

West to 'pay a price' for sanctions: Iran

AFP, Tokyo

Iran's finance minister yesterday warned that the West would "pay a price" for sanctions on his country over its nuclear programme, while vowing to stem a severe currency crisis.

Western powers have tightened economic sanctions against Tehran in recent years, sparking a drop in crucial oil exports and a collapse of its currency, pounding the economy and sending unemployment higher.

Yesterday, finance minister Shamseddin Hosseini echoed Tehran's regular criticism of the sanctions, saying they were part of an "economic war" and warned that Western firms would suffer as Iran moves to trade with other nations.

Tehran insists its atomic programme is for peaceful purposes while the West accuses it of working to develop nuclear weapons.



Survivors and relatives of the victims of the 2002 Bali bombings attend a ceremony marking the 10th anniversary of the Bali attacks at Indonesia's resort island of Bali yesterday. Inset, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard paying tribute to the victims of the attack which killed more than 200 people.

PHOTO: AFP

Monks protest in Myanmar against OIC

AFP, Yangon

Several thousand monks took to the streets of Myanmar's second-largest city yesterday to protest against a world Islamic body's efforts to help Muslim Rohingya in strife-hit Rakhine state, organisers said.

Holding banners reading "No OIC in Myanmar", the monks gathered in Mandalay to urge the government to block a plan by OIC to open an office in the country.

"We cannot accept the OIC here, Thaw Bi Ta, told AFP by telephone.

Sectarian tensions are running high following Buddhist-Rohingya clashes in June in Rakhine state which left dozens of people dead.

The country has seen a series of protests against the OIC and Myanmar's 800,000 stateless Rohingya, who are described by the UN as one of the world's most persecuted minorities.

NEWS IN brief

Warrant issued against Mallya

AFP, Hyderabad

A court in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad yesterday issued an arrest warrant for billionaire Vijay Mallya, owner of debt-ridden Kingfisher Airlines, a spokesman for the complainant said.

The non-bailable warrant was issued in the local sessions court against Mallya, who also co-owns Formula One team Force India, over Kingfisher cheques to the operator of Hyderabad International Airport that bounced.

The cheques for 105 million rupees (around \$2 million) were to settle user fees at the airport, which

TEPCO downplayed tsunami risk

AFP, Tokyo

The operator of the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant yesterday admitted it had played down the risks of a tsunami to the facility for fear of the financial and regulatory costs.

The admission is one of the starkest yet by Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which has been criticised for trying to shirk responsibility for the worst nuclear disaster in a generation.

The report says before the huge waves of March 2011 smashed into the plant the company was aware defences against natural disasters were not sufficient, but did not act because of the possible consequences.

Tunisia cuts blasphemy clause

AFP, Tunis

A controversial blasphemy clause proposed by the ruling Islamist party but opposed by civil society groups will not be included in Tunisia's new constitution, the speaker of the Assembly told AFP.

The plan to criminalise attacks on the sacred sparked an outcry when it was first announced by the Islamists in July, with the media and civil society groups fearing that it would result in new restrictions on freedom of expression.

Jaafar said that Ennahda, the Islamist party that heads the ruling coalition, will accept dropping the blasphemy clause even though it remains at the heart of its political agenda.

UN chief backs ME nuke meet

AFP, United Nations

UN leader Ban Ki-moon threw his support Thursday behind a conference aimed at creating a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, urging all countries in the region to attend it.

Finland is ready to host the meeting in Helsinki in mid-December, which Ban hailed as a "unique opportunity for all states of the region to collectively enhance their security," the secretary-general's office said.

Neither Israel nor Iran have said they plan to

Arvind Kejriwal detained

PTI, New Delhi

Arvind Kejriwal and some activists were yesterday detained by police after they were stopped from marching towards the prime minister's residence demanding resignation and arrest of Union minister Salman Khurshid over allegations of irregularities by an NGO run by him.

Kejriwal along with about 70 activists of Rashtriya Vikalang Party (RVP) marched from Janpath to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Race Course residence, a few kilometres away, but were stopped at Rajpath crossing by police. They were later detained when they refused to disperse and staged a sit-in.

US prepares new rules for cyber war

AFP, Washington

The United States faces a growing threat of a "cyber-Pearl Harbor" and has drafted new rules for the military that would enable it to move aggressively against digital attacks, US defense secretary said late Thursday.

The amended rules of engagement underline the need to defend Defense Department computer networks, "but also to be prepared to defend the nation and our national interests," Leon Panetta said.

Officials offered no further details, but as former CIA director, Panetta reportedly helped oversee an unprecedented cyber sabotage campaign that targeted Iran's nuclear programme.

