

# Iran can defeat sanctions

Says Khamenei

AFP, Tehran  
Iran can overcome problems caused by "barbaric" economic sanctions that Western states have imposed over its nuclear programme, supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said yesterday.

"These sanctions are barbaric. This is a war against a nation... But the Iranian nation will defeat them," Khamenei said in a speech broadcast on state television.

The all-powerful leader said the sanctions had created "problems" for the country, and that "some mismanagement" of the draconian measures was adding to those problems. He did not elaborate.

Iran's currency, the rial, has lost 40 percent of its value against major currencies in the past week, with the central bank unable to support the rial on the open market due to a lack of foreign cash.



PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistani civil society activists carry placards and papers with a photograph of the gunshot victim Malala Yousafzai during a protest rally against the assassination attempt by Taliban on her, in Islamabad yesterday. (Story on page 20)

# US drone kills 5 in Pakistan

AFP, Miranshah

A US drone strike targeting a militant compound killed five insurgents in a restive Pakistani tribal region near the Afghan border yesterday, security officials said.

The attack was the first since a massive anti-drone rally last weekend near the lawless region known as a stronghold of Taliban and al-Qaeda militants, they said.

The al-Qaeda-linked Haqqani network in North Waziristan, blamed for some of the deadliest attacks in Afghanistan, is one of the thorniest issues between Islamabad and Washington.

The attacks by unmanned US aircraft remain contentious -- they are deeply unpopular in Pakistan, which says they violate its sovereignty, but American officials are said to believe they are too important to give up.

# US PRESIDENTIAL POLLS Romney leads Obama

AFP, Cuyahoga Falls

Mitt Romney supporters taunted Barack Obama with chants of "four more weeks" as their candidate surged into the lead in US opinion polls, propelled by his debate win last week.

With both candidates campaigning in perennial kingmaker state Ohio, top Obama aides put a brave face on the president's slide, insisting they had always known his re-election bid would be tough.

A flurry of new polls out Tuesday showed the delayed impact of Romney's debate triumph last week in Denver.

For the first time since he accepted the Republican Party nomination, Romney topped the widely-read poll of polls conducted by the RealClearPolitics website, albeit by only 0.7 points.

He led Obama by two points in daily tracking polls by Gallup and Investors Business Daily, but the pair were tied in another tracking poll, by Rasmussen's

## US election: Romney leads

Average of nationwide opinion polls between Sept 28 and Oct 8  
In percent



Barack Obama  
Mitt Romney

Romney's rise in the polls in part reflected his tack toward the political center during the debate, a shift he continued on Tuesday by telling an

Iowa newspaper he had no plans to introduce legislation restricting abortion.

Romney did say, however, that he would restore a law ended by Obama that prohibits non-profit groups receiving federal government funds from providing abortions in other countries.

Despite the clear bounce in Romney support, national polls are only one reflection of the race, and the campaigns are more interested in the eight or so swing states that will decide the election.

Obama is up in most battlegrounds, though full data is yet to emerge on local races following the debate.

And in a welcome respite for the president's camp, struggling to shake off the fallout of last week's listless debate performance, a CNN/ORC poll showed Obama holding steady in Ohio, leading 51 to 47 percent among likely voters.

No Republican has ever become president without winning Ohio.



# Saif would be hanged in Libya

Defence tells ICC

AFP, The Hague

Muammar Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam without a doubt would get a death sentence if tried in Libya, his lawyer told the Hague-based International Criminal Court yesterday.

"Although the Libyan government has danced around the issue, let's be very clear: if convicted (in Libya) Mr Gaddafi will be hanged," Melinda Taylor, a court-appointed lawyer, told judges amid a dispute on where Saif should face justice.

While the ICC wants Saif, the only son of the slain Libyan leader in custody, to be tried in The Hague, Libya's post-revolutionary authorities insist he should stand trial in his home country.

# Pope prays in Arabic for the first time

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Benedict XVI yesterday pronounced a blessing in Arabic at his weekly audience in front of 20,000 pilgrims on St Peter's Square -- the first time the language has been used at such an event.

"The pope prays for all Arabic speakers. May God bless you all!" the pope said in Arabic at the audience, after a bishop read out an Arabic translation of the pope's comments praising the results of the Second Vatican Council.

