



US Senate scraps Obama jobs bill

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama's jobs plan slid to defeat Tuesday against a wall of Senate Republican opposition, but he vowed to fight on amid grim new warnings partisan warfare could spark a new recession.

Two of Obama's own Democrats, who face tough reelection fights in 2012 elections, joined Republicans to vote against the \$447 billion bill, which fell well short of the 60-vote supermajority needed to advance in the chamber.

"Tonight's vote is by no means the end of this fight," Obama said.

"With so many Americans out of work and so many families struggling, we can't take 'no' for an answer. Ultimately, the American people won't take 'no' for an answer," said the increasingly embattled president.

In a procedural maneuver that would permit him to bring up the bill again at any time, Senate Majority leader Harry Reid joined the two Democratic lawmakers who cast votes with Republicans.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, was asked in an interview with Bloomberg Television whether Republicans were raising the risk of another recession by standing in the way of the bill, replied: "Absolutely."

"If Congress does not act, it will be because Republicans decided they did not want to do anything to help the economy," he said. "Growth will be weaker... people will be out of work," he warned.

NTC fighters move in for kill in Gaddafi town

AFP, Sirte

Forces of Libya's new regime were looking to move in for the kill against Muammar Gaddafi's diehards in his hometown yesterday after meeting little resistance and taking several key objectives.

A day after seizing Sirte's police headquarters, the National Transitional Council forces were still closing in from the east and west on ever smaller pockets of pro-Gaddafi forces.

Hundreds of them, massed in dozens of pickups, fired rockets from the west of the Mediterranean city whose seizure will enable the NTC to declare the liberation of Libya and clear the way for an election timetable.

An AFP correspondent said Sirte's main square and entire waterfront was under NTC control, along with its fortress-like conference centre, university campus and main hospital, which the fighters all seized on Sunday.

"All our lines are now in place; the area is completely surrounded," said NTC commander Zubayr Bakush.

Within a few hours, the new regime forces had advanced another two kilometres (1.2 miles) and were only encountering small pockets of resistance, with most of the fire power going one direction only, at the Gaddafi loyalists.

NTC soldiers went house to house, clearing each one of them, and sometimes arresting prisoners.

The plight of stranded civilians raised the concerns of Human Rights Watch, which called on both sides yesterday to minimise harm to them and to ensure that prisoners are treated humanely.

The New York-based watchdog said much of Sirte's population of around 100,000 has already fled, but that an unknown number of civilians remain in the city centre.

New regime fighters in Sirte were buoyed on Tuesday night by a two-hour visit from NTC chief Mustafa Abdel

Jalil, and said he visited the one-time Gaddafi showpiece Ouagadougou conference centre.

Medics at a field hospital in western Sirte reported five killed and 42 wounded on Tuesday, while medics in the east reported 11 dead -- including six Gaddafi loyalists -- and 52 wounded.

The NTC forces had besieged Sirte from September 15 before launching on Friday what they termed a "final assault" that has seen nearly 80 of their number killed and hundreds wounded, according to medics.

Nato warplanes, backing the NTC, overflew Sirte early yesterday without firing, an AFP correspondent reported, as the alliance said in its latest update that it had struck six vehicles in Bani Walid.

Outside that oasis, 170 kilometres southeast of Tripoli, NTC fighters are also gearing for a renewed onslaught on the town, which is another remaining bastion of forces loyal to the ousted dictator.

Israel to free 1,027 Palestinians for Shalit

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel and Hamas have agreed a landmark deal to secure the release of captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in exchange for over a thousand Palestinian detainees, officials on both sides said.

If the accord is implemented, it will end an ordeal that has lasted more than five years for the young soldier, who has become a national icon in Israel since his capture by Gaza-based militants in June 2006.

Shalit was captured in a deadly cross-border raid on June 25, 2006 by militants from three Gaza-based groups including Hamas, the Popular Resistance Committees and a Salafi group called the Army of Islam.

The Israeli government early yesterday formally approved the deal, which came out of the blue, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announcing the details in a live address shortly after presenting it to his



GILAD SHALIT

In Israel, the news brought excited crowds to the protest tent set up by Shalit's parents outside Netanyahu's Jerusalem home.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas "warmly" welcomed the deal, negotiator Saeb Erakat told AFP in a phone call from Venezuela, describing it as a "Palestinian national achievement".

And in the Gaza Strip, Hamas said "tens of thousands" of Palestinians had flooded streets in the northern part of the territory to celebrate the expected release of Palestinian detainees.

