

## Russia fears chaos in Middle East

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday the Middle East was at risk of descending into "chaos" following a deadly attack on the US mission in Libya and incidents in Egypt and Yemen.

"We are afraid that the region may descend into chaos, which is essentially what is happening already," he said in comments broadcast on state television from his summer residence in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

Putin condemned Tuesday's attack in Libya that killed the ambassador and three other US citizens as not only a crime but one that also broke conventions on the safety of diplomats working in dangerous conditions.

The culprits "not only put themselves outside the bounds of law, but outside the frameworks of contemporary civilisation," said Putin.

## SYRIA CRISIS Concern for refugees grows amid violence



AFP, Beirut

Hollywood star Angelina Jolie yesterday said she was concerned about the plight of Syrian refugees fleeing the unrest in their conflict-torn country with no end in sight to the violence.

Syrian regime air strikes targeted rebel-held police stations inside Aleppo city yesterday, ahead of talks between visiting peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and opposition groups in the 18-month conflict.

An AFP correspondent said three loud explosions were heard in Damascus, where Brahimi spent his first night ahead of meetings with the opposition groups tolerated by the embattled regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

"I share everyone's concern about the winter approaching," Jolie, a UN special envoy, said, calling for help to make sure that "nobody freezes to death in this very very frightened time."

The Oscar-winning actress listened to the accounts of refugees in the camps who have fled Syria, where a brutal conflict that began as a peaceful uprising against the Damascus regime has now killed around 27,000 people, according to activists.

At least 18 people were killed yesterday in Syria, a Britain-based Observatory said, with the highest toll in Daraa province where eight civilians, including three children, were killed in air strikes on the town of Bosra al-Sham.

## South Africa vows miner clampdown

AFP, Pretoria

South Africa yesterday said it will no longer tolerate growing unrest in its key mining sector and will act against incitement and threats of violence at gold and platinum mines.

"Our government will not tolerate these acts any further," Justice Minister Jeff Radebe told journalists, saying measures had been put in place to bring the situation under control.

"Illegal gatherings, the carrying of dangerous weapons, incitement as well as threats of violence against anyone in the affected areas will be dealt with accordingly," he said, saying such acts violated legislation.

South Africa has been battling to rein in growing wildcat action on mines since production at global giant Lonmin's platinum mine in Marikana was shut down more than a month ago in a deadly strike that has killed 45 people.



PHOTO: AFP

Smoke billows from the burning German embassy in Khartoum as a policeman stands next to a man preparing to extinguish the fire that was caused by protesters demonstrating against a low-budget film mocking Islam yesterday. The US boosted security at its embassies worldwide amid escalating anti-American violence sparked by the film which swept the Middle East and North Africa yesterday.

## ANTI-ISLAM FILM Staff and crew say they were 'grossly misled'

CNN ONLINE

The 80 cast and crew members involved in the making of the movie that has roiled much of the Islamic world said Wednesday they were "grossly misled" about its intent and expressed sorrow over the resulting violence.

"The entire cast and crew are extremely upset and feel taken advantage of by the producer," they said in a statement to CNN about the movie, "Innocence of Muslims."

"We are 100% not behind this film and were grossly misled about its intent and purpose," continued the statement.

An actress in the film said the original script did not include a Prophet Muhammed character.

Four Americans, including US Ambassador Chris Stevens, were killed Tuesday in Libya amid a regional furor over the film, which mocks Islam's prophet.

## Obama faces tough test in ME ahead of polls

REUTERS, Washington

An eruption of violent unrest across the Middle East is confronting President Barack Obama with the most serious challenge yet to his efforts to keep the Arab Spring from morphing into a new wave of anti-Americanism.

Less than two months before the US presidential election, a spate of attacks on embassies in Libya, Egypt and Yemen poses a huge dilemma for a US leader who took office promising a "new beginning" with the Muslim world but has struggled to manage the transformation that has swept away many of the region's long-ruling dictators.

On top of that, even as he tries to fend off foreign policy criticism from Republican rival Mitt Romney, Obama is grappling with an escalating crisis in US-Israeli relations over Iran's nuclear program and increased bloodshed in Syria, where President Bashar al-Assad has defied international calls to step aside.

Obama's Middle East woes deepened this week with a series of mob attacks on US diplomatic compounds and the killing of America's ambassador to Libya.



Barack Obama

Demonstrators were incensed by a US-made film they consider blasphemous to Islam.

With the White House fearing further violence in the region after Muslim prayers on Friday, Obama and his aides were scrambling to recalibrate their approach to the problem. Warnings were issued to Muslim governments around the world that they would be expected to help protect US interests.

All of this may simply point to a larger challenge that will endure well beyond November's US vote - an apparently growing gulf between the United States and increasingly assertive Islamist forces within the Middle East.

