

Tribute to Ahmad Khomeini

TEHRAN, March 11--State Expediency Council Chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani warned Thursday against ignoring the achievements of the Islamic Revolution and highlighted the need to safeguard them.

Rafsanjani made the remarks at a ceremony to mark the 10th death anniversary of Seyyed Ahmad Khomeini, the son of the late founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini, at Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum, IRNA reported.

He said Iran currently needs to promote unity and solidarity, as the presidential election is a few months away.

The SEC chairman also called on political groups and power camps to refrain from factional bickering, warning that it will harm the Islamic Revolution.

Rafsanjani recalled the efforts of Seyyed Ahmad Khomeini for the victory of the 1979 Islamic Revolution and described his role as 'significant'.



Seyyed Ahmad Khomeini

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei attended the ceremony. Other ranking officials

included Majlis Speaker Gholamali Haddad-Adel, cabinet ministers, MPs and other military and state officials.

Conservatives Doubtful of Success

TEHRAN, March 11--Since the conservative faction is doubtful about its success in the upcoming election, it is creating problems for the future government through its ratifications, a prominent politician said on Thursday.

Commenting on the performance of the current parliament in Mashhad, Secretary-General of Islamic Iran Participation Front Mohammad Reza Khatami also told ISNA that every parliament brings about changes in its first year in office, but the outcome of these changes become evident in the course of time.

"It is only in the second year of parliament that one can say whether the parliament can be effective or not," he said.

Khatami hoped that the next govern-



Mohammad Reza Khatami

ment would compensate for the performance of the current parliament.

The next presidential election is scheduled for June 17, but as yet the conservative faction has not come up with a consensual candidate.

Uranium Enrichment Know-How Legal

TEHRAN, March 11--Majlis Speaker Gholamali Haddad-Adel said on Thursday the know-how of uranium enrichment achieved by Iranian scientists confirms to and is within the framework of international laws.

Speaking on the occasion of the World Physics Day, he added that inspectors of the

International Atomic Energy Agency are welcome to visit various sites, "but we will not suspend uranium enrichment indefinitely", IRNA reported.

On the budget bill for the next year (to start March 21), the speaker said MPs have 'balanced' the budget dealing with salaries and benefits of civil servants.

Meanwhile, Iran's top nuclear chief negotiator said on Saturday Iran, in its nuclear talks with the European states seeks set-

tlement of problems through legal channels and within the frameworks of international regulations and the IAEA.

"The United States intends to turn Iran's nuclear case into a crisis and then make it an international security issue by increasing tension, while several countries have expressed concern over the US behavior and hegemony," Hassan Rohani said during his speech at the International Conference on Nuclear Technology and Sustainable Development.

Gov't Prioritizing Zarand Reconstruction

KERMAN, March 11--First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref arrived in Kerman on Friday to inspect the quake-hit cities of Zarand and Bam.

During his one-day visit, Aref was accompanied by a delegation that included Minister of Housing Ali Abdolalizadeh, vice president for parliamentary and legal affairs, Mohammad Saidikia, and deputies of the ministries of commerce, agricultural jihad, and roads and transportation, IRNA reported.

Aref hoped that the draft proposal related to reconstruction of Zarand in Kerman province would be approved in the first cabinet meeting to be held after the onset of the Iranian New Year (March 21).

Commenting on the funds required, Aref said a two-part emergency bill had been submitted to Majlis, part of which is already ratified. He underlined that the organizations in charge should take special measures with regard to infrastructural issues.

preventing the transit of drugs to Europe and other countries.

On the heavy expenses Iran has been paying in this campaign, he said the world should be more sensitive about tackling the issue and playing a more serious and active role in this respect.

Democracy, Only Solution For Middle East

BRUSSELS, Belgium, March 11--Iranian human rights lawyer and Nobel peace prize winner, Shirin Ebadi, rejected the claim that democracy is incompatible with Islam.

Addressing members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg late on Wednesday, she said establishment of democracy is the only solution for the Middle East to overcome its problems, according to an EP press release received by IRNA late Thursday.