Syria army takes pounding as Turkey tension rises

106 soldiers killed; Damascus calls Ankara liar over cargo claim

AFP, Damascus

Syrian rebels have gone on the offensive killing more than 100 soldiers in two days, a watchdog said yesterday, as tension between Syria and Turkey escalated over cargo seized from a Syrian Air plane.

Fourteen soldiers died in an attack on an army post in the southern province of Daraa yesterday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said, a day after the army suffered 92 losses, the highest daily total for the military of the 19-month conflict.

With an average of 20 deaths per day, the army has lost about 10,000 soldiers, with at least an equal number wounded, in the conflict, a military hospital official told AFP.

As fighting raged on the ground, including in the northern provinces of

Idlib and Aleppo, a war of words between Syria and Turkey grew angrier after Ankara said it had found military supplies on a passenger plane it intercepted en route between Moscow and Damascus.

The Syrian foreign ministry

SYRIA CRISIS

accused Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan of lying when he said the jet had been carrying "equipment and ammunition shipped to the Syrian defence ministry" from a Russian military supplier.

A Russian newspaper yesterday reported the plane was carrying Russian radar parts for Syrian missile defence systems but not weapons.

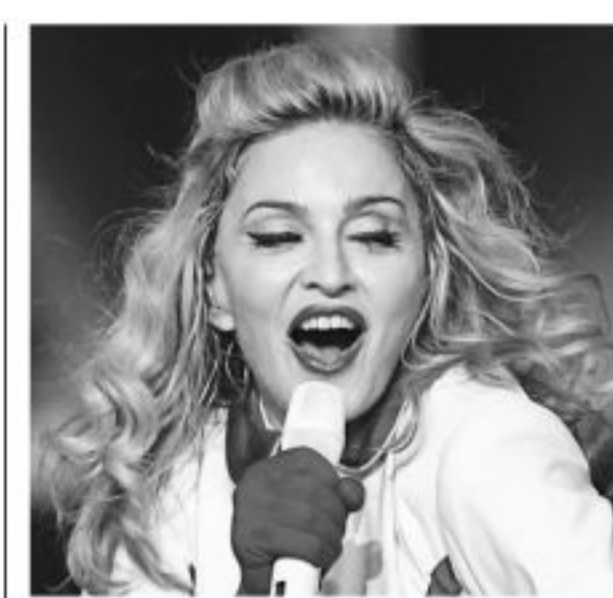
The plane was loaded with 12 boxes

containing parts for radars used in the Syrian army's missile defence systems, Kommersant quoted sources in the arms export industry.

With tensions running high, Turkey scrambled a fighter jet yesterday after a Syrian helicopter shelled the rebel-held town of Azmarin inside Syria near the Turkish border, an official in Ankara told AFP.

Turkey's allies have warned of the risks embedded in the conflict between the neighbours, which have exchanged fire over their border in recent days, amid fears that the Syrian civil war could set off a regional conflagration.

The Britain-based Observatory said that Thursday had marked one of the deadliest days of fighting since an anti-regime revolt erupted in March last year, with at least 240 people killed across the country, including the 92 soldiers, 67 rebel fighters and 81 civilians.



This song is for you, Malala

DAWN ONLINE

Pop singer Madonna during a concert in Los Angeles on Thursday dedicated a song to 14-year-old Pakistani child activist Malala Yousufzai, who was attacked by the Taliban on Tuesday.

"This song is for you, Malala," Madonna said and then went on to sing 'Humannature'.

"This made me cry. The 14-year-old schoolgirl who wrote a blog about going to school. The Taliban stopped her bus and shot her. Do you realise how sick that is?" The Nation quoted Madonna, as saying, "Support education! Support women!" she shouted out to a cheering crowd.

She is now said to be in a critical condition at a hospital in Rawalpindi.

Malala, who earned international fame for raising voice against Taliban oppression in Swat, was shot in the neck and head and two other girls sustained injuries when the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan opened fire on their school van in Swat valley.

Pakistanis yesterday prayed across the country at mosques for the recovery of Malala as doctors said the next two days were critical.

A flight that nearly sparked a nuke war

AFP, Washington

At 9:09am on October 27, 1962, Major Rudolf Anderson climbed into the cockpit of his U-2 spy plane for a flight that nearly triggered a nuclear apocalypse.

Five days earlier, president John F Kennedy had revealed evidence that the Soviets had deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba, setting off a harrowing war of nerves that threatened to push the world into nuclear armageddon.

But by the morning of Anderson's mission, a way out of the crisis appeared to emerge after Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev floated a secret proposal to withdraw the missiles in return for an American promise not to invade Cuba.

