

# Rebels make fresh gain in Libya war

## Nato raid kills 12 civilians; strains emerge in alliance

REUTERS, Zintan

Libyan rebels pushed deeper into government-held territory south of the capital yesterday, but their advance came as strains began to emerge in the Western alliance trying to topple Muammar Gaddafi.

Fighters in the Western Mountains, a rebel stronghold about 150 km southwest of Tripoli, built on gains made in the past few days by taking two villages from which pro-Gaddafi forces had for months been shelling rebel-held towns.

But the rebels are still a long way from Gaddafi's main stronghold in Tripoli, while their fellow fighters on the other two fronts -- in Misrata and in eastern Libya -- have made only halting progress against better-armed government troops.

"The revolutionaries (rebels) now control Zawiyat al-Babour and al-Awiniyah after pro-Gaddafi forces

retreated this morning from the two villages," Abdulrahman, a rebel spokesman in the nearby town of Zintan, told Reuters.

The Nato military alliance, which has been pounding Gaddafi's military and command-and-control structures for nearly three months, has failed to dislodge him.

Libyan state TV said yesterday a Nato bombardment had killed 12 people in a convoy in the town of Kikla, 150 km southwest of Tripoli. A Nato official denied the report, saying: "There was no strike in Kikla by Nato today."

The rebels seized the town on Tuesday after government troops fell back.

And following a three-day pause in Nato strikes on Tripoli, powerful explosions rocked the Libyan capital late Tuesday, with black smoke rising from a site close to downtown.

In a theatrical show of defiance, Libyan state television showed Gaddafi

at the weekend playing a game of chess with a visiting Russian official.

Ties are becoming strained in the alliance, with some Nato members complaining that others have been reluctant to commit additional resources needed to sustain the bombing mission in the coming months.

Speaking in London after meeting Nato Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, British Prime Minister David Cameron reiterated that time was running out for Gaddafi and that the alliance was as determined as ever.

Rasmussen echoed those comments despite senior Nato commander General Stephane Abrial on Tuesday raising questions about the alliance's ability to handle long-term intervention.

"Allies and partners are committed to provide the necessary resources and assets to continue this operation and see it through to a successful conclusion," Rasmussen said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Syrian refugees greet each other at the Turkish Red Crescent camp in the Yayladagi district of the Turkish city of Hatay, two kilometers from the Syrian yesterday.

## NEWS IN brief

### Russia aims to be among the 5 biggest economies by 2021

AFP, Geneva

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin yesterday set an "ambitious goal" for the country to become one of the five largest economies in the next decade.

"We have put forth an ambitious goal in the next decade to make Russia one of the five largest economies of the world," he told the 100th conference of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva.

Putin acknowledged that the country would need to double its productivity, and create new jobs in the

### Stock scam leads top Hong Kong businesswoman to jail

AFP, Kong

A Hong Kong court jailed one of the city's highest profile businesswomen for three and a half years on Wednesday after she engineered a \$475,000 stock scam, a court official said.

Lily Chiang, 50, the former head of Hong Kong's General Chamber of Commerce, was convicted last week of fraud, conspiracy to defraud and authorising the issue of a misleading prospectus.

Passing sentence, Judge Albert Wong, who earlier described Chiang as an "author of dishonesty", said the entrepreneur had "tarnished Hong Kong's reputation as an international financial hub", local radio

### Che's diary published in Cuba

BBC ONLINE

A previously unpublished diary by the Argentine-born revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara has been unveiled in Cuba.

His widow, Aleida March, said she had decided to publish the writings unedited.

Diary of a Combatant covers his three-year guerrilla

### Youth electrocuted by China-made mobile

PTI, Bharuch

A person was electrocuted after coming in contact with a made-in-China mobile phone in the Panchmahal district of Gujarat, police said on Tuesday.

"Twenty-five-year-old Dhanji Damor, got electrocuted at Muktanand Bungalov Society while attempting to make a phone call from a made-in-China



Che Guevara

### LIBYA WAR

## US lawmakers file suit against Obama



Barack Obama

AFP, Washington

A bipartisan group of US lawmakers filed suit against President Barack Obama yesterday, saying US military operations in Libya are "illegal" because they do not have congressional approval.

