



1. A Hamas security member inspects the destroyed Hamas headquarter in Gaza City. 2. Israeli soldiers take position on Israel's border with the Gaza Strip and 3. Smoke billowing from a site in Gaza following an Israeli air strike yesterday. Israeli called up thousands more reservists for a possible ground war in Gaza strip raising the tension of a regional war.



PHOTO: AFP

## Ban to visit Gaza on truce mission

Abbas says UN state bid on

AFP, United Nations

UN leader Ban Ki-moon will visit the Gaza war region within days to push for a truce between Israel and Hamas as their conflict veers toward all-out war, officials said Friday.

UN spokesman Martin Nesirky said Ban will go to the region "shortly" to "push for an end to violence" and Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said the UN secretary general would visit the Palestinian territories in "two or three days."

Ban will be in Jerusalem on Tuesday or Wednesday, according to UN Diplomats and Israeli media.

"Ban went to the region during the last Israeli offensive against Gaza in 2009 and worked hard to end that conflict. He is looking to produce a truce and ceasefire this time as well," said one senior UN diplomat.

Ban has already spoken to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to urge restraint, while also strongly condemning the rocket attacks from Gaza that Israel blames for its air strikes and its military buildup around the besieged Palestinian territory.

He said Ban was speaking to the leaders of Middle East nations and the major powers "as part of his efforts to call for restraint and push for an end to violence. As part of those efforts, he plans to visit the region shortly."

## 49 killed in Egypt school bus tragedy

AFP, Cairo

Dozens of nursery school children were among 49 people killed on Saturday when a train ploughed into their bus in central Egypt, officials said, prompting angry protests and resignations.

"There are now 49 deaths and 18 injuries," with almost all of the casualties children, Assiut provincial governor Yehya Keshk told state television.

The bus taking 60 children aged between four and six on a school trip organised by their nursery was struck on a railway crossing in Manfalut, 356 kilometres south of Cairo, police said.

The worker manning the level crossing -- which had been left open -- was asleep when the bus tried to cross the tracks, Keshk said. "He has been arrested of course."

Parents of the children were staging angry demonstrations near the scene of the horrific accident, demanding the death penalty for those responsible, police said.

## Ethnic unrest flares in Assam again; 4 killed

AFP, Guwahati

Four people have been shot dead in India's restive northeast in the latest outbreak of ethnic violence which has claimed 10 lives this week, officials said yesterday.

Heavily armed gunmen attacked the village of Joraibari in the western Kokrajhar district late Friday, 230 kilometres from the state of Assam's main city of Guwahati, authorities said.

"Three members of a family and another (distant) relative were shot dead by unidentified gunmen," Biswajit Daimary, a member of parliament and leader of the Bodoland People's Party (BPP), told AFP by telephone.

A young teenager was also critically injured in the shooting. All the victims were Muslims.

The government said there had been a "massive deployment of army, police, and paramilitary troopers" to quell the fighting between indigenous Bodo tribes and Muslim settlers who have been embroiled for years in territorial disputes.

"The situation is tense," Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi told reporters.

An indefinite curfew has been clamped on the Kokrajhar district and soldiers are conducting counter-insurgency operations in troubled areas, police said.

Clashes between the Bodos and the Muslim settlers in July left at least 80 dead and displaced 450,000 people.

## Iran reaches milestone at key nuke plant: IAEA

AFP, Vienna

Iran is on the cusp of being able to triple output of nuclear material that, if further treated, could be used in the core of a bomb, a new UN atomic agency report showed.

Foro, which Iran only told the IAEA about in 2009, began in 2011 to enrich uranium to purities of 20 percent, a process that lies at the heart of the international community's concerns.

Enriched to this level, uranium can be used to produce medical isotopes -- Iran's stated intention -- but when further enriched, a relatively easy process, it can go in a bomb.

If Iran uses the new machinery at Foro to enrich uranium to 20-percent levels production could increase from 15 kilos per month now to around 45 kilos, a source said.

Experts say that around 250 kilos of 20-percent uranium is needed to convert into enough 90-percent material for one nuclear weapon.

However, deciding to "break out" and enrich to 90-percent would quickly be detected by the IAEA, likely sparking military action by Israel and the United States.

## Mamata to bring no-trust motion against Indian govt

IANS, Kolkata

Trinamool Congress chief and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee yesterday said her party will bring a no-confidence motion against the Congress-led "minority" UPA government in the winter session of parliament.

"It is very important for the sake of the country that this government falls and so we have taken a unanimous decision to bring a non-confidence motion against the minority UPA," Mamata said after meeting her party parliamentarians.

## US foreign policy's key focus is on 'jobs diplomacy': Hillary

AFP, Singapore

US foreign policy is being reoriented to promote American economic interests after Washington was tied down by two wars in the past decade, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said yesterday.

"We are shaping our foreign policy to account for both the economics of power and the power of economics," she said in a speech in Singapore ahead of an Asia-Pacific summit in Cambodia to be attended by President Barack Obama.

After a decade attending to "a war in Iraq that is now over and a war in Afghanistan that is winding down," Hillary said the "first and most fundamental task is to update our foreign policy and its priorities for a changing world".

"Our global leadership depends on our economic strength," she said, adding that the new emphasis on "jobs diplomacy" would boost US exports, open up new markets and level the playing field for American firms to compete overseas.



More than 270 US embassies and consulates across the world will operate as advocates for US companies and help achieve the newly reelected Obama's goal of doubling US exports in five years, Hillary said.

Washington is seeking "a rebalancing of the global economy so Americans export more, Asians import more and we avoid financial crises and build middle classes".

Hillary spelled out key initiatives in various regions, including the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership being discussed with Asian countries, efforts to increase the US market presence in Africa and trade pacts with Latin American nations.

Even non-military powers are gaining clout "less because of their size of their armies than because of the growth of their GDP".

"For the first time in modern history, nations are becoming major global powers without also becoming global military powers," she added, citing the example of Singapore, a city-state whose two-way trade with the United States now exceeds \$50 billion.

## Benghazi attack 'was terror strike': Petraeus Defends Rice before lawmakers

GUARDIAN ONLINE

David Petraeus, the former CIA director, told congressional hearings on Friday that he had always known a terrorist group had been involved in an attack in Benghazi that left the US ambassador and three other Americans dead.

According to reports from members of Congress who attended the closed-door hearings, Petraeus said the information had been included in the original set of talking points prepared by the CIA for the Obama administration.

But he said it was removed from the one provided to the UN ambassador, Susan Rice, who used it as the basis for a series of interviews on the weekend after the killings.

Rice is among the contenders to replace Hillary Clinton as US secretary of state.

Rice, in her interviews, had suggested the attacks were largely motivated by a spontaneous demonstration by protesters against a US-produced anti-Muslim film and she put less emphasis on the attack being organised by extremists.

Petraeus, who gave evidence to both the Senate and House intelligence committees, said that references to the group alleged to have been behind the 11 September attack were in the CIA's classified talking points, which were classified, but removed from the unclassified memo relied upon by Rice.



Petraeus Susan Rice

## NY bomb plotter gets life in prison

AFP, New York

A US court sentenced a New York man to life in prison Friday for plotting to turn himself into a suicide bomb in the city's subway as revenge for American attacks in Afghanistan.

Brooklyn federal court sentenced Adis Medunjanin, 34, for his role in the 2009 conspiracy, which he entered into with two other young Muslims who prosecutors say were angered by American foreign policy.

According to prosecutors, Medunjanin, a Bosnia-born whose family fled to the United States during the war with Serbia in the 1990s, and his friends were "within days" from enacting a blood-bath in one of the most serious plots since September 11, 2001.

## SYRIA CIVIL WAR Rebels to move quickly on alternative govt

AFP, Paris

Syria's new opposition coalition yesterday signalled that it intends to move quickly to establish a broad-based alternative government to the regime of President Bashar al-Assad.

After talks with French President Francois Hollande, coalition leader Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib assured the international community that the transitional government will be composed of technocrats rather than politicians, and include representatives of all the war-torn country's ethnic and religious groups.

France, which on Tuesday became the first Western state to recognise the coalition as the sole representative of the Syrian people, is pushing for the rebels to be given greater support, including some arms.

EU foreign ministers are set to discuss the arms embargo at talks in Brussels on Monday.

Hollande also said that France would increase its recognition of the National Coalition by allowing them to appoint an ambassador in Paris.

France, Turkey and the Gulf states have so far granted official recognition to the new Syrian grouping, and British Foreign Secretary William Hague, who met Khatib in London on Friday, said Britain was considering following suit.

More than 39,000 people have died since the uprising against Assad's regime erupted 20 months ago, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

On Friday, 106 people were killed in violence across Syria.

## NEWS IN brief

### 'Gaza unrest won't halt UN bid'

AFP, Ramallah

Israel's bombing campaign in Gaza will not derail a Palestinian bid to seek upgraded membership at the United Nations later this month, president Mahmud Abbas said on Friday.

"What is happening in Gaza is aimed at preventing our request to get the status of non-member state the United Nations, but we will vote on the resolution on November 29," he said.

### US lifts Myanmar import bans

AFP, Washington

Moving to encourage reform in Myanmar ahead of a landmark trip by President Barack Obama, the United States has scrapped a nearly decade-old ban on most imports from the long-isolated nation.

The world's largest economy will open up to products from the country formerly known as Burma with the exception of gems, a sector seen

### Jordanians call for king to go

AFP, Amman

Thousands of protesters made unprecedented calls on Friday for Jordan's King Abdullah II to go, as police blocked them from heading to the royal palace to vent their anger over big fuel price increases.

"Abdullah, reform or leave, you have lost legitimacy," they chanted. "God is greater than injustice."

### Sierra Leone votes in poll

AFP, Freetown

Sierra Leoneans cast their votes yesterday in the country's third poll since the end of a brutal civil war, a high-stakes race which will hand the victorious party stewardship of a lucrative mining boom.

The elections are being closely watched by the international community, which has helped the West African nation rebuild after a devastating 11-year conflict ended a decade ago.

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