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[Female announcer]

The best songs and the latest news on Radio Farda!

Radio Farda's News.

[Host Mania Mansour]

It is 9:00 p.m. Hello, dear listeners and good evening! Welcome to this edition of Radio Farda's Evening Magazine. I am Mania Mansour. Together with my colleagues, we will be at your service in this news magazine. First, let us listen to short pieces of news.

The Sanandaj General Penal Court sentenced Sheys Amani, the chief executive officer and Sedigh Karimi, a member of the board of directors of the Dismissed and Unemployed Workers' Union, to 2.5 years of imprisonment. According to this sentence, which was served on these two worker activists on Wednesday, the 24th of Mordad, six months of Sheys Amani and one year of Sedigh Karimi's jail terms may be substituted by fines.

The border guard commanders of Iran and Iraq signed the minutes of the meeting and emphasized the necessity of cooperation for establishing security on Iraq-Iran borders by the end of their first joint summit. The three-day summit of Iran and Iraq's border guard commanders was held in Tehran. This was the first meeting and negotiation between the Iranian and Iraqi high-ranking border guard officials.

Tehran's interim Friday Prayers Leader said in a reaction to the possibility of United States' putting the Guards Corps on the terrorist list that such an action would be a source of pride for the government of Tehran. Ahmad Khatami, Tehran's interim Friday Prayers Leader and a member of the presidium of the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership, said that such an action resulted from the fact that the United States had reached a deadlock with regards to the issue of Iran's nuclear program. The U.S. media announced on Wednesday that Washington intended to consider adding the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to the list of terrorist organizations. The U.S. Department of State has regarded this

issue as an in-house talk in this department and no decision has been announced by the U.S Secretary of State.

Radio Free Afghanistan reported that the chief of a district in Kandahar and two of his children were killed in their own house in the south of Kandahar on Friday. Khairuddin Kaka, the district chief for Zerai, and two of his children were killed in this suicide attack. Three of Kaka's children were also injured. Reports say the bomber detonated his explosives as Khairuddin Kaka and his family stepped out of their house.

The U.S. army skirmished with Sunni militia in a mosque in Northern Baghdad on Friday. A U.S. soldier was killed in this encounter. U.S. troops attacked the mosque after spotting an armed man on the roof of the mosque.

On Friday, the U.S. Central Bank reduced the interest rate in this country by half a percentage point in reaction to concerns about a world wide economic crisis. Following the discount in the interest rate, the value of stocks in the U.S. Wall Street Stock Market and the European markets rose. In the wake of a crisis in housing loans in the United States last week, the international economic markets encountered financial losses.

Two days after the earthquake in Peru, a strong aftershock shook the southern part of the country on Friday. An earthquake on Wednesday, with a magnitude of 7.9 on the Richter scale, struck the country and killed more than 500 people. More than 1,000 were also injured in the earthquake. Search operations for locating victims' corpses and rescuing those buried under the debris are being continued. The United Nations and other international organizations across the world have expressed preparedness for granting emergency aids to Peru. No statistics have been released on the toll of today's aftershock.

Following the flood in North Korea, South Korea, the United States and international organizations offered help to this country. Continuing floods in North Korea have resulted in more than 300 dead over 300,000 refugees. South Korean officials announced that they would grant emergency aids worth 7.5 million dollars to North Korea. The U.S. Agency for International Development has also said that it would give the sum of 100,000 dollars to North Korea for purchasing blankets, materials for building temporary shelters, water drums and other necessary items. Floods in North Korea have also inundated over 10 percent of corn and rice farms in this country.

Troops of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization member countries executed a joint maneuver on Friday in the vicinity of the Ural Mountains in Southern Russia on Friday. Russia and China are among the major participants in the maneuver. Troops from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan had also taken part in this maneuver.

Now, it is the turn for the program on viewpoints, produced by Fereydoon Zarnegar. This program is about the changes in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's cabinet.

[Viewpoints]

[An arena for discussing major political, social and cultural issues]

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

With greeting to you, dear listeners of Radio Farda! I am Fereydoon Zarnegar, your host in this week's Viewpoints. The Islamic Republic's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, dismissed the Industry and Oil Ministers on Sunday and appointed care takers in their places. Taking into account the procedure and level of delivering information on this, speculations and rumors have been and are being made about the manner and the reasons for dismissing two important ministers of the cabinet. The first question to be raised regarding this is whether these ministers resigned, that is to say they abdicated their responsibility willingly, or they were forced to resign or were they dismissed. The topic of this week's Viewpoints is the recent changes in Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's cabinet and the reasons for and the outcomes of such changes.

