

Libya's Jibril calls for grand coalition

REUTERS, Tripoli

Libya's wartime rebel prime minister Mahmoud Jibril called for the some 150 political parties in the North African nation to back the creation of a grand coalition government as election results were expected yesterday.

Joyful Libyans turned out in large numbers on Saturday for a largely peaceful national assembly election, their first free national poll after 42 years of Muammar Gaddafi which went ahead despite widespread fears of violence.

First official results were due yesterday and Jibril declined comment on speculation his own National Forces Alliance (NFA) of around 60 parties was leading Islamic groups including the political wing of Libya's Muslim Brotherhood.

"We extend an honest call for a national dialogue to come altogether in one coalition, under one banner ... This is an honest and sincere call for all political parties operating today in Libya," Jibril said.

"In yesterday's election there was no loser or winner ... Whoever wins, Libya is the real winner," he told a late-night news conference on Sunday.



Mahmoud Jibril

Jibril is a fluent English-speaker who was the main point man of the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC) with Western backers including France, Britain and the United States.

He rejected descriptions of the NFA as secular and liberal, saying a commitment to tenets of Islamic law was among its core principles - a comment which could facilitate efforts to form ties with more overtly Islamist parties.

"The door is open to dialogue now for all Libyans," Ali Rhouma El-Sibai, head of the hardline Islamic Al-Assala Group told Reuters. "But no agreement is possible until we know what is on the table. We cannot compromise our principles."

No comment was available from the Justice and Construction Party, political wing of the local counterpart of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. Al-Watan, an group led by former rebel militia leader Abdel Hakim Belhadj, said it was studying the call.

If such a grand coalition were formed it would inevitably dominate the new 200-head assembly for which Libyans voted on Saturday and whose tasks include naming a prime minister and cabinet to serve before full parliamentary polls due in 2013.



A handout picture released by the official Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) shows Syrian President Bashar al-Assad meeting with UN-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan in the Syrian capital Damascus yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Morsi, Egyptian judiciary on collision course

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's top court yesterday rejected a decree by President Mohamed Morsi to reinstate the parliament it ruled invalid, setting the president on a collision course with the judiciary and the military that enforced the ruling.

"All the rulings and decisions of the Supreme Constitutional Court are final and not subject to appeal... and are binding for all state institutions," the court said in a statement.

This came after Morsi decided to order back the Islamist-led lower house of parliament a month after the court found certain articles in the law on parliamentary elections to be invalid, annulling the house.

The powerful Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which was running the country after Hosni Mubarak was ousted by a popular uprising last year, had dissolved parliament based on the ruling.

The court's move could spark a confrontation between Morsi, who stepped down from the Brotherhood when he was sworn in last

month, and the SCAF as well as the judiciary.

However, the court stressed that it was "not a part of any political conflict... but the limit of its sacred duty is the protection of the texts of the constitution."

Its statement came hours after parliament speaker Saad al-Katani invited the lower house to convene at 2:00 pm today, following the presidential decision.

It was not clear how the court's ruling would be enforced.

Morsi's decree also stipulates the organisation of new parliamentary elections two months after the approval by referendum of the country's new constitution and the adoption of a new law regulating parliament.

The presidential decision has also heightened tensions with the military, although both Morsi and Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi who heads the SCAF appeared together at a military cadet graduation ceremony yesterday.

Morsi's decision caused a "political earthquake," some media reported yesterday, sparking a flurry of meetings including

INDIAN PRESIDENTIAL POLLS Pranab ready to talk to Mamata

PTI, Kolkata

United Progressive Alliance (UPA) presidential nominee Pranab Mukherjee yesterday said he will talk to Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee to seek support for his candidature when she is ready to talk to him.

"I am ready to talk to her as and when she is ready to talk to me," Mukherjee, whose candidature has been opposed by the West Bengal chief minister, told reporters here.

Mukherjee said since his candidature for the presidential poll was announced by the UPA, he had expressed the desire to get the support of all the partners in the ruling alliance.

"I understand they (Trinamool) have not yet taken a decision and that they will take a decision at an appropriate time," said Mukherjee, who is in Kolkata to campaign for the July 19 election.

