

IRAN DAILY ON THE NET

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Subject: Knee-Jerk Response
Date: Thursday, December 30, 2004 5:05 AM

Why would Howard have to defend Australia's response to the Asian disaster if it were adequate?

Five days and we still haven't evacuated all our survivors, and what started as a whisper has now grown into a loud moan. Surely the helping hand has not been extended as readily as the clinched fist was to Iraq.

Again on the back foot and yet again defending his actions (or lack of them), we hear ever-worsening excuses to validate feeble governance. Dozens of aftershocks grip the locals in fear, and we sit on a fence waiting for the locals to respond. We could have and should have had help on the ground within six hours.

"You always get complaints," says Howard. I would have thought this a perfect opportunity to extend a hand of friendship to our close neighbors, but not with \$27 million. That's about one day's income from the speed cameras and gambling. How much have we spent so far on the drug-testing DNA-recording experiments? Far in excess. How much is being spent on the upcoming commonwealth games? And how big was the windfall from the Johnny Howard tax, the GST, the one that has been scrapped until Fascism was rekindled.

Sadly the public have no say in how the nation responds. I can only describe our leadership as a Demonic Hypocrisy, likely to intercept emails and delete them when they don't agree with the given agenda.

Regards
Istvan Braun

Voter Turnout Will Exceed 25m

TEHRAN, Dec. 31--More than 25 million people will take part in the upcoming presidential election slated for May 2005, secretary of State Expediency Council predicted.

Addressing members of political groups and university students in Zabol (in Sistan-Baluchestan province) on Thursday, Mohsen Rezaei noted that what is good about the

upcoming presidential election is the fact that political factions have agreed to let people decide about the candidates, IRNA reported.

"In other countries, elections resemble a two-phase university entrance exam. People choose candidates in the first phase and then elect the president or lawmakers depending on the kind of election in the second

phase," he said.

Rezaei also said that political groups have realized it will be in their own interest to take wise decisions.

Commenting on the country's 20-year Perspective, Rezaei noted that this perspective will be implemented in the country in 2005 and provides guidelines for Iran's future.

Mohsen Rezaei



Mayor Critical of Economic Policies



TEHRAN, Dec. 31--Parliament's recent bill to fix prices of certain goods and services is wise and necessary, Tehran Mayor Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad said on Wednesday.

Speaking to students of Imam Khomeini International University, Ahmadi-Nejad noted that an unsuccessful experience has been repeated over the past 15 years by sticking to an outdated

economic model, IRNA reported.

"The more the country's economy relies on this model, the more problems will arise as a result. The country's economy has been destabilized due to the wrong decisions of decision-makers," he added.

He maintained that repeating an unsuccessful

economic model only prevents proper planning.

Ahmadi-Nejad noted that the hike in gasoline prices has not curbed petrol consumption.

"The fourth economic development plan (2005-2010) needs to be amended and officials should change their attitude toward economic issues," he said.

Tehran Sends Relief

Report on Iranian Casualties Rejected

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Dec. 31--UN Emergency Relief Coordinator in Geneva said Iran has so far donated \$675,000 in aid to victims of the Asian tsunami.

The first shipment of relief supplies from Tehran for the victims of the Asian tsunami arrived in Indonesia on Wednesday. The 41-ton consignment included medications, tents, blankets, clothes and foodstuff, earlier reports said.

The government says it would continue dispatching relief supplies to tsunami-hit regions.

Meanwhile, Iran's Ambassador to Bangkok Mohsen Pak-Aeen told IRNA by phone here on Thursday that no Iranian national has been killed in the December 26 killer earthquake and tsunami in Thailand.

Responding to a report by the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), Pak-Aeen said that as of now no Iranian has been killed by the devastating earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale and the ensuing tsunamis in Thailand.

Quoting an AFP report, the IRIB said on Wednesday that five Iranians were among victims of the Asian tsunami.

"There are Arabic names on the list of victims which are similar to Iranian names," he said, adding that perhaps it was the similarity which misled AFP to make such a mistake.

The ambassador added that Iranian officials in Bangkok contacted the AFP office in Thai capital which denied reporting the deaths of any Iranians in its dispatches. Pak-Aeen said any Iranian national, who is not aware of the fate of one's relatives recently visiting Thailand, should contact the Foreign Ministry in Tehran and the ministry will follow up the case with Iran's Embassy in Thailand.

Among Asian countries, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Thailand, Myanmar and Bangladesh were badly affected by tsunamis which also reached the east African coastline.

