

# 'Syria using cluster bombs'

Accuses rights group; Damascus slaps flight ban on Turkey

AGENCIES

Syrian government forces have dropped Russian-made cluster bombs over civilian areas in the past week as they battle to reverse rebel gains on a strategic highway, Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

Syria, meanwhile, banned Turkish passenger flights from its airspace from yesterday in a retaliatory move, as its troops launched a counter-attack on rebels in the country's north in a bid to regain lost ground.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said cluster bombs were dropped from planes and helicopters near the main north-south highway running through Maarat al-Numan, a town rebels seized last week cutting the route from Damascus to Aleppo.

HRW previously reported Syrian use of cluster bombs in July and August, but the renewed strikes indicate the government's determination to regain strategic control in the northwest.

Cluster munitions drop hundreds of

bomblets on a wide area, designed to kill as many people as possible. Human rights groups say their use near civilian homes can be a war crime.

More than 100 nations have banned their use under a convention which became international law in 2010, but Syria has not signed it, nor have Russia,

## SYRIA CRISIS

China or the United States.

The reprisal over Turkey's confiscation of a cargo of what Russia said was radar equipment being flown from Moscow to Damascus came despite a flurry of diplomacy intended to calm soaring tensions between the neighbours.

Syria accuses Turkey of channelling arms from Gulf Arab states to rebels fighting its troops, who have been under mounting pressure across large swathes of the north, including in second city Aleppo.

Ankara has taken an increasingly

strident line towards its southern neighbour since a shell fired from the Syrian side of the border killed five Turks on October 3.

On the battlefield, the military used fighter jets to bombard Maaret al-Numan, captured by the rebel Free Syrian Army earlier in the week, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

SANA, meanwhile, reported that troops killed and captured "dozens of terrorists and destroyed anti-tank rockets" in the northern city of Aleppo, the country's commercial capital.

Elsewhere, two explosions hit the upscale district of Mazzeh in Damascus early yesterday, the Observatory said, adding that one of them targeted the car of a pro-regime lawyer who was critically wounded.

At least 18 people were killed nationwide yesterday, the Observatory said, in addition to more than 33,000 who have died since the revolt against the regime erupted in March last year.



PHOTO: AFP

A Syrian woman is evacuated after being wounded in shelling by regime forces in the Shaar neighbourhood of the northern city of Aleppo yesterday.

## NEWS IN brief

### Israel polls set for Jan 22

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli cabinet gave its approval yesterday to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposal to hold an early general election on January 22, a statement from the premier's office said.

Netanyahu had on Tuesday announced his intention to bring forward an election that had been scheduled for October 2013, saying the decision was driven by the current deadlock among coalition partners over the passage of a budget packed with austerity measures.

The Israeli parliament, or Knesset, will have to vote on the date in the coming days, in a move which

### US nuke sub collides with cruiser

AFP, Washington

A US Navy nuclear submarine and a cruiser collided on Saturday during training exercises off the US Atlantic Coast Saturday, NBC News reported.

The television network said the incident involved the Montpelier, a nuclear-powered Los Angeles-class attack submarine, and the San Jacinto, an Aegis-class missile cruiser.

The causes and circumstances of the collision were not immediately known.

Nobody aboard the vessels was injured, the

### Brazil cops occupies Rio slums

AFP, Rio De Janeiro

Police in Rio de Janeiro yesterday moved to take control of the crime-infested favelas of Jacarezinho and Manginhos, AFP reporters witnessed.

The operation began shortly before 5:00 am and involved about 800 police in riot gear and 13 armored personnel carriers.

The favelas are known as major drug trading and consumption centers.

Authorities in Brazil are trying to take control of and clean up some of the most dangerous areas of the country in preparation for the 2014 World Soccer Cup and the Olympic Games of 2016.

Tibetan self-immolates in China

AFP, Beijing

The grandfather of a revered Tibetan Buddhist figure has burned to death in northwest China after setting himself on fire in protest at Beijing's rule in the remote region, rights groups said yesterday.

