

Army assault on Syria province kills 57

HRW says regime 'willfully' kills civilians from air

AFP, Beirut

Six children were among at least 57 people killed in southern Syria as the army launched an all-out assault on two towns in Daraa province, a watchdog said yesterday. "At least six children, seven women, 16 rebel fighters, 16 other unidentified men and 12 army troops were killed on Wednesday, in fighting, shelling and summary executions waged after the army launched an assault on Al-Sanamein and Ghabagheb," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP the army's assault came a day after a dozen troops defected from a nearby military post to join the rebels. "The defectors took refuge in the area of Al-Sanamein and Ghabagheb, which up until then had remained somewhat more calm than other areas of Daraa," said Abdel Rahman.

"The army launched its assault, and shelled several houses," he added. Nationwide, at least 179 people were killed in violence on Wednesday -- 50 civilians, 86 rebels and 43 soldiers, the Observatory said. Meanwhile, the Damascus regime has "willfully" killed thousands of civilians in air strikes that amount to war crimes, Human Rights Watch said on Thursday, as rebels lobbied the major powers for weapons. G8 foreign ministers gathered for a second day of talks in London after several of them met opposition leaders to discuss their calls for arms to tilt the balance in their fight to oust President Bashar al-Assad. Overshadowing the talks was a Wednesday statement by the head of the jihadist rebel al-Nusra Front pledging allegiance to al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri, which has increased concerns about weapons falling into the wrong hands.

CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA

Syria, N Korea top G8 agenda

REUTERS, London

Western and Middle Eastern nations trying to help the Syrian opposition in its war against Bashar al-Assad will meet in Turkey on April 20, a US official said on Wednesday as G8 foreign ministers gathered in London for a summit. US Secretary of State John Kerry will attend the meeting of the so-called Friends of Syria "core group" in Istanbul, said the official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity. The G8 talks, which began in London over dinner on Wednesday and were due to end on Thursday, will also be the first chance for the ministers to discuss face-to-face the failure of last week's meeting in Almaty on curbing Iran's nuke programme.

Egypt army 'tortured, killed during 2011 revolution'

BBC ONLINE

A report leaked to a British newspaper appears to show that the Egyptian army participated in torture and killings during the 2011 revolution. The report was submitted to President Mohammed Morsi earlier this year. Egypt's armed forces had declared their neutrality during the uprising, with the police blamed for much of the bloodshed. Hundreds were killed and many more are unaccounted for following attempts to violently suppress the uprising. The document leaked to the Guardian newspaper clearly implicates the armed forces in serious violations of human rights during Egypt's 18-day revolution that led to the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, says the BBC's Aleem Maqbool in Cairo. It contains testimony relating to civilians detained at military checkpoints who were never seen again. There is also evidence presented that

protesters from Tahrir Square were detained by the army and tortured inside the nearby Egyptian Museum, before being moved to military prisons. It suggests the army delivered unidentified bodies to coroners. The Guardian says it was leaked a chapter of a report compiled by an investigation committee which was submitted to President Morsi earlier this year but never made public. Over recent weeks, members of the committee, which included human rights lawyers, had briefed that the military had not been co-operative during the investigation. In 2011, the army stressed its neutrality, with the Egyptian police blamed for much of the bloodshed, our correspondent says. But there is much more to be established about the army's role in the initial attempt to violently suppress the revolution and in the disappearance of civilians - estimated to number anywhere between dozens and hundreds of people - who remain unaccounted for, he adds.

Pak army, militants clash kills 16

REUTERS, Peshawar

Fifteen militants and one soldier were killed yesterday when the Pakistani military mounted another operation in a week of fighting designed to seize control of a remote but strategic valley in the northwest, the army said. The military has faced fierce resistance from the Taliban and its allies in the Tirah Valley in the Khyber region since troops set out to dislodge insurgents from strategically important heights above the valley six days ago. Pakistani military officials say insurgents use the valley as a base camp that enables them to carry out raids in other semi-autonomous tribal areas near the Afghan border.



