

# Thousands flee Assam riots

**Manmohan expresses concern; 25 killed**

**AGENCIES**  
Fresh riots took the death toll from ethnic violence in India's remote northeast to 25 yesterday despite an official curfew backed by shoot-on-sight orders, police said.  
Fighting flared overnight between Bodo tribal groups and Muslim settlers in the west of Assam state, where more than 50,000 villagers -- many of them women and children -- have fled their homes to shelter in government buildings, schools and relief camps.  
Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday took stock of the situation in Assam where ethnic clashes have taken place and directed Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi to do everything possible to control violence.  
The central government yesterday said nearly 4,000 paramilitary troopers have been rushed to two violence-hit Assam districts.  
Indian soldiers and paramilitary troops have been on patrol to try to quell the unrest that started on Friday, triggered by long-standing territorial disputes.

The Press Trust of India news agency said the fighting started when two Muslim student leaders were shot and seriously injured in Kokrajhar, leading to revenge strikes on Bodo groups.  
Meanwhile, The North East Frontier Railway authorities have cancelled 11 trains to Howrah, New Delhi, Mumbai and southern states after unidentified persons attacked the coaches of the Guwahati-bound Rajdhani Express at Gossaigaon in Kokrajhar district damaging four coaches. No casualty or injuries reported.  
Local television channels broadcast pictures of several homes that had been set ablaze by rioters.  
Police issued shoot-on-sight orders in Kokrajhar district late on Monday after rioters burnt shops and houses and attacked rival gangs while night curfew was in force in Dhubri and Chirang districts. The orders mean that mobs breaking the curfew could be shot without warning.  
Local authorities said the situation remains tense and volatile.



**In this photograph taken on Monday, a house burns at Kachugaon village in Kokrajhar district, about 230 km from Guwahati, the capital city of the northeastern Indian state of Assam during violent clashes. Inset, villagers flee their homes at Dujabari village in Kokrajhar district yesterday as new clashes broke out.**



PHOTO: AFP

## Hazare gives ultimatum on Lokpal bill

**AIANS, New Delhi**  
Reversing his earlier decision, Anna Hazare said he will join his team members on an indefinite fast if the government does not agree to bring Jan Lokpal Bill in parliament within four days of their fast due to begin today.  
"They (Team Anna members) suggested I don't fast. I will give four days to the government to agree to our demand and if they don't, I will sit on an indefinite fast from July 29," Hazare told reporters here.  
"Even if I die, I will die for my country," said the social activist, who arrived here to join his team members beginning their indefinite fast.  
The team will sit on an indefinite fast at Delhi's Jantar Mantar today, the day when new president Pranab Mukherjee will be sworn-in. Arvind Kejriwal will be leading the agitation this time, Team Anna said.

# Warplanes hit Syria's 2nd city

**80 killed; US warns regime on chemical weapon use**

**AGENCIES**  
Fighter jets yesterday bombed eastern areas of Syria's second city Aleppo, reporters near the city said as US warns regime of over its threat to use chemical weapon.  
The attack is seen as a significant escalation in the conflict. It is thought to be the first time that warplanes have been used in Aleppo, our correspondent says.  
Rebels launched an offensive against Aleppo at the weekend in an attempt to wrest control of the city from the army. Fierce fighting has been reported close to Aleppo's historic Old City.  
Helicopter gunships were reportedly involved in the clashes earlier yesterday.  
Pro-government troops bombarded the city, Syria's commercial centre, with shells and rocket fire as the government attempted to take back districts seized by the rebels.  
A French correspondent there has spoken of rebels besieging a police headquarters close to the walls of the Old City, which is a world heritage site.  
Government forces have already regained control of most areas of Damascus that were captured by rebels last week. There are unconfirmed reports of troops carrying out raids on the Qadam and Assali areas of the city.



