# INTERNATIONAL

# Israel faces pressure to ease Gaza blockade

AFP, Gaza City

Violence across the Gaza-Israel border subsided yesterday after three days of bloody exchanges, as pressure rose on Israel to unblock humanitarian supplies for the aiddependent territory.

One Palestinian militant was killed and another seriously wounded in an explosion as they prepared to launch a rocket into Israel from the northern Gaza Strip, witnesses and medics said.

Israel said the blast was probably an own goal as it had carried out no attacks in the area. It added the militants had not succeeded in firing off any rockets.

"We haven't carried out a strike in northern Gaza in recent hours," an army spokesman said. "The explosion might be due to mishandling of weapons."

ment that rules Gaza said the dead man was one its fighters.

Committees, a loose grouping of hardline defectors from other factions, insisted that an unmanned Israeli aircraft had carried out the attack.

"Abdullah Hassan Manayia, 35, one of the commanders of a surveillance unit and a member of our faction, was martyred during a raid by an Israeli drone east of Jabaliya," the group said in a statement.

Earlier one rocket was fired at Israel from Gaza but the army was unable to say on which side of the border it hit as it was far from inhabited areas.

It was the first time in four days that no rockets or mortar rounds had been fired into populated areas of Israel.

A series of salvoes over the A small armed group uncon- previous three days had left one nected to the Islamist Hamas move- Israeli woman wounded and ings but the Gaza closure was not law," a UN statement said.

attacks that threatened to unravel a The Popular Resistance nearly five-month-old truce between Israel and Hamas.

Israel has blocked passage of humanitarian supplies on most days since violence first flared on the border on November 5.

The closure of the border crossings, Gaza's sole gateway for vital goods, forced the United Nations to suspend food distribution to 750,000 residents and the territory's sole power plant to shut down. On Saturday, the crossings

remained closed as they have been every week on the Jewish day of rest for several years. An aide to Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak told AFP that

no decision would taken before

Sunday on reopening them in the

The Israeli cabinet holds its weekly meeting on Sunday morn-

prompted a series of tit-for-tat on the formal agenda and the decision is normally taken by the defence minister in consultation with field commanders.

> Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas plans to raise the issue with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert when they meet on Monday for their first talks since September 16, Palestinian senior negotiator Saeb Erekat told AFP.

A range of international organisations and rights movements have urged Israel to ease the punishing blockade on Gaza which it first imposed when Hamas seized control of the territory in June last year and then tightened earlier this month.

UN Secretary General Ban Kimoon "is deeply concerned at the deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation in Gaza and southern Israel. He calls on all parties to uphold international humanitarian and human rights

Firefighters

battle blazes

in California

Firefighters were battling to get a

grip on a wildfire in an exclusive

California enclave early Saturday

as a fresh blaze erupted on the

hillside community of Montecito,

100 miles (160 kilometres) north-

west of Los Angeles, had been

destroyed by a wind-driven wild-

fire that erupted on Thursday in the

respite to around 800 firefighters

tackling the flames but the fire,

which has burned around 1,800

acres (728 hectares) remained out

from-home for the super-rich, and

Montecito is a popular home-

A lull in winds on Friday offered

picturesque celebrity haven.

At least 100 homes in the ritzy

outskirts of Los Angeles.

AFP, Montecito



Palestinians gather around a mural painted on the street with a slogan in English that reads: "No for siege, the siege kills", during a demonstration in Gaza City on Friday against the Israeli blockade on the territory. Violence flared again around Gaza Friday, wounding two militants and an Israeli woman and putting a five-month-old truce in jeopardy as UN food handouts to the Hamas-ruled strip grind to a halt.

## Iraq, US agree on final security pact draft

Key Shia clerics warn Baghdad about deal

AP, Baghdad

A senior aide to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki says Iraq and the US are now in agreement over a final draft of a security pact.

troops to stay in Iraq for three more years after their United Nations mandate expires Dec. 31.

will be distributed to Cabinet Dec. 31. members later Saturday after a final revision of the Arabic translation and could be put to a vote in an emergency meeting Sunday or Monday.

Speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject, the aide says the agreement stands "a good chance" of being passed by a two-thirds majority in the 37-member seek a renewal of the UN Security

If adopted by the Cabinet, the agreement will be voted on in parliament.

Shia clerics on Friday challenged The pact would allow American the government's planned security pact with the United States, undercutting efforts to reach a deal before the UN mandate for He says copies of the agreement American troops in Iraq expires

renewed threats to unleash his militia fighters to attack US forces Fadlallah of Lebanon. unless they leave Iraq immediately, and Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani vowed to intervene if he concludes the proposed agreement governing the presence of US forces infringes on national sovereignty.

Iraqi officials have said they will

Council's mandate if the pact, which would allow American troops to stay in Iraq through 2011, is not passed by parliament by Earlier Iraq's two most powerful year's end.

