

EU's candidate for IMF presidency, former French Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn, enjoys Czech support



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Iranian hurdler Leila Ebrahimi hogged the limelight after her victory at the 2007 Asian championship in Jordan



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Gholamhossein Nozari, Oil Ministry's caretaker, is expected to visit Ankara to sign the energy agreement



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Agreement On Nuclear Timetable

TEHRAN, Aug. 22--Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency reached an agreement on a timetable to respond to questions over Tehran's civilian nuclear program, a move hailed as a "milestone" by a senior IAEA official.

Action Plan in 60 Days

The agreement was announced at the end of two days of talks in Tehran between senior officials from the IAEA and Iranian nuclear negotiators.

"We have in front of us an agreed work plan. We agreed on modalities on how to implement it. We have a timeline for the implementation," IAEA Deputy Director Olli Heinonen said after the negotiations, which he described as "good and constructive".

"I think this was an important milestone," he told a press conference. "But this process will take its time." Iran agreed in June to draw up an action plan within 60 days to grant more access to its nuclear sites for inspectors of the Vienna-based IAEA and clear up longstanding agency questions about the nature and scope of the program. Heinonen said work would start swiftly on implementing Tuesday's agreement, with activities later this month as well as in September and October.

Details of the deal would be included in a report for the IAEA board by early September.

Senior Iranian nuclear negotiator, Javad Vaeedi, also said the two sides agreed on a framework to resolve the outstanding issues over Tehran's nuclear activities.

"The talks produced very great and constructive progress," he said, adding that Iran is serious about implementing the agreement.

Iran and the IAEA previously met in July and earlier this month. After the July talks, Tehran allowed UN inspectors to revisit the Arak heavy-water reactor, which is under construction. Tehran had cut off access in April in protest at UN sanctions.

American Claims Dismissed

TEHRAN, Aug. 22--Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the secretary of the Swiss Embassy in Tehran on Wednesday to voice its disapproval of the provocative remarks made by a US commander in Iraq.

The ministry issued the US with a letter of protest, via the embassy.

A top US general on Sunday charged that around 50 members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards are inside Iraq and training Shiite extremists to launch attacks on US and Iraqi security forces, IRNA reported.

Major General Rick Lynch, commander of US forces in central Iraq, said that members of the Quds Force have set up base in Babel, Karbala and Najaf provinces and the southern outskirts of the capital.

Iran expressed its sharp criticism over the baseless allegations made by General Lynch and rejected his statements, said the letter.

Tehran considers the remarks as unwise and a machination, and considers them against the ongoing interaction between Iran and Iraq, said the letter, urging the US to clarify these remarks.

The Swiss Embassy in Tehran liaises between Iran and the US, since the two cut political ties in 1980.

Meanwhile, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larjani, also reacted to the rumors on Monday.

"If there are 50 members of the Quds force in Iraq, give the names of five of them," he said.

"Some people say arms marked with 'Made in Iran' have entered Iraq from Iran. It is obvious that these statements are wrong," he said.



IAEA deputy Director Olli Heinonen (l) talks to reporters during a joint press conference with Iran's deputy nuclear negotiator Javad Vaeedi, in Tehran.

President: Caspian Region Should Embody Peace

BAKU, Azerbaijan, Aug. 22--President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Wednesday the Caspian Sea should remain the sea of peace and amity.

Speaking to reporters, the president said all littoral states "should benefit from its potentials and resources".

The president arrived in Baku on Tuesday for a two-day visit at the official invitation of his Azeri counterpart Ilham Aliyev, IRNA reported.

Ahmadinejad referred to the Caspian Sea as "an opportunity to cement bilateral relations among its littoral states".

Noting that cooperation among the Caspian Sea littoral states will benefit all regional countries and other nations, he said, "There is no fundamental problem on promoting ties among the Caspian Sea littoral states and their proper and fair use of the sea's resources."

Ahmadinejad expressed hope that the active participation of the sea's littoral states in the upcoming summit would lead to appropriate decisions.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the five countries bordering the oil- and gas-rich Caspian Sea will hold a summit in Tehran in October.

According to AP, the division of the sea's riches has been disputed for years. Iran insists that each of the five states be allotted an equal portion of the seabed, while most of the other countries

want it divided proportionately based on the length of their shorelines.

"The leaders of the other four states--Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan--have agreed to the Oct. 16 summit," Ahmadinejad said.

This was the first official visit to Azerbaijan of President Ahmadinejad since he took office in 2005.

Ahmadinejad returned to Tehran on Wednesday.

CIA Reports on 9/11 Faults

WASHINGTON, Aug. 22--Former CIA Chief George Tenet failed to follow through on his 1998 declaration of war against Al-Qaeda and the agency diverted counterterrorism money for other uses in the years before the September 11 attacks, according to an agency report released on Tuesday.

A summary of the 2005 report by the CIA inspector general was declassified under protest by agency Director Michael Hayden in response to a law passed by Congress earlier this month, Reuters reported.

The report said top CIA officers "did not discharge their responsibilities in a satisfactory manner" and it described a "systemic breakdown" in a watch list for tracking terrorism suspects who seek to enter the United States.

"It's really pointing the finger at the CIA's executives," including Tenet, said Barbara Elias of the National Security Archive, which collects and publishes declassified documents.

