

International

# 'Enemies seek to sow discord' between Iran, Iraq: Khamenei

## Iran reopens Iraq border crossing shut amid unrest

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said "enemies" were trying to drive a wedge between Tehran and Baghdad in a tweet yesterday following deadly unrest in neighboring Iraq. "#Iran and #Iraq are two nations whose hearts & souls are tied together... This bond will grow stronger day by day," Khamenei was quoted as saying on his office's Twitter account.

"Enemies seek to sow discord but they've failed & their conspiracy won't be effective," he added. State news agency IRNA said the supreme leader was reacting to recent violence in Iraq. More than 100 people have been killed in Iraq since clashes erupted last week between protesters and security forces, the majority of them demonstrators struck by bullets.

The Iraqi authorities have accused "saboteurs" and unidentified snipers of targeting the protesters. Tehran has close but complicated ties with Baghdad, with significant influence among its Shiite political groups. The two countries fought a bloody war from 1980 to 1988 and Iran's influence in Iraq grew after the US-led invasion toppled veteran dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003. Since the protests broke out last week, some officials in Iran have accused the country's foes - including the United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel - of being behind the Iraqi unrest.

"Foreign evil hands... are now seeking to destabilize Iraq in another way," said Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, a senior foreign policy advisor to the Iranian parliament. "This plot will also be foiled," he added in a tweet on Friday. Yesterday, government spokesman Ali Rabie said there "are ill-wishers who seek to sabotage any opening between us and those neighbors who've had differences of opinions in recent years".

### Call for 'self-restraint'

Speaking at a news conference aired on state television, Rabie said Iran was "concerned and sad regarding any unrest in neighboring countries". Iran called on "the great people of Iraq to show more self-restraint and seek democratic and legal means to reach their demands", he said. "As always, the Islamic republic of Iran expresses its readiness to stand beside Iraqi brothers and sisters and help them. No form of propaganda can sever the people of Iran and Iraq."

Iran has urged its citizens planning to take part in a major Shiite pilgrimage in Iraq to delay their travel into the country over the violence. Last week, Iran shut the Khosravi border crossing with Iraq at the request of Iraqi authorities as the protests raged. The post was reopened yesterday morning and Iranians were making their way towards holy shrines in Iraq, an official



AL MANDHARIYAH: Photo shows the Khosravi border crossing between Iraq and Iran, also known as the Muntariya border crossing, in the Diyala province of eastern Iraq, as Iranian pilgrims arrive on their way to the central Iraqi shrine city of Karbala ahead of the Arbaeen religious festival. —AFP

said in a report by ISNA news agency. A top military adviser to Khamenei said those behind the unrest would be unable to deter Iranian pilgrims.

"They want to scare people into not going to Arbaeen, but even if it rains arrows and stones, Hussein's lovers will not be afraid," Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency. Iranians are

heading to the Iraqi holy city of Karbala for the pilgrimage that will culminate on October 17 with the annual Arbaeen commemoration. Arbaeen is one of the world's biggest religious festivals and marks the end of the 40-day mourning period for the seventh-century killing of Imam Hussein by the forces of the Caliph Yazid. —AFP

## Iran arrests an Instagram celebrity for 'blasphemy'

TEHRAN: Iran has arrested an Instagram celebrity famous for drastically altering her appearance through cosmetic surgery, Tasnim news agency has reported.

The social media star known as Sahar Tabar was detained on the orders of Tehran's guidance court, which deals with "cultural crimes and social and moral corruption", Tasnim said.

She faces charges including blasphemy, inciting violence, gaining income through inappropriate means and encouraging youths to corruption, the news agency added. Tabar shot to prominence on Instagram last year after posting a series of images of her face altered through plastic surgery. Most of the photos and videos shared with her 26,800 followers have also been heavily

edited so that she seemingly resembles Hollywood star Angelina Jolie.

The account features images of her with a gaunt face, pouting lips and sharply turned-up nose. In some, she can be seen wearing a loosely fitting hijab over her hair and a white bandage on her nose commonly seen on Tehran's streets. Cosmetic surgery is hugely popular in the Islamic republic, with tens of thousands of operations taking place each year. Instagram is the only major social media service accessible in Iran unlike Facebook and Twitter and the Telegram messenger service are officially banned. —AFP

## FBI: US most prolific serial killer murdered at least 50 people

WASHINGTON: A 79-year-old man murdered at least 50 people, making him the most prolific serial killer in US history, the FBI said Sunday. Samuel Little confessed to 93 homicides - mostly of women - between 1970 and 2005, the Federal Bureau of Investigation said. Although investigators have only confirmed his involvement in 50 of them, they believe all of Little's confessions are credible.

The FBI has set up a website showing his videotaped recollections of unidentified killings, alongside sketches - drawn by Little - of the people he claims to have murdered. "Many of his victims' deaths, however, were originally ruled overdoses or attributed to accidental or undetermined causes. Some bodies were never found," the FBI wrote on the website. He was jailed for life in 2014 after being convicted of three murders. "For many years, Samuel Little believed he would not be caught because he thought no one was accounting for his victims," FBI crime analyst Christie Palazzolo said.

"Even though he is already in prison, the FBI believes it is important to seek justice for each victim - to close every case possible." The former boxer, also known as Samuel McDowell, was first arrested in 2012 at a homeless shelter in Kentucky and extradited to California to face drug charges. Once there, DNA evidence linked him to three cold cases, leading to his 2014 conviction for the murder of three women in Los Angeles between 1987 and 1989. All three had been beaten and strangled. —AFP

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