



Syria Values Iranian Friendship

Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad highlighted Iranian friendship with the Arab states.

In an interview with the Qatari daily Al-Watan which appeared in the paper's Sunday edition, the Syrian president rejected the Israeli propaganda that tried to portray Iran as the enemy of Arab states, IRNA reported.

Referring to the current regional crises, particularly the situation in Iraq, Bashar stressed the need for establishing cordial ties between regional countries.

"Iran plays an effective role in regional peace and security," he said.

The Syrian president noted that there are many commonalities between the Iranian and Arab civilizations.

"With a rich and ancient history, Iran's civilization is close to that of the Arab states while the country is placed at the heart of the region," he said.

Bashar noted that all regional countries should acknowledge the fact that Iran, a major regional power, plays a significant role in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Venezuela Collaboration Expanding

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chavez agreed on Venezuelan cooperation to meet soon to boost cooperation at several levels, the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry said on Sunday.

"Presidents Ahmadinejad and Chavez agreed to meet as soon as possible to continue boosting their industrial, scientific and technological development plans to benefit the two nations," the ministry said in a statement, AFP reported.

The two leaders have often met, the last time was in November in Tehran. They share a profound hatred of the United States and both their countries are members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

In their telephone conversation, Ahmadinejad congratulated Chavez for Venezuela's "victory over ExxonMobil, and ratified his solidarity with Venezuela's fight to secure its natural resources", the foreign ministry said.

A London judge in March lifted a freeze on \$12 billion in global assets of Venezuela's state-run oil company PDVSA. ExxonMobil had requested as compensation for a Venezuelan 2006 law forcing foreign oil companies to give PDVSA at least a 60-percent share in their operations at oilfields in the Orinoco basin.

Joint Nano Confab With India

A conference on nanotechnology attended by Iranian and Indian experts began at Tehran's Imam Khomeini Hospital on Sunday.

Secretary of the conference noted that D. Rao, a senior advisor to the Indian prime minister, will also deliver a speech at the event, IRNA reported.

Saeed Sarkar added that about 150 articles have been submitted to the secretariat of the conference, of which 100 were accepted.

"The top four articles will be awarded at the end of the conference," he said.

He noted that India is among the top ten countries in the field of nanotechnology and called for bolstering ties with India in the field.

Referring to the two countries' cultural commonalities, he said, "We are interested in expanding our scientific relations with India rather than with the western countries."

Sarkar also called for the exchange of students and lecturers between the two countries.

The conference will run for three days from April 27.

Iran Package Discussed With Russia



Saeed Jalili, the head of Supreme National Security Council (r), speaks with Valentin Sobolev, the acting head of Russia's National Security Council, after their joint press conference in Tehran on April 28.

Secretary of Supreme National Security Council, Saeed Jalili, said on Monday he discussed Tehran's proposed package with the visiting senior Russian official.

Acting Secretary of the Russian Security Council Valentin Sobolev arrived in Tehran late Sunday at the head of a high-ranking delegation for a two-day visit, IRNA reported.

Speaking in a joint press conference after the meeting, Jalili said Iran will disclose the proposed package soon and exchange views with "influential states" about it.

On April 13, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki announced that Iran is preparing a package to help resolve the regional and international problems.

Jalili said Iran's proposed package could be the topic of Iranian talks with big powers or Group 5+1, which include five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany.

Asked if Tehran will discuss its proposed package with Group 5+1, the top nuclear negotiator said, "We can also talk to them on this issue."

Strategic Partners

Jalili said Iran and Russia are two major powers.

Referring to the two countries' potentials in different areas, he stressed that Tehran-Moscow bilateral cooperation could strengthen peace, tranquility, stability and security in the region and the entire world.

For his part, Sobolev said his visit is in response to Jalili's last December trip to Russia.

He said he had positive and constructive talks with Jalili on the basis of mutual respect and understanding.

"Iran and Russia share strategic political and economic issues of mutual interest," he said.

Sobolev noted that Russian officials are pursuing the release of a Russian nuclear cargo for Iran halted by Azerbaijan customs officials.

The two sides also discussed Iran's peaceful nuclear program and bilateral technical and military cooperation.

"Energy and North-South corridor were among other topics reviewed by the Russian and Iranian officials," he said, adding that talks were held in a friendly and peaceful atmosphere.

During his two-day stay, Sobolev is scheduled to hold talks with Iranian officials on security cooperation as well as the latest regional and international developments.

Persian Press Watch

Soft War

JOMHOURI-YE ESLAMI: Tens and perhaps hundreds of television networks, newspapers, websites and electronic sources across the world are inculcating the western imperialist culture across the world. These media outlets are manipulating the global public opinion in general and the Middle East nations in particular. They are portraying Muslim resistance movements and fighters, especially Palestinians, as terrorists and not as freedom and justice seekers. Westerners are seeking to undermine the struggle of Hezbollah resistance movements in Lebanon and anti-occupation forces in Iraq to seek freedom and independence. Now that the West has failed in the real battle, it is resorting to a "soft war" and cultural assault against Muslims via the mass media.

Political Retirement

RESALAT: Former President Mohammad Khatami has been quoted as saying that he would not return to politics again. It should be noted that Khatami launched a political campaign through the reformist camp, when he was elected president in 2001. The leader of the Islamic Revolution called Khatami's campaign "a historical epic". However, the reformist camp has now diverted from the right track. A cleric in general and a politician in particular cannot be indifferent toward concepts such as criticism, management and, more importantly, "the mechanism of seeking power". Political retirement, as suggested by Khatami, cannot be justified in any way, especially at a time when the enemy is waging a large-scale "political war". The way to political power is accompanied with hardship. However, preserving the cause and principles of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 is an obligation. In fact, serving the Muslim nation of Iran is the will of God. Retirement is not acceptable for Khatami.

Banking Facilities

DONYA-YE EQTESAD: Currently, the most important topic discussed in economic sectors is the new policy package proposed by the Central Bank of Iran to facilitate banking affairs, devise a new mechanism for setting bank profit and lending rates, and control the operations of financial institutions. One of the criticisms raised by opponents pertains to the mechanism of offering facilities to economic sectors. Critics believe the package will not solve any problem as bank facilities flow into commercial sectors while depriving others. This appears to be a correct interpretation, especially in the absence of supervision over banks. This is while the Central Bank of Iran has been obliged to prevent banks and financial institutions from injecting loans into one specific sector.



2 Films to Counter Anti-Islam Plot

Iran is to counter the anti-Islam video film Fitna (Discord) made by Dutch legislator Geert Wilders with two documentary films.

The Iranian films are titled "Reply to Fitna" and "Beyond Fitna", aiming to neutralize the Dutch 'plot' against Islam.

The two Iranian filmmakers have also declared their readiness to have a debate with Wilders over his film, Fars News Agency reported on Monday.

Tehran has condemned the anti-Islam video film, terming it "insulting and anti-Islam", terming it symbolic of the "deep antagonism" of some western states to-



Iranian students chant slogans during a protest against an anti-Islamic film made by a Dutch MP, in Tehran on April 5.

ward Islam and Muslims.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry last month summoned the Dutch ambassador to Tehran to lodge a protest against Wilders' film.