G8 Foreign Ministers pose for a group picture ahead of their meeting at Lancaster House in London yesterday. (From left to right) High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union Baronesse Ashton, Canada's Foreign Minister John Baird, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, US Secretary of State John Kerry, British Foreign Secretary William Hague, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Germany's Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, Japan's Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Italy's interim Foreign Minister Mario Monti. US Secretary of State John Kerry and other G8 foreign ministers were on Thursday to hold a second day of talks in London focused on Syria after rebels again appealed for weapons.

PHOTO: AFP

Plea to prove Bhagat Singh's innocence

PTI, Lahore

Eight decades after Bhagat Singh's execution by the British, a petition has been filed in a Pakistani court seeking the reopening of the freedom fighter's case so that he can be declared innocent. Imtiaz Rasheed Qureshi of the Save The Judiciary Committee filed the petition in the Lahore high court. He said Bhagat Singh, who was sentenced to death by the British government and hanged in Lahore in March 1931, was a freedom fighter of the subcontinent. "Singh was first given life imprisonment but later awarded death sentence. He was convicted in a fake case," Qureshi said in his petition. Singh was respected by Sikhs and Muslims alike and Pakistan's founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah too had paid tribute to the freedom fighter in the erstwhile Central Legislative Assembly, Qureshi said. "I therefore request the court to reopen the case and declare him innocent," he said.



Bhagat Singh

NOMINATION REJECTION Musharraf files appeal

PTI, Lahore

Former President Pervez Musharraf has filed an appeal against the rejection of his nomination papers for a parliamentary constituency in Pakistan's Punjab province. The appeal against the rejection of the papers for the constituency in Kasur was filed in an election tribunal yesterday, the last day to challenge decisions made by returning officers. In the appeal filed by lawyer Salman Safdar, Musharraf said he had served the country as President for 10 years but the Returning Officer in Kasur rejected his nomination papers.

Rahul ineffective, confused: Ramdev

ANI, Rajkot

Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev yesterday took potshots at Rahul Gandhi in the context of prime ministerial candidates, saying that the Congress Vice-President is not mature enough and has no vision. "There is a long queue of people who want to become the Prime Minister. Rahul Gandhi's name is also coming up for the post of PM, but he is not mature enough and has no vision," Baba Ramdev told media here. Praising Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi, Baba Ramdev said: "In the present situation, Modi appears as a man who is committed to development and one who can prevent corruption." Baba Ramdev had earlier said the BJP should project Modi as its leader in the next Lok Sabha elections. "There is some possibility and space for BJP if it changes priorities and thinks about projecting Narendra Modi in the next Lok Sabha elections," Baba Ramdev said. "Modi has emerged as a robust leader who has become icon of development and courage and has zero tolerance for corruption but the final decision for his projection is to be taken by the BJP and Sangh," he added.



Rahul Gandhi

Palestinian PM offers to resign

AP, Ramallah

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has offered to resign because of an increasingly bitter dispute with President Mahmoud Abbas over the extent of his authority, officials said yesterday. Abbas has not responded to Fayyad, who enjoys the support of the international community, particularly the United States. It's not clear if Abbas, who is expected back in the West Bank on Thursday from a trip to Qatar, will accept Fayyad's resignation at a time when the US is trying to revive Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. As part of that effort, US Secretary of State John Kerry hopes to win Israeli approval for Palestinian economic projects in the West Bank. Fayyad, a respected economist, is considered to be key to overseeing such projects.

Argentina barred from Thatcher funeral

AFP, London

Britain has decided not to invite Argentine President Cristina Kirchner to the funeral of former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, Downing Street said yesterday, in a sign of the still bitter dispute over the Falkland Islands. The government is still finalising the list of foreign dignitaries who will receive invitations to the ceremonial funeral next Wednesday of the "Iron Lady", who successfully led Britain into a war to expel Argentine forces that invaded the South Atlantic archipelago in 1982.

ICT orders security for Alim

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only war crimes accused who is enjoying conditional bail due to poor health. The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge M Shahinur Islam passed the orders following a prosecution petition submitted on Wednesday. The petition sought Alim's security upon "alarming information" that he could be attacked by snipers. A former member of late president Ziaur Rahman's cabinet, Alim has been indicted on 17 charges of crimes against humanity allegedly committed during the Liberation War.