He said he has been visiting state capitals to thank leaders and members of all the parties who have extended support to him.

Mukherjee said all the UPA partners, except one, have endorsed his candidature and he has also received support from the SP, BSP, RJD, CPI(M), Forward Bloc, JD(U), Shiv Sena and some regional parties.



Annan hails 'constructive' talks with Assad

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

International envoy Kofi Annan has said he agreed with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on an "approach" to end Syria's conflict that would be put to the rebels.

Annan said talks with Assad in the Damascus yesterday were "constructive and candid", echoing Syrian foreign ministry spokesman Jihad Makdissi who described the meeting as "constructive and good".

"We discussed the need to end the violence and ways and means of doing so. We agreed an approach which I will share with the armed opposition," Annan told reporters after the meeting.

Annan is set to leave for Tehran later in the day, according to an Iranian state news agency.

Annan, visiting Damascus for the third time since the uprising began 16 months ago, is the architect of the most prominent international plan to violence that has left thousands of people dead.

The six-point plan was to begin with a cease-fire in mid-April between government forces and rebels seeking to topple Assad, but the truce never took hold.

Almost 300 UN observers sent to monitor

the cease-fire are now confined to their hotels because of the escalating violence.

In an interview with Le Monde on Saturday, Annan said that "the evidence shows that we have not succeeded".

He stressed that those opposed to Western plans for resolving the crisis should not be sidelined.

"Russia wields influence, but I am not sure that the events will be determined by Russia alone ... Iran is an actor. It has to be part of the solution. It has influence and we cannot ignore it," Annan told the French newspaper.

Annan also expressed irritation that while Russia and Iran were mentioned by some as stumbling blocks to peace, "little is said about other countries which send arms, money, and have a presence on the ground".

Assad, meanwhile, accused the US of assisting "gangs" to destabilise his country, in an interview aired on German public broadcaster ARD on Sunday.

"As long as you offer any kind of support to terrorists, you are partner. Whether you send them armaments or money or public support, political support in the United Nations, anywhere," said Assad.

NEWS IN brief

Mexican leftist says he doesn't accept election result

REUTERS, Mexico City

Mexican leftist presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said yesterday he does not accept the July 1 election results in which he placed second.

According to official counts issued Sunday by election authorities, Lopez Obrador finished second with 31.59 percent of the vote. The final election tally put Enrique Pena Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in first with 38.21 percent, a winning margin of 3.3 million ballots.

"We cannot accept those results ...," Lopez Obrador said. "We have evidence to support this and when the time is right we are going to prove that around 5 million votes were bought."

Philippines suspends governor for hitting reporter

AFP, Manila

President Benigno Aquino yesterday suspended a province governor for a month without pay for storming a state-run radio station and hitting a broadcaster on the head with a microphone.

The suspension comes a year after Governor Jocel Baac of Kalinga province barged into a studio of radio DZRK to confront announcer Jerome Tabanganay, who criticised him for allegedly failing to stop illegal gambling in the area.

A video of the incident uploaded to YouTube showed Baac bursting into a radio booth at the station, hitting Tabanganay with a microphone and

Mladic's war crimes trial reopens with first witness to testify

AFP, The Hague

Bosnian Serb ex-army chief Ratko Mladic's genocide and war crimes trial resumed yesterday with the first prosecution witness telling how Bosnia's ethnic groups lived in peace before its brutal war erupted.

"Before the war we had a great time," said Elvedin Pasic, who as a 14-year-old boy lived in the village of Hvacani in northern Bosnia.

"We were playing basketball and football, we used to do everything together. Muslim, Croats and Serbs, we were all having a great time, respecting each other," he said.



