

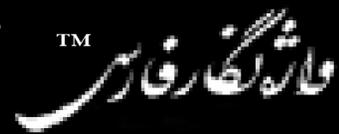


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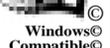
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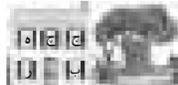
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Iran selected new chairman of FAO committee

TEHRAN - Iran on Tuesday was selected the new chairman of the regional commission on food security for Asia and the Pacific, affiliated to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In the opening ceremony of the 24th meeting of the FAO committee, Iranian Ambassador to FAO Mohammad Saeed Nouri Naemi was appointed the new chairman of the committee for a two-year period.

The chairmanship of the Iranian envoy was approved by over 180 member states of FAO.

The ex-chairman of the committee Medrano from Chile hailed Nouri Naemi's appointment as an excellent choice.

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

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Iranian cultural exhibit in France

TEHRAN - A group of Iran's non-governmental cultural organizations are to set up a cultural-arts exhibit in France called 'Iran Today' on the occasion of the world cup soccer games in France. The organizations, in a joint statement issued here Monday, announced that 'Iran Today' newspaper will also be published during the period. The paper which will be published in Farsi, English and French, will inform the readers of the cultural and sports news in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the statement added. The exhibit aims to introduce the latest cultural developments in Iran to the readers, the Iranians residing abroad in particular, as well as to pave the way for expansion of activities by the Iranian private sector in the field of culture. Folk music and theater arts will be featured in the Iranian cultural exhibit.

Kharrazi arrives in New Delhi:

Iran spares no effort to ease tension in region

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said upon arrival in New Delhi on Tuesday night that Iran is concerned about the future of the region and to this end spares no effort to ease tension in this part of the world.

Kharrazi arrived in New Delhi from Islamabad where he had extensive talks with senior Pakistani officials.

He told reporters that Pakistan's nuclear tests have been assessed as a deterrent factor to the "dangerous nuclear threats of Israel", IRNA reported from New Delhi.

While in Pakistan, Kharrazi conferred with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on a wide range of issues including mutual relations and regional as well as international issues.

In the meeting, the Pakistani premier underlined the need for broadening and deepening of trade relations with between the two countries.

Sharif also called for finalization of projects for laying of oil pipeline and construction of an oil refinery the two sides also exchanged views on the critical situation in Afghanistan and called for immediate

cessation of clashes in that war-torn country.

Nawaz Sharif added that his country is determined to have close cooperation with Iran to resolve the plight of Afghanistan.

The Iranian foreign minister in reply, conveyed a message of good will from Iranian President Mohammad Khatami to the Pakistani premier.

Referring to Iran's determination to have closer relations with Pakistan, Kharrazi said that Tehran is ready to endeavour to put an end to civil war in Afghanistan.

The two sides underlined

the need for having closer cooperation to revive the Afghan peace talks and to accelerate the trend of peace process in that country.

Meanwhile, Kharrazi and the Leader of Jamaat-e Islami Pakistan (JIP) Qazi Hussein Ahmad later on Tuesday reviewed the latest developments in the world of Islam.

Expressing regret over factional violence in Pakistan and its negative impact on peaceful co-existence of Muslims, Kharrazi called for higher solidarity among various Pakistani factions.

Solidarity among Muslims will frustrate the enemies' plots and remove any grounds for conflicts, violence and mischiefs, he added.

The Iranian foreign minister stressed that such solidarity would be to the interests of both Iran and Pakistan as well as of the region and the entire world of Islam.

Underlining the need for solidarity among Pakistani Muslims, Qazi Ahmad expressed hope that agents of terror and conspiracy in Pakistani society will soon be brought to justice.

Critical situation in Afghanistan and issues related to Kashmir and Palestine were also discussed in the meeting.

Kharrazi, heading a high-ranking political-economic delegation, arrived in Islamabad Monday evening.

Italian prime minister due in Tehran

TEHRAN - Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi will soon travel to Iran for a 2-day visit, reported the Farsi daily 'Abrar' Tuesday.