Democrat Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and nine other members of the House of Representatives signed the lawsuit challenging what they described as Obama's circumvention of Congress in authorising the use of military force in a protracted effort to oust longtime Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

The US Constitution stipulates that only Congress has the right to declare war.

The suit "challenges policy that any president can take the US to war unilaterally," said the lawmakers, who included Republicans Walter Jones of North Carolina

and Ron Paul of Texas.

It also states that Obama violated the War Powers Resolution, the 1973 law aimed at curtailing US presidents' ability to deploy the military overseas.

Earlier President Barack Obama's top critic in the US Congress, Republican US House Speaker John Boehner, warned him over the issue.

He warned Obama that the administration may fall afoul, come Sunday, of a 90-day deadline set by the 1973 War Powers Act aimed at curtailing US presidents' ability to deploy the military overseas.

In a letter made public by his office, Boehner also gave Obama until Friday to share his legal justification for not seeking explicit congressional approval for a conflict that polls find overwhelmingly unpopular with the US public.



John Boehner

### Switzerland to toughen bank rules

AFP, Zurich

Swiss legislators have moved to drastically toughen capital requirements on big banks Credit Suisse and UBS amid concerns their failure in a crisis could drag down the Alpine country's economy.

Lawmakers in the upper chamber of parliament, the Council of States, approved the measures expected to cost each bank \$90 billion in a preliminary vote late on Tuesday and were due to cast a final vote on Thursday.

The measures would require the banks to hike their high-quality core common equity to 10 percent of assets plus hold another nine percent in bonds that could be converted into equity if needed.

The measures are considerably tougher than the Basel III international standards.

### UN report condemns Syria crackdown

BBC ONLINE

Syrian troops trying to quash three months of protests are committing "alleged breaches of the most fundamental rights", said a UN report yesterday.

The use of live ammunition against mostly unarmed civilians has killed around 1,100 people, says the report.

It also documents arrests on a massive scale. Investigators believe as many as 10,000 people have been detained.

Investigators used evidence from rights groups and people who had fled Syria, but were denied entry to the country.

President Bashar al-Assad is facing the gravest threat to his family's 40-year ruling dynasty, as unrest that first erupted in the south of the country has now engulfed the north - near the border with Turkey - and is threatening to spread eastwards towards its border with Iraq.

As anti-regime demonstrations continued in many parts of the country, the government yesterday mobilised its own demonstration of popular support as thousands of people turned out in a Damascus suburb to wave a giant Syrian flag 2.4 km (1.4 miles) long.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has repeatedly appealed to Syria to let in a humanitarian team make a proper assessment, but the Syrian authorities have refused.

Meanwhile, Syria has called on the people of Jisr al-Shughour to return, three days after an army attack restored government control there.

### CHINA FLOODS Death toll climbs to 105

REUTERS, Beijing

Torrential rains are still ravaging central and southern China, nearly two weeks after leaving at least 105 people dead and 65 missing, the state news agency Xinhua reported yesterday.

Heavy rains across recently drought-stricken sections of China have triggered floods and landslides, which have forced more than 88,000 people to evacuate their homes.

Rain in the region is expected to last until Friday, and spread to north China in a few days.

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Ministry of Finance jointly allocated 12.3 million pounds to Hubei and Hunan provinces for evacuation and reconstruction efforts yesterday.

## World's most dangerous places for women

REUTERS, London

Afghanistan, Congo and Pakistan are the world's most dangerous countries for women due to a barrage of threats ranging from violence and rape to dismal healthcare and "honour killings," a Thomson Reuters Foundation expert poll showed yesterday.

Following are key facts on each of the five countries, ranked in order of danger.

- 1. AFGHANISTAN**  
Beleaguered by insurgency, corruption and dire poverty, Afghanistan ranked as most dangerous to women overall and came out worst in three of the poll's key risk categories: health, non-sexual violence and economic discrimination.  
► Women in Afghanistan have a one in 11 chance of dying in childbirth.  
► Some 87 pct of women are illiterate.
- 2. CONGO**  
Still reeling from a 1998-2003 war and accompanying humanitarian

disaster that killed 5.4 million, Democratic Republic of Congo ranked second.

► About 1,150 women are raped every day, or some 420,000 a year, according to a recent report in the American Journal of Public Health.

