

NEWS IN  
brief

## No limits on settler issue: Israel's PM

AP, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is vowing to continue building in east Jerusalem, over the objection of Palestinians who claim the territory as capital of their hoped-for state.

Netanyahu spoke yesterday after the European Union's foreign policy chief criticised plans to build 800 new apartments and a military



Netanyahu

## Ex-US presidential candidate dies

AFP, Washington

Former US senator George McGovern, a liberal icon who vowed to end the Vietnam War but lost a landslide presidential election to Richard Nixon in 1972, died early yesterday at the age of 90.

The three-term senator was widely credited with bringing women, youth and minorities into the Democratic Party in a broad-based White House campaign that foundered after revelations of his running mate's battle with mental illness.

According to the family, funeral services will be held in Sioux Falls but no exact date was

## Fatah claims victory in West Bank poll

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party was claiming victory yesterday ahead of the results of local elections in the West Bank, in the first such vote since 2006.

Although preliminary results were due to be released at 1600 GMT, Fatah officials and supporters were openly jubilant after 12 hours of voting in a ballot which was boycotted by the rival Hamas movement which rules Gaza.

The Central Elections Commission put turnout at 54.8 percent, with chairman Hanna Nasser

## Egypt freezes assets of ex-PM

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's justice ministry yesterday ordered the freezing of assets of Mubarak-era premier Ahmed Shafiq, who faces trial for alleged corruption, state media reported.

The order, which comes from the ministry's Illicit Gains Authority, also applies to Shafiq's three daughters.

Shafiq -- the last prime minister to serve under toppled president Hosni Mubarak -- narrowly lost a June presidential election to Islamist

## Churchill's car sold at 129,000

PTI, London

A Land Rover built for former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on his 80th birthday has sold for a whopping 129,000 pounds at an auction in UK.

The vehicle, which had been modified to enable him to be chauffeur-driven around his Chartwell estate in Kent, was expected to fetch up to 60,000 pounds at an auction in Cambridgeshire, the BBC News reported.

The Land Rover sold for 129,000 pounds -

## US Navy enters South China sea

Move risks drawing Beijing's ire amid tensions with neighbours

GUARDIAN ONLINE

A US aircraft carrier group cruised through the disputed South China Sea on Saturday in a show of American power in waters that are fast becoming a focal point of Washington's strategic rivalry with Beijing.

Vietnamese security and government officials were flown onto the nuclear-powered USS George Washington ship, underlining the burgeoning military relationship between the former enemies.

A small number of journalists were also invited to witness the display of maritime might in the oil-rich waters, which are home to islands disputed between China and the other smaller Asian nations facing the sea.

The visit will likely reassure Vietnam and the Philippines of American support but could annoy China, whose growing economic and naval strength is leading to a greater assertiveness in pressing its claims there.

The United States is building closer economic and military alliances with Vietnam and other nations in the region as part of a "pivot" away from the Middle East to Asia, a shift in large part meant to counter rising Chinese influence.



The nuclear-powered USS George Washington aircraft carrier cruising the disputed South China Sea.

PHOTO: AFP

The mission came a day after Beijing staged military exercises near islands in the nearby East China Sea it disputes with US ally Japan. Those tensions have flared in recent days.

China claims nearly all of the South China Sea, where the US says it has a national interest in ensuring freedom of navigation in an area crossed by vital shipping lanes.

Vietnam, the Philippines and several other Asian nations also claim parts of the sea.

The disputes attracted little international interest until the late 1990s, when surveys indicated possible large oil reserves.

## Britain acted like empire over Assange

Says Ecuador ambassador

AFP, London

Britain behaved like it was still an empire in its threat to raid Ecuador's embassy and arrest WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, the Ecuadoran ambassador to London said in an interview broadcast yesterday.

Ana Alban told BBC radio that the threat, made in August just before Ecuador granted asylum to Australian-born Assange, was "the biggest mistake" committed by Britain since she became ambassador.

"They were trying to show this little country that the British are still an empire and we should learn to be good boys during our stay here," said Alban.

Former computer hacker Assange, 41, walked into the London embassy on June 19 claiming asylum in a bid to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he faces questioning over alleged rape and sexual assault.

## Obama to launch swing state blitz

Polls show rivals in tight race

REUTERS, Washington

Facing a cliff-hanger re-election attempt, President Barack Obama will launch a round-the-clock, two-day campaign blitz through six battleground states next week to try to fend off the challenge from Republican Mitt Romney.

Polls show Obama's strong debate performance this week gained him little or no ground against the former Massachusetts governor with just over two weeks until the November 6 election.

The pair are essentially tied in most surveys as Americans remain split between giving Obama more time to fix the economy or choosing a former business executive who argues he knows best how to create jobs.

Obama will campaign in Iowa on Wednesday, then hit Colorado, Nevada, Florida and Virginia, cast his ballot early in his home town of Chicago, then stop in Ohio to end the tour.

"As the President criss-crosses the nation, he will spend time on Air Force One calling undecided voters, rallying National Team Leaders and volunteers and continuously engaging with Americans," his campaign said in a statement.

Obama usually comes back to Washington after one-day campaign trips, or stays in hotels on longer visits, but on this tour he will overnight on the presidential jet between Las Vegas and Tampa to save time for campaign appearances.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll on Saturday showed him with a razor-thin lead, 46 percent to 45 percent. The margin has narrowed from Friday when he had a three-point lead, which showed the limits of any bounce the Democrat might have received from the second debate in Hempstead, New York, last Tuesday.



## Brahimi meets Assad, calls for peace

Blast hits Damascus; protest, clashes in Lebanon

AFP, Damascus

Peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi yesterday appealed to both sides in Syria's conflict to cease fire for a Muslim holiday this week after meeting President Bashar al-Assad, even as a deadly blast rocked Damascus.

Meanwhile, Lebanese police used tear gas yesterday to repel demonstrators trying to storm the Serail, the headquarters of Prime Minister Najib Mikati, amid calls for him to resign, an AFP reporter witnessed.

The clashes broke out following the funeral nearby of slain police intelligence chief General Wissam al-Hassan, an opponent of the Syrian regime.

During funeral orations, angry former premier Fuad Siniora called on Prime Minister Mikati to resign, adding his voice to many others since Hassan was killed in a car bombing on Friday.

The opposition has widely accused Syrian President Bashar al-Assad of being behind the attack, which killed two other people and wounded 126.

In Damascus, a bomb exploded outside a police station in a Christian quarter of the Old City, killing 13 people and wounding many others, officials and state media said.

The bombing came as UN-Arab League envoy Brahimi, after holding talks with

Assad, called for "unilateral" ceasefires by the regime and the rebels for the Eid al-Adha holidays that starts on Friday.

"I appeal to everyone to take a unilateral decision to cease hostilities on the occasion of Eid al-Adha and that this truce be respected from today or tomorrow," he said.

The UN-Arab League envoy told reporters that the ceasefire call was his "personal initiative, not a blueprint for peace."

Brahimi added he had contacted political opposition leaders inside and outside

Syria and armed groups in the country. "We found them to be very favourable" to the idea of a truce, he said, in a cautious note of optimism.

Assad, in the meeting with Brahimi, said he was "open to all sincere efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis on the basis of a rejection of any foreign interference," state news agency SANA reported.

On the ground, clashes were reported yesterday in several parts of Syria, including Damascus province and the northern city of Aleppo, a key battleground for the past three months.

The Britain-based Observatory said 130 people died in violence across the country yesterday, adding to its estimated toll of more than 34,000 killed since March 2011.



