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200 Iranian hospitals depend on nuclear fuel

◆ *Iran will enrich uranium to the required level of 20 percent if it is forced to: Soltanieh*

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Iran's ambassador to the UN nuclear watchdog says over 200 hospitals in the country urgently need higher-enriched uranium.

As a timely reminder that obtaining higher-enriched uranium is a matter of great urgency for Iran,

Ali Asghar Soltanieh said that the fuel is required for the Tehran nuclear reactor, which is designed to produce radioisotopes used by Iranian hospitals for medical treatment, Press TV reported on Sunday.

He warned that if Iran's proposal to purchase the fuel from abroad falls through, the country would have no choice but to enrich uranium to the required level of 20 percent 'if it is forced to'.

"We need the fuel because more than 200 hospitals depend on it," Soltanieh said in an interview with Der Spiegel published on Saturday.

A proposal put forth by the International Atomic Energy Agency requires Iran to send most of its domestically produced low-enriched uranium (LEU) abroad for further refinement.

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SOLTANIEH

Persian Gulf states should have higher profile in intl. arena: Leader

◆ *Kuwaiti PM backs Iran's right to nuclear technology*

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Sunday that it is unwise if Islamic countries, especially neighboring Muslim nations, do not cooperate with each other.

The Leader made the remarks in a meeting with Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammed al-Ahmed al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation.

All Islamic countries, especially those on the Persian Gulf, must bolster their cooperation to higher level than ever, the Leader insisted.

The countries bordering the Persian Gulf are gifted with rich natural resources, and therefore it is necessary that they exercise more influence on world politics and gain a better status in the world in terms of scientific and economic achievements, Ayatollah Khamenei suggested.

However, he said these aims will not be realized without closer cooperation. He added establishing such a close cooperation has its own opponents but it is the regional countries that must always decide against the will of enemies and just con-



sider their own interests.

"Of course, such cooperation has enemies, but one should decide against the

will of enemies and (decide) based on his own interests."

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Ex-interior minister Kordan passes away

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN — Former interior minister Ali Kordan, 51, died of a stroke on Sunday.

Kordan had been hospitalized on Wednesday. The former minister also suffered from lung and liver diseases.

Presidential adviser Ali Akbar Javanfekr said on Thursday that Kordan was suffering from a type of blood cancer due to the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war.

Kordan jumped to fame as debates over the authenticity of his university degree led to his impeachment and removal in the parliament last year.

Kordan took the post of interior minister on August 5, 2008, after he received 169 votes in favor, 64 against and 36 abstentions. He was dismissed on November 4 last year after the Majlis overwhelmingly voted to oust him.

Before taking over as interior minister, Kordan acted as deputy oil minister. He also served as deputy director of the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) for some years.



Iraqi parliament fails to reach election deal

BAGHDAD (Reuters) — The Iraqi parliament on Sunday failed to resolve an impasse threatening to delay the country's election in January.

There are only a couple of days left for parliament to address Vice-President Tareq al-Hashemi's veto of an election law, as the law must be passed 60 days before a vote and January 23 is viewed by Iraq's majority Shi'ite Muslims as the last possible date in January for the ballot to take place.

If no resolution is found, Iraq may have to delay the election for a month until after the Shi'ite religious festival of Arbain, a move that western diplomats and U.N. officials have warned would be unconstitutional.

"I think tomorrow will be crucial and the issue will be resolved," said Khalid al-Attiya, deputy speaker of parliament. "There are no agreements but there are ideas and I hope we will agree on a specific project tomorrow."

The election is viewed as a milestone for Iraq as it emerges from years of sectarian bloodshed since the U.S. invasion in 2003 and starts to stand on its own feet ahead of a full U.S. withdrawal by December 31, 2011.

Privately, Western and Iraqi officials say a short delay in holding the ballot might not be a bad thing as it would give the electoral authorities more time to prepare.

But the constitution stipulates that the next election should be held by January 31, and breaching that barrier could set a dangerous precedent that might be exploited in the future by a would-be strongman, disinclined to hold a scheduled election.

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Leaked UK documents detail Iraq war chaos

LONDON (AP) — Leaked British government documents call into question ex-Prime Minister Tony Blair's public statements on the buildup to the Iraq war and show plans for the U.S.-led 2003 invasion were being made more than a year earlier, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Britain's Sunday Telegraph published details of private statements made by senior military figures claiming plans were in place months before the March 2003 invasion, but were so badly drafted they left troops poorly equipped and ill-prepared for the conflict.

The documents — transcripts of interviews from an internal defense ministry review of the conflict — disclose that some planning for the Iraq war had begun in February 2002. Maj. Gen. Graeme Lamb, then head of Britain's special forces, was quoted as saying he had been "working the war up since early 2002," according to the newspaper.



Former British prime minister Tony Blair and former U.S. president George W. Bush.

