

Assad defiant as rebels elect new leadership

Bratrain, Turkey up ante against Syria on multiple front

STAR DESK

The main opposition Syrian National Council (SNC) has elected a new leadership as President Bashar al-Assad scotched any suggestion he might flee Syria vowing he would "live and die" in his country.

"I am not a puppet. I was not made by the West to go to the West or to any other country," Assad said in English in an interview with Russian state-backed Russia Today (RT) television. "I am Syrian, I was made in Syria, I have to live in Syria and die in Syria," he said, according to transcripts posted on RT's website.

In Qatar, SNC said a president of the opposition coalition would be chosen today, after the 40-member general secretariat was elected overnight at a

SYRIA CIVIL WAR



meeting in the Qatari capital.

On the diplomatic front, Turkey and Britain upped the ante against the embattled regime.

Britain is to review the EU arms embargo on Syria as part of a whole-

sale change in strategy in the wake of Barack Obama's re-election that could lead to the eventual arming of the rebel forces fighting to overthrow Bashar al-Assad.

As David Cameron said he would press Obama to make Syria a priority.

In another indication of regional tensions, Turkey confirmed that it is to make an official request to Nato to station Patriot missiles along its border with Syria.

The moves by Britain and Turkey both seemed to anticipate a bolder approach from Obama to end the conflict that has claimed an estimated 35,000 lives since the bloodiest of the Arab spring uprisings erupted in March 2011. On average 100 to 150 people now die every day.

China should become 'maritime power': Hu



AFP, Beijing

China yesterday stressed its intention to become a "maritime power" in line with its economic clout, as US President Barack Obama prepares to return to Asia amid regional anxiety at Beijing's rise.

Against a backdrop of simmering territorial disputes with its neighbours, President Hu Jintao indicated China would continue to assert its disputed claims to maritime territories as he addressed the ruling Communist Party's congress.

"We should enhance our capacity for exploiting marine resources, resolutely safeguard China's maritime rights and interests, and build China into a maritime power," Hu said in his speech to more than 2,200 delegates in Beijing.

The party congress meets every five years. This year's gathering will end with confirmation of a new slate of party and national leaders for the next decade, widely expected to be headed by current Vice President Xi Jinping.

His comments were likely to fuel alarm among China's neighbours, some of whom have watched warily as Beijing builds up its military amid offshore disputes.

Hu said China was committed to a peaceful foreign policy but must continue a military build-up that has seen huge sums poured into developing fighting capacities. He called for China in particular to step up the military's technological abilities, saying its most important task was to be able to "win a local war in an information age".

His comments become more significant amid a growing presence of US military presence in Asia.

Race to replace Hillary

John Kerry, Susan Rice frontrunners

STAR DESK

Hillary Rodham Clinton's departure from the state department opens up a vacancy for the US cabinet's highest-ranking post, and the competition has been quiet but intense.

Hillary has long said she would step down at the end of Obama's first term. Recently, she has said she will be willing to stay on board -- perhaps for a couple of months -- until a replacement is confirmed.

In the race to be the new US secretary of state, two frontrunners are Senator John Kerry and the ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, with the lead apparently swapping hands more than once if Washington conventional wisdom is to be believed, British daily The Guardian reported.

Rice, a veteran diplomat and foreign policy scholar, was widely seen as the favourite for much of the year, but was seen to stumble in the final stretch over the attack in September on the US consulate in Benghazi in which the ambassador was among those killed.

She denied the attack had been premeditated, a position later disowned by US intelligence, which has since portrayed it as a terrorist assault. Rice became



John Kerry

Susan Rice

the target of cover-up allegations from the Romney camp, who claimed the government had tried to hide the true nature of the incident to disguise a security lapse. Hillary and Kerry came to her defence and the White House insisted she had simply been expressing the best-known facts at the time, but the incident would be likely to haunt her at Senate confirmation hearings if she got the job.

Kerry comes with his own pros and cons. As chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee and former presidential candidate, he has good credentials of his own, and his role as Mitt Romney's stand-in at Obama's debate rehearsals gave him extensive face-time with the president during the last weeks of the campaign.