Thai University Ready to Cooperate

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Dec. 31--President of Chulalongkorn University of Bangkok, Suchada Kiranandana, in a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Thailand Mohsen Pak-Aeen on Thursday praised Iran's scientific progress.

Kiranandana added that Chulalongkorn University is ready to cooperate with Iran's scientific centers and universities for carrying out joint research projects.

"Several agreements have been signed between Chulalongkorn and Iranian universities of Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz and Islamic Azad University," Kiranandana said, adding that the implementation of these agreements could bolster cooperation between Iranian and Thai universities, IRNA reported. She further said exchanging students and academic delegations between Iran and Thailand is a fruitful way of sharing scientific expertise.

The Iranian envoy, for his part, underlined the significance of cooperation between Iranian and Thai universities in promoting scientific standards.

Pak-Aeen further said objectives of Iranian and Thai universities should be accomplished through implementation of these agreements.

Quake Jolts Shoush

TEHRAN, Dec. 31--A mild earthquake measuring 3.7 on the open-ended Richter scale jolted the suburban areas of the city of Shoush in Khuzestan province, southwestern Iran, early Thursday, IRNA reported.

The Seismological Center affiliated to Tehran

University's Geophysics Institute recorded the quake at 02:10 hours local time (22:40 GMT).

The quake was epicentred at 32.20 latitude and 48.15 longitude, the center added.

There are no reports of possible damage or casualties caused by the quake.

Rafsanjani Waiting...

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Addressing Rafsanjani, Naseri-Zanjani said, "We respect all the political factions and people who have nominated themselves for presidency. However, at this juncture we feel that you have a previous experi-

ence of presidency and are a clear choice for president this time around. Therefore, if you consider it expedient, enter the electoral scene so that the people and sympathizers of the Islamic Revolution would have no worries."

Persian Press Watch

Accountability

AFARINESH: Recent devastating earthquake that rocked large areas in Southeast Asia can have many lessons for other countries, including Iran. As everyone knows Iran is located on the seismic fault lines and many earthquakes have hit the country throughout centuries. Although officials might argue that no one can do anything about quakes with the magnitude of 9 on the Richter scale, what measures have they taken for preventing smaller quakes? This is a question that the majority of people ask themselves. The public expects the officialdom to be accountable towards earthquake prevention measures. What is more concerning is the fact that most of the buildings of the country in the post-Islamic Revolution era have been constructed without abiding by basic safety standards. Although many things have been said on paper, there is still a long way to go before projects for reinforcing buildings are implemented effectively.

Little Chance

ABRAR: Head of the Physical Education Organization Mohsen Mehr-Alizadeh has nominated himself for presidency. In recent years, it has been quite commonplace that heads of the PEO nominate themselves for presidency. This is little that all angles considered head of the PEO has little chances of winning in presidential election. One reason behind PEO heads nominating themselves for presidency might be that they want to secure their post in the next government. Another reason could be that PEO heads are excessively optimistic.

Unchanged

AFTAB-E YAZD: The conservative MPs of the Seventh Majlis, before getting elected, perpetually vowed that they would avoid discussing issues in Majlis that could raise tension and would not pass bills that would impose extra financial burdens on the country. Moreover, the present head of Majlis Research Center, Ahmad Tavakkoli, before the Majlis elections, had said that salaries of lawmakers and their fringe benefits should be reduced! However, an analogy between the performance of the Seventh Majlis with that of the Sixth Majlis reveals that no actual changes have taken place in terms of the commitment of the legislators to their electoral campaign pledges. This is while the incumbent parliamentarians were expected to set a turning point for the national managerial system.

Manipulation

SOBH-E EQTESAD: Bazing Internet site quoted certain economists as saying that stock exchange brokers have gained a lot by manipulating stock prices and portraying that the stock indexes are much higher than what they actually are. For example, although rubber and plastic manufacturers have only experienced a growth of between 2 or 3 percent, plastic and rubber stock indices have seen a 113-percent growth. Experts believe that a Mafia-like group is presently influencing the stock market and its main intention is to accumulate wealth by changing the real value of stocks.

Perspective

Working With Pakistan

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Interestingly enough, for the first time during the 14th Iran-Pakistan Joint Economic Commission meeting, top officials of the two countries exchanged important documents. It is expected that senior officials of the two countries concentrate on the existing documents and accords and take effective measures to implement earlier agreements.

It must be recalled that one important issue, which can underwrite quality relations between Iran, Pakistan and India, is the construction of a gas pipeline from Iran to India via Pakistan. Plans and other details of the multi-billion dollar project have been under study for over a decade and it is high time that a final agreement is sealed and work commence on the three-nation project.