Lopez Obrador



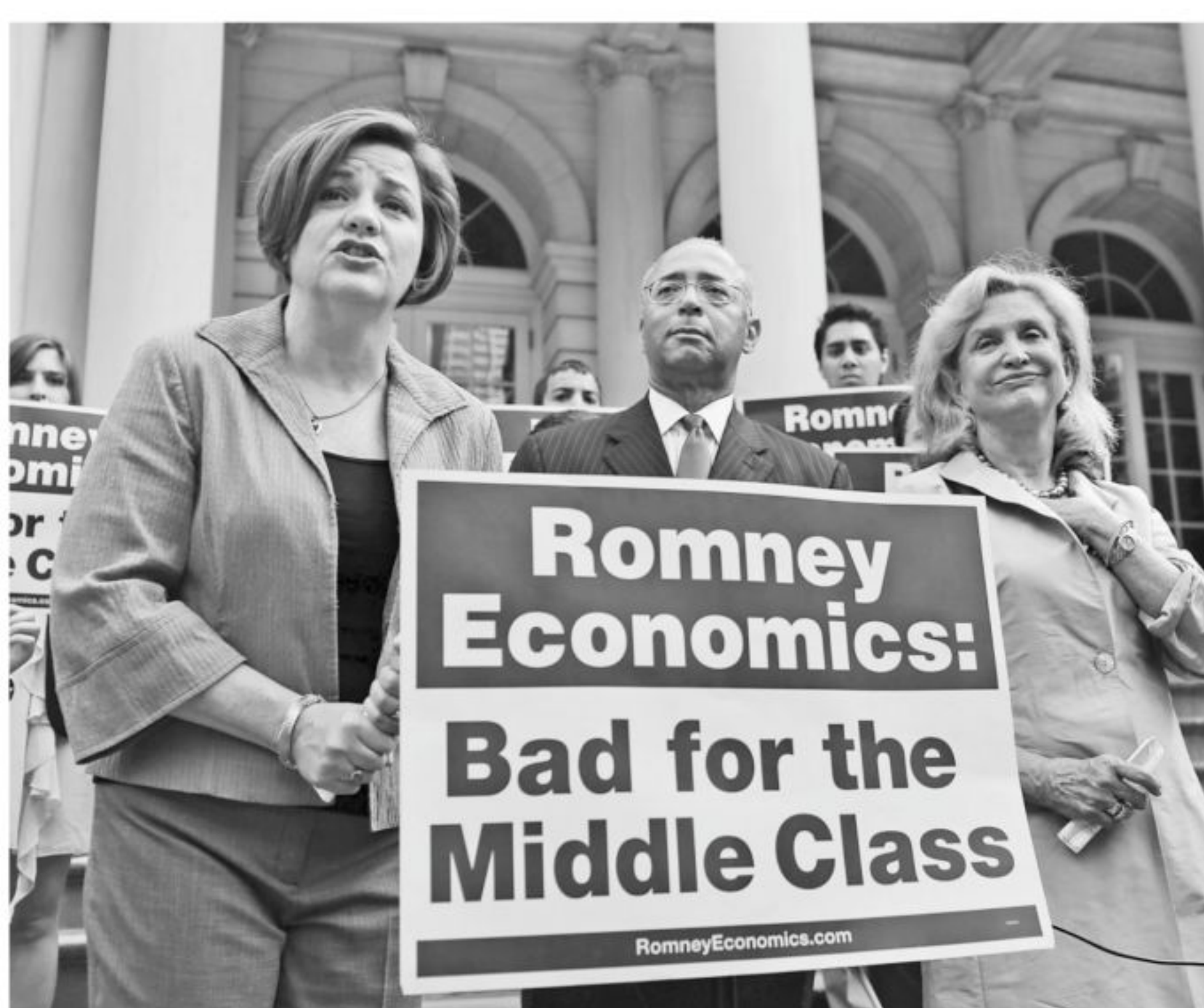
Palestine govt approves Arafat autopsy

AP, Ramallah

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has given his permission to exhume the remains of his predecessor, Yasser Arafat, a top aide said yesterday, days after a Swiss institute reported finding elevated traces of a radioactive substance on the late leader's belongings.

The findings by Switzerland's Institute of Radiation Physics were inconclusive, but revived speculation that Arafat was poisoned.

The legendary Palestinian leader died Nov 11, 2004 in a French military hospital, a month after falling violently ill at his government compound in the West Bank town of Ramallah.



City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, former City Comptroller Bill Thompson and US Rep Carolyn B Maloney attend a news conference on the steps of City Hall to criticise presumptive Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney yesterday in New York City.