Nevertheless, the wafer-thin Democratic Senate majority may mean Obama cannot move him. The requirement for Kerry to resign his Massachusetts Senate seat to take a cabinet post would trigger a special election to replace him.

Other options include the national security adviser, Thomas Donilon, and William Burns, a deputy secretary of state and a former ambassador to Moscow.

ROHINGYA-RAKHINE VIOLENCE

Suu Kyi calls for more troops to end unrest

AFP, Yangon

Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has urged the government to send more troops to western Myanmar to restore peace to a region convulsed by communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims.

At least 180 people were killed and 110,000 displaced since June in the ethnically volatile Rakhine state.

"Everyone is responsible for respecting human rights, without discriminating between ethnicity and religion," she said in a statement on Wednesday.

Suu Kyi, who has been criticised for failing specifically to condemn the treatment of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, said more security forces must be sent to bring "peace, stability and the rule of law" to Rakhine.

The statement followed a meeting of the parliamentary committee on the Rule of Law and Stability, which Suu Kyi chairs. It did not mention the Rohingya by name but it directly addressed the "concerns" of ethnic Rakhine.

A 1982 law enshrines the citizenship of Myanmar's officially-recognised ethnic groups but the Rohingya were excluded, despite their claims to have met the criteria by having ancestors in the country some 160 years before.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Obama hints at new initiatives after Sandy

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama has hinted he will make another push to fight climate change after cruising to a new term in shadow of a superstorm Sandy which killed more than 100 people just days ahead of the Election Day.

Obama, whose hopes for a law restricting carbon emissions blamed for rising temperatures died in the Senate during his first term, alluded to climate change at his victory rally after the issue's near absence during the campaign.

"We want our children to live in an America that isn't burdened by debt, that isn't weakened by inequality, that isn't threatened by the destructive power of a warming planet," Obama told cheering supporters in Chicago.

The election means that Obama will be able to keep in place his main measures against climate change. He has tightened vehicle emission standards and empowered the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate greenhouse gases from power plants.

and assured them of all-out government support to this end.

Hasina said the government amended the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act and formulated the ICT policy to materialise the huge potential of various IT services.

She also suggested the engineers to utilise the facilities provided by the government.

Prof Habibur Rahman, president of Bangabandhu Prokoushali Parishad, and its general secretary Nuruzzaman also spoke on the occasion.

Nahar, director general of BMET, said they would solicit applications from the workers online at the directive of the government.

The workers will be selected maintaining district quotas based on the requirements of the recruiters, she added. All financial transactions would be made through banks so that no scope for cheating arises.

Though the government had earlier said the recruiting company would bear the airfares, the jobseekers would have to bear it now, she added.

NEWS IN brief

Strong Guatemala quake kills 48

AFP, San Marcos, Guatemala

A 7.4-magnitude earthquake rocked southwestern Guatemala on Wednesday, killing 48 people and injuring another 150 while more were missing as homes crumbled.

The earthquake also rattled nerves in neighboring Mexico and El Salvador, sparking a tsunami alert on the Salvadoran coast and evacuations from offices, homes and schools as far north as Mexico City.

New storm hits NY, New Jersey

AP, New York

Coastal residents of New York and New Jersey faced new warnings to evacuate their homes and airlines canceled hundreds of flights as a new storm arrived Wednesday, only a week after Superstorm Sandy left dozens dead and millions without power.

Nearly 60,000 households who lost power because of Sandy lost it all over again as a result of

6 Tibetans set themselves alight

AFP, Dharamshala

Six Tibetans set themselves on fire in China in an escalating wave of protests as the country's leaders gathered for a once-a-decade power transition, exile leaders said yesterday. Two of them died.

A total of 69 Tibetans have set themselves on fire since February 2009, of which 54 have died, according to the government in exile.

The Tibetan government is hoping that the new Chinese leadership under Xi Jinping would see their more compassionately like his father, Xi Zhongxun, who had a liberal view on the issue.

Saudi nets \$16.5b from hajj pilgrims

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia raised \$16.5 billion from Muslim pilgrimages this year to Mecca and Medina in the west of the kingdom, a Saudi newspaper reported yesterday.

