



PHOTO: AFP

Kyrgyz opposition supporters attack a riot policemen's vehicle during an anti government protest in Bishkek yesterday. Opposition followers killed Kyrgyzstan's interior minister, took the deputy prime minister hostage and captured state television in a deadly revolt against President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.

Iraq declares open war with Qaeda

AFP, Baghdad

Deadly bomb attacks in Baghdad are aimed at pressuring political blocs battling to form a government, a top politician said yesterday, as Iraq declared "open war" with al-Qaeda over the surge in violence.

Six bombs in the capital killed at least 35 people on Tuesday; two days after another co-ordinated set of attacks against foreign embassies killed 30 people.

The sudden wave of attacks has fuelled fears that insurgents are making a return due to a political impasse following March 7 elections.

Israel to maintain nuke ambiguity

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel plans to remain ambiguous over its nuclear policy, with US backing, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said yesterday.

"This policy of ambiguity constitutes one of the pillars of Israeli national security and the Americans consider it very important," Ayalon told army radio.

"There is no reason for the Americans to change their approach or for Israel to change its position," he said.

Baghdad airport closed

AFP, Baghdad

Baghdad International Airport was closed morning for unspecified reasons, airport checkpoint staff and officials said yesterday.

Staff controlling checkpoints refused entry to all passengers and were only allowing airport staff through security checks.

Security and airline officials gave differing accounts for the reasons behind the closure.

A spokesman for Iraqi Airways said the airport was closed for "technical reasons" without elaborating, and said it would be re-opened in the afternoon.

UK ELECTION 2010

Party leaders go head-to-head

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and opposition leader David Cameron braced yesterday for their final parliamentary clash before the May 6 election as campaigning gathered pace.

After Brown finally called the election on Tuesday, party leaders wasted no time in hitting the campaign trail in what is expected to be one of the tightest election races in decades.

Brown's centre-left Labour party is battling for a historic fourth term against Cameron's centre-right Conservatives, who have seen their double-digit opinion poll lead shrink in recent weeks to just a few points.

The two men were to go head-to-head in the House of Commons for the prime minister's last weekly question and answer session

(PMQs) before parliament is dissolved Monday.

The economy is shaping up to be the key election battleground as Britain tentatively emerges from a deep recession, and Brown repeated his claim Wednesday that the Conservatives would threaten the recovery.

Brown attacked their plans to scrap planned rises in payroll taxes as unsustainable given Britain's deficit of 167 billion pounds (254 billion dollars, 188 billion euros).

"Britain is on the road to recovery. Now don't put that at risk. The Conservatives' policy will take six billion (pounds) out of the economy," he said in a television interview.

Cameron is expected to attack Labour's tax plans in a visit to businesses in the northwest of England and Wales later Wednesday, highlighting how they will "kill economic recovery", a party spokesman said.

IRAN SANCTIONS

China to meet world powers

AFP, AP, Paris/Teheran

China, which has opposed new UN sanctions on Iran over its nuclear programme, has agreed to meet world powers Thursday in New York to discuss punitive measures, France said.

"The Chinese have agreed to speak tomorrow in New York among the six," Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said, referring to the negotiating group comprising Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

A top Iranian official says a nuclear fuel swap

with the West, initially proposed under a UN-drafted plan, is still on the table.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki has told reporters that Iran is showing flexibility how to effect an exchange of its low enriched uranium for higher enriched nuclear fuel if the West is ready for a deal.

Iran's conditions for an exchange do not meet those of the proposed UN plan, however.

Mottaki said Wednesday that Iran will meet its fuel needs itself if no deal is reached.

Uranium can be enriched to make nuclear fuel, or at higher levels, weapons.

Iraq ex-PM Jaafari wins referendum

AFP, Baghdad

A radical Shia cleric's supporters have rejected the main candidates for prime minister, preferring an ex-premier under whom Iraq's sectarian conflict erupted, the results of an unofficial ballot showed yesterday.

Former prime minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari garnered nearly a quarter of the votes in the two-day referendum organised by powerful anti-US cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

The poll has no legal standing and its results come as sitting Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and ex-premier Iyad Allawi battle to form a government following Iraq's general election last month.

Neither leader holds enough seats to claim a parliamentary majority.

'N Korea leader sets world fashion trend'

AFP, Seoul

The trademark suit sported by North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il is now in fashion worldwide thanks to his greatness, Pyongyang's official website said yesterday.

Uriminzokkiri, quoting an article in communist party newspaper Rodong Sinmun, said the modest-looking suits have gripped people's imagination and become a global vogue.

Ahmadinejad warns Obama of 'tooth breaking response'

AFP, Tehran

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad yesterday warned his US counterpart Barack Obama of a "tooth-breaking" response, as he condemned Washington's new nuclear policy.

Ahmadinejad lashed out after the United States unveiled new limits on use of the nation's nuclear arsenal, but suggested that exceptions could be made for "outliers" such as Iran and North Korea, both accused by the West of flouting UN resolutions concerning their nuclear programmes.

"I hope these published comments are not true... he (Obama) has threatened with nuclear and chemical weapons those nations which do not submit to the greed of the United States," Ahmadinejad said in speech broadcast live on state television.

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PHOTO: AFP

The solar impulse aircraft, a pioneering Swiss bid to fly around the world on solar energy takes off on its first test flight yesterday from western Switzerland. The tests are due to build up to a first non-stop 36-hour flight through darkness, followed by a five-stage flight around the world in 2012.

RANGS advertisement for power supplies. Features a large question mark and lists various power supply models with prices: 250VA (188,000), 350VA (199,000), 400VA (229,000), 650VA (229,000), 750Watt (18,990), 2.5KVA (18,990), 2KVA (12,990), 1KVA (102,000), 2.2KVA (180,000), 3.6KVA (190,000), 4.8KVA (5.5KVA) (209,000). Includes a crossed-out image of a power supply and a light bulb.