

Rift widens in Yemen

Street clashes in Sanaa kill 39

AFP, Sanaa

Gunbattles on the streets of Yemen's capital overnight killed 39 people after security forces and opposition tribesmen shattered a four-day-old truce, witnesses said yesterday.

The medic at Jumburiya hospital said 37 people, most of them combatants, were killed in the clashes in Sanaa, while the AFP photographer said the bodies of two other tribesmen were taken to Al-Ulum hospital.

Heavy fighting raged yesterday, prompting Kuwait to withdraw its diplomatic staff from the city, one day after Italy closed its embassy on concerns of escalating violence following threats against European missions.

The fighting between tribesmen loyal to Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar, who heads the powerful Hashid federation, and security forces loyal to embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh broke out in the city on Tuesday.

It ended a truce announced on Friday, after a week of fierce clashes that erupted when Saleh warned of a civil war as he refused to sign a Gulf-brokered plan for him to give up office as demanded by protesters.

Ahmar had in March pledged his support for protesters who have been demonstrating since January for the departure from office of Saleh, who has been in power since 1978.

The defence ministry's 26sep.net news website said tribesmen had yesterday occupied a building near the presidential palace, in the south of Sanaa.

Residents reported that street fighting took place throughout the night in the Al-Hasaba area where Ahmar's house is located, in the north of the city.

"We heard the sound of ambulances evacuating the wounded throughout the night," one resident of Al-Hasaba told AFP.

Most shops were closed in Sanaa, and there were long lines at petrol stations.

Witnesses said reinforcements from the Republican Guards, an elite unit loyal to the president, had been sent to Al-Hasaba.

A fourth army brigade camp located near the state television and radio headquarters was targeted by rockets, as was the interior ministry headquarters, witnesses said.

26sep.net, meanwhile, said government forces "regained control of a number of public buildings," without specifying which ones.

The website had said on Tuesday that Ahmar's tribesmen had seized both the headquarters of the ruling General People's Congress and the main offices of the water utility.

Saleh's government had accused Ahmar's fighters of breaking the truce, but sources close to Ahmar said Saleh's forces were to blame as they had opened firing on the tribal leader's compound.

In south Yemen, fighting between alleged al-Qaeda militants and security forces continued in the city of Zinjibar yesterday, residents said.

At least 41 soldiers and civilians have been killed in fighting in the city since Friday, according to an AFP tally based on security officials and medics.



PHOTO: AFP

Oxfam activists wearing masks representing (From L) Belgium's Prime Minister Leterme, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Sarkozy, Italy's Prime Minister Berlusconi and British Prime Minister Cameron sit on a table and pretend to order food for nine billion people, the projected world population in 2050 yesterday as a protest in front of the European Parliament in Brussels.

Mubarak, sons to be tried August 3

AFP, Cairo

Ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak and his two sons, Alaa and Gamal, are to face trial on August 3 on charges of ordering the killing of protesters and fraud, a judicial source told AFP yesterday.

The trio will be tried by the North Cairo criminal court and the hearing will be presided by Judge Ahmed Rifat, the source said.

Businessman Hussein Salem, a close associate of the Mubaraks, is to face trial on the same date on the same charges, the source 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.

Mladic extradited, to be charged on Friday

REUTERS, The Hague

Former Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic, extradited to the Netherlands from Serbia after 16 years on the run, will be formally charged with genocide at the UN war crimes tribunal on Friday.

Judges at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia scheduled Mladic's initial court appearance for Friday at 0800 GMT, when he will be charged and asked to enter a plea, according to a statement on the court's website.

Serge Brammertz, prosecutor for the tribunal, said in an interview with Austrian radio ORF yesterday that everything possible would be done to avoid a lengthy trial. Several war crimes trials in The Hague have dragged on for years.

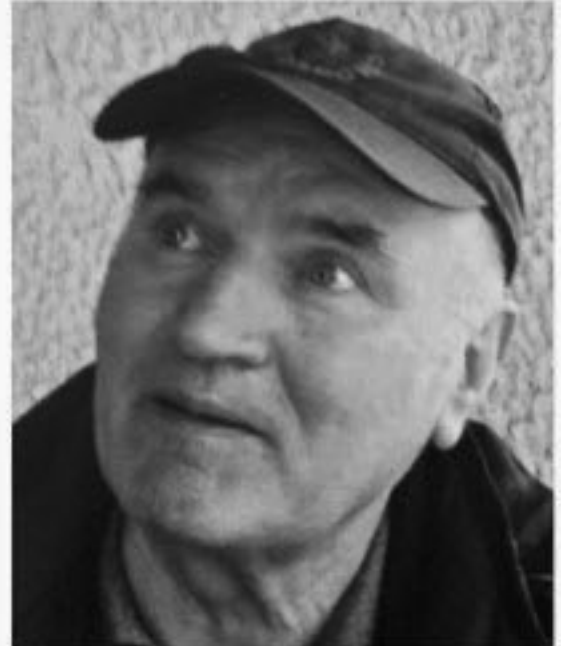
Asked how long the whole process could take, he said that depended on several things, including Mladic's health and whether he appointed a legal team or handled his own defence.

