

# Iran will use force to defend nuclear drive: Ahmadinejad

AFP, Tehran

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said on Friday that his country will use force against its "enemies" to defend its nuclear drive, state television reported.

"For them, subjects like the nuclear issue are pretexts. The key reason for the hostility of the enemies in the past 30 years against Iran is that they want us to pull back so that they can say we have given in," Ahmadinejad said.

"But the Iranian people will resist with force against the enemies," state television quoted him as saying.

The comments came as the United States on Friday set a weekend deadline for Iran to respond to an international offer to freeze its nuclear drive.

"We want and we expect a response this weekend," US State Department acting spokesman

Gonzalo Gallegos said.

But an EU diplomat said in Brussels that the European Union is in no rush for a response from Iran.

"There's no real limit," said the diplomat on condition of anonymity after Washington set the deadline. "We're in no rush" to have a response "in the next 24 hours."

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said on Thursday that there was no deadline and that his country had already replied.

Iran on July 4 handed major powers what it said was its "constructive and creative" response to their offer presented by EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana in June aimed at persuading Tehran to halt sensitive nuclear work.

The package, drawn up by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany, offers Tehran technology and negotiations if it suspends ura-

nium enrichment, which the West fears could be used to make atomic weapons.

Meanwhile, Iran is heading toward a major breakthrough in its nuclear weapons capability, Israel's deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz warned Friday.

"Iran is continuing to advance toward a military nuclear capability and is heading towards a major breakthrough," the Iranian-born Mofaz told a think tank after talks in Washington with US officials.

"For us such a situation that Iran will have a nuclear power is an existential threat and from the state of Israel point of view, it is unacceptable," Mofaz told the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"Our estimation is that already by (2009) Iran will reach enrichment capability and as soon as 2010 will have option to reach (uranium production) at military levels," he said in broken English.

He charged that Iran was playing for time in talks aimed at halting uranium enrichment with the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain -- the permanent UN Security Council members -- and Germany, the so-called P5-plus-1.

"One thing is clear is Iranians are continuing their policy of buying time and so far they are succeeding," he said.

"We all know time is a decisive element in our ability to change the picture and remove the Iranian threat," Mofaz said.

"And the window of influence is becoming smaller and I believe about to close," he said. "It's a race against time and time is winning."

He said he favoured a diplomatic solution to the showdown with Iran over its nuclear program but refused to rule out all options, including the military option, to stop Iran.

## 10,000 detainees freed in Iraq so far this year

AP, Baghdad

The US military said Saturday it has released more than 10,000 detainees in Iraq so far this year more than in all of 2007 as it continues to try phase out its running of Iraqi prisons.

The military said about 21,000 people remained in custody, and it is currently releasing about 45 detainees and detaining 30 a day.

The United States wants to transfer the detainees to Iraqi control. Reaching that goal has been slowed partly by the lack of adequate Iraqi prison space and trained guards. More than 8,900 people were released from detention last year.

The US military separated moderate detainees from extremists and instituted religious, educational and vocational programs over the past year to try to rehabilitate less dangerous prisoners. It also increased releases under amnesty programs.

"Due to changes in the conduct of detainee operations and programs to prepare detainees for reintegration into society, we have not only gone over 10,000 releases, but our re-interment rate is less than 1 percent," said Gen. David Petraeus, the top US commander in Iraq.



Iraqis burn US flags while rallying after Friday prayers in the populous Shia stronghold of Sadr City, on the outskirts of Baghdad, opposing the proposed agreement to maintain a US army presence in the country beyond 2008.

## Uma Bharti detained in trouble-torn Jammu

PTI, Jammu

Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Uma Bharti was detained on Saturday in the trouble-torn Jammu region while Sadhvi Ritambhara was sent back, official sources said.

Bharti arrived at Jammu airport on Saturday morning from New Delhi and was to address a press conference here but police took her into custody. She was later taken to Udhampur district.

Another fire-brand Hindu leader Sadhvi Ritambhara was not allowed to enter Jammu. Sources said she was sent back to the national Capital from Jammu airport.

However, senior BJP leader who is also in-charge of party's Jammu and Kashmir unit Arun Jaitley was stopped by police at the airport for over an hour before being allowed to go to BJP headquarters.



Israeli soldiers scuffle with Palestinian and foreign activists near the village of Yatta, south of the West Bank city of Hebron yesterday during a protest against the closure of a road between two nearby Palestinian villages.

## 13 new polio cases in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan has this year recorded 13 new cases of polio, which is only endemic in three other countries worldwide, the health minister said yesterday.

Almost all the new cases were in the southern provinces, which see the worst of a deadly Taliban rebel-linked insurgency, with the insecurity hampering efforts to wipe out the crippling disease.

"We have 13 cases since the beginning of this year," Health Minister Mohammad Amin Fatimie told an event to mark the start of a new round of polio vaccinations.

Most of the cases were in children aged under two years, he said. The number was down from 31 in 2006 and 17 in 2007.

"The first challenge is that the immunisation teams are not able to cover every single house and the enemies of Afghanistan are stopping the process," Fatimie said, referring to Taliban and other militants.

