

Mubarak  
refuses food

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's ex-president Hosni Mubarak, due to go on trial next week for murder, is refusing food in his hospital detention and has become extremely weak, state media reported yesterday.

Mubarak, 83, has been detained since April on charges of ordering the killings of anti-regime protesters and corruption. He is under arrest in a Red Sea resort hospital, where he receives treatment for a heart condition.

His health, the topic of much speculation as critics accuse him of malingering to avoid trial, is "extremely weak," the official al-Gomhuria newspaper reported.

He "completely abstains from food and intakes only some liquids and juices," the newspaper quoted Mohammed Fathallah, head of the hospital in Sharm el-Sheikh, as saying.

Mubarak is scheduled to stand trial on August 3 with his two sons, his former interior minister Habib al-Adli and six police commanders.

## NORWAY MASSACRE

## Breivik acted alone

BBC ONLINE

Norwegian domestic intelligence chief Janne Kristiansen has told the BBC no evidence has so far been found linking Anders Behring Breivik with far-right extremists in Norway or elsewhere.

But Kristiansen said she thought he had acted completely on his own. She also cast doubt on suggestions by Breivik's lawyer that he was insane.

Kristiansen, who heads Norway's Police Security Service, told the BBC: "We don't have indications that he has been part of a broader movement or that he has been in connection with other cells or that there are other cells."

But she added that the possible existence of accomplices was being investigated. "I don't think there is any limits to the evil in this person's head," she said. "We can't take any chance with this person."

About contacts with right-wing activists in the UK or other countries, she said: "We are in close contact with our sister services in Europe, America and elsewhere."

Denying suggestions that Breivik was insane, Kristiansen described him as calculating and someone who sought the limelight.

The bomb in the capital Oslo targeted buildings connected to Norway's Labour government, while the mass shooting occurred at an annual Labour Party youth



camp on a small island, Utoeya.

Breivik has said he had wanted to inflict maximum damage on the party, which he accuses of failing the country on immigration, according to his lawyer.

The lawyer, Geir Lippestad, said it was too early to say if his client would plead insanity, even though "this whole case indicated that he is insane".

In her BBC interview, Kristiansen also defended the actions of Norwegian police - who have been criticised for taking 90 minutes to get to Utoeya after the shooting began.

She said the island was "quite a way away" from Oslo, and that officers had got there as quickly as they could.

The leader of Norway's Delta Force, a special-operations unit, said the breakdown of a police boat did not cause any significant delay.

Anders Snortheimsmoen told reporters that the team had immediately found an alternative boat to reach Utoeya.

Early on yesterday, parts of Oslo's central station were briefly evacuated after a suitcase was left on a bus. Police later said nothing suspicious had been found in it.

Meanwhile police say they have detonated a cache of explosives found at a farm north of Oslo which Breivik had rented.

Friday's massacre prompted up to a quarter of a million people to take to the streets of Oslo on Monday to commemorate the victims.



Activists of India's Fight Against Terrorism Society shout anti-Pakistan slogans against Pakistan's Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar, currently on an official visit, during a protest in New Delhi yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN  
brief

## Afghan mayor assassinated in troubled south

AFP, Kandahar

The mayor of Kandahar, a close ally of Afghan President Hamid Karzai, was assassinated in a suicide attack yesterday -- the latest in a string of political murders in the key southern region.

The killing came two weeks after Karzai's powerful brother was gunned down in the city and is a further setback for US-led efforts to control the Taliban's spiritual home as foreign troops start to withdraw.

The suicide bomber detonated explosives hidden in his turban and killed mayor Ghulam Haidar Hameedi, who was talking to locals in the courtyard of

## Norway to review security measures: PM

AFP, Oslo

Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said yesterday that Oslo will review and assess the country's security measures after the current period of national grieving for the 76 victims of bomb and gun attacks.



Jens Stoltenberg

"After the investigation and after we have in a way gone through the period in which we are now comforting those who have lost loved ones, there will be a time for going through all the experiences we have from the operation," Stoltenberg told a press conference.

"That will be part of what we are going to go through," he said.

When asked whether a review and assessment of

## Uzbek charged with threatening to kill Obama

AFP, Washington

An Uzbek national who overstayed his student visa was indicted Tuesday on charges of threatening to kill President Barack Obama and illegal possession of weapons, officials said.

Ulugbek Kodirov, 21, was arrested July 13 at a motel in Leeds, Alabama after buying a machine gun from a US undercover agent, the Justice Department said.