[Music Clip]

The guests of this week's Viewpoints are Sadeq Zibakalam, a university professor and political analyst, Mahdi Mahdavi Azad, a journalist and the former director of the Internet base "Aftab", and Ali Reza Kermani, a Journalist and political analyst and the secretary of the editorial board of the banned journal, "Nameh".

Let's begin tonight's talk with this question for Mr. Mahdavi Azad: Did these ministers resign willingly or were they dismissed? Mr. Mahdavi Azad, please!

[Guest Mahdavi Azad]

Taking into account the text of the resignation released by Mr. Alireza Tahmasebi, which includes implicit and explicit criticism of Dr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's performance, we can say with certainty that Alireza Tahmasebi has resigned and has taken the side line voluntarily.

Regarding Vaziri-Hamaneh, taking into consideration the fact that the issue of his dismissal and resignation have been raised for some eight or nine months and there have been blatant differences between Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government and Vaziri-Hamaneh in the open, especially in the field of the Oil Mafia and how to spend oil revenues, we can say that Vaziri-Hamaneh has also resigned.

But it must be noted that with regards to the principle of "Changing the Threat to Opportunity", which is common in strategic sciences - pro-government media are currently trying to change these two people's resignation, which is a kind of a remonstrative action along with implicit divulgence, to an opportunity for improving the reputation of Dr. Ahmadinejad's cabinet and arguing that Dr. Ahmadinejad's cabinet wants to work, and is reshuffling itself, it is strengthening itself, and has dismissed these two people in line with this policy. This is what they have not accomplished yet. Therefore, on the whole, I think that on the one hand due to their protest to the government's performance and because of the differences between their own outlooks and that of Mr. Ahmadinejad's on the other, and finally due to the activities of the "shadow government" and the realm of Mr. Ahmadinejad's consultants and companions and intra-cabinet political competitions in the Ninth Government, both of these people reached a stage which led to their removal from the cabinet.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Zibakalam, why haven't such differences, which Mr. Mahdavi Azad is mentioning, been raised and discussed explicitly anywhere before?

[Guest Zibakalam]

We can not say that these issues have not been discussed before and are new. Look, what is certain and can be said fairly definitively is that the issue is not only the matter of Mr. Tahmasebi or Mr. Hamaneh or previously Mr. Rahbar or others' resignation. It is far broader than this and goes back to the policy and type of management and attitude of Mr. Ahmadinejad toward a combination called "the cabinet". On the whole, Mr. Ahmadinejad is not very much a person who proceeds with projects according to the plan, cooperates with others, lets people disagree with

him and criticize him. I think such characteristics are somewhat missing in Mr. Ahmadinejad's intellectual and administrative system.

At the time of Mr. Hashemi and Mr. Khatami, the cabinet really had its own meaning. They worked as a team. Although the president would make the final decision, the ministers would also raise their concerns, criticisms, viewpoints and opinions. It seems that most authorities in Mr. Ahmadinejad's administrative system are executives. They execute orders, requests, opinions and what Mr. Ahmadinejad regards as advisable and thinks that must be implemented.

Therefore, what this or that minister thinks does not matter very much in his cabinet, and this is completely visible in the text of Mr. Tahmasebi's resignation. I mean, for example, Mr. Ahmadinejad says that prices must not rise. The price of this item, or that manufactured good, that product made by a certain governmental organization, factory or company must not rise. Well, the minister asks how it can be prevented from rising. When the [cost of] raw materials has risen, the [cost of] fuel has risen, well, the fare has risen, when [the price of] all of the elements which make up the goods has risen, how can I keep the price of this item fixed? Because Mr. President wants to! Therefore, I think that the current ministers or those who will join his cabinet in the future will be obedient, abiding by and executing Mr. President's orders.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Kermani, taking into account Mr. Mahdavi Azad's remarks, who referred to the "shadow government" and those of Mr. Zibakalam, who talked of Mr. Ahmadinejad's individualistic and imperative characteristics, the other issue which is raised every now and then is the issue of cronyism and nepotism.