In July 2002, Blair told lawmakers at a House of Commons committee session that there were no preparations to invade Iraq.

Critics of the war have long insisted that Blair offered President George W. Bush an assurance as early as mid-2002 — before British lawmakers

voted in 2003 to approve UK involvement — that Britain would join the war.

The leaked documents are likely to be supplied to a public inquiry established by Prime Minister Gordon Brown to scrutinize prewar intelligence and postwar planning, and which will hold its first evidence sessions later this week.

Brown appointed ex-civil servant John Chilcot to lead the panel, which will call Blair and the current and former heads of Britain's MI6 intelligence agency — John Sawers and John Scarlett — to give testimony in person.

According to the Sunday Telegraph, military leaders used the defense ministry review to criticize government departments over their failure to plan for reconstruction work once Saddam Hussein had been deposed.

(Contd. on P. 15)

Historic health care bill clears U.S. Senate hurdle

WASHINGTON (AP) — A bruising debate on health care awaits the Senate after Thanksgiving now that the historic legislation has cleared a key hurdle over the opposition of Republicans eager to inflict a punishing defeat on President Barack Obama.

The bill would extend coverage to roughly 31 million who lack it, crack down on insurance company practices that deny or dilute benefits and curtail the growth of spending on medical care nationally.

In the final minutes of a daylong session, Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., accused Republicans of trying to stifle a historic debate the nation needed.

The Republican leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, said the vote was anything but procedural — casting it as a referendum on the bill itself, which he said would raise taxes, cut Medicare and create a "massive and unsustainable debt."

Two final Democratic holdouts, Sens. Mary Landrieu of Louisiana and Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, announced they would join in clearing the way for a full debate.

"It is clear to me that doing nothing is not an option," said Landrieu, who won \$100 million in the legislation to help her state pay the costs of health care for the poor.

(Contd. on P. 15)

Romanians vote in tight presidential election



Members of the Romanian Roma minority talk to a riot police officer as they arrive to cast their votes in Sintesti, Romania, Sunday, Nov. 22, 2009.

(AP photo)

BUCHAREST (AFP) — Romanians voted on Sunday in a tight presidential election seen as a chance to resolve a political crisis that has hindered the recent EU member's bid to recover from a deep recession.

Twelve candidates are running, but polls have shown the incumbent centre-right President Traian Basescu and his Social Democrat rival Mircea Geoana are likely to face each other in a run-off set for December 6.

The winner will be pressed to name a new prime minister, with the country in the hands of a caretaker government for the last six weeks, a situation that has put reforms eagerly awaited by financial institutions on hold.

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China mine explosion death toll reaches 92

HEGANG, China (Reuters) — The death toll from China's latest coal mine disaster reached 92 on Sunday, state television said, and hopes dimmed that more survivors would emerge after a gas blast at a colliery in the nation's far northeast.

Chinese television news said 528 workers were in the mine at Hegang in Heilongjiang province when the blast erupted in the early hours of Saturday, and 420 had been rescued by Sunday.

Some 16 miners remained trapped or unaccounted for, the evening news broadcast said.

Reporters in Hegang were taken by officials to see 20 or so rescue workers descending into a tunnel still belching smoke, preparing to scour tunnels for survivors or bodies.

Zhang Fucheng, an official in charge of rescue efforts, told Chinese television that efforts had been held up by gas and collapsed tunnels. Temperatures throughout the day were near freezing.

The blast was the latest big accident to hit the world's deadliest major coal mining industry. The explosion was so violent that nearby buildings partly collapsed.

(Contd. on P. 15)

Can China's backwaters save the global economy?

By Michael Schuman

XI'AN (TIME) — Though he doesn't know it, shop manager Zhu Baohua is on the front lines of the battle to reform the global economy. Zhu's three-floor electronics store, crammed with Sony TVs, Motorola cell phones and HP PCs, is located in a non-descript neighborhood in the western Chinese city of Xi'an. Far from China's dynamic coastal manufacturing and financial centers, Xi'an for decades has been an economic backwater known mainly as the home of China's famed terra-cotta warriors, reminders of the city's glory days as a capital of ancient dynasties.

But today, Xi'an is experiencing a renaissance. The locals who frequent Zhu's store have cash — and they're spending it like never before. On a recent Wednesday in late October, hospital worker Hao Jie, 40, is gleeful after dropping \$1,200 on a 52-inch LCD TV for her new apartment, the keys to which she received only days earlier. Nearby, a soon-to-be-married young couple, Zhang Guopeng and Luo Xi, sizes up washing machines using a measuring tape. The two engineers are also shopping to fill up a new apartment, their first home together. For Zhu, the busy Wednesday evening is business as usual. His store's sales have surged about 40% this year. "In the past, people only bought the electronics that they needed," Zhu says. "Now people are spending money just to enjoy it."

(Contd. on P. 15)