

Iranians unaware of US Iran troubles

POOJA GAUTAM

Iranians living in Bangalore are not aware that there is an ongoing rift between US and Iran. It is said that people become more conscious about what is going on in their country, when they are away from it. This however, does not hold true for Iranians living in Bangalore since they remain aloof.

"I am unaware of any tribulations between the two countries. If there is, it's surely just between the governments. The layman is not really concerned about the matter. We have nothing against the US.

We have friends who are from US. I have been to US infact. And I absolutely have no problems with it. It is a beautiful country," said Arash a government official from Iran.

Shima, who has lived in India for the past three years, is also unaware of any fissure between the two countries. She is a student

studying in Bangalore." I am not aware of any such situation. I have my parents living there, but we don't discuss all this, and they are fine. So, I don't think it's a big deal. And I am sincerely not aware of any such problems with US", she said.

"I am not aware of any such situation actually. Personally, I don't have any problems with US. I have made a lot of Americans my friends in Goa, and even Bangalore. I love their music and food. The rift is just between government. We have nothing to do with it. We just want peace", said Armin, a 24 year-old musician. He is an International DJ, who plays all over the world.

"I am not really concerned with what the government is doing or thinking. We Iranians just want peace. We don't want to fight. Peace is the reason why I came to India", added Armin.



courtesy Google images

Sri Lankan conflict in full swing

Conflict between Sinhalese and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam continues without solution

AKANSHA PRADEEP

The years old conflict between the Sinhalese and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has renewed fears of breakout of a civil war. The recent violence in the northeast has made life for many intolerable. S. P. Tamilselvan, leader of the Tamil tigers was killed by the Sri Lankan military in an air force strike on Thirivearu, where the rebel leaders had gathered for a meeting.

The conflict dates back to 1983, since then the rebels have been fighting for an independent homeland for the minority Tamils who have been facing discrimination by the majority of Sinhalese.

The situation has now aggravated since the government has decided to retake the area. The current political affairs in Sri Lanka have changed the face of the social situation prevalent in the country.

When considering the situation in Sri Lanka it is difficult to say that either side can secure military triumph. Both the sides have had their success and failures but none of them have been able to take control of the situation. Both the sides claim equal rights over the island.

According to Dr Gerard Chaliand, former director of European center for the study of conflicts, LTTE under Prabhakaran is a totalitarian movement. LTTE is the most efficient terrorist movement in the world using guerrilla tactics. LTTE under the leadership of Prabhakaran has eliminated all other parties which have tried to represent Tamil interests in Sri Lanka.

Granting the freedom that LTTE wants would come as a blow to the country's democracy. If this happens then the political condition of Sri Lanka would be the same as the current situation in Burma.



Fighting in Sri Lanka intensifies after the death of LTTE leader SP Tamilselvan
courtesy Google images

Amongst all this blood shed and the fight for power there are thousands of civilians who have lost their lives. Most of the population lives in refugee camps where life is miserable. They now believe that the Norwegian brokered ceasefire agreement signed in 2002 exists only in paper. The young

boys and girls have been transformed into militants who die rather than surrender for the movement.

After looking at the current political and social situations in Sri Lanka it is difficult to say that any mutual agreement can be reached between Sinhalese and LTTE that could bring peace to the million of civilians in the country.

Emergency declared in Georgia

GAYATHRI VAIDYANATHAN
Violent protests marked the beginnings of emergency rule in Georgia on Wednesday November 7, 2007 a nation often hailed as a model democratic nation emerging from the ruins of the Soviet Union.

As many as 70 000 demonstrators gathered at the Parliament building in the capital Tbilisi in an initially peaceful gathering, which six days later denigrated to violent protests and then emergency rule. President Mikheil Saakashvili has since revoked the citizen's right to demonstrate and shut down private television and radio channels.

The protest, organized by opposition supporters, was triggered by Saakashvili's near-autocratic control over state affairs. It was the first real contest to the popular president who swept into office following the Rose Revolution, a peaceful uprising on November 23, 2003 that introduced true democracy to the region.

When Saakashvili came to power in Georgia in 2003, it had a nearly defunct economy and an enormous degree of entrenched corruption. Four years since then the country has become the 'top reformer in the world' according to the World Bank, and one of the strongest trade allies of the West in the region. A British company is managing the railways; a rail link is opening between Georgia, Armenia and Turkey; Turkey has become Georgia's main trading partner, replacing Russia; an important oil pipeline runs from the Caspian

basin through Georgia that serves the world; and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation now owns Imedt, a television channel that was at the center of the recent protests.

Imedt was initially owned by

has also called for a referendum to find out if the public wants early parliamentary elections as well. The state of emergency though continues.

Patarkatsishvili, who fled the country, has announced plans to



Protesters in Georgia liken President Saakashvili to Adolf Hitler. Inset: map
courtesy The New York Times

Badri Patarkatsishvili, a wealthy businessman who has been accused of plotting to overthrow the government.

In reaction to worldwide condemnation and mild bullying by the United States, which had been using Georgia as the poster child of its 'introduce democracy abroad' campaign, the president, on Saturday, scheduled a presidential election for January 5, 2008. He

run for Presidency in the next election.

The Russian Equation

President Saakashvili has blamed Moscow for the ongoing protests. "Russia's foreign intelligence service and its agents have become very active in Georgia recently," he said. "We had information in advance that there was a plot to overthrow the Georgian govern-

ment at the end of the year."

Russia indeed has reasons to want this government gone. Columbia-educated lawyer Saakashvili has become increasing pro-Western in his stance, distancing himself from Russia. Georgia is embroiled in disputes over the lost lands of Abkhazia and South Ossetia due in large part to the Russia, which would like to see Abkhazia become a part of the Russian foundation. The country is also seeking membership in NATO.

Russia state Duma speaker Boris Gрызлов defended his country though: "As for the Georgian authorities and their policy of accusing Russia...I think this is all done on the orders of the United States' special services."

In this hostile climate, Saakashvili's achievements are laudable, but opposition parties have raised questions about his ability to share power, especially in the wake of arrests of certain opposition leaders. The president's unnecessarily harsh reaction to a peaceful protest, where demonstrators were pelted with tear gas, rubber bullets and sometimes fists, has also drawn criticism from countries including, interestingly, Russia.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin called the crackdown a "crude and mass violation of human rights and democratic freedoms," and urged strong action by the United Nations, Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Council of Europe.

Around the world at a glance

IMF ready to cancel Liberia debt

IMF chief Dominique Strauss-Kahn said it was a "critical step... toward comprehensive debt relief" for Liberia.

A few restrictions lifted in Baghdad

Roadblocks and other restrictions imposed over the last nine months in Baghdad will be removed in response to lessening violence, according to Iraqi military commanders.

Bhutto under house arrest

The Pakistan government has placed opposition leader Benazir Bhutto under house arrest for seven days in an effort to stop a planned march to Islamabad.

Six Palestinians killed at rally

Armed clashes between rival Palestinian Fatah and Hamas factions resulted in the death of six people, and wounded 100 more in a rally marking the third death anniversary of leader Yasir Arafat.

UN calls for Burma reciliation

Ban Ki-Moon has urged Burma's leaders and opposition to redouble their efforts to achieve national reconciliation.