

Syria assault kills 28 in protest hubs

Russia wants Iran's involvement to solve crisis

AFP, Beirut

Syrian army shelling and gunfire yesterday killed at least 28 civilians in protest hubs, including 17 in the flashpoint city of Daraa, while three soldiers died in clashes, a monitoring group said.

Nine women and three children were among the 17 people killed in pre-dawn bombardment of a residential neighbourhood of the southern city of Daraa, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Meanwhile, leaders of the exiled Syrian National Council met in Turkey yesterday to pick a new leader after the resignation of Burhan Ghalioun last month to avert divisions in the opposition bloc.

And Russia yesterday pushed its idea of an international Syria conference including Iran as it reaffirmed its opposition to the use of force against its ally after the latest violence.

Moscow said that denying Tehran a role in

helping negotiate an end to the protracted crisis would be "thoughtless."

"We want this event to be effective," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters.

The Iranian government is one of the most important of a dwindling number of friends for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Susan Rice, the US ambassador to the United Nations, has called Iran a "spoiler" and said it is "part of the problem in Syria." The United States has accused Iran of arming Assad's forces.

Lavrov said permanent UN Security Council members Russia, the United States, France, Britain and China, Syria's neighbours including Lebanon and Jordan, as well as the EU and the Arab League should take part in the get-together.

Moscow wants to hold the conference "as soon as possible", Lavrov said, without being more specific.



Activists supporting the group Anonymous wear masks as they protest against the Indian Government's increasingly restrictive regulation of the internet in New Delhi yesterday. Indian protesters responding to a call from global hacking movement Anonymous took to the streets over what they consider growing government censorship of the Internet.

New Iran talks fail to strike a deal

AFP, Vienna

The UN nuclear watchdog and Iran failed Friday to agree a deal allowing greater access to Tehran's contested nuclear programme, a setback as world powers prepare for crucial talks in Moscow.

"There has been no progress," IAEA chief inspector Herman Nackaerts announced late Friday after all-day talks with Iran's envoy to the agency Ali Asghar Soltanieh and IAEA deputy director general Rafael Grossi.

"This is disappointing," he said, reading out a prepared statement at a joint briefing with the Iranian ambassador.

The agency has been seeking a deal with Iran that would allow greater access to sites, people and documents tied to Tehran's nuclear programme.

STATEHOOD BID AT UN Palestine may accept non-member status

AFP, Paris

The Palestinians, who saw their full United Nations membership blocked by a US veto threat, may accept non-member state status, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said Friday.

He told reporters during a Paris visit that if Israel did not resume peace negotiations, "we will of course go to the (UN) General Assembly to obtain non-member status, as was the case for Switzerland and the Vatican".

The Palestinians applied for full membership of the UN last September but application hit deadlock at the Security Council where the United States threatened to veto any recommendation in support of the Palestinian bid.

The United States and Israel argue that only direct Palestinian-Israeli talks can produce a definitive peace accord.

French President Francois Hollande, who met Abbas during his Paris visit, said Friday that "we must do everything to facilitate the recognition of a Palestinian state via a negotiated process".

7 UN troops killed in Ivory Coast

AFP, Abidjan

Seven UN peacekeepers from Niger were killed in an ambush in western Ivory Coast Friday, in the deadliest attack on the force since its deployment in 2004, a UN spokesman said.

The UN Security Council swiftly "condemned in the strongest terms" the deadly ambush.

The 15-member council called on the Ivory Coast government to "work with all relevant parties to identify and bring the perpetrators to justice."

UN leader Ban Ki-moon said he was "outraged" by the killings and warned that more UN troops "are still in danger".

RACE FOR INDIAN PRESIDENCY

Pranab's candidacy picks wind

PTI, Kolkata

On a day of key political meetings, shortly after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress president Sonia Gandhi held consultations at the former's official residence, Gandhi's Political Secretary Ahmed Patel met Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee at his office in North Block on Friday.

The meeting assumes significance at a time when Mukherjee has emerged as the front-runner for President, especially as Patel went to 10, Janpath immediately after his meeting with the Finance Minister to confer with Gandhi. Later in the evening, Mukherjee left for Kolkata.

With his candidature for the President's post gaining momentum, Pranab Mukherjee yesterday said no one can become president "on his own wish" and the Congress would decide on the issue.

"It is decided by the party. Party nominates. No one can become president on his own wish," the Finance Minister told reporters at his residence here.

UPA sources had said on Friday that Congress president



Sonia Gandhi, who has been authorised by the party's Working Committee to pick the candidate, is likely to make the announcement around June 15, probably a couple of days after the expected poll notification by the Election Commission.