## Hamas, Fatah lock horns in Gaza: 3 killed

AFP, Gaza City

Three Palestinians were killed and dozens hurt in running street battles yesterday between militants of the rival Islamist Hamas and Fatah movements in Gaza City, prompting Israel to sound an alert.

The fighting, which was still continuing late afternoon, was sparked in the morning when Hamas security forces tried to arrest suspects behind a July 25 bombing that killed five Hamas militants and a little girl on a Gaza beach.

Hamas blames Fatah forces loyal to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas for the attack but the secular group denies any involvement. Over the past week the two sides have engaged in tit-for-tat attacks.

Palestinian medical officials said at least three people have been killed and 40 injured in the firefights on Saturday.

Israeli authorities and health services in areas skirting the Gaza Strip went on a state of alert amid fears that the internecine violence would spill over into Israel, with

Palestinian militants firing rockets at the Jewish state despite a truce that went into effect on June 19.

"A member of the Hamas police and a member of the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades (the military wing of Hamas) were martyred," in the clashes, Hamas said in a statement.

The head of Gaza emergency services Muawiyah Hassanein said that a third Palestinian was killed although his identity was not immediately known, while around 40 people were hurt in the fighting.

According to Hassanein the clashes broke out at a house belonging to the influential pro-Fatah Helis clan in the Shujwa neighbourhood of Gaza.

Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri charged that members of the Helis family and other unidentified associates had "fired mortar rounds at the Hamas police as well as a rocket at Gaza City" from inside the house in Shujwa.

Several members of the Helis clan "are responsible" for the July 25 attack and Hamas is determined to round up the suspects, Abu Zuhri told AFP.

"There have been several arrests and there will be many more. We have asked the police to be firm."

But Adel Helis, a Fatah leader, denied that clan members opened fire on Hamas.

"These are lies. We never fired rockets or mortar rounds. Hamas is the one committing crimes. We have asked all the Palestinian factions, Islamists and nationalists, to use their influence so that these crimes cease," he said.

Clan leader Ahmad Helis said that Hamas militants "laid siege to our house, firing mortar rounds... targeting our women and our children."

"We will not surrender. We will defend ourselves," Helis told AFP.

The two main Palestinian factions have been deeply divided since Hamas expelled Abbas's security forces from Gaza in a week of bloody street battles in June 2007, cleaving the territories into rival entities.

Hamas has detained more than 300 people, mostly Fatah members, since the bombing that killed the five Ezzedine al-Qassam militants and the girl.

## Syria's Assad in Tehran for nuclear talks

AFP, Tehran

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad arrived in Tehran yesterday to discuss the Islamic republic's nuclear issue as well as matters of mutual interest.

Assad flew into Tehran's Mehrabad international airport and was welcomed by Housing Minister Mohammad Saeidi-Kia ahead of meeting with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

During the two-day visit Assad is due to meet with high-ranking Iranian officials to discuss regional and international issues, state-run television reported.

Iran's ambassador to Syria Ahmad Moussavi said on Friday talks would include Iran's nuclear programme, which Western countries claim hides an ambition to develop atomic weapons but which Tehran says is purely for peaceful purposes.

"During the visit of the Syrian president, who will meet with Supreme Leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the two sides will discuss... (Tehran's) nuclear issue," he was quoted as saying by the Fars news agency.

## Under-pressure Thai PM reveals reshuffled cabinet

AFP, Bangkok

Under-pressure Thai premier Samak Sundaravej revealed his reshuffled cabinet Saturday in the wake of a series of damaging legal defeats and resignations for his battered six-month-old government.

Samak introduced two new faces and welcomed former minister Chiya Sasomsab back into the fold less than a month after being forced out of government in a legal ruling.

Chiya, kicked out of government on July 9 when the Constitutional Court ruled he had illegally concealed his wife's assets upon taking up his post as health minister, returns as commerce minister.

Former national police chief Kowit Wattana is made interior minister and a deputy prime minister, while deputy parliamentary spokesman Somsak Kietsuranond becomes culture minister.

## Russian couples rush to marry on 'lucky' 08.08.08

AFP, Moscow

Russian marriage offices have seen a surge of applications to wed this coming Friday due to the supposedly lucky character of the date: 08.08.08, officials and local media said.

In Moscow, registry offices will stay open late as applications to marry on August 8 are up by more than two thirds compared to a normal Friday in summer, a spokeswoman for the city's registry offices, Yevgenia Smirnova, told AFP.

Normally between 900 and 1,000 marriages take place on a regular Friday or Saturday in summer, she said, but applications had already reached 1,675 by the end of last week.

## Bride, groom among 13 killed in Afghan blast

AFP, AP, Kabul

A suspected rebel bomb struck a minibus carrying a newly married couple in southern Afghanistan yesterday, killing the bride and groom and 11 wedding guests, police said.

Police chiefs blamed the bombing in the southern province of Kandahar on "enemies of Afghanistan", a reference to Taliban militants involved in an insurgency launched after they were removed from government in 2001.

The blast killed eight women, including the bride, as well as two children and three men, one of them the groom, Spin Boldak border police commander Abdul Raziq told AFP.

The Kandahar police chief, Mutiullah Khan, had earlier said 10 people including the newly married couple were killed in blast in Spin Boldak, which is near the Pakistan border.

"A roadside bomb exploded under a minibus carrying a bride and groom. Ten people including the bride and the groom were martyred," Kandahar province police chief Mutiullah Khan told AFP.

Six other children, including women and people, were wounded in the blast, both officials said.

"The bomb was planted to target security forces," Khan said.

It was similar to a wave of bombing by Islamic Taliban-led insurgents who are battling the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai.

The rebels claim that their attacks are targeted at Afghan and international troops, but they usually kill more civilians.

Earlier bomb blasts killed five Nato soldiers in Afghanistan on Friday, the alliance force said, in the latest in a surge of extremist attacks that have raised alarm about deteriorating security.

Meanwhile, three Taliban militants were killed when a roadside bomb they were planting exploded prematurely in eastern Afghanistan, and militants kidnapped a district chief in the same region, officials said Saturday.

Five Afghan policemen were also killed in an overnight bomb attack that was similar to scores carried out by the hardline Taliban group waging an insurgency after being driven from government in 2001.

The Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) did not release the nationalities of its soldiers killed in eastern provinces along the border with Pakistan, where extremist rebels are said to have sanctuaries.

Four died with a civilian interpreter in the eastern province of Kunar, Isaf said in a statement that gave few details. Another died in a similar blast in Khost, it said separately.



Residents on a boat look at the flooded houses in the Balabanesti village, Republic of Moldova on Friday. In the Moldovan capital Chisinau, three people were found dead after being swept away by floodwaters.

## SAARC SUMMIT FACTS

# S Asia bound by poverty, torn by tensions

AFP, Colombo

South Asian leaders opened a summit in Colombo Saturday focusing on spurring regional economic cooperation as raised tensions between India and Pakistan dampened hopes for any big progress.

The main common feature of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation's member states is deprivation -- more than three quarters of the 1.5 billion population in the region earn less than two dollars a day.

The smallest member, the Maldives, has a population of 330,000, fewer than the number of babies born in a week in India, the biggest SAARC member. India has over 1.1 billion people and the population growth rate is 1.5 percent.

All eight states in Saarc enjoy a veto in the organisation where every decision must be taken through consensus.

That is partly blamed for the snail-like progress of the group, founded in 1985 with ambitious plans to follow in the footsteps of the European Union and the Association of South East Asian Nations (Asean).

Almost all Saarc members except the Maldives have some sort of border issue or dispute with neighbours, and the cross-border conflicts have soured relations within the organisation and applied brakes on trade.

But most often, the summits have been held hostage to tensions between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan which flared anew after last month's attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul in which New Delhi suspects Pakistan's intelligence service.

The Indian Ocean atoll nation of the Maldives, the smallest member with a population of just 300,000, is listed as a "Least Developed State" together with four other Saarc

members -- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

The second biggest member in Saarc is Pakistan with 155 million people, followed by Bangladesh with 141 million. It was Bangladesh, which floated the idea of regional cooperation to enable Saarc's establishment.

The two Buddhist countries in the region are Sri Lanka and Bhutan. Nepal's population of 27 million is just below Afghanistan's 29.9 million.

Sri Lanka has the best social indicators with a life expectancy of 74.4 years, while at the other end of the scale is Nepal, where people can expect to live to 62.2 years, according to World Bank data.

Most are in political turmoil, with Bangladesh under emergency rule and Nepal struggling to form a government after abolishing its monarchy.

Afghanistan is battling a resurgent Taliban and Sri Lanka is in the

grips of a bloody ethnic civil war.


Pakistan is struggling to combat Islamic extremists while India is fighting a host of insurgencies including a deadly revolt in Muslim-majority Kashmir.

The World Bank said recently governance was a key challenge for the region to overcome the poverty rife in South Asia.

"If South Asian countries can accelerate and sustain economic growth at eight to 10 percent a year, strengthen human development... the region has a real chance of ending mass poverty in a generation," the Bank said.

Despite fast economic growth, South Asia has some of the worst levels of human deprivation on the planet, the Bank noted.

India has levels of child under-nutrition nearly double those of Sub-Saharan Africa. One in 10 Pakistani children die before their fifth birthday; only 34 percent complete primary school.



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## CONVOCATION

### October 28, 2008

Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre, Dhaka

### Invitation for Registration

**Requirements:**

- a) Registration Form (duly filled in)
- b) Registration Fee of Tk. 3,000/= (Taka Three Thousand) only in cash at cash counter or in pay order/demand draft in favour of World University of Bangladesh
- c) Money Receipt for Convocation Registration Fee (photocopy)
- d) Original Copy of the Provisional Certificate
- e) Library Card & ID Card
- f) 3 (three) copies of passport size photograph (colored)

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**Registrar**

**For further query, please contact-**

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