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[Note: Using editorials as an indicator, this series presents views, understanding and attitude of the Urdu periodicals in India towards various developments concerning the Middle East. The selection of an item does not mean the endorsement or concurrence with their accuracy or views. Editor, MEI@ND]

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The Etemaad Urdu Daily (The Confidence Urdu Daily), Hyderabad
Editorial, 16 January 2012, Monday

1. US Policy on Iran!

Immediately after President Barack Obama signed the law prohibiting any trade with the Central Bank of Iran, one of the officials of the Iranian nuclear programme declared that in spite of the new sanctions imposed on Iranian oil, it intends to start work on the second project for enriching uranium. Iran has reiterated time and again that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes, which it has also tried to emphasize through Ayatollah Khamene'i who said that developing such weapons that can cause the death of innocent people are illegitimate and prohibited in Islam. According to the Iranian authorities, the nuclear programme is important for Iran's national security, not because it would use them for manufacturing nuclear weapons but because it wants an alternative source of energy apart from oil and wants to obtain fuel for a reactor for medicinal purposes.

Economic sanctions have been imposed on Iran for the past four years and have adversely affected the economy. Yet, it has not brought any change in its nuclear programme strategy. The new American sanctions include restrictions on the export of oil, curtailing an important source of revenue for Iran. What could be the repercussions of these sanctions? The Iranian authorities do have an idea of its adverse impact and that is why Iran has announced its decision to start the second big project for uranium enrichment. They are trying to show that Iran can march forward even in difficult times. A case-in-point is the visit of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to South American countries that are anti-US and his strategic meetings with the leaders of these countries.

On the contrary, the American policy is not just against Iran, but also amounts to self-destruction. Although the law imposing sanctions on trade with the Central Bank of Iran has been signed by the US President Barack Obama, its European allies have pulled out of the sanctions before it can take effect. The bloc of 25 European countries, which were a part of the agreement, did not have the guts to impose sanctions immediately because they are facing a huge challenge suffering from extreme cold conditions and, therefore, want to buy oil from Iran for another six months. They will implement the sanctions on Iran in the summer.

At another level, the US and its allies have started to put pressure on Iran to withdraw its threat of closing down the Strait of Hormuz in response to the economic sanctions. British Prime Minister David Cameron has said that Britain and other countries have decided that they would ensure the Strait of Hormuz remains open for international shipping. Cameron has also held a meeting with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia because it is in the interest of entire world that the Hormuz Strait remains open. On the other hand, Barack Obama has used backdoor diplomacy to establish contacts with Ayatollah Khomeini. However, the US State Department has refused to accept it as an extraordinary contact between the countries and has also refused to divulge any detail about the Iranian response. The secret contact was established to inform the Iranian Supreme Leader about American concerns on increasing tension over the Strait of Hormuz. The idea to reopen negotiations between the worst allies was also brought to the knowledge of Ayatollah Khamene'i.

So far as Iran is concerned, it has never closed doors for negotiations. It has asked for the resumption of talks despite recent tensions. The Western countries have never tried to read the mind of Iran or to acquaint itself with the nuclear programme of Iran. Iran is a country with a neighbour, which not only has huge cache of nuclear weapons but also is also full of apprehensions with respect to the Muslim countries. The West is very much aware of its expansionist policies and its unrelenting and tough attitude. Yet Iran has been a continuous target for its nuclear programme. Russia and China also support Iran on its nuclear programme apart from a number of South American countries. Russia has expressed its fear that if there were any military intervention to curb Iran's nuclear programme then it would be a threat to Russia's security. It has criticized the boycott of Iranian oil. Russia believes that if a state considers something useful for it, then it has the right to achieve the same. But the American policy to impose Western decisions has made it a liability.

Source: http://www.etemaaddaily.com/EtemaadArchive_files/Jan/16/editorial.html



The Siasat Daily (The Politics Daily), Hyderabad
Editorial, 16 January 2012, Monday

2. Apprehensions of Israeli attack on Iran

The apprehension of attack on Iran by the Jewish state of Israel, which is known for its conspiracies the world over, is becoming stronger every day. The US has indicated that Israel has begun preparations for carrying out air attacks on Iran. On the basis of this information, the US has started preparing for the security of its resources in the region and is trying to give an impression that it has objected to the Israeli intentions and that it has tried to warn Israel of the consequences and repercussions of this attack. In spite of this, the Jewish state is adamant on its plans and indifferent to the warnings. It has continued to carry out its preparations with regard to the same. The US has claimed that in the past few days, Israel has closed one of its nuclear plants to avoid missile attack by Iran and has transferred the nuclear resources to avoid destruction. This situation could be critical and dangerous not only for Iran but for the entire region and the world. In the past few days, a nuclear scientist was murdered in Tehran, and Iran has accused the US and Israel for the killing of the scientist because he was a part of the Iranian nuclear programme. This has also led to increased tensions between Iran and the US as well as Israel, though he was not the first Iranian nuclear scientist to be killed in a terror attack. Judging by the attitude of the US and Israel, the accusation of Iran that these countries are involved in the murder of the scientist does not appear to be baseless. As such, the politics of violence and killing has become a habit of the Western countries, especially the US, and it continues to target Muslim states all over the world. Now the latest target is Iran.

With regard to Iran, their policies towards it indicate the Israeli and US concern for the survival and existence of Israel. Just as with every instance of Israeli threat to target Iran, Iran has also often threatened to wipe off Israel from the map. This furious exchange of words now seems to be taking a more critical shape. Israel is gradually making the entire world agree with itself and there is an improvement in its strength. That is why it wants to promote its interests and increase its influence in the region, and in the achievement of this mission, Iran is its biggest obstacle. The US is concerned about the Iranian nuclear programme, as Israeli existence is important for it. Iran has always maintained that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes and that it needs an alternate source of energy but the US and Israel are not ready to heed. They want to target Iran on the basis of its nuclear programme because of their enmity with the Muslim world. It is for this reason that economic sanctions have been imposed on Iran. Despite these sanctions, Iran has continued to pursue its nuclear programme and it is definitely not ready to give up or compromise on it. It is Iran's right and the US and Israel have no right to object to this. They also do not have the right to object to this because the US and Israel themselves have dozens of nuclear weapons and there is no guarantee that they would not be used against Iran. Under these circumstances, even if Iran develops nuclear weapons, it would be opposed by those states that are against nuclear weapons proliferation and do not themselves possess nuclear weapons.

The Israeli animosity towards Iran and the Muslim world is not hidden from anyone; it has always conspired against the Muslim world. When its conspiracies against Iran seem to be failing with Iran not stopping its pursuit of its nuclear programme, it plans to attack Iran. The US has only expressed its apprehensions of an Israeli attack on Iran though what is indeed required is that the US use all its influence to prevent the Jewish state from carrying out any such attack. Not only this, even the United Nations to improve its image should prevent Israel from carrying out any attack on Iran. It is also time for all the responsible countries in the world to make an effort to prevent Israel from carrying out attacks on Iran because the effect of these attacks will not be confined to Iran but would be felt in the entire world.

Source: <http://www.siasat.com/urdu/news/idr16-28>



The Etemaad Urdu Daily (The Confidence Urdu Daily), Hyderabad
Editorial, 18 January 2012, Wednesday

3. Syria suffering from Lack of Governance

Syrian President Bashar al Assad has proven himself to be an inefficient ruler to the world. He cannot continue to rule after losing his legitimacy among the people. All his hopes are now pinned upon Iran and Russia. This is because Syria is the only state that provides a military camp to Russia outside the erstwhile Soviet Union at its Tartas port. Russia is the only big power that is a friend of Syria. Earlier this month, the activity of Russian navy and air carriers in the sea had enthused the Bashar government but it proved to be a farce. In the UN Security Council, Russia has only obstructed the sanctions against Syria. It has not done or said anything else in Syria's support. The Russian authorities have said that the Russian naval exercise near Syrian waters had nothing to do with domestic political situation in Syria.

Due to the ten-month long protests that are still going on in Syria, the economy of the country has definitely received a setback. Firstly, the value of the currency has fallen and inflation has started to touch the skies. The government treasury has become empty and it has been forced to impose new taxation on its employees. According to analysts, the situation is so critical that more than violence and protests, economic decline has become a threat for the Bashar government. A report has claimed that in 2011 the government expenditure had increased to 19 billion dollars mainly due to increase in military expenditure whereas the government income has declined by \$2.3 billion. In the first six months of the previous year, the profits derived from cargo ships passing through the Syrian ports have declined by 35 to 40 percent. This implies that Syria had to bear the loss of approximately \$6.1 billion in revenue. According to the Syrian Ministry of Finance, the inflation on some food materials has increased by 37 percent in 2011

compared to 2010. This critical economic condition in Syria is the result of the stubbornness and selfishness of Bashar al-Assad.

The Arab League has also failed in persuading the Syrian government to negotiate with the opposition leaders and create amicable conditions for elections. Some of the Arab League representatives have also raised questions on the role of Arab League. They have criticized that the observer team of the League was not allowed to visit the worst affected areas. According to the UN estimates, more than 5,000 civilians have lost their life in the past ten months. Although Bashar al-Assad has continued to rule by use of force, military defectors have started to join the opposition camps. The opposition has also conceded that at present, there seems to be no chance of collapse of the Bashar government but the biggest fear is of a civil war. The Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby has said that Bashar al-Assad has partially implemented the Arab League plan. Since the promises were not fulfilled, if the situation persists, there is a danger of civil war.

After the failure of the Arab League mission, there seems to be no scope for any international intervention. The news coming out of Syria is so contradictory that it is difficult to assess the actual situation. If a civil war breaks out in Syria, it would mean that the control of Assad over Syria has weakened. Under these circumstances, only the army can intervene. If the army takes over, it would become very difficult for Assad to remain in control of the country because from the viewpoint of the military they would never be able to hand over the reins back to Assad.

As a gesture, Bashar al-Assad has announced general pardon for all who indulged in criminal activities in the past months of rebellion. Assad had made similar announcements in May, June and November, but the opposition claims that the Syrian jails are still full of political prisoners. The ruler of any country cannot gain the trust of the people by putting them behind bars or killing them, even if the people are protesting against the regime. Bashar al-Assad will have to step down, tomorrow, if not today.

Source: http://www.etemaaddaily.com/EtemaadArchive_files/Jan/18/editorial.html



Dawat Online (Invitation), New Delhi
Editorial, 19 January 2012, Thursday

4. Peace or War

The degree of peace that is required in the world today is unprecedented. But it is also a bitter truth that the kind of environment that is building up in the world is pushing humanity farther from peace and closer to war. There could be no other example from

world history. The amount of equipment man has accumulated to destroy peace and inflict war and violence is unprecedented. The reins of peace are under the control of those people who are now advocates of violence more than peace. It is both; a source of entertainment as well as their bread and butter. They have made it a medium of earning their daily bread. Therefore, at the end of every year it is shown that the market for weapons during that year was more profitable vis-à-vis the previous years. This implies that more weapons were procured in the ensuing year. A second meaning is that it was spread throughout the world. And the most interesting aspect is that it is the privilege of those states to punish other states when they procure the same. Not only is there a proliferation of weapons across the world, another aspect of the weaponry is that their capability to cause havoc and destruction is also increasing, and their intent for use is also getting encouraged. All kinds of weapons are included in this. According to various sources, procuring weapons has become an important dimension of American policy, and the US is selling weapons to its Arab allies on a large scale, and that too in the name of making them secure.

Another aspect of this trade is that just as the production and sale of weapons have increased, so have their demand, and it is in this respect that their capabilities and types have also increased. This could be estimated by the fact that in the past few days, the US entered into agreements to supply arms to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and other Gulf countries, on the argument that these Arab countries face tremendous danger from one of their regional neighbours Iran because not only is it engaging in developing nuclear weapons but has also given special emphasis on its missile programme. It has already prepared long-range missiles and its targets are the Arab countries. It has disturbed the balance of power in the region. Therefore, it has become all the more important to equip the Arab states so that they could at least defend themselves. On this basis, agreements of billions of dollars were signed. Now when the deal is signed, Israel objected that since the Arab countries are now possessing dangerous weapons, its security is being threatened; therefore, they would also need improved weapons as well as its technology. On this, it was assured that its security would not be threatened because the US has already taken responsibility for its protection. In this way, it has become a vicious circle. Along with the armaments race, the capability to inflict destruction has also increased. And all the experience of the previous wars in being used to prepare for the coming wars. Also, in comparison to the previous wars, the coming wars are going to be deadlier.

