

Thousands flee fighting in Yemen capital

Opposition fighters head to capital; airport closed

AFP, Sanaa

Dissident tribesmen fought loyalist troops in the Yemeni capital for a third straight day yesterday leaving bodies on the streets and sending thousands of residents fleeing.

More than 60 people have now been confirmed killed in the fighting since a fragile truce between the forces of powerful tribal leader Sheikh Sadiq al-Ahmar and embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh collapsed on Tuesday.

But medics said they had no word yet on casualties from yesterday's fighting as ambulance crews were unable to access the Al-Hasaba neighbourhood of north Sanaa where Ahmar has his base. "The bodies are still scattered in Al-Hasaba and ambulances cannot reach it due to the dangerous situation there," a medical official said.

At least 15 more people died in overnight fighting, medics said, adding to 47

killed on Tuesday and Wednesday.

A seven-year-old girl, who was hit by a stray bullet, also died of her wounds, an official at Al-Jumhuriya hospital said.

Residents said the fighting was the fiercest so far after loyalist special forces who had received US training as part of Washington's "war on terror" joined the battle.

Thousands of armed tribesmen were on their way to Sanaa to boost Ahmar's forces, tribal leaders said.

An advanced guard clashed with loyalist troops when it was stopped at a military post 15 kilometres (nine miles) north of the capital, they added.

Witnesses said a warplane broke the sound barrier over Ahmar's hometown of Khamr, 80 kilometres north of Sanaa, in an apparent attempt to intimidate the tribesmen of his Hashid confederation.

Mohsen Sinan, 70, said he and 30 members of his household were trying to flee Sanaa along with many other

residents. "Sanaa is deserted now and if these battles continue, Yemen will be finished," he said.

Many shops were closed and long queues formed outside petrol stations. Those residents who remained in the city complained of water shortages and power cuts.

An aviation official said flights were being diverted from the capital's main international airport, which is just 10 kilometres from Al-Hasaba, but its director Naji al-Marqab later insisted flights were running normally.

Saleh, who has been in power in Sanaa since 1978, has faced nationwide protests against his rule since mid-January.

Ahmar, who heads one of the impoverished Arabian Peninsula nation's two main tribal confederations, threw his weight behind the protesters in March.

A truce announced last week lasted just four days before clashes resumed with each side blaming the other.



Libyan boys hold fake bullets as they play at a school run by volunteers to keep children engaged in activities far from fighting between rebels and loyalists of Muammar Gaddafi in the eastern rebel stronghold of Benghazi on Wednesday. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN brief

Mitt Romney enters 2012 White House race

AFP, Stratham

Republican hopeful Mitt Romney officially entered the 2012 White House race yesterday, urging a radical change of economic course and accusing President Barack Obama of failing America.



Mitt Romney

The 64-year-old former Massachusetts governor made his announcement at a farm in the state of New Hampshire, one of the first to vote for its candidates and which will be crucial to his hopes of winning next year's Republican Party nomination.

Around 200 migrants missing off Tunisia coast

AFP, Tunis

Around 200 migrants are missing off the Tunisian coast after an operation to rescue some 800 people aboard a small ship from Libya, the official news agency TAP reported yesterday.

A rescue operation that began Wednesday has lifted 570 people off the overcrowded vessel after it ran aground and capsized near Tunisia's Kerkennah islands, the agency said.

Red Cross reopens Haiti cholera centre

AFP, Geneva

The Red Cross has reopened a cholera treatment centre near Port-au-Prince to fight a resurgence of a disease that killed thousands last year, said a statement yesterday.

According to Haitian health authorities, at least 10 people died in recent days of a new cholera spike in areas near the Haitian capital.

About 1,000 cholera cases were admitted to the Carrefour hospital, south of the capital, they said.

Internet traffic to quadruple by 2015

AFP, San Francisco

Global online traffic will quadruple by 2015 as the number of gadgets linked to the Internet climbs to 15 billion, according to a forecast by networking colossus Cisco.

Cisco's fifth annual Visual Networking Index Forecast, released Wednesday, predicted that nearly three billion people, more than 40 percent of the expected world population, will be using the Internet by the year 2015.

Series of Nato strikes rock Tripoli

UN denounces war crimes

AFP, Tripoli

Nato air raids shook Tripoli yesterday as the UN denounced crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in the conflict between Muammar Gaddafi's forces and rebels seeking to topple the strongman.