The pipeline can help supply a significant volume of the rapidly increasing energy demand in Pakistan and India. Furthermore, the pipeline has been endorsed by experts in and outside the region as economically viable and the best available route for transporting natural gas to Pakistan and India. It is believed that ever since Shaukat Azim, a well-known technocrat, became Pakistan's prime minister, strong measures have been taken to address and remove the half-century tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad while the former has also demonstrated the will and ability to move forward in the interest of both nations and peace and stability in the volatile region.

Iran has welcomed fresh efforts by leaders in Pakistan and India to remove the sting out of their relations, and informed the two capitals that if need be the Islamic Republic's good office would be available to help make normal Indo-Pak ties a reality.

Judiciary Probe Denied



Jamal Karimi-Rad

TEHRAN, Dec. 31--Judiciary Spokesman Jamal Karimi-Rad said on Friday the Judiciary's Intelligence Department has not received any dele-

gation to investigate the judiciary's activities.

Karimi-Rad was responding to remarks by an MP that officials of Judiciary's Intelligence

Department mistreated a delegation from the Assembly of Experts probing the judiciary performance.

Commenting on a UN resolution accusing Iran of violating human rights, Karimi-Rad said the resolution was politically motivated and lacked any legal and real value.

"The report is based on unreliable sources. The resolution is not documented and far from realities, being drafted from unreliable, distorted and untruthful sources. Therefore, it's invalid, politically-motivated and

unreal," he said.

The UN General Assembly has criticized the human rights situation in Iran. The assembly, which groups 191 member-states, approved the resolution 71-54 with 55 abstentions.

MP Teimour Ali Asgari on Wednesday confirmed reports that a delegation from the Assembly of Experts had been mistreated by Judiciary's Intelligence Department whose mission was to probe the department's performance, noting that two members of the team were arrested.

Germany Keen on Diplomatic Solution

BERLIN, Dec. 31--German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said on Friday he was confident Iran's nuclear energy case would be resolved diplomatically.

"Germany has proved together with France and Britain that such conflicts are diplomatically solvable," Schroeder said in an interview with the Hamburg-based magazine Stern, IRNA quoted.

The German chancellor also voiced confidence that the US was not against Europe's diplomatic initiative toward Iran.

"I firmly believe that," he added. Germany, France and Britain have been involved in sensitive talks with Iran to finalize a long-term political, economic and security agreement.

Earlier on Wednesday, Germany's ambassador to the

United States, Wolfgang Ischinger, called on Washington to support Europe's Iran initiative for a long-term accord on nuclear, economic and security cooperation, DPA quoted in an advance report in the weekly newspaper Zeit.

Germany's top diplomat in the US said current negotiations between Iran and the European Union stood better chances of succeeding if Washington would be "ready to talk with Tehran bilaterally and multilaterally."

Ischinger criticized America's headline Iran policy, saying it "hardly offered any substance other than sanctions."

Leading German politicians in recent weeks have repeatedly urged the US to start direct talks with Iran.

Kashani Warns of Anti-Muslim Plot

TEHRAN, Dec. 31--Interim Friday prayer leader of Tehran, Ayatollah Mohammad Emami-Kashani, said on Friday arrogant world powers have hatched a dangerous plot against the Muslim world to uproot their religious culture.

Addressing thousands of worshippers at the Tehran University campus, Ayatollah Emami-Kashani added that the plot against Islam is being pursued through various channels.

"Sometimes the Islamic ideology and fundamentals are attacked, while at other times enemies try to spread the seeds of discord and distrust in the Islamic and Arab world on the one side and in Iran on the other, or try to create crises between the world Shias and Sunnis," he said. Ayatollah Emami-

Kashani referred to the history of conspiracies against religious cultures and said hatching plots against monotheist religions can be traced as far back as the 16th and 17th centuries, "although such plots were not originally aimed at uprooting the Islamic culture."

Considering Islam as an important part of the global religious civilization, he said, "A civilization comprises cultural habits, economic transactions, political conduct, family and social relations, and various aspects of a large group of people's lives."

The interim Friday prayer leader noted that agents of arrogant world powers have been commissioned to take mankind away from God's messengers, and now that they have already succeeded in doing so in the

Christian world they are heading to do the same in the Muslim world.

He congratulated Christians, particularly the Iranian Armenians, on the eve of the New Year and wished them all a very happy New Year "full of God's special blessings."

Ayatollah Emami-Kashani referred to the situation in Palestine as part of efforts to deprive Muslims of its Islamic civilization.

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