

Troubled Greece faces final coalition push

AGENCIES

Greek socialist leader Evangelos Venizelos met yesterday with President Karolos Papoulias to return his mandate to form a cabinet, an AFP reporter said, making all-party talks the only hope to avert a new ballot.

Venizelos was the third party leader who tried and failed to cobble together a government after inconclusive elections on Sunday punished pro-austerity parties but failed to produce a clear winner.

Greek President Karolos Papoulias is preparing to hold talks with party leaders in an attempt to create an emergency government.

If the president's bid fails, another election will have to be held.

Last Sunday, voters backed parties opposed to Greece's bailout deal that requires deep budget cuts.

Greece's political turmoil has raised the possibility that it could default on its debts and be forced out of the



Carolos Papoulias

eurozone.

The president is expected to try to pressure parties into a government of national salvation - but the BBC's Mark Lowen in Athens says he is unlikely to succeed.

The process could take days.

Venizelos abandoned efforts to form a new government on Friday, and met the president yesterday morning to confirm his decision.

He had held talks with centre-right New Democracy leader Antonis Samaras, whose party came first in the

election, but could not find a third partner to give them a majority in parliament.

New Democracy also failed to form a coalition earlier in the week, as did the left-wing bloc Syriza, which came second in the election.

Syriza firmly rejects the terms of last year's EU-IMF bailout, which requires tough austerity measures in return for loans worth 130bn euros.

Its leader, Alexis Tsipras, said on Friday he could not join any coalition that intended to implement the bailout deal.

Meanwhile Germany has reiterated that Greece's exit from the eurozone would have dire consequences, and urged Athens to continue its deep budget cuts.

The Greek crisis is continuing to create unease in global financial circles.

The Fitch ratings agency warned that if Greece did leave the euro, it would probably place all 16 remaining euro nations' sovereign ratings on "rating watch negative" - meaning they

US resumes arms sales to Bahrain

BBC ONLINE

The United States said Friday it was partially resuming sales of military supplies to Gulf Arab ally Bahrain after having frozen most shipments last year amid a bloody crackdown on protests.

The US State Department says the shipment will help Bahrain "maintain its external defence capabilities."

Arms sales were frozen last year after the Bahraini government suppressed pro-democracy demonstrations.

Amnesty International says 60 people have been killed since the protests began in February 2011.

Bahrain is a key US ally in the Gulf, hosting the US Navy's Fifth Fleet.

Human rights campaigners have condemned this move, saying it is out of step with the United States' commitment to reform in

'Obama's an amateur!'

Book claims Bill Clinton urged Hillary to run against him

DAILYMAIL ONLINE

Bill Clinton dismissed Barack Obama as an 'amateur' and urged his wife Hillary to run against him in this year's US presidential election.

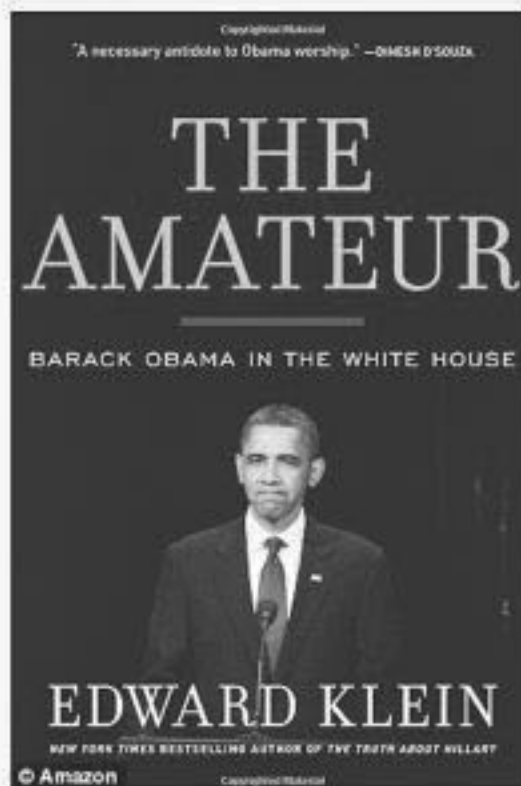
According to a new book, Bill Clinton tore into Obama and branded him 'incompetent' and that he 'did not know how to be President'.

He urged Hillary to quit her job as US Secretary of State and challenge him for the Democratic ticket, as she knew how to do a better job of it.

The extraordinary claims - which have been strongly denied by Clinton - came after he finally gave Obama his backing and put their past differences behind them.

The two had clashed during Hillary's failed bid for the presidency in 2008, which she lost to Obama.

According to Edward Klein's new biography of Obama called 'The Amateur', however, enmity runs even deeper than it had been thought.



During a gathering at Clinton's home in Chappaqua, New York last August he supposedly told his wife: 'The country needs you! The country needs us!'

Clinton supposedly claimed to have 'no relationship' with the president and spoke more often to his own successor George W. Bush.