PHOTO: AFP

Alim held as collaborator after war

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been detained under the Collaborators Act, 1972.

About a month after the tribunal had framed 17 specific war crimes charges against the former minister, the prosecution yesterday placed its opening statement.

Prosecutors Rana Dasgupta and AKM Saiful Islam read out the 42-page opening statement yesterday. The statement largely narrated the historical background of the war and Alim's role in it.

Following a time petition of the defence, the three-member tribunal led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir yesterday deferred the date for recording the depositions of prosecution witnesses until August 6.

On June 11, the tribunal framed 17 charges against the former BNP lawmaker for his alleged involvement in genocide and murder of

Bangalee civilians during the Liberation War and fixed yesterday for hearing the opening statement of the prosecution and examination of prosecution witnesses and submissions of defence documents.

However, the defence was directed to submit its documents on August 6.

Rana Dasgupta said the government issued proclamation against Alim under the Collaborators Act, 1972, and arrested him in March 1972. Allegations about his anti-liberation role were proved through a government investigation, added the prosecutor.

Even documents from the defence say that in March 1972, Alim was arrested for allegedly being a collaborator of the Pakistani forces and he was released on bail in 1974.

Prosecutor Saiful Islam said Alim led the formation

of the Peace Committee and Razakars (two auxiliary forces of the Pakistan army) in Joyprhat during the war and recruited Razakars by setting up a recruiting centre in his own home.

Later, he established the office of the Peace Committee and a camp of the Razakars occupying the home and businesses of his neighbour Shawn Lal Bazla. He committed crimes such as killing, genocide and looting with the help of the Pakistani army and other collaborators during the war, said Saiful.

Meanwhile, in the war crimes case against Jamaat leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, the tribunal yesterday fixed July 15 to deliver an order on an indictment review petition filed by the defence.

On June 21, the tribunal indicted Mojaheed on seven charges, including murder,

torture and genocide and hatching a conspiracy to kill intellectuals during the Liberation War. On July 1, the defence filed the petition seeking a review of the indictment order.

Abdur Razzaq, chief defence counsel of the detained Jamaat leaders, yesterday said although the prosecution had not mentioned Mojaheed as a leader of the Al-Badr force in all charges, the tribunal mentioned the accused as "head of Al-Badr Bahini" in every charge.

So, the order should be reviewed. Otherwise the accused would be prejudged against, said Razzaq.

Justice ATM Fazle Kabir said Mojaheed was identified as a leader of Islamic Chhatra Sangha, then student wing of Jamaat, and head of the Al-Badr force from October, 1971, in his life sketch placed in the

Afghan president hails aid

Calls for help to end graft

AFP, Tokyo

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai yesterday hailed international donors for pledging \$16 billion in aid to the war-torn nation, but called for more help to clamp down on corruption.

"I'd like to thank all of those countries, all of those organisations that have pledged support for Afghanistan," Karzai told a press briefing in Tokyo, after a conference in the Japanese capital on Sunday.

Karzai said Afghanistan was rebuilding its civil service and other social and economic infrastructure after three decades of turmoil, but added "it is not only the Afghan government that should work and succeed" in fighting graft.

"We cannot succeed without... cooperation from international donors as well," he added.

Donors and Afghan officials must ensure that the aid is dispersed fairly with infrastructure and other development projects being chosen and contracted out in a transparent way, he said.

Karzai's comments followed the pledge Sunday for billions of dollars in aid for Afghanistan through 2015, which was aimed at preventing the country from sliding back into

Gunmen attack Pak army camp

Kill 7 security men

AFP, Islamabad

Gunmen killed seven security personnel at an army camp close to Islamabad yesterday, officials said, hours after a protest march against the resumption of Nato supply convoys passed through the area.

The encampment was attacked from a bridge over the river Chenab, close to the industrial city of Wazirabad, less than 150 kilometres southeast of the capital.

Hours earlier, thousands from the Defence Council of Pakistan coalition of right-wing and hardline Islamist groups crossed the bridge on a "long march" from Lahore to Islamabad to protest against the reopening of Nato supply routes to Afghanistan.