A grand jury in Birmingham, Alabama indicted him on charges of threatening to kill Obama on four occasions in the week preceding his arrest, and illegal pos-

## LIBYA CONFLICT

## Britain recognises rebels, expels Gaddafi envoys

AFP, London

Britain recognised Libya's rebel council as the country's sole legitimate government yesterday after dramatically expelling all remaining staff loyal to Moamer Gaddafi from the London embassy.

Foreign Secretary William Hague said he had invited the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC) to take over the embassy and appoint an official envoy in a major boost for the movement fighting Gaddafi's regime.

A group of rebel supporters unfurled the red, black and green flag of the Libyan opposition outside the embassy after Hague's announcement, although the Gaddafi regime's green flag was still flying from the building itself.

"The prime minister and I have decided that the United Kingdom recognises and will deal with the National Transitional Council as the sole governmental authority in Libya," Hague told a news conference in London.

"We are inviting the National Transitional

Council to appoint a new Libyan diplomatic envoy to take over the Libyan embassy in London."

He added: "In line with that decision we summoned the Libyan charge d'affaires to the Foreign Office today and informed him that he and the other regime diplomats from the Gaddafi regime must leave the UK."

"We no longer recognise them as the representatives of the Libyan government."

Britain would also unlock £91 million of Libyan oil assets frozen under a UN Security Council resolution so that the rebels could benefit from them, Hague said.

"This will help to ensure that the crucial provision of fuel is maintained. We will work hard with our international partners in the coming weeks to unfreeze further Libyan assets."

Britain is one of the lead nations in a Nato-led alliance that has been carrying out an aerial campaign against Gaddafi's regime since March, when the UN approved action to protect civilians.

## N Korea calls for peace treaty with US

AP, Seoul

North Korea demanded yesterday that the United States sign a peace treaty formally ending the Korean War, as a senior North Korean diplomat visited New York to negotiate ways to restart six-nation nuclear disarmament talks.

In an editorial marking the 58th anniversary of an armistice that ended the 1950-53 war, the North's official Korean Central News Agency insisted a peace treaty could go a long way toward resolving a deadlock over Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear weapons.

North Korea has long called for a peace treaty with the United States. The armistice left the Korean peninsula in a technical state of war. Its latest push comes as North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan makes a fresh attempt to reopen six-nation talks that were last held in December 2008.

US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton invited Kim to New York to meet with US officials later this week only after nuclear envoys from the rival Koreas held surprise talks last week.

Seoul blames North Korea for two attacks that killed 50 South Koreans last year and has demanded that Pyongyang show remorse. The United States has insisted that its ally Seoul must be satisfied that inter-Korean ties are improving before it will pursue more nuclear negotiations with Pyongyang.

## Storm kills 25 in Philippines

AFP, Manila

At least 25 people were killed and nine others went missing as a slow-moving tropical storm dumped enormous amounts of rain across the Philippines' main island, authorities said yesterday.

Nock-ten was expected to cause more damage in the mountainous northern areas of Luzon island last night, while also bringing heavy rain to Manila, the state weather service said.

The latest death toll from Nock-ten, which struck the eastern Philippines on Tuesday, was 25, with many of the victims caught in floods or consumed by landslides.

Most of the missing were fishermen or sailors lost at sea, although a young boy also disappeared after being washed away in a flooded river, the officials said.

## India, Pak ministers hail 'new era' in ties

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian and Pakistani foreign ministers hailed a new era in ties between the nuclear-armed rivals yesterday and agreed to fight militancy and boost trade and travel, a step forward in reducing tension in the world's most dangerous region.

The comments from Indian Foreign Minister S M Krishna and his Pakistani counterpart, Hina Rabbani Khar, were unexpectedly positive and may be a small step toward improving regional stability, made more urgent with a US troop drawdown in Afghanistan looming.

"This is indeed a new era of bilateral cooperation between the two countries," Khar, Pakistan's first female and youngest-ever foreign minister, told the media after two and a half hours of talks, standing next to Krishna.

"(It) is our desire, and I believe after having spoken to you, Mr Foreign Minister, that it is the desire of both the governments, to make it an uninterrupted and an unintermittable process."

Expectations of a breakthrough in peace talks have been low, but the fact the South

Asian rivals are talking was a sign that neither side wants to slide back toward conflict.

India and Pakistan in February resumed a formal peace process broken off after the 2008 attack on India's financial capital of Mumbai by Pakistan-based militants, which killed 166 people.

"We have some distance to travel, but with an open mind and consistent approach, which has been demonstrated in this round of dialogue, I am sure we can reach our desired destination of having a friendly and cooperative relation between our two countries," Krishna said.