She stressed that there is only one concept of democracy and rejected notions such as "western democracy" or "Islamic democracy".

Ebadi rejected US threats of an attack on Iran and said democracy cannot be promoted by the force of arms.

Explaining the turmoil in Middle East, Ebadi said this is due to lack of democracy and presence of rich natural resources.

She further said dictatorships and despotism in Middle East countries made nations unable or unwilling to resist colonialist and hegemonic powers that target them for their oil.

Ebadi referred to the current situation in Iraq and to the overthrow by the US of the elected government of Iranian Premier Mohammad Mosaddeq in the 1950s.

In reply to questions by MEPs, Ebadi said that second- or third-generation immigrants in western countries were less willing to put up with humiliation than their fathers.

"She called on western countries not to humiliate immigrants and not to oppress them, as they are likely



Shirin Ebadi

to fall prey to terrorists.

Ebadi criticized Middle East states which justify non-implementation of democracy based on the argument that Islam is incompatible with democracy. She maintained that democracy is the same for the East and the West, without differentiating between Muslims and Christians.

"We can be Muslims yet observe human rights. Islam is the religion of equality. Islam opposes dictatorship. Muslims should not let themselves be deceived by despotic rulers. The growing front of progressive Islamic systems is a symbol and future of Middle East," she said.

100 Drug Gangs Busted

SARI, Mazandaran, March 11--Police commander in Mazandaran province said on Thursday over 107 drug trafficking gangs have been busted since the beginning of the current Iranian year (started March 20).

Colonel Hadi Reza Hosseini-Abadi told IRNA

that 968 types of narcotics were also seized in the said period. Also, 6,537 addicts of whom 96 were women and 3,038 distributors and dealers, including 164 women, were also arrested

and handed to the local judicial authorities.

"Large amounts of cash and many vehicles were also confiscated during these operations," he said. Meanwhile, Secretary-General of Drug Control

Headquarters Ali Hashemi said on Wednesday over 100,000 billion rials, equivalent to three-fourths of the national oil income, have been spent on the campaign against drugs and

related programs since the beginning of the current year.

He told IRNA that given the volume of narcotics transited to the West, some 40 percent of the above funds are spent on

China Hopeful of Iran-US Resolution

BEIJING, March 11--Spokesman for China's Foreign Ministry Lio Jian Chao said on Friday China hopes disputes in Iran-US relations would resolve satisfactorily. Lio made the remark in response to a question by IRNA's Beijing correspondent on the phone on expansion of US economic sanctions against Iran by the Bush administration, IRNA reported.

"China believes relations between countries need to be regulated on the basis of mutual respect ... Disputes emerging in countries' relations also need to be settled by holding dialogues and political consultations," he said.

The spokesman hoped that the United States and Iran would keep in mind the need to safeguard global and regional peace and stability, and solve their disputes by resorting to appropriate methods.

US President George W. Bush recently repeated his accusations against the Islamic Republic and extended economic sanctions against Tehran for another 12 months.

Reacting to fresh criticism from George W. Bush, Iran told the US president to "open his eyes" and "stop labeling freedom-seeking nations as terrorists".

"America's full support for Israeli state terrorism is so obvious and outrageous that it leaves the United States with no right to comment on terrorism," Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi was quoted as saying in the Iranian media.

"It is about time the US president opened his eyes to the realities and stop exploiting the term 'democracy', labeling freedom-seeking nations as terrorists and following the racist beliefs of the Zionists," Asefi said.

Terror Fight Threatens Western...

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Khan called on US Attorney-General Alberto Gonzales to bring to justice US officials responsible for human rights abuses in Iraq and the US military base in Guantanamo, Cuba. Gonzales also attended the conference to commemorate an Al-Qaeda attack which killed 191 people in Madrid on March 11, 2004.

"Our concern is that under the guise of fighting the war on terror what the United States has unleashed is actually a massive attack on the fundamental principles of human rights," said Khan,

blaming Washington for setting a bad example to nations both in the West and the developing world.

