

More Shiraz Blast Suspects Arrested

Intelligence Minister Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said that different dimensions of the Shiraz terrorist incident have been revealed and new suspects have been arrested.

According to IRNA, Ejei made the announcement while talking to reporters on the sidelines of the induction ceremony for new Interior Minister Mehdi Hashemi.



Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei

"The dossiers of these people have not yet been sent to the judiciary. The Intelligence Ministry is examining the case," he said.

He stressed that Iran will certainly follow up the issue of the US-UK involvement in the bomb blast through international forums.

Commenting on his ministry's involvement in issues related to land and housing mafia, Ejei said, "Fighting against economic corruption is, generally speaking, one of the Intelligence Ministry's duties. We are working on the matter."

Iran said on Wednesday that the blast in a mosque that killed 13 people in the southern city of Shiraz last month was a bombing and that suspects linked with the country's western foes have been arrested.

"Through the efforts of the law enforcement forces...the main person involved in the Shiraz mosque explosion was arrested in one of the northern cities of the country," the Fars News Agency quoted Ejei as saying.

"The main culprit, who was an accomplice in the bombing, was arrested during an attempt to leave the country. The person was armed when arrested," Ejei said.

Mottaki in Kuwait

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Muhammad Al-Sabah Al-Salim Al-Sabah received a message from his Iranian counterpart Manouchehr Mottaki on Sunday about bilateral relations.

Mottaki's message concerned bilateral ties between the two capitals and ways to promote them, IRNA quoted Kuwait's News Agency (KUNA) as reporting.

It did not provide further details about the message.

Mottaki was in Kuwait on Friday evening on a short visit to convey the sympathy and condolences of the Iranian government and people on the demise of Kuwait's former Emir Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah, who died last Tuesday of a chronic disease at the age of 78.

He also met with Kuwaiti Emir Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his counterpart who also serves as the deputy prime minister of Kuwait.

Iran Deserves to Be Top Regional Power

A senior Iranian official said the Islamic Republic deserves to be the leading power in the region, given its vast resources.

"Our Islamic country holds vast spiritual and material assets, the most important of which is the support of its people. Hence, it deserves to be the region's leading power," said the Chairman of State Expediency Council Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Monday.

Rafsanjani also said the Iranian nation could achieve that goal by making a strong showing in social arenas, PressTV reported.

The former Iranian president made the remark in an address to a group of political and scientific figures in Iran's southwestern province of Khuzestan.

Rafsanjani's speech focused on ways to develop the province, drawing on its oil, gas and water resources.

Call for Afghan Foreign Troop Pullout Timetable



President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (r) talks with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan Kai Eide in Tehran on Monday.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran calls for full restoration of democracy to Afghanistan and for a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign forces from the country.

The president made the remark in a meeting with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan Kai Eide on Monday, IRNA reported.

Ahmadinejad called current developments in Afghanistan as very important and very complicated.

"As history testifies, direct interference of foreign forces has not helped resolve the Afghan problems and, therefore, all efforts in the war-shattered country should be based on democracy and support for the Afghan people," he said.

He pointed out that Iran is among the countries directly affected by ongoing developments in Afghanistan, adding that Iran fully supports restoration of security and stability to Afghanistan.

Ahmadinejad further said the adoption of double-standards regarding Afghanistan has complicated the country's problems, stressing that Afghan problems will not be

resolved until correct policies are taken.

"The issue of drug trafficking is one of the major topics for the whole region, including Iran," he said.

"Unfortunately, the production of drugs in Afghanistan has increased, which favors terrorist groups."

The president called for defining the role of foreign countries in restoring security to Afghanistan.

"Issues including drugs, correcting contradictory relations and presenting a timetable for restoring stability to Afghanistan are among the main duties of the UN envoy in the country," he said, adding that Iran will spare no efforts to cooperate to this end.

Referring to ample cultural and historical commonalities between Iran and Afghanistan, he said Iran regards Afghanistan's security, stability and development as its own.

The UN envoy, for his part, briefed the president on his duties and responsibilities, and said the Afghan people should administer their own affairs.

"Afghanistan's problems have no military solution," he said.

German Mideast Expert: Time for Western Detente

The West should pursue a policy of détente vis-à-vis Iran which should include an end to western sanctions over its nuclear program and direct talks between both the sides, said a leading German Middle East scholar on Sunday.

The former head of the Berlin-based German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Christoph Bertram, wrote in an op-ed piece for the Sunday daily Der Tagesspiegel that the present western Iran strategy had 'failed'.

He urged western leaders to "review the strategy toward Iran" instead of issuing futile threats and repeatedly passing "toothless sanctions".

Bertram, who is to unveil on Monday evening his new book on Iran titled 'Partner, not rival: For another Iran policy', stressed that any basis for a western rethinking should remember that the West had not been able to stop Iran's nuclear program over the past six years.

