



IRAN TODAY & TOMORROW

WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN

The Committee in Support of Referendum in Iran (CSRI), a 501(c)(3), non-profit and independent group, is committed to advance change in Iran through an internationally monitored referendum as the only peaceful means to bring democracy and establish a secular and representative government in Iran.

June 3, 2005

No. 158

Iran Elections

Iranian Politics Remains Firmly Under Control of Mullahs

NBC World News Tonight, June 3, Washington reported on Iran's political situation. The country "pretends to be a democracy with presidential elections in two weeks. But in Iranian politics, there's a higher power. Whichever candidate wins the presidential election on June 17, this man will still control Iran. He is Said Ali Khamenei, the keeper of the flame of Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme religious leader. The politicians have elections, he runs the country. One of the political clerics claims he can change that, Ali Akbar Hasemi Rafsanjani, a conservative former president now talking vaguely about improving relations with America. But Iranian students I spoke with expect no real change." With its "rich oil and gas deposits, Iran should be one of the most prosperous nations on earth, but everyone agrees the Iranian economy is a mess. It's a combination of corruption, state mismanagement, high unemployment, and hyperinflation."

Iran survey: 92 percent of voters to stay away from presidential polls

Iran Focus, June 1, Tehran - A nationwide survey conducted by an Iranian opposition group showed widespread voter apathy in Iran's upcoming June 17 presidential elections. The People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) said in a press release that a survey of 1,730 adults eligible to vote showed that 92 percent of voters intend to boycott the elections. The survey was based on interviews conducted between May 27 and May 30, 2005. While the PMOI as an opposition group has clear interests in promoting a boycott of the polls, independent observers also believe that this year's presidential election is a lacklustre event that has failed so far to generate any interest among Iranians. "It's hardly a choice to make people motivated," said Mohamed Rezaie, a Paris-based political scientist. "On the ballot, you have two mullahs, four Revolutionary Guards generals, and two leftovers from Khatami's cabinet who have no credibility. Add to this the rising discontent, and you see why the boycott appeal has never been as strong as it is today." Of the eight percent who said that they would be taking part in the elections, 4.7 percent said that they would be voting for ex-President Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and 3.0 percent said they favoured hard-line candidate Ali Larijani. Only one person said that he planned to vote for ex-Majlis speaker Mehdi Karroubi. Eleven of those surveyed said that they planned to throw blank ballots in the boxes. Blank votes made up a significant percentage of the ballots in the last election, as many of the voters simply go to the polling stations to have their ID cards stamped. Anyone whose ID card is not stamped could face a series of consequences, such as being refused public sector jobs. A total of 1,730 people from a variety of backgrounds and in different sectors of society were surveyed, according to the PMOI statement. Last month the Guardian Council, Iran's hard-line watchdog loyal to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, banned over 1,000 presidential candidates, including all the women who had registered.

Iran's regime praying for presidential votes



AFP, May 30, Tehran - Voting, the Iranian public has been told, is as important as praying. And casting a ballot, the regime has also said, is akin a "firing a bullet into the heart" of US President George W. Bush. When Iran goes to the polls on June 17 to elect a new president, voter turnout will be closely watched -- with the figure seen as a measure of precisely how popular the much-maligned 26-year-old theocracy actually is. "For the first time in an opinion poll, 23 percent of the electorate are saying that they won't be voting. It's an important figure because ahead of the last presidential elections, just five percent of people said they wouldn't vote," a government official said.

Iran TV slams foreign 'propaganda'



BBC News, May 28 - An Iranian television channel has accused foreign media organisations of interfering in the country's forthcoming presidential election, just three days after the official start of the campaign. In a special programme shown on Saturday, the 24-hour news channel Iranian News Network TV said foreign broadcasters, including Persian-language radio stations based abroad, were attempting to affect the outcome of the poll, scheduled for 17 June, by urging a low turnout. "The foreign media are resorting to all the tricks in the book," said the programme's presenter. "The policy of creating division and discord is one of their old ploys." "Iranian News Network TV receives and records pictures from news media all over the world," added a correspondent. "Their propaganda can be summed up in one sentence - divide and rule." The channel said some overseas broadcasters were seeking to open up divisions in Iranian society by encouraging members of ethnic minorities not to cast their votes.

