

Fatah-Hamas
talks on govt
delayed

AFP, Ramallah

Talks between president Mahmud Abbas, who heads Fatah, and Hamas chief Khaled Meshal on a new Palestinian cabinet have been postponed, a Fatah official said yesterday.

The two senior political figures were due to meet in Cairo on Tuesday to discuss the make-up of an interim government of independents called for by a unity deal which rival factions Hamas and Fatah signed in Egypt last month.

The talks have reportedly stalled on the issue of the premier who will head the transitional government, with Abbas championing his current prime minister Salam Fayyad despite objections from the Islamist movement Hamas.

Nato air strike kills 9 civilians in Tripoli residential area

World groups urge political solution; rebels rebuke West on aid

AFP, Tripoli

A Nato air strike on a residential district of Tripoli early yesterday killed nine people, five of them from the same family, and wounded 18, Libyan government spokesman Musa Ibrahim told AFP.

"The toll has now risen to nine martyrs, including five from the same family, and 18 wounded," Ibrahim said.

Earlier in the day, journalists had been shown the bodies of five people, one of them a woman and two of them toddlers.

"The other four people were killed as they passed by in front of the block of flats when the raid hit," Ibrahim said.

The Nato spokesman Wing Commander Mike Bracken said in a statement that the military alliance took "all reports of civilian casualties seriously and we will continue to look into the allegations to determine their

authenticity".

If confirmed, these first established civilian deaths would be an embarrassment for the alliance which has been leading the bombing campaign under a UN mandate to protect civilians.

The incident too comes a day after Nato said its aircraft mistakenly hit a column of Libyan rebels in the area of Brega on June 16.

The alleged civilian casualties in Tripoli come amid mounting international pressure on the alliance to seek a negotiated solution.

After talks in Cairo on Saturday, the African Union, Arab League, European Union and United Nations issued a joint statement on the importance of "accelerating the launch of a political process that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people."

EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton attended the meeting along with outgoing Arab League chief Amr Mussa and African

Union head Jean Ping, while UN chief Ban Ki-moon joined by live video link.

Ban said the roots of a negotiating process were showing but that the international community needed to give a "consistent message" on a political solution with Gaddafi.

The UN chief's comments came after both the Libyan prime minister and Russian envoy Mikhail Margelov insisted that contacts were under way between the two sides despite furious denials by the rebels.

Meanwhile, speaking in the eastern city of Benghazi, chief rebel oil official Ali Tarhouni castigated Western powers for failing to make good on their promises to help the rebel cause.

"We are running out of everything. It's a complete failure. Either they (Western nations) don't understand or they don't care. Nothing has materialised yet. And I really mean nothing," Ali said in an interview with Reuters.

"All of these people we talk to, all of these

Libyan conflict
Toddlers among dead in "barbaric" Nato air raid, officials say



AFP

countries, at all these conferences, with their great grand speeches -- we appreciate them ... but in terms of finances they are a complete failure. Our people are dying," he said.

Clashes kill 13
al-Qaeda men
in Yemen

AFP, Aden

Thirteen suspected members of an al-Qaeda-linked group and two Yemeni soldiers were killed in clashes near the gunmen-held southern city Zinjibar, an army officer said yesterday.

"Thirteen of the Ansar al-Sharia (Supporters of Islamic Sharia Law) terrorists were killed and three wounded after Artillery Brigade 119 targeted a group planting explosive devices on the main road," the field officer told AFP.

He said two soldiers were killed and three wounded when gunmen attacked an army base in the area.

Hundreds of men who officials say are connected to al-Qaeda took control of Zinjibar on May 29 after battles with the Yemeni army in which 140 people died, including about 80 soldiers.

NEWS IN brief

Ousted Tunisian ruler slams 'victors' justice' trial

AFP, Dubai

Ousted Tunisian president Zine el Abidine Ben Ali, whose trial in absentia begins today, has denied all charges against him and dismissed them as a "victors' justice", a source close to him told AFP.

A criminal court in Tunis is to begin hearing the first of about 93 cases brought against the authoritarian ruler, ousted in a month-long popular uprising that inspired other revolts still rocking the Arab world.

Ben Ali, the source said, "thinks that the trial might be aimed at diverting the attention of Tunisians from the troubles sweeping the country."

Soviet dissident Yelena Bonner dies in US

AFP, Moscow

Soviet dissident Yelena Bonner, the widow of Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov and tireless critic of Vladimir Putin, has died aged 88, friends and relatives said yesterday.

A pediatrician by training but a historic figure in life, Bonner died in Boston after undergoing heart surgery for a third time.

Rights activists remembered Bonner as a tireless fighter for Soviet freedoms who became so disillusioned with the course taken by modern Russia that she spent her last years in the United States.

Police, soldiers take over Rio slum

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Hundreds of Brazilian police and soldiers backed by helicopters and armoured vehicles swept in yesterday to take over a crime-ridden Rio slum as part of a pacification plan ahead of the football World Cup in 2014.

More than 100 marines and 160 elite police officers took part in the operation, which went off without a shot being fired, a police spokesman said.

The pre-announced operation began just after dawn with armoured personnel carriers thundering up the slum's steep roads and helicopters clattering overhead, as security forces on foot followed with arms at the ready.

Israel okays expansion of 2,000 settler homes

AFP, Jerusalem

Jerusalem's municipal council yesterday approved the expansion of 2,000 homes in the settlement district of Ramat Shlomo, allowing each home to add a room, the interior ministry said. "Jerusalem's planning and urbanisation committee on Sunday authorised the enlargement of 2,000 homes in the neighbourhood of Ramat Shlomo," it said in a statement.

Indo-Pak
nuke talks
on Thursday

PTI, New Delhi

Despite the war of words between India and Pakistan over a sea vessel MV Suez, government sources said yesterday New Delhi is going into the Foreign Secretary-level talks in Islamabad on Thursday with an "open and constructive" mind.

At the talks, India will strongly convey concerns on the slow pace of the 26/11 trial in Pakistan and that the alleged ISI officers named by Headley in Chicago are yet to be arrested.

More Confidence
Building Measures (CBMs) for Jammu and Kashmir are on the table including more trade and travel across the Line of Control (LoC).



Protesters demonstrate against the euro pact in Madrid yesterday. Thousands of people began gathering outside the Spanish parliament in Madrid in a new protest against rampant unemployment and biting austerity measures.

Most Japanese wish to scrap reactors

AFP, Tokyo

More than four out of five Japanese want to see Tokyo abandon nuclear power in the wake of the Fukushima atomic crisis, a survey said yesterday.

Resource-poor Japan relies on nuclear power for a third of its electricity supplies, and Prime Minister Naoto Kan's government has said it will remain a major pillar of the nation's energy policy.

But a survey in the Tokyo Shimbun newspaper found that 82 per cent of Japanese wanted to see it phased out.

Just over nine percent wanted all reactors shut down immediately, while almost 19 percent said they should each be permanently decommissioned when their next routine inspection was due.

The majority, just under 54 per cent, wanted to have them shut down when electricity supply and demand allowed.

The findings came after four of the six reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi plant northeast of Tokyo were heavily damaged by the 9.0-magnitude earthquake and deadly tsunami on March 11.

The world's worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986 has caused radioactive material to spew into the air, ground and sea and forced the evacuation of 80,000 people in a 20-kilometre radius.

In the survey, 67 percent of the 1,853 respondents said Japan should not build any more reactors, while 22 percent said Japan should reduce the number being planned.

TACKLING ECONOMIC CRISIS Greek PM urges all party consensus

AFP, Thessaloniki

Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou yesterday urged political parties to forge a "national accord" and back him in a confidence vote in order to overcome the economic crisis amid social unrest.

"I have asked for a renewal of the confidence in the government because the country finds itself at a crucial point," Papandreou said at the opening of debate on a parliamentary vote of confidence in the new Greek cabinet.

Papandreou revamped his government on Friday in the hope of securing the green light to forge ahead with further austerity measures, amid public protests.

The major reshuffle came after a week of political wrangling and mounting pressure on the streets.

He axed finance minister George Papaconstantinou, who was blasted by fellow party cadres for failing to jumpstart the economy after an 18-month effort.

In his place, switching from the defence portfolio, comes Evangelos Venizelos, a former party rival to Papandreou, who in press comments yesterday called for a political consensus over handling the country's debt crisis.

Papandreou's socialist Pasok party holds 155 of the 300 seats in the Greek parliament.

The Greek government finds itself pinned between EU and IMF pressure to introduce ever tougher austerity measures in return for financial bailout and popular protest at those measures.

Egypt PM hints at polls delay

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's premier has said delaying a September parliamentary election would give parties more time to prepare, as the nation debates its political future with early polls seen likely to benefit Islamists.

"Postponing the election would give the chance for a larger number of new political parties to develop," said Prime Minister Essam Sharaf.

However, "whatever the time of the election, we will exert all efforts to make it a success," Sharaf said.

His comments come at a time of mounting calls by liberal and secular groups to delay the election until a new constitution is drafted.

Some groups have expressed concern Islamist group will have too much influence over the constitution if polls are conducted now.

Marilyn Monroe's famous Seven Year Itch dress sells for \$4.6m

BBC ONLINE

The white dress worn by Marilyn Monroe in the 1955 film The Seven Year Itch sold for \$4.6m at an auction in Los Angeles yesterday.

The dress was part of a collection of film memorabilia collected by actress Debbie Reynolds over four decades.

She had hoped to house them in a museum but the project never came to fruition.

A red sequined dress and feathered headdress worn for Monroe's role in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes reached \$1.47m and a saloon girl costume from River of No Return for \$510,000.

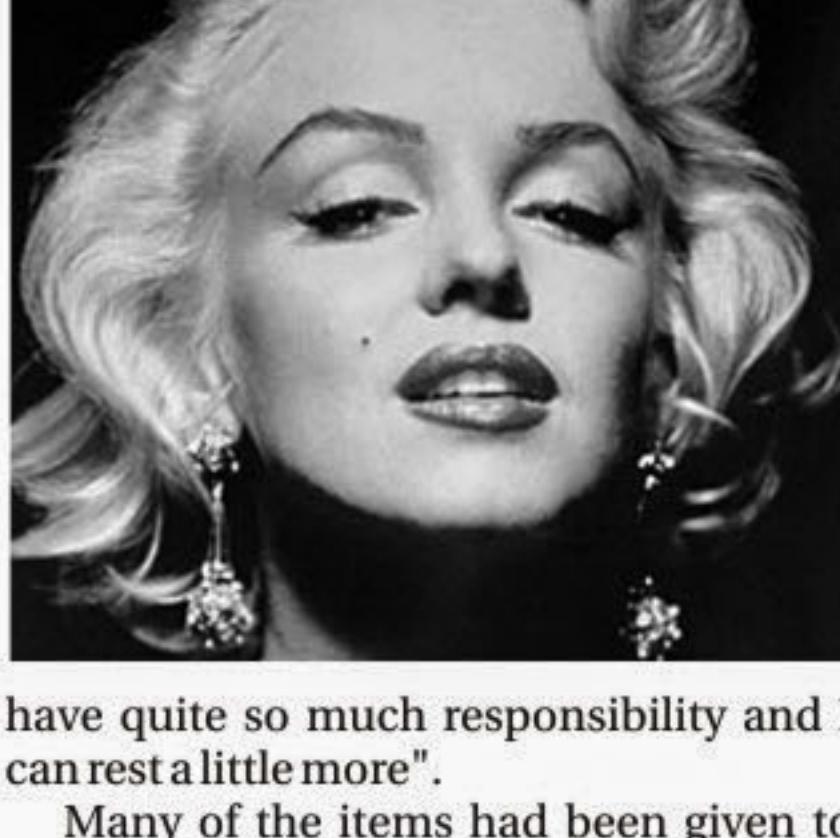
Other lots included Elizabeth Taylor's Cleopatra headdress, a Charlie Chaplin bowler hat and the guitar played by Julie Andrews in The Sound of Music.

