

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

The article appeared on Feb. 28 titled "Japan's Neo Militarists," seems to have been written from a very peculiar standpoint without acknowledging the Government of Japan's position. While we do not wish to rectify every single error in the article of this sort, and also noting that the contents as such "do not necessarily reflect the views of Iran Daily", I feel obliged, for the readers' interest, to point out only the most obvious of errors:

First of all, let me clarify that the Japanese leaders have no intention of reviving a spirit of militarism or giving up pacifist ideals. Prime Minister Koizumi has repeatedly expressed his heartfelt apology for Japan's wartime aggression and colonial rule to all victims, both at home and abroad. Japan, by adhering to strictly defensive security policy, has never posed any threat to any other countries for the past sixty years. For your reference, our website provides further details at: www.mofa.go.jp/policy/post-war/index.html.

The article also finds our Minister for Foreign Affairs Tarō Aso's remarks on China "explosive", yet we understand that Minister Aso simply referred to shared concerns over China's consistent and non-transparent military activities and build-up. It should also be noted that Minister Aso welcomes China to be a responsible partner and its rise as an opportunity.

Regarding the Senkaku Islands, they have, since its incorporation in January 1895, remained continuously as an integral part of the Nansai Shoto Islands which are the territory of Japan. The article erroneously claims that the islands became Japan's territory as a result of Japan's annexation of Taiwan, but these islands were neither part of Taiwan nor part of Pescadore Islands which were ceded to Japan from Qing Dynasty of China in May 1895.

The description labeling the activities of Japan's Self Defense Forces in Iraq as "unpopular" and failing to provide "reliable electricity and water" appeared to have been forged without studying the real situation in Muthanna Province where the SDF has been doing its humanitarian reconstruction work for the past two years. Japan's contribution to Iraq, a mixture of the provision of financial assistance (approximately US\$200 million grant, only in Muthanna Province) and the dispatch of the SDF, has helped to ameliorate the living standard of the people who still now suffer from the predicament persistent from the days of Saddam's negligence.

Along with these facts, the SDF's presence is highly appreciated by the local population as proved by repeated results of opinion polls and echoes of the Iraqi government's request for the extension of the dispatch.

Sincerely,
Fumio Yawata
Minister
Embassy of Japan
Tehran/Iran

Special Body To Prepare Persian Vocabulary

DUSHANBEH, Tajikistan, March 18—Public relations director of Iran's Persian Language and Literature Academy announced here Saturday that Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan will soon form a special commission for deciding the Persian vocabulary.

Hassan Qaribi told IRNA that the idea of establishing the joint commission was proposed at the Fifth International Assembly of Persian Language Professors in Dushanbe.

The main objective of the commission is to update Persian words and help finalize a standard language for three Persian-speaking countries.

"The commission will try to coin terms for foreign words that are used by in three countries and the same will come in use among three neighbors after consensus," he added.

The academy's word selection group was founded in 1990. Two dictionaries with 9,000 words have already been published by the academy and new words have replaced foreign words.

Qaribi was of the opinion that there is no need to delete Arabic words that have been used for several centuries until Persian equivalents have been found for them.

"Tajiks are more concerned about their language and culture than Iranians," he said.

Persian language professors from Tajikistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, India, Lebanon, US and China attended the fifth meeting. The first and fourth assemblies were held in Tehran.



Hassan Qaribi

Int'l Forum on Religion Opens in Isfahan

By Farzaneh Shokri

ISFAHAN, March 18—A prominent religious scholar described an international conference in this central city on religious unity as a show of respect for all divine prophets and a denunciation of pervers who caused offense to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

The two-day conference is themed "Constructive Interaction Among Divine Religions -- a Framework of the World Order".

Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi-Amoli told the conferees that every divine faith has endorsed and complemented the one prior to it. "Islam, as the last divine religion, was also an advocate of religions that preceded it."

Pointing to different interpretations of the Holy Quran, he said divine messages have throughout history faced resistance by those who see them against their lust.

Javadi-Amoli referred to the recent insulting drawings against the Prophet of Islam in some western newspapers as offensive to all divine religions.

Bangladeshi minister of religion, Moshref Hussein Shah Jahan, said at the meeting that inter-



Iranian and foreign dignitaries at the two-day conference themed "Constructive Interaction Among Divine Religions--a Framework of the World Order" in Isfahan, March 18. (IRNA Photo)

action among followers of divine religions has prevailed since the birth of Islam.

