

Majlis to Impeach Commerce Minister

Commerce Minister Masoud Mir-Kazemi will be impeached on May 21.

A member of Majlis Presiding Board said on Saturday the impeachment of Mir-Kazemi was removed from the Majlis agenda on May 14, IRNA reported.

Mousa Qorbani stated that the impeachment was postponed due to the withdrawal of six MPs, but the second motion to impeach the minister was submitted to the Majlis in response to the demand of other MPs.

As per the Majlis bylaw, if the number of MPs calling for impeachment of a minister does not reach the quorum, the case will be removed from the Majlis agenda.

Mir-Kazemi is due to attend the Majlis session to answer questions raised by deputies on the performance of his ministry.

The motion to impeach Mir-Kazemi was launched on May 6.

Criticism mounted about the Commerce Ministry's performance over the dramatic rise in prices of rice and other consumer goods.

Mir-Kazemi said he has made plans to deal with rice shortage and the Commerce Ministry will distribute large amounts of rice and other commodities to bring down the prices in a matter of weeks.

"The rice crisis is the outcome of limits imposed by producing countries on the export of this commodity," he said.

McCain Urged To Change Approach

Senior McCain's advisers have urged the Republican candidate to reconsider his "unsustainable" approach toward the Islamic Republic.

In a recent interview with PBS, ultraconservative Robert Kagan took a sharp jab at Senator John McCain for perpetuating the Bush administration's refusal to engage Tehran diplomatically, Pressty reported.

"You know, I think, and this is where John McCain may not--doesn't agree necessarily. I think at some point we may find ourselves in a position where you might want to do that (talk to the Iranian government)," Kagan said.

He suggested that the Bush administration should abandon its increasingly combative stance toward Iran, as it has yielded no results.

The 71-year-old McCain has vocally advocated a joint US-Israel preemptive military strike against the Islamic Republic, claiming that it would "fulfill God's plan for... a biblically prophesied end-time confrontation".

Economy Grew by 6.7%

Deputy Governor of the Central Bank says Iran's economic growth rate in the last Iranian year was 6.7%.

Ramin Pashaei-Fam also told a gathering of CBI census-takers on Saturday that the growth rate was 0.5 percent higher than the previous year's growth rate, Pressty reported.

"Census-takers should pay special attention to unemployment, inflation and growth rates to help the country's policymakers make their decision," he said.

He added that correct and precise data made available at reasonable speed can help decision-makers and guide them in their efforts to achieve the country's economic goals.

Pashaei-Fam said the main issue is how to put the resources available to the country to the best possible use.

"There is no liquidity problem in the economy, but liquidity needs to be controlled to avoid using it in non-productive activities," he said in another part of his speech.

Pashaei-Fam noted that channeling liquidity in the right direction and exercising proper control over it can help curb inflation.



US Responsible For Iraq Terror Attack



Manouchehr Mottaki

Iran has denounced terror attacks on its diplomats at the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad and held the US responsible for violating diplomatic immunity in Iraq.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki strongly condemned the terror attacks, IRNA reported.

On Thursday, unknown terrorists opened fire at a motorcade of Iranian diplomats, wounding three diplomats and one Iraqi staffer of the Iranian Embassy in Baghdad.

Mottaki commissioned Iran's Ambassador in Baghdad Hassan Kazemi Qomi to work with Iraqi officials to transfer the diplomats to Iraq for medical treatment.

Package

Mottaki made the remark on the sidelines of the Second National Seminar on Public Relations Departments of Executive Bodies, adding that Iran's package of proposals prepares the ground for expansion of multilateral cooperation in different arenas.

"If the other sides carefully review the

package of proposals, many issues and problems can be solved," he said.

Referring to the fact that Iran will send the package of proposals to a number of countries, he said the package will be submitted to member-states of Non-Aligned Movement as well as the Organization of Islamic Conference.

The minister noted that the Iranian package includes surveys on important issues and Tehran has prepared it to address the root-causes of regional crises.

The Iranian government has presented the package to the UN secretary-general, the head of UN Security Council, foreign ministers of China and Russia, and through Javier Solana, the EU foreign policy chief, to the Group 5+1, and Switzerland.

Pointing to the fact that the Islamic Republic has not yet received any package from the other side, Mottaki said that during a meeting between Iran's ambassador and the Group 5+1 in Belgium, the representatives of the group announced that they would provide Tehran with a new package.

Iran 3rd in Vaccination Coverage

Health Minister said the country ranks third in the world in hepatitis B vaccination coverage.

