

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15

## Iran still to decide on nuclear deal

A senior aide of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Saturday that Iran has not made any final decision on the exchange of nuclear fuel for Tehran reactor.

To advisor Mujtaba Samareh Hashemi told IRNA that Iran is evaluating West's sincerity and commitment in the deal.

## FM Mottaki invites Egyptian counterpart

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki invited his Egyptian counterpart Ahmed About Gheit for a visit to Tehran, in a meeting with Egypt's Interest Section in Tehran with Alaeddin Hassan Yousef. Egypt holds the current presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement.

## General backs

### Ahmadinejad's Metro decision

General Mohammad Rouyanian, the head of Iran's Traffic Police, has thrown his weight behind President Ahmadinejad's decision to take Tehran's Metro Company off Tehran's Municipality and under his own control, reported Farsi daily Iran.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16

## Mottaki in India

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki arrived in New Delhi on Monday and held talks with Indian PM Manmohan Singh and Foreign Minister S.M. Krishna, regarding the stalled trans-national gas pipeline and a possible Indian prime ministerial visit to Iran.

Mottaki has said the "door is open" for India to rejoin the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline but indicated that Iran could not wait indefinitely and the structure of the project could change in the future, Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

## Iran nuclear plant delayed, says Russia

The Russian Energy Minister, Sergei Shmatko, said on Monday that due to "technical issues" the Russian-built Bushehr nuclear power plant in southern Iran would not come online at the end of the year as planned.

Although Iran did not offer an immediate response, but some MPs expressed their concern.

On Tuesday Russian Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov said there was no connection between this delay and the ongoing dispute over Iran's nuclear program. Lavrov said the delay is purely based on technical reasons.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17

## Five sentenced to death

Iranian television reported Tuesday that five people had been sentenced to death over the unrest that followed the June presidential election. A statement by the Justice Department said the five sentenced to death were members of "terrorist and armed opposition group," the state television reported, adding that these verdicts can be appealed.

The statement said courts have sentenced a total of 89 defendants since the process began in August and 81 of them got prison terms ranging from six months up to 15 years. Three others were acquitted.

Last month the Iranian-American academic Kian Tajbakhsh was sentenced to 12 years in prison for his alleged role in anti-government protests. At the same time the Canadian-Iranian Maziar Bahar, a Newsweek journalist was allowed to leave the country.

## Soltanieh: Iran's nuclear plant peaceful

Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's IAEA ambassador, said Tuesday that the IAEA's Monday report about the Fordo nuclear plant proved the country's program was peaceful and that Iran was cooperating with the agency's inspectors.

"In the report it is clearly said that no centrifuge machine has been installed in the site and no nuclear fissile has been used there," he said, describing the report as repeating previous IAEA assertions that Iran's nuclear activities were for peaceful purposes.

## Judiciary will decide fate of U.S. hikers

Tehran's Chief Public Prosecutor, Abbas Jafari Dolatabadi, said on Tuesday that Iran's judiciary will make the final decision regarding the three Americans who strayed into Iran from northern Iraq at the end of July.

## No verdict on French TA's trial

The French teaching assistant who was arrested in Tehran on spying charges after the presidential election, appeared before a judge on Tuesday, Reuters quoted a French Foreign Ministry spokesman.

Clotilde Reiss, who is out of jail on bail and staying at the French embassy in Tehran, is accused of taking part in a Western plot to destabilize the Iranian government after the June 12 vote.

# Political factions wrangle over Tehran Metro



*Tehran Times Political Desk*

**TEHRAN** — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced his intention to take control of Tehran's metro system causing anger among his political opponents, including Tehran Mayor Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and son of Expediency Council Chairman Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Mohsen Hashemi, who heads the Tehran Metro.

In a televised interview on Wednesday, Nov. 11, while criticizing the state of the traffic jams in the capital, President Ahmadinejad said that his administration plans to take over the control of the Tehran Urban and Suburban Metro Co. from the Tehran municipality.

The latest figures released by the Tehran municipality show citizens of the Iranian capital waste about 20 million hours in traffic jams every day.

The report found Tehran had the worst traffic situation in the entire country and that a rush-hour driver in the capital spends more than 1.5 hours in slow or stopped traffic every day. Over one million people are transported daily by the Middle East's largest underground railways network.