Mladic was indicted by the tribunal 16 years ago over the 43-month siege of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo and the massacre of 8,000 Muslim men and boys in the town of Srebrenica, close to the border with Serbia, during the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

He was taken to a detention centre outside The Hague from Rotterdam airport on Tuesday evening after being flown from Belgrade on a Serbian government aircraft.

The 69-year-old former general was arrested on Thursday at a farmhouse in northern Serbia belonging to a cousin, triggering protests by Serb nationalists in Serbia and Bosnia.

His swift extradition will smooth Serbia's progress toward candidacy for European Union membership while serving as an important warning to others indicted on similar charges, such as Libya's Muammar Gaddafi and Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir.



Japan's PM faces no-confidence motion

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's centre-left prime minister, struggling with the quake, tsunami and nuclear disaster recovery and a flagging economy, had a no-confidence motion tabled against him by his opponents yesterday.

Three junior ministers and two parliamentary secretaries from Naoto Kan's Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) resigned late yesterday, a sign that they would vote for the motion in the Diet legislature Thursday, local media said.

Former premier Yukio Hatoyama was also likely to back the no-confidence measure, according to reports.

If Kan's enemies succeed, he will have to resign or call fresh elections.

Nato says Gaddafi's exit a matter of time

Extends Libya mission until late September

AFP, Brussels

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's departure from power is only a question of time, Nato's chief said yesterday as allies agreed to extend the military campaign in Libya until late September.

"The question is not if Gaddafi will go but when," Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said after Nato decided to extend its mission by another 90 days. "It could take some time yet but it could also happen tomorrow."

Hours after Nato aircraft launched new raids on Tripoli, alliance ambassadors meeting in Brussels decided to renew the mission for another 90 days.

"This decision sends a clear message to the Gaddafi regime. We are determined to continue our operation to protect the people of Libya," said Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen.

"We will sustain our efforts to fulfil the United Nations mandate" to defend civilians from Gaddafi's forces, he said in a statement.

"We will keep up the pressure to see it through," Rasmussen added after the North Atlantic Council, the decision-making body of the 28-nation alliance, agreed to extend the mission.

The current military expires June 27.

Wednesday's decision will give individual nations time to prepare their contributions for the next 90 days, a Nato diplomat said.

The alliance has intensified its air raids on Tripoli in recent weeks, launching daily strikes on command and control bunkers in the capital to prevent Gaddafi from crushing a revolt that began in mid-February.

The veteran strongman has resisted international pressure to step down, telling South African President Jacob Zuma during a mediation visit Monday that he would not relinquish office and leave his country.

A senior European diplomat warned that a prolonged stalemate raises the risk of the partition of Libya, with Gaddafi entrenched in the west and the rebels controlling the east.

NEWS IN brief

UN says Japan underestimated tsunami risk

BBC ONLINE

Japan underestimated the risk of a tsunami hitting a nuclear power plant, the UN nuclear energy agency has said.

However, the response to the nuclear crisis that followed the 11 March quake and tsunami was "exemplary", it said.

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which was badly damaged by the tsunami, is still leaking radiation.

The IAEA inspectors spent a week in Japan compiling their report on the Fukushima nuclear crisis, and

Pakistan military helicopter crash kills two

REUTERS, Islamabad

A military helicopter with the head of the provincial paramilitary force on board crashed in eastern Pakistan yesterday, killing at least two people, military officials said.

Four military officials, including Major-General Mohammad Nawaz, director general of the Punjab Rangers, were on board the helicopter when it crashed into Indus River in eastern Pakistan.

Another official said that the cause of the crash was

Cholera resurgence in Haiti kills at least 10

AFP, Port-au-prince

At least 10 people have died in a resurgence of cholera in areas near the Haitian capital, the country's health authorities announced yesterday.

"We have registered about 10 deaths and 1,000 people have been hospitalized in Carrefour, south of Port-au-Prince," said Gabriel Timothee, the director

Polish troops cleared over Afghan civilian deaths

AFP, Warsaw

A military court yesterday cleared seven soldiers over the deaths of a group of civilians in Afghanistan at the end of the first ever Polish court martial involving troops fighting the Taliban.

Announcing his verdict, the presiding judge said the court had been unable to gather key evidence or hear from witnesses to the incident in southeastern Paktika province, giving it no option but to pass a not guilty verdict.

