

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."



PHOTO: AFP

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.

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.

Hillary also urged Israel to allow more humanitarian supplies into the war-shattered Gaza Strip.

"We have obviously expressed concerns about the border crossings. We want humanitarian aid to get into Gaza in sufficient amounts to alleviate the suffering of the people in Gaza," she said.

Abbas, speaking to reporters at the same press conference, made a similar call, and urged Israel to halt settlement activity and housing demolitions in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

"The incoming Israeli government ... (must) respect the roadmap and two-state solution and should stop all settlement activity and reopen the border crossings" into Gaza, Abbas said.

Both criticised the Israeli-run Jerusalem municipality's decision to destroy dozens of homes built without permits in mostly Arab east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians have demanded as their future capital.

"Clearly this kind of activity is unhelpful and not in keeping with the obligations entered into under the roadmap," Clinton said, referring to a blueprint for peace talks adopted by the international community in 2003.

"It is an issue that we intend to raise with the government in Israel and the government at the municipal level in Jerusalem because it is clearly a matter of deep concern," she added.

Abbas also spoke out against the demolitions, saying "the message to us is very clear -- whoever takes these sorts of measures does not want peace."

Obama sending 17,000 troops to Afghanistan

AFP, Washington

In his first major military move, President Barack Obama Tuesday approved the deployment of 17,000 more troops to Afghanistan, saying they were needed "to stabilize a deteriorating situation."

"There is no more solemn duty as president than the decision to deploy our armed forces into harm's way," Obama said in a statement.

"I do it today mindful that the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan demands urgent attention and swift action."

Obama said the deployment orders were in response to a months-old request by the US commander in Afghanistan, General David McKiernan, who had asked for 30,000 more troops.

"This increase is necessary to stabilize a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, which has not received the strategic attention, direction and resources it urgently requires," Obama said.

The president said he had approved a request by Defense Secretary Robert Gates to deploy a Marine Expeditionary Brigade in the spring, and an Army Stryker Brigade and support forces later this summer.

The White House said some 17,000 troops will be deployed to Afghanistan ahead of Afghan elections scheduled for August 20, significantly building up the 38,000-strong US force already on the ground battling a growing insurgency.

Asked about possible future troop deployment orders, a senior administration official told AFP they were unlikely to come before an ongoing comprehensive review of US strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan was completed.

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 overwhelmingly 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.

MILITARY CUSTODY WITHOUT TRIAL

US top court urged to mull detentions

AFP, Washington

A leading US civil rights group is urging the Supreme Court to rule whether the US president has the authority to indefinitely hold US residents and citizens in military custody without charge or trial.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) wants a ruling in the case of Ali Saleh Kahlal al-Marri, who was living in the United States on a student visa and was arrested in December 2001 and charged with credit card fraud, identity fraud and making false statements.

He was described as an Al-Qaeda sleeper agent and designated an enemy combatant in 2003, and was held in solitary confinement at a military brig in South Carolina.

The Supreme Court in December accepted

the case and was going to issue a ruling on president's authority for indefinite detention.

But President Barack Obama's administration on Friday charged Marri in federal court with alleged ties to the Al-Qaeda network. It simultaneously asked the high court to drop consideration of his case, arguing that he was no longer being held formally without charge.

The ACLU said in a statement the move means the government "has not renounced the authority to detain US residents and citizens in military custody as 'enemy combatants,' nor has it ruled out the prospect that al-Marri himself may be placed back in military detention."

A hearing has been scheduled for April 27 but the high court could decide before then to take the case, or send it back to a lower court.