Quoting "informed sources", the paper said the date has not been finalized yet but the trip is tentatively scheduled for June 18, IRNA reported.

The visit to Tehran of Prodi is considered a turning point in Tehran-Rome ties and relations between Iran and the European Union.

The two sides are expected to sign agreements at the end of the visit to boost bilateral trade exchanges and for investments in Iran.

The Italian prime minister is to meet President Mohammad Khatami, Majlis Speaker Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri and head of the Expediency Council Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

He will be accompanied by Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini and a number of Italian businesspeople and industry owners, added Abrar.

The Italian foreign minister visited Iran recently.

Turkmenistan to finalize accord with Iran on gas pipeline

TEHRAN - Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov said he would sign important pacts with President Mohammad Khatami of Iran on oil and gas in his upcoming visit to Tehran by the end of June.

Addressing delegates from 20 Japanese firms, he said Tehran and Ashkhabad are working jointly with the Dutch-British Shell company and the project of piping Turkmen gas to Europe via Iran and Turkey will never stop, IRNA reported from Ashkhabad.

He said he would finalize the agreement on the project in his upcoming visit to Tehran to enable Turkmenistan to export gas to the world markets by the year 2000.

He said Iran has offered to buy 30 billion cubic meters of gas from Turkmen-

stan and his country is studying the Iranian offer.

President Niyazov said Turkmenistan, Iran and Europe would sign an accord soon to carry out different projects ranging from exploration to transit of gas from the region and the Japanese firms are also welcome for investment in the projects.

He said Turkmenistan has plans to build nationwide railway joining the north to the south and invited the Japanese companies to take part in the project.

TEHRAN - Iranian Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs Mehdi Hosseini told IRNA in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday that his ministry is to announce next month oil and gas projects in which foreign com-

panies can invest.

Hosseini, who is in the Malaysian capital to take part at the third seminar on oil and gas in Asia, said many foreign firms, especially from Europe and Asia, have so far applied for investment in the Iranian oil and gas sectors.

Touching on failure of the D'Amato bill, he said the U.S. policy of imposing sanctions on those firms investing in Iranian oil and gas sectors was doomed to failure from the very beginning.

He said that Iranian oil industry is developing more rapidly than ever before.

He expressed hope that cooperation between Iran and all foreign companies would prove fruitful.

He added that the Iranian Oil Ministry would do its best to cooperate with oil companies.

Total of France and Petronas of Malaysia are first major oil firms to make big investment in Iran, said Hosseini, adding that however, Iran is to treat in the best possible manner, other oil companies willing to invest in Iranian oil industry.

Iran supports Intl. efforts to resolve Afghan plight

TEHRAN - Despite the recent decision by the Taliban to withdraw from the inter-Afghan negotiations, Iran believes that the international community should muster a new resolve to tackle the Afghan crisis.

Iran's permanent representative to the U.N. Hadi Nejad Husseinian said in a meeting of the group of 21 on Afghanistan Monday evening that the international community in general and Afghanistan's neighbors in particular had placed high hopes for the latest round of peacemaking efforts in that country, IRNA reported from New York.

Representatives of Taliban and the northern alliance started negotiations in Islamabad recently within the framework of ulema commission. The Taliban, however, withdrew from talks after a few days on the pretext that the northern alliance does not show the necessary cooperation.

"This optimism stemmed

from the fact that the suggestion for the establishment of ulema commission was essentially at Taliban proposal," he said adding, "the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and states with influence in Afghanistan were all encouraged to fully support and invest in this seemingly promising inter-Afghan negotiations."

Nejad-Husseinian added that Iran mobilized its resources and contacts with Afghan parties and concerned states to facilitate the peacemaking efforts of the U.N. and the OIC.

"We are extremely dismayed that the Taliban has decided to withdraw from the negotiations in the context of the ulema commission," he further said.

The Iranian representative stressed that the international interests in the war-torn country should be maintained.

