surveillance over border activities and increased border entanglements in recent years.

The crackdown has cost Iran 600 million dollars over the past two years. Strategies pursued by Tehran include

digging canals, building barriers and installing barbed wire to seal the country's borders, specially in the East.

The United Nations credits Iran with the seizure of 80 percent of the opium netted around the world.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the Iranian police have lost more than 3300 of their personnel in the country's combat against narcotics.

During the past Iranian year (ended on March 20,) Iran seized more than 1,000 tons of opium smuggled from Afghanistan, the largest producer of opium poppy in the world.

## Iran to attend London confab on Afghanistan if conditions met

(Contd. from p. 1)

On December 23, a Saudi-owned newspaper reported that a daughter of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden had taken refuge in the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Tehran.

Iran has no plan to downgrade ties with Britain

Mehmanparast also said Tehran has no plan to downgrade its diplomatic relations with London.

Increasing or decreasing the level of ties between nations requires a long process and the various aspects of such a move have to be taken into consideration, he added.

On December 16, the Majlis National

Security and Foreign Policy Committee urged the Foreign Ministry to reduce the level of diplomatic relations with the British government due to its hostile attitude toward Iran.

Yemeni ambassador not summoned

The Foreign Ministry spokesman dismissed media reports claiming that Iran has summoned the Yemeni ambassador to Tehran and that Yemen has made a reciprocal move.

"I have not heard anything, but unfortunately, some embassies have been closed due to insecurity in Yemen," he added.

He also expressed hope that the crises in Yemen would be resolved through negotiations.

The Yemeni army has been in a military conflict with a segment of the country's Shia population, who took up arms to try to reverse the political, economic, and religious marginalization of their Zaidi Shia community, since last August.

No request for Kerry visit

Mehmanparast also said that Iran has not received any official request from U.S. Senator John Kerry to visit Tehran.

"Whenever Iran receives an official request, it will be reviewed by the relevant authority, which is the Majlis," he stated.

## Subsidy reform plan proceeding apace

(Contd. from p. 1)

In addition, the administration must deposit all revenues gained from the normalization of prices in the treasury and then can only spend the money as the bill stipulates.

Informed sources say that 50 percent of the revenues will be paid directly to vulnerable citizens to compensate

for price hikes, 30 percent will be paid to producers, and 20 percent will be spent to cover state expenses.

The Supreme Audit Court will oversee the spending of the additional revenue, and the new organization will be required to present a report to the Majlis every six months.

## Rezaei responds to confusions over his controversial letter

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — The office of Expediency Council Secretary Mohsen Rezaei released a statement on Tuesday explaining reasons for sending a letter to the Supreme Leader on Mir-Hossein Mousavi's recent proposals.

Rezaei who was a candidate in the June presidential election wrote on January 5 a letter to the Supreme Leader stating that the proposals put forward by Mousavi is worth noticing to put an end to the ongoing political conflicts.

In the letter he said that Mousavi's proposals can herald the beginning of a unity movement between the opposition groups and the

The letter met with widespread divergent reactions by political figures with varied persuasions.

In the beginning the statement says "various comments on the letter to the Supreme Leader and the massive turnout of people in the demonstrations to condemn disrespect to religious sanctities are highly appreciated. This letter is aimed at enlightening public opinion and clarifying the misinterpretations."

The statement goes on to say "the main reason for sending a letter to the Supreme Leader was to separate protesters and rioters with the aim to invite them to rejoin the establishment and the society, a move in line with the Supreme Leader's policy calling for maximum attraction and minimum repulsion (of the people)," the statement said.

Following is excerpt of the statement:

Rezaei's proposals have been aimed at creating national unity and coherence in order to foil enemies' plots and erase the image that the Islamic system has been undermined.

Although efforts by Rezaei - which have been based on law, ethics, and the Supreme Leaders' directives - have been very effective, he is not satisfied.

Some analyses and speculations made over the past few days remarks such as 'attempt to exonerate rioters', 'call for not investigating with rioter's charges', and 'making decision for the Supreme Leader' lack truthfulness.

If Rezaei has taken advantage of the opportunity created by Mousavi's retreat in order to attract protesters, it proves his prudence.

It was not expected that some friends react to the letter with suspicion and level unsubstantiated accusations against Rezaei as most of them know that Rezaei is and will be the "soldier" of the Supreme Leader.



## Commander rejects tensions along Iran-Iraq borders

TEHRAN (FNA) — A senior Iranian commander on Tuesday dismissed media reports about tension alongside Iran-Iraq borders over a number of shared oil wells on the Fakka field.

"The colonial powers are seeking to take advantage of any minor development for advancing their ill-intended goals," Commander of the Iranian Army Major General Ataollah Salehi said, calling the recent media reports on tension between the two neighboring countries as "untrue".

"Iraq and Afghanistan are occupied by the colonial powers and these colonialists are trying to create disruption and trouble between the two neighboring countries, i.e. Iran and Iraq," the commander noted.

He asserted that all Iranian and Iraqi forces are stationed at their border posts, rejecting the claims that Iranian military troops have been deployed in the oil field.

The Iranian commander made the remarks in response to the recent hype by some American and Arab media outlets which claimed that Iranian soldiers had crossed into the Iraqi territory and seized an Iraqi oil field.

Iran rejected claims that its armed forces had taken control of the oil well within Iraqi borders, stressing that the well in question is not located on Iraq's soil.

Tehran had also earlier announced the Iranian troops are stationed in their border posts, and that the soldiers had never crossed into Iraq.

Iraq says that it dug oil wells on the Fakka field during the 1970s before the Iran-Iraq war. But Iran says the area near the well that its soldiers had occupied - known as Well No. 4 - is on the Iranian side of the border.

## Senior MP stresses Iran's transparency in cooperation with IAEA

TEHRAN (FNA) — The Islamic Republic of Iran has the highest level of transparency in its cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Head of the Iranian parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission Alaeddin Boroujerdi said on Tuesday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has shown a transparent approach in the nuclear issue and has allowed the IAEA inspectors and even the world journalists to visit its nuclear facilities," Boroujerdi said in a meeting with the head of the Italian Senate's Human Rights Commission here in Tehran.

The voluntary implementation of the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), suspension of uranium enrichment for two years and issuing permission to the UN watchdog inspectors to visit its nuclear sites are other instances of Iran's cooperation with the IAEA.