A series of six blasts at around 12:35am were followed by several more a few minutes later in the Libyan capital, the target of intensive Nato air raids for the past weeks, an AFP correspondent reported.

Nato warplanes had carried out raids late Monday and Tuesday on Tripoli, the suburb of Tajura and Al-Jafra, 600 kilometres to the south.

Government spokesman Musa Ibrahim said Tuesday that Nato air raids on Libya had killed 718 civilians and wounded 4,067 since they were unleashed on March 19 and up to May 26, but Nato said there was nothing to verify the claim.

Libyan Oil Minister Shukri Ghanem meanwhile became the latest member of Gaddafi's regime to resign, saying in Italy

that he had left Libya to join the uprising against his former boss and "fight for a democratic country."

On the ground in Libya, a huge car bomb rocked a major hotel Wednesday in Benghazi, the Libyan rebels' capital in the east of the country, but caused no casualties, witnesses and police said.

A commission of inquiry set up by the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva accused Gaddafi's regime of carrying out systematic attacks on the population, saying that it committed not only crimes against humanity but also war crimes.

While it found fewer reports of violations by the opposition, the commission also said rebel forces committed acts that constituted war crimes.

The 47-member UN Human Rights Council set up the investigation into suspected crimes against humanity in February after Gaddafi's regime dispatched Libya's army and air force to fire on civilians.

Mladic treated for cancer

Says lawyer

AFP, The Hague

War-time Bosnian Serb army chief Ratko Mladic was treated for cancer two years ago while evading genocide charges, his lawyer said yesterday on the eve of the ex-general's first appearance at a UN court.

"I have medical records showing that he was treated for lymphoma in 2009 in a Belgrade hospital," Belgrade-based lawyer Milos Saljic who has previously said his client won't live to see trial, told AFP.

The prosecution of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, meanwhile, said the trial of the man, dubbed as the "Butcher of Bosnia", would not start for months.

Japan PM survives no-confidence vote

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Prime Minister Naoto Kan survived a no-confidence vote yesterday after pledging to step down once the country is on the road to recovery from the March 11 quake and nuclear disaster.

The promise to hand over power to a younger generation mollified internal party rebels who had threatened to bring down Kan, the country's fifth premier in as many years, days before his first anniversary in the job.

The motion brought by the opposition conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its allies was defeated by a 293-152 margin after most lawmakers of the centre-left ruling party fell into line behind Kan.

Kan, 64, in a last-minute appeal to his fractured Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), urged its lawmakers to stick together until he makes significant progress in rebuilding from Japan's worst post-war emergency.

Kan, a self-styled "son-of-a-salaryman", or man of the people, offered no precise milestone, leaving his departure date open to interpretation.

The LDP -- which was ousted in a landslide 2009 election after more than half a century of almost unbroken rule -- had submitted the no-confidence motion late Wednesday with two small parties.



Deadly tornadoes kill four in US

BBC ONLINE

A cluster of tornadoes hit the US state of Massachusetts, killing at least four people.

They roared through some 20 towns, ripping off roofs, uprooting trees and scattering debris.

Worst hit was Springfield, the third largest city in the state, where 33 injuries were reported. A state of emergency has been declared and the National Guard has been called in.

Tornadoes are rare, but not unheard of, in the north-eastern US.

The damaged area is about 90 miles west of Boston.

The storm struck after a tornado alert was issued for much of the East Coast, including Philadelphia, New York and Boston.

Global war on drugs 'has failed'

Say former leaders

BBC ONLINE

The global war on drugs has "failed" according to a new report by group of politicians and former world leaders which came to light yesterday.

The Global Commission on Drug Policy report calls for the legalisation of some drugs and an end to the criminalisation of drug users.

The panel includes former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the former leaders of Mexico, Colombia and Brazil, and the entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson.

The US and Mexican governments have rejected the findings as misguided.

The Global Commission's 24-page report argues that anti-drug policy has failed by fuelling organised crime, costing taxpayers millions of dollars and causing thousands of deaths.

It cites UN estimates that opiate use increased 35% worldwide from 1998 to 2008, cocaine by 27%, and

cannabis by 8.5%.

