

IAEA Talks Enter 2nd Day

Iranian officials and a delegation from the International Atomic Energy Agency continued talks on the second day of the third round of technical negotiations at Iran's Atomic Energy Organization in Tehran.

An informed official told IRNA that Herman Nackaerts, director for regional department of Safeguards Operation, heads the IAEA delegation, while Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's permanent envoy to IAEA, leads the Iranian team in this round of negotiations.

The official said that the three-day negotiations are being held at the experts' level and will be concluded on Wednesday.

"A number of experts from the Foreign Ministry were scheduled to take part in the talks."

Technical delegations of both sides held talks about two weeks ago during April 28-30.

After the release of the report by IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei on February 22, the first round of technical talks was held between Iranian officials and IAEA deputy director general, Olli Heinonen.

Tehran addressed all questions raised by the International Atomic Energy Agency in order to remove concerns about its peaceful nuclear program based on the modality plan signed on August 21.

Call for Boosting Oman Ties



Morteza Rahimi

Iranian ambassador in Muscat on Tuesday called for expansion of ties with Oman.

Morteza Rahimi told Oman-based newspaper Al-Shabiba that the recent visit of deputy to Oman Sultan Qaboos, Fahd bin Mahmoud Al-Said, is considered a positive step toward strengthening bilateral ties, IRNA quoted.

He added that during Al-Said's visit, agreements in the fields of politics, economy, culture, oil and gas were signed and this was among the important achievements of his visit.

"On the sidelines of Al-Said's visit, the possibility of establishing a joint research center, publishing books in Persian and Arabic languages and translating archeological books into Arabic were discussed," he said.

He announced that an educational Iranian center for teaching Persian language will be established in Oman under the supervision of the Iranian Embassy in Muscat.

Referring to the meeting of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad with the deputy to Oman's Sultan Qaboos, the envoy said ways to develop bilateral cooperation were also discussed.

Rahimi expressed hope that the Oman's Sultan Qaboos would visit Iran in the near future.

Pointing to the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC) Summit in Riyadh and transfer of its rotating presidency from Qatar to Oman, Rahimi said the Riyadh summit was very important.

"Oman plays a key role in bringing PGCC members closer," he said.

Referring to tourism cooperation, Rahimi noted that cooperation in the field of tourism is not very extensive, calling for establishing direct Tehran-Muscat air link.

During Al-Said's visit to Iran on April 20, President Ahmadinejad named Oman a brotherly country, calling for expansion of bilateral ties. He also underscored the deep-rooted relations between the Islamic Republic and Oman, expressing hope that Al-Said's visit would help develop bilateral ties and regional cooperation.

Ahmadinejad further said Iran-Oman cooperation should become a model for other regional countries, stressing that there is no obstacle to bolstering bilateral ties.

US, Israel Behind Lebanese Crisis



Mostafa Mohammad Najjar

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 in a Tuesday meeting with senior defense officials, Presstv reported.

"The United States presents itself as an advocate of peace and stability whilst using all political and military power to foment violence in the region," he added.

The defense minister warned against foreign interference in Lebanon and called on the country's political parties to resolve the ongoing crisis through dialogue and negotiations.

"Foreign interference would benefit the enemy at the expense of the Lebanese nation and its resistance movement," he said.

Najjar stressed that the key to a lasting regional stability lies in the localization of stability as well as greater unity among Middle

Eastern countries.

Tensions mounted among the feuding Lebanese parties and their supporters after the pro-US ruling coalition decided to ban Hezbollah telecommunications network and sack Beirut Airport security chief on Tuesday.

Hezbollah says its telecommunication network played a vital role during the 33-day war with Israel. The war inflicted a humiliating defeat on the Zionist regime.

Earlier, the US president, ahead of his trip to the region, said his country is prepared to strengthen the Lebanese Army so it could disarm Hezbollah.