He is said to have told his wife: 'Barack Obama is an amateur.'

According to the book Clinton's tirade did not end there amid protestations from Hillary, 64, that she did not want to risk her legacy from her current post as US Secretary of State.

She also supposedly emphasised that she could run in 2016, but Clinton, 65, who has been become a vegan out of concerns for his health, said it could be too late.

Hillary is said to have responded: 'What about loyalty, Bill? What about loyalty?'

Clinton said back: 'Loyalty is a joke, loyalty doesn't exist in politics'. Hillary Clinton has long been touted as presidential candidate in the 2016 elections.

More UN observers in Syria amid violence

8 killed; Islamist group claims Damascus blasts

AFP, Damascus

Violence in Syria cost at least eight lives yesterday even as a UN force to oversee a truce neared half its planned strength, monitors said, while an Islamist group claimed deadly blasts in Damascus.

In Idlib province, a stronghold near the Turkish border of rebels fighting President Bashar al-Assad's regime, security force gunfire killed a man and a woman during a series of raids, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

A third civilian was killed in pre-dawn shelling of the village of Mork in central Hama province, the Britain-based watchdog said, while a fourth was killed by sniper fire in the northeastern city of Deir Ezzor.

And four soldiers were killed in clashes between armed rebel groups and regime forces in Hantuten village of Idlib province, northwest Syria, according to the Observatory.

Turkey's Anatolia news agency reported

that two Turkish journalists who were held in Syria for two months before being freed thanks to Iranian mediation arrived in Tehran on Saturday.

Reporter Adem Ozkose and cameraman Hamit Coskun were flown to Tehran from Damascus, and the two men told Anatolia they were in good health.

Al-Nusra Front, an Islamist group unknown before the Syrian revolt, released a video yesterday claiming responsibility for the attacks as revenge for regime bombing of residential areas in several parts of the country.

Claims by the group, including for past bombings, have been hard to verify. In the latest video, the speaker's voice was electronically modified and no militants were visible.

According to the Observatory, another 17 people were killed in violence on Friday, including 12 civilians, while the total death toll has climbed to more than 930, over two-thirds of them civilians, since the battered ceasefire.



The daughter of Ukraine's jailed former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko, Yevgenia Tymoshenko, reads a letter from her mother in front of giant screen displaying a picture of the opposition leader yesterday during an anti-government protest in Kiev. The 51-year-old Orange Revolution standard-bearer, who suffers from debilitating back pain, was moved from jail to a hospital on May 9 amid growing world pressure.

PHOTO: AFP

Forces out of disputed territory

South Sudan tells UN

AFP, United Nations

South Sudan has withdrawn hundreds of police from the territory of Abyei that it disputes with Sudan ahead of a UN Security Council ultimatum, a UN spokesman said Friday.

The United States and the African Union welcomed South Sudan's withdrawal and said Sudan should now pull its troops out of the territory.

But the United Nations is still "verifying" the South's claim, said the spokesman, Martin Nesirky.

Abyei is one of a many disputes between South Sudan and Sudan that has brought the two sides close to all-out war. Khartoum troops seized most of Abyei a year ago.

Sudan and South Sudan both claim the border region with fertile grazing and some oil reserves.



Chavez claims success in fight against cancer

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez returned home from Havana late Friday, declaring success in his fight against cancer after a week in which he received what was supposed to be his last session of radiation therapy.

"I have to tell you that in recent days we have successfully concluded this course of radiation therapy," the Venezuelan leader told local television upon his arrival at Maiquetia Airport.

Interior Minister Tarek El Aissami had fueled the speculation after saying Tuesday that the Venezuelan president would return in "the coming hours," which then did not happen.

Chavez, 57, has undergone surgery twice in the past year to remove cancerous tumors, and has had chemotherapy followed by radiation treatments to try to rid himself of the cancer.

He has not disclosed the type of cancer he has or the prognosis, which, with presidential elections looming in October, has fueled political uncertainty at home.

Chavez, in power since 1999, is running for reelection as a "revolutionary socialist" against Henrique Capriles, the youthful Miranda state governor and center-left candidate for the united opposition.

Chavez is the most prominent face of the left in Latin America, and has rallied a group of like-minded leaders as a

US army 'war on Islam' course sparks row

BBC ONLINE

America's top military officer on Friday condemned a course taught at a US military college that advocated a "total war" against Muslims.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen Martin Dempsey, said the course was "totally objectionable" and "against our values".

The voluntary course at the Joint Forces Staff College in Virginia also suggested possible nuclear attacks on holy Muslim cities such as Mecca.

The course has now been suspended.

He added that he had ordered a full investigation when the course was suspended in April after one of the students objected to the material.

The officer in charge of the class, Lt Col Matthew Dooley, has been suspended from teaching but has kept his job at the college in the city of Norfolk.

The Pentagon has also confirmed that the

course material found on their website is authentic.