[Guest Alireza Kermani]

I believe that the problem of the current government is an acute one. The issue of cronyism can also be seen within the framework of the same problem. The problem is that the present government needs to be as assured of the tameness of the protégés as possible. This government has to turn to nepotism in order to be assured about executing Mr. Ahmadinejad's personal desires. Naturally, within such frameworks, friends and relatives are more trustworthy. I think that the main defect of the present government is that the policy of this government is crisis-spawning, both in economic and social fields and in political scenes. And all these elements combine to spawn problems and crises for both the nation and the government itself. It is quite natural

that under such circumstances it is necessary that friends and relatives be employed, for they are more obedient and perhaps they can suppress crises. However, I do not think that this will help the government either.

[Music Clip]

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Mahdavi Azad, taking into account the fact that these two people have been among important ministers of the cabinet, now what predictions as to their substitutes are possible? Again, regarding the fact that Mr. Ahmadinejad faced the problem of finding a competent person for Ministry of Oil?

[Guest Mahdavi Azad]

Now that you have talked of predictions, let me refer to another point. This also results from predictions and in fact is a follow-up to Mr. Zibakalam and Kermani's remarks. Both Mr. Zibakalam and Mr. Kermani referred to the conditions which led to the current situation. You know, long ago, observers said that Mr. Ahmadinejad and specifically the central team of the Ninth Government could not cope with the realities and did not enjoy a correct analysis of realities and consequences or the mechanism of actions and reactions.

For instance, Mr. Ahmad Tawakoli had said about Mr. Hamaneh's resignation that Mr. Ahmadinejad insisted that Mr. Vaziri-Hamaneh should change the director of Fuel Smart Card Department due to the existing problems. Look! Dr. Ahmadinejad can not accept that this system of changing, for instance, the smart card so hastily and precipitously and with all these problems will misfire. And because he faces a problem, which he doesn't know how it has come about, the director of the relevant department must be changed. He does not accept that this investment has misfired in the upper hand realm, the oil Mafia, as he puts it, have not been removed and the existing problem has not resulted from a particular person's performance; but rather due to general policies and other issues. Therefore, he says Mr. Hamaneh must be replaced. Value-added growth in the industry, despite all predictions, is expected to be about four to five percent.

Of course, Mr. Davoudi said that it is about eight percent. But even such statistics are a far cry compared to governments. Because Mr. Ahmadinejad does not accept this, he says, for instance, that the Minister of Industry should be removed. He does not accept the reasons

why only about 590,000 job opportunities have been created during the past two years, according to Social Security statistics, which are far from the 1,600,000 job opportunities approved by the plan and upper hand documents.

Hence, he says that person should be dismissed. We see the same approach in security and political encounters. That is to say, when, for instance, plans do not come to fruition or things do not proceed as predicted, they detain a couple of journalists on the charge of disturbing the economy of the count, arrest two others on the charge of fomenting inflation, and attribute the problem of housing to the performance of two reporters and so on. In such a situation, I predict and think, with the rise of economic and social problems and the aggravation of the disarrays resulting from wrong decisions and incorrect performance, the government will probably increase its angry reactions and will show its passive aggressive side in other ways.

This may show itself at the civil level, in the form of encountering civil activists, or at the cabinet level, in the form of removing ministers or other government officials. As to who will replace the removed ministers, I do not have any accurate and well-founded information. But as you know when the issue of removing Mr. Hamaneh was raised, some seven or eight months ago, many predicted that Mr. Kordan would replace him. Mr. Kordan is a person who belongs to the traditional right and is very close to Mr. Larijani, Mr. Rezaie, and the like.

This led to the analysis that if Mr. Kordan was appointed, the Ninth Government and in fact the fundamentalists, who we can call "the maximalist fundamentalists" and form the core of the Ninth Government, would attain a kind of convergence and solidarity with the traditional fundamentalists. If such a prediction is correct, we can predict that due to the importance of the Oil Ministry and its revenues and the issue of the upcoming elections, some kind of a convergence has developed between these two wings. However, the history of the Ninth Government indicates that Mr. Ahmadinejad will, for instance, insist on introducing Mr. Mehrabian or probably Mr. Nozari to the Majlis. Anyhow, we should wait for future changes.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Zibakalam, according to what Mr. Mahdavi Azad and yourself stated, the issue goes beyond the resignation or the removal of a couple of ministers and is associated with Mr. Ahmadinejad's method of

administration. In your view, what will be the economic and the social consequences of this method for the society?

