



PHOTO: AFP
Relatives of earthquake and tsunami victims offer prayer at a ceremony to mark 100 days since the March 11 massive earthquake which killed over 15,000 people, at Otsuchi town in Iwate prefecture yesterday.

NUKE DISASTER Japan pauses waste water operation

AFP, Tokyo

Tokyo Electric Power said yesterday it stopped treating highly radioactive waste water at a crippled Japanese nuclear plant just hours after the system came online because parts needed to be replaced.

Part of the system that absorbs radioactive caesium had reached its processing capacity and needed to be replaced far earlier than expected, TEPCO officials said.

The operation started at 8:00pm Friday and was stopped five hours later, said TEPCO, which had earlier expected the part to last for one month.

Defiant Gaddafi vows to defeat Nato

Libya reaffirms talks with rebels

AFP, Benghazi

Hours after loud blasts shook Libya's capital Tripoli, Muammar Gaddafi vowed to defeat Nato as his forces launched a deadly rocket assault on rebel-held Misrata.

"Nato is bound to be defeated," Gaddafi said in the speech broadcast on loudspeakers in Tripoli's Green Square as thousands of flag-waving regime supporters staged their biggest rally in weeks.

"We are determined to change nothing in our country other than by our own free will... We are resisting, we are fighting," he declared.

Meanwhile, the Libyan government dismissed rebel denials that the two sides have been holding talks.

Addressing a news conference in Tripoli just hours after loud explosions again rocked the Libyan capital, Prime Minister Baghdadi al-Mahmudi accused Nato of committing "war crimes and crimes against humanity"

by "directly targeting civilian sites" with air raids over the past three days.

"Ask the Egyptians, French, Norwegians and Tunisians for information. They will tell you the truth," Baghdadi said.

"We are sure of our meetings and everything has been recorded."

Speaking earlier on Friday a day after visiting Tripoli, Margelov said that the Libyan government had forged multiple contacts with the Libyan opposition in foreign capitals including Berlin, Paris and Oslo.

The claim has been repeatedly denied by the rebels National Transitional Council.

At least five further explosions were heard early yesterday in and around the capital, an AFP journalist reported.

In the western rebel enclave of Misrata, 10 people were killed and 40 wounded when Gaddafi loyalists fired a volley of Grad rockets at the lifeline port city, rebel spokesman Ahmed Hassan told AFP.

NEWS IN brief

S Korean troops mistakenly shoot at airliner

BBC ONLINE

South Korean troops fired yesterday at a passenger jet after mistaking it for a North Korean aircraft.

Soldiers on Gyeongju island, off South Korea's west coast, fired 99 rifle rounds at the Asiana flight, which was out of range and landed undamaged.

The incident took place early on Friday close to the tense border between the Koreans.

Protest called against Moroccan king's reform proposals

AFP, Rabat

Morocco's youth-based February 20 Movement called for nationwide protests yesterday against constitutional reforms proposed by King Mohammed VI.

"The plan as proposed by the king yesterday (Friday) does not respond to our demands for a true separation of powers. We will protest peacefully on Sunday against this plan," he said.

The king outlined curbs to his wide political powers in an address to the nation on Friday and pledged to build a constitutional monarchy with a democratic parliament in response to nationwide protests.

Tajikistan charges BBC reporter with extremism

AFP, Dushanbe

Tajikistan yesterday charged Urunbay Usmonov, 59, a correspondent for the BBC's Central Asia service, with membership of a banned Islamist group, after his arrest sparked global concern that he was being persecuted merely for opposing the regime.

Saying "the initial investigation, based on witness testimony and evidence, confirms Usmonov's membership in Hizb ut-Tahrir," a criminal investigation has been opened against him, the Tajik state committee for national security told AFP.

Zambian ex-president dies

AFP, Lusaka

Former Zambia president Frederick Chiluba, 68, who ruled the country from 1991 to 2001, died at his home in the early hours of yesterday morning, his spokesman said.

"He died five minutes after midnight at his home," Emmanuel Mwamba told AFP.

Recognise Palestine Abbas calls on EU

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas urged European Union nations on Friday to separately or collectively recognise the state of Palestine.

During a meeting with EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton, Abbas "affirmed that the Palestinian position was to resume the peace process" with Israel, expecting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to accept to talk of two states and to halt Jewish settlements, especially in Jerusalem, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat said.