Attacks on Baghdad police kill 28

REUTERS, Baghdad

Suicide bombers and roadside blasts targeted police across Baghdad yesterday, killing at least 28 people and wounding dozens on the second day of serial bombings in the Iraqi capital in less than a week.

The string of apparently coordinated assaults heightened worries about the ability of Iraq's security forces to contain a stubborn insurgency, despite a drop in violence as the last US troops prepare to withdraw by the end of this year.

One bomber rammed an explosives-filled vehicle into a police station in central Alwiya district, killing 14 including 8 police and wounding 28, and another blew up his car at a police building in northwestern Hurriya, killing 8 people and wounding 27, police and hospitals said.

The Hurriya blast burned out police vehicles and damaged the station's blue protective blast walls next to the large crater in the road. In other districts blasts blew out windows from nearby homes and shops, scattering streets with debris.

A car bomb also targeted a police patrol in southern Ilaam district, killing at least three, while a roadside bomb hit an army patrol in Hurriya, killing one civilian and injuring 12 people, mostly soldiers, police said.

Two police officers were killed and seven people wounded when a roadside bomb hit another police patrol in the mainly Shia Washash district in western Baghdad.

None of Iraq's insurgent or militia groups claimed responsibility for the attacks, but suicide bombings are usually the hallmark of Iraq's al-Qaeda affiliates who often target local authorities.

Bhutan's king to tie the knot today

PTI, Thimphu

Bhutan's popular King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck will tie the knot today with India-educated commoner Jetsun Pema at a fairy tale wedding, an occasion considered as a watershed event in the history of the tiny nation.

The 31-year-old Oxford-educated King will marry an airline pilot's daughter Pema, 10 years younger to him, at a grand ceremony in line with Buddhist traditions at an impressive 17th century fortress in the historic city of Punakha 71 km from here.

Pema did her higher secondary schooling from Lawrence School in Himachal Pradesh's Sanawar from 2006 to 2008. Currently, she is a student of the Regents College in London.

The Royal Couple will exchange vows before nearly 1,500 guests, including those from India like West Bengal Governor M K Narayanan, at the fortress, which is surrounded by mountains and river.

A majority of the nearly 7 lakh Bhutanese population are expected to be glued to their television sets as the



wedding will be telecast live on Bhutan Broadcasting Service TV.

Youngsters in and around Thimphu say it would be a "watershed" event as majority of the current population has

never witnessed a royal wedding.

The Royal Bhutan Government has announced a three-day public holiday beginning tomorrow to enable people to celebrate the wedding.

Aussie House passes carbon tax bill

BBC ONLINE

Australia's lower house of parliament yesterday narrowly passed a bill for a controversial carbon tax.

The legislation would force about 500 of the biggest polluters to pay for each tonne of carbon dioxide they emit.

The tax is central to the government's strategy to combat climate change, but the opposition says it will cause job losses and raise the cost of living.

Australia is the world's largest coal exporter and one of the biggest per capita greenhouse gas emitters.

Along with a companion bill for A\$300m (\$298m; £191m) in assistance for the Australian steel industry, it is expected to pass the Senate with the help of the Greens next month.

NEWS IN brief

Zawahiri urges Algeria revolution in new video

AFP, Washington

Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri appeared in a new al-Qaeda video released Tuesday, a US-based service that monitors Islamist websites said.

The Qaeda leader urged Algerians to follow the example of Libyans and revolt.

Zawahiri, a veteran Egyptian militant and long-time al-Qaeda number two, took over the network after bin Laden was killed in a clandestine raid by US Navy commandos in Pakistan on May 2.



Anti-corporate protests to hit UK

AFP, London

Protests against corporate power that have taken hold in the United States are to hit Britain on Saturday with a rally in front of the London Stock Exchange, organisers revealed.

Occupy London Stock Exchange (OccupyLSX) plans to launch a "peaceful occupation" near the British capital's financial nerve centre, and its page on social networking site Facebook has attracted 3,500 confirmed attendees.

"We want to stand with...the overwhelming majority who value people over profit. We want to make our voices heard against greed, corruption and for a democratic, just society," OccupyLSX supporter Kai Wargalla.

Israel to apologise over Egypt police deaths

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel is to apologise to Cairo over the deaths of six Egyptian policeman, according to an announcement.

The apology was expected to be formally extended yesterday.

In a statement released on Tuesday evening Defence Minister Ehud Barak said Israel and Egypt had concluded a joint inquiry into the deaths of six Egyptians killed by Israeli fire on August 18.

The deaths, which raised tensions between Israel and Cairo, occurred as Israeli troops chased a number of gunmen responsible for carrying out a series

TYMOSHENKO JAILING

West condemns Ukraine

BBC ONLINE

Western leaders condemned the jailing of former Ukraine Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko who had been sentenced to 7 years imprisonment on Tuesday.

