

NUCLEAR TALKS Iran, powers lock horns in Geneva

AFP, Geneva

Iran and world powers yesterday locked horns in intense and difficult talks on a preliminary but landmark nuclear accord, with Tehran warning that "serious issues" still had to be resolved.

Both sides stressed however that the gathering, seen as the best hope in years to resolve the standoff over Iran's controversial nuclear programme after a decade of rising tensions, was constructive.

The United States, China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany -- the P5+1 -- want Iran to freeze parts of its nuclear programme in return for minor relief from painful sanctions.

Yesterday's talks are aimed at obtaining a "first phase" deal which would build trust and ease tensions while Iran and the six powers hammer out a final accord that ends once and for all fears that Tehran will get the bomb.

But both sides warned that the negotiations would be tough.

Iran's lead negotiator Abbas Araqchi said that "serious issues remain to be a source of difference", following a meeting between the powers' chief negotiator Catherine Ashton and Foreign Minister Mohammad Jarad Zarif.

Ashton's spokesman said that her talks with Zarif, due to resume at 1330 GMT, had been "very substantial and detailed". A meeting of all seven parties is expected to be later yesterday, with bilateral talks to follow.

The proposed deal includes the International Atomic Energy Agency having greater inspection rights and Iran's stockpile of medium-enriched uranium removed. This also grants Iran to enrich Uranium up to 5 percent. Construction would also stop at the Arak reactor, a facility that could provide Iran with plutonium for a bomb.

Western powers say that the relief from painful sanctions that Iran would get would be minor and that the main oil and banking sanctions would stay during this period.

Ukraine rejects bills to release Tymoshenko

AFP, Kiev

The Ukrainian parliament yesterday voted against bills that would free jailed opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko, dealing a potentially fatal blow to its chances of signing a historic trade deal with the EU at a summit this month.

Watched by special EU envoys Aleksander Kwasniewski and Pax Cox, the Verkhovna Rada rejected all six bills that had been put forward on the treatment of convicts abroad after they failed to gain the support of President Viktor Yanukovich's ruling party.

Opposition lawmakers shouted "shame" as the bills were rejected in the 450-seat parliament.

The six bills failed to earn the 226 votes necessary to pass, with fewer than 200 lawmakers supporting the legislation, an AFP correspondent said.

EU leaders have made clear that Ukraine will only be able to sign a broad political and trade agreement considered the first step to eventual membership at the November 28-29 summit in Vilnius if it allows some form of release to Tymoshenko who was jailed in 2011 on abuse of authority charges.



Members of NGOs walk out of United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 19 in Warsaw, yesterday. They protested as they claim talks were 'on track to deliver virtually nothing'.

UN climate talks in trouble

AFP, Warsaw

Exasperated green groups walked out of faltering UN climate talks in Warsaw yesterday as rich and poor nations bickered about who must do what to curb planet warming.

The negotiations entered their penultimate day in a stalemate over how to curb dangerous greenhouse-gas emissions and channel aid to poor, climate-vulnerable states.

In a dramatic flourish, six environment and development groups walked out, saying the annual round of talks had delivered little more than hot air and no action since opening on November 11.

"The Warsaw climate conference, which should have been an important step in the just transition to a sustainable future, is on track to deliver virtually nothing," said a statement announcing the groups' decision.

The signatories are Greenpeace, WWF, Oxfam, ActionAid, the International Trade Union Confederation and Friends

of the Earth.

"The stakes are too high to allow governments to make a mockery of these talks," said an Oxfam statement.

The groups pointed the finger at Poland for its "endorsement" of a global coal summit held in the same city and at the same time as the talks, Japan for slashing its carbon emissions goal, and Australia's decision to scrap a carbon tax on high emitters.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) attend the talks as observers and advisors. Their presence endorses the role of civil society in these important, but hugely complex negotiations. But decision-making is reserved for UN member states.

On Wednesday, UN chief Ban Ki-moon had urged nations to "much bolder" action to stave off an existential peril for the Earth.

Gathering more than 190 nations, the talks are meant to pave the way to a pact to be signed in Paris by the end of 2015 to limit warming to 2.0 degrees

Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

At its heart would be national pledges to tame carbon gases emitted by burning coal, oil and gas, which provide the backbone of the world's energy supply today.

On current emissions trends, scientists warn the Earth could face warming of 4.0 C or higher -- a recipe for catastrophic storms, droughts, floods and land-gobbling sea-level rise.

Developing countries want wealthy nations to shoulder a bigger share of emissions cuts to make up for a long history of fossil-fuel combustion. The West, though, insists that emerging economies must do their fair share.

Another quarrel is over money. Developing nations are challenging wealthy countries to honour a 2009 pledge to muster up to \$100 billion by 2020, up from \$10 billion a year from 2010 to 2012.