Bertram, the ex-director of London's International Institute for Strategic Studies, called on western nations to engage in nuclear talks with Tehran "without any preconditions".

The German expert noted that a western detente policy with Iran should include Tehran's right to enrich uranium for its civilian nuclear program and "fair solutions" for all remaining non-nuclear problems.

"Such a western Iran initiative has to be led by the US," he said.

Bertram is among several prominent German experts on Iran who have expressed deep skepticism over Berlin's current policy toward Tehran.

US Exacerbating Mideast Crisis

A legislator said Iran believes the crises in Middle East and other parts of the world are fomented by the US and other big powers.

Making the remark in a meeting with Bosnian lawmaker Baqer Izetbegovic on Sunday, Alaeddin Boroujerdi added that Iran is located in a critical region and witnesses crises to the west and east of its borders, which have been triggered by the presence of the US and multinational forces, IRNA reported.

Pointing to good relations between Iran and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Boroujerdi said the Iranian government and nation are pleased with the stability and tranquility in the Euro-

pean country after a bloody civil war.

"Iran has always supported independence and tranquility in Bosnia-Herzegovina," he said, adding that the two parliaments can play a key role in expanding cooperation in political, economic and cultural arenas.

The Bosnian lawmaker, for his part, said Iran is a big and important country in the region and the world, and his nation believes Iranians are the real friend of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Referring to the satisfactory inter-parliamentary relations between the two countries, Izetbegovic noted that parliaments play a decisive role in developing ties in all fields.

Persian Press Watch

Appreciation

RESALAT: Two lawmakers have criticized the government for importing gasoline last year without getting the parliament's authorization. Sections of the domestic media highlighted this, but out of context. According to Article 11 of the Budget Law of last year (ended March 19), the government was authorized by the parliament to import gasoline worth 33,000 billion rials. This is while the government, which imported an additional consignment worth \$2 billion, says importing the surplus gasoline was not against the law, as it had been bought from the National Iranian Oil Company's share of oil revenues. The parliament should thank the government because it has used its own resources and not the Oil Stabilization Fund.

Empty Call

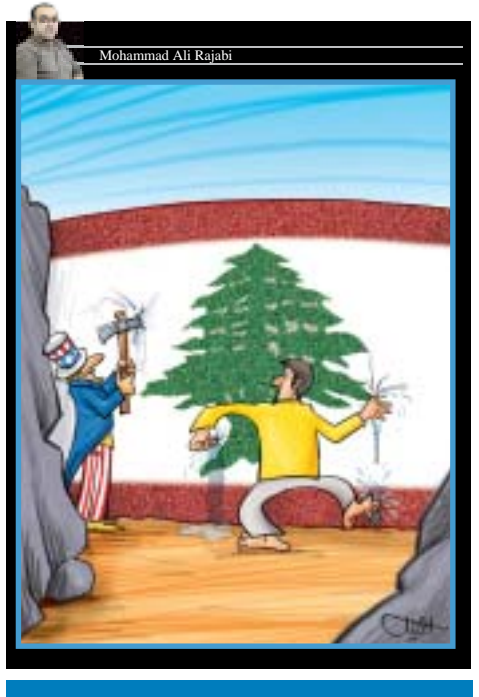
JOMHOURI-YE ESLAMI: Sixty years have elapsed since the establishment of the illegitimate Zionist regime. Palestinians have experienced many hardships in the past several decades despite the anti-Zionist campaign led by the Palestinian religious and political leaders in the occupied territories. Selection of the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as Qods Day by the late Imam Khomeini was welcomed by most Muslim nations, as it raised awareness about the oppressions, deceptions and lies of Zionist leaders. This is while US President George Bush's empty call for Israeli-Palestinian peace has faced criticism, as it's insincere and not expected to give rise to any positive results.

Cooperation

AFARINESH: The mastery of civilian nuclear technology is one of the greatest achievements of Iranian scientists in recent years. The technology is important for providing an alternative source of energy, which Iran lacked in the past several decades. Iranian politicians should realize that any factional dispute over the nuclear issue is against national interest. In other words, all political factions should cooperate for resolving the nuclear impasse.

Good Initiative

MARDOMSALARI: Iran's package of proposals to resolve the nuclear issue is a good initiative of the Iranian foreign policy apparatus. During the past five years, only western countries provided Iran with incentives to make it a pliant state. However, at a time when Group 5+1 provided Iran with a 'refreshed' set of incentives, Tehran also presented its own package of proposals to the world leaders and organizations. However, it seems Britain and the United States are showing no interest in Iran's proposals. Although the US is worried about the positive role of the Islamic Republic in Lebanon and Palestine, it is well known that warmongering American leaders do not want to see Iran as the number one state in the Middle East. The Islamic Republic, therefore, should maintain its nuclear stance and not stop uranium enrichment.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi