

Iran urges China to resist sanctions pressure

New navy ship successfully fires missile

AP, Tehran

Iran yesterday urged China to resist pressure by the United States and its allies for new sanctions against Tehran over its nuclear program.

Washington and other Western powers are seeking a new round of UN sanctions against Iran because of its refusal to halt uranium enrichment, a process that can produce either fuel for a nuclear reactor or a warhead.

"We are hopeful that China will not be affected by other's demands and will have its own independent policy. We hope such independent, powerful countries will block bullying powers," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said Tuesday.

China and Russia have not directly responded on the push for a fourth round of sanctions, but they have emphasized the need for negotiations.

Meanwhile, Iran's official news agency says its navy has successfully test fired a sea missile from a newly commissioned destroyer in its southern waters.

IRNA said Tuesday the anti-ship missile, dubbed Noor, or Light, destroyed its target. The report doesn't elaborate on the range or give the exact location of the launch but said the missile was fired from the Jamaran destroyer. The ship was inaugurated in February in a southern Iranian port.

Iraq awaits vote results

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq awaited initial results yesterday from polls touted as a test of its young democracy, with Baghdad holding the key as the prime minister's list and its top secular rival jockeyed for pole position.

Thirty percent of votes were due to be counted by the evening, giving Iraq's complex range of political blocs their first official indication of how they fared in the second general election since the 2003 fall of Saddam Hussein.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, a Shia who helped ease the country's deadly sectarian strife, emerged Monday as the front-runner, according to estimates AFP obtained from officials across the country.

But he could yet face a tough battle to cling to power after the vote on Sunday that saw millions defy bomb, mortar and rocket attacks which killed 38 people to cast their ballots.

Estimates of early trends in the Baghdad region, which with its 70 parliamentary seats could swing the result of the vote, are not yet available.

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However, officials said on Monday that Maliki's political bloc was leading the count in nine of Iraq's 18 provinces.

His State of Law Alliance was ahead in Shia regions, while Iyad Allawi, a former premier who heads the Iraqiya list, led in Sunni areas, according to estimates AFP obtained from officials across the country.

The complete results will be announced on March 18 and the final official results -- after any appeals are taken into account -- will come at the end of the month.

Months of horse-trading are then likely before a new government is formed.

Early indications were positive for Maliki, however. A source close to him said it now looked as if his list would secure 100 seats in the 325-seat parliament.

Maliki was appointed premier in 2005 as a compromise candidate, and his administration, with the essential help of the US military, sharply reduced the Sunni-Shia sectarian strife that killed tens of thousands of Iraqis.

Israel, Syria eye nuke plants

AP, Paris

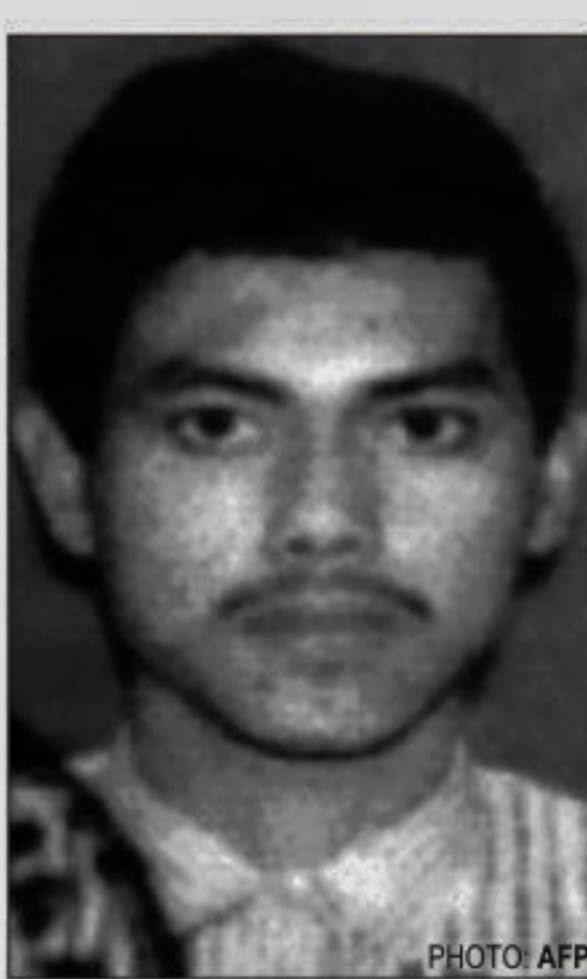
Mideast rivals Israel and Syria yesterday each announced ambitions to develop nuclear energy, with Israel facing the prospect that its plan could bring new international attention to its secretive nuclear activities.

Both countries laid out their hopes at an international conference on civilian nuclear energy at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Civilian nuclear energy contributes far less to global warming than burning of fossil fuels but worries many because of the risks of long-term waste storage and the possibility of proliferation.