But, the developed world is wary of unveiling a detailed plan at this stage, or pledging any new short-term figures.

JFK'S 50TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY Obama hails his 'daring' legacy

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama hailed the "daring" legacy and the "sober, square-jawed idealism" of John F. Kennedy on Wednesday, as he marked the 50th anniversary of the 35th US president's assassination.

Obama also paid homage, alongside fellow two-term Democratic president Bill Clinton, at Kennedy's hillside grave to honor a man murdered at the age of just 46, but whose legend endures for Americans as a symbol of their nation's spirit and possibility.

Later, at a dinner honoring winners of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, an award minted by Kennedy, Obama said that the wealthy slain president could have enjoyed a life of luxury and ease, but picked instead "a life in the arena."

"Fifty years later, John F. Kennedy stands for posterity as he did in life, young, bold and daring," said Obama, who was two years old when the 35th US president was killed.

Obama and Clinton, along with First Lady Michelle Obama and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, earlier laid a large blue and white wreath on the sun-dappled grave of JFK, who was killed in Dallas on November 22, 1963.

The observance came after Obama awarded Bill Clinton, and 15 other luminaries of the arts, sports, science and innovation the medal of freedom, his nation's highest civilian honor.

The poignant moment of remembrance came two days before the official half-century anniversary of the death of Kennedy, who was picked off as he rode an open-top limousine in Dallas, Texas, in a crime that traumatized the



People wash themselves using water from an open pipe among the rubble of destroyed homes in Tacloban, yesterday. More than 4,000 people were killed and up to 4.4 million displaced when typhoon Haiyan packing some of the strongest winds ever recorded by a storm made landfall.

Spate of attacks kills 41 in Iraq

AFP, Baquba

A bombing at a market north of Baghdad was the deadliest in violence that killed 41 people yesterday, as the year's death toll topped 5,800 amid a surge in unrest.

The flare-up has prompted Baghdad to appeal for international help in fighting the country's worst bloodshed since 2008, just months before its first general election in four years.

Officials have voiced concern over a resurgent al-Qaeda emboldened by the civil war in neighbouring Syria.

Yesterday's violence came a day after a spate of attacks, most of them car bombs targeting Shiite neighbourhoods of Baghdad, killed 59 people and wounded more than 100 in Iraq's highest death toll of the month.

'Dead' baby wakes at China funeral

AFP, Beijing

A Chinese baby boy who had been declared dead was saved from being cremated alive when he started crying at a funeral yesterday, media reported last year.

The parents of the critically-ill boy, who was less than one month old, had agreed to end his medical treatment at Anhui Provincial Children's Hospital in eastern China, hospital sources told Xinhua state news agency.

A death certificate was issued before the baby was sent to an undertakers in Hefei, the provincial capital -- only for staff there to be alerted by crying on Wednesday.

It was unclear how long he had been at the funeral parlour, or when his cremation had been due.

The baby was immediately sent back to the hospital.

Brotherhood 'stole' Egypt's revolution

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State John Kerry on Wednesday accused the Muslim Brotherhood of stealing Egypt's revolution, in some of his toughest comments yet about the party that took power in the nation's first democratic election.

In a speech to a forum on enhancing links between private sector businesses and diplomatic security agencies, Kerry said "the best antidote to extremism is opportunity."

"Those kids in Tahrir Square, they were not motivated by any religion or ideology."

"They were motivated by what they saw through this interconnected world, and they wanted a piece of the opportunity and a chance to get an education and have a job and have a future, and not have a corrupt government that deprived them of all of that and more," the top US diplomat said.

"They tweeted their ways and Facetimed their ways and talked to each other, and that's what drove that revolution."

"And then it got stolen by the one single-most organized entity in the state, which was the Brotherhood."

Since Islamist president Mohamed Morsi was ousted by the military in July a year after coming to power, the United States has repeatedly said that he had failed to live up to calls for an inclusive, transparent government.

And Kerry in August defended the army's action to remove Morsi, saying it had moved as a bid at "restoring democracy."

But as the military-led interim government has moved only slowly towards new elections, the US in October

Eating nuts reduce death rate: Study

PTI, Washington

People who eat a daily handful of nuts are 20 per cent less likely to die from any cause over a 30-year period than those who didn't consume nuts, according to the largest study of its kind.

Scientists from Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and the Harvard School of Public Health also found that regular nut-eaters are more slender than those who didn't eat nuts.

Nuts prevent 29 per cent in deaths from heart disease and 11 per cent even from cancer.

Whether any specific type or types of nuts were crucial to the protective effect couldn't be determined, but all nuts reduces death, the study said.

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Annual Dinner Postponement

All respected invitees are requested to kindly note that due to the prevailing situation in the country, the scheduled Annual Dinner of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) on Friday, the 22nd November 2013 has been postponed.

Any inconvenience caused to any invitee is regretted.