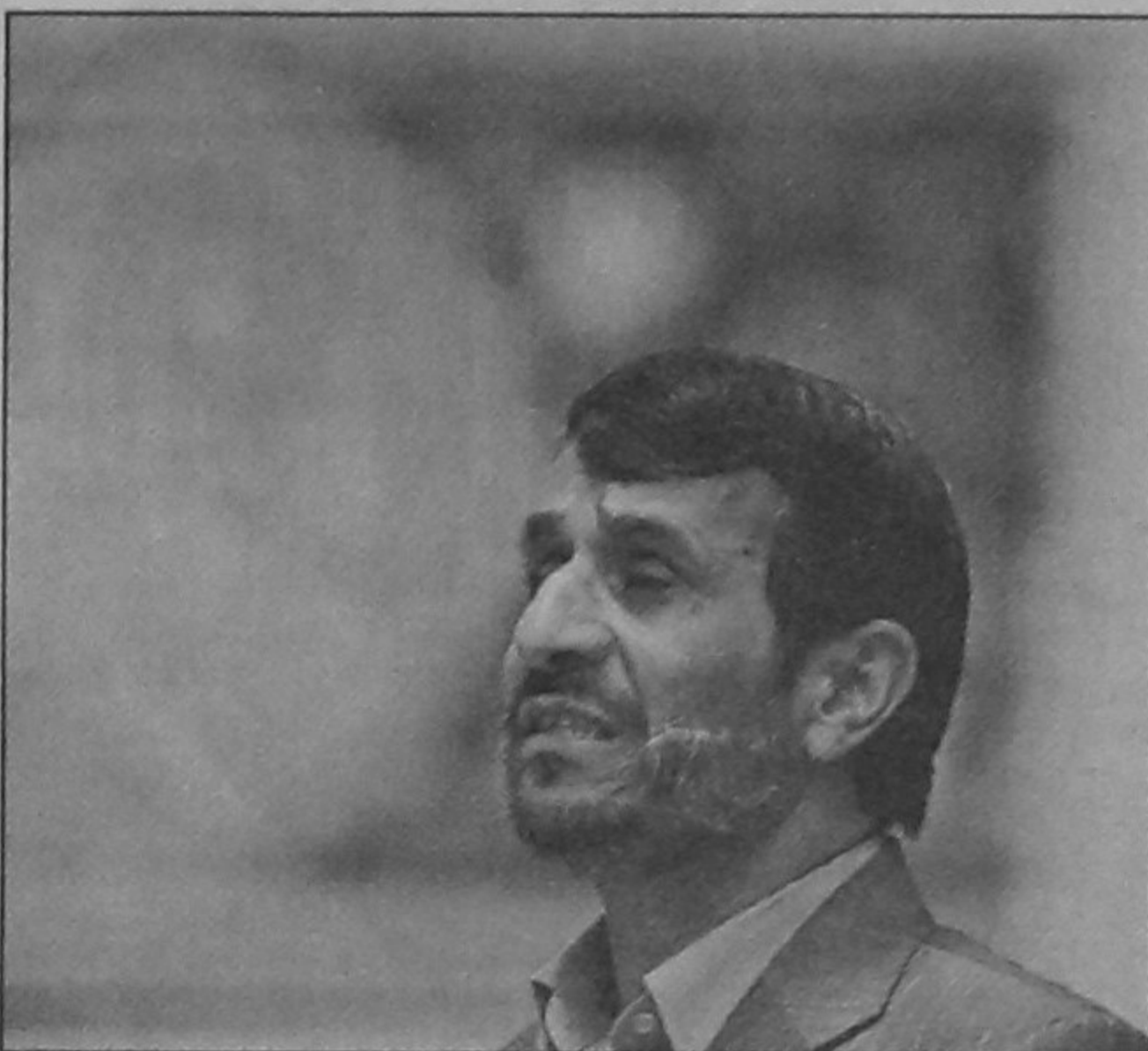


PHOTO: AFP

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad delivers a speech during a conference in Tehran in support of Gaza and Palestinians yesterday. Ahmadinejad called for setting up a "global anti-Zionist front" at the opening of the summit in aid of war-torn Gaza.

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-ravaged 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 officer 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.



PHOTO: AFP

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.