"We are calling on the European Union to help us on the question of moving the United Nations to accept Palestine on the basis of the 1967 borders," Erakat was quoted as saying by the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

Ashton arrived in Israel on Thursday and met Friday with Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman.

She later met Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad and president Abbas in the West Bank.

Obama ignored legal advice on Libya war

BBC ONLINE

Barack Obama overruled the advice of administration lawyers in deciding the US could continue participating in the Libya conflict without congressional approval, The New York Times reported yesterday.

The White House insists the president did not need congressional approval to authorise US support for Nato's mission, because the military campaign is limited in scope.

Critics argue the action violates a Vietnam War-era law limiting military action without congressional approval to 60 days.

The newspaper report said Pentagon General Counsel Jeh Johnson and acting

head of the justice department's Office of Legal Counsel Caroline Krass had advised Obama that the US involvement in the Libya air campaign constituted "hostilities".

But the US president opted to follow the advice of White House counsel Robert Bauer and state department legal adviser Harold Koh, who argued the US involvement fell short of "hostilities", the paper said.

US presidents can override the legal conclusions of the Office of Legal Counsel, but it is very rare for that to happen, analysts say.

The War Powers Resolution of 1973 states Congress must authorise participation in hostilities longer than 60 days, although the president can seek a 30-day extension.

Australian PM slides in polls

AFP, Sydney

Australian leader Julia Gillard said she felt "very secure" and vowed to stay the course yesterday, after an unprecedented slump in the polls and a surge in support for axed prime minister Kevin Rudd.

The latest Nielsen poll, published in Fairfax newspapers yesterday, put support for Gillard's ruling Labor party at 27 percent, the lowest primary vote for a major party in the poll's 39-year history.

Tony Abbott's conservative Liberal party enjoyed 49 percent, according to the survey of 1,400 Australians, rising to 59 percent with smaller party preferences against Gillard's 41 percent.

Venezuela prison riot kills 3

AFP, Caracas

At least two members of the Venezuelan national guard and an inmate were dead Friday after security forces launched a massive operation to retake control of the El Rodeo prison, where 22 people have been killed in rioting.

Some 1,300 inmates were backed into a part of the prison and refused to surrender late Friday after a day-long raid involving thousands of national guard troops managed to take over most of the facility officials said.



A Greenpeace activist dressed as Barbie doll pretends to kill other activists dressed as animals with a plastic chainsaw yesterday in front of a toy store in Paris, to protest against the alleged use by Mattel, the manufacturer of the famous Barbie doll, of packaging produced from trees from an endangered rain-forest in Indonesia.

PHOTO: AFP

Taliban kill nine in Kabul police station attack

AFP, Kabul

Nine people were killed yesterday when three attackers armed with suicide vests and machine-guns stormed a police station in the heart of the Afghan capital Kabul, officials said.

The militants, at least one of whom was in army uniform, got into a compound housing the police station in the crowded main central market area, near the Afghan presidential palace, defence ministry and other official buildings.

Five civilians were among the dead along with three policemen and one officer from Afghanistan's intelligence agency, interior ministry spokesman Najib Nikzad said. Ten

civilians and two police were wounded.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, the latest embarrassing breach at a supposedly secure location in Kabul, which comes weeks before limited foreign troop withdrawals are due to start from Afghanistan.

One of the attackers detonated his explosives at the entrance to the compound, allowing his two accomplices into the building, the interior ministry said.

Once inside, they fired at police, sparking a gun battle which lasted for around two hours before the pair were killed.

Parts of the city centre were sealed off following the attack and hundreds of people were evacuated.

US drops Laden charges

CNN ONLINE

The United States has formally dropped criminal charges against former al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, who was killed in a US military raid in Pakistan last month.

In federal court in Manhattan on Friday, prosecutors disposed of a 1998 indictment that charged Laden with murder and conspiracy to kill Americans for his role in attacking US embassies in East Africa in 1998.

The bombing of US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, killed 224 people.

A raid by US special operations forces killed bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, on May 2.

Preet Bharara, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, asked for the change, a request that Judge Lewis Kaplan granted in a brief order.

The action came after a thorough analysis confirmed that bin Laden did indeed die after Navy SEALs raided his compound. The officials noted that facial recognition and photograph analysis confirmed the identity, along with DNA testing of the body.

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