Source: http://dawatonline.com/Archive_Editorial.aspx?sDate=19-jan-2012



Dawat Online (Invitation), New Delhi
Editorial, 22 January 2012, Sunday

5. Efforts against Iran

The US and Europe want to impose an economic blockade on Iran but at the same time they want to secure themselves from the ill effects of the same. Their problem is if the oil supply from Iran were stopped, how would they cope with the demands in their countries? This is because Iran fulfils a large portion of the need for oil in the world. Not only does Iran have crude oil supplies but it also has a rich reservoir of natural gases. Besides, new reserves have also been discovered. Another problem is that Iran has control over the Strait of Hormuz and it is a route for supplies to the US and Europe, which is as important to them as the soul is for the human body. Through this route, 40 percent of America and Europe's energy supplies pass by. This implies that oil ships pass the Hormuz to reach the world and Iran has already warned that if the US and Europe do not act consciously and remain adamant on their obstinacy and stubbornness, then Iran would be compelled to take such steps which would be detrimental for the US and Europe and would harm their interests. One of the steps included is the closing of the Strait. Iran has expressed its intentions clearly that it would not accept the negative attitude of Europe and US in any way, it would not surrender to them, and would take steps for its security. It will not leave any stone unturned in this matter. In the past few days, Iran has also mobilized its naval forces and test-fired some weapons. This caused massive unease in the West, especially the US and Britain.

In response to this, the US has used its military strength giving signals to its forces in the Gulf to remain prepared. Britain has also told its unit to remain prepared. In fact, it has mobilized its entire naval forces. Subsequently, the US and British leadership were seen running around. The British Prime Minister made a visit to Saudi Arabia. This was an extraordinary event because such visits are undertaken prior to an important event. It has been reported that among the issues discussed with the Saudi rulers was the Strait of Hormuz issue. The news that has followed is that Saudi Arabia has announced an increase in the production of oil although Iran had earlier warned the oil producing countries not to increase their production of oil. This would imply that Saudi Arabia has accepted the request of the Western countries. Obviously since Iran is a major producer of oil, the lack of its oil has to be compensated from somewhere or the other. This was to render any subsequent Iranian move ineffective.

On the other hand, Europe and the US have been warned by Russia that any further sanctions on Iran would have dangerous consequences. Meanwhile, the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Latin American countries so that the conspiracies to besiege Iran and increase pressure on it could be made ineffective. The US and Britain are trying to give an

impression to the entire world that if Iran implements its warning of closing the Strait of Hormuz, it can have dangerous consequences.

Source: http://dawatonline.com/Archive_Editorial.aspx?sDate=22-jan-2012



Dawat Online (Invitation), New Delhi
Editorial, 25 January 2012, Wednesday

6. Tough Phase

In Egypt, after the “New Morning”, the results of three Parliamentary elections have been declared, according to which the Freedom and Justice Party (*Hizb al-Hurriyah wa al-Adalah*) has swept the elections continuing its superiority over all other political parties. In all the three phases, not only has it been ahead of other parties but by huge margins. In the first phase, it got about 48 percent of the seats. In the second and third phase also, it got votes at a similar rate. The *Hizb al-Noor* came a distant second and won 20 percent seats in the first phase and 28 percent seats in the second phase. It maintained its second place in the third and final phase and achieved a total of 29 percent seats. The Wafd Party (*Hizb al-Wafd al-Jadeed*) stood at the third place and the Egyptian Bloc (*al-Kutlah al-Misriyah*) came fourth. There is meagre difference between the two and both have gained nearly 9.9 percent of seats. The Western media is presenting it as domination of Islamists because both the Freedom and Justice Party and al-Noor are Islamist parties. In fact, al-Noor has been said to be the voice of radical fundamentalist Islam. The other picture being projected is that the Islamists have gained a two-third majority in the Parliament. This implies that in future, their unity could be decisive and that they now have the power to change the image of Egypt. Nothing else needs to be told. For them, it could be a major, in fact, a revolutionary change. It is important for the American point of view as well. It is an extraordinary situation for Europe while for Israel it is of huge significance. Therefore, their interest in the Egyptian elections is natural.