[Guest Zibakalam]

On the whole, the issues of planning, proceeding according to plans, moving ahead within the framework of the Fourth Plan and moving within the 20-Year Perspective are gradually losing their importance. Decisions are made on day-by-day basis and the substantial decisions made by planners and authorities after months, weeks, and hours of expert work, when they formulated the 20-Year Perspective or the 4-Year Plans, will gradually fade in practice.

Then the major issue will be focused on a day-by-day administration. The other point is that there are two parameters about the would-be ministers. First, Mr. Ahmadinejad will certainly insist that the would-be minister be such a person that Mr. Ahmadinejad can work with. This means that such a person should be "a person like us and other ministers who execute what I order." Well, this is a considerable point. Then if such a person is found, and of course there are a lot of people who would accept the position of the Oil Minister, or to be the Minister of Industry and Mines, to be the Minister of Foreign Affairs, without having any words, willpower, decisions and ideas of their own. They would follow blindly Mr. Ahmadinejad's words - to see what he says and to simply execute them.

Now, the main issue is what Majlis says. Will 50 percent plus one of the members of parliament vote for the minister whose only characteristic is that Mr. Ahmadinejad can work with him or is a tame executive? This will be the next problem. Now, in a general response to your question as to what consequences such changes and reappointments will have for the administrative and executive systems, planning, and proceeding with plans, well the answer is quite clear. They will shatter them. Take the Oil Ministry as an example. Regardless of the fact that some three fourths of government revenues comes from this ministry, when there is no Oil Minister, the petrochemical and gas industries have to wait and see who the new minister will be. It will also influence Asalouyeh. There is a concatenated hierarchy in the field of oil industry, which will get stagnant. We have to wait and see that when the new minister comes, the director of the petrochemical industries, the director of gas industries, the chiefs of oil refineries will all be changed. Well, this will certainly influence the administrative and executive issues of the country.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Kermani, It is speculated that such changes and reappointments are associated with the upcoming elections? Is there any evidence which can confirm such speculations?

[Guest Alireza Kermani]

I think these changes are indicative of the fact that the government has accepted that within the past two years its policies have flopped. Mr. Ahmadinejad, who is trying to convince people that he has not caused the problems and that he is determined to solve the problems, changes his ministers so that he might rehabilitate part of his reputation. But I believe that it will not work. A very important point which was mentioned by Mr. Zibakalam and Mr. Mahdavi is that these issues are concatenated.

Nobody defends Mr. Tahmasebi and everybody says that he does not enjoy a good record. In fact, I am not going to defend any particular person, but with the current collection of monetary policies and foreign orientations, which will influence foreign investments, the new Minister of Industry in Mr. Ahmadinejad's government cannot do anything miraculous in order to create job opportunities in the private sector regardless of all the crises in the government.

All these efforts are doomed to failure. Foreign policies and domestic and social policies are totally crisis-spawning. Instead of changing crisis-spawning policies, the present government does physical changes by replacing people. This will not be the solution to the problems of the present government. Pro-government websites assail Mr. Ahmad Tavakoli, who has criticized [the government], and even threatened to divulge against him.

[Music Clip]

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Mahdavi Azad, you yourself referred to problems among the fundamentalists and now Mr. Kermani mentioned the same differences. In your opinion, what effects can these changes and reappointments at the cabinet level have on the structure of the fundamentalists?

[Guest Mahdavi Azad]

It must be noted that Mr. Ahmadinejad's government, from the very beginning, did not try to form a cabinet out of the entire fundamentalist

front. The cabinet established by Mr. Ahmadinejad was finally a cabinet of his friends, relatives and companions plus a couple of ministers who had been appointed through Mr. Bahonar and Mr. Ahmad Tavakoli's supporters and recommendations; the former representing a part of the Islamic Community of Engineers.

At the onset of establishing the cabinet, we witnessed a drop-off in the votes of the fundamentalists, who had supported Mr. Ahmadinejad in the 1384 [2005] elections. And this trend continued insofar as the fundamentalist fraction disintegrated, or as Mr. Bahonar put it, broke into pieces. Then people like Mr. Afrough, Mr. Aboutorabi, and the like, came and formed the Independent Fundamentalists Faction. With the removal of the minister who had been appointed thorough support and recommendations from, for instance, Mr. Ahmad Tavakoli and with the removal of the two ministers who represented another part of the fundamentalists, that is to say Mr. Hamaneh and Mr. Tahmasebi, I think what has happened now has constricted the administrative circle of the Ninth Government in terms of including a greater number of the fundamentalists.