Only 13 days earlier, another U-2 detected Soviet ballistic missiles on the island, setting off alarm in Washington.

After taking off from a base in Orlando, Florida and reaching an altitude of 72,000 feet, Anderson was tasked with using the U-2's high-powered cameras to photograph Cuban and Soviet deployments near the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay. He was also ordered to "probe" Soviet air defenses.

The Soviets had set up 24 sites across Cuba with V-75 surface-to-air missiles to bring down sneaking aircrafts.

Unlike previous days, the Soviets switched on their air defense radars, after being pushed by Fidel Castro the day before to stand ready for a potential American attack,



John F Kennedy

was later found in a sugarcane field.

Kennedy was meeting with his top advisers and debating how to respond to Moscow when he was informed at 2:03pm that Anderson's U-2 plane, serial number 56-6676, had not returned from its mission over Cuba.

Disturbed by the news, the president told his advisers the shutdown over Cuba was an apparent "escalation" by Moscow.

His hawkish assistant defense secretary, Paul Nitze, called it an opening salvo. "They've fired the first shot," he said. After learning of the downed plane, top military generals, who stood ready to order an invasion of Cuba, proposed retaliating by bombing the island's air defenses.

In Moscow, it was nighttime when Khrushchev learned of the U-2 plane shot down over Cuba. Although he had authorized commanders in Cuba to fight back in self-defense, Khrushchev never ordered attacks on unarmed reconnaissance planes.

The two sides sensed they were approaching a point of no return.

At 8:00pm, Robert Kennedy, the president's brother, met with Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. They managed to work out a compromise, and the crisis was resolved.

And fortunately after 13 days on the brink, Anderson remained the only victim of the Cuban missile crisis.

JUDICIARY-GOVT STANDOFF IN EGYPT Rivals clash at Tahrir

AFP, Cairo

Supporters of President Mohamed Morsi clashed with opponents in Cairo's Tahrir Square yesterday in the worst violence over Egypt's new Islamist leader, a day after he crossed swords with the judiciary.

Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood movement and a coalition of secular leaning groups held separate rallies on some of the thorniest issues facing the new democracy after last year's uprising which ousted president Hosni Mubarak.

The health ministry said at least 12 people were wounded as protesters showered each other with stones, after Morsi supporters tore down a podium from which anti-Brotherhood chants were being orchestrated.

The violence broke out as Morsi faced a backlash from judges after trying to sack



Mohamed Morsi

the chief prosecutor following this week's acquittals of Mubarak-era officials on trial for a deadly attack on protesters during the 2011 uprising.

An influential group of Egyptian judges backed state prosecutor Abdel Meguid Mahmud's refusal to resign after Morsi ordered his removal on Thursday, the official Al-Ahram newspaper reported.

Morsi's bid to remove Mahmud bypassed checks on presidential control of the prosecutor, further enraging judges after the president had unsuccessfully tried to reverse a court order disbanding the Islamist-dominated parliament.

Morsi had pledged to retry Mubarak and his senior officials for their roles in the killing of protesters during the revolt, after trials that critics said had been bungled by the state prosecutor's office.

Botswana rules women can inherit

AFP, Gaborone

In a landmark ruling Botswana's High Court yesterday affirmed women's inheritance rights for the first time, up-ending a male-dominated system that had prevailed in the thriving African nation.

The court ruled that local customary laws -- giving a son preferential rights to inherit the family home -- are not in line with the country's constitution, which guarantees gender equality.

The case had been brought in 2007 by a group of sisters, all aged over 65, whose claim to family property is challenged by their 63-year-old nephew, and the High Court began hearing it in May.

According to advocacy group Social Watch, sub-Saharan Africa is among the world's most inequitable regions.

Mars rover makes surprising rock find

AFP, Washington

A rock analyzed by NASA's Mars rover Curiosity has a surprising and more varied composition that resembles rare rocks from the bowels of our planet, the US space agency said yesterday.

"This rock is a close match in chemical composition to an unusual but well-known type of igneous rock found in many volcanic provinces on Earth," Curiosity co-investigator Edward Stolper of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena said in a statement.

"With only one Martian rock of this type, it is difficult to know whether the same processes were involved, but it is a reasonable place to start thinking about its origin."

On Earth, rocks with similar compositions usually come from "processes in the planet's mantle beneath the crust, from the crystallization of relatively water-rich magna at elevated pressure," according to the NASA statement.

Nasa said the initial results were just a preview, noting that Curiosity also carries analytical laboratories inside the rover.

Soon, it plans to analyze its first Martian soil sample. Curiosity is on a two-year, \$2.5 billion mission to investigate whether it is possible to live on Mars and to learn whether conditions there might have been able to support life in the past.



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