

## Tobacco magnate wins Paraguay presidency

AP, Asuncion, Paraguay

Paraguayans elected a tobacco magnate as their new leader Sunday, returning the conservative Colorado Party to the presidency that it held for 61 years before former Roman Catholic bishop Fernando Lugo won the office in 2008.

Horacio Cartes won a five-year term with 46 percent of the vote over 37 percent for Efraín Alegre of the Radical Liberal party, the Electoral Court announced after most votes were counted. Five other candidates trailed far behind.

"I'll need help from all the Paraguayans to govern in the next five years. Poverty, the lack of jobs for young people and international issues await us," Cartes said Sunday night.

Poverty is widespread in Paraguay, which is an agrarian nation that is South America's No. 3 producer of soy, corn and sunflowers. About 1 percent of the population controls 77 percent of the arable land. The U.N. estimates more than half of Paraguayans live in poverty, while the country's census bureau puts the number at 39 percent.

Alegre recognized his defeat despite saying earlier that he might challenge the outcome. "The Paraguayan people have spoken. There's nothing more to say," he said in a brief concession speech.

Cartes, 58, is part of the tiny elite that controls just about everything in Paraguay. His father represented the Cessna airplane company in Paraguay, which enabled Cartes to get schooling in the U.S. state of Oklahoma.



Horacio Cartes

## Russia warns EU not to lift Syria arms ban

*UK pushes; Opposition names interim chief*

AGENCIES

Russia warned the European Union yesterday not to lift an arms embargo that has prevented weapons supplies to Syrian rebels, despite British and French lobbying, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, the Syrian National Coalition named veteran dissident George Sabra as caretaker leader of the main opposition grouping on Monday, following the resignation of Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib, reports AFP.

The announcement came a day after the widely-respected Khatib submitted his resignation for a second time, officially in protest over the failure of the international community to stop the conflict in Syria, which has killed at least 70,000 people.

Six days of clashes in two Damascus suburbs may have killed hundreds of people, a dramatic spike in the rising death toll in the Syrian civil war, activists said Monday.

The reports came as President Bashar Assad's forces pressed on with a major offensive in the suburbs against opposition fighters who have been closing in on



George Sabra

parts of the Syrian capital. To the north, regime troops surged around the contested town of Qusair in Syria's Homs province, near the frontier with Lebanon.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the number of the dead could be as high as 250. Rami Abdul-Rahman, who heads the Observatory, said the group has documented 80 names of those killed but fears a much higher toll, reports AP. British Foreign Secretary William Hague said on Sunday that EU foreign ministers, who last month rejected a Franco-British proposal to ease the ban, would in coming weeks discuss the question again, reports Reuters.

Russia, which says it is continuing to implement weapons contracts with Syria but is no longer delivering arms that could be used in the civil conflict, has vehemently opposed any supplies of weapons to President Bashar al-Assad's opponents. Meanwhile, Iran wants Syria's embattled President Bashar al-Assad to stay on and contest the presidential election scheduled for next year, a visiting senior Iranian envoy said on Monday.

## Applications

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Nevertheless, the project has already had 10,000 applicants, even though it did not officially start accepting them until yesterday.

When the official search was launched at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York, they expect tens of thousands more hopefuls to put their names forward.

Multimillionaire space tourist Dennis Tito announced his ambitious and audacious \$1 billion plan earlier this year to send a married couple in their 50s on a round-trip visit to Mars in just five years.

Dubbed a "Mission for America", Tito said the lucky couple have yet to be selected for the journey in which they will spend 501 days confined in a 600-cubic-foot capsule with only each other for company.

Setting his launch date for January 5, 2018, Tito is a former Nasa engineer who made his money through finance and became the first private space tourist in 2001, when he paid the Russians \$20 million for a ticket to the International Space Station.

**This handout picture taken on June, 2012 and released by leading rights watchdog Human Rights Watch (HRW) yesterday shows what HRW says is ethnic Rakhine with weapons walking away from a village in flames. (Story on page on 20)**

PHOTO: AFP



## Half of Guantanamo on hunger strike

AFP, Washington

More than half of the 166 detainees held at the US-run Guantanamo military prison have joined a rapidly growing hunger strike to protest their indefinite detention, an official said Sunday.

There are 84 inmates who are refusing food, including 16 on feeding tubes, five of whom are hospitalized, Lieutenant Colonel Samuel House said in a statement, adding that none had "life-threatening conditions."

House said that as recently as Friday there were 63 inmates who were refusing to eat. On Tuesday of last week just 45 were taking part.

The hunger strikers are protesting their incarceration without charge or trial at Guantanamo in the 11 years since the prison went into use for terror suspects detained in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The hunger strikes began February 6, when inmates claimed prison officials searched their Korans for contraband. Officials have denied any mishandling of Islam's holy book.

## BOSTON MARATHON BOMBS Prosecutors prