

SEC Chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani urged scholars to take decisive measures to help end Muslim discord



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Victory of China's Liang Wen-Chong in the Singapore Masters is his first win outside his homeland



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Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez visited Bolivia and pledged ten times more aid than US President George W. Bush



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## President May Attend UNSC Meeting

TEHRAN, March 11--Foreign Ministry Spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini said on Sunday President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may attend the upcoming meeting of the United Nations Security Council.

Speaking in his weekly press conference, Hosseini added that the upcoming UNSC meeting will discuss issues related to Iran's nuclear case.

"The chief executive will officially announce Iran's nuclear stance in the upcoming meeting," he said, without giving any details of such a meeting.

According to Iran Daily's reporter, the spokesman noted that the one-day Baghdad security conference held on Saturday was important due to the ongoing violence in Iraq, especially the daily bombings in the capital city.

"Ceding security affairs to the Iraqi government, preparing a timetable for the exit of American troops from Baghdad and adopting a non-discriminatory attitude toward terrorist groups will definitely restore peace and stabil-

### Iran Bridging Chad-Sudan Gap

ity to Iraq," he said. He pointed out that the Iranian delegation did not take part in direct negotiations with the American delegates.

Commenting on programs of the meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation held recently in Tehran, the official noted that the most important decisions taken in three working groups dealt with strengthening the IOR-ARC Secretariat, classification of projects, establishment of a research center, preparing a framework for preferential commerce and conducting feasibility studies on tourism.

Referring to a meeting held recently between Iran, Chad and Sudan for mediating between Chad and Sudan, Hosseini pointed out that during talks among the three

heads of state, the presidents of Chad and Sudan agreed to send representatives to Iran and attend a meeting hosted by Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki to discuss the differences between the two African states.

"At the end of the meeting between the three heads of state, the two countries agreed to set up a committee to follow up the reopening of embassies in both countries," he said.

Asked about the cooperation of the former senior employee of Defense Ministry, Alireza Asgari, with Americans, Hosseini rejected the same and noted that Asgari is a former Defense Ministry employee who became a businessman after retirement.

"After Asgari traveled to Turkey from Syria, he was missing for two days and a team dispatched from Iran is currently following up his case," he said.

On the completion of Bushehr Nuclear Power Plant, Hosseini hoped that Russians will not politicize the plant and said Iran pays special attention to cooperation with Russia.

## Iraq Keen on New Framework



First Vice President Parviz Davoudi (l) shakes hands with his Iraqi counterpart Tareq Al-Hashemi in Tehran, March 11.

TEHRAN, March 11--Iraqi Vice President Tareq Al-Hashemi said on Sunday the Iraqi government looks forward to establishing a new framework for relations with Iran.

The statement was made after First Vice President Parviz Davoudi officially welcomed the visiting Iraqi official at the Presidential Office, IRNA reported.

Urging the need to lay the cornerstone of new relations to compensate for the past, Davoudi said, "We believe Iraq can benefit from Iran's present status and significance at the regional and international levels. Many opportunities have been lost by the two sides, which should have been used for promoting development and welfare of both the countries."

Davoudi expressed the special regard of the Iranian people and officials for Iraq and its people, hoping that a favorable outcome will be obtained from the visit of the current Iraqi delegation.

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## More Deadly Attacks on Iraqi Shiites

BAGHDAD, Iraq, March 11--A suicide car bomber rammed a truck carrying Shiite pilgrims returning from a religious commemoration on Sunday, killing at least 32 people a day after Iraqi leaders warned sectarian violence could spread through the Middle East.

Suspected Sunni insurgents killed hundreds of pilgrims as they traveled to attend ceremonies in the holy city of Karbala, where millions had gathered for two

days of commemorations, and their return journey was equally treacherous, AP reported.

The truck was bringing about 70 men and boys home and had reached central Baghdad when it was blasted by the car bomber. At least 32 people were killed and 24 were injured, police and hospital officials said.

Attacks on other vehicles carrying pilgrims on Sunday killed at least five people in Baghdad.

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## Hamas, Fatah Clash

GAZA STRIP, Occupied Palestine, March 11--Palestinian gunmen from Hamas and Fatah exchanged fire in the Gaza Strip early Sunday, killing a local militia leader and wounding seven people in the most serious flare-up of violence since a power-sharing deal between the political rivals last month.

Both sides blamed each other for starting the battle in the northern town of Beit Hanoun, AP reported.

Hamas said a truckload of Fatah gunmen opened fire on the militant group's forces near the town's sports club, killing a Hamas field commander, Mohammed Kafarneh. Fatah said the shooting began when Hamas attacked a compound of the security forces with rocket-propelled grenades. Later, Hamas and Fatah gunmen also exchanged fire for a few minutes in Gaza City.

In another incident, two Gaza fishermen were wounded when an Israeli Navy vessel fired on their boat near the Gaza-Egypt border, Palestinian security officials said.

The Israeli military said a naval patrol spotted three boats, suspected of carrying smugglers, quickly approaching Gaza from the direction of Egypt before dawn and opened fire when the craft ignored warnings to turn back. A military

statement said the navy has repeatedly foiled past arms smuggling attempts, but gave no further details on Sunday morning's incident.

Sunday's death was only the second since last month's Saudi Arabia-backed Hamas-Fatah ceasefire which cleared the way for talks on setting up a Hamas-Fatah coalition government.

The violence followed an incident in the West Bank on Saturday in which gunmen fired on the car of Prisoners Affairs Minister Wasfi Kababha of Hamas, security officials said. Nobody was injured in the attack, which Hamas blamed on Palestinian security officials with ties to Fatah. Security officials said they did not know who was responsible.

The Palestinian unity government was intended to halt months of fighting in which more than 130 people were killed. But tensions have remained high since the accord was announced weeks ago.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah

hopes the coalition government, to be formed within two weeks, will also help end an international boycott of the year-old Hamas government and lead to a resumption of peace talks with Israel.

The international community has said it would withhold judgment until it sees the new government's political program. However, the coalition, in deference to Hamas, is unlikely to agree to the world's conditions for acceptance, including recognition of Israel.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas met on Sunday for the second time in less than a month, but with few hopes that the encounter will yield a breakthrough in the stalled peace process.

The meeting took place amid low expectations from both sides of a breakthrough, and amid deep disagreements over the Palestinian government of national unity due to be unveiled within days.

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## Special Court for Press Offenses

TEHRAN, March 11--Prosecutor General Qorbanali Dorri Najafabadi said on Sunday a special court should be set up to deal with press offenses, apart from strengthening press guild institutions.

In a meeting with members of Press Cooperatives, Najafabadi noted that the media, as the pillar of Islamic system, are committed to truth, justice and moral issues, Fars News Agency reported.

"The media are also responsible for enlightening public opinion and strengthening divine values by promoting virtue and preventing vice," he said.

Referring to the effective and superior role of the media in upholding the intellectual and cultural performance of the country, Najafabadi said that in a religious system, media are not tools for the domination of powerful groups and should serve as a means for upholding national interests and improving the country's cultural status.

"Using immoral approaches and spreading fabrications contradict the objectives of the committed media. Journalists should avoid taking part in any activity that jeopardizes the society's health and instead help strengthen the family bonds," he said.

Najafabadi pointed out that those who work in the media are committed to improve the country's conditions.

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