She singled out the 2001 US Patriot Act as contravening international human rights law by racial profiling citizens to assess their potential security threat. The law was passed swiftly in the wake of the Sept. 11 attacks on New York

and Washington and is due for renewal before the end of this year.

"Most dangerously what it does is create a world of them and us...where foreigners and certain types of people are more likely to

be stopped, detained, searched, deported," said Khan, the first Muslim woman to head the London-based rights group.

"The Bush administration is usurping the language of human rights ... They are using 'democracy' and 'freedom' to actually pursue a strategy of fear and force," said Khan. "He is creating fear at home and he is using force abroad."

In this light, Khan welcomed a decision by the British Parliament this week to tone down government proposals for home arrest without trial of terrorism suspects.

Persian Press Watch

Media Woes

AFTAB-E YAZD: With a little exaggeration, one can say that the government controls everything in Iran. In other words, traces of the government's impact on the people's social life are quite visible. As a result, the people have become accustomed to the government's support for any form of activity that they intend to get involved in. For instance, newspapers for many years relied on government's subsidies in order to continue their activities. However, after a while the print media sought the support of civil institutions. One institution that they relied on excessively was the Association of Iranian Journalists. Although journalists have been hopeful that the AIJ will eventually resolve the majority of their problems, the association has failed to overcome even the basic needs of newspapers so far. Managing directors of eleven Persian dailies even discussed their problems in a letter to President Mohammad Khatami. They warned that their newspapers could be closed down due to shortage of paper in the country and that the AIJ should immediately help them in this regard.

Beirut Rally

ABRAR: Recent rally of hundreds of thousands of people in Beirut that took place upon an invitation by secretary-general of Lebanon's Hezbollah Party, Seyyed Hassan Nasrallah, received a mixed reaction both in the Middle East and other parts of world. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan reacted by asserting that Hezbollah should be recognized as an influential political power in any UN plan considered for Lebanon. The Hezbollah-sponsored protest rally has certainly conveyed a clear message and that being rejection of Resolution 1559 of the UN Security Council according to which Syrian troops should withdraw from Lebanon. The protesters have also reiterated that they would continue their resistance against the occupying regime of Israel. They essentially voiced their opposition to the US and Israeli plans for the permanent settlement of Palestinians in Lebanon.

Dilemma

AFARINESH: A total of 1,400 cars join the transportation cycle of the country everyday. Some two million cars were manufactured in Iran over the past three years. Although increase in car production hints at the country's industrial development, there should be a harmony between road capacity and domestic car production. The main concern is that the number of locally produced cars hitting the market next year will exceed one million. This is while the number of old cars that are taken out of the transportation cycle per annum is only few thousands. The important consideration is that our roads and streets have not been expanded in proportion with the domestic car output capacity. If the prevailing trend continues, Tehran will turn into a big parking lot.

Contradiction

MARDOMSALARI: Main causes of the 1979 Islamic Revolution were lack of freedom, absence of equality and justice, neglecting brotherhood and depending on foreign powers. According to Islam, the government should pay sufficient heed to the concept of equality of the people. Hence, the people should be given the opportunity to express their viewpoints about different issues, especially political ones. If foreigners are paying a great deal of attention to voter's turnout in general elections, this plainly shows the importance of these undertakings. Disappointing the public with the status quo and making them reluctant about participating in elections contradict the very ideals of the Islamic Revolution. More than 70-percent voter turnout is a must at the time and age we live in and it is only through massive participation of the people in elections that the threats posed against the country can be neutralized.

Perspective

Advancing Women's Role

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Now that our womenfolk are increasingly present on the socioeconomic scene, we must create efficacious and long-term strategy to maintain and promote this positive development. Otherwise, like in very many cases in the past, when we suffered economically for not planning well in advance, we will inherit chaos and confusion, which could make a bad situation worse.

If special laws and regulations are legislated and institutionalized in the interest of women's empowerment and their socioeconomic progress, both men and women will know what they are in for and what society expects of them. When this happens, many ambiguities will be removed and women will have meaningful assurances about their true status in our society.