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,"

Soltanieh said.

The West accuses Iran of seeking to develop the atomic bomb under guise of a nuclear energy programme, a charge Tehran vehemently denies.

For the West, the main sticking point is Iran's refusal to suspend uranium enrichment, a process that can be used not only to make nuclear fuel, but also the fissile material for a bomb, despite three rounds of UN sanctions.

Tehran insists that, as a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it has a right to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes.

Despite a six-year investigation, the IAEA is still not in a position to definitively say that Iran's nuclear activities are entirely peaceful.

Earlier this week, IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei complained of a deadlock, with Iran stonewalling key questions on the possible

military dimension of past nuclear work and defying UN orders to stop enrichment.

But Soltanieh said the deadlock was of the West's making, not Tehran's.

If the situation really is "stalemated", "it is not a technical but a political stalemate," he said.

"It's not a technical stalemate because the agency is continuously implementing safeguards in Iran without any impediments. If the DG (director general) is right, it is a political stalemate, which has been created by a few Western countries."

On Monday, ElBaradei expressed hope that a possible shift in policy in Washington could help break the deadlock.

And on Tuesday, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany had said in a rare joint statement that they were committed to direct diplomacy with Iran.

DFID Department for International Development
An Equal Opportunity Employer

Vacancy Announcement Software Support Developer Department for International Development Bangladesh (DFIDB)

DFID Bangladesh is responsible for managing the UK's development programme in Bangladesh, the main aim of which is the elimination of poverty. In addition, we are setting up a small support team to provide software support and development services to the rest of DFID, working as part of the Information Systems Department (ISD), which is based in the UK. We now have a vacancy for 2 **Software Support Developers (Sub Band B2)**.

BACKGROUND:

The Application Development team within ISD is responsible for the development and support of a wide range of core business applications for DFID, including Finance, Project Management, HR and Knowledge and Information Management systems. DFID has a mix of both commercial and bespoke systems and operates an agile development methodology.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

The successful candidates will be part of the Bangladesh development team responsible for the support and maintenance of existing systems across the whole of DFID, and for the development of new system components. Reporting to the Support and Development Manager in DFID Bangladesh the Support Developers will:

- Provide support to existing applications.
- Maintain and further enhance existing DFID applications and integration components.
- Develop new applications using web-based technologies, translating functional requirements into technical designs.
- Comply with DFID's developer code of practice, ICT, architectural, development and Human Computer Interface standards.
- Ensure systems developments comply with accessibility and usability standards.
- Complete testing to agreed standards and introduce to live operation in accordance with DFID's change control procedures.
- Prepare user guidance/release notes for system changes.
- Maintain technical documentation, ensuring it is updated to reflect any changes.

PERSONAL SKILLS:

Candidates should have excellent skills in spoken and written English and Bangla. The selected candidates will be assertive, a self-starter and have excellent organizational, management, communication, inter-personal, analytical and judgemental skills. The post holder will be expected to complete an intensive 2-3 months induction and training programme in the United Kingdom.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

The candidate must be a Graduate, with at least a BSc in computer science or related subject. A minimum of two years systems application development/support experience across the full lifecycle is required. The candidates must have a working knowledge of service delivery management, experience of web-based development technologies and relational databases, including Microsoft development tools and technologies (including Visual Studio, ASP.NET).

CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

The selected candidates will be awarded permanent contracts, subject to satisfactory performance during a probationary period. A competitive salary starting at BDT 66,970 per month, with annual progression, plus a benefit package, will be offered. For an application form please go to the website www.eshna.com

Completed application form along with a CV should be returned to **Eshna Consulting Team Ltd, House 30 (new) 132 (old), Road 3, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka 1205 no later than 15:00 hours on Thursday 26 March 2009**. Selection is on merit although you will need to hold Bangladeshi citizenship or have a Bangladesh work permit. Applications are welcome from all ethnic groups, women and disabled people.



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