

NEWS ON IRAN

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DOMESTIC

Rajavi: Boycott second round of elections

NCR Secretariat, Apr. 15 - In a message to the people of Iran, NCR President Massoud Rajavi, expressed confidence that the Iranian people will boycott the second round of the election farce even on a wider scale.

Less than 10% of the eligible voters actually voted in the March 8 theatrics. Despite rigging the vote in favor of Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, the Majlis speaker and the top candidate from Tehran, the mullahs could not announce more than 890,000 votes, or the vote of only 14% of Tehran's electorate, for him.

But the mullahs cannot even accept the outcome of this sham election. So far, the Council of Guardians has canceled results from six cities, where candidates other than those supporting the ruling faction were elected. Results in a number of other cities are also left in limbo.

The NCR President said: If the mullahs are true to their words and do not fear the Iranian people's genuine vote and choice, they should display no opposition to holding free elections under the auspices of the United Nations and other competent international bodies. In that case, the vast majority of the Iranian people will doubtless be inclined to vote for the democratic alternative, the NCR, and its President-elect, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi.

23 arrested for electoral violations

Tehran radio, Apr, 15 - The Judiciary announced the arrest of 23 people for misusing public resources in their election campaign. A number of them were sentenced to lashing, jail and fines for posting election posters on other candidates' posters or on government bill boards.

Youngster murdered at birthday party

AFP, Apr. 12 - Eyewitnesses said plain-clothed and uniformed police raided an apartment in west Tehran where a party was being held, and assaulted the hosts and their guests.

The police dragged Alireza Farzaneh-far, who was celebrating his 23rd birthday, to the balcony on the 18th floor and began beating him. He suddenly fell off the balcony to his death. The police fled the scene and the victim's body remained on the ground for two hours.

UN urged to condemn the murder

NCR Secretariat, Apr. 11 - The committing of such atrocities against the defenseless people on a daily basis in Iran is the other side of coin of the regime's assassination of Iranian dissidents abroad and its

jubilation over the massacre of innocent civilians in terrorist explosions.

The NCR draws the attention of international human rights bodies, especially the UN Commission on Human Rights, to the mullahs' barbaric crime last night and calls for the condemnation of this shocking murder and attacks by the regime's suppressive agents on helpless citizens.

Brick factory workers stage strike

Iran Zamin, Apr. 15 - On April 8 and 9, workers at Isfahan's Aali brick factory converged on the city's governor's office and staged a strike for the second time in the last four months. The action was in protest to the non-payment of their wages in the last six months.

Previously, the factory's workers had gone on strike on November 29, because they were not paid their salaries and bonuses. Aali factory is two billion rials in debt and unable to pay the workers' wages.

Taxi drivers strike over price hikes

Iran Zamin, Apr. 15 - In Makou, northwestern Iran, taxi drivers went on strike for the second time in the last few days to protest the rise in petroleum products and low taxi fares. The drivers had stopped working on April 7. Since their demands, including an increase in fares, were not met, they again went on strike on April 9.

Truckers protest high prices

Iran Zamin, Apr. 15 - Reports say that since March 20, truckers in the central city of Isfahan have staged a strike in protest to the rise in the prices of gasoline and motor oil. They are refusing to load their trucks at the city's Amir-Kabir loading terminal.

Truckers are demanding that the truckers' union specify new rates for carrying cargo because the current rates are insufficient to cover their costs. Some time ago, prices for truck tires had gone up as well.

Shoemakers strike to protest crackdown

Iran Zamin, Apr. 15 - Shopowners in Isfahan's Naqsh-e Jahan shoemakers' bazaar staged a general strike on April 3 to protest the closure of a number of shoe stores by the Government Punishment Organization. The move was to also show solidarity with shoemakers whose stores had been shut down.

To thwart the spread of the strike elsewhere, the mullahs' regime agreed to lift the ban on the shoe stores that were closed down.

Prices continue to spiral

Reuters, Apr. 9 - Price rises are common topics of complaint in Iran and the government has come under

attack in the press and the parliament for not doing enough to fight inflation, officially put at 60 percent.

Potatoes, tomatoes and onions have doubled or tripled in price, prompting a newspaper to print a cartoon showing the vegetables alongside fancy pastries and fruit on a stylishly- decorated table.

"I try not to look at prices when I pass in front of a vegetable shop," said a middle-aged state employee. "Life is getting harder and harder every day."

The oil ministry increased the price of petrol to 130 rials a liter from 100 rials. Kerosene and diesel went up to 30 rials a liter from 20 rials, while fuel oil rose five rials to 15 rials.

The largest price increase was reserved for motor oil which raised to 800 rials from the previous 225 rials.

Residents and press reports said the rises have led taxi-drivers to demand fares up to 100 percent higher.

Other increases included a 15 percent rise in postal charges, 11 percent higher phone rates and a doubling by the flag carrier Iran Air of ticket prices for domestic flights.

