

Fighting raises Yemen civil war fears

Truce broken; EU says 50 killed since Sunday

AFP, Sanaa

Street fighting raged across the Yemeni capital yesterday after a tenuous truce broke down between tribal groups and forces loyal to President Ali Abdullah Saleh, edging the impoverished Arab country closer to civil war.

Deadly clashes erupted in the Yemeni capital yesterday as security forces shot dead seven protesters in the second-largest city of Ta'ez.

European Union foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton voiced shock at the use of live rounds against protesters in Ta'ez in a crackdown that the UN human rights office said had already killed more than 50 people since Sunday.

Fierce fighting erupted in the capital Sanaa before dawn between troops loyal to embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh and fighters loyal to Yemen's most powerful tribal leader

Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar, an AFP correspondent said.

A plume of dark smoke rose into the sky over Ahmar's compound in north Sanaa, witnesses said.

There were also heavy exchanges between his tribesmen and loyalist troops around the headquarters of the military police and the official Saba news agency, as well as in a major thoroughfare in the Yemeni capital, the correspondent said.

Three of Ahmar's fighters were killed in the clashes, a medic said. There was no immediate word of any casualties on the loyalist side.

Saleh's government accused Ahmar's fighters of breaking the truce which the tribal chief announced on Friday after four days of ferocious clashes.

But sources close to Ahmar accused loyalist forces of breaking the truce by

firing on his compound.

In Ta'ez, south of Sanaa, loyalist security forces shot dead seven anti-government protesters on Tuesday, witnesses said, after 21 were killed as a long-running sit-in in a central square was smashed.

Five were killed in central Ta'ez, witnesses said. Others clashed with police while trying to enter the city, leaving two protesters dead.

Yesterday's deaths came after security forces smashed a four-month-long sit-in in Ta'ez, killing 21 protesters.

The UN human rights office put the death toll in the city since Sunday at more than 50, with hundreds more injured.

In the south, suspected al-Qaeda fighters killed four Yemeni soldiers and wounded 10 on Tuesday in an attack near the city of Zinjibar, a security official said, while a medic said two others had died of their wounds.



Indian health volunteers dressed in costumes participate in an anti smoking rally during the "World no tobacco Day" created by the World Health Organisation in Hyderabad yesterday.

Japan PM refuses to quit

REUTERS, Tokyo

Unpopular Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan yesterday refused to step down in the face of a no-confidence motion in parliament this week, saying he wanted first to resolve the world's worst nuclear crisis in 25 years.

Analysts say Kan would probably survive the vote which could be submitted today, but add he would still face big hurdles pushing policies through a divided parliament.

"I cannot give up the responsibility to do what needs to be done now," Kan told a panel in parliament.

"I am determined to perform my duty."

Pressure from inside his own party mounted after media said ruling party power broker Ichiro Ozawa had hinted he would back the no-confidence motion if Kan refused to quit.

Mladic appeal rejected, extradition cleared

REUTERS, Belgrade

Serbia's war crimes court rejected an appeal against the extradition of Ratko Mladic yesterday, opening the way for the former Bosnian Serb general's dispatch to The Hague to stand trial, a spokeswoman said.

Earlier in the day, Serbian officials said Mladic could be sent to the international criminal court within 24 hours, making a late night yesterday or early Wednesday departure most likely.

The accused war criminal's last day in Serbia began with a police-escorted visit to the Belgrade grave of his daughter Ana, who committed suicide in 1994.

Mladic is charged with genocide in the 43-month siege of Sarajevo and the massacre of 8,000 Muslims in Srebrenica during the 1992-95 Bosnian War.

The court received the Mladic appeal yesterday morning after his cemetery visit



and rejected it within hours.

The justice minister scheduled a news conference for 5pm local time.

During a prison visit on Monday, Mladic met his five-year old grandson, possibly for the first time, and his 10-year-old granddaughter. His wife and son were expected to visit him again yesterday

afternoon.

Mladic's lawyer and family say the 69-year-old, who was captured alone in a cousin's farmhouse, is mentally unstable and too sick to be extradited to the tribunal.

Yet he was able to elude justice for 16 years, a fact that in recent years held back Serbia's progress in achieving membership in the European Union.

Around 10,000 Bosnian Serbs pledged support for their wartime commander in the Serb Republic's capital Banja Luka, an affront to Muslims elsewhere in Bosnia who view the general as a brutal murderer.

Cell phone use 'possibly' a cause of cancer

Says WHO

AFP, Paris

The use of cell phones and other wireless communication devices are "possibly carcinogenic to humans", the World Health Organisation's cancer research agency said yesterday.

The radio frequency electromagnetic fields generated by such devices are possibly cancer-causing "based on an increased risk for glioma, a malignant type of brain cancer," the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) said in a statement.