The story broke after a copy of the presentation of the course material was posted online by Wired.com's Danger Room blog.

"We have now come to understand that there is no such thing as 'moderate Islam'," Lt Col Dooley said in the presentation last July.

"It is therefore time for the United States to make our true intentions clear. This barbaric ideology will no longer be tolerated. Islam must change or we will facilitate its self-destruction."

He added that international laws protecting civilians in armed conflicts - such as the Geneva Conventions were "no longer relevant".

That left open the option, the instructor continued, of applying "the historical precedents of Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki" to Islam's holiest cities, and bringing about "Mecca and Medina destruction".

UK minister under fire on Murdoch link

AFP, London

Olympics Minister Jeremy Hunt was under renewed pressure yesterday following the revelation at Britain's press ethics inquiry of a further email from a top Murdoch aide.

In a potentially damaging development, the email, revealed at the Leveson Inquiry, left Hunt facing fresh calls to resign, less than three months away from the start of the London 2012 Games.

The email was from Frederic Michel, a lobbyist for Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation media empire, to Rebekah Brooks, who quit as chief executive of Murdoch's British newspaper wing News International last July.

Michel's message to Brooks, revealed Friday, said Hunt had asked for private advice to "guide his and No. 10's positioning" about whether the hacking scandal would affect News Corp's bid to take full control of British satellite broadcaster BSkyB.

Hunt has rejected calls to quit and says that when he is mentioned in Michel's emails the lobbyist is referring to aides in his Department for Culture, Media and Sport ministry, and not to him.

The Independent newspaper yesterday called on Hunt to quit and said the inquiry had turned up conclusive evidence of overly-cosy relationships between politicians and the



Duchess of Cambridge Catherine, arrive for a gala of Great Britain's Olympic Team at the Royal Albert Hall in London, on Friday. She is an ambassador for Britain's Olympic and Paralympic teams, one of her first official roles since she married William, the second in line to the British throne, in April 2011.

PHOTO: AFP

Manhunt has Kony on the run

Says UN official

AFP, United Nations

Joseph Kony, one of the world's most wanted men, is having to move nearly every day as hunters close in on the African guerrilla leader who may now be in Darfur, a top UN envoy said Friday.

Defectors have also reported that the Lord's Resistance Army chief is becoming increasingly unstable, Abou Moussa, UN special representative for Central Africa, told reporters.

Kony, who launched his rebellion in Uganda 25 years ago, is wanted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes and his global notoriety increased this year through an internet video that has been watched tens of millions of times.

A multi-national force, led by Uganda and helped by 100 US Special Forces, has been chasing Kony in Uganda, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. The wanted guerrilla is believed to have a dwindling band of followers, estimated to number between 200 and 500 fighters.

The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo predicted Thursday that Kony will be "arrested or killed" this year.

Kony is wanted by the ICC for rape, the mutilation and murder of civilians, as well as abducting and forcibly recruiting children to serve as soldiers and sex slaves. The hunt for Kony is to be discussed again at the UN Security Council next month.

NEWS IN brief

Nigeria nabs Sr Islamist militant

REUTERS, Abuja

Nigeria's police yesterday said they captured a senior commander of the militant Islamist sect Boko Haram in Kano, the largest city in the north and scene of attacks this year that have killed hundreds of people.

Security sources also said that the man police say they caught, Suleiman Mohammed, was known to be a leading Boko Haram figure in Kano. The sect has denied the arrest of senior members claimed by the police in the past.

Gunmen killed at least 15 people and wounded many more at a Christian service in Kano last month and in January coordinated bomb and gun attacks in Nigeria's second city killed 186, the most deadly strikes yet claimed by Boko Haram.

S Lanka parties brace for snap polls

PTI, Colombo

Two major political parties in Sri Lanka are gearing up for snap polls for provincial councils with freshly launched reorganisation drives.

Snap elections for three of the nine provincial councils are expected to take place after September this year, a year ahead of the expiration of their terms.

Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the dominant party in the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance was to launch its reorganisation campaign from the north central district of Anuradhapura yesterday.

Sirisena said that similar reorganisation drives would be conducted in the rest of the 21 electoral districts as well.

The main opposition United National Party (UNP) leaders were in the northern district of Vavuniya on Friday to launch its reorganisation campaign.

India agrees \$560m US artillery deal

AFP, New Delhi

India has agreed a \$560-million deal to buy 145 howitzer guns from BAE Systems of the United States as it upgrades its antiquated military hardware, an official said yesterday.

India is updating its military capabilities with hardware worth tens of billions of dollars in the face of long-standing tensions with regional rivals China and Pakistan.

The government will spend 30 billion rupees (\$560 million) on the field guns, the official said. The howitzers, with a maximum range of 30 kilometres, will be used by the army's mountain artillery divisions along India's high-altitude frontiers.

India has fought three wars with arch-rival Pakistan since independence in 1947, but China is increasingly seen as the main focus of its ambitious