"The international pressures on all Afghan parties

to abandon violence and to opt for a political solution conceived by Afghan parties themselves should be sustained."

Expressing concern over flow of arms into Afghanistan, the Iranian envoy said, "despite the fact that there already exist a huge amount of the type of weapons used in that conflict in Afghanistan, we believe the idea of political commitment to prevent further flow of arms and some other material to Afghanistan deserve serious consideration."

Spain, Iran set to boost bilateral cooperation

TEHRAN - Vice-Speaker of the Spanish Congress of Deputies Enrique Fernandez Miranda said on Tuesday Spain is willing to develop relations with Iran.

In a meeting with Iranian Speaker of Parliament Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, Miranda recommended that the specialized commissions from the two countries' parliaments hold meetings to find ways of carrying out the accords already reached between officials of Iran and Spain, IRNA reported.

Miranda delivered a message from the Spanish speaker of congress to his Iranian counterpart and called for promotion of bilateral relations in political, economic and cultural fields.

Nateq Nouri said the long-standing history and civilization of the two countries require them to have extensive relations.

He said the Islamic Republic of Iran is interested in developing relations with all states on mutual respect.

He said parliamentary cooperation between Iran and Spain would bring government-to-government

cooperation.

Nateq Nouri called for setting up of parliamentary friendship groups and said the friendship groups would help make more contacts between specialized commissions from both parliaments of Iran and Spain.

He appreciated Spain's positive efforts to bring Iran and the European Union closer and accepted an invitation from the speaker of Spanish Congress to visit Spain in an appropriate time.

Meanwhile, Miranda and head of the Environmental Protection Organization (EPO) Masoumeh Ebtekar in a meeting here on Tuesday explored ways of promoting mutual cooperation for environment protection.

Ebtekar outlining the country's natural, manpower and marine resources said that despite enjoying diverse climatic conditions, Iran's environment is vulnerable.

Iran is moving rapidly towards sustainable economic development and growth and the EPO by supporting most efficient laws has taken steps to offer environmental standards to executive bod-

ies and supervise compliance with relevant regulations.

She welcomed further cooperation between Iran and Spain and other countries for protection of environment.

Miranda said that environment protection and related problems are a source of global concern and that's why countries have adopted their own laws.

He said that urban dwellers were suffering from air pollution, disposal of sewage and industrial wastes.

Spain can cooperate with Iran in many fields, including conduction of research on environmental protection technology and ecosystem.

Collective efforts essential to promote exports

TEHRAN - All around efforts by both the private sector and the government is needed to activate an export oriented culture for promoting exports, said Assadollah Asgaroladi, the vice-president of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Mines (ICCIM).

In an interview with 'Tehran Times' published Tuesday, he said "Iran's high quality pistachios are still popular worldwide," and pointed out that the export figures which stood at 20,000 tons in 1978 increased tenfold and were recorded at 200,000 tons in 1996.

"The export of pistachios increased but ironically we did not improve services and facilities to keep pace with rising export trends," he said, blaming the Ministry of Agriculture for it.

Another blow was caused by the European Union which banned or restricted the imports of pistachio nuts from Iran on the pretext that it was contaminated by the use of aflatoxin B1, a toxic highly carcinogenic produced by molds.

The restrictions were nothing however, but a political blackmail, he said.

"This year, we expect a crop of 200,000 tons of pistachios out of which 160,000 tons will be exported to earn valuable foreign exchange, he said.

"Last year, Iran produced 100,000 tons of pistachios out of which 60,000 tons were exported," he pointed out.

Europe tops the list of importers of Iranian nuts followed by Middle Eastern countries, America, Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The customs authorities last month announced that Iran's exports of non-oil goods amounted to Dlr. 3 billion during the last Iranian year which ended on March 20.

"Exports registered a drop of 3.1 percent while imports were 17.5 percent higher as compared with last year. Exports of agricultural products also dropped by 40.7 percent amounting to Dlr. 555 million as a result of last year's drought and EU ban on imports of Iranian pistachios.