The report recommended that the agency consider disciplining Tenet and other officials. But Hayden rejected that recommendation, endorsing a 2005 decision by his predecessor as CIA chief, Porter Goss.

"There was never a question of misconduct," Hayden said.

Although the officials had been unable despite their best efforts to prevent the September 11, 2001, attacks, "they have prevented other acts of terrorism, and they have saved innocent lives, in our country and overseas," he said on the CIA Web site.

Tenet, who was awarded the country's highest civil-

ian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, by President George W. Bush in 2004, called the report's findings "flat wrong".

The report said that in



The logo of the Central Intelligence Agency is seen in the lobby of the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

December 1998 Tenet signed a declaration saying "we are at war" and he directed that "no resources or people" be spared to contain Al-Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden.

The declaration was issued four months after Al-Qaeda-linked bombings in US embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

However, the report

said, the CIA focused too narrowly on tactics and never developed a broad strategy against Al-Qaeda before the September 11 attacks. Tenet, it said, "bears ultimate responsibility for the fact that no such strategic plan was ever created."

Tenet and others persuaded Congress to increase counterterrorism spending, but officials were not effectively using the money they had, the report said.

Political analysts believe that disclosing CIA failure in 9/11 is aimed at whitewashing the negligence of American officials over past six years.

The details of terrorist attacks of 9/11 have not been precisely clarified since 2001.

In fact, the US government is trying to evade answering the question: "Who is really to blame for 9/11 tragic event?"

CBI Governor Resigns

TEHRAN, Aug. 22--Central Bank of Iran Governor Ebrahim Sheibani has resigned, informed sources reported.

Sheibani reportedly submitted his resignation to Economy Minister Davoud Danesh-Jafari, Mehr News Agency reported.

Sheibani is the seventh cabinet member to have resigned in the past two years.

First Vice President Parviz Davoudi, Managing Director of Iran's Export Development Bank Tahmasb Mazaheri and Managing Director of Bank Mellat of Iran Ali Divandari are speculated to replace Sheibani.

Sheibani will be appointed as Iran's representative to the World Bank after he officially leaves CBI.

Masoud Mazini is the current Iranian representative in the Washington-based World Bank since 2001 and a senior advisor to one of its executive managers. He formerly served as deputy CBI chief for foreign currency affairs.



Ebrahim Sheibani

Hezbollah Victory:

Decisive, Strategic Muslims Want Mideast Without Colonial Powers

TEHRAN, Aug. 22--A roundtable themed "Middle East One Year After Lebanon's 33-Day War" was held at Tehran's Institute for Political and International Studies on Tuesday.

Deputy secretary-general of Lebanon's Hezbollah, Sheikh Naim Qasem, in talks with Iran Daily, described the victory of Lebanese people and Hezbollah resistance movement against Zionists as decisive and strategic.

"Hezbollah's victory against Zionists is not temporary, but it is strategic for the Middle East," he said.

Sheikh Qasem pointed out that the victory has paved the way for Hezbollah's greater achievements in future.

He further said Hezbollah's victory paved the way for the emergence of a new political current in the Muslim world.

"Arab and Muslim countries can achieve independence by becoming powerful and by paying attention to spiritual capabilities," he said.

The official noted that Lebanon's Hezbollah is an Islamic resistance movement based on faith in Islam and teachings of the Infallible Household of Prophet Muhammad (PBUIH).

"Hezbollah's relations with Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria and Palestine show the extent of political solidarity among these countries. Hezbollah takes pride in such relations," he said.

Sheikh Qasem also said Hezbollah's victory resulted in the US failure in implementing the so-called Middle East peace plan.

"Israel was forced to reconsider its calculations vis-à-vis Hezbollah and the Palestinian groups, because it realized that mere military force is not effective," he said.

Sheikh Qasem further said Hezbollah believes in the continued resistance against the occupying regime of Quds.

"Hence, Hezbollah is trying to increase its popularity and attract the attention of international community," he said.

Head of Lebanon's Popular Relations Committee, Maan Bashur, also said Hezbollah's victory against Israel showed that the Muslim world wants a Middle East without any colonial powers.

Bashur described Hezbollah's victory as an earthquake that shook Israel.

Maliki Rejects US Criticism

DAMASCUS, Syria, Aug. 22--Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki, on a visit to Syria, rejected US criticism of his government on Wednesday and said only the Iraqi people could decide its fate.

"The Iraqi government emanates from the Iraqi people and only this people is empowered to decide its fate," he told a news conference as he wound up a three-day visit to Washington's arch-foe, AFP reported.

Maliki has come under growing American criticism over his government's alleged failure to make progress on reconciliation in securing stability.

"No one has the authority to impose a timetable to the Iraqi government," he told journalists at the news conference with his Syrian counterpart, Mohammed Naji Otri.

He accused US politicians or leaders of making "irresponsible statements and criticisms...which lack courtesy."

Referring to Washington's frosty relations with Damascus, Maliki said, "These criticisms could also reflect the fact that certain people in the US are embarrassed by my visit to Syria."

He added: "What matters for us is the Iraqi people's confidence in this government and in the democratic experience begun in the country."

US President George W. Bush, with more than 155,000 troops in Iraq and a death toll of 3,719 since the March 2003 invasion, is also under growing pressure over an increasingly unpopular war.

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