"Quran can be a valuable spiritual source for humanity and His (the prophet's) tradition and way of life can serve a model for all the people in the world."

Shah Jahan called on religious movements and groups to comply with exigencies of time. "While remaining committed to their religious teachings, human beings should also draw on modern knowledge and technology."

Professor Hamid Mowlana, a lecturer of international relations at Washington University,

advised against violent confrontations against insulting behaviors of westerners against Muslim and their sanctities.

He told Iran Daily on the sidelines of the seminar that such actions stem from their (west) ignorance and are provoked by political objectives.

Today, anti-religious sentiments are propagated in universities and schools in the western world and the way to resist this is for Muslims to mobilize and take a common stance against the hostile moves through expert forums, he said.

Head of the Culture and

Islamic Communications Organization, the organizing body, Mahmoud Mohammadi-Araji told reporters that the aim of the meeting is to help provide a window to genuine Islam and study the role and influence of divine religions in shaping global developments.

Mohammadi-Araji said 60 religious scholars from 38 countries and 150 from Iran are attending the conference. Articles submitted include those on the status of divine prophets from the religious perspectives, and solidarity among divine religions as an instrument to strengthen global peace and justice.

US Talk Offer Under Review

TEHRAN, March 18—Secretary of the State Expediency Council Mohsen Rezaie said here Saturday proposed talks between Tehran and Washington on Iraq has not yet been taken up at the council, Fars News reported.

Rezaie told the news agency during the year-end meeting that the issue is being discussed at the Supreme National Security Council and will be referred to the SEC if necessary.

Meanwhile, the American ambassador to Iraq said he wants US-Iranian talks about Iraq—a first between the two antagonists since the US invasion—to be held in Baghdad and focus on "our concern with Iranian policies in Iraq."

In an interview with the Associated Press at the US Embassy in Baghdad, Zalmay Khalilzad insisted there would be no bargaining with Iran.

"We are not entering into negotiations about Iraq with Iran. The Iraqis will decide the future of Iraq. We have Concerns—and I've spoken about them—with regard to

Iranian policy in Iraq," said the Afghan-born ambassador, who can speak with Iranians in a common language—his native Dari is a Persian dialect.

Iran's agreement Thursday to hold direct talks on Iraq came in response to a call by the senior Iraqi Shiite politician, Abdul-Aziz Al-Hakim.

"It is in the interests of the Iraqi people that such dialogue is opened and reaches an understanding on various issues," Hakim, who has close ties with Iran, said Wednesday.

Iran has expressed grave concern about the sectarian fighting and reprisal killings in neighboring Iraq, and, some believe, would not want responsibility for a raging civil war across the border if US troops withdraw.

Khalilzad and the top Iranian diplomat, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki agreed that any talks would be limited to Iraq—not the angry standoff over Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran insists is for peaceful purposes.

Khatami: Lawlessness More Harmful Than Bad Laws

TEHRAN, March 18—Head of the Foundation for Freedom, Growth and Development of Iran (BARAN) Mohammad Khatami Friday said

Iranians including a personality like the late Imam Khomeini never had the task of liberating the world.

"Holding this view point that we have a duty to liberate the world only results in a situation wherein Iran too would be lost.

During the reform movement the question was: are we responsible to liberate the whole world?"

At the time we were taking preliminary steps to help liberate Iranian society. We simply cannot talk about liberating the whole world. Rather our responsibility is to facilitate the development of Iran. If we carry out this task in compliance with our religious and humanitarian values, then we will have also affected the Islamic

world and world in general," he told the first monthly gathering of BARAN.

According to ISNA, the former president also outlined his reformist policies, such as establishing civil society, promoting freedom, abiding by the rule of law, economic development as the yardstick for fulfillment of justice, interaction with the outside world and détente, during his eight years as chief executive.

He recalled that during the reform movement his emphasis was on upholding the law.

"The harm done by lawlessness is much more than the harm done by establishing bad laws. When there is lawlessness, chaos follows.

But when bad laws are introduced, parts of national interests are ensured and other parts are wasted. It is a must for our society to move toward lawfulness," he noted.

