

# Govt plane bombs Libyan oil town

Gaddafi warns Europe; over 1 million need aid

REUTERS, Libya

Government forces seeking to dislodge rebels from Libya's strategically important coast struck at an oil town yesterday amid quickening efforts to prevent more humanitarian suffering and a mass refugee exodus.

The United Nations said more than one million people fleeing Libya and inside the country needed humanitarian aid, and conditions in rebel-held Misrata town were particularly worrying following attacks on it by forces loyal to Gaddafi.

Offering a potential olive branch to rebels seeking to end Gaddafi's long rule, one of his associates appealed to opposition chiefs for dialogue, in a sign the aging autocrat may be ready to compromise with the unprecedented revolt.

The offer, rapidly dismissed by rebels, coincided with a renewed publicity drive by Gaddafi that warned European nations to the north of the Mediterranean that if he fell "you will have immigration, thousands of people from Libya will invade Europe."

Meanwhile, the United Nations and the European Union are dispatching fact-finding missions to the north African nation, where reports by residents of attacks on civilians by security forces have triggered a war crimes

probe and provoked global outrage.

In an interview with the France 24 television station, Gaddafi said Libya was an important partner for the West in containing al Qaeda and illegal migrants trying to reach Europe.

"There are millions of blacks who could come to the Mediterranean to cross to France and Italy, and Libya plays a role in security in the Mediterranean," he said.

A warplane launched an air strike on the eastern outskirts of the rebel-held oil terminal town of Ras Lanuf 600 km east of the capital Tripoli yesterday, witnesses said.

"There was an aircraft, it fired two rockets there were no deaths," Mokhtar Dobrug, a rebel fighter who witnessed the strike, told Reuters. The attack took place at one of two checkpoints in the city.

Witnesses said government forces advanced on the rebel-held oil port of Ras Lanuf in a counter-attack that forced residents to flee and rebels to hide their weapons in the desert.

In Ras Lanuf, one angry man told rebels to go home, arguing that they were bringing fighting closer to oil terminals.

Another complained of the rebels' inexperience, as one opposition fighter lay on his back and fired an automatic weapon gun at a government warplane flying overhead.



Libyan rebel fighters take cover as a bomb dropped by an airforce fighter jet explodes near a checkpoint on the outskirts of the oil town of Ras Lanuf yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## UN calls for \$160 mn to help Libya victims

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations called yesterday for \$160 million to cover the needs of those who have fled Libya as well as others who remained trapped in the strife-torn north African country.

The appeal is expected to cover relief support including shelter, food, transportation for up to one million people for the next three months.

"This appeal is based on planning scenario projecting up to 400,000 people leaving Libya -- including the 200,000 who have left to date -- and another 600,000 people inside Libya expected to need humanitarian aid to varying degrees," said Valerie Amos, UN aid chief.

"I hope this appeal receives a favourable response from donors," added the United Nations under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs.

The appeal will be revised in two weeks, said the UN.

## NEWS IN brief

### Serbia eyes 'historic reconciliation' with Kosovo

AFP, Belgrade

Serbia and Kosovo begin EU-brokered talks today, the first high level direct meetings since Pristina broke away in 2008, with Belgrade seeing an opportunity for an "historic reconciliation."

However Serbia has made it clear that the talks will only tackle practical problems like trade agreements, customs issues and property records and stressed it would never recognize Pristina's declaration of independence.

"This is an opportunity for an historic reconciliation between Serbs and (Kosovo) Albanians and neither Belgrade nor Pristina should pass it up," Goran Bogdanovic, Serbia's minister for Kosovo,

### Japan PM resists resignation call

BBC ONLINE

Japan's Prime Minister Naoto Kan has brushed off calls for his resignation, after the foreign minister stepped down over a funding scandal at the weekend.

Kan told parliament that he intended to fulfil his duties until elections, which must be held by late 2013.