Now, with much of the US optimism that accompanied the Arab world's uprisings seemingly gone for good, Washington faces an apparent rise in Islamic activism and declining influence over countries it once counted as allies.

At the very least, the events of this week will deepen the already-profound caution over getting further involved in Syria, underlining misgivings about allowing rebels there to get more sophisticated and lethal weapons.

## JAPAN-CHINA TERRITORIAL ROW Tension escalates

AFP, Tokyo

Six Chinese ships sailed into waters around a disputed archipelago yesterday, with Beijing saying they were there for "law enforcement" around islands Japan nationalised earlier this week.

The move -- dubbed "unprecedented" by Tokyo -- came as it was reported Japanese nationals had been physically attacked in China, marking the latest stage in a deteriorating row between Asia's two biggest economies.

Japanese living in or visiting China were warned to take extra precautions after assaults and harassment were reported to the consulate in Shanghai, a base for Japanese businesses and a popular tourist destination.

Tokyo summoned the Chinese ambassador to protest what it insisted was an incursion into territorial waters around islands it controls, called Senkaku, but claimed by Beijing, which refers to the islets as Diaoyu.

However, China was resolute, with the foreign ministry issuing a forthright statement claiming the boats were patrolling sovereign territory. Japan's coastguard said the ships had all left the area by around 1:20pm, approximately seven hours after the first vessel arrived.

Foreign Minister Koichiro Gemba cut short his visit to Australia as tensions mounted.

"I'd like to underscore that we should never let the situation escalate," he told reporters. "We have strong hopes the Chinese government will respond to the situation in an appropriate and also a calm manner."

Relations between the two countries -- often rocky because of a difficult history -- have worsened since pro-Beijing activists were arrested and deported after a landing on one of the islands in August.

Protests broke out in China and have continued since Japan on Tuesday announced it had nationalised three of the islands in the chain. It already owns another and leases the fifth.

The purchase was intended at least partially to calm the situation by heading off an attempt to buy them by Tokyo's provocative Governor Shintaro Ishihara, who charged Japan was not doing enough to protect its territory.

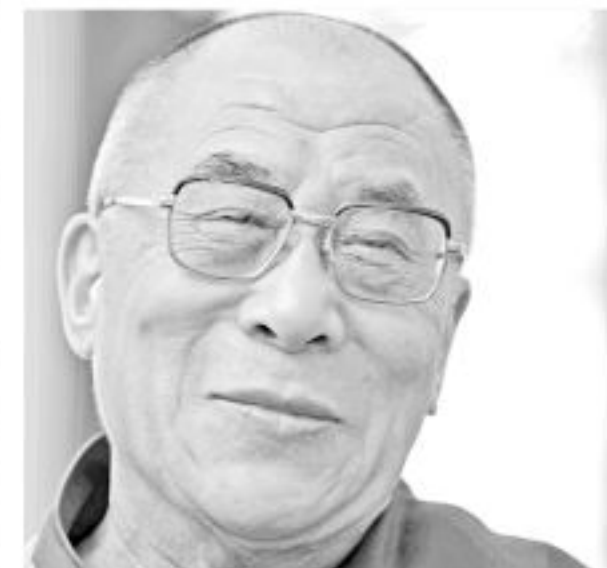
## 'Religion is no longer adequate'

THE HUFFINGTON POST ONLINE

The Dalai Lama has recently sparked a great deal of discussion by writing "religion is no longer adequate" on his Facebook page.

The Tibetan Buddhist leader, who has 4.3 million Facebook fans, posted this status update on Monday:

"All the world's major religions, with their emphasis on love, compassion, patience, tolerance, and forgiveness can and do promote inner values. But the reality of the world today is that grounding ethics in religion is no longer adequate. This is why I am increasingly convinced that the time has come to find a way of thinking about spirituality and ethics beyond religion altogether."



Dalai Lama

The post got over 4, 770 comments, and over 53,920 shares.

Because the Dalai Lama, 77, is one of the world's most recognizable religious figures, his words got others talking and questioning his intent.

The Huffington Post reports that the status update was actually excerpted from a book released by the Dalai Lama last year called "Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World."

In it, he argues that secular ethics are more important when it comes to dealing with the problems in today's world than organized religion.

Some suggest that by "secular ethics" the Dalai Lama is referring to science - a field that the Nobel Peace Prize winner has shown a keen interest in for years.

## Alone, all alone on a wide wide sea

AFP, Majuro

A Kiribati fisherman who drifted in the central Pacific for nearly four months has been found alive and asking for cigarettes, a Marshall Islands fishing vessel reported yesterday.

Toakai Teitoi was healthy but a friend who had sailed with him from Maiana Atoll in the island nation of Kiribati on May 28 had died, fisheries observer Ali Ezekiah said in a radio message from the rescue vessel to an onshore agent.

Teitoi was found on his 15-metre boat on September 11 by the fishing vessel in waters northeast of Nauru.