"We need this energy source because it is environmentally clean," Israeli Infrastructure Minister Uzi Landau told The Associated Press in Paris. He called Israel's need for nuclear energy "imminent" but gave no timeline for an atomic power plant.

In an interview on the sidelines of the conference, Landau said his country would open up any nuclear plants to international inspections but said he saw no reason for his country to allow inspectors into what are believed to be nuclear weapons sites, or to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

Landau's announcement Tuesday could complicate US-led efforts to impose a new round of sanctions against Iran for its refusal to cooperate with international nuclear inspectors. Tehran says its uranium enrichment activities are peaceful but several world powers suspect it is seeking weapons.



Bali bomb mastermind believed killed

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesian counter-terrorism forces killed a man believed to have been one of the masterminds of the 2002 Bali bombings yesterday during a raid in the capital Jakarta, police and reports said.

The man was among three people killed in two raids on the city's outskirts.

Police did not disclose the identities of the three, saying "a forensic examination was still being carried out". But a police source told AFP one was believed to be Dulmatin, a leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) militant group and an al-Qaeda-trained bomb-making specialist for whom Washington is offering a 10-million-dollar bounty.

It is not the first report of his death. In 2008, Philippine military officials said they believed Dulmatin's body had been exhumed on the island of Tawi-tawi.

The security ministry's counter-terrorism chief, Ansyad Mbai, told AFP that "if it's true that it's him, we will be very grateful that the most wanted terrorist has been killed in Pamulang. It will be a big relief to us."

At a news conference, national police spokesman Edward Artonang said that one of the three was killed in a gunfight with counter-terrorism police at an Internet cafe in Pamulang city west of the capital.

Biden sees 'moment of real opportunity' in ME peace process

AP, Jerusalem

Israelis and Palestinians face a "moment of real opportunity" to make peace after agreeing to resume American-brokered talks, US Vice President Joe Biden said yesterday as he launched the highest-level visit by an Obama administration official to Israel.

Monday's announcement of indirect talks, which will be held through a US mediator, broke a 14-month deadlock and marked President Barack Obama's first substantive diplomatic achievement in the region.

Joe Biden also pledged Washington's full commitment to Israel's security while throwing his weight behind a renewal of Middle East peace talks after a 14-month hiatus.

"The cornerstone of the relationship is our absolute, total, unwavering commitment to Israel's security," Biden said after talks with hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem.

"Progress occurs in the Middle East when everyone knows there is simply no space between the United States and Israel. There is no space between the United States and Israel when it comes to Israel's security."

But the new peace push is sure to face enormous challenges, including sharp divisions among the Palestinians and a hard-line Israeli government seen as unlikely to make wide-ranging concessions.

"I think we are at a moment of real opportunity, and I think that the interests of the Israeli and Palestinian people, if everybody stops and takes a deep breath, are actually more in line than they are opposites," Biden said ahead of a meeting with Israel's president, Shimon Peres.



US Vice President Joe Biden hands Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu a pen to sign a certificate at the Prime Minister's residence on Tuesday. Biden pledged US's full commitment to Israel's security while a renewal of Middle East peace talks after a 14-month hiatus.

Obesity when positive!

ANI, Washington

While metabolic syndrome is apparently related to obesity, researchers have said that the link is not just negative.

Metabolic syndrome is characterised by insulin resistance, high cholesterol, fatty liver, and a greater risk for diabetes, heart disease, and stroke - all of which are related to obesity.

But, Roger Unger of the University of Texas Southwestern at Dallas, said that obesity is the body's way of storing lipids where they belong, in fat tissue, in an effort to protect our other organs from lipids' toxic effects.

It is when the surplus of calories coming in gets to be too much for our fat tissue to handle that those lipids wind up in other places they shouldn't be, and the cascade of symptoms known as metabolic syndrome sets in.

Woman gives birth - just 3hrs after finding she's pregnant!

ANI, London

Belinda Waite, a 21-year-old woman from Bampton, Devon, gave birth to a baby girl - just three hours after doctors told her she was pregnant.

During the past 9 months, hairdresser Waite had been to her local hospital several times. The doctors at the hospital had told her that she had a severe case of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and gout.

In fact she was pregnant with a healthy baby girl who arrived a month ago, reports The Telegraph. Waite, known as Billy, said: "You read about these stories in magazines but you never think they happen to real people and I certainly never thought it would happen to me."

Waite was staying with her partner Wyane Boyles, 28, when she unexpectedly went into labour.

Japan govt criticises US 'secret pacts'

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's new centre-left government criticised its conservative predecessors yesterday for keeping secret nuclear and military deals made with the United States during the Cold War.

A panel of historians Tuesday released a report commissioned by the six-month-old government on the "secret treaties," confirming previous reports from whistleblowers, media leaks and declassified US documents.

The report officially confirmed that, from the 1960s, Japan quietly allowed US warships to carry nuclear weapons across Japanese territory and, in the case of an emergency, to take them to US bases on southern Okinawa island.