"I don't see how you can have a society with Hezbollah armed up the way they are," George W. Bush said, adding that the first step is to ensure that the Siniora government has got the capacity to respond with a military that's effective.

The US president made the remark while the Lebanese Army remained neutral during the crisis.

Iraq Insecurity Will Not Benefit Neighbors

Iran's Ambassador in Baghdad Hassan Kazemi Qomi said Tehran welcomes restoration of stability and security to Iraq, noting that an insecure Iraq would not be in the interest of neighboring countries.

"Iran's strategy in Iraq is based on providing help to the government of Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki to establish security, promote the economy and rebuild the war-stricken country," Qomi told IRIB.

He added that Iran calls for a stable and independent Iraq along with the preservation of its national unity and territorial integrity as well as the withdrawal of occupation forces.

"An insecure Iraq would not be in the interest of neighboring and regional countries," he said, noting that continuation of Iraq's occupation and terrorist acts would get in the way of the Iraqi government's development plans.

The Iranian diplomat expressed Iran's all-out support for the Iraqi government's plans aimed at completing the political process, beefing up security and reconstructing the country.

Qomi noted that cooperation in the fields of fuel and energy, including transfer of electricity and construction of power plants, road building, the opening of Iranian banks and consulates in Iraqi cities, supplying security and medical aid, and the annual reciprocal visits of two million pilgrims between the two countries attest to Iran's amicable relations with the Iraqi government and nation.

Ceremonies to Mark Khorramshahr Liberation

The Foundation for the Preservation and Publication of Sacred Defense and Values will hold ceremonies to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Khorramshahr on May 24.

Head of the foundation, Brigadier General Mir Feisal Baqerzadeh, told a press conference that the organization has planned more than 100 programs for the occasion.

Mountain climbing, distribution of a pamphlet titled Victors of Khorramshahr and unveiling the Khorramshahr Photo Book are some of the scheduled programs.

Staging 15 plays related to the Sacred Defense (the 1980-88 Iraq-imposed war) is also among the programs.

Persian Press Watch

Resistance

RESALAT: A glance at the six decades of fear, frustration, misery and, in one word, catastrophe caused by the occupying Israeli regime in the Palestinian land indicates that anybody taking part in Israeli celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the illegitimate formation of the Zionist regime is complicit to its crimes against the defenseless people of Palestine. During the past 60 years, however, resistance movements have become stronger. Hezbollah and Hamas have brought 'resistance' into the limelight. The 33-day war against Lebanon in 2006 was the peak of the victory of resistance against international Zionism. Today, after years of raiding Gaza and committing war crimes in the West Bank with the explicit support of the western countries, Israelis have failed to eliminate the resistance movement.

Differences

HAMSHAHRI: Despite the necessity underlined by the Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to avoid unnecessary differences of opinion among officials, some of them seem to be wasting their energy by concentrating on discord and disputes. According to the leader, creating differences among officials is one of the conspiracies of enemies against the Islamic Republic. Like the late Founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini, Ayatollah Khamenei also stresses the importance of maintaining unity. Differences of opinion among officials are inevitable, but exaggerating these differences will harm the principles and causes of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Iranian nation has proved its allegiance to the revolution on many occasions. It's time officials set aside differences for the sake of safeguarding the revolution and upholding the national interests.

Agro Prices

IRAN: According to the data of the Food and Agriculture Organization, the price index of agro products has increased by 40 percent and is continuing to rise. Given the fact that the major part of income in developing countries is spent on food, the rise in the price of agro products has negatively affected a majority of families in these countries. The rising food price across the world is due to many reasons. The most important ones include soaring energy prices, rising consumption of staple food, growing population and increasing prosperity in developing countries, particularly in densely populated states such as China and India. Moreover, the shortage of rainfall and threat of drought in some agro-based countries have also augmented prices. For instance, the severe drought in Australia, which is one of the major producers of wheat, has negatively affected global markets.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi

Hassan Kazemi Qomi