Therefore, if this approach to appointment of the would-be ministers is not amended and the views of the fundamentalist majority of the Majlis and the fundamentalist sages and elders of other groups, for example even the Organization of War Veterans, are not considered, we can say that it will lead to the drop-off of fundamentalists from Mr. Ahmadinejad's cabinet even more.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Zibakalam, what do you think? I mean, can such changes at the cabinet level result in divisions inside the fundamentalist wing, or on the contrary, make them united?

[Guest Zibakalam]

No, I believe that the problems are more deeply rooted than this. Look, when Mr. Ahmadinejad expects his provincial governors, his director generals, the head of the state nationalized organizations, the directors of large factories, the ministers and the like to only execute his orders, the problem is that in such an atmosphere, you cannot act as a coalition.

For instance, a number of the ministers in his cabinet, as Mr. Kermani and Mr. Mahdavi mentioned, have been selected by Mr. Bahonar and are in fact his share. But other fundamentalist have not had a remarkable share in Mr. Ahmadinejad's cabinet, at least not so far. Now,

let's suppose a person supported by the reformist fundamentalists, i.e. Mr. Afrough and Mr. Aboutaleb and so on, is appointed as the new oil or industry minister, the major issue is that such a minister, regardless of how competent or incompetent he is in executive affairs, will not regard himself very obedient and compliant toward Mr. Ahmadinejad, since he has gained his power and legitimacy from somewhere else.

This way, problems will occur from the very onset, for he has been appointed not at Mr. Ahmadinejad's will but at the behest of the factions inside the fundamentalist front. Then, Mr. Zarnegar, when you put these next to one another, you will go back to what I said at the beginning of my remarks, that is to say, unfortunately, the spirit of team work, the spirit of group work, and the spirit of proceeding with plans were not very conspicuous from the onset of Mr. Ahmadinejad's Government.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Mahdavi Azad, could you please let us know, very briefly within the remaining minutes of tonight's program, how Mr. Ahmadinejad's policies and these changes and reappointments will affect his re-election?

[Guest Mahdavi Azad]

I do not think that such changes will influence Mr. Ahmadinejad's chance in the upcoming elections. Of course, I know we are short of time, but we can discuss the issue of nepotism and cronyism from another point of view. When Dr. Ahmadinejad took power, he was extremely pessimistic toward former manager and all political parties in Iran. We can look at his strong inclination toward his companions and relatives from this angle that he can not establish relations with any political parties. If we look at the issue from this angle, we can come to the conclusion that such changes will contribute to the differences between political groups, including fundamentalists, reformists, and Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani's spectrum, and Mr. Ahmadinejad's government.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]

Mr. Zibakalam, you please?

[Guest Zibakalam]

Yes, I also believe that the changes and reappointments will not contribute to Mr. Ahmadinejad's nomination and election in the upcoming elections, but they will reduce his chance. However, the main question is whether the political currents and the political figures, who were so insistent that Mr. Ahmadinejad be elected and nominated as the major nominee of the fundamentalist, can see and still believe that Mr.

Ahmadinejad's selection among the fundamentalists was the best option, having regard to the fact that there were other options among them like Mr. Ghalibaf, Mr. Larijani, and Mr. Velayati. I think they have gradually developed doubts about this.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]
Mr. Kermani, you please?

[Guest Alireza Kermani]
I think that from the fundamentalist's point of view their next president will not be Mr. Ahmadinejad. The totality of these actions and changes will hint to the Majlis and the fundamentalist supporters of Mr. Ahmadinejad that they shouldn't stymie the present government and let this procedure go on, but its long-term - mid-term results for the upcoming elections is that the fundamentalists will not give him their primary support.

[Fereydoon Zarnegar]
Many thanks to the guests of tonight's viewpoints, Sadeq Zibakalam, Alireza Kermani and Mahdi Mahdavi Azad! I, Fereydoon Zarnegar, saying goodbye to you, dear listeners of Radio Farda, and wish you a good time.

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