



## John Kerry confirmed as US secretary of state

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

John Kerry's nomination as President Barack Obama's new secretary of state sailed through the US Senate on Tuesday, as his fellow senators voted overwhelmingly to confirm him to replace Hillary Clinton as the country's top diplomat.

The vote was 94-3 in favor. Three senators did not vote.

Kerry's easy confirmation had been expected. The Senate agreed to vote quickly after his confirmation hearing last week. The Foreign Relations Committee had voted unanimously by voice vote earlier on Tuesday to back his nomination.

The five-term senator and losing presidential candidate in 2004 is expected to be sworn later this week.

Senator Robert Menendez, chairman of the Foreign Relations committee, said before the roll call that a heavy vote for Kerry would send a "strong message" to the rest of the world that he had the firm backing of the entire United States.

Kerry, who became a US senator 28 years ago, said he will make a final speech on the Senate floor on Wednesday.

## UN pleads to stop Syria killings

Donors pledge \$1b in aid

AFP, Kuwait City

International donors at a Kuwait conference yesterday pledged almost \$1 billion in aid for stricken Syrians, as UN chief Ban Ki-moon warned of a "catastrophic" situation in their war-torn country.

"Total pledges so far are around \$1 billion," a Gulf official said requesting anonymity, adding that "Saudi Arabia has pledged \$300 million," after Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates each pledged a similar amount.

Addressing the so-named International Humanitarian Pledging Conference for Syria in Kuwait City, Ban called for urgent financial aid, warning that if funds were not forthcoming "more Syrians will die".

"The situation in Syria is catastrophic," the UN chief said as he urged all parties to the conflict to "stop the killings".

Ban said that based on UN reports half of Syria's hospitals and a quarter of its schools had been destroyed while other vital infrastructure had been badly affected.

He stressed that humanitarian assistance would not resolve the crisis, which he said required a political solution. UN humanitarian aid chief Valerie Amos said that three million Syrians have fled their homes inside the country and that at least 2.3 million need basic help.

Earlier, UN envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said Syria's war had reached "unprecedented levels of horror", after dozens of men were found slaughtered in the northern city of Aleppo. Brahimi urged the divided UN Security Council to act now to halt the carnage which has killed more than 60,000 people since the uprising began in 2011.

## Hillary bids goodbye in global interview

Says no plans to run for presidency

AFP, Washington

Despite being grounded on doctor's orders after a bout of ill health, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton Tuesday took a virtual round-the-world trip to say a final farewell.

Using satellites and the Internet, she hooked into some of the world's major television networks to answer questions from local anchors and audiences in what was billed as a "Global Towninterview" by the State Department.

Hillary, who has traveled almost a million miles, apparently held 1,700 meetings with world leaders and suffered some 570 airplane meals, never moved from her seat in the Washington-based Newseum during the hour-long interview.

It was one of her last public events before she steps down tomorrow after four years as America's top diplomat.

Taking questions from every continent and cities from Beirut to Tokyo, London to New Delhi, and on to Bogota via Lagos, Hillary was quizzed on the burning issues



of the day.

And virtually putting to rest all speculations about her contesting the next US presidential elections, Hillary said she has "absolutely" no such plans and is just focusing to finish her current term in office.

"Well, I have absolutely no plans to run (for presidency).

Right now, I am trying to finish my term as Secretary of State," she told CNN in the interview, when asked about reports of her contesting the elections in 2016.

"I don't know everything I'll be doing. I'll be working on behalf of women and girls, and hopefully be writing and speaking. Those are the things that I am planning to do right now," she added.

"It's(work) been my whole life. I mean, I've had a job ever since I was 13 years old. When I wasn't in school, I was working.

"When I wake up, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, to have the luxury of nowhere to go, nothing to do, no frantic call about calling some leader about some impending crisis, I'm actually interested to see how that goes," she told CNN



This picture shows South Korea's Space Launch Vehicle-I (KSLV-I) taking off from its launch pad at the Naro Space Center in Goheung, 350 km south of Seoul. South Korea yesterday succeeded in its third attempt to put a satellite into orbit, in a high-stake test of national pride after arch-rival North Korea got there first with a rocket launch last month.

PHOTO: AFP

## Egypt opposition urges talks

Two more killed in Cairo

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian opposition leaders yesterday called for urgent talks on the political crisis gripping the country, as a fresh eruption of violence killed two more people in Cairo.

Mohamed ElBaradei, a leading figure in the National Salvation Front, called for the talks just two days after the opposition had rejected Islamist President Mohamed Morsi's call for dialogue. "We want an immediate meeting between the president, the ministers of defence and interior, the ruling party, the Salafist movement and the National Salvation Front to take urgent measures to end the violence and begin a serious dialogue," ElBaradei said in a tweet.

It was not immediately clear whether this represented a step back by the NSF, which had been demanding the formation of a national salvation government and the amendment of the Islamist-drafted constitution, before agreeing to any talks.

## Obama stresses on immigration reform

BBC ONLINE

President Barack Obama said Tuesday that long-sought reforms to a "broken" immigration system were within America's grasp, seeking to lock in rare momentum towards a major cross-party compromise.