University students protest for 2nd consecutive night

News wires, May 25 - Hundreds of students of Tehran University gathered for the second consecutive night to continue protesting against the Islamic regime. Security forces were rushed to the area to close all perimeters around the famous Amir-Abad dorms. Plainclothes



agents helped by militiamen were seen welding the entry doors and putting chains in order to contain the students inside the premises for avoiding their exit and a spread of the protest action.

Several students who were able to jump from the walls and get into the Amir-Abad Avenue were attacked, beaten up and arrested by intelligence officers.

"Freedom, Freedom", "Boycott of election, duty of Iranians", "Incompetent reformist, shame, shame", "Student fights, regime shakes", "Down with Islamic republic", and "Down with

repression", were shouted by students. Students hurled stones at security forces and militiamen who backed off from the doors by contenting to wider the perimeters of the protest action but containing it inside the university premises. The action follows the unrest of the night before initiated by a small group of pro-Khatami students but was soon taken over by hundreds of students seeking a secular regime.

Iran strongman: Do opposite of U.S. wishes



The Associated Press, May 26 - Iran's supreme leader called on the people to elect an anti-Western president in the upcoming June elections, accusing Washington of trying to influence the poll.

"Look for a candidate with whom [the] enemy is not satisfied. This is one of the criteria. Americans have begun their absurdities saying who should run and who should not run in the election," said Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, speaking to a group of students Thursday. "What is that to you, you ignorants," he said, seeming to direct his comments at the United States. Then, to the students he said: 'They [Americans] don't know that people will do the opposite of the Americans' wishes.'"

Nuclear proliferation

Iran Reports Gain in Test of Missile Fuel

The New York Times [New York Times June 1, TEHRAN](#) - Iran said Tuesday that it had successfully tested a solid-fuel motor for its medium-range ballistic missile known as Shahab 3, raising concerns that it could reach its enemies, including American forces in the region and Israel, with more precision. Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani told state television the test was a success but did not say when it had been carried out. "When you fill a missile with liquid, you have to use it quickly," he said. "With solid fuel, a missile can be stored for years. And in addition, it makes the missile more accurate and cheaper." Iran's ambition to develop its nuclear program and its missile industry has been a major concern for the West. Iran announced large-scale production of the Shahab 3 last year. If Iran were to develop nuclear weapons, the missile would make it possible to deliver them to targets more than 1,200 miles away. The new fuel technology is a breakthrough for Iran's military. Solid-fuel missiles can be stockpiled for much longer than liquid-fuel weapons, making mass production much more practical.

Tehran penalized if insisting on going down nuclear road

Khaleej Times, May 29 - If Iran insists on going down the nuclear road it would be substantially penalized, warned a senior American expert in US foreign policy. "Nobody wants Iran to become a nuclear weapons state. But if it insisted on going down the nuclear path it will then be substantially penalized by the United States and its allies," said US Ambassador and President of the Council on Foreign Relations Richard N. Haass, in an interview with Khaleej Times. He, however, said that unlike the case in Iraq, a UN Security Council "go-ahead" would be sought and any strike to deter Iran's potential nuclear programme will be under the council's umbrella. Rejecting allegations that the US has already made up its mind to strike Iran, Ambassador Haass, who was recently on a visit to the UAE to discuss US foreign policy in the Gulf region, said there were several options to deal with the situation, if Iran continued its nuclear programme, one of them being the use of force to deter any such move.

Iran adopts law pushing nuclear technology

Dow Jones Newswires, May 28, Tehran - Iran's hard-line Guardian Council on Saturday approved a law forcing Iran to develop nuclear technology, including uranium enrichment, an action aimed at strengthening Tehran's hand in negotiations with Europeans... The Council's decision was a clear challenge to European negotiators trying to persuade Tehran to abandon the program, a lawmaker said. "Approval of the parliamentary legislation into law by the Guardian Council means Europeans should forget the idea of asking Iran to permanently freeze its nuclear activities forever," conservative lawmaker Nayereh Akhavan said. Now Iranian negotiators were required by law to persist in uranium enrichment and defend the development of nuclear fuel production facilities, she said. "No one will be in a position to ignore the law during negotiations with Europeans," she said. Akhavan represents Isfahan, a central historical city where the heart of Iran's nuclear facilities are located. Iran's conservative-dominated Parliament had passed the bill on May 15 but the hard-line Guardian Council must vet all bills before they become law.