Persian Press Watch

Timing

AFTAB-E YAZD: The news of negotiations between Iran and the US was widely covered by international mass media. This situation is similar to the time when Iran negotiated with America over Afghanistan, which was covered by the global sections of mass media in a contradictory manner. Although there is nothing wrong with Iran's negotiating with the US, the timing of such negotiations should also be taken into consideration. Iranian officials have always said that Iran and the US should sit at the negotiating table only when the US does not assume an upphand over Iran. The bottom line is that Iran should be more concerned about its own interests while sitting at the negotiating table.

Success

HADAF-VA-EQTESAD: Setting up free trade zones is not something new. Countries of Southeast Asia have already established such zones. The most important reason behind the success of these zones is that there is no government monopoly and bureaucracy and that the private sector has been provided more opportunities to take part in economic and trade activities. Of course, there are obstacles that hinder development of economic zones. These obstacles include labor laws, insurance, trade, customs tariff and the unnecessary red tape for issuance of trade permits.

NGOs

MARDOMSALARI: The main purpose for establishment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is to promote general welfare of the society. NGOs, ordinarily speaking, include societies, groups and humanitarian institutions. The most important characteristic of NGOs is that they are independent from the government. World Bank has described the main objective for founding NGOs as alleviating pains, curbing poverty, protecting the environment and improving the social security system. The large number of NGOs in the country in the past few years has resulted in better social conditions as a whole.

Perspective

Mistaken Cause

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Iraqis in no small number and not necessary hostile to the US occupation now believe America and the occupation are indeed a huge part of their problem, not the solution.

Having moved from invasion, to occupation, a full-fledged military conflict, sectarian violence and revenge killings, the war-weary Iraqis fear the worst. Pundits and politicians are talking about the insurgency getting worse and drifting towards civil war in a country that has never ever in its history witnessed fighting between the majority Shiites and minority Sunnis.

Mind you, as the brutal war enters its fourth year amid all the deceit and deception, Messrs Bush and Blair won't accept responsibility for their horrible mistakes and visibly failed strategies.

To the contrary, Bush the serial liar and murderer of innocent Iraqi civilians hardly loses an opportunity to tell his audiences that "Iraq is moving away from dictatorship to democracy." As usual Blair is at hand to justify the dangerous mess. Very recently he was quoted as saying that "Anyone would stand up for democracy against terrorism!"

As Iraq burns day in and day out, Americans who still believe in human values and dignity are coming to grips with a grim reality: their soldiers are risking their lives in a foreign desert and are actually dying for a mistaken cause.

In late November America's bomber chief executive said, "We want to win, and I don't want the troops to come home without having achieved victory. We will achieve our objective."

But today things are much different than what Bush and company may have anticipated. All the signs are that America with all its deadly military power feels it is out of control. This is perfectly understandable because it is true. The White House set out looking for short-term solutions in Iraq that have now become long-term problems, to say the least.

Whatever the outcome of the conflict in Iraq, one thing is certain. America will not win this war because its president continues to lie at every step. The chaos, death and destruction in that country engineered by the Bush and Blair teams demands self-examination not self-serving nonsense that only fools would believe.

Given the current state of affairs, the architects of the Iraq war now trying hard to hide their dangerous failures are trapped and immobilized as they fast run out of time and ideas.

As the bullying militarists try to prevail, things will only get much worse for the disgraced warmongers and regime changers.

Anti-Drug Campaign Discussed With Afghanistan

VIENNA, Austria, March 18—A security belt should be built at the joint Iran-Afghan border to curb narcotic traffic between the two countries, an Iranian official said Saturday.

Secretary General of Iran's Anti-Drug Taskforce, Fada Hossein Maleki made the comment in a meeting with Afghan Minister for Anti-Narcotics Affairs Habibullah Qaderi on the

sidelines of the 49th session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) in Vienna, IRNA reported.

Maleki said all laboratories involved in producing the illegal drugs should be dismantled.

Qaderi noted that his country is obliged to control its borders but has not been able to do so due to lack of funds and facilities.

"Afghanistan's neighbors

should exercise stronger control and supervision of their frontiers," he said.

The latest CND meeting opened here March 13 and wrapped up on Friday.

Located in the focal point of the so-called "Golden Triangle", Afghanistan is the leading poppy growing country in the world and a major source of heroin smuggled across the world.

Meanwhile, a police offi-

cial said in Tehran more than 20 tons of various illegal drugs were seized in the southern Fars province during the current Iranian year (ends March 20).

Brigadier General Ahmad Alireza-Beigi told IRNA that the volume was a seven percent decline compared to the previous year.

Over 30,000 smugglers were also arrested during the same period.