Submitting the petition on Wednesday, prosecutor Rana Dasgupta told the court that bdnews24.com and amadershomoy.com had recently posted a link in their websites which claimed that Alim would come under attack so that the crimes against humanity trials could be foiled. In its order the tribunal said, "Although we do not know whether the report was authentic, a protective measure needs to be taken to ensure safety to Mr Abdul Alim in his place of stay and his way to his house-tribunal-house." It also directed the chief prosecutor and prosecutors concerned to inform police on which dates security measures needed

to be taken for Alim. Meanwhile, Alim's counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena yesterday completed the cross-examination of 15th prosecution witness Mozammel Hossain. On Wednesday, Mozammel testified that during the Liberation War in 1971, the then Pakistani occupation army in a single assault in Joypurhat had killed 22 Awami League supporters as per a list prepared by Alim. During the 52-minute cross-examination, the defence counsel asked whether the letter [list] was written in English, Bangla or Urdu. "I can't say. But, my name was called from the list," replied Mozammel. In response to another

question, he said Pakistani army had called his name. However, the witness could not give details about his serial number in the list or when and by whom Alim had sent the list. "Mr Alim never sent any letter [list] to Riaz Mirdha (a peace committee member who was mentioned in Mozammel's testimony) and your name was not picked from the list," Hena said. Mozammel rejected Hena's claim by just saying, "It is not true." "You have given false testimony against Abdul Alim," said Hena, but Mozammel denied. The tribunal adjourned the case proceeding until April 18.

NEWS IN brief

Obama cuts funds for spy agencies

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama's proposed budget unveiled Wednesday calls for cuts of at least \$4.4 billion to America's intelligence agencies, in a sign of growing fiscal pressures. Obama is requesting \$48.2 billion for the CIA and other spy agencies starting October 1, down from a proposed \$52.6 billion for fiscal year 2013, according to the national intelligence director's office. Separately, the Pentagon said it had requested \$14 billion for military intelligence programs, down from \$21.5 billion spent in fiscal year 2012.

China bird flu death toll hits 10

AFP, Shanghai

The death toll from H7N9 bird flu in China reached 10 yesterday with another victim in Shanghai, as cities banned people from raising chickens at home to try to contain the outbreak. China has confirmed 38 human cases of H7N9 avian influenza after announcing on March 31 that it had found the strain in people for the first time. One person, a young boy in Shanghai, has been discharged from hospital after recovering but the city reported the death of a 74-year-old retired man on Thursday. Chinese authorities say they do not know how the virus is spreading, but it is believed to be crossing to humans from birds.

US offers help to quake-hit Iran

REUTERS, Washington

The White House, at odds with Iran over its nuclear program, offered on Wednesday to help Tehran grapple with a deadly earthquake in southern Iran. The powerful 6.3 magnitude quake struck close to Iran's only nuclear power station on Tuesday, killing 37 people and injuring 850 as it destroyed homes and devastated two small villages, Iranian media reported. Caitlin Hayden, spokeswoman for the White House National Security Council, said in a statement the American people extended condolences to the people of Iran for the devastation that resulted from the quake.

Pak teacher gang-raped

PTI, Islamabad

A 26-year-old school teacher was kidnapped and gang raped while on her way to work in Pakistan's central Punjab province. The woman was found lying in a field in Khanewal, near Multan city, yesterday. She was taken to a hospital in Jhang and a medico-legal examination at a nearby rural health centre confirmed she had been raped. Doctors at the centre said she might need surgery. Police registered a case against three suspects named by the woman's family, The Express Tribune reported.

Request For Proposals (RFP) for Printing Materials and Video Production

The Elimination of Filariasis Control and STH Prevention Program, is funded by USAID under END in Asia Project implementing by FHI (fhi 360), is requesting for two proposals from a Bangladeshi media agency for printing IEC materials and for the production of two Video documentaries covering messages on elimination of Filariasis and prevention of STH control.

Eligible media agencies are requested to submit technical and financial proposals following the guidelines provided in the RFP. Interested agencies can collect specifications of both RFP from the security desk of fhi 360, Road 35 House 5, Gulshan 2| Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh. Please collect the specifications from Monday, 15 April, 2013 to Thursday, 18 April, 2013. Interested agencies shall submit a technical and financial proposal by no later than 17:00 on 19 May, 2013.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute any commitment on the part of fhi 360 nor does it commitment to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of the proposals.