Egypt has a bicameral Parliament. The upper house is known as the *Majlis al-Shura* (Consultative Council) and the lower house is known as the *Majlis al-Sha'ab* (People's Council). The recent elections were held for the lower house, which consists of 498 members. The electoral process is divided into two different ways, 332 members are elected by one process whereas the remaining 166 members are elected by another. The members of the lower house are elected for a five-year term. The election for the *Majlis al-Shura* is still to be held. It constitutes of 264 members. The electoral process here is again divided into two ways. The election process for 176 members is different while the remaining 88 members are elected by a different process. The members of the upper house are elected for a six-year term. The elections are still due for the upper house. It would be conducted in two phases; the first phase would take place on 29-30

January and the second phase would take place on 14-15 February. It would be followed by a Presidential election, which is supposed to be held in June. A new Constitution is to be drafted for the country because the earlier Constitution had been drafted by the military, which had witnessed several amendments as per their requirement. The common people have lost faith in the previous Constitution. The drafting of the Constitution is obviously to be undertaken by the Parliament. But it is not an easy task as it is a very difficult phase. Firstly, it is important that the Islamists parties agree on various aspects but even then, it would not be a cakewalk. Currently, the administration of the country is in the hands of the military and it wants to have a role in the country's politics, which it is trying to institutionalize. There is external pressure for protecting the interests of foreign elements while, the minorities have their own concerns. A clear picture would be difficult to visualize before the successful passage of the several stages of this tough phase.

Source: http://dawatonline.com/Archive_Editorial.aspx?sDate=25-jan-2012



The Etemaad Urdu Daily (The Confidence Urdu Daily), Hyderabad
Editorial, 25 January 2012, Wednesday

7. Uncertainty in Yemen

The clever politics of the Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has made him an untrustworthy personality before the people of the country as well as the international community. With regard to the protests and anxiety in Yemen against his rule, which has continued for a few months, Saleh had signed an agreement in the Saudi capital of Riyadh to resign but going against the terms of the agreement, he started suppressing the voices of dissent and has strengthened his control over the regime. In February 2011, he saw a conspiracy against the state in the protest against his authoritarian regime. In the last 33 years of his rule, whenever a protest started against him, he had always dubbed it as a conspiracy. He never realized after taking over the reign of Yemen in 1978, what he would do to the country. Today, Yemen is one of the poorest countries of the world. His rule is also known for corruption and lack of administration. Unemployment, mismanagement and lack of governance has left 40 percent of the people living under the income of two dollars a day. It was these failures of Saleh that compelled the people to revolt against him and the protests spread in several Yemeni cities. Initially, only the students and youth were protesting but later they were joined by the opposition. The Shias in the north who were struggling for their rights since long also joined the protests ultimately.

The most disappointing fact was that to save his regime at all costs, Saleh opened the doors of the state treasury for certain sections of the society. He bribed his allies and the people of higher

echelons of the society but he failed to seize the momentum against the protestors. The protests continued and many civilians had to face the wrath of government repressions and were killed.

In a clever move, this past week, Saleh managed to make the Parliament accept his plea for pardon and has also successfully lobbied for a law prohibiting his prosecution after his resignation. This law also seeks pardon for all the officials and ministers under the previous government who committed any political crime. The agreement was signed between Saleh and the opposition and has international accord. But it is disputed by international humanitarian organizations who have termed it as injustice to the victims of Saleh's highhandedness. A huge protest was organized against Saleh on Sunday (22 January) when he was to fly for the US. The power has been handed over to his deputy, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al-Hadi, and it has been reported that the Parliament has also unanimously nominated him as the candidate for the coming presidential elections. The main problem for the authorities now is to hold a peaceful election under the current chaotic scenario. Saleh, before leaving for the US, addressed the nation on state television and sought pardon for his mistakes during his rule giving an impression that he has packed his bags for life.

