

NEWS IN

brief

Obama to visit Myanmar on Nov 19

AFP, Yangon

Newly re-elected US President Barack Obama will visit Yangon later this month, a Myanmar government official said yesterday, in the latest sign of Washington's support for reforms there.

Obama is also expected to travel to Phnom Penh to attend the East Asia summit and regional partners including China and Russia.

Huge quake strikes Guatemala coast

AFP, Guatemala City

A strong 7.4 magnitude quake struck off the Pacific coast of Guatemala, Mexico and El Salvador yesterday, prompting panicked evacuations, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

The Mexican Seismological Service said seven aftershocks followed the quake, which it put at a magnitude of 7.3.

Canada, India clinch nuke deal

AFP, New Delhi

Canada and India on Tuesday clinched a deal opening the door to Canadian exports of uranium and other nuclear supplies to the energy-hungry South Asian nation for the first time in nearly four decades.

The announcement that will allow Canadian uranium to be used to power Indian reactors ends close to 40 years of awkward relations after India used Canadian nuclear technology to build its first atomic bomb.

Libya's ex-leader faces grilling

AFP, Benghazi

A Libyan military court yesterday ordered prosecutors to interrogate former transitional leader Mustafa Abdel Jalil over the murder of a general who had commanded rebel forces last year.

The court in the eastern city of Benghazi ordered that the ex-chairman of the National Transitional Council be questioned over the killing of General Abdel Fatah Yunes.

Ghana mall collapse kills 3

AFP, Accra

A six-storey shopping mall collapsed in the Ghanaian capital Accra yesterday, killing at least three people, but a desperate rescue operation had so far pulled out 39 survivors.

Police said 50 employees worked in the building, but all were not believed there before the collapse, which occurred ahead of opening time yesterday morning.



1. US President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle and daughters Sasha and Malia wave to supporters on election night in Chicago on Tuesday. 2. Democratic supporters celebrate in front of the White House after Obama's re-election and 3. Supporters of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney react to results on election night. Obama was re-elected late Tuesday making history when he won a second term in the White House defeating Romney.

MYANMAR ETHNIC CONFLICT

Govt mulling resettlement as int'l pressure grows

AGENCIES

Amid international pressure, Myanmar yesterday said it is working to resettle tens of thousands of people displaced by communal bloodshed in western Rakhine state as soon as possible, officials said Tuesday.

"The priority of the government for the present moment is to resettle and rehabilitate those victims who are homeless," Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin told AFP on the sidelines of an Asia-Europe summit in Laos.

"The government is handling with great care so that this kind of violence cannot reoccur again," he added.

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard and British Foreign Secretary William Hague raised the issue separately in meetings with Myanmar President Thein Sein on the sidelines of a major Asia-Europe summit in Laos.

"At a time of so much progress on human rights we would also look for progress on the treatment of ethnic minorities," Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard told reporters in Vientiane afterwards.

Earlier on Monday, Indonesia's foreign minister said the sectarian violence is "an issue of concern" for the whole of Southeast Asia.

More than 100,000 people have been displaced and about 180 killed since clashes between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims erupted in June, followed by another outbreak of violence in October.

Myanmar's 800,000 Rohingya are seen by the government and many in the country as illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh. They are described by the UN as among the world's most persecuted minorities.

World's first solar-powered nation

AFP, Wellington

The remote Pacific islands of Tokelau have become the first territory in the world to generate their electricity entirely from solar energy, in a project hailed as an environmental milestone.

Before the solar power grid was completed, the New Zealand-administered grouping of three coral atolls, with a population of just 1,500, relied on diesel generators for electricity.

Bassett-Smith, from New Zealand firm PowerSmart Solar, said the change would allow Tokelau to switch money from fuel purchases to social welfare projects.

Syria rebels step up attacks

AFP, Damascus

Syrian rebels shelled a key area of Damascus home to President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite minority, embassies and government buildings yesterday, as they stepped up attacks on his power base.

Britain, meanwhile, said it was to open talks with the rebels in a bid to help end the violence, as the main opposition Syrian National Council said it hoped resolving the conflict would top re-elected US President Barack Obama's agenda.

British PM David Cameron himself toured a desert refugee camp for Syrians in northern Jordan yesterday.

UN leader Ban Ki-moon urged President Barack Obama to act quickly on ending the war in Syria and reviving the Middle East peace process as he congratulated the US leader on his re-election.

The shelling of the mainly Alawite Mazzeh 86 district came a day after a car bomb hit another Alawite area in the suburb of Qudsaya, as rebels increasingly target Assad's supporters in the minority, an offshoot of Shia Islam.

Meanwhile, Syria's main umbrella opposition group, under US pressure to broaden its representation and urged by the Arab League to present a united front, began voting in a new leadership in Qatar yesterday.

Reality bites for Netanyahu who backed Romney

THE INDEPENDENT

Israeli President Shimon Peres and other moderate leaders hailed Obama's re-election but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu awoke to a double shock.

"This is probably not a very good morning for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu," said Interior Minister Eli Yishai, a major coalition partner.

After several abrasive encounters with President Barack Obama, Netanyahu and his Likud Party had thrown their support solidly behind Mitt Romney in what opposition leader Shaul Mofaz described as "a dangerous intervention in the United States election."

Netanyahu must hope that Obama will not bear any grudges as Israel tries to convince the US to take urgent action to halt Iran's nuclear programme, including a possible military strike.

Obama's victory may also have re-written script for Israel's own poll on January 22.

Netanyahu moved swiftly yesterday to try and repair some of the damage, sending urgent messages to colleagues to keep quiet. He failed. World Likud Chairman Danny Danon said Israel "will not surrender" to Obama and his "ill-advised policies."