The pressure from the clerics showcases the precarious position of Shia Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Most of his Shia allies reject the deal, including the senior partner in his coalition, the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, and Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr his own spiritual guide, Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Hussein

> Al-Sadr's threat to attack American troops if they don't leave came in a statement by the Iranbased cleric that was read to thousands of supporters at Friday prayers in Baghdad's Shia Sadr City enclave and the city of Kufa, south of Baghdad.

### South Korean opposition delegation visits north

AP, Seoul

An opposition party delegation was taking a message from the South Korean government to the North on Saturday to try to improve relations that soured after Pyongyang threatened to halt border crossings.

The Democratic Labour Party group was travelling to North Korea via China, Jun Kwon-hee, a party leadership aide, told The Associated Press.

Vice Unification Minister Hong Yang-ho met opposition leader Kang Ki-kap on Thursday and asked him to tell Pyongyang that Seoul has not turned away from deals reached at two bilateral summits and that it is ready to discuss how to implement them, Jun said.



### US Army promotes first woman to four star rank

AFP, Washington

The female descendant of a long line of US military officers was promoted to four star general Thursday, the first woman ever to reach the top rung of the US military.

Ann Dunwoody accepted the promotion and command of the army's materiel command with humour and humility at a Pentagon ceremony so packed with well wishers that three star generals were standing in the

"When people ask me, Ann, did you ever think you were going to be a general officer, say nothing about a four-star, I say not in my wildest. dreams, she said.

Medical Excellence,

Genuine Care

celebrities such as talk-show queen Oprah Winfrey and Hollywood actors Michael Douglas, Jeff

of control.

A firefighter walks across a burnt landscape near a home that was saved from burning by a team of firefighters on Friday in Montecito, California. A wind-whipped wildfire has destroyed at least 100 homes and forced thousands to Bridges and Rob Lowe all own property in the area.

# Obama also weighs Obama faces more

President-elect Barack Obama has

interviewed primary election rivals Hillary Rodham Clinton and Bill Richardson for secretary of state, according to Democratic officials who revealed his secret meetings with both as he weighed the decithan ever before. sion on folding former foes into his The Secret Service would not

Obama met with Richardson late Friday afternoon, a day after conferring one-on-one with Clinton at his Chicago office, said He plans to meet there Monday

Richardson as

secy of state

new administration.

AP, Washington

several Democratic officials. with his Republican opponent, John McCain, but advisers to both of the general election rivals say they don't expect Obama to consider McCain for an administration job.

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# personal threats

AP, Washington .

Threats against a new president historically spike right after an election, but from Maine to Idaho law enforcement officials are seeing more against Barack Obama

comment or provide the number of cases they are investigating. But since the Nov. 4 election, law enforcement officials have seen more potentially threatening writings, Internet postings and other activity directed at Obama than has been seen with any past president-elect, said officials aware of the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because the issue of a president's security is so sensitive.

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Earlier this week, the Secret Service looked into the case of a sign posted on a tree in Vay, Idaho, with Obama's name and the offer of a "free public hanging." In North Carolina, civil rights officials complained of threatening racist graffiti targeting Obama found in a tunnel near the North Carolina State University campus.

And in a Maine convenience store, an Associated Press reporter saw a sign inviting customers to join a betting pool on when Obama might fall victim to an assassin. The sign solicited \$1 entries into "The Osama Obama Shotgun Pool,' saying the money would go to the person picking the date closest to when Obama was attacked. "Let's hope we have a winner," said the sign, since taken down.

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Space Shuttle Endeavour lifts off from launch pad 39-1 at Kennedy Space Centre on Friday in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Endeavour is scheduled for a 16-day mission to the International Space Station.

## Space shuttle Endeavour races toward space station

AP, Cape Canaveral

Space shuttle Endeavour raced toward the international space station on Saturday for a home makeover job after a brilliant moonlit launch that had Nasa managers in awe.

The shuttle and its seven astronauts blasted into orbit Friday night on a mission to redo the insides of the space station, adding some extra bedrooms and a spare bathroom and kitchenette.

"It's our turn to take home improvement to a new level after 10 years of international space station construction," commander Christopher Ferguson called out.

Ferguson and his crew will double as plumbers and installers once they arrive at the 220-milehigh space station Sunday, hooking up extra cooking and sleeping equipment as well as a new water recycling system so the station's crew can expand next year.

The work will keep the astronauts up over Thanksgiving; Nasa expects to add a 16th day to the mission, thanks to the ontime launch.

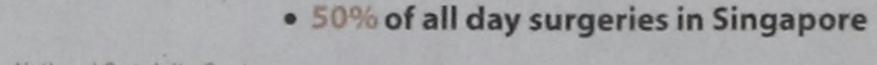
"Very few things that we do beat a night launch like you saw tonight," said LeRoy Cain, chairman of the mission management team. "We're off to a great start on what's going to be an extremely exciting, very complex and challenging mission."