The uncertain situation of Yemen has put the American leadership, including Barack Obama, in a spot of bother. The Obama administration has sanctioned the visa of Saleh for medical treatment, which they do not intend to extend. The US is considering the consequences of extending the visa of its long-time ally Saleh. It also wants Saleh to return before the Presidential elections and therefore, it is evident that the US is not interested in providing refuge to Saleh and facing any further problems. It would be interesting to see what would be his political future in case he returns to Yemen.

Source: http://www.etemaaddaily.com/EtemaadArchive_files/Jan/25/editorial.html



Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (National Sahara Daily), Delhi
Editorial, 25 January 2012, Wednesday

8. Bashar al-Assad is inviting Trouble

In the struggle between the military and the civilians in the past few months in Syria, roughly thousands of people have been killed. Even if the figures given by the United Nations is only tentative, it cannot be denied that the number of deaths that has occurred in this struggle is more than the number of deaths that occurred during the Israel-Syria conflict and this truth is enough to indicate the critical situation that exists in Syria. The other things are beyond belief. For example, Bashar al-Assad like his father Hafiz al-Assad, cannot be considered a military general. He does not have any military designation. By profession, he is a doctor. It is so

surprising that in spite of being a doctor he is not able to listen to the heartbeat of the Syrian people. In medicine also, he specialized as an eye specialist. Hence, this is also strange that he is hiding behind the lenses of the situation. One reason for this attitude could be that the advice that is being given by the counsel for their own benefit is removing Assad farther away from the people. When Bashar al-Assad came to power, in spite of the fact that he was not elected by the people, the US had said that Assad would be soft hearted unlike his father and would be more enthusiastic about the Republic. In the beginning, Assad did take some steps that raised the hopes of improvement in Syria. For example, he promised to bring a law by which rather than nominating, a people's representative would be elected. It was probably due to the pressure of the military that this promise was not fulfilled. The people certainly objected to that but were hesitant to take direct action against the government. However, on witnessing the revolution in Egypt and Tunisia they realized that the military generals are only toothless lions. To protest against a major general like Hosni Mubarak was not only a surprise for the Arab world but also a stunning development for the entire world. It was obvious that the Syrian public would get influenced by it and they did also. More and more Syrian people appear to be against Bashar al-Assad and his popularity among the masses has reduced more and more. The limit was that Assad refused to agree to anything that was offered by the Arab neighbours. No Arab country wants that this mistake once again leads to foreign intervention in a state. The bitter memories of the intervention of the US and NATO troops in Iraq still linger in the minds of the people. Now any kind of intervention is unacceptable to them. It was for this reason that the Arab League tried to intervene and advised Bashar al-Assad that rather than resorting to violence, he should open the doors for negotiations with the protesters. This was a valid suggestion, but for some reason Assad first accepted and then rejected the advice. It is regrettable that Assad has decided to walk on the same path as Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. Gaddafi had also paid the price for acting against his own people. He, too, used force instead of resorting to talks. But, when the majority of the population turns against the ruler, then for some time his terror recedes; it does not come to an end. However, Libya's case was different. Libya was a part of the African world, far away from the Arab world. The ferns, which caught fire there, remained confined to that region only. But Syria is a part of the Middle East region; the Arab world will not be able to escape the fire that catches there. It is almost impossible for Assad to win the hearts of his people. He could be thrown from power any moment. It is said that Russia is providing them with military arms and ammunition, but against whom? Till now, Assad has used the weapons only against the civilians. If weapons are used against enemies then it is a different issue, but if they are used against one's own people, then the rulers cannot be bailed out of it. Any kind of foreign intervention in Syria would prove disastrous. Though US has incurred losses in Iraq and Afghanistan and its Presidential elections are going to take place, it could signal its NATO allies to intervene. Though Europe is going through a severe economic crisis, which could prevent them from intervening, they are nevertheless not in a position to refuse the orders of US. This option would be very aggrieving for the Middle East region. But it is also true that the world will not be a silent audience to the killings of the Syrian civilians. One positive sign is that in the past few days Assad has reduced the use of force against his people but this is not enough. What is required is that Bashar al-Assad prevents Syria from becoming Libya.

Source: <http://www.roznomasahara.com/Details.aspx?id=44734&boxid=14959619>

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