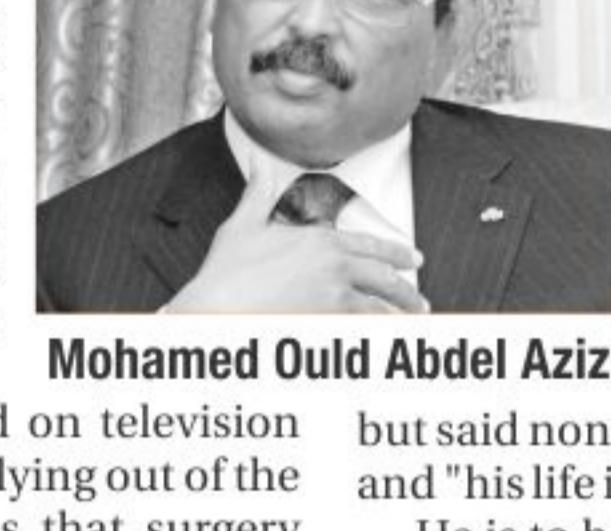
Tamdin Dorjee killed himself near a monastery in China's Gansu province, according to the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT).

The 52-year-old was said by the ICT to be the grandfather of the seventh Gungthang Rinpoche, who is believed by Tibetan Buddhists to be the reincarnation of an important religious figure.

More than 50 ethnic Tibetans, many of them monks and nuns, have set themselves on fire in the local area

### Mauritania president injured in accidental shooting

AFP, Nouakchott



Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz

Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz flew to Paris for medical treatment yesterday after being wounded when soldiers "accidentally" shot at his convoy as he returned to the capital Nouakchott from a weekend retreat.

Ould Abdel Aziz appeared on television from his hospital bed before flying out of the country, telling Mauritians that surgery carried out after Saturday's shooting had been a "success".

"I want to reassure them about my health after this incident, which was committed in error by a military unit," he said, looking pale but speaking with a normal voice.

"Thanks be to God, there is no problem," added the president, who was joined at his bedside by his Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf and top civilian and military figures.

However, a security source had earlier told AFP that the president, who has been in power in the impoverished northwest African nation since leading an August 2008

military coup, had been directly targeted.

The president was flown to Paris for medical treatment after undergoing the operation at a military hospital to remove a bullet, a security source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The source did not specify where the bullet had lodged but said none of his vital organs had been hit and "his life is not in danger".

He is to be treated in a specialist hospital in the French capital.

Unconfirmed media reports in Nouakchott said variously that Abdel Aziz, who has in the past reportedly been targeted by al-Qaeda's North African branch, had been hit in the arm and/or the abdomen.

Opposition lawmakers accuse Ould Abdel Aziz, a former general, of despotism and mismanagement in the largely desert nation.

The opposition wants a transition government to take over from Abdel Aziz and find a way out of the crisis, dealing with issues such as unemployment, slavery and attacks on human rights.

### Gunmen kill 20 at mosque in Nigeria

REUTERS, Kaduna

Gunmen opened fire on Muslim worshippers as they were leaving a mosque in northern Nigeria yesterday, killing at least 20 people, a local official said.

The attack happened in a remote village called Dogo Dawa, in Kaduna state, said Abdullahi Muhammad, the traditional ruler and councilor of Birnin Gwari, a local government area next door to the village.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. Like much of northern Nigeria, Kaduna is plagued by an insurgency led by radical Islamist sect Boko Haram.

They usually attack security forces, government officials or Christians, but have hit Muslim clerics and mosques in the past, especially ones that do not follow their hardline brand of Islam.

### Myanmar to choose new leadership

BBC ONLINE

Myanmar's army-backed ruling party was yesterday urged to embrace democracy at a key meeting to revamp its leadership and map its future after a by-election drubbing by Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition.

The Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) wants to regroup after the newly legalised opposition NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, trounced nearly all its candidates in April by-elections.

Myanmar has surprised the world with the speed of its recent political reforms, says BBC Asia reporter Viv Marsh.

But those same reforms also mean the party risks a crushing defeat in the next general election, due in 2015.

The USDP started a three-day conference yesterday to choose a new party chief and attempt to map out a new strategy.

The USDP has not had a permanent leader since Thein Sein became Myanmar's president last year.

A front-runner for the position is the powerful parliamentary speaker Shwe Mann, his main political rival.

"In a democratic system, we have to keep in mind that the majority needs to respect the wishes of the minority, while all must follow the majority's decision," said Shwe Mann, adding he was speaking on behalf of Thein Sein, who also attended the party's first-ever conference.

Analysts say the USDP risks outright defeat in a general election planned for 2015 if the vote is free and fair - although Burma's current constitution guarantees the military a quarter of seats in parliament.

### Daredevil succeeds in space jump

AFP, Los Angeles

Austrian daredevil Felix Baumgartner made a record-breaking leap from the edge of space yesterday, landing safely in the New Mexico desert after freefalling from more than 24 miles above the Earth.

The 43-year-old floated down to Earth on a red and white parachute canopy, which he had opened after reaching speeds of more than 700 miles per hour in freefall.

