

French firm studying plan for Kuwait's N-project

AFP, Kuwait City

Kuwait's Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah said in comments published yesterday that a French firm is studying a plan by the Gulf state for a civilian nuclear project to produce power.

Al-Watan daily quoted the emir as saying Kuwait is "seriously considering joining the nuclear club but only for peaceful purposes."

"A French company is taking charge of the matter," the daily quoted the emir as saying. He did not name the company.

Sheikh Sabah also said that generating power through a nuclear programme would "save large quantities of fuel being consumed by power and water desalination plants."

The emir stressed Kuwait has no military ambitions with its planned nuclear programme which will be "within international law and standards."

Suicide bomb kill four police in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Two suicide bombers killed at least four Iraqi policemen and wounded 22 in separate attacks in the violence-wracked nation yesterday, security officials said.

In the first incident, a suicide bomber killed two policemen and wounded 12 more people in central Baghdad's Karrada district, defence and interior ministry officials said.

The bomber set off an explosive belt in the middle of a patrol, the sources said, adding that seven of the casualties were police.

In Mosul, 370 km north of the capital, a suicide car bomb targeted a police roadblock, killing two police officials and wounding 10, including eight policemen, a security official said.

Over the past year the security situation has improved dramatically in Iraq, but attacks remain common in Baghdad and in provinces such as Diyala and Nineveh, of which Mosul is the capital.

Kennedy to get honorary knighthood from Britain

AFP, London

Veteran US Senator Ted Kennedy is to receive an honorary knighthood from Britain, Prime Minister Gordon Brown's office said yesterday.

Kennedy's honour -- for services to relations between the US and Britain and Northern Ireland -- was to be announced in a speech by Brown to a joint session of the US Congress later, Downing Street said.

Kennedy, 77, who was diagnosed with a malignant brain tumour last year, is the brother of the assassinated US president John F Kennedy and the most senior member of one of the top US political dynasties.

IRAN NUCLEAR STANDOFF

'Breakthrough possible if US changes attitude'

AFP, Vienna

A breakthrough is possible in the nuclear standoff between Iran and the West, if the United States changes its attitude towards Tehran, the Iranian envoy to the UN atomic watchdog said yesterday.

If Washington changed its "mentality ... and they understand that we're on an equal footing, and they come in a civilised manner to the negotiating table, then there will be a breakthrough," Iranian ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-member board here.

"But they not only have to recognise our inalienable right (to nuclear technology) for peaceful uses, but they should remove any obstacles for the implementation of these rights, including the fuel cycle and enrichment."



Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas (L) welcomes US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the Palestinian Authority headquarters in Ramallah yesterday. Clinton met Palestinian leaders in the occupied West Bank as part of her "aggressive" diplomacy in working towards a Palestinian state.

PHOTO: AFP

Americans approve of Obama's work

AFP, Washington

Americans are skeptical that President Barack Obama will solve the economic crisis within two years but still overwhelming approve his job performance, a new poll found yesterday.

Most voters also support Obama's mortgage rescue plan unveiled last month in a bid to quell a rising tide of home foreclosures -- but think it is unfair to people who played by the rules and met all their payments.

The large snapshot of more than 2,500 voters by the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute reveals deep pessimism among US voters about the state of the economy and prospects for a recovery.

Half of the survey sample was asked whether they believed that the federal government could fix the economic crisis within two years, and answered no by a margin of 68 to 26 percent.

The other slice of the survey group was asked whether Obama alone would be able to lead the country out of the economic mire within the same time period, and answered no by a 64 to 28 percent margin.

Yet Obama's approval rating, so far at least, seems immune to the impact of the worst economic crisis in decades -- 59 percent of those polled said they approved of the job their new president was doing, compared to 25 percent who did not.



Firemen leave early yesterday from the scene where a house collapsed in the western German city of Cologne. Rescue efforts were being stepped up one day after the accident for a couple still missing after a building containing Cologne's historical archives and an adjacent apartment block collapsed, German officials said.

PHOTO: AFP

Hillary vows to work for Palestinian state

AFP, Ramallah

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called on Israel to allow more aid into Gaza, blasted its plans for demolishing houses in east Jerusalem and vowed to work towards a Palestinian state as she met with president Mahmud Abbas yesterday.

"The United States aims to foster conditions in which a Palestinian state can be fully realised," she said after talks with Abbas in the occupied West Bank on the second day of a maiden trip to the region.

"Time is of the essence," she said.

US President Barack Obama has vowed to vigorously pursue Israeli-Palestinian peace talks which were relaunched to great fanfare in November 2007 but were frozen during Israel's offensive on the Gaza Strip in December and January.

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