Brahimi



Assad

## Human eggs on sale in China

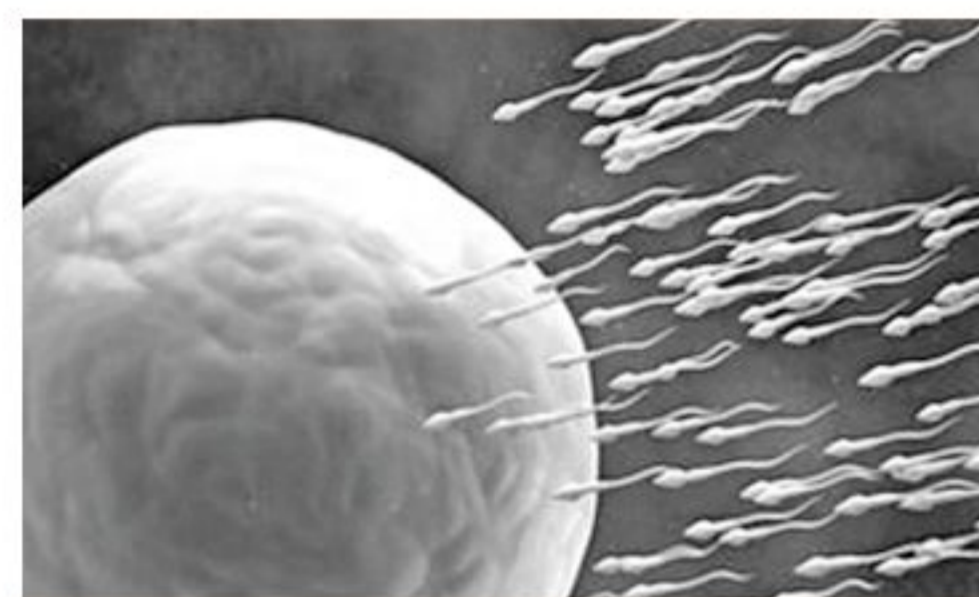
TNN, Beijing

Health authorities in southern Chinese city of Shenzhen have exposed a scandal involving illegal collection and sale of human eggs taken from young girls. Each transfer of human egg fetched \$32,520.

Unlicensed doctors collected the eggs and fertilized them before transplanting them into women with fertility problems. Their husbands were encouraged to give their sperm to fertilize them.

The collection center has now been closed down. Health authorities said egg donors had to go through surgery to stimulate their ovulation and enable doctors to collect eggs. "This is a dangerous procedure that can endanger the health of the girls," said an official.

Collection and sale of female eggs is



illegal in China.

The collection center was housed in an abandoned nursing home, which had been divided into several sections to provide different facilities, according to Southern Metropolis Daily.

Young women selling their eggs earned 10% to 25% of the amount paid by the buyers of the eggs.

Egg-seeking customers specified the kind of donors they preferred.

## Pope names first Native American saint

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Benedict XVI named seven new saints yesterday, including the first Native American, praising their "heroic courage" as the Catholic Church seeks to counter a rising tide of secularism in the West.

Kateri Tekakwitha, known as "Lily of the Mohawks", who for centuries has been a symbol of hope for the long-oppressed American Indians, was canonised in a lavish ceremony in St Peter's Square that followed her beatification in 1980 by the late pope John Paul II.

Pope Benedict delivered a homily praising all seven new saints, saying they "lived their lives in total consecration to God and in generous service to their brothers".

About 80,000 faithful from numerous countries, including American Indians, gathered on the square outside St. Peter's Basilica, which was decked with portraits of those being canonised.

The other new saints include a French missionary to Madagascar, a young Philippine missionary who died at the age of 17, a German migrant to the United States who took care of lepers and a Spanish nun who campaigned for women's rights.

Vatican watchers said the choice of the saints was linked to the Roman Catholic Church's efforts to highlight the need for a "new evangelisation" as church pews empty in Europe and the United States.

The canonisations were announced during a synod of 262 bishops from around the world.

Tekakwitha, who was born in 1656 to an Algonquin mother and a Mohawk father, was converted by Jesuit missionaries as a child. After being left scarred and partially



A faithful, holding a painting representing Kateri Tekakwitha, attends a special mass in St Peter's square at the Vatican City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

blind from smallpox and being orphaned, she earned a following for her deep spiritualism before dying at just 24.

Tradition holds that her scars vanished at the time of her death -- considered a miracle that paved the way for her beatification in 1943. Sainthood was assured when the pope certified a second miracle last year, the recovery of an 11-year-old Native American boy from flesh-eating bacteria after his parents prayed for divine intervention through Tekakwitha in 2006.

For a many non-Catholic American Indians, her canonisation is seen as a gesture of reconciliation by the Church for past injustices.

## Telecoms missing

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clusters of access, use and skills, of some 155 countries -- but not Bangladesh.

The index is a standard tool that governments, operators, development agencies, researchers and others use to measure the digital divide and compare ICT performance within and across countries.

The index is published every two years, with the studies illustrating the level of ICT development made by the countries since the last publication.

"Exclusion from the list would affect the promising outsourcing business of Bangladesh," said Mahboob Zaman, a former president of Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services.

He said the developed countries' businesses consider their outsourcing destinations after getting the ICT standard or ranking of developing countries.

"It is nothing but a political and bureaucratic negligence," said an analyst

who preferred not to be named.

According to the telecommunications ministry, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) is responsible for sending in the information to the UN body.

And as per a BTRC official, the data was sent to the UN body -- but it did not meet the deadline.

"This is a great pity because the IDI is one way of assessing whether any progress has been made through the 'digital Bangladesh' initiative," said Rohan Samarajiva, chairman and chief executive of the Colombo-based telecom think-tank LIRNEasia.

Telecom analyst Abu Saeed Khan said, "The authorities have miserably failed by not meeting the deadline for feeding ITU the very basic telecom indicators. As a result, Bangladesh has been wiped out of the global telecoms map."

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