Kamran Bagheri Lankarani said Iran has an acceptable coverage of vaccination and primary healthcare, the most important indexes for evaluating the health status of a country, Pressty reported.

He added that in view of Iran's over 95 percent vaccination coverage, the country now has a praiseworthy place in the world.

According to Lankarani, Iranians are also cooperating in the vaccination drive of some neighboring countries.

Lankarani designated health, economy and insurance coverage as Iran's main issues of concern and added that there has been a significant increase in insurance coverage, especially in rural areas.



Jannati Addresses Pak Dignitaries

Secretary of Guardians Council met with Pakistani religious dignitaries at the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Friday.

Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati addressed the meeting attended by Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan Mashallah Shakeri, the leader of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) Fazl-ur-Rehman, Secretary-General of Pakistan's Muslim League (PML) Mushahid Hussein and a number of Pakistani religious and political dignitaries and officials, IRNA reported.

Ayatollah Jannati said Iran and Pakistan, as two Muslim and brotherly nations, can play an effective role in the campaign against hegemony.

Pointing to the Islamic Revolution's impact on the Muslim world, the senior Iranian cleric added that the Islamic Revolution became victorious in 1979 while the country was surrounded by arrogant world powers and colonialists.

"The victory aroused the hope of the oppressed people for Islam's bright future," he said.

Stressing the key role played by the late Imam Khomeini in the Islamic Revolution's victory, Jannati said the modern thoughts of Imam Khomeini won dramatic support in the Muslim world. "By hatching satanic conspiracies in occupied Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan, the hegemonic powers are trying to shatter the Muslims' unity, all of which are being foiled," he said.

Jannati concluded that obstacles to the Muslim world can be removed through the Muslim nations' solidarity and unity.

The secretary of Guardians Council arrived in Islamabad on Friday at the head of an Iranian delegation.

Iraqi President Rejects Anti-Iran Claims

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani rejected the US claims about Iran's involvement in sending weapons to Iraq.

Speaking in a televised interview with the Al-Arabiya TV of Iraq on Friday, Talabani said as the president of Iraq, he did not agree with the claims made by US military officers in this regard.

President Talabani said statements made by certain persons were their personal opinions and not the official position of the Iraqi government.

Commenting on the presence of Iran-made weapons in Iraq, President Talabani said these weapons were sent to Iraq during Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, as Iran had provided Iraqi opposition, including the Patriotic Union for Kurdistan of Iraq, with weapons.

As for Tehran's alleged interference in Iraq's internal affairs by negotiating with Iraqi religious leader Muqtada Al-Sadr, the Iraqi president said helping Iraq resolve its domestic problems does not constitute interference in the country's internal affairs.

"Iran has so far brokered a ceasefire between the Iraqi government and Al-Mahdi Army," he said.

Talabani also said Iraqi officials have accepted the principle to form a tripartite committee with Iran and US officials on Iraq security.

"That is not called interference, that's help for Iraq to resolve its problems," he said.

Commenting on the Algeria Accord signed between Iranian and Iraqi officials in 1975, the Iraqi president said the accord was registered with the United Nations as an international document and cannot be canceled unilaterally.

He added that the two sides need to reach an understanding on the issue through bilateral talks.

President Talabani looked forward to strengthening Tehran-Baghdad relations as well as cooperation in economic, political and security fields.

Saudi Arabia Declines...

From Page 1

He said the Saudis increased production by 300,000 barrels per day on May 10 after about 50 customers around the world requested it. He added most of the requests came from the US.

Naimi also said that in future if there was a need to increase oil production, then Saudi Arabia has no objection to doing so. He also said Saudi officials spoke to Bush about production and told him the kingdom's policy is to respond to the customers' demands.

Bush's national security adviser told reporters earlier that Saudi Arabia's leaders made clear during the president's visit they see no reason to increase oil production further until customers demand it.

"Saudi Arabia does not have customers that are making requests for oil that they are not able to satisfy," Stephen Hadley said. "What the Saudis wanted to tell us was 'we're doing everything we can do...to meet this problem, but it's a complicated problem'."

Saudi Arabia, which has the world's largest oil reserves, has in the past acknowledged the ability to produce as much as 11 million barrels a day.

Producers Oppose...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, Benjamin Chang, a spokesman for the US mission to the UN said, "We are opposed to any ban on cluster munitions. We do not believe they are indiscriminate weapons."

US allies such as Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands and Sweden are lobbying for the exclusion of some cluster bombs from the ban, diplomats said.

More than 13,000 have been confirmed injured and killed around the world by the cluster munitions, especially in Laos, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, UNDP said.