State television has broadcast video of soldiers apparently securing and checking heavily shelled suburbs in the south of the capital.  
The battle for Aleppo, Syria's most populous city, appears to have spread to much of the city, with rebels claiming control of several areas.  
State forces appear to have focused their counter-attack on the Sakhour area to the east of the city centre, where rebels destroyed several tanks on Monday, the BBC's Jim Muir reports from neighbouring Lebanon.  
The violence yesterday claimed the lives of 80 people in Syria, according to the opposition Local Co-

ordination Committees, including 20 in Aleppo.  
Thirteen people died in a revolt in Aleppo prison, activists said, when security forces reportedly opened fire and used tear gas on detainees.  
Explosions and fires have also been reported from the jail in Homs where a similar mutiny took place.  
Hundreds of refugees appear to have become caught up in violence while trying to flee the country across its eastern border with Iraq.  
Three people were wounded when Syrian forces shelled the Syrian side of the Boukamal crossing on the Euphrates river, where a crowd of Iraqis and Syrians were waiting to leave, a source has told the BBC.  
As the battle for control of Syria's biggest cities spreads, international concern about Syria's chemical weapons stockpile has spread to its ally, Russia.  
The US and the UN have already issued a warning to Damascus, after a Syrian spokesman said its weapons would never be used internally but could be deployed against "external aggression".  
US President Obama responded swiftly.  
"Given the regime's stockpile of chemical weapons, we will continue to make it clear to Assad and those around him that the world is watching," Obama told an audience of US veterans in the western US state of Nevada.

# Putin warns of long civil war if Assad ousted

**AFP, Moscow**  
Russian President Vladimir Putin warned on Monday of a protracted civil war in Syria should President Bashar al-Assad be "unconstitutionally" removed from power by rebel fighters.  
"We are afraid that if the country's current leadership is removed from power unconstitutionally, then the opposition and today's leadership may simply change places," Russian news agencies quoted Putin as saying.  
"One will become (the new) leadership and the other -- the opposition," Putin was quoted as saying after talks with visiting Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti.  
"We do not want the situation to develop according to the bloody scenario of civil war and continue for no-one knows how many years as it happened in Afghanistan," Putin was quoted as saying in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.



He once again called on both sides in the 16-month conflict to sit down for talks that could help end fighting. Syrian activists say has claimed more than 17,000 lives.  
Putin stressed that Syria's political future should not be decided on the battleground.  
Meanwhile, the head of the Arab League has said the Syrian government of President Bashar al-Assad cannot last for long, saying its days were numbered in an interview published in the pan-Arab newspaper al-Hayat yesterday.  
Arab League ministers who convened in Doha on Sunday called on Assad to relinquish power, adding that the Arab League would help to provide a safe exit for him and his family.  
Asked how long the Assad administration could survive, Elaraby told al-Hayat: "I cannot define a period, but the regime cannot continue for a long time."

## NEWS IN brief

**Romney starts European tour**  
**AFP, Washington**  
White House hopeful Mitt Romney heads to Europe and the Middle East this week to burnish his diplomatic credentials but President Barack Obama and his re-election team declared the Republican too inexperienced in foreign policy.  
The six-day overseas trip to Britain, Israel and Poland, Romney's first since clinching the Republican Party nomination in April, will provide him a chance to attack Obama's foreign policy while seeking to burnish his own stature.  
He then travels to Israel to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and he will also talk with Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad. On July 30 Romney heads to Poland to meet its leaders.



Mitt Romney

**Floods kill 35 in Nigeria**  
**JOS, Nigeria**  
Heavy rainfall in central Nigeria forced a dam to overflow, causing flooding that left at least 35 people dead and destroyed or damaged some 200 homes, the Red Cross said Monday.  
The downpour in Jos began at roughly 9:00pm Sunday when many of the city's residents were at home for the night.  
The area coordinator for the National Emergency Agency (NEMA), Alhassan Danjuma Aliyu, called the flood "devastating" and said police and other rescue bodies were searching the affected areas in hopes of

**Typhoon hits Hong Kong**  
**AFP, Hong Kong**  
Scores of people were injured and trees were ripped from the ground as a typhoon lashed Hong Kong packing winds in excess of 140 kilometres an hour, officials said yesterday.  
Authorities issued a hurricane warning for the first time since 1999 as Typhoon Vicente roared to within 100 kilometres of Hong Kong shortly after midnight, disrupting dozens of flights to the regional hub.  
The alarm was downgraded to a strong wind warning by mid-morning as the cyclone passed to the west and weakened over the southern Chinese coast.  
The storm brought down hundreds of trees and sent debris crashing into downtown streets as commuters made their way home from work on Monday evening, when people were told to seek shelter.

## 'I bow my head, apologise'

**S Korean president addresses nation over graft**  
**AFP, Seoul**  
South Korea's President Lee Myung-Bak yesterday apologised to the nation for corruption cases allegedly involving his elder brother and close aides.  
"I bow my head and apologise for causing concern to the people with these incidents," a solemn Lee said in brief televised remarks.  
"It breaks my heart... that such regrettable things have happened among people so close to me."  
The incidents are seen as a setback for Lee's conservative ruling party before a presidential election in December. He himself is barred from serving a second five-year term due to constitutional limits.  
Lee's elder brother Lee Sang-Deuk was arrested and detained earlier this month pending a corruption trial.  
Prosecutors allege the 76-year-old former lawmaker took 600 million won (\$525,000) from the chairmen of two troubled savings banks between 2007 and 2011 in return for helping them avoid audits and punishment.  
The scandal was the latest in a series of corruption cases involving people close to the president, whose term ends in February 2013.

## Dhaka for urgent

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by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute objections last year, he said, "We have been told about India's internal consultations on the issue and we are looking forward to the completion of that process."  
He went on, "Things appear to be moving forward to the agreement and Bangladesh wants to give space to India to finish its internal consultations on the Teesta issue."  
"From the discussions I have had so far the sense I get is that India is serious to sign the agreement sooner than later,"  
He added.  
Replying to a question on a timeline for the Teesta agreement, Quayes, who also called Indian External Affairs Minister S M Krishna, said, "It is not right to ask when the agreement will be signed. I'm not talking about any timeline."  
The issue of joint survey of the controversial Tipaimukh multipurpose project in the northeastern Indian state of Manipur also came up at the meeting. And Quayes said Indian Water Resources Ministry has given to External Affairs Ministry the composition of its team for the joint survey. Bangladesh has firmed up its team for the purpose.  
He said Bangladesh side also raised the issue of river-interlinking, and India "assured us that the Himalayan rivers component of the project" is not being implemented now.  
Dhaka also reiterated its concern over killing of civilians in firing by BSE, and India reiterated the need for coordinated border management to check illegal border crossings.  
Quayes said nobody can condone the killings at the border and "the act of shooting and killing does not reflect well on the bonhomie in bilateral partnership".  
In this context, he said, Bangladesh has proposed revival of interface between local administrations in border districts on both sides and "India has agreed to seriously consider it".  
If the local administrations on both sides of the border interact with each other frequently, many small incidents can be avoided, he said.  
On the issue of expediting implementation of projects

under the \$1 billion Indian credit, Quayes said projects worth \$183 million are in the pipeline and some of these would come through by next month. "There has been a significant forward movement from where we were in May this year."  
Quayes said security-related matters, border coordination, trade, credit, land boundary agreement and connectivity were discussed at the meeting, and both sides reiterated their resolve to carry forward the process. "There has been a forward movement in several areas."  
The issues of connectivity, particularly use of Ashuganj port, and waterways link were raised by India and discussed.  
He said power sector cooperation also came up at the talks.  
Dhaka wanted expediting setting up of the 1,320 MW coal-fired power plant in Khulna, New Delhi wanted to focus on another power plant in Chittagong.  
Quayes also met Indian Water Resources Secretary Dhruv Vijay Singh and National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon. He returns home this morning.

## Mollah, his men

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holy Quran, they slit the throat of all of them.  
The 63-year-old witness said she had heard about the brutal killings from people on March 27, 1971, evening, the day of incident, and after the Liberation War she heard it from two non-Bangalee Biharies of Mirpur.  
On July 10, Syed Shahidul Haque Mama, a freedom fighter and the second prosecution witness in the crimes against humanity case, also said Quader Mollah and his accomplices had killed Meherun Nesa and her family members during the Liberation War.  
On May 28, the tribunal indicted the Jamaat assistant secretary general on six charges of crimes against humanity, including murders and mass killings.  
Yesterday, the three-member tribunal, led by its Chairman Justice ATM Fazle Kabir with members Justice Obaidul Hassan and Judge Md Shahinur Islam, also recorded the cross-examination of Rosy before it adjourned the case proceedings until tomorrow.  
During her 50-minute testimony yesterday, Rosy said Meherun accompanied her most of the time of the pre-liberation period. "We had formed an action committee to resist oppression against Bangalees in Mirpur (before the war). I was the president and Meherun and many others were members of the action committee," said Rosy.  
After Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March-7 speech in 1971, which was a call for liberation, enmity between Bangalees and non-Bangalees intensified, said the witness, adding, "Under the circumstances, we continued to hold meetings regularly."  
"On the morning of March 25, 1971, we had a meeting and apprehended that something was going to happen," said Rosy.  
"When, I reached home after the meeting, I got information that my home was going to be raided along with Meherun's home," Rosy said, adding, "Because, we were the female members of the action committee."  
Rosy said she had sent a message to Meherun asking her to leave home but Meherun sent her brother to Rosy with the message, "Where would they [Meherun Nesa, her mother and two brothers] go?"  
"Afterwards, I left Mirpur but Meherun did not leave Mirpur and on the evening of March 27, I got information that Quader Mollah and his accomplices wearing red and white bandanas entered Meherun's house around 11:00am," said Rosy.  
"Seeing them, Meherun embraced a holy Quran firmly and pleaded for life but they slit the throat of all four of them [Meherun Nesa, her mother and two brothers]," added emotion-choked Rosy.  
"She was my friend but I could not do anything for her," lamented Rosy.  
"They entered the house under the leadership of Quader Mollah on that day I could not say whether Quader Mollah had entered the house or not," said the witness.  
Rosy said after the Liberation War, non-Bangalee Gulzar and another Bihari also told her about the incident.  
"After killing Meherun, they tied her severed head to the ceiling fan with her hair and her beheaded body wriggled like a slaughtered chicken," said Rosy, quoting the non-Bangalee Biharies.  
Rosy said Quader Mollah was the leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha at that time and under his leadership, local non-Bangalees had taken part in the election campaign for Ghulam Azam, the then ameer of East Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami and a candidate of Mirpur area. Ghulam Azam is currently an accused at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.  
At the end of her testimony, Rosy, quoting a poem of Mahbulul Alam Chowdhury, the writer of the first poem on 'Ekushy', said, "Kandte ashini, phashiri dabi niye eshechchi [haven't come here to cry, but to demand death by hanging]. I want trial of war criminals. I have lived this long to say something at this holy place [the court]."  
"I have been suffering from cancer for the last 19 years. If I die after leaving this room [tribunal], then I have an appeal to you [tribunal], try the war criminals," said emotion-choked Rosy.  
Ekramul Huque, defence counsel of Quader Mollah, cross-examined the witness for 20 minutes and asked around 20 questions mostly on her educational background. Following his time plea, the tribunal adjourned the proceeding until tomorrow when the defence would continue cross-examining Rosy.

## Arms treaty talks stalls at UN

**AFP, United Nations**  
Major powers haggled 'word by word' at the UN Monday over a treaty on the \$70 billion a year conventional arms trade, amid calls from governments and activists to speed up talks to meet a looming deadline.  
With the negotiating conference set to end on Friday, the 193 UN member states still do not have a draft text to send back to governments for approval, according to diplomats.  
On current estimates the draft will not be ready until Wednesday, giving governments two days to consider what would be a major international treaty.  
"Time for the negotiations is running out," warned Britain's foreign office minister.