► The Congolese Women's Campaign Against Sexual Violence puts the number of rapes at 40 women a day.

► 57 pct of pregnant women are anaemic.

**3. PAKISTAN**  
Those polled cited cultural, tribal and religious practices harmful to women, including acid attacks, child and forced marriage and punishment or retribution by stoning or other physical abuse.

► More than 1,000 women and girls are victims of "honour killings" every year, according to Pakistan's Human Rights Commission.

► 90 pct of women in Pakistan face domestic violence.

**4. INDIA**  
Female foeticide, child marriage and high levels of trafficking and

domestic servitude make the world's largest democracy the fourth most dangerous place for women, the poll showed.

► 100 million people, mostly women and girls, are involved in trafficking in one way or another, according to former Indian Home Secretary Madhukar Gupta.

► Up to 50 million girls are "missing" over the past century due to female infanticide and foeticide.

► 44.5 pct of girls are married before the age of 18.

**5. SOMALIA**  
One of the poorest, most violent and lawless countries, Somalia ranked fifth due to a catalogue of dangers including high maternal mortality, rape, female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage.  
► 95 pct of women face FGM, mostly between the ages of 4 and 11.  
► Only 9 pct of women give birth at a health facility.  
► Only 7.5 pct of parliament seats are held by women.

### Chile volcano halts Perth flights

AFP, Sydney

Travel chaos from the Chile ash cloud spread to Western Australia yesterday with Virgin, Qantas and Jetstar suspending flights into and out of Perth.

Several other international services from the city were also cancelled, including a South African Airlines flight to Johannesburg and Tiger Airways to Singapore.

But as the fallout from the eruption of the Puyehue volcano -- high in the Andes -- entered a fourth day, there was better news for Adelaide passengers, with Qantas, Jetstar and Tiger resuming flights.

Qantas and Jetstar however again cancelled all routes to New Zealand and the southern island of Tasmania as well as to the Argentinian capital Buenos Aires.

### ANTI-AUSTERITY MOVEMENT

## Protesters surround parliament in Greece

PM held emergency talks

AFP, Athens

Thousands of Greek protesters surrounded the parliament building yesterday as a general strike paralysed the country and the prime minister held emergency talks on a controversial reform package.

Riot police and barricades blocked approaches to parliament as 20,000 people mustered in the capital, summoned by a popular protest group that has occupied central Syntagma Square for weeks after a similar mobilisation in Spain.

Lawmakers inside the building are debating a new austerity package worth over 28 billion euros (\$40 billion), a condition demanded by Greece's creditors in return for a badly-needed new aid bailout.

Prime Minister George Papandreou

began an emergency meeting with the Greek head of state, President Karolos Papoulias, after a government deputy defected on Tuesday, reducing the government's majority to five seats.

Another party member also recently indicated that he would vote against the government's plan, raising the likelihood the reforms may be rejected.

A similar event in Portugal prompted the collapse of a left wing government followed by snap elections that were won by a right-of-centre party.

Dozens of police vans were parked in front of parliament to allow the deputies unhindered access and keep at bay the crowd of protesters.

Rallies called by trade unions were due to begin in the late morning.



PHOTO: AFP  
Greek riot police officers arrest protesters during a general strike against government austerity plans, in Athens yesterday. Offices were closed and public transport on land and sea across Greece was seriously disrupted early today as a mass general strike got under way.

### RUSSIA FOOD BAN EU voices deep 'dissatisfaction'

AFP, Brussels

The European Union executive yesterday voiced "profound dissatisfaction" over Russia's failure to lift a blanket ban slapped on EU vegetables due to Germany's killer E coli bacteria outbreak.

Moscow had agreed Friday to lift the embargo after two days of summit talks between EU Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev dominated by the bitter trade row.

Lamenting Russia's failure to move, the "Commission today expressed its profound dissatisfaction that the lifting of the import ban which was agreed between presidents Medvedev and Barroso at the summit has not yet been implemented", a spokeswoman said.

"Meanwhile, the source of the E coli contamination has been clearly identified and eliminated from the market and this further emphasizes that there is no justification" for maintaining the ban, said Pia Ahrenkilde Hansen.

The European Union had reacted furiously to Moscow's ban on vegetables from the 27-nation union, calling it disproportionate and scientifically unjustified.