Commentators in Yisrael Hayom, the free daily bankrolled by Sheldon Adelson, the casino magnate who finances both Netanyahu and Romney, warned of impending doom. "Obama's re-election means Olmert will run against Netanyahu and a 'grand bargain' with Iran can be made at our expense," wrote one columnist.

Palestinians were also divided. President Mahmoud Abbas welcomed Obama's re-election, while Hamas leaders urged him to abandon his pro-Israel bias.

Hina Rabbani

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the first of its kind since the incumbent government came to power four years ago.

Bilateral engagement of the two countries in the last four years has been limited to the visits of Bangladesh's education and commerce ministers to Islamabad.

Hina Rabbani's visit would present an opportunity to discuss unresolved issues between the two countries, officials said.

Bangladesh had long been demanding repatriation of stranded Pakistanis, sharing of wealth of the undivided Pakistan and unconditional apology from Pakistan for the genocide during the Liberation War in 1971.

Meanwhile, sources at the foreign ministry said there is very little chance of Sheikh Hasina visiting Pakistan.

Instead, she might send Dipu Moni as her representative, though the prime minister's attendance would be important as she played a significant role in D-8 and led it for two years, from 1999 to 2000.

The D-8 is an organisation of eight Muslim countries-- Bangladesh, Iran, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, Nigeria and Pakistan.

Dhaka hosted the D-8 Summit in March, 1999.

More arrests over Jamaat rampage

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Earlier on Monday and Tuesday, a total of 327 Jamaat-Shibir men were picked up in different districts for the same offences.

The clashes broke out when the Jamaat-Shibir activists took to the streets as part of their nine-day programme demanding release of their nine top leaders now being tried for committing crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War.

The brawls left at least 384 people, including 140 policemen, injured. Some activists of the Islamist party looted a rifle in Rajshahi and a shotgun in Noakhali from police and set afire many vehicles and shops and damaged dozens of others.

In the capital, 27 Jamaat-Shibir men were arrested by the Rapid Action Battalion-3 (Rab) and 19 by Ramna police.

Court sources said 35 out of the 46 arrestees were yesterday placed on three-day remand each in connection with violence and vandalism at Malibagh on Tuesday. The rest were sent to jail.

Besides, 19 out of the 35 detainees were placed on four-day remand each on charges of attacking policemen and obstructing them in their duties.

Talking to The Daily Star, Lt Col MM Anisur Rahman, commanding officer of Rab-3, said they arrested 16 Jamaat-Shibir men at Meherbagh while they were in a meeting to devise plans for carrying out subversive activities.

The elite force also picked up 11 more Jamaat activists from different parts of the city.

Ramna police said they arrested 19 Jamaat-Shibir men from Malibagh and its adjacent areas for attacking police and creating anarchy on city streets on Monday and Tuesday.

In Kushtia, police arrested 42 Jamaat-Shibir men from different parts of the district, reports our correspondent.

Law enforcers said they made the arrests following the filing of two cases against 400 Jamaat-Shibir men over Sunday's attacks on police, said Zoynal Abedin, additional police superintendent in Kushtia.

Rajshahi police arrested 14 Jamaat men from different areas in the district for Monday's attacks on cops that left 30 policemen injured, adds our Rajshahi correspondent.

Jamaat-Shibir men attacked two policemen, snatched a rifle from them and hit them with the rifle in the city's Shaheb Bazar on Monday evening.

Police in Chittagong detained eight activists of

Islami Chhatra Shibir, an associated body of Jamaat, from different areas of the port city on charges of vandalism and attacks on police.

A court in Feni yesterday sent 13 Jamaat-Shibir men to jail after they surrendered before it in connection with a case filed for attacking policemen on Tuesday, reports our correspondent.

Police picked up 10 more Jamaat activists in the district.

A correspondent from Chandpur adds: Police arrested Chandpur town Jamaat unit chief Shahjahan Mia and 10 others on charge of plotting subversive activities.

In Narayanganj, police detained Jamaat leader Nazrul Islam from Fatullah area in connection with attacking police on Tuesday.

mist, is set to succeed Wen Jiabao as prime minister.

"We expect the new leadership to be more international-oriented. They'll work for attracting more foreign investments in China and facilitate more Chinese investments abroad as well," Director General of the Shanghai Municipal Government's Financial Service Office Fang Xing-Hai told The Daily Star.

There will be more reforms this time than what the country witnessed back in 1978, said Xing-Hai, a former World Bank official.

Premier Wen Jiabao informed the summit that China's GDP grew by 7.7 percent in nine months to the end of September with over 10 million jobs created.

According to a CPC statement released on Monday, the president told some members of the country's non-communist parties in a recent consultation that China was facing unprecedented opportunities as well as challenges.

"We must make use of these opportunities and cope with the challenges rigorously and effectively," the statement quoted the president as saying to the non-communist leaders, whose views had also been taken for consideration at the 18th congress.

Alongside the reform agenda and selection of new leadership, the CPC has also another prime job in hand, which is to clean up the party.

The recent expulsion of Bo Xilai from the Politburo for corruption is just an example to CPC having zero-tolerance to graft. Besides, over 660,000 party members have been punished for disciplinary violations since 2007.

A recent survey by China's National Bureau of Statistics shows that 72.7 percent of people polled have expressed satisfaction over the anti-graft measures taken in 2011.

Vice Minister Ai Ping told foreign journalists that no matter how high a position a leader held one could not get away with corruption.

"We'll further educate our cadres (of CPC) and develop reforms in a fashion that check and balance is established in power. We'll limit the monopoly of power."