

Abbas demands settlement freeze during ME talks

AFP, Jerusalem

US envoy George Mitchell headed to the Middle East yesterday to try to rescue peace talks as Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas demanded the renewal of a moratorium on Israeli settlements.

The negotiations, relaunched on September 2 after months of tortuous shuttle diplomacy, were on the brink of collapse after a 10-month moratorium on the building of new settler homes in the West Bank expired on Sunday.

Abbas said he will not officially respond to the move until he meets with the Palestinian leadership this week and Arab foreign ministers on October 4, but that settlements should be halted for the duration of the peace talks.

"We demand a moratorium for as long as there are negotiations, because for as long as there are negotiations there is hope," he told a French radio station on Tuesday during a visit to Paris.

"We don't want to stop these negotiations, but if settlement building continues, we will be obliged to stop,"

Abbas said.

He added that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "should understand that peace is more important than settlement building."

Netanyahu and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton discussed the moratorium by telephone late Monday in talks that were described by State Department spokesman Philip Crowley as "very significant, very detailed, very direct."

"The prime minister understands what our policies are. We understand his ongoing political difficulties," Crowley said.

"We believe he's sincerely interested in the process, recognises its importance."

Crowley had earlier praised Abbas for showing "restraint" and not immediately backing out of the negotiations.

Netanyahu's refusal to renew the moratorium has thrown the peace talks into jeopardy and has drawn widespread international criticism, including from the United States, Britain, the European Union and the United Nations.



A Palestinian woman and her child walk past Israeli riot police in the east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan on September 28, 2010 following small clashes between Palestinian youth and Israeli forces. Meanwhile, in an Israeli overnight air raid on southern Gaza 3 Palestinians were killed.

Australian PM's majority slashed in rocky start

AFP, Sydney

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard's tiny majority was slashed to the bare minimum yesterday during a rocky start to the new-look parliament led by the first minority government since World War II.

The centre-left Labor leader warned of "remarkable and demanding times" as she was forced to re-elect party colleague Harry Jenkins as speaker, depriving her precarious ruling coalition of a vital vote as parliament resumed.

Julia, Australia's first woman prime minister, now has just 75 votes in the 150-member House of Representatives against 74 for conservative leader Tony Abbott, who tore up a deal that would have secured her a two-seat majority.

The Welsh-born former industrial lawyer teetered on the brink of catastrophe after August 21 elections created the first hung parliament in 70 years, before cobbling together a fragile coalition government.

US criticises 'unbalanced' Gaza flotilla probe

AFP, Geneva

The United States yesterday criticised a UN probe into Israel's storming of a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, urging the Human Rights Council to prevent the report from being used to torpedo peace talks.

"We are concerned by the report's unbalanced language, tone and conclusions," US ambassador Eileen Donahoe told the Human Rights Council.

"We urge that this report not be used for actions that could disrupt the direct Israeli-Palestinian talks now underway or actions that could make it harder," she added.

A probe ordered by the UN Human Rights Council said last week there was clear evidence to back a prosecution against Israel for killing and torture when troops stormed the flotilla in May, leaving nine Turkish activists dead.

The report also threw out Israel's argument that the activists were violent, thereby justifying the decision by soldiers to open fire.

It found that no offensive weapons were taken on board any of the vessels of the flotilla except a few catapults.

From the outset, Israel has rejected the probe as biased.

Other Western states however, called for the report to be transmitted to the separate United Nations probe into the incident which was set up by UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon.

Switzerland said it hopes that the separate inquiry "would take into account the analysis and conclusions of the Human Rights Council's probe."

The European Union also "encouraged Israel to follow-up on the conclusions" of the rights inquiry.

The Israeli and Palestinian leaders relaunched peace negotiations earlier this month but the fledgling process is already in danger after the expiry of a moratorium on Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Iran to press for recognition of 'nuke rights'

AFP, Tehran

Iran will press to have its "nuclear rights" recognised in talks with world powers who accuse Tehran of seeking atomic weapons, a foreign ministry spokesman told reporters yesterday.

"Iran has announced its view points and readiness for talks with the P5+1. We are seeking to have Iran's nuclear rights recognised in these talks," Ramin Mehmanparast said at his weekly press briefing.

He said Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili was seeking to set "a date and venue" to meet EU foreign affairs chief Catherine Ashton, who represents permanent UN Security Council members and Germany -- known as the P5+1.

N Korea's Kim makes son 4-star general

AP, Seoul

North Korea's Kim Jong Il made his elusive youngest son a four-star general in a major promotion seen yesterday as confirmation that he is slated to become the country's next leader.