Mission control erupted in cheers as Baumgartner made a near-perfect jump from a capsule hoisted aloft by a giant helium-filled balloon to an altitude of around 128,000 feet.

"Sometimes you have to go up really high to (realise) how small you are," Baumgartner said shortly before he jumped, watching in live footage beamed around the world.

Baumgartner had already broken one record, before he even leapt: the previous highest altitude for a manned balloon flight was 113,740 feet, set in 1961.

The Red Bull Stratos mission was the second attempt for the skydiver after an initial bid last week was aborted at the last minute due to winds.

### Israel air raids on Gaza kill 3

Top Islamist among dead

AFP, Gaza City

A top Salafist leader and two other militants were killed in overnight air strikes on Gaza, as Israel yesterday vowed to "act aggressively" against jihadists.

In the first of two deadly strikes, which took place in the northern town of Jabaliya late on Saturday, the Israeli air force killed two Salafist militants in the second such raid targeting radical Islamists within a week.

Several hours later, Israeli warplanes targeted two militants from the armed wing of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in the southern city of Khan Yunis, killing one of them.

The attack late on Saturday killed Sheikh Hisham al-Saiedi, 43, head of Salafist group Tawhid wal-Jihad.

Saiedi was one of the top Salafist militants in Gaza and in late 2008 founded the Mujahideen Shura Council, which has claimed a spate of rocket attacks on Israel in recent days.

### US sought mafia-backed Castro assassination plot

Reveal new RFK documents

THE DAILY MAIL ONLINE

Lined pages with a doodle of the Liberty Bell and a CIA document outlining a Mafia-connected plan to assassinate Fidel Castro for \$150,000 are among thousands of Robert F Kennedy documents made public on Thursday.

The National Archives and Records Administration and the John F Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston released some 2,700 pages of documents Kennedy compiled as attorney general from 1961 to 1964, offering a glimpse into Cold War decision-making.

Though the documents, released just shy of the 50th anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis, don't rewrite Cold War history, they do provide insight into the personal thoughts of the era's key figures, historians say.

Kennedy advised John F Kennedy during the Bay of Pigs invasion and the missile crisis, key moments during his brother's presidency.

His title as attorney general "disguised his real position, which was the closest adviser to the president and the president's confidant and the person the president trusted most,"



John F Kennedy

Fidel Castro

said journalist and historian Michael Dobbs, who blogs for Foreign Policy.

"That's the interesting point of this, that he kind of reflects his brother's thinking."

The seven boxes of newly released material include telegrams, reports, meeting transcripts and handwritten notes by Kennedy, some with doodles and quotes in the margins.

"It gives you a sort of insight into what was on his mind, what he doodled," Dobbs said. "It's interesting from a human perspective."

One CIA document offers a profile of Castro: It calls him intelligent but "not very stable" and "touchy, impatient and rash."

Another outlines plans to assassinate Castro, including a 1964 plan with connections to the Mafia.

The mob and "patriotic Cuban exiles" eventually settled on a payment of \$100,000 for assassinating Castro, \$20,000 for his brother Raul and \$20,000 for revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara, plus \$2,500 for expenses.

The materials are available online and at the Boston library. Some are still classified and aren't available.

The documents' release is important to historians, said University of Maine history professor Nathan Godfried.

## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 20

irrigation projects which may harm riparian states.

The feasibility studies before granting such funds should be made with fore-sights, he added.

The two-day meeting, which began on Saturday, was attended by experts from South Asian coun-tries.

The speakers said the environment flow approach of managing and sharing the Teesta water could save the dying river and resolve the decades-long disagreement between Bangladesh and India.

Environmental flows can be described as the quality and quantity of flows required for maintaining sound health of a water body.

Suresh Babu SV, director of River Basins and Water Policy WWF-India, pre-sented a paper titled "E-flows: A tool for regional cooperation".

He said cooperation should be the driving principle of sharing the trans-boundary waters.

Sagar Prasad, deputy country director of Asia Foundation in Nepal, pre-sented a paper on the role of civil society on the decision making process for common rivers.

He said civil society could first build trust among citizens as they can function without the constraints of foreign policy mandates.

Dr MA Matin, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, chaired the last session of the day.

Manjurul Kamal, 60, Md Babu Mia, 30, and Sujon alias, 27, at another factory at West Rasulpur in Kamrangirchar.

The team seized materials include three laptops, a desktop computer, a computer monitor, six printers, packets of ink and watermarks of Bangladesh Bank.

Mashirul Rahman, DB additional deputy commissioner (North), said the police in the first drive raided a factory in Demra's Amin