Iran very anxious to get nuclear bomb, says Pakistani leader



AFP, May 28 - Iran is very anxious to obtain a nuclear bomb, Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf said in an interview published Saturday... Asked by Germany's Der Spiegel weekly how to prevent Iran from developing a military nuclear program, Musharraf said: "I do not know. They are very anxious to have the bomb."

Rice: Iran "is very much out of step" with trends in region



AP, May 27 -- Answering questions at the Commonwealth Club during a long weekend trip here... Rice said it would be an "enormously dangerous" situation if Iran were to become a nuclear weapons state. "We're going to do everything we can to prevent that outcome," she said, adding that Iran "is very much out of step" with trends in the region.

Uranium work could yet resume, Iran warns EU



AFP, 27 May - Iran is still examining the European Union's latest offer to solve a dispute over its nuclear programme and could yet resume uranium conversion if it rejects the new proposal, Tehran's top atomic official said on Friday. "We will restart (work at the) the Isfahan (uranium) conversion plant, and the fuel cycle is our (non-negotiable) red line," Hassan Rowhani said, replying to a question on what will happen if Iran refuses to accept the EU plan. The Isfahan plant is used for uranium conversion, a precursor stage in nuclear enrichment, a process that the EU wants Iran to renounce as it can be used to develop nuclear weapons. "Since the European proposal was a new one and it is up to the regime's officials to make a decision, we brought it to Tehran. If not accepted we will begin enrichment in Isfahan," he added, quoted by the IRNA news agency. Rowhani also warned the Europeans that if "they want to drag out the negotiations, we will begin the enrichment in Isfahan." His comments come after Iranian officials and the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany on Wednesday managed in a last-ditch meeting in Geneva to avert a collapse of talks.

..."Up to now, each time we have asked the Europeans to make clear proposals they have ducked the issue and taken time," Rowhani said. "This is the first time they have committed to making overall proposals."

Support the Third option and Iranian opposition

Iran Focus, May 29, London – A British Parliamentarian called on the United Kingdom government to change its current policy vis-à-vis Iran and instead support the main Iranian opposition group and its leader. David Amess, Conservative Member of Parliament from Southend West, during a debate in parliament Thursday, said, "It is to the Government's shame that the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, which, as far as I am concerned, is doing nothing but good, is still on the proscribed list. In the previous Parliament, more than 300 members of this House signed an Early-Day Motion to get the organization removed from the proscribed list, and I hope that the Minister will do what he can to persuade colleagues to do so". Amess said that Rajavi offered a third option, "In a speech in the European Parliament just before Christmas, the charismatic and courageous president-elect, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, whom I recently had the privilege of meeting in Paris, stated that 'The Iranian people and their organized resistance have the capacity and ability to bring about change'. The MP warned of Tehran's threat to peace and stability in the region, "The Iranian regime's lethal cocktail of brutal oppression of its people at home, its export of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism abroad, including to Iraq, and unwavering pursuit of nuclear weapons, represents the real and present threat to the middle east and wider world". He called on the government to address the challenge posed by the Iranian regime.

Terrorism and meddling in Iraq

Rice: Iran probably most important state sponsor of terrorism

IANS, May 29 - Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has described Iran as "probably the most important state sponsor of terrorists" and said it is in that context that its quest for nuclear weapons attracts unfavorable attention from the US. "It is also Iranian behavior on other fronts. We're talking about a country that does have abominable human rights record, we're talking about a country where an un-elected few continue to suppress the desires of its people for democratic elections, most recently, with the Guardian Council deciding who can run for president and who can't run for president," Rice said during a speech at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. "And this is a country - and we really want to underscore this - that is out of step in terms of its support for terrorists," she said. "The Iranians are probably the most important state sponsor of terrorists, including the terrorists who are doing their best to frustrate the hopes of the Palestinian people for a state." She said Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas came to power in an election where he won 62 percent of the vote by saying the armed Intifada has to end. "He's trying to face down terrorist organizations that the

Iranians are funding. So the Iranians are very much out of step with the international system. And so to have a nuclear weapon in the hands of the Iranians would be a very, very dangerous thing. So we're going to do everything that we can to prevent that outcome," she said.