"We have to underline the significance of exports of non-oil products in all religious gatherings including Friday prayers and social and cultural seminars," an expert on nation's commercial affairs, Asgaroladi said.

"Training, necessary services and incentives for export may be the most effective means of promoting trade with foreign countries," he said.

Asgaroladi is optimistic about the future of export of dry fruits and said in 10 years time the figures will touch the level of 800,000 tons and in 20 years this may rise to one million tons a year.

He said, "we urge the government to take specific measures for the smooth running of export business."

"Poor management, lack of incentive for capital investment, ambiguous rules and regulations and above all the absence of internationally accepted packing system for export of goods are some issues which must be addressed by both the government and traders," Asgaroladi said.

Cuba to offer sugar in exchange for Iran's oil

TEHRAN - Visiting Cuban minister and president of State Committee of Labor and Social Security Aalvador Valdes Mesa here Tuesday delivered to Iran's President Mohammad Khatami a verbal message from Cuban President Fidel Castro.

The Iranian president told the Cuban minister that the notion of the world becoming a uni-polar world in the wake of the collapse of communism in the former Soviet republics was an erroneous judgment from the outset, IRNA reported. He said a realistic peace is dependent on the nations maintaining good relations amongst themselves with mutual respect to each

other. The Cuban minister intimated the interest of his country to offer sugar to Iran in exchange for the Iranian oil.

Six-year old girl has read 4,000 books

TEHRAN - A six-year old girl from the central city of Qom has read more than 4,000 books in the past two years, the morning daily 'Jomhuri Eslami' reported.

Raziyeh Gholami is able to read books on different subjects and also to give commentaries on their contexts, the daily added, IRNA re-

ported. The brilliant youngster, who has been very much interested in reading various kinds of books since the age of four, on average reads 10 books every day, jomhuri wrote.

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Explosion at Islamic Revolution court

TEHRAN - At least two persons were killed and six others injured when explosives went off at the Islamic Revolution court in northern Tehran Tuesday afternoon, an official at the public relations office of the court said, IRNA reported.

According to the official, the incident took place due to the negligent handling of the explosive device. The explosion happened at 13:45 hours local time (9:15 GMT) due to negligence during the transfer of the explosive, the official said.

The blast shattered many windows at the ground floor of the court building. The injured were immediately taken to hospital after the incident.

Iran, Norway upgrade bilateral trade

TEHRAN - Iran-Norway bilateral trade increased 52 percent in 1997 compared to that of the year before, according to the 1997 Foreign Trade Report published by the Norwegian Statistics Center.

The Foreign Trade Report indicates that total bilateral trade reached 226.5 million kron (Dlr. 30 million) in 1997, which registered a 52 percent increase compared to that of the year before, IRNA reported.

Norway's imports from Iran reached 66.4

million kron (Dlr. 8.8 million) and its exports to Iran stood at 16.1 million kron (Dlr. 21.2 million) in 1997.

In 1996, Norway's exports to Iran was 65.1 million kron and its imports from Iran reached Dlr. 82.5 million.

National soccer team for world cup finalized

TEHRAN - Iran's Football Federation here Tuesday announced the composition of the 22-member team for the world cup games in France.

The announcement was made on behalf of the head coach of the national soccer team, Jalal Talebi.

Ahmad Reza Abedzadeh, Parviz Boroumand, Nima Nakisa, Mohammad Khakpour, Javad Zarinecheh, Mohammad Ali Peyrovani, Ali Akbar Ostad-Assadi, Mehdi Pashazadeh, Na'eem Saadavi, Reza Shahroudi, Nader Mohammadkhani, Hamid Reza Estili, Alireza Man-

sourian, Mehdi Mahdavi-Kia, Sirous Dinmohammadi, Sattar Hamadani, Mehrdad Minavand, Karim Baqeri, Behnam Seraj, Ali Latifi, Khodadad

Azizi and Ali Da'ie are members of the team.

The Iranian players will appear in white shirts in their first match against Yugoslavia on June 14.

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