



US reaffirms support for Egypt transition

AFP, Cairo

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton yesterday reaffirmed Washington's "strong support" for Egypt's democratic transition, after talks with newly-elected President Mohamed Morsi.

"I have come to Cairo to reaffirm the strong support of the United States for the Egyptian people and their democratic transition," Hillary said at a joint news conference with Foreign Minister Mohammed Amr after the meeting.

"We want to be a good partner and we want to support the democracy that has been achieved by the courage and sacrifice of the Egyptian people," she said.

During her two-day visit to Egypt, the top US diplomat will also meet Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi as well as women activists and Coptic leaders.

Hillary's visit comes amid political maelstrom of a complex power struggle in Egypt between the Islamist president and the military that risks paralysing the country again.

"Democracy is hard," she said. "It requires dialogue and compromise and real politics. We are encouraged and we want to be helpful. But we know it is not for the United States it is for the Egyptian people to decide."

Hillary also sought assurances that its key Middle East ally will continue to press for regional security and uphold the peace treaty with Israel.

The origins of the battle for parliament lay in the constitutional declaration issued by the SCAF before the president was sworn in.

The declaration, which acts as a temporary constitution, granted the military sweeping powers, including legislative control, and rendered the presidential post little more than symbolic.

Morsi did not wait long to assert his own power either, issuing a decree summoning the disbanded, Islamist-led parliament just days after he took office.

And the judiciary, seen as allies of the generals, responded by rebuking Morsi.

But on Wednesday, the president said he would respect a court ruling overturning his decree, in an apparent bid to mollify an



PHOTO: AFP

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi meets with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at presidential palace in Cairo yesterday.

World outrage at Syria 'massacre'

France urges action to avoid civil war; violence kills 148 in 2 days

Agencies



Francois Hollande

Robert Mood

any steps Moscow and Beijing view as supporting "regime change" in Damascus.

Meanwhile, French President Francois Hollande yesterday said there was "still time" to find a solution to the crisis in Syria and urged Russia to stop blocking UN Security Council efforts.

"I told (Russian President Vladimir) Putin... that the worst thing is to have a civil war in Syria," Hollande said during a televised interview with channels TF1 and France 2 on Bastille Day.

"So we have to find a political position that avoids civil war. There is still time, it is high time," Hollande said.

On the ground, 30 people were killed around the country yesterday, several of them by an army

bombardment in Homs province, a day after 118 people died including dozens of civilians gunned down by troops at anti-regime protests.

The circumstances surrounding the massacre incident have still not been clarified, but UN observers made their way to the village in the central province of Hama yesterday to investigate.

Spokeswoman Sausan Ghosheh told AFP that a group of observers was visiting Treimsa, while an activist calling himself Abu Ghazi said they had met residents and "inspected places that were bombed and where there were traces of blood."

A spokesman for Syria's military said the army killed "many terrorists" in Treimsa, but no civilians, in a "special operation... targeting armed terrorist groups and their leadership hide-outs."

On Friday, UN observers mission chief Major General Robert Mood said his team is ready to go to the massacre site.

Assad, who succeeded his late father 12 years ago, has enough firepower and international support to suppress the opposition.

Annan called events at Tremseh a "grim reminder" that UN resolutions calling for peace were being flouted and wrote to the Council

Thousands flee Japan flood

Death toll rises to 29

AFP, Tokyo

About 400,000 people were ordered or advised to leave their homes in southwest Japan yesterday as heavy rain pounded the area for a third day leaving 29 dead or missing, officials and media said.

The Japan Meteorological Agency warned of more landslides and floods on the main southern island of Kyushu as rainfall of up to 11 centimetres per hour was recorded yesterday.

Evacuation orders were issued to about 260,000 people in the north of the island where more rivers burst their banks, Kyushu's local media reported.

They were told to go to designated shelters such as schools and other public facilities.

Nearly 140,000 other people were advised to leave their homes to avoid possible disaster, according to officials contacted by AFP in the four affected prefectures in Kyushu.

Television footage showed torrents of muddy, debris-strewn water and flooded houses following what officials described as "unprecedented" downpours from a seasonal rain front.

In Fukuoka prefecture alone, 78,600 people were ordered to evacuate their homes as rivers overflowed in dozens of places and 181 landslides occurred, an official said.

NEWS IN brief

India may allow Pak TV channels

TNN, New Delhi

India has assured Pakistan that it will consider a proposal to lift the ban on Pakistani television channels in the country. This was after Pakistani foreign secretary Jalil Abbas Jilani's strong pitch last week proposing India allow transmission of not just Pakistan government (PTV) but also private channels, both news and non-news.