The US and EU said the trial was politically motivated and Russia's foreign ministry said the ruling had a "clear anti-Russian subtext".

Tymoshenko was jailed for seven years for acting beyond her powers in sealing a gas deal with Russia in 2009.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who signed the deal, said he could not understand the court's verdict.

"It is dangerous and counterproductive to cast the entire package of agreements into doubt," said Putin.

The judge ruled that Tymoshenko had "used her powers for criminal ends" by pushing Ukraine's state energy firm Naftogaz into a deal with Russia's Gazprom.

The US called for the release of Tymoshenko and decried the "politically motivated prosecution".

Several European countries were scathing about the sentencing, Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt labelling it a "political show-trial".

Rights watchdog the Council of Europe accused Ukraine of "criminalisation of political decision-taking", while Amnesty International demanded that Tymoshenko be set free.

The president had been under pressure from Western governments and rights groups to downgrade the charges against Tymoshenko to administrative offences rather than criminal.

CRACKDOWN ON PROTESTERS

Egypt's army defends action

REUTERS, Cairo

Egyptian generals defended yesterday the army's actions in cracking down on a Christian protest over a church attack that left 25 dead, denying charges that troops used live ammunition or that army vehicles crushed demonstrators under their wheels.

The violence, which drew criticism from Muslims and Christians alike, cast a shadow over the first election for parliament since Mubarak was ousted. Candidate registration began on Wednesday, while voting starts on November 28.

Activists said some people were crushed by wheels. Activists and a doctor said some dead had bullet wounds. The generals showed footage they said showed army vehicles avoiding demonstrators.

Where child sacrifice is a business

BBC ONLINE

The villages and farming communities that surround Uganda's capital, Kampala, are gripped by fear.

Schoolchildren are closely watched by teachers and parents as they make their way home from school. In playgrounds and on the roadside are posters warning of the danger of abduction by witch doctors for the purpose of child sacrifice.

The ritual, which some believe brings wealth and good health, was almost unheard of in the country until about three years ago, but it has re-emerged, seemingly alongside a boom in the country's economy.

The mutilated bodies of children have been discovered at roadsides, the victims of an apparently growing belief in the power of human sacrifice.

Many believe that members of the country's new elite are paying witch doctors vast sums of money for the sacrifices in a bid to increase their wealth.

According to official police figures, there was one case



ALLEGED SAUDI AMBASSADOR MURDER PLOT IN US

Washington busts Iran

Allegations 'prefabricated', says Iran

AFP, Washington

Tensions ran high yesterday after the United States said it had foiled a high-level Iranian plot to assassinate the Saudi envoy to Washington and warned it would hold Tehran accountable.

In an explosive twist to the bitter showdown with the Islamic Republic, the Justice Department on Tuesday charged two men with conspiring with Iranian government factions to blow up Saudi Ambassador Adel al-Jubeir on US soil.

The New York Times cited an unnamed law enforcement official as saying the plot also included plans to pay a notorious Mexican drug cartel to bomb the Israeli embassy in Washington and the Israeli and Saudi embassies in Argentina.

US Attorney General Eric Holder said the "conspiracy was conceived, sponsored and directed from Iran and constitutes a flagrant violation of US and international law."

Holder said the plot against Jubeir, known

as Saudi King Abdullah's closest adviser on foreign affairs, was directed and approved by elements of the Iranian government, and specifically senior members of the Quds Force.

A criminal complaint named Manssor Arbabsiar, 56, a naturalised US citizen holding Iranian and US passports, and Gholam Shakuri, an Iran-based member of the Quds Force, a unit of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

However, an aide to Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dismissed the allegations as a "prefabricated scenario designed to 'turn public attention away from domestic problems within the United States.'"

In a formal complaint lodged with the United Nations, Iran called the allegations an "evil plot" and accused the United States and Israel of engineering the murder of Iranian nuclear scientists.

But US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the United States would consult its allies about how to "further isolate" Iran.

Hurricane Jova hits Mexico

BBC ONLINE

Jova made landfall near Chamela in the state of Jalisco with maximum sustained winds of 160km/h, the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

Shops and businesses were boarded up ahead of Jova's arrival, while in the busy port of Manzanillo people were urged to leave flood-prone areas.

Jova has weakened but forecasters warn of the danger of landslides caused by torrential downpours.

Jova, classed as a category two storm, made landfall at 23:00 local time (06:00 GMT Wednesday).

The hurricane is expected to lose force but the NHC said downpours could cause flash floods and mudslides.