The 19-member commission includes Mexico's former President Ernesto Zedillo, Brazil's ex-President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and former Colombian President Cesar Gaviria, as well as the former US Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker and the current Prime Minister of Greece George Papandreu.

The panel also features prominent Latin American writers Carlos Fuentes and Mario Vargas Llosa, the EU's former foreign policy chief Javier Solana, and George Schultz, a former US secretary of state.

The authors criticise governments who claim the current war on drugs is effective:

"Political leaders and public figures should have the courage to articulate publicly what many of them acknowledge privately: that the evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that repressive strategies will not solve the drug problem, and that the war on drugs has not, and cannot,

be won," the report said.

Instead of punishing users who the report says "do no harm to others," the commission argues that governments should end criminalisation of drug use, experiment with legal models that would undermine organised crime syndicates and offer health and treatment services for drug-users.

It calls for drug policies based on methods empirically proven to reduce crime and promote economic and social development.

The commission is especially critical of the US, saying it must abandon anti-crime approaches to drug policy and adopt strategies rooted in healthcare and human rights.

The office of White House drug tsar Gil Kerlikowske rejected the panel's recommendations.

"Drug addiction is a disease that can be successfully prevented and treated," said a spokesman for the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Around 100 killed in Abyei conflict

AFP, Juba

Around 100 people were killed when northern Sudanese troops overran the contested Abyei area last month, the former administrator of the flashpoint border district said yesterday.

"The situation there is very bad, and our people are suffering," Deng Arop Kuolsaid.

Kuol, a southern appointee, was controversially sacked as Abyei administrator by President Omar al-Bashir after Khartoum's troops and tanks occupied the disputed region on May 21, in what the south's government branded an "invasion."

Khartoum has since appointed Brigadier Izzedine Osman, who led the army's seizure of Abyei town, as the region's caretaker administrator.

9,050 qualify

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A total of 9,050 candidates came out successful in the second phase of the three-phase competitive examination.

Of them, 4,019 are in general cadre, 1,400 in technical cadre and rest 3,631 candidates are placed in both the cadres.

The results are available on www.bpsc.gov.bd.

The commission, however, withheld results of 34 candidates due to errors in information or administrative reasons, a press release of the PSC said.

The PSC has published the results provisionally and the commission has the right to modify the published results if it requires any, the release said.

The written examinations were held in January this year.

On October 19 last year, the commission published the preliminary test results of the exam with a total of 14,470 candidates qualifying for the written test.



PHOTO: AFP

An Indian saleswoman speaks on a cellular telephone as she makes a recharge to a prepaid telephone at a shop in Hyderabad yesterday. With the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicating that heavy use of mobile phones could possibly cause brain cancer, the Indian government has launched a probe into the matter.

The real slumdog millionaire

AFP, Manila

An illiterate, slum-dwelling Philippine carpenter who was too poor to send his six children to school became an instant millionaire yesterday with the country's second biggest-ever lottery win.

The 60-year-old collected a 356.5-million-peso (eight-million-dollar) cheque from a single 20-peso ticket, which was all he could afford, said an aide to Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office general manager Jose Ferdinand Roxas.

"He plans to buy a house because he and his family had never owned a proper home all their lives," said the Roxas aide, who declined to be identified.

US senator McCain meets Suu Kyi

AFP, Yangon

US Senator John McCain pledged to support efforts to bring democracy to Myanmar in talks yesterday with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi during a visit to assess the new political landscape.

The senior Republican's visit comes as President Barack Obama, who beat McCain in the 2008 White House race, pursues greater engagement with the nation, whose junta recently handed power to a nominally civilian government.

"McCain said they (the US) will always help and support Myanmar democracy. We are also satisfied with the meeting with him," Suu Kyi told reporters after the pair met for about one hour at her lakeside mansion.

Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in November shortly after the junta held the



first election in 20 years.

The vote, which was won by the military's political proxies, was marred by widespread complaints of cheating and intimidation.

The US senator has described Suu Kyi as "my inspiration" and wrote in the guestbook at her party's headquarters: "Thank you for unwavering support for 'the Lady,'" as she is widely known in Myanmar, also known as Burma.

On Wednesday McCain, the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, met with Vice President Tin Aung Myint Oo and Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin in the capital Naypyidaw, according to state media.

They "exchanged views on promotion of bilateral ties and cooperation between the two countries," the New Light of Myanmar reported.