The opposition, which controls the upper house, wants an early poll and is threatening to block budget bills.

The resignation of Foreign Minister Seiji Maehara has added to the impression of a govern-

### Pakistan court extends detention of US national

AFP, Peshawar

A Pakistani court yesterday extended the detention of an American national said to have been working for a private security company, after he overstayed his Pakistani visa, police said.

US national Aaron Mark DeHaven was arrested last month from a residential area in the northwestern city of Peshawar, close to the lawless tribal belt near the Afghan border.

"The court has extended the judicial remand till

### Cyber attack on France targeted Paris G20 files

BBC ONLINE

The French finance ministry has confirmed it came under a cyber attack in December that targeted files on the G20 summit held in Paris in February.

Budget Minister Francois Baron said an investigation had been launched, adding: "We have leads".

It follows a report in Paris Match magazine that claimed a sustained cyber attack sought documents related to the G20 and international economic affairs.

More than 150 computers at the ministry were

### New Egyptian govt sworn in

AFP, Cairo

Ministers of Egypt's new government were sworn in yesterday by the head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Field Marshal Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, at a ceremony in the capital Cairo.

Prime Minister Essam Sharaf's government includes six new ministers including Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi, Oil Minister Abdullah Ghorab and those of interior, culture, justice and labour.

Sharaf, who was appointed on Thursday after demonstrations against the presence of Mubarak's associates in the caretaker government running affairs since the former president's departure, has vowed to work for a democratic system.

## Chirac faces trial for corruption

AFP, Paris

Jacques Chirac becomes the first former French president to go before a judge when his month-long trial for corruption during his time as mayor of Paris in the 1990s begins yesterday.

Chirac, 78 and one of France's most popular political figures despite the charges, stands accused of using public money to pay people working for his party while he was mayor of Paris, a post he held from 1977 to 1995.

He enjoyed immunity from prosecution as president from 1995 to 2007, but the case, which has already seen current Foreign Minister Alain Juppe convicted, has finally caught up with the former head of state.

The case could promptly grind to a halt, however, if a lawyer working for one of Chirac's co-defendants succeeds in getting a procedural matter referred upwards to France's constitutional court.

He has been linked to a series of corruption scandals but never convicted. If found guilty, Chirac faces up to 10 years in jail and a fine of 150,000 euros (\$210,000) on charges including embezzlement and breach of trust.

In the opening hearing due to start at 1:30 pm (1230 GMT) yesterday, presiding judge Dominique Pauthie is due to deal with procedural issues.



Chirac's first appearance is scheduled for today, when he is due to answer the judge's questions, the court said.

The hearings in Paris are the result of the merging of two separate cases -- one begun by magistrates in the Paris suburb of Nanterre in 1995, and another in the capital itself dating to 1998.

The case involves seven alleged ghost jobs for which Chirac is charged with conflict of interest and 21 other jobs for which he is accused of embezzlement and abuse of trust.

Nine other people are going on trial alongside Chirac, accused either of having ghost jobs or benefiting from those of town hall employees.

Chirac denies that the people employed in the jobs were used to prepare for the 1995 presidential election, which he went on to win, insisting they were all legitimate posts in the service of Paris.

Jean-Yves La Borgne, a lawyer working for one of Chirac's former chiefs of staff, said he will argue that under the constitution the accusations in the former case can no longer be heard since they date back too far in time.

So even before Chirac's first scheduled appearance today, the judge may agree to submit the question for constitutional ruling.

## Oman sultan orders major cabinet reshuffle

AFP, Muscat

Sultan Qaboos of Oman ordered a major cabinet reshuffle yesterday after weeks of anti-government protests in the strategic Gulf state, state television said.

"The Sultan of Oman has ordered a reshuffle of the council of ministers," a television announcer said, before reading the names of members of the reshaped cabinet.

The reshuffle had been expected after Sultan Qaboos on Saturday sacked two ministers in response to protesters' grievances, which include corruption and a slow pace of democratic reform.