A group of 31 experts meeting in the French city of Lyon over the past eight days "reached this classification based on its review of the human evidence coming from epidemiological studies," said Jonathan Samet, president of the working group.

Two studies in particular, the largest conducted over the last decade, provided evidence that cell phone use was associated with higher rates of glioma, "particularly in those that had the most intensive use of such phones," Samet said.

A number of individuals tracked in the studies had used their phones for 10 to 15 years.

There are about five billion mobile phones registered in the world. Both the number of phones in circulation, and the average time spent using them, have climbed steadily in recent years, the working group found.

Nato risks becoming 'occupying force': Karzai

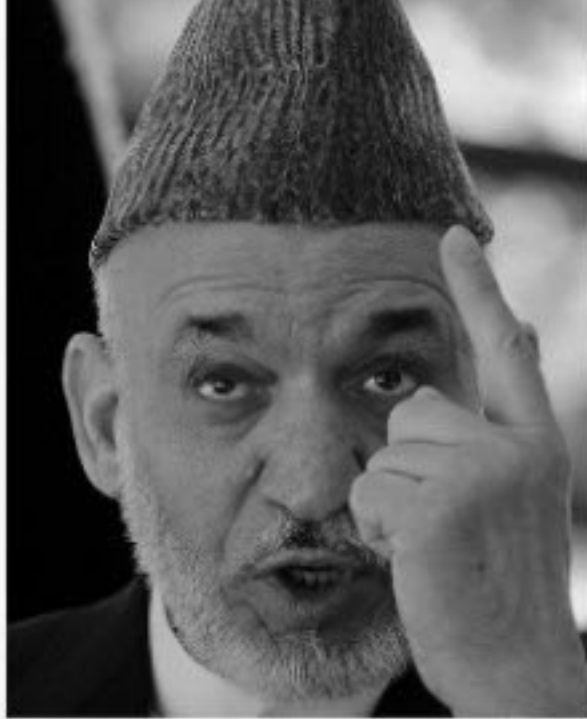
AFP, Kabul

Afghan President Hamid Karzai warned yesterday that the US-led foreign military in Afghanistan risks becoming an "occupying force" if air strikes which cause civilian casualties continue.

In some of his strongest remarks yet, Karzai harked back to Afghanistan's long history of "dealing with occupying forces" such as the Soviet Union and reiterated that bombing the homes of ordinary Afghans was now "banned."

The outspoken comments came after he issued a "last warning" on Sunday to foreign forces over civilian casualties, following the killing of what he said were 14 innocent Afghans in an air strike.

Karzai's relationship with the West has become increasingly strained in recent years, with the controversy over civilian casualties a



Hamid Karzai

terrorism to an occupying force," Karzai told a news conference in Kabul.

"And in that case, Afghan history is witness to how the Afghans deal with occupying forces."

This was an apparent reference to historic Afghan defeats of foreign invaders, including the Soviet Union, which entered Afghanistan in 1979 and withdrew 10 years later.

NEWS IN brief

Russia confirms arrest of suspected Politkovskaya assassin

AFP, Grozny

Russian forces arrested in Chechnya Rustam Makhmudov, the suspected assassin of journalist Anna Politkovskaya who was shot dead in 2006, a spokesman for the Chechen police told AFP yesterday.

"The arrest was carried out by forces of the Chechen interior ministry," a spokesman for the department of criminal investigations at the Chechnya interior ministry said, declining to give further details.

A family lawyer earlier said Makhmudov was arrested Monday night in Chechnya at the home of his parents.



Anna Politkovskaya

Mubarak unfit to be moved to prison

AFP, Cairo

Ailing former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak is not well enough to be moved to prison from his hospital in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, the country's public prosecutor said yesterday.

"After having examined (Mubarak's) medical file and evaluated (facilities) at the hospital in Tora prison, the committee has decided not to transfer the patient outside Sharm el-Sheikh for the moment," the prosecutor said.

Mubarak has been in custody in hospital since April 13 after reportedly suffering a heart attack during questioning about the killing of anti-regime protesters and fraud.

Tajikistan pulls down Lenin monument

AFP, Dushanbe

Tajikistan pulled down Central Asia's tallest statue of revolutionary Russian leader Vladimir Lenin as it sought to distance itself from its Soviet past, a city spokesman said yesterday.

"The Lenin monument was taken off its pedestal on Monday evening," the mayor's office spokesman Makhmujon Ibragimov told AFP.

The 23-metre monument to the founder of the Soviet state had stood in Tajikistan's second largest city of Khujand -- formerly called Leninabad -- for two decades after the Soviet Union crumbled.