The running of the Tehran Urban and Suburban Metro Co., which carries more than one million passengers every day, was handed over to the Tehran municipality in 2001. But last week, on a live television show focusing on issues within Tehran, President Ahmadinejad said he had decided to return the running of the metro to the central government.

The president, who was the mayor of Tehran from 2003 to 2005, said he would personally appoint the head of the metro company.

### Opponents

Persian daily the Tehran Emrooz, close to Qalibaf, has criticized President Ahmadinejad's plans to takeover the metro. On Saturday the daily said the President's announcement is a deviation from

Article 44 of the constitution, which calls for privatization.

On Saturday's issue the Tehran Emrooz quoted the City Council Chairman, Mehdi Chamran saying the Tehran Metro will be better managed outside the central government's administration. Chamran says he believes the government should encourage privatization of the network by financing the private sector.

Jafar Rabii, managing director of Tehran Metro Operation Company, a subsidiary of Tehran Metro, attributed the metro delays to technical problems, over crowdedness in the subway stations, and shortage of trains, "but the most important problem is the budget allocated towards the system."

Mehrdad Lahooti, an MP member of the Majlis Construction Committee said based on Article 136-7 of the third and fourth economic development plan, the administration should hand over government institutions to the municipalities where possible.

Ali Asghar Yousefnejad, an MP member of Urban Management Faction of Majlis, says the administration has defaulted on providing the needed budget for the Tehran Metro, thereby creating the main problem. This issue has been politicized and the Tehran residents are the victims of this debate, he said.

On November 15 the City Council of Tehran vetoed the president's plan, but the government still has the option of offering a bill to the parliament, which, if approved, would give President Ahmadinejad full control over the subway network.

The capital's metro network is headed by Mohsen Hashemi, the eldest son of the influential politician Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. The government has accused Rafsanjani and his two politically active children, Faezeh and Mehdi, of supporting Mir Hussein Mousavi during the presidential election.

(Contd. on P.15)

# Contrast in U.S.-China relations

By Salman Ansari Javid

China is U.S.'s second largest trading partner and the largest holder of U.S. foreign debt. So a visit to China during the U.S. President Barack H. Obama's Asia tour was inevitable. During Obama's China tour, Nov. 15-18, he met President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao.

What makes this trip in contrast with other

U.S. presidential visits is China's newly gained global stature which coincides with the failure of U.S. institutions, due to which the whole concept of American-style capitalism is under debate. With major institutions in the U.S. filing for bankruptcies and seeking government bail out, the usual appeal by Washington for China to move towards open market policies is pointless.

A common topic between the two nations is the currency rift. On Tuesday, after Obama met Hu, he praised China's commitment to "move toward a more market-oriented exchange rate over time." Just hours later China's Deputy Foreign Minister, He Yafei called a news conference to issue a denial.

He Yafei said that it was too soon since the worldwide financial crisis to talk about change of strategy. Regarding West's usual demand to allow yuan to appreciate, he argued that a "stable yuan during the financial crisis not only helped the global economy but also the stability of the world's financial markets."

There was also concern in China over the U.S. deficit, which was declared to exceed more than 12 trillion dollars for the first time in history last Tuesday. Three quarter of China's \$2.27 trillion of foreign currency reserves is held in dollar denominated securities and it is seen as the major financier of American budget deficits.

So it is not surprising if China is concerned about the newly proposed universal health care scheme in U.S. and its impact on the budget deficit.



President Obama and his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao, reach out to shake hands after their news conference in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. The two leaders read 15-minute statements but, unusually, took no questions on November 17, 2009.

(AP/Ing Han Guan)

Another contrast is the usual human rights' lecture by the U.S. administrations in the past. Dalai Lama was in Washington in October and Obama became the first president not to meet him.

The Chinese deputy foreign minister also turned down Obama's call for greater internet freedom, saying that "we need to ensure that online communication do not affect our

national security."

### Iran sanctions

Obama has set the deadline for resolving the disputed Iran's nuclear program until the end of 2009. With the deadline approaching fast, Obama wants to pressure Russia and China to support tougher sanctions on Iran. Both the countries have resisted such calls in the past.

