



## LIBYA POLLS Wartime PM extends lead

REUTERS, Tripoli

Libya's wartime prime minister Mahmoud Jibril extended his lead in the North African country's landmark elections, partial vote tallies showed yesterday, as Islamist rivals tried to bolster their score by striking deals with independent candidates.

Jibril's National Forces Alliance headed for a landslide win in the eastern district covering the towns of Tobruk and Derna, seen as a hardline Islamist stronghold, suggesting his support was broader than urban areas such as the capital Tripoli.

He was also leading in Sabha, the main town of the desert south. Justice and Construction, the political arm of Libya's Muslim Brotherhood, led in the central town of Shati -- one of the few areas where Jibril's alliance did not stand.

Libya's first free national vote in six decades has been hailed as a success by observers despite election-day violence that claimed at least two lives.

However Jibril's gains will not automatically translate into dominance of the 200-seat interim national assembly which is set to choose a prime minister and cabinet before setting the stage for full parliamentary elections in 2013.

Candidates on party lists have only been allotted 80 seats, meaning they will be outnumbered by independent candidates whose allegiances are hard to pin down and who may strike deals with Islamist parties.

# Russia stands firm on Syria

## Vows to keep up arms supply; Annan to brief UN

AFP, Damascus

Syria's opposition yesterday failed to persuade Russia to drop ally President Bashar al-Assad and warned that this will only prolong the violence, as peace envoy Kofi Annan prepared to brief the UN Security Council.

As fresh clashes across the country challenged Assad's beleaguered regime, Russia refused to shift its stand on the conflict, the Syrian National Council (SNC) said after talks in Moscow with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

Abdel Basset Sayda, head of the exiled SNC, reacted angrily to the failure.

"We reject the Russian policy -- however it is presented -- as this policy of supporting the regime is allowing the violence to continue," he told reporters after the talks.

"The Syrian people continue to suffer because of the position of Russia at the UN Security Council where Russia has used its veto" to block two resolutions against Assad's regime, he

said.

Underlining the gulf between the SNC and Moscow, Lavrov said Russia wanted to understand in the talks if there were "prospects" of the opposition groups uniting and joining a platform for dialogue with the Syrian government.

Meanwhile, Russia yesterday vowed not to follow a Western arms embargo on Syria and promised new air defence systems and other military components to President Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Earlier, a top Russian arms export official had raised eyebrows in Western capitals earlier in the week by saying that Russia would no longer provide new weapons for Syria.

That same official yesterday told reporters that his comments covered only a tiny range of new types of weapons and in no way concerned the military trade that exists between the two allies today.

Russia is Assad's main ally apart from Iran and has fiercely resisted international action against the

Damascus government as proposed by Washington and European powers.

On Tuesday, Moscow proposed a Security Council resolution on Syria that would extend the UN observer mission in the country without any threat of sanctions, diplomats in New York said.

The resolution was sent to the council's other 14 members ahead of a briefing on yesterday by UN-Arab League envoy Annan on efforts to revive his peace plan, Russia's deputy UN envoy Igor Pankin told reporters.

On the ground, in the commercial hub of Aleppo, at least two soldiers were killed as rebels attacked a checkpoint overnight, the Britain-based watchdog said.

The Observatory also reported an attack in the northwestern province of Idlib on a bus transporting soldiers, killing as many as 11 troops although the exact number was impossible to verify.

It added that 82 people were killed in violence across Syria on Tuesday.

## CONTEMPT OF COURT

# Pakistan upper house passes immunity bill

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's upper house of parliament yesterday passed a bill that would exempt senior government figures from contempt of court proceedings, in an apparent bid to save the new prime minister from disqualification.

The move comes a day after the bill was approved by the National Assembly, or lower house.

The Supreme Court has given Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf until today to indicate whether he will obey an order to ask Swiss authorities to reopen multi-million dollar corruption cases against the president.

The court dismissed Yousuf Raza Gilani as prime minister on June 19 after convicting him of contempt in April for refusing to reopen the cases against President Asif Ali Zardari.

The bill, which now needs to be signed by Zardari before it becomes law, seeks to exempt senior government figures including

the president, prime minister and ministers from contempt for acts performed as part of their job.

The Senate, or upper house, passed the bill after a debate late yesterday as the main opposition party Pakistan Muslim League-N headed by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif staged a walk out to boycott the proceedings.

The allegations against Zardari date back to the 1990s, when he and his wife, late premier Benazir Bhutto, are suspected of using Swiss bank accounts to launder \$12 million allegedly paid in bribes by companies seeking customs inspection contracts.

The Swiss shelved the cases in 2008 when Zardari became president and the government insists the president has full immunity as head of state.

But in 2009 the Supreme Court overturned a political amnesty that had frozen investigations into the president and other politicians, ordering that the cases be reopened.

## Protests as Spain adopts austerity deal

AFP, Madrid

Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy yesterday announced a 65-billion-euro (\$80 billion) austerity package to avert financial collapse as angry miners rallied against subsidy cuts.

Rajoy, interrupted by howls from opposition members as he outlined the cuts, performed a U-turn by ramping up value added sales tax having promised he would not raise it, and took an axe to state expenditure.

Street protests are already mounting over austerity measures in a country with a jobless rate of 24.4 percent.

Coal miners, hundreds of whom marched from their northern pits to Madrid, joined a major demonstration in Madrid yesterday against subsidy cuts that they say will destroy thousands of jobs.



PHOTO: AFP

A Bosnian Muslim woman cries among 520 caskets stocked in an abandoned factory hangar, in preparation for a mass burial ceremony at the Srebrenica Memorial Cemetery, in Potocari, Bosnia yesterday. Tens of thousands of people are expected in Potocari to commemorate the 17th anniversary of the moment the UN-protected enclave fell to Bosnian Serb troops. Some 8,000 Muslim men and boys were killed in just a few days after the town under UN protection was captured by Bosnian Serb forces 17 years ago.

## Taliban cannot win war in Afghanistan

### Admits senior leader

AFP, Kabul

One of the most senior Taliban commanders has admitted that it is unlikely the insurgents can win the war in Afghanistan, according to an interview published by Britain's New Statesman magazine.

The identity of the Taliban leader is not revealed but the interview was conducted by Taliban expert and author Michael Semple, who was a UN envoy to Afghanistan and is now with the Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy at Harvard.

"It would take some kind of divine intervention for the Taliban to win this war," the commander, who is referred to only as Mawlvi (mullah) tells Semple, according to excerpts of the interview on the magazine's website.

"The Taliban capturing Kabul is a very distant prospect." The Islamists were in power in Afghanistan from 1996 until they were ousted by a US-led invasion in 2001 for harbouring al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, and have since waged an increasingly bloody insurgency.

"At least 70 percent of the Taliban are angry at al-Qaeda," Mawlvi is quoted as saying. "Our people consider al-Qaeda to be a plague that was sent down to us by the heavens."

"To tell the truth, I was relieved at the death of Osama. Through his policies, he destroyed Afghanistan. If he really believed in jihad he should have gone to Saudi Arabia and done jihad there, rather than wrecking our country."

The Taliban insurgents now face the growing forces of the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai, supported by some 130,000 US-led Nato troops, who are due to withdraw by the end of 2014.

"Any Taliban leader expecting to be able to capture Kabul is making a grave mistake. Nevertheless, the leadership also knows that it cannot afford to acknowledge this weakness."

The views presented in the interview contrast strongly with the Taliban's belligerent public statements, but Mawlvi said that "for the moment, as long as Mullah Omar is alive, the Taliban will be prepared to follow him in this fight".

PUBLIC EXECUTION  
Afghan women stage protest in Kabul

Afp, Kabul

Dozens of rights activists yesterday took to the streets to protest over the recent public execution of a young woman for alleged adultery, which was captured in a horrific video.

The 22-year-old victim was shot dead as dozens of men cheered in a village about 100 kilometres north of the capital Kabul.

The execution was blamed by the authorities on Taliban militants and caused global outrage, with world leaders denouncing the Islamists.

"We want justice," the protesters, almost all women, chanted as they marched from the women's affairs ministry to President Hamid Karzai's heavily-fortified palace.

Karzai condemned the execution and security forces have launched a manhunt for those responsible.

Public executions of alleged adulterers were common when the Taliban were in power from 1996 until 2001, when they were ousted by a US-led invasion for



PHOTO: AFP

Participants run in front of Fuente Ymbro's bulls during the fifth San Fermin Festival bull run in Pamplona, northern Spain yesterday. The festival is a symbol of Spanish culture that attracts thousands of tourists to watch the bull runs despite heavy condemnation from animal rights groups.

## Hillary on landmark visit to Laos

AFP, Vientiane

Hillary Clinton yesterday became the first US secretary of state to visit Laos for 57 years, on a trip focused on the damaging legacy of the Vietnam War and a controversial dam project.

The US "desire was to deepen and broaden" the relationship, Hillary said after a visit to a US-funded orthotic and prosthetic centre, which she described as a "painful reminder of the legacy of the Vietnam War era".

US forces dropped more than two million tons of ordnance on Laos between 1964 and 1973 to cut off North Vietnam supply lines.

Some 30 percent of the ordnance failed to detonate.

## Congress buying support for Pranab: Sangma

### EC rejects Pranab nomination rejection plea

AGENCIES

Former Lok Sabha speaker and presidential candidate Purno Agitok Sangma yesterday accused the Congress of using the CBI to fulfill its political interests.

Sangma accused the Centre of giving special packages to various states like Uttar Pradesh (UP) in a quid pro quo to garner maximum possible support for its presidential candidate Pranab Mukherjee.

Taking a dig at the Centre and the UPA presidential candidate Pranab Mukherjee, the former Meghalaya chief minister said, "The country's economy is going through one of the worst phases. The government has given price rise and a host of other economic woes to the common man."

Playing the tribal card to polarise the MLAs, MLCs and MPs belonging to weaker sections of society, Sangma also urged political parties 'to give the tribal people a chance to occupy the country's highest office'.



Pranab



Sangma

selective states.

Coincidentally, the Centre had on Tuesday assured a delegation from UP, led by chief secretary Jawed Usmani, of releasing over Rs 45,000 crore for various welfare and infrastructure development schemes. The state had demanded Rs93,000 crore.

Meanwhile, in a big relief for UPA presidential candidate Pranab Mukherjee, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday turned down PA Sangma's request for the re-scrutiny of his nomination over the "office of profit issue."

Not satisfied with the EC's order, sources in the Sangma camp said they were contemplating approaching the Supreme Court to challenge Mukherjee's nomination, as they still claim that he had not resigned from the post of chairman of the

Significantly, on July 2, Odisha chief minister and Biju Janta Dal president Naveen Patnaik, who is supporting Sangma, had accused the Congress led UPA government of buying support by doling out large sums of money to

## Romney slams Obama as 'outsourcer-in-chief'

AFP, Grand Junction

Republican Mitt Romney, facing a Democratic assault over his business record and charges he shipped US jobs overseas, went on the offensive Tuesday by pegging President Barack Obama as "outsourcer-in-chief."

The issue of sending jobs to low-wage nations such as China and India has sharpened into a major point of contention in the White House race, with Romney and Obama accusing each other of enabling and even benefiting from the process.

It's also linked to an election-year clash over US trade policy and in particular Obama's stance on China, which Romney's campaign said has led to the president being "treated like a doormat" by Beijing.

Last week, Obama's campaign released an advertisement claiming Romney "made a fortune" outsourcing US jobs to China while he was at the helm of his private equity firm Bain Capital.

Romney, speaking at a town hall campaign stop in Grand Junction, Colorado, called the ad "false and misleading."

And he turned the tables on Obama for "outsourcing a good deal of American jobs himself, by putting money into energy companies, solar and wind energy companies that end up making their products outside the United States."

"If there is an outsourcer-in-chief, it's the president of the United States, not the guy who's running to replace him," Romney said to cheers from some 600 people at a local high school.

The US trade deficit with China stood at \$91.6 billion for the first four months of 2012, according to the US Department of Commerce.



## চেহলাম

র্যাংগ্‌স গ্রুপ অব কোম্পানিজ এর মাননীয় ভাইস চেয়ারম্যান মাহবুবুল গণি (৬৭) গত ১লা জুন ২০১২ পরলোক গমন করেন।

আগামী ১৩ই জুলাই ২০১২ শুক্রবার বাদ আসর মরহমের নিজ বাসভবন "চারুকুঞ্জ" ৭৭ গুলশান এভিনিউ, ঢাকা এ তাঁর আত্মার মাগফেরাতের জন্য দোয়া মাহফিলের আয়োজন করা হয়েছে। দোয়া মাহফিলে উপস্থিত থাকার জন্য আত্মীয়-স্বজন, বন্ধু-বান্ধব, শুভানুধ্যায়ী সকলকে বিশেষভাবে অনুরোধ জানাচ্ছি।

বিনীত  
মিসেস জিনাত গণি  
ওসমান গণি