The landmark Council, which began 50 years ago this week, is a "compass" for the Catholic Church "in the middle of the storms", the pope said.

As a young reformer, the then Joseph Ratzinger took part in the Council, better known as Vatican II, which revolutionised Catholic rituals.

The pope has always defended the 15 "constitutions" adopted by the Council despite complaints from traditionalists in the Church over several reforms.



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# AMBASSADOR MURDER PROBE US urges more from Libya

AFP, Tripoli

The top White House anti-terror official John Brennan yesterday pressed Libyan leaders to hunt down those guilty of killing Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans as controversy mounted in Washington.

Just four weeks ahead of the US presidential election, Barack Obama's administration faced mounting criticism from Republicans over the breach of security at the US consulate in Libya's second city Benghazi on September 11 that led to the killings.

Security was tight in the Libyan capital for Brennan's talks with national assembly chief Mohammed Megaryef, Libya's de facto head of state, and other senior officials.

Brennan set out to Megaryef "specific additional steps Libya can take to better assist the US in ensuring that the perpetrators are brought to justice," the White House said.

Brennan also urged Libya to "take full and

timely advantage of specific offers of assistance from the United States and other international partners."

The envoy's visit came with political temperatures rising in Washington as senior State Department officials gave evidence to a congressional hearing into the deadly consulate attack.

In a dramatic new account, two State Department officials Tuesday described a relentless attack in which dozens of armed men invaded the US consulate in Benghazi, setting it on fire and hunting through the building for staff.

There had been no warning that an attack was planned, and in the hours before the streets outside the compound had been calm, they said on a conference call with reporters, asking to remain anonymous.

The new account contradicts initial reports by State Department officials which said it was a "spontaneous" attack sparked by a protest against an anti-Islam film.

# Sudan opens border with South

AFP, Khartoum

Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir yesterday ordered land and river border crossings with South Sudan reopened, official radio said, after agreements last month that eased long-running tensions between the neighbours.

Radio Omdurman said Bashir made the request after a meeting with Sudan's new ambassador to South Sudan.

The announcement comes after Bashir and his South Sudanese counterpart, Salva Kiir, on September 27 signed deals on security and cooperation that they hailed as ending their countries' conflict.

A 22-year north-south civil war led to a 2005 peace deal and South Sudan's independence in July last year.

# Syria rejects UN truce call

Ankara warns Damascus over cross-border attacks; 50 killed

AFP, Damascus

The Syrian regime rejected a UN call for a unilateral ceasefire on Wednesday as rebels confronted columns of tanks and troops sent to retake a town on the road to main battleground city Aleppo.

President Bashar al-Assad's regime, on the back foot with rebels controlling swathes of northern Syria, insisted the insurgents must stop the violence first as it turned down the call issued the previous day by UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

"We told Ban Ki-moon to send emissaries to the countries which have influence on the armed groups, so that they put an end to the violence," foreign ministry spokesman Jihad Maqdisi said.

Syria's main exiled opposition coalition the Syrian National Council will in a "matter of days" set up in a rebel-controlled area inside the country, a top member of the group said yesterday.



Abdel Basset Sayda

Ward said that SNC leader Abdel Basset Sayda and other members of the executive committee will regularly travel to Syria via Atme, a village in Idlib province in the northwest which is a key rear base for the rebels near the Turkish border.

Meanwhile, Turkey's top military commander, General Necdet Ozel, warned of a tougher response if Syria keeps hitting Turkish soil, as he visited the town of Akcakale, where cross-border shelling killed five civilians last week.

"We have retaliated (for Syrian shelling) and if it continues, we'll respond more strongly," General Ozel said, as he inspected Turkish troops on a tour of the heavily fortified border zone.

Following the deadly shelling in Akcakale on Wednesday of last week, Turkey's parliament approved the use of military force if necessary against Syria. Nato has also pledged support to Turkey, if required.

The sabre-rattling added to growing fears of wider regional fallout from the conflict ravaging Syria, in which activists say more than 32,000 people have died, mostly civilians.

Residents of the Old City neighbourhood of Homs, meanwhile, desperately pleaded for assistance as the Observatory reported heavy shelling of rebel belts across the central city and nearby Qusayr, both besieged for months.

The Britain-based group reported at least 50 people killed across Syria yesterday -- 18 rebels, 16 soldiers and 16 civilians.



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