"When the crew brought him on to the fishing boat and asked him what he wanted, the first thing he said was 'smoke'," Ezekiah said as the Marshalls 203 headed back to Majuro. It was due in port at the weekend.

Teitoi said he survived the hard days by eating fish and drinking rainwater.

The record for drifting at sea is believed to be held by two fishermen, also from Kiribati, who were at sea for 177 days before coming ashore in Samoa in 1992.

## Indecent photos cause new storm for UK royals

REUTERS, Paris/london

French magazine Closer unleashed a new media tornado on the royal family yesterday with a five-page splash of photos showing the Duchess of Cambridge, Kate Middleton, sunbathing topless with Prince William in the south of France.

Closer, a weekly round-up of celebrity gossip, under the headline "Oh my God!" ran a dozen shots of the Duchess as she slipped off her bikini top, relaxed on a sun lounger and at one point pulled down the back of her bikini bottoms as William rubs sun cream on her.

While Closer defended its decision to publish the photographs, a royal spokesperson called it a grotesque move that had upset the royal cou-



Kate Middleton

ple, currently touring southeast Asia, and said Buckingham Palace would sue the French magazine.

The publication reopens a debate over the privacy of Britain's royal family and the freedom of the press weeks after a US website published grainy photos of William's younger brother Harry cavorting naked in a Las Vegas hotel room.

Royal sources said the photo spread was a flashback to the paparazzi chases of Princess Diana, William's mother, making it even more painful for him. "There is a feeling of anger and disbelief," one source said. "We feel there has been a red line crossed with regard to publishing these images."

## Anti-Islam film is a distraction

Says Egypt's president

AFP, Rome

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi on condemned a film which has sparked protests across the Muslim world as an "aggression" on Islam that distracts from the real problems of the Middle East.

"We cannot accept this type of aggression and attempt to sow discord. These irresponsible actions yield no good and draw attention away from real problems like the conflict in Syria, the fate of the Palestinians and the lack of stability in the Middle East," Morsi said during a visit to Rome.

"The Egyptian people reject and oppose any pernicious attempts to offend the prophet of Islam. Everyone rejects this. Americans also reject these actions, President Obama told me," the Islamist president told reporters.

Morsi, who was speaking as fresh clashes broke out between police and protesters outside the US embassy in Cairo in a demonstration over the film, also rejected the deadly violence that has erupted in recent days.

"We do not accept the killing of innocent people or attacks against embassies. All governments have the obligation to defend diplomatic missions.... We reject with maximum determination any type of aggression."

Analysts say that Morsi is being forced to walk a delicate tightrope over the last few days, keen not to be seen as too pro-American by his people while keeping billions of dollars in investments and aid flowing from the West.

## NEWS IN brief

### Khmer Rouge leader unfit for trial

BBC ONLINE

Cambodia's UN-backed genocide court Thursday ordered the release of Khmer Rouge leader Ieng Thirith, saying she is unfit to stand trial.

The court said Ieng Thirith probably had Alzheimer's disease and there was no prospect she could be tried "in the foreseeable future". The 80-year-old served as the Maoist regime's social affairs minister.

Three other surviving top Khmer Rouge leaders are currently being tried for crimes against humanity. However her release was delayed as prosecutors lodged an appeal, a court official said.



### Iraq, Kurds reach oil deal

AFP, Baghdad

The Iraqi government and Kurdistan struck a preliminary deal on Thursday on a months-long oil dispute that will see the autonomous region export 200,000 barrels of oil per day, officials said.

Kurdistan halted its oil exports via the federal government on April 1 over \$1.5 billion it said is owed to foreign oil companies working in the region that Baghdad has allegedly withheld, but then resumed them again on August 7, in what was billed as a confidence-building measure.

Iraq's cabinet threatened on September 4 to cut the autonomous Kurdish region's budget by \$3

### Ex-Pak PM Gilani's son arrested

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan's former premier Yousuf Raza Gilani's son Ali Musa was arrested yesterday and briefly detained by the army-run Anti-Narcotics Force in connection with alleged irregularities in the import of the controlled drug Ephedrine before he was granted bail by the apex court.

Ali Musa was arrested at the gates of the Supreme Court when he arrived this morning to seek pre-arrest bail. He was taken to an ANF office in Rawalpindi and detained in a room.

Ali Musa has been accused of influencing officials of the health ministry to allocate Ephedrine quotas of 9,000 kg to two pharmaceutical companies while his father was the premier.

### Accident kills 51 in Afghanistan

AFP, Ghazni

A passenger bus collided with a fuel tanker in Afghanistan yesterday, killing 51 people and injuring several others, with women and children among the victims, officials said.

The incident happened in Ab Band district of Ghazni province, on the highway from Kabul to Kandahar, the capital of the south and Afghanistan's second largest city, on what is one of the most dangerous roads in the country.