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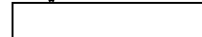
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BRIEFS AND COMMENTS

IRAN: Election Results

President Bani-Sadr's political power is likely to be severely limited as a result of the Islamic Republic Party's strong showing in the first round of the National Assembly elections. []

The Islamic Republic Party may well win a majority of seats in the 270-member Assembly when final results are known next month. Press reports indicate that the party, which is contesting all Assembly seats, has won a majority vote in 29 of the 54 seats decided so far in the first round. Bani-Sadr's supporters have won seven. First round results probably will not be finalized for several days, and the runoff will not be held until the first week in April. []

A senior Islamic Republic Party official said yesterday that the party will act as a bloc in the Assembly and, if the party wins a majority, it will insist that the Prime Minister either be a party member or acceptable to the party. According to the constitution, the President appoints the Prime Minister, but his choice must be approved by the Assembly. []

Bani-Sadr said in an interview on Saturday that he would ask the Assembly, which has been directed by Ayatollah Khomeini to decide the fate of the hostages, to release the hostages when it convenes--possibly not until May. The apparent victory of many Islamic Republic Party candidates, however, makes it unlikely that the Assembly will follow presidential directions. Numerous political independents will also complicate the work of the Assembly. There therefore continues to be little reason to believe that the Assembly will choose to release the hostages without further US concessions unless it has direct orders from Khomeini. []

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