He said the time has come for a sweeping overhaul of the US immigration system.

He made his case at a high school in Las Vegas, Nevada, a day after a bipartisan group of senators outlined a framework for reform.

United States has an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants. The move reflects the growing influence of Hispanic voters in USA.

Obama's case for an immigration revamp reflects a blueprint he rolled out in 2011, though that did not go far, to the disappointment of Latino voters.

On Tuesday, the US president championed the proposals outlined a day earlier by a group of four Democratic and four Republican senators. But Obama added that if Congress did not take action, the White House would write legislation of its own and insist that lawmakers vote on it.

Like the bipartisan plan, the president also backed an overhaul of the existing legal immigration system and securing US borders. 2011 blueprint also focused on a path to permanent residency and eventual citizenship, as well as making it easier for businesses to verify the legal status of workers. After eight years, individuals would be allowed to become legal permanent residents and could eventually become citizens five years later.



## Israel boycotts UN rights council

Transfers \$100m to Palestine

AGENCIES

Israel on Tuesday boycotted a regular review by the UN Human Rights Council, the first time any country has done so.

The move was expected as Israel has long been angered by what it claims is unfair criticism from the body. A decision last year to investigate Jewish settlements in the West Bank prompted Israel to announce it would no longer co-operate with the council.

Meanwhile, Israel yesterday said it had released \$100 million of the tariffs and tax monies it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, which were frozen last year as punishment for the UN bid.

But an Israeli official said it was a one-off measure to ease the financial crisis faced by the Palestinians.

## Assange to run for Aussie senate

AFP, Sydney

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange will run for a seat in the Australian Senate during this year's elections, his organisation announced yesterday.

WikiLeaks unveiled the plan with a tweet that read "Australia: Julian Assange has confirmed he will run in the 2013 national election for the Australian Senate", just hours after Prime Minister Julia Gillard said the nation would go to the polls on September 14.

Assange, who announced his intention to stand for Senate last year, has been holed up in the Ecuadoran embassy in London since June, after claiming asylum in a bid to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he faces allegations of sex crimes. Britain has refused to grant him safe passage out of the country.

Assange said last year that he was planning to register a WikiLeaks party with the Australian Electoral Commission, The Age newspaper reported at the time.

It was unclear whether being elected a senator would have any bearing on his status in Britain and whether London would allow him to leave the country of his own accord.

## Cats killing billions of animals in the US

BBC ONLINE

Cats are one of the top threats to US wildlife, killing billions of animals each year, a study suggests.

The authors estimate they are responsible for the deaths of between 1.4 and 3.7 billion birds and 6.9-20.7 billion mammals annually.

Writing in Nature Communications, the scientists said stray and feral cats were the worst offenders. However, they added that pet cats also playing a role and that owners should do more to reduce their impact.

The authors concluded that more animals are dying at the claws of cats in the United States than in road accidents, collisions with buildings or poisonings.

The domestic cat's killer instinct has been well documented on many islands around the world.

Felines accompanying their human companions have gone on to prey on the local wildlife, and they have been blamed for the global extinction of 33 species, the study said.



saving sight worldwide

## Vacancy Announcement Regional Program Manager, Asia

ORBIS International (www.orbis.org) is a nonprofit humanitarian organization working in developing countries to prevent and treat blindness through training of eye care professionals, public health education, improved access to quality eye care and partnerships with local health care organizations. ORBIS is a founder member of the Vision 2020: The Right to Sight global initiative for elimination of avoidable blindness by the year 2020. We are pleased to announce the vacant position of Regional Program Manager, Asia that will work on strengthening program activities in the region.

**Duties:** Based in Dhaka, with significant amount of travelling in the region, the incumbent will report to the Regional Program Director, Asia and assist in the development, implementation, oversight and evaluation of all programs in Asia, with emphasis on resource utilization, quality training, clinical service and sustainability. As a senior member of the regional team the incumbent will also guide program strategy and staff development in the region.

**Requirements:**

- o Masters degree in public health, social science or related field from reputed university.
- o At least 7 years' project development and management experience in NGO health sector along with proven experience in program design, implementation, grant management, and M&E.
- o Experience in international health organization for at least 3 years is preferred and eye care program management experience is desirable.
- o Excellent communication, negotiation, presentation and analytical skills are essential.
- o Experience in public health research and advocacy is an added value.

Experienced and qualified candidates are requested to apply. Please send resume and letter of interest, stating current and expected salary to [hr.bangladesh@orbis.org](mailto:hr.bangladesh@orbis.org) on or before February 14, 2013. Short listed candidates will be called for interview.

## NEWS IN brief

### Gillard sets Australia poll date

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE



Julia Gillard, the Australian prime minister, has announced a general election will be held on 14 September, surprising the electorate and ending speculation about when she would take her minority government back to the polls.

Gillard said that she would ask Governor-General Quentin Bryce to order that parliament be dissolved on 12 August. Gillard leads a minority government that relies on independents.