HIV infections down 12% in youth

Says UNICEF

AFP, Johannesburg

HIV infections among the world's youth dropped by 12 percent over the last decade, but fell short of the 25 percent target set by world leaders, a UNICEF report said yesterday.

"Is it progress? Yes. Is it enough? Absolutely not," said Elhadj As Sy, UNICEF director for eastern and southern Africa, at the launch of the report in Johannesburg.

Five million people aged 15-24 have HIV, down 12 percent from 2001, but with 2,500 new infections daily, the report said.

Young women are hardest hit, representing more than 60 percent of all young people living with HIV -- a figure that jumps to 72 percent in sub-Saharan Africa.

African youth generally bear a staggering share of the burden and risk: close to four of the five million young people living with HIV are in sub-Saharan Africa, it said.

As Sy said early sexual debut, pregnancy and drug use are driving the spread of HIV among youth, and called on communities to address issues of teen sex and drug use.

The study also found most adolescents living with HIV do not know their status -- particularly troubling after a new research last month found that HIV-positive people who take anti-retroviral drugs cut their risk of spreading the virus by 96 percent.

Researchers said the report is the first study to look at HIV among young people.

E COLI OUTBREAK Infections still rising in Germany

BBC ONLINE

German researchers were yesterday still trying to identify the source of a deadly E coli outbreak after Spanish cucumbers were found not to have the lethal strain.

About 470 patients - mostly in north Germany - have the most severe and potentially fatal symptoms.

The E coli has killed 16 people - 15 in Germany and one in Sweden.

Germany's Robert Koch Institute has advised people not to eat raw vegetables.

Meanwhile, the Spanish government has demanded compensation for affected Spanish growers.

Spain's Deputy Prime Minister Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba threatened legal action against Hamburg.



PHOTO: AFP

US space shuttle Endeavour crews pose in front of it after landing at Kennedy Space Centre yesterday. Endeavour landed safely wrapping up its final mission to space before becoming the next to last US shuttle to retire.

Spiders' web code cracked

PTI, Washington

A new study has suggested that spiders build intricate patterns into their webs to protect them from damage.

A team from the University of Melbourne found that orb-weaving spiders respond to severe damage to their webs by building bigger silk crosses, but if the damage is mild they don't bother adding extra decoration.

Professor Mark Elgar, who led the research, said web damage is costly for spiders as a lot of nutritional resources are required to rebuild a web.

"So they evolved this ingenious way to minimise unwanted damage," he said. "It's much like we mark glass windows with tape to prevent people walking into them."

For their research, the team collected a group of orb-weaving spiders and left them to build their webs in the laboratory.

Some of the completed webs were severely damaged, others lightly damaged and the remainder left alone. The response of the spiders was then observed.

"The fact that spiders increased their decorating activity in response to severe damage but didn't increase their decorating following light damage suggests that the conspicuous building of silk crosses serves to make webs more visible to animals that might accidentally walk or fly into them," Professor Elgar said.

Adding silk decorations to spiders' orb-webs was first reported over a century ago but why these spiders decorate their webs has been the topic of controversial debate for decades.

"Our study helps unravel this mystery," Professor Elgar said.

The study was published in Behavioural Ecology and Sociobiology.



N Sudan proposes rotating control over Abyei

REUTERS, Khartoum/Juba

North Sudan's government laid out new proposals to resolve a dispute with the south over the central Abyei region, including setting up a rotating administration for the contested territory.

Khartoum seized Abyei on May 21, sparking an international outcry and stoking fears the two sides could return to full-blown conflict over the oil-producing region, also coveted for its fertile grazing land.

Tens of thousands of people fled the fighting.

The proposals announced late on Tuesday said the northern military should stay north of the Bahar al-Arab river and southern troops would stay south, "without participating in any administrative tasks until a final solution is reached through a referendum."

Under the north's proposals, Abyei's administration would be transferred to a joint north-south committee on July 8, the day before the south is scheduled to secede, a statement carried by the state news agency SUNA said.

A senior official with the southern ruling party said sharing Abyei's administration "doesn't do justice to the people of Abyei or the current situation there," and repeated calls for the north to withdraw its forces.

Southerners voted overwhelmingly for secession in a January referendum promised by a 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended decades of civil war. Issues such as the common border line have not been settled yet.

A separate referendum was scheduled for Abyei to determine its status, but that vote has not happened.

"The north must pull its forces out of Abyei, it is a violation of the CPA," Anne Itto, deputy secretary general of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM), told Reuters.

"The shared administration of Abyei ended a long time ago, on January 9, when the people of Abyei were meant to hold their own referendum," she added.

The Abyei region is used all year round by the south-linked Dinka Ngok people and for part of the year by northern Arab Misseriya nomads.