The consultations on the Congress nominee are clearly heading towards a decision, as the Election Commission is expected to announce the poll schedule on June 13 or thereabouts, with nominations ending around June 20 as the

next President will be elected by July 24.

The sources said the Congress has already secured the support of key allies like Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), who form part of the government, and outside supporters like Samajwadi Party.

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), another outside supporter, and UPA's second largest constituent Trinamool Congress, are not expected to oppose the UPA candidate.

As for the Trinamool Congress, it would be politically unwise for the party to oppose a Bengali.

Ten camels on Obama's head!

Somalia's Shebab mock US bounty

AFP, Mogadishu

Somalia's al-Qaeda-allied Shebab rebels yesterday mocked a US offer of up to \$33 million for tip-offs enabling the arrest of its top leaders, saying they would give 10 camels to anyone who helped locate Barack Obama.

The highest price put up by the US State Department on Thursday was for Shebab chief Ahmed Abdi aw-Mohamed -- more commonly known as Godane or Abu Zubayr -- with a \$7 million bounty for information on where he is hiding.

"I can assure you that these kind of things will never dissuade us from continuing the holy war against them," said another senior Shebab leader, Fuad Mohamed Khalaf, or "Shongole", in a message carried on several websites.

"There is nothing new in the fact that infidels pay to have Muslim leaders killed. They already did that by offering camels for the head of Prophet Mohammed, and the dollar is the camel of today," he said.

He was referring to an offer of 100 camels made for Mohammed when he was fleeing Mecca for Medina, according to the Koran.

Khalaf added: "Whoever informs the mujahideen fighters of the place where Obama can be found will get 10 camels and for (US Secretary of State Hillary) Clinton, we will offer 10 roosters and 10 hens."

The Shebab still control large parts of southern Somalia, but African Union troops, government forces and Ethiopian soldiers have clawed back several key bases from the insurgents in recent months.



“ডুপ্লেক্স ট্যুরিস্ট সিটি” নির্মাণের জন্য ডেভেলপার চাই
কক্সবাজার সমুদ্র সৈকত হতে ৪ কিলোমিটারের মধ্যে হাইওয়ে সংযুক্ত
২১২টি “ডুপ্লেক্স হাউস” তৈরীর জন্য জমি দিয়ে বোখ বিনিয়োগে ইচ্ছুক।
আগ্রহী স্বনামধন্য ও অভিজ্ঞ প্রতিষ্ঠান সরাসরি যোগাযোগ করুন। ১১, ফকিরাপুল, মতিঝিল, ঢাকা।
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EUROZONE CRISIS Europe is 'at a crossroads': IMF chief

AFP, Washington

International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde on Friday urged European leaders to act without delay to overcome the eurozone crisis.

Speaking in New York, Lagarde said that five years into the crisis, the goal of a safer financial system has not yet been attained.

"We are still at a great distance from our final destination," she said. "And with the stakes rising by the day, we stand at a crossroads."

Lagarde appeared to respond to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who spoke about long-term plans of rebuilding Europe while other European leaders insist on quick solutions.

"Policymakers need to lay out and follow a clear roadmap of how to finish the job -- not just looking to the next five or ten years, but looking to the next weeks and months ahead," Lagarde said.

She noted at the same time that restoring the health of European banks was in the interests of all and would require a European solution.

"Let me be clear: The heart of European bank repair lies in Europe. That means more Europe, not less," she said.



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NEWS IN brief

Prince Philip leaves hospital

AFP, London

Britain's 90-year-old Prince Philip, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II, left hospital yesterday after five days of treatment for a bladder infection, an AFP photographer said.

He was discharged in time to celebrate his 91st birthday today.

Philip was taken to hospital on Monday with a bladder infection in the midst of the queen's diamond jubilee celebrations, less than six months after he needed treatment for a blocked coronary artery.

Manning loses bid to drop charges

AFP, Fort Meade

A military judge rejected Friday a petition by the US soldier accused of spilling a trove of US intelligence secrets to the WikiLeaks website to dismiss some of the charges against him.

Judge Denise Lind denied defense motions to dismiss 10 of 22 charges against Army Private First Class Bradley Manning.

The judge rejected defense claims that eight charges of unauthorised possession and disclosure of classified

US arrests 190 over child porn

AFP, Los Angeles

Police have arrested 190 people and rescued 18 children in a major US crackdown on child pornography, including some detained in Europe and elsewhere, judicial authorities said Friday.

Most of the arrests in Operation Orion through the month of May took place in the United States, but suspects were also picked up in Argentina, Britain, the Philippines and Spain.