The announcement was published in state media hours before a historic Workers' Party meeting Tuesday where Kim, 68 and apparently in deteriorating health, was expected to grant son Kim Jong Un and other family members top posts in plans to take the communist dynasty into a third generation.

The North Korean capital was in a festive mood, with banners and placards celebrating the meeting, where Kim Jong Il was re-elected to the party's top position of general secretary. It is the communist country's biggest political gathering in 30 years.

The succession within the opaque

regime is of regional significance because of Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs and continuing tensions between North Korea and rival South Korea where the US retains a major military presence.

It was the North Korean state media's first mention of Kim Jong Un, who has remained so well hidden from the outside world that not even his face or exact age can be confirmed. He is believed to be 27 or 28, and is said to have been schooled in Switzerland and educated at Kim Il Sung Military University in Pyongyang.

However, it is clear that "Kim Jong Un's promotion is the starting point for his formal succession to power," said Kim Yong-hyun, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Dongguk University.

"It's clearly the biggest news we've had from North Korea since the death of Kim Il Sung," said Peter Beck, a Council on Foreign Relations-Hitachi research fellow

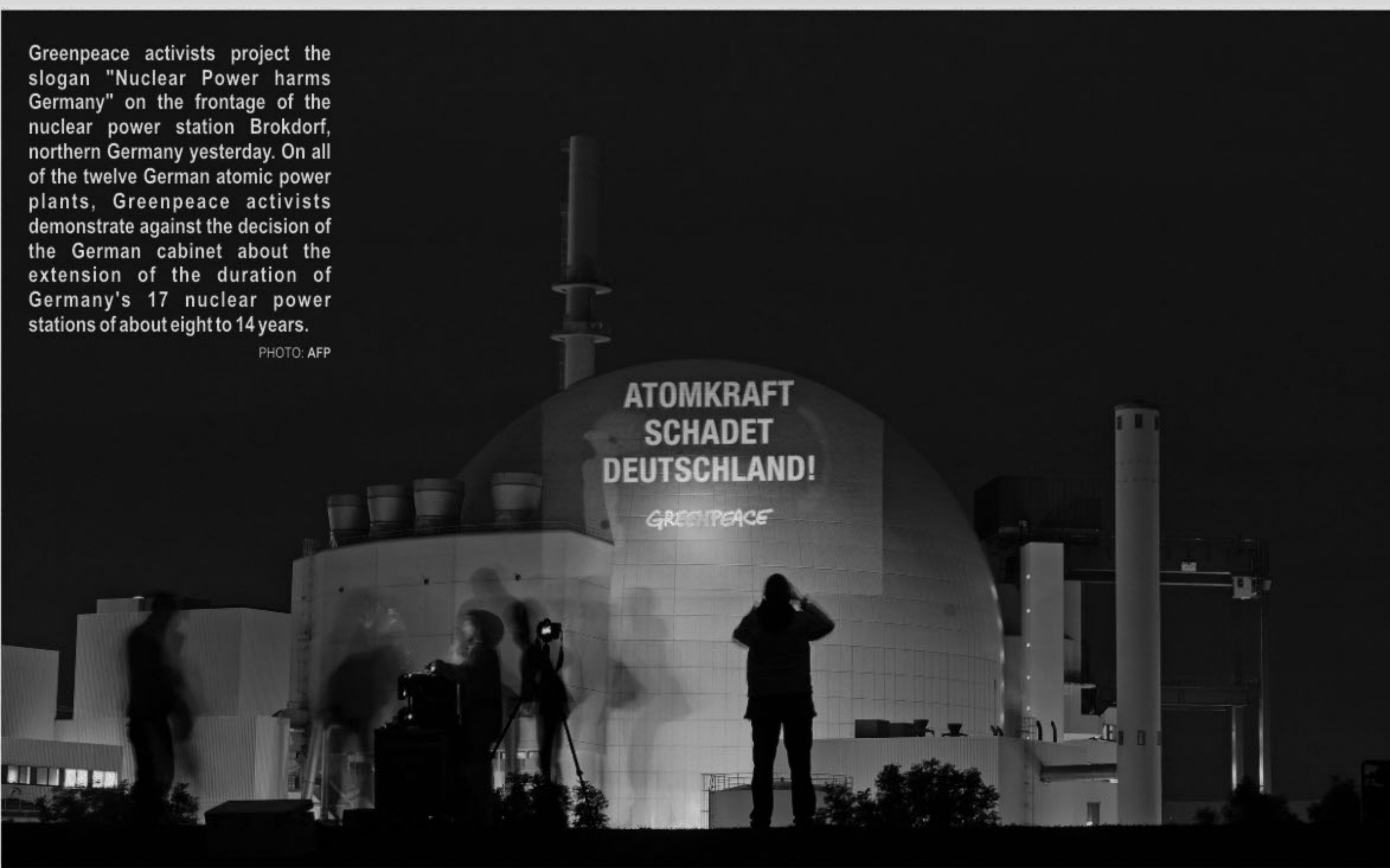
at Keio University in Tokyo.

