

Egypt may collapse

Warns army chief as turmoil drags on; death toll rises to 52

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's military chief yesterday warned that the political crisis sweeping the country could lead to the collapse of the state...

"The continuing conflict between political forces and their differences concerning the management of the country could lead to a collapse of the state and threaten future generations..."

He further warned that the political, economic, social and security problems facing Egypt constitute "a threat to the country's security and stability..."

Sissi's warning comes as medics reported another three people killed in the violence sweeping Egypt, pushing to at least 52 the death toll from five days of clashes.

Two people died in fighting between protesters and security forces in the riot-hit canal city of Port Said, and one was shot dead in Cairo when protesters and police clashed near Tahrir Square...

On Sunday, President Mohamed Morsi imposed a month-long state of emergency and night-time curfews on Port Said, Ismailiya and Suez, the three provinces most affected by the rioting.

But witnesses said thousands of demonstrators flooded the streets of the three Suez Canal cities Monday night in defiance of the curfews.

Opposition groups and disgruntled Egyptians accuse Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists of monopolising power and say the revolution failed to reach its goals of social justice.

The violence first erupted on Thursday. It gained momentum on Friday, when protests marking the second anniversary of the start of the

uprising that toppled long-time president Hosni Mubarak turned into clashes around the country.

On Saturday, violence exploded in Port Said after a court sentenced to death 21 supporters of a local football club for their involvement in a deadly soccer riot last year.

Soon after the verdicts, rioters attacked police stations and the prison where the defendants were being held, sparking clashes with security forces that left 42 people dead at the weekend.

The crisis looks set to deepen after the National Salvation Front, a coalition of mainly liberal and leftist movements, called for countrywide protests on Friday after rejecting an offer from Morsi to hold talks.

The unrest highlights a deep split between Morsi's mainly Islamist allies, and an opposition of leftists, liberals, Christians and Muslims calling for freedoms and the separation of the state from religion.

Plane crash kills 22 in Kazakhstan

REUTERS, Kyzyl Tu

A passenger plane crashed in thick fog near Kazakhstan's commercial capital of Almaty yesterday, killing all 22 people on board...

The Canadian-built Bombardier Challenger CRJ-200 was en route from the city of Kokshetau in northern Kazakhstan to Almaty in the southeast when it crashed near the village of Kyzyl Tu...

"There was no fire, no explosion. The plane just plunged to the earth," Yuri Ilyin, deputy head of the city's emergency department, told Reuters near the scene. Ilyin put the death toll at 22.



This picture shows a baby elephant staying close to a dead pygmy elephant in the Gunung Rara Forest Reserve, some 130 kilometers from Tawau in Malaysia's Sabah state. Ten endangered pygmy elephants have been found dead this month in Malaysian Borneo and are thought to have been poisoned...

PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN brief

Japan PM suggests China summit

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday suggested a summit with China would improve a relationship that has been badly troubled for months.

"A high-level meeting should be held because there is a problem. If necessary, there might be a need to build the... relationship again, starting with a summit meeting," Abe told Nippon Television.

Blast hits Somali PM's office; kills 6

AFP, Mogadishu

At least six people were killed when a suicide bomber blew himself up amongst a group of security officials outside the Somali prime minister's office yesterday, army officials said.

Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon Said was in his office at the time when the attacker struck, officials in his office said, but he was not harmed by the blast.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the blast, but the al-Qaeda linked Shebabb insurgents have conducted a series of guerrilla

US shuts Guantanamo office

AFP, Washington

The State Department has shut down the office of its special envoy for the closure of Guantanamo Bay, a US official said Monday, in a sign of the fading hopes of shuttering the jail.

On his first day in office in January 2009, Obama signed an executive order the prison camp should close, in a bid to fulfill one of his campaign promises.

But his plan was thwarted when some countries were reluctant to accept the return of their nationals and when US lawmakers banned the military from transferring prisoners to the United States for trial or sending them abroad.

Double-memory iPad unveiled

AFP, New York

Apple yesterday unveiled a new iPad with twice the storage capacity as the existing model in an effort to score business with companies that share large amounts of data.

Apple's new iPad will have a capacity of 128 gigabytes compared with the current model, which comes with different memory capacities but has a maximum of 64 gigabytes.

The new iPad model will go on sale on February 5, with a suggested price of \$799 for the iPad with Wi-Fi capacity and \$929 for iPad with

Google unveils detailed N Korea map

AFP, Seoul

Weeks after its chairman Eric Schmidt's secretive visit to North Korea, Google has rolled out a detailed map of the isolated state that even labels some of its remote and infamous gulags.

Ironically, the people least able to benefit from the Google publication are the North Koreans themselves, who live in one of the most isolated and highly censored societies on the planet.

Tourist numbers exceed 1b in 2012

AFP, Madrid

International tourist arrivals exceeded one billion for the first time last year, with the Asia-Pacific region posting the biggest increase in foreign visitors, and numbers will rise further in 2013, a UN body said yesterday.

The number of international tourist arrivals grew by 4.0 percent to 1.035 billion in 2012, up from 996 million in 2011, the Madrid-based United Nations World Tourism Organisation said in an annual survey.

65 executed bodies found in Syria

AFP, Aleppo

The bodies of at least 65 young men and boys, all executed with a single gunshot to the head or neck, were found yesterday in a river in the Syrian city of Aleppo, a watchdog and rebels said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 65 bodies were found in the Quweiq River and said that the toll could rise significantly.

A Free Syrian Army officer at the scene said at least 68 bodies had been recovered and that many more were still being dragged from the water, in a rebel-held area.

A senior government security source accused "terrorists" for carrying out the executions.

Most have their hands are tied behind their backs and pools of blood trail from their heads. Their faces are white and bodies bloated.

Guatemala ex-dictator to be tried for genocide

AFP, Guatemala City

A Guatemalan judge on Monday ordered former dictator Efraim Rios Montt to stand trial on charges of genocide for the slaughter of more than 1,750 native Maya people during his 1982-83 regime.



Efraim Rios

The retired general, now 86, sat stoically as Judge Miguel Galvez ordered the opening of a trial "for the crimes of genocide" and crimes against humanity.

The landmark decision marks the first time that genocide proceedings have been brought in the Central American country over the 36-year civil war that ended in 1996, leaving an estimated 200,000 people dead, according to the UN.

Outside the courthouse in Guatemala City, relatives of victims -- some wearing red carnations and clutching photographs of their loved ones -- lit firecrackers in celebration after the ruling was read out.

Rios Montt is accused of orchestrating the massacre of more than 1,750 indigenous Ixil Maya people in Quiche department during his time in power.

Rios Montt is known for his "scorched earth" campaign against people the government claimed were leftist rebels, but who were often indigenous Maya community members not involved in the conflict.

Rights advocates have worked for years to see Rios Montt tried, but he avoided court action, at one point by getting elected to Guatemala's congress -- and thereby winning parliamentary immunity.

Human Rights Watch called the decision to prosecute Rios Montt a "major step forward for accountability in Guatemala."

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