### 'Brazil fire caused by fireworks'

BBC ONLINE

The chief investigator in the southern Brazilian city of Santa Maria yesterday said that cheap fireworks meant for outdoor use caused a deadly nightclub fire.

The death toll in Sunday's blaze reached 235 people after a 21-year-old man died of his injuries in hospital. Brazil is marking three days of national mourning for the victims.

Police chief Marcelo Arigony said the band had chosen not to buy more expensive indoor flares. Four people have been arrested in connection with the blaze including a member of the band Gurizada Fandangueira, blamed for the start of the flames.

### Russia pulls out of US drugs deal

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday said it was pulling out of a decade-old drug control agreement with the United States in the latest sign of a deterioration in ties since President Vladimir Putin's return to the Kremlin last year.

The Russian government website published a decree from Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev saying Moscow had informed Washington it was withdrawing because the deal "does not address today's realities and has exhausted its potential."

The decision's timing suggested that Moscow intended for the move to be interpreted as reprisal for recent US actions against Russia aimed at punishing those responsible for rights abuses.

### Colombia to decriminalise ecstasy

BBC ONLINE

Colombia's Justice Minister, Ruth Stella Correa, said a new drugs bill would decriminalise personal use of synthetic drugs, such as ecstasy.

The proposal would replace current laws, which ban cocaine and marijuana, although people are not prosecuted for possessing small amounts.

Colombia's legislation is being re-assessed in an attempt to tackle drug use, trafficking and

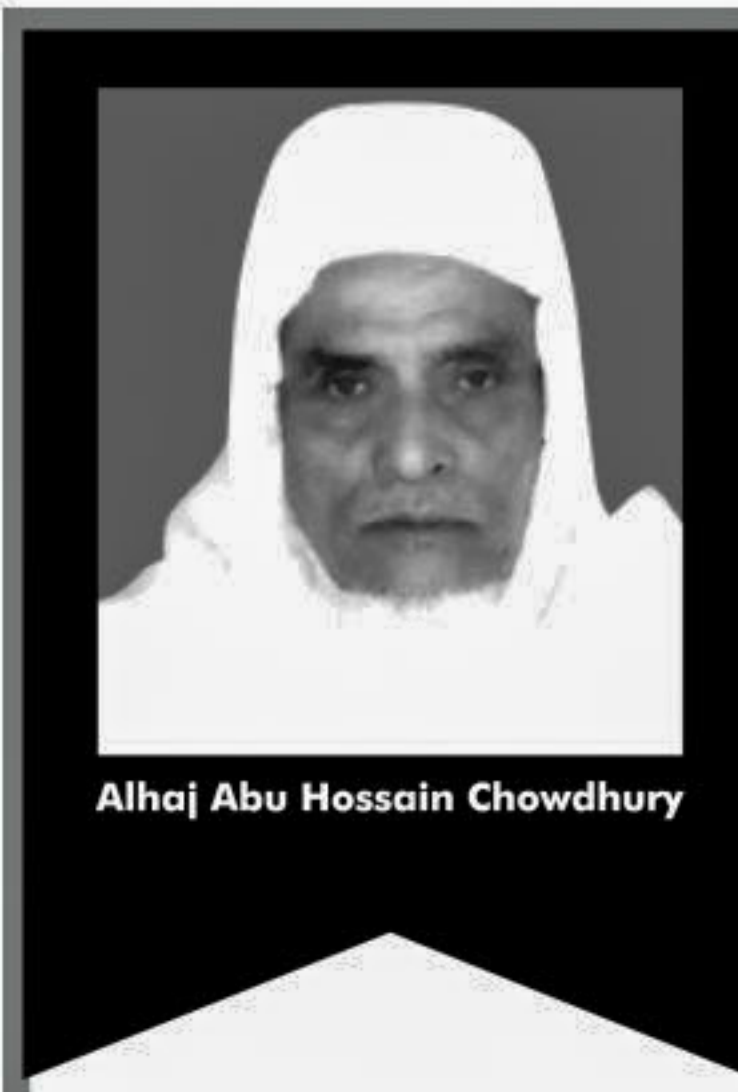
### 3 more pigmy elephants found dead

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Three more endangered Borneo pigmy elephants were found dead yesterday in Malaysia of suspected poisoning, wildlife officials said, adding to 10 carcasses discovered earlier this month.

They may have ingested poison spread by oil palm plantations to keep "pests" away, said Laurentius Ambu, wildlife department director of the Malaysian state of Sabah on Borneo island.

He warned that the elephants travel in herds of up to dozens of animals and that still more carcasses could turn up.



*We mourn, we pray'*

We, Amerex Group LLC, express our deepest condolence on the sad demise of **Mr. ALHAJ ABU HOSSAIN CHOWDHURY**, father of Mr. Khosru Chowdhury - Managing Director of NIPA Group Of Industries Ltd. on 18th January at 11:50 pm at Appollo Hospital (Inna Lillahi wa Inna Ilayhi Rajjooon).

There are no enough words to express our utter sadness. We convey our deepest sympathy to the bereaved family members in this time of grief and pray to Almighty Allah to give them the courage and strength to bear this irreparable loss.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Amerex Group LLC.