

Rezai enters Iranian presidential race

by UPI

TEHRAN -- Hard-line conservative Mohsen Rezai says he's entering Iran's presidential race because of mismanagement by the current president.

Rezai, head of the Revolutionary Guards from 1981 to 1997, is to run as an independent in the June 12 election against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, The New York Times reported Thursday.

Rezai, who has condemned Ahmadinejad's handling of the economy, likely would draw conservative voters who otherwise might vote for Ahmadinejad, the Times reported.

Ahmadinejad is expected to have strong support from the Revolutionary Guards and low-income Iranians, among others, Iranian news media reported.

Voters who favor more political and social openness, and closer ties to the West, are divided between former a prime minister, Mir Hossein Mousavi, and a former speaker of the Parliament, Mehdi Karroubi, said Saeed Leylaz, a political analyst in Tehran.

Ahmadinejad's critics have accused him of trying to sway the election by distributing nearly 400,000 tons of potatoes throughout the country and giving bonuses, including gold coins, to government workers, the Times reported.

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