

NEWS ON IRAN

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DOMESTIC

Suppressive Maneuvers

Agence France Presse, Aug. 8, Tehran - Several thousand Iranian *Bassij* members staged maneuvers in a number of regions in west and southwestern Tehran, the press reported.

The area was the site of the rebellions in early April which left several people dead and dozens wounded, particularly in Shahriar and Robat Karim. More violent riots took place in Akbarabad and Islamshahr, two townships housing the working class families in Robat Karim.

According to the press, the maneuvers were to put up a show of readiness of the paramilitary forces to maintain "order and security." The paramilitary troops taking part in these exercises are part of the *Ashura* brigades formed in 1993 after a series of riots erupted in several cities.

IRTV, state-run television network, Aug. 10, Tehran - Tehran's provincial governor demanded a halt to the random constructions in Islamshahr. Speaking in the meeting of Islamshahr's management council, Seyedzadeh said: The facilities in this small township of one million people are not sufficient and the governorship must act to prevent unlicensed constructions and stop the population growth.

Agence France Presse, Aug. 13, Tehran - *Kayhan* reported that the "special units" of the Revolutionary Guards arrested 65 "vagrants and insurgents" in the poor neighborhoods of South Tehran.

Agence France Presse, Aug. 13, Tehran - 85 persons were arrested on the charge of illegal sale of foreign currency and gold coins.

Qazvin, Aug. 11 - The regime's suppressive forces ambushed the Park *Mellat* in Qazvin (west of Tehran) to arrest an addict. A young girl was shot dead in the ensuing shootings.

Kayhan, Aug. 12 - Movaheddi Savoji, the legislative branch's representative in the Article 10 Commission announced: "Political groups' activities are possible only if they are loyal to and comply with the Constitution of the Islamic Republic." The Freedom Movement is not allowed to have political activities because of having violated the Constitution in the past, he reiterated.

Workers' Strike in Isfahan's Simeen Factory

Over 1,600 workers at Isfahan's Simeen textile factory (in central Iran) went on strike on Thursday, August 10, to

protest non-distribution of the factory profits among workers.

Shootings occurred in the ensuing clashes with the regime's Guards. Workers' persistence in their protest, however, forced the regime's officials to remove Sabri, the managing director, and promise to revise the factory's plans on distribution of profits, before they ended their sit-in.

Isfahan's Simeen textile factory, one of the biggest production units in the province, was the scene last December of a six-day workers' strike in demand of payment of their salaries. The textile factory is affiliated with the *Mostaz'afin* Foundation.

Gilan's Asalam Lumber Factory on Strike

Mojahedin Press Office, Paris, Aug. 8 - According to reports from Iran, Asalam Lumber Factory workers staged a sit-in and went on strike last week to protest four months postponement of their monthly pay. The factory is located in Khalifeh-abad, in the Gilan Province's Hashtpar, northern Iran.

Workers went out of the factory and blocked Anzali-Hashtpar road for several hours and stopped the traffic, after their latest discussions with the factory management did not bear any results and they were disappointed from any official action. The sit-in ended when workers were given two months of their postponed payments.

This is the fourth time since March, the workers in this factory go on strike in demand of their salaries.

Isfahan, Aug. 10 - Unfair distribution of profits at Isfahan's Steel Mill factory has led to a slow-down by discontented workers.

Ettela'at, state-run Tehran-based daily, Aug. 1 - Fifty-one accidents took place in the work environments in the past 15 days. According to the report of the Ministry of Labor and Social Work, the victims died in 10 of these incidents. Another 8 lost their limbs or were burnt and injured.

Extradition of Refugees

Radio France International (RFI), Aug. 11 - The number has reached 120 of the Iranian refugees staging a sit-in Ankara to protest government policies and difficult requirements by the High Commissioner of Refugees in Turkey. The sit-in began 8 days before.