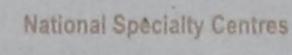
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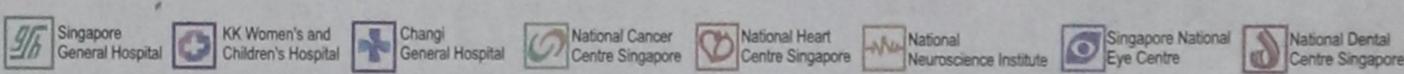
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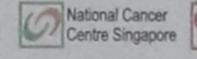
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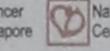


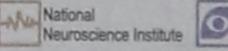










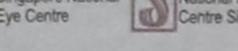


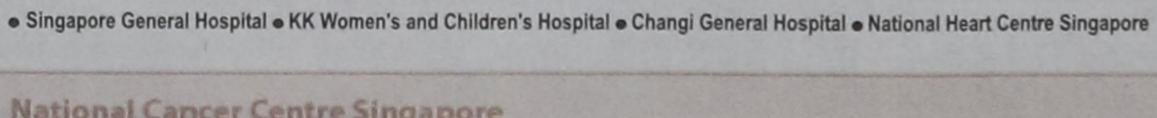
• 42 clinical specialties

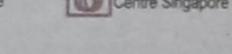
• 1,000 internationally qualified doctors

• 3.7 million patient visits per year

• 197,000 surgeries per year





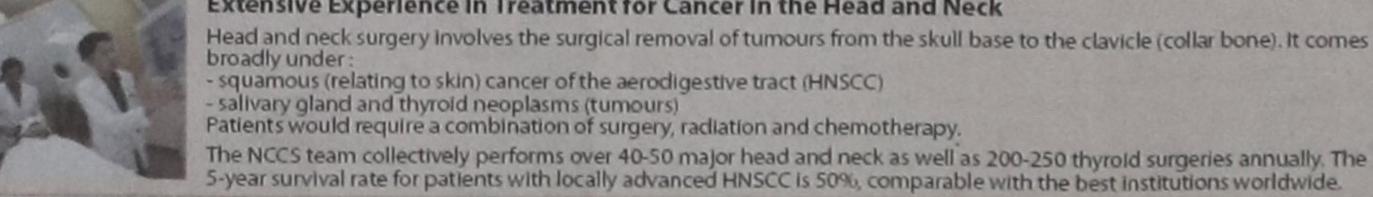




National Cancer Centre Singapore Comprehensive Cancer Care, Customised by a Team of Experts

National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) is a national and regional centre directed at the prevention and treatment of cancer. A one-stop specialist centre, NCCS houses Singapore's largest pool of oncologists.

Its multidisciplinary and holistic approach to cancer treatment, state-of-the-art equipment and use of the latest therapies such as mini transplants and targeted therapies maximise outcomes and minimise undesirable side effects for patients. NCCS also conducts clinical and basic research directed at the prevention and treatment of cancer.



Extensive Experience in Treatment for Cancer in the Head and Neck Head and neck surgery involves the surgical removal of tumours from the skull base to the clavicle (collar bone). It comes

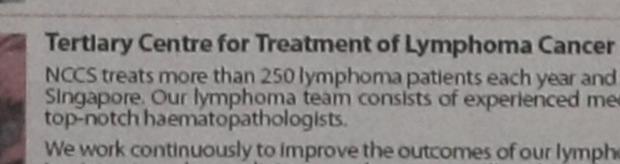
broadly under: - squamous (relating to skin) cancer of the aerodigestive tract (HNSCC) - salivary gland and thyroid neoplasms (tumours) Patients would require a combination of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy.



Highly-trained Specialists for Liver Surgery or Liver Resection

Liver tumours - either primary liver cancer or cancer spreading to the liver is best treated by surgery. Liver resection aims to remove all the tumour with a clear margin to obtain primary control and cure for the tumour. The highly-trained team of surgeons at NCCS and the high volume of cases they handle helps to ensure quality of care

and world standard results.

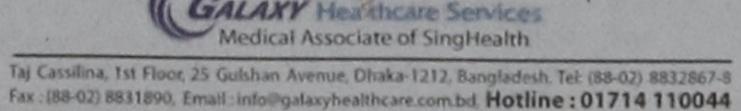


NCCS treats more than 250 lymphoma patients each year and is the largest tertiary centre for lymphoma treatment in Singapore. Our lymphoma team consists of experienced medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, nuclear physicists and

We work continuously to improve the outcomes of our lymphoma patients through clinical trials, use of innovative new treatments such as radioimmunotherapy as well as through research aimed at understanding the molecular mechanism of rare lymphomas like NK/T cell lymphomas. With these efforts, the overall two-year survival of our patients with aggressive Bcell lymphoma exceeds 80%.



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