Making his point, Jilani said all Indian channels are available in Pakistan and Islamabad has done nothing to impose restrictions on their telecast. During talks between the two countries here last week, Pakistanis told the Indian delegation, led by foreign secretary Ranjan Mathai, that if India wants to spruce up people-to-people contacts, it must

Gordon Brown made UN envoy

AFP, London

Former British prime minister Gordon Brown is to become a special global education envoy to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, it was announced yesterday.

The role will see Brown trying to get 61 million more children enrolled in education across the world by 2015 to meet a UN Millennium Development goal.

He will accompany Ban on a tour of Asia in August.

Brown, who has kept a low public profile since leaving office in 2010, said the new post was a "great privilege".

Brown will join statesmen including former US

Mosque blast kills 5 in Nigerian

REUTERS, Maiduguri

A suicide bomber killed five people at the central mosque in the northeastern Nigerian city of Maiduguri on Friday, the military said, the latest attack in a region plagued by Islamist Boko Haram insurgents.

The blast narrowly missed the deputy governor of Borno state, Zanna Umar Mustapha, and Borno's Shehu (regional religious leader), Abubakar Umar Garbai El-Kanemi, who were attending Friday prayers.

"The suicide bomber was about 15 years old ... Fortunately we both escaped unhurt," Mustapha told reporters.

Six people were also injured in the attack, military



Peacekeepers from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon take part in the annual Bastille Day military parade on the Champs-Elysees in Paris yesterday. Bastille Day is the name given in English-speaking countries to the French National Day, which is celebrated on the 14th of July each year. It commemorates the 1790 Fête de la Fédération, held on the first anniversary of the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789. The anniversary of the storming of the Bastille fortress-prison was seen as a symbol of the uprising of the modern nation.

PHOTO: AFP

Court directs India PM on corporal punishment

AGENCIES

The Calcutta High Court on Friday "directed a petitioner to send a notice to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh" who is also the Chancellor of the Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan, in relation to an incident in which a class V student of the University's Patha Bhavan was forced to drink her urine by the hostel warden as a punishment for bedwetting, a report published on The Hindu said.

A petition had been filed by lawyer Tapas Bhanja regarding the incident in which the advocate brought to the court's notice the violation of its 2004 ruling which banned corporal punishment in the schools in the state of Kolkata.

Advocate Bhanja told The Hindu that the court had directed him to "serve the contempt petition to all the alleged contemnors stating that the matter will be heard on July 27".

The report further stated that notices were also issued to University Vice-Chancellor Professor Sushanta Dutta Gupta, Registrar Manimukut Mitra and Uma Poddar, the accused warden.

The court moreover directed that a notice be served to the secretary of the state's school education department, the report said.

The Hindu also reported that earlier, Singh's office had sought a report from the Union Human Resource Development Ministry regarding the incident. It added that the said report had been submitted by the university.

Pak court asks army to trace 30 missing

AFP, Quetta

Pakistan's top judge on Friday ordered a paramilitary commander to produce 30 people in court, saying there was evidence troops were involved in their disappearance.

It is the latest effort from judges designed to bring powerful military and intelligence agencies to book over mass arrests of alleged terror suspects, who are never seen again.

Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry ordered Balochistan Frontier Corps commander Major General Obaidullah Khattak to produce the missing before the court in the provincial capital Quetta on July 24.

The 30 people were allegedly abducted in Totak Khuzdar district in February

Venezuela is no threat Chavez says Obama is a good guy

REUTERS, Caracas

President Hugo Chavez denied on Friday that Venezuela was a threat to anyone, after US presidential hopeful Mitt Romney criticised Barack Obama for playing down the risk posed by the socialist leader.

Obama told a Spanish-language television station in an interview screened this week that Chavez's actions over recent years had not had a serious impact on the national security of the United States.

Romney said Obama's comments were "stunning and shocking" and showed a pattern of weakness in the Democratic president's foreign policy.

In an interview with a local Venezuelan television station on Friday, Chavez dismissed the allegations he posed any danger.

"The Venezuela of today is no threat to anyone," he said.

"It has all been a hoax by the imperialists and global far right: that uranium is being enriched



in Venezuela, that we're setting up missiles here, that we're supporting terrorism."

Whenever there were efforts to improve relations between Washington and Caracas, Chavez said, they were criticized by powerful "snipers" who issued threats in the US media.

With both Chavez and Obama running for re-election this year, Chavez struck a conciliatory tone, saying the latest comments by his US counterpart needed to be seen in context.

"Obama is campaigning. He's a candidate. I hope the real revolutionaries understand well. I think that Barack Obama - aside from 'the president' - is a good guy," he said.

There was a window to improve ties between Caracas and Washington after Obama took office in 2009 and promised more engagement with foes.

Chavez, whose stridently anti-Washington politics are highly popular in his OPEC nation, has expanded ties with Iran while the United States and other nations have increased their