The tacit agreements, previously denied, were reached despite Japan's pacifist stance and its official three "non-nuclear principles" of not making, possessing or allowing on its soil atomic bombs, the panel found.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada told a news conference: "It is extremely regrettable that this problem for such a long time remained under cover, to the Japanese, even to parliamentary sessions, even after the end of the Cold War."

Okada said he could not rule out that US nuclear weapons had been brought into Japan but said he believed this had not happened since the United States in 1991 announced the withdrawal of tactical nuclear arms from its warships.

Japan -- since its World War II defeat by the United States, which dropped nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- has maintained a pacifist and anti-nuclear stance, but has relied on the superpower for nuclear deterrence.

Iran warns 17 media publications

AFP, Tehran

Iran's press watchdog has warned 17 publications, including a leading reformist daily, accusing them of having breached media regulations, Mehr news agency reported yesterday.

Mohammad Ali Ramin, a watchdog official and deputy culture and Islamic guidance minister, said the publications were "not committed to journalistic duties, breached media regulations, printed superficial materials and propagated materialism."

The leading reformist daily, Bahar (Spring), was accused of having published "rumours and lies," Ramin said, quoted by Mehr.

Ahmadinejad to visit Afghanistan

AFP, Tehran

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is to head to Afghanistan on Wednesday, his first trip to Tehran's eastern neighbour since the re-election last August of his counterpart Hamid Karzai.

"The president is going on Wednesday" to Afghanistan, foreign ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told reporters at his weekly press conference.

N Korea creates mid-range missile division

AP, Seoul

North Korea has recently created an army division in charge of newly developed intermediate-range missiles capable of striking US forces in Japan and Guam, a South Korean news agency said yesterday.

The report came as North Korea stepped up its war rhetoric against the US and South Korea after the allies started their annual drills aimed at improving their defence capabilities.



British Prime Minister Gordon Brown (L) greets King Abdullah II of Jordan as he arrives at 10 Downing Street, in central London, on Tuesday. King Abdullah II of Jordan was in London for a working visit.

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for Project "Operation Umbrella"

Grameenphone Ltd. is the leading Telecommunications Company in Bangladesh. Grameenphone has taken an initiative to appoint compliant and professional business organizations in order to provide support for Operation & Maintenance Works in its Network over the country.

Grameenphone is thus requesting Expressions of Interest (EOI) from interested business organization for Operation Umbrella Project as mentioned below:

Subject: Providing support for generator maintenance, air conditioner maintenance, auto generator refueling work, civil works maintenance, portable generator running, BTS & fiber route security & patrolling and electricity bill collection & payment under a bundled package as per Grameenphone requirements.

Closing date for receipt of EOI : March 18, 2010
 Reference No. : EOI/GP/OU2010
 EOI should be addressed to : DGM, IO Unit, Supply Chain Management Department
 Grameenphone Ltd., Celebration Point, Plot 3 & 5, Road 113/A
 Gulshan - 2, Dhaka -1212, Fax: +880-2-9882970
 E-mail Address : localprocurement@grameenphone.com

Conditions:

- 1) In view of the nature of the services, only those organizations possessing substantial and proven track records of performance in the same field of activities are encouraged to participate. Firms should have REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE and REGIONAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT to provide services at the regional level.
- 2) The interested vendors need to provide support for all the above mentioned jobs as a package.
- 3) Only those organizations possessing substantial financial capability to carry out the mentioned jobs are encouraged to apply.
- 4) Compliant with all related laws in Bangladesh including Bangladesh Labor Law, 2006 for providing the services.
- 5) Only prospective vendors that respond and are deemed to be selected, upon completion of an evaluation of their application and /or EOI, together with the documents and information supporting their qualifications and experience may receive invitation to attend road-show presentation to understand the scope of work in details and request to submit tender later on. The submission of EOI is not a guarantee for the required services. Thus, submission of the EOI does not automatically guarantee that the firm will be considered for receipt of the RFQ or further invitation when issued.
- 6) Grameenphone reserves the right to change or cancel the requirement at any time during the evaluation of EOI and/or during further selection or during proposal evaluation process and also to reject any or all expressions of interest at any time without prior notice.

An Expression of Interest (EOI) shall consist of the following documents:

- a. Name and address (office responding to this EOI) of the firm with all contact details.
- b. Firm's main Line of Work.
- c. Proof of experience (at least one year).
- d. Other experience with other Multi-National Companies, UN Organizations, Large Local Companies etc. (if any).
- e. Valid Legal Documents (i.e. Trade License, VAT Registration Certificate, TIN Certificate, Bank Solvency etc. as well as for limited company Memorandum of Association, Articles of Association and Certificate of Incorporation under proper authority and for partnership firm, respective partnership agreement).
- f. Other documentary evidence which proves the fulfilling of the conditions mentioned above.

Those who feel interest are requested to respond by e-mail to localprocurement@grameenphone.com on or before the closing date.