

Google, Facebook launch Persian services

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The Internet has played a key role in allowing some Iranians to communicate since last week's disputed presidential elections and many international media outlets have used services like [Twitter](#) and emails in their coverage.

"We feel that launching Persian is particularly important now, given ongoing events in Iran," Google's principal scientist Franz Och said, announcing the addition of Farsi to [Google Translate](#), its free online service.

Like [YouTube](#) and Twitter, "Google Translate is one more tool that Persian speakers can use to communicate directly to the world, and vice versa -- increasing everyone's access to information," he added in a posting on Google's official blog.

Meanwhile, [Facebook](#) engineer Eric Kwan said on its blog: "Since the Iranian election last week, people around the world have increasingly been

sharing news and information on Facebook about the results and its aftermath."

He added: "Today we're making the entire site available in a beta version of Persian." Several thousand people posted a "thumbs up" reaction to the news, denoting their approval.

The BBC reported that Google and Facebook had speeded up work on their projects because of huge interest in current events in Iran.

Hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been declared the winner of the elections, provoking major protests on the streets of Tehran by supporters of his principal challenger, moderate former premier Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Many young people have been taking part in the protests.

Meanwhile, the BBC also said Friday it has increased the number of satellites carrying its BBC Persian television service to countries including Iran.

It said in a statement that the Hotbird 6 satellite which carries BBC international TV and radio services had been subjected to "deliberate interference" since last Friday.

Services will now be available via three other satellites.

"This is an important time for [Iran](#) and many Iranians are turning to the BBC for impartial and independent news and information during this crisis," said BBC World Service director Peter Horrocks.

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