North, south Sudan agree on demilitarised zone

AFP, Khartoum

North and south Sudan have agreed to create a demilitarised zone to bolster security along their border, despite a deadlock over the disputed region of Abyei, the African Union said yesterday.

The agreement, signed in Addis Ababa on Monday evening, established a joint political and security mechanism, headed by the defence ministers, "to ensure that the two parties can maintain stable and secure relations."

"The agreement also establishes a common border zone between north and south Sudan, which is to be demilitarized and jointly monitored and patrolled," said the AU, which is mediating negotiations ahead of full independence for the south on July 9.

The news of the accord came 10 days after the northern army occupied Abyei in

response to a deadly attack on their troops in the contested border region.

The army's move was condemned by world powers, which have warned it threatens peace between the former civil war enemies.

On Monday, Sudan's vice president Riek Machar agreed with his northern counterpart Ali Osman Taha to form a joint committee aimed at resolving the Abyei crisis.

But Taha rejected southern demands that the army withdraw, saying it would only do so when a political solution had been reached.

Sudan's volatile north-south border runs to more than 2,000 kilometres (1,250 miles), but its demarcation, along with the future status of Abyei, are among the key outstanding issues that the two sides have been struggling to resolve ahead of July.

Some 20 percent of the border has yet to be agreed on.

Germany fights to stop E coli bacteria

16 killed; Russia bans Spanish food

AFP, Berlin

German authorities yesterday battled to stop the spread of a killer bacteria traced to imported cucumbers that has killed at least 16 people, including one outside Germany.

Meanwhile a number of European countries, including Belgium and Russia, banned vegetables imports from Spain, while Spanish Agriculture Minister Rosa Aguilar denied that her country was the source of contamination.

Aguilar yesterday called for a "European solution" and slammed Germany's handling of the outbreak.

Germany's Health Minister Daniel Bahr has warned that the number of cases is likely to grow.

The source of the outbreak was still unknown but contaminated vegetables appeared the most likely vehicle of infection, German officials said after identifying imported cucumbers from Spain carrying the bacteria, a virulent form of enterohemorrhagic E coli (EHEC).

The Robert Koch Institute (RKI), Germany's national disease institute, said yesterday it has recorded 373 confirmed cases of HUS, along with six deaths.

But regional authorities, who have been faster in reporting fatalities, said at least 15 people have died in Germany so far, mostly in the north, and more than 1,200 have been infected.

And in Sweden, the Soedra Aelvborg hospital in Boraas said a woman in her 50s who was treated for EHEC after a trip to Germany had died in the first reported fatality outside the country.

The Stockholm-based European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has described the outbreak as "one of the largest worldwide and the largest ever reported in Germany".

Nepal's royal massacre

Still a mystery after 10 years

AFP, Kathmandu

A decade after Nepal's crown prince stunned the world by gunning down nine family members, mystery still surrounds the massacre that plunged the monarchy into a crisis from which it never recovered.

Many Nepalese believe they may never know the truth about the night of June 1, 2001, when a drink- and drugs-fuelled prince Dipendra ran amok with an automatic weapon at a family dinner at the palace in the capital Kathmandu.

Dipendra, dressed in military fatigues, killed his revered father, King Birendra, his mother, brother and sister and five other relatives before shooting himself, according to official findings.

The 31-year-old Eton-educated heir to the throne was believed to have been crazed with anger after being stopped by the queen from marrying the woman he loved.

But conspiracy theories continue to swirl in Nepal about the bloodbath, which caused outpourings of hysterical



King Birendra

cal grief in the impoverished nation where the king was seen as the reincarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu.

Shah said some internal and external forces could have provoked the crown prince but declined to elaborate, saying only: "There were interest groups who wanted to end the monarchy."

The royal massacre, believed to have been the worst since Russia's Romanovs were shot on the order of Vladimir Lenin in 1918, prompted rumours about the possible role in the slayings of the king's less popular brother, Gyanendra.

"The monarchy lost its traditional respect" with Gyanendra's decision to dismiss the government, said Nepalese journalist Yubraj Ghimire.

"Looking back, I think the politics of 2006 when the Maoists and other parties were arrayed against the monarchy played a critical role in its demise," Ghimire said.

Now, Nepal remains in tumult, racked by political crisis as parties struggle to draft a new constitution and oversee the peace process that began when the decade-long Maoist civil war ended in 2006.

The widespread hope that followed the end of the conflict and the abolition of the unpopular monarchy has been replaced by a growing sense of anger and frustration in Nepal, one of the world's poorest countries.

And 10 years on from the royal massacre, even though many Nepalese believe they still do not know the full truth, there is a waning desire to reopen old wounds with another investigation.

"Nobody is interested in probing it," Shrestha said.