Wounded terror chief believed to be in Iran

The Sunday Times, May 29 - IRAQ'S most wanted terrorist has fled the country for emergency surgery after an American airstrike left him with shrapnel lodged in his chest, according to a senior insurgent commander in close contact with his group. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who has a \$25m bounty on his head after being blamed for suicide bombings, assassinations and the beheadings of western hostages — including Ken Bigley, the Liverpool engineer — is now believed to be in Iran.... Officials in Washington believe that US forces may have lost their chance of capturing or killing him for now. "If he's got to Iran, there's not much we can do," said one. He had been with eight other men in a convoy of three cars when the missile struck, although sources in Washington said that US forces had had no evidence that Zarqawi was in their sights. According to the commander, two pieces of shrapnel injured Zarqawi in his vehicle. One passed through his body but the other tore away a large chunk of flesh just beneath the shoulder.



Human rights abuse

Iranian Group Releases Footage of Public Hangings

NEWS.scotsman.com June 1, By David Barrett, PA Home Affairs Correspondent Shocking footage of three public executions carried out in Iran was screened in London by exiled dissidents today. The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) showed a 10-minute video which they said depicted the capital punishment of three young men for adultery. The three were hanged by being lifted off the ground by a mechanical crane mounted on a flat-bed lorry. Several members of the invited audience were moved to tears by the scenes. The NCRI said it was the first film of Iranian executions to be smuggled out of the country. Former Labour MP Kerry Pollard, who introduced the video at the Law Society in central London, said: "I have never in my life seen anything like that before and hope never to see it again. "It is beyond shocking – it is an abomination. "How human beings can do things like that to other human beings, I do not know." He urged the Government and the European Union to cease what he described as "appeasement" of the Iranian mullah regime. The NCRI said the hangings took place in Khoramabad, western Iran, in August last year. According to the Home Office, the NCRI distributes anti-regime propaganda and supports Mujaheddin-e Khalq (MEK), a dissident organisation which seeks to replace the mullahs with a democratic, socialist, Islamic republic. MEK was banned as a terrorist group by the Home Secretary in February 2001. The NCRI is campaigning for the ban to be lifted. In the video, large crowds, including children, were shown gathering to watch the executions. The first sequence showed the mechanical crane being driven on to a bridge and prepared for the execution, with a hangman's noose of blue nylon rope attached to the end of the crane jib. Officials led out the first man to be executed, who was wearing a white blindfold. In a translation of his words from Arabic provided by the NCRI, he said: "Let me see, undo my eyes. "Hold on, hold on, undo my eyes. "Please, for God's sake undo my eyes. I want to see the people. "We may have committed sins but we do not deserve to be executed." He urged young people to live good lives and not to associate with wrongdoers, before the noose was placed around his neck. The man said the other two men sentenced to die were innocent of any crime. While the man was still blindfold, with ankles tied and hands bound behind his back, the crane jib was raised high into the air, his body appearing to jerk slightly. In the second sequence, a second man was shown being hanged on a similar crane at a different location, using a red-coloured noose. His body was then lowered back to earth to rest on a steel stretcher. Footage of the third execution was indistinct in the video, which the NCRI said was smuggled out of Iran in the last few days. Hossein Abedini of the NCRI said: "This is only the tip of the iceberg of human rights violations in Iran." Wilfred Wong of the Christian human rights organisation, Jubilee Campaign, said there were at least 159 executions in Iran last year. "That is the second-highest number of state executions in the world – the first

being China with a population of 1.2 billion and yet Iran has only 60 to 65 million," he said. "It is deeply disturbing that there is such a high number of executions in the country."