Water shortage plague the south

Salaam, Apr. 7 - Residents of 20 villages in Tangestan, southern Iran, with a total population of 20,000, are facing water-shortages. They have access to running water only two hours in every 48 hours. The locals are demanding that their water network be connected to the southern province of Bushehr.

Girl children abducted

Iran Zamin, Apr. 15 - On April 1, unknown persons abducted a nine-year-old girl, Jiran Zamani, as she was playing outside her home in Khorramabad, western Iran. She was one of several children kidnapped in the city in recent weeks, causing panic and fear among parents. Reportedly, the children are abducted by a kidney-smuggling ring which take out the girl's kidneys and sell them.

Government Corruption

Jomhuri Islami, Apr. 10 - Thirty high ranking officials in the state rail road company were arrested for embezzlement of billions of rials. So far, sentenced for 13 of them have been issued and the cases of others is being pursued.

Friday prayer leader attacked

Iran Zamin, Apr. 15 - On April 7, unknown assailants opened fire on Friday prayer leader of Iranshahr, southern Iran. He escaped unharmed but his two bodyguards were killed. The regime has brought reinforcements from nearby cities.

FOREIGN

Turkey expels four Iran diplomats

Reuters, Apr. 11 - Four Iranian diplomats accused by Turkey of involvement in the killing of secular figures

and ordered withdrawn by Ankara said on Thursday they were preparing to go home.

Relations were damaged last month when Turkish police said that a Turkish Islamist hitman, who confessed to killing two Iranian dissidents in Turkey in 1992, had received training in Iran. Iran denied the accusation.

Turkish foreign ministry assistant undersecretary Ali Tuygan returned to Ankara on Thursday after a three-day visit to Tehran, where he went to question Iranian authorities on the hitman claims and ask for the four diplomats to be withdrawn.

Deal may give mullahs the bomb

AP, Apr. 15 - A deal with Tehran to complete a nuclear power plant could give Iran technology to build an atomic bomb and poses a threat to Russia's security, a top Russian environmentalist said Monday...

Alexei Yablokov, a top environmental adviser to President Boris Yeltsin, warned that the deal endangers Russia's security by providing a country only 200 miles from its border with nuclear technology that could be used to manufacture an atomic weapon.

"It is strange that Iran, a nation with huge stocks of oil and gas, has decided to build such a dangerous facility as a nuclear power plant," Yablokov told the Interfax news agency.

"If Iran has nuclear specialists, it will make great progress toward the creation of its own nuclear armaments," he said. "One can make a primitive nuclear charge without a colossal nuclear industry."

FEATURE

"*You can't keep the sun from shining,*" wrote a traveler's as he passed through several Iranian cities. We chose some excerpts for this week's feature.

Driving from the northeast to northern Iran, from Neishabour to Mashad to Babol and Amol, one finds that the highway patrol has turned the checkpoints into a lucrative business. "I see that you were not wearing your seat belt," one of the guards told us. "Do you want to give us your new year's gift or to the government?" he asked. We offered 2,000 rials (\$1.15), and they let us go.

We reached Shahrood. To our shock, prices had spiraled. A kilo of onions, potatoes, vegetables, oranges and tomatoes sold for 2,000; 2,000; 1,000; 2,500; and 3,000 rials respectively.

At the city's fruit market, an old man offering his oranges for 500 rials. A young woman, in her late 20s, was begging to buy two kilos of oranges on credit. "1,000 rials is peanuts, and I am poor," the old man cried out. "How do you expect me to give you the oranges for a simple promise that you will pay later?" "Oh, God, what can I do with so many destitute people?" he said before giving the woman the oranges.

"Hey old man, what's going on?" we asked. "How do people manage?" "You will move on, but the people

here have to endure with the pain of being poor for ever," he sighed. Didn't you see? They can't manage. I had to give that woman the oranges to save her face before her children."

In Mashad, we saw a virtual martial law. At every intersection, guards, wearing camouflaged uniforms and touting Uzi sub-machineguns, sat in jeeps from the special units of the State Security Forces, keeping watch.

At Imam Reza's Shrine you could see plain-clothed and uniformed police and surveillance cameras everywhere.

Inside, by the Imam's holy tomb, the outcries of the worshipers, many in their twenties and early thirties, was astounding. "My beloved Imam Reza, you tell me what to do. To whom should I speak of my problems? Are you listening, Imam? My family is poor. I have two older sisters who are at age of marriage. My father has died, I cannot find a job. All the doors seem

closed. I cannot even afford to buy bread. Please help me," one young man moaned.

Around 6:30 A.M., I looked up at the shrine's magnificent golden dome. To my surprise, a bunch of crows were attacking the pigeons who for hundreds of years have made it a home here. It was indeed symbolic of our time under the reign of the mullahs. "How much longer can the crows prevent the pigeons from descending on the dome?" one asked. "Don't you worry," replied another. "The sun will finally rise from the East and the crows will escape." How correct he was! As the warm spring sun began to shine on the beautiful golden dome, the crows flew away. It was truly a magnificent scene. For many onlookers it was a good omen, a hint that the dark reign of the mullahs will finally come to an end and the sun will begin to shine on our beloved country.