Iran-Iraq Normalization

BAGHDAD, Aug. 8 (Reuter) - Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Tuesday marked the end of the 1980-88 Iraq-

Iran war by criticising his neighbour for holding Iraqi prisoners of war, keeping Iraqi planes and snubbing Baghdad's peace overtures.

The anniversary address by Saddam was broadcast live and included some of the harshest language against Tehran since a U.N.-brokered ceasefire ended fighting that killed more than a million people on both sides.

"During contacts with us, we have told the Iranians who mistakenly believed that the conditions of the embargo could force us into accepting a compromise...we told them this is impossible," Saddam said.

Saddam demanded that Iran free prisoners of war who he said were still "wantonly suffering and moaning in Iranian prisons under unprecedented injustice not allowed by Islam or earthly laws in their simplest sense."

According to International Red Cross records, more than 13,000 Iraqi war prisoners have not been repatriated. Iraq says the number exceeds 20,000.

Saddam asked Tehran to return civil and military aircraft which flew to Iran at the start of the 1991 Gulf War to escape bombing by the U.S.-led multinational force that expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

Iraq says it flew to Iran 22 Soviet-built Ilyushin 76 transports and five Boeing airliners in addition to more than 100 military aircraft. Iran has rebuffed all previous Iraqi demands for the return of the planes.

Saddam charged that since the start of the Iraq-Iran war, Tehran had snubbed 215 peace calls from Iraq.

Help Us Instead of Bosnia

Salam, Aug. 8, Letters to the Editor - "All the economic disasters afflicting our nation are brought upon us by the Central Bank, not the U.S., not anyone else... Why do the officials fabricate so much hollow talk to cover up their own mistakes?"

"Our government helps African countries or countries like Afghanistan, Bosnia, etc., presenting them with free services and financial loans. This is while in our own country, a white-collar worker cannot afford to be absent from work for even one day, otherwise he will starve."

Salam, Aug. 12 - It seems that as Majlis elections approach, the right wing is working hard to monopolize the power. Despite their unforgettable opposition in the past to the coupon-system, now they have deemed it necessary to defend it... These gentlemen think the nation has forgotten their elaborate boasts about economic balance, market economy, etc. in opposition to the coupon system...

FEATURE

Agence France Presse, Aug. 12 - Tehran radio announced on Saturday the resignation of Massoud Roghani-Zanjani, deputy to the President and head of the Planning and Budget Organization...

Roghani-Zanjani's resignation, brought up in the political circles several times in recent weeks, is said to be a *coup de grace* to the economic liberalization which began in 1990.

Several months ago, the government decided to change its course and return to state-controlled economy to encounter its acute financial crisis. The free market for foreign exchange was eliminated in May, and a close control imposed on any investments in Iran....

The return to a coupon system for the basic staples is another indication of shifting from a free market to a state-run bazaar. Since several days ago, hundreds of thousands of Iranians have lined up in queues in front of the banks where coupons are distributed for rice and cooking oil.

After hitting a record low, suddenly on Saturday, the price of dollar rose in the black market, reaching 3,600 rials on Monday morning and 4,000 to 4,100 by noon.

According to many experts, the rise in the price of dollar is due to "exporters and merchants' high demand for foreign currency." The official dollar exchange rate in the Melli (National) Bank stands at 3,000 rials.

The daily *Iran News* wrote that the reappearance of the free market shows there is a high demand for foreign exchange and that the Central Bank is not able to provide enough.

The government's increased control over the foreign exchange market is seriously affecting non-oil exports and particularly carpets. From now on, exporters have to return 100% of their foreign currency at the official exchange rate.

The government had in April designated fixed prices for some local industrial products, and decided to reinforce its efforts to counter trafficking. Officials have created an economic police force which is in charge of inspection of the warehouses to prevent any form of illegal storage of consumer goods. Some 320 teams of "Bassij" are in charge of "guarding" the Bazaar.

Since two years ago, Iran is engulfed in an acute treasury crisis which has led to 35 billion dollars in short and mid-term debts.