One protester was killed in clashes between police and demonstrators in the northern industrial city of Sohar last week, but Oman has been spared the violent tumult that has gripped regional states like Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.

A peaceful sit-in at a roundabout in Sohar entered its ninth day yesterday with activists demanding the sacking of more ministers for alleged corruption.

Another crowd has maintained an anti-corruption sit-in outside the consultative council in Muscat, which is the sultanate's equivalent of parliament but without legislative authority.

## YEMEN UNREST

### Opposition vows to intensify protests

REUTERS, Sanaa

Yemen's opposition coalition vowed yesterday to escalate protests that have swept the country demanding the resignation of President Ali Abdullah Saleh, after he rejected a plan that would have him step down in 2011.

Tens of thousands of protesters are camped out in major Yemeni cities, staying awake through the night to hear speeches and sing national songs, as their tone against Saleh hardens.

Saleh, a US ally against al Qaeda's Yemen-based wing, rejected a plan proposed by an opposition coalition last week, which would have implemented political and electoral reforms while paving the way for his resignation within the year.

"Recent events have proven that the regime is incapable of answering the demands of the people, and for that reason it needs to go," said the coalition's spokesman, Mohammed al-Sabry.

"The protesters are studying several options for an escalation, including organizing a day when all Yemenis will take to the streets, a 'Friday of No Return' protest, and other options," he told Reuters.

## US under pressure to arm Libya rebels

AFP, Washington

The administration of President Barack Obama has come under mounting pressure to arm Libyan rebels facing an emboldened and regrouping military, amid charges Washington missed recent chances to oust the country's strongman.

Obama has insisted that all options, including military action, remain on the table with respect to Libya, where Moamer Kadhafi's forces have unleashed deadly airstrikes on rebels and civilians in efforts to crush an uprising in which thousands are feared dead.

But with the administration cautioning that a decision on a no-fly zone was still far off, opinion among US lawmakers and former officials appeared to coalesce around the likelihood that supplying weapons to the outgunned rebels was a way forward.

## TAINTED APPOINTMENT Indian PM accepts 'error'

AFP, New Delhi

India's prime minister yesterday accepted responsibility after the Supreme Court struck down his choice of a tainted civil servant to serve as the country's chief anti-corruption officer.

Manmohan Singh's statement to lawmakers marked another setback for the 78-year-old leader, whose Congress-led government is reeling over a series of graft scandals, including a multi-billion-dollar telecom licensing scam.

Addressing the lower house of parliament, Singh admitted his "error of judgement" and said he respected the Supreme Court's decision to cancel the appointment of Central Vigilance Commissioner P.J. Thomas.

Singh appointed Thomas in September, although the official had been charged in 2000 over his role in allegedly fraudulent imports of palm oil from Malaysia while he worked as a civil servant in the Kerala state government in the 1990s.

60-year-old civil servant has never been prosecuted in the palm oil case and has always maintained his innocence, blaming the accusations on political rivalry in Kerala.

But with lawmakers clamouring for an explanation, Singh said: "Obviously there has been an error of judgement and I accept full responsibility."

The Central Vigilance Commission is India's leading anti-corruption watchdog.

The latest development comes as the government has been battling corruption scandals for the past six months that have caused concern among voters and troubled foreign investors.



PJ Thomas

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## Congratulations

Mr. Aktar Hussain, Chairman & Managing Director, Rangs Electronics Ltd. received the "STAR AWARD" from Mr. Kiyoshi Shikano, Global Sales & Marketing Officer, Senior Vice President, Corporate Executive, Sony Corporation, Tokyo, Japan during SSBP Conference in Singapore held on 23rd February, 2011. This award is for selling "HIGHEST QUANTITY OF BRAVIA LCD TV" in Bangladesh comparing to other South East Asian Countries.

We are proud to be a part of this achievement.  
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