Reynolds, 79, was in tears as the auction on the iconic Seven Year Itch dress closed, CNN reported.

Auction house Profiles in History had expected it reach around \$2m.

It was bought by an unidentified buyer bidding by telephone.

Speaking before the auction, she said the cost of maintaining them had become too high and that by selling them "I won't



have quite so much responsibility and I can rest a little more".

Many of the items had been given to Reynolds by her close friend Dame Elizabeth Taylor, who died earlier this year. The horse racing outfit worn by Taylor as a child in National Velvet sold for \$73,800.

The trademark bowler hat worn by Charlie Chaplin in several films, including The Little Tramp, reached \$135,300 while a dress and pair of ruby slippers worn by Judy Garland in the filming of The Wizard of Oz sold for \$1.75m despite not having appeared in the film.

Judgement on June 23

FROM PAGE 1
Ismail Hossain Salimon, son of former shipping minister late Akbar Hossain, is also accused in this case.

A Singapore court on January 2 punished a businessman of Singapore for keeping Koko's money in his personal account.

According to report of The Straits Times, the court fined Lim Siew Cheng US \$900,677 for transferring \$317,000 of Koko to his account and holding on to it on Koko's advice.

In Bangladesh, the Anti-corruption Commission filed the case with Kafur Police Station on March 17, 2009 in connection with siphoning of Tk 19.7 crore to Singapore.

In the case statement, the anti-graft body said the accused had laundered the money they got as bribes from China Harbour

yesterday set the date for verdict after hearing the closing argument of the prosecution.

Chief counsel for the ACC Anisul Haque told the court that they found evidence of Koko's involvement in laundering Tk 20.41 crore.

He pleaded the court to give Koko and Salimon the highest punishment under the Money Laundering Act, 2002, which is seven years' jail.

Earlier, the court recorded statements of 22 prosecution witnesses, including complainant ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed.

A total of 22 cases have been filed against Khaleda, her sons Tarique Rahman and Koko with different police stations during the caretaker and the present government tenure.

Afforestation will hardly dent warming problem

AFP, Paris

Schemes to convert croplands or marginal lands to forests will make almost no inroads against global warming this century, a scientific study published yesterday said.

Afforestation is being encouraged under the UN's Kyoto Protocol climate-change treaty under the theory that forests are "sinks" that soak up carbon dioxide (CO2) from the air through photosynthesis.

But environmental researchers, in a new probe, said that even massive conversion of land to forestry would have only a slender benefit against the greenhouse-gas problem.

This is partly because forests take decades to mature and CO2 is a long-lasting molecule, able to lurk for centuries in the atmosphere.

But another reason is that forests, even as they absorb greenhouse gas, are darker than croplands and thus absorb more solar heat - and in high latitudes, this may even result in net warming.

Vivek Arora of the University of Victoria in British Columbia and Alvaro Montenegro of St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia modelled five scenarios in which afforestation was carried out over 50 years, from 2011 to 2060.

They used a Canadian programme called CanESM1 that simulated the impacts on land, sea and air if Earth's surface temperature rose by some 3.0 degrees Celsius by 2100 compared to 1850.

Even if all the cropland in the world were afforested, this would reduce the warming by only 0.45 C by timescale of 2081-2100, according to the study, which appears in the journal Nature Geoscience.

Fifty-percent afforestation would break it by an even tinier 0.25 C.

Both scenarios are, of course, wildly unrealistic because of the need to grow food.

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