During Obama's Asia trip he met leaders from both countries.

He met Russian President, Dmitri A. Medvedev on Nov. 15 on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Singapore. Following this meeting Medvedev has not indicated any shift in Russian position over tougher Iran sanctions. However, he did accuse the Iranian government of intransigence.

Obama met with Hu last Tuesday in Beijing and was unable to persuade China to budge on its opposition to tougher sanctions on Iran. During the news conference at the Great Hall of the People, where the presidents each read 15-minute statements outlining the highlights of their meeting, Hu did not make any mention of sanctions against Iran.

Obama headed for South Korea on Wednesday. Before his departure the White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs told a reporter who suggested Obama's reception was chilly "I did not expect... that the waters would part and everything would change in the course of our almost 2 1/2-day trip to China."



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18

## 14 new H1N1 victims, death toll reaches 100

Swine flu has claimed the lives of 14 students in Iran, bringing the country's total death rate from the disease to 100, MP Ali Karimi Pirouzjahi said here on Wednesday.

A total of 14 school students and three university students have lost their lives due to the disease since it emerged in the Islamic Republic, the MP was quoted by the Mehr News Agency.

According to the Health Ministry's report, 42 flu patients have died over the past week. 466 new cases of the disease have been reported over the past seven days, bringing the country's total number of H1N1 infected cases to 3,128.

There was a decrease in the number of those diagnosed with the disease over the past week (466) compared to the week before (509).

Compared with the countries in the East-Mediterranean region, Iran's death toll rate of the disease regarding its total population of over 70 million is not high.



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

## Soccer riots in Egypt

Soccer games and bread price are the two major reasons for riots in Egypt. Egypt's national team was defeated by Algeria 1-0, losing berth for the 2010 Football World Cup tournament, sparking a riot outside the Algerian Embassy in Cairo on late Thursday.

While the government silenced the 1977 and 2008 bread riots by lowering the price Thursday's riots against Algerian football win had a different tone. Egypt had defeated Algeria 2-0 in Cairo to set up Wednesday's climactic playoff in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. Egypt withdrew its ambassador from Algiers and accused Algerians of menacing Egyptian fans after the game.

It's been 24 and 20 years for the two North African neighbors, Algeria and Egypt respectively, to make it to the World Cup. Just as it creates flag waving celebrations on the occasion of a win, it can create riots during losses in football, a national passion.

The Egyptian president's son Gamal Mubarak who is often seen as a possible successor to his 81-year-old father, along with other high-ranking party members were present during the game.

## Nasrallah re-elected as head of Hezbollah

Hassan Nasrallah was re-elected as head of Hezbollah on Thursday, the Islamic resistance movement announced.

Nasrallah, 49, has headed Hezbollah since 1992 when his predecessor, Abbas Massouli, was martyred in an Israeli helicopter raid.

A new manifesto, which was also adopted during the election, will soon be announced by Nasrallah.



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20

## Afghan market suicide bomber leaves 15 dead

A suicide bomber on a motorcycle attacked a crowded marketplace in western Afghanistan (Farah province) on Friday, killing at least 15 people, while a well known former warlord and member of Parliament, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf narrowly survived an assassination attempt on the outskirts of Kabul. The attack comes in when leader Hamid Karzai was sworn in as president on Thursday.



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

## Iran to hold aerial defence war games

Iranian air defence forces will conduct five days of manoeuvres involving simulated attacks on the country's nuclear sites, a senior air defence commander said on Saturday.

"From tomorrow (Sunday) we will start a big aerial defence manoeuvre that will last for five days... covering an area of some 600,000 square kilometres in north, southwestern Iran and parts of south and central Iran," Brigadier General Ahmad Mighani, the army air defence chief was quoted by the Fars news agency as saying.

The aim of the exercises is to thwart the aerial threat posed by an imaginary enemy on Iran's nuclear facilities -- from reconnaissance to actual assault -- and also to improve cooperation among different units.

## Tehran to host mime festival in winter

Tehran's Eshraq Cultural Center will host the first edition of a mime festival from February 6 to 9. The festival will be held in two professional and amateur sections and that between 12 and 15 performances will go on stage during the event.

Workshops and meetings will be held before the beginning of the festival to improve the quality of the participants' performances.