"I think it clearly demonstrates that Kim Jong Il is committed to maintaining control of the country within his family," he said.

The appointment also appears aimed at putting the son at the helm of his father's "songun," or military-first, policy. He is expected to take up other top military jobs such as commander of the 1.2 million-member military, analyst Cheong Seong-chang of the private Sejong Institute think tank said.

The secrecy surrounding the succession process is typical of North Korea, and reminiscent of Kim Jong Il's own rise to power.

Kim Jong Il was 31 when he won the No. 2 post in the ruling Workers' Party in 1973, an appointment seen as a key step in the path to succeeding his father, North Korea founder Kim Il Sung.



Greenpeace activists project the slogan "Nuclear Power harms Germany" on the frontage of the nuclear power station Brokdorf, northern Germany yesterday. On all of the twelve German atomic power plants, Greenpeace activists demonstrate against the decision of the German cabinet about the extension of the duration of Germany's 17 nuclear power stations of about eight to 14 years.

UN chief backs call for 'inclusive' Myanmar election

BBC ONLINE

Myanmar's upcoming elections will not be credible without the release of political prisoners, including democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said.

Ban was speaking after a ministerial meeting in New York of the so-called "Group of Friends" of Myanmar.

He said the group had called for a "more inclusive" poll on 7 November.

Suu Kyi's party won Myanmar's last election in 1990 but was never allowed to take power by the ruling junta.

The November poll is part of the junta's long-announced "roadmap to democracy", but critics have dismissed it as a sham designed to keep the military in power.

SWISS CASE REOPENING Pak SC orders govt to probe graft

AP, Islamabad

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Monday again ordered the government to ask Swiss authorities to reopen a money-laundering case against the president, raising the stakes in a case that has triggered speculation over the future of the Western-backed administration.

The court proceedings came after weeks of criticism against the democratically elected government over its handling of this summer's floods and doubts it can handle the reconstruction, strengthening a sense in some quarters that the government is in trouble.

The government's supporters dismiss such talk as baseless rumours that have regularly cropped up since it took office 2 1/2 years ago. Even some of its critics say the coalition, however bad, must be allowed to complete its term to cement democratic traditions in nation that has suffered several military coups.

Stability in Pakistan is regarded as important to US hopes of achieving success across the border in Afghanistan, as well as in the nuclear-armed country's own fight against an al-Qaeda and Taliban insurgency that shows few signs of ebbing more than three years after it began.

The dispute between the court and the government has been simmering since December, when judges struck down an amnesty protecting President Asif Ali Zardari and hundreds of other politicians from prosecution on graft and other cases and ordered them reopened.

On Monday, Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry summoned government lawyers to ask them whether they had implemented the order. Standing in front of him and two judges in the Supreme Court building, they were unable to report much progress.

Taliban making overtures for peace

Says Petraeus

AFP, Kabul

The commander of Nato troops in Afghanistan said yesterday that the Taliban are approaching the Afghan government and foreign forces about laying down arms after almost nine years of insurgency.

US General David Petraeus, who commands more than 150,000 Nato and US troops in Afghanistan, said many small insurgent groups had already made "overtures" to Nato forces about quitting the fight.

"There have already been 20 or so overtures from small groups around the country," he told AFP, referring to a programme aimed at reintegrating mid-level Taliban commanders and grassroots fighters back into Afghan society.

He said Nato supported efforts by President Hamid Karzai to open peace talks with the Taliban leadership and in some cases had helped the process along.

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EXTENSION OF DATE FOR TENDER SUBMISSION

INVITATION FOR SELECTION OF VENDOR FOR CONSTRUCTION OF STEEL FOOT OVER BRIDGE AT PROGATI SHARANI, DHAKA

Sealed offers are hereby invited from the experienced, bonafide and reputed contractors / vendors for Design, Drawing and Construction of a Steel Foot Over Bridge with necessary RCC works at Progati Sharani, Dhaka.

The following changes has been made in the invitation for tender :

	Previous Date	New Date
Last Date of Selling	19 September, 2010	07 October, 2010
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Opening Date	30 September, 2010	10 October, 2010 at 3:45 p.m.

All other terms and conditions remain unchanged. NSU Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the offers without showing any reason.

Director (Administration) and In-charge (Logistics & Resources)
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