



>> Ferdowsi Remembered

May 14 is the National Ferdowsi Day that commemorates the renowned Iranian poet, Hakim Abolqasem Ferdowsi, whose epic 'Shahnameh' regenerated the Persian language and traditions. See Page 16



>> Shell, Repsol Renegotiating

Spain's Repsol and Royal Dutch/Shell are negotiating with Iran over their participation in the giant South Pars gas field development project. See Page 4

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Israel Behind Lebanese Crisis



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Defense Minister Mostafa Mohammad Najjar said the US and Israel are behind regional violence and instability. "Washington is intensifying the Lebanese crisis in a bid to strengthen Israel defense," said Major General Najjar.

Iran to Sue US, UK Over Shiraz Blast



02

Iran's judiciary said on Monday it may take legal action against the United States and Britain over a mosque explosion last month that killed 13 people in the southern tourist city of Shiraz.

Iranians Enter Futsal Quarters



15

Iran's futsal in the third match of the Asian Championship, defeated Tajikistan 14-0 and advanced to quarterfinals.

China Quake Toll Continues to Rise



10

Heavy storms and wrecked roads hampered efforts to reach areas hardest-hit by China's worst earthquake in three decades on Tuesday as the death toll rose to around 12,000.

Saudi FM Claims Criticized



Photo by Ali Hassanpour

Debate With US Presidential Nominees Welcome

By Sadeq Dehqan

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said if Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal cares about Arab territories, he should do something about the Palestinian dilemma.

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, the president was commenting on Faisal's statement that Saudi Arabia may dispatch military forces to Lebanon.

"If Arab countries could mobilize military forces, the priority (for dispatching them) should be an Arab territory that foreigners have occupied for a long time. If Faisal cared about Arab territories not in the past 60 years but rather in the past 10 years, he should have done something when people were being massacred every day," he said.

According to Fars News Agency, Ahmadinejad said, "I remember when we reached an agreement with King Abdullah to establish a working group to resolve Lebanon's problems, the Saudi king told Faisal that he should represent Saudi Arabia and work alongside Iran for resolving (Lebanon's) problems."

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Perspective

Celebrating Occupation!?

By Armin Hedavati

On the threshold of the 60th anniversary of the occupation of Palestine and establishment of the Zionist regime, US President George W. Bush has once again set out for the Middle East to reiterate Washington's unconditional support for the Qods occupying regime.

These anniversary celebrations, which will be held in the presence of western leaders, coincides with Israel's genocidal attacks on the Gaza Strip.

Sixty years ago, Zionists used the policy of intimidation and fear, and declared the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestinian territories with the support of British colonialists. The Americans recognized Israel only a few hours after the occupation. In fact, America's full-fledged support for Zionists dates back to many years before the establishment of Israel.

In the course of world wars I and II, American Jewish and non-Jewish capitalists helped thousands of Jews migrate to Palestine under the pretext of mistreatment of Jews in Europe and usurped Palestinian lands. This support intensified upon the establishment of Israel, which gradually became America's most staunch political and military ally.

It should not be doubted that had it not been for America's political, economic and military support for Israel, the Middle East would not have been subject to shocking crimes in Sabra, Shatila and Qana as well as the ongoing crisis in Gaza Strip. The annual payment of \$3 billion of military aid to Israel and the veto of at least 35 Security Council draft resolutions constitute only a small portion of the US support for Israeli aggressions and criminal acts. Not to mention that after the heartbreaking murder of hundreds of Palestinians in Jenin, Bush described the then Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, as the "man of peace".

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Washington-Baghdad Deal Denounced

A military official on Tuesday denounced Washington's efforts to strike a security agreement with Baghdad and called for clarifying the imperialist aspects of such an agreement.

Brigadier General Seyyed Masoud Jazayeri, deputy for cultural and defense propagation affairs of the armed forces, made the statement in a telefax sent to Iran Daily.

"Americans, who in the name of freedom and democracy crossed into Iraq with tanks, airplanes and missiles... have now become the biggest problem of Iraq as well as the Middle East and Persian Gulf," he said.

Jazayeri emphasized that the US seeks hegemony over the regional oil reserves, supports the illegitimate state of Israel, killed many people in Afghanistan and Iraq and has devised plans for a permanent presence in Iraq to safeguard its interests in the region and even control Russian moves.

"Despite the hostile US attitude, the regional conditions are not to the liking of the White House and the Pentagon. This failure, more than being rooted in the moves made by others, has to do with the inefficacy of American leaders in controlling the crisis that they themselves created," he said.

The general emphasized that the US imposed agreement will not entail anything for the Iraqis but misery and hence the people of Iraq will not allow its implementation.

"By practicing tactics such as long-term control over Iraqi affairs, the Americans are trying hard to prevent the fall of Israel," he said.

Jazayeri concluded by saying that it is the duty of all thinkers, non-governmental organizations, personalities and journalists to prevent the implementation of the agreement.

MegaFon Eyes \$4.6b Venture

Russia's third-largest mobile phone operator, MegaFon, is prepared to invest around 3 billion euros (\$4.64 billion) to build a GSM network in Iran, the company said late on Monday.

MegaFon hopes to win a tender for the third GSM license in Iran, the firm quoted its general director Sergei Soldatenkov as saying at the opening of a representative office in Tehran.

There are currently two mobile service providers in Iran--state-controlled Iran Telecommunications Company (ITC) and MTN Group, sub-Saharan Africa's biggest cellphone operator, Reuters reported.

Iran, which has 28 million mobile phone users, is expected to auction its third GSM license in the middle of the year but the tender has not been announced yet. MegaFon said in February it was considering long-term investment opportunities in the Iranian telecom sector despite US efforts to hinder foreign investments in Iran by imposing sanctions.

The Russian firm currently has more than 36 million clients mainly in Russia, lagging behind market leaders Mobile TeleSystems and Vimpelcom. Besides Russia, MegaFon's only other part of the ex-Soviet pie is Tajikistan.