Al-Hayat said a total of 12 million pilgrims including 1.7 million from abroad spent 62 billion riyals (\$16.5 billion) during the hajj this year, a rise of 10 percent over 2011.

Greek MPs approve austerity deal

AFP, Athens

Greek lawmakers on Wednesday approved huge cutbacks creditors had demanded to unlock aid needed to save the country from bankruptcy despite fierce political and popular opposition to more belt-tightening.

The bill for budgets cuts amounting to \$23.6 billion won a narrow majority even as thousands of anti-austerity protestors massed around parliament in Athens.

Blast kills 10 Afghan wedding guests

AFP, Kandahar, Afghanistan

A roadside bomb killed 10 civilians, including women and a child, heading for a wedding party in southern Afghanistan yesterday, officials said.

Seven children were wounded in the blast, which police blamed on Taliban insurgents.

Foil bid to save war criminals

FROM PAGE 1

War was patronised by those who had killed Bangabandhu on August 15, 1975.

She mentioned that a particular person of the defeated force also got Bangladesh passport after he had been awarded Bangladesh citizenship.

"So, it is normal that someone will be there to save the war criminals who had committed crimes against humanity during the Liberation War," she told her audience.

Listing various development works carried out by the government, the premier said her government did not want to roam

across the world with the bag of beggars.

"It was the policy of BNP and the rulers who came to power after 1975. BNP wants to make Bangladesh a food-deficit country so that they can beg alms from foreign countries," she said.

Emphasising the need to reduce dependency on donors, Hasina said, "If we become so much dependent on donors, they will impose conditions, they will take away the lion's share of their money in the name of consultancy fees."

In response to the criticism of a section of people about power generation through quick rental sys-

tem, the premier said this type of people never want to feel the ground reality.

"That is why I asked the people concerned to go for load-shedding for at least an hour twice a day in Dhaka...I think this is necessary," she told the audience at the conference organised by Bangabandhu Prokoushali Parishad.

Hasina called upon the engineers to play an active role in keeping up the momentum of development activities through proper and sustainable use of the limited resources.

She mentioned that 85 percent of the country's infrastructure develop-

ment and production activities greatly depend on the efficiency of engineers.

The premier urged the engineers to be more active in implementing the service-oriented works like exploration of gas and coal, generation and distribution of electricity through their efficiency and sincerity.

To combat the adverse impacts of climate change, Hasina underscored the need for innovating sustainable green technology instead of waiting for help from the developed countries.

She told the engineers to innovate local technology,

Malaysia Manpower export

FROM PAGE 1

Malaysia was scheduled to be signed today, but it was deferred as the Malaysian authorities asked Bangladesh to sign two more MoUs on human trafficking prevention and inter-state crimes prevention respectively.

Secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan added.

"We hope workers' recruitment in Malaysia will start early next year as the government has agreed to sign all the MoUs once those are approved by the home ministry," the secretary told The Daily Star.

He said a delegation

would go to Kuala Lumpur to sign the MoUs on November 26. Then the government might begin selection procedure for workers' recruitment from December.

The cabinet last month approved a proposal to sign an MoU on employment of workers with Malaysia. Under that MoU the cost will be maximum Tk 40,000 to for a jobseeker to get a job in Malaysia.

The government held detailed talks with Malaysian Human Resources Minister Dr S Subramaniam in Dhaka in

September this year for the recruitment under state arrangements.

Once started, the recruitment will end a nearly four-year Malaysian ban issued in 2009 due to middlemen's irregularities in sending workers to that country.

The government favours state arrangements to put an end to the middlemen's meddling in this regard.

According to the government, five lakh workers would be sent to Malaysia in next five years under state arrangements with 50,000 workers flying to

Malaysia every six months.

The government will prepare a database of potential workers so that it could train them and provide them with orientation on Malaysian laws, culture and language, added the secretary.

The Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET), Dhaka's regulatory authority for overseas labour affairs, will manage the entire recruitment process aimed at checking malpractices rampant in the sector.

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