Importantly, they agreed to work more closely to fight militancy, which has plagued both countries, and to bring to justice perpetrators of militant attacks.

"We have agreed that terrorism poses a continued threat to peace and security and reiterate the firm and undiluted commitment of our two countries to fight and eliminate this scourge in all forms," Krishna said.

"We have also agreed the need to strengthen cooperation in counter-terrorism to bring those responsible for terror crimes to justice."

## Dark winters 'led to bigger human brains'

BBC ONLINE

Humans living at high latitude have bigger eyes and bigger brains to cope with poor light during long winters and cloudy days, UK scientists have said.

The Oxford University team said bigger brains did not make people smarter. Larger vision processing areas fill the extra capacity, they write in the Royal Society's Biology Letters journal.

The scientists measured the eye sockets and brain volumes of 55 skulls from 12 populations across the world, and plotted the results against latitude. Lead author Eiluned Pearce told BBC News: "We found a positive relationship between absolute latitude and both eye socket size and cranial capacity."

Eiluned Pearce said: "Both the amount of light hitting the Earth's surface and winter day-lengths get shorter as you go further north or south from the equator."

"We found that as light levels decrease,

humans are getting bigger eye sockets, which suggests that their eyeballs are getting bigger.

"They are also getting bigger brains, because we found this increase in cranial capacity as well."

"In the paper, we argue that having bigger brains doesn't mean that high-latitude humans are necessarily smarter. It's just they need bigger eyes and brains to be able to see well where they live."

The work indicates that humans are subject to the same evolutionary trends that give relatively large eyes to birds that sing first during the dawn chorus, or species such as owls that forage at night.

The team, from the Institute of Cognitive and Evolutionary Anthropology, used skulls dating from the 1800s kept at museums in Oxford and Cambridge.

The skulls were from indigenous populations ranging from Scandinavia to Australia, Micronesia and North America.

The largest brain capacity came from Scandinavia, while the smallest were from Micronesia.

## Syrian forces kill 11 in vengeance raid

AFP, Nicosia

Syrian security forces shot dead at least 11 people, including a child aged seven, in a "vengeance" raid on the town of Kanaker near Damascus early yesterday.

"The security forces entered homes at dawn yesterday and during the operation 11 people were shot dead and more than 250 arrested," said Ammar Qurabi, head of the National Organisation for Human Rights, reached by telephone from Nicosia.

Qurabi said the operation in Kanaker, a town of 25,000 people, was backed by "a bulldozer and army tanks" and targeted people aged between 15 and 40.

He added that at least 11 vehicles were used to carry away those arrested in the swoop.

According to Qurabi, the raid was an "act of vengeance" because inhabitants had supplied provisions to anti-regime protesters in the southern city of Daraa, the main hub of protests against President Bashar al-Assad's hardline rule, when it was besieged by troops earlier this year.

Another advocacy group, the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, in a statement emailed to AFP, named eight people it said were killed in yesterday's crackdown in Kanaker.

## Putin considering Kremlin return

## Say Russian political sources

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin is close to a decision to bid for the presidency in an election next year because he has doubts about his protege, President Dmitry Medvedev, senior political sources say.

Putin ruled as president from 2000 to 2008 before handing over to Medvedev to comply with a constitutional ban on a third consecutive term. He will be free to run in the March presidential election.

Putin, 58, and Medvedev, 45, have repeatedly refused to say which of them will run but as Russia's paramount leader, officials and diplomats say the decision is



Putin's

"I think Putin is going to run, that he has already decided to," said a highly placed source who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the delicacy of the political situation.

The source said Putin had been troubled by the perception that his protege, whom he has known for more than two decades, did not have sufficient support among the political and business elite or the electorate to ensure stability if he pushed ahead with plans for political reform.

"Putin has much more support from the people than Medvedev. Medvedev has overestimated his weight inside the system," he said.

## 28 killed after downpours in S Korea

AFP, Seoul

Torrential rain pounding South Korea yesterday triggered landslides which killed 28 people and inundated hundreds of homes in the country's worst flood damage in decades.

Main roads turned to rivers of churning, muddy water, while the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said that swollen streams and rivers killed an additional three people and left 10 others missing across the country.

Thirteen people died when a mudslide hit an inn and three homes in the mountainous Chuncheon area 100 kilometres east of Seoul early yesterday, it said.



Cars are submerged by floodwaters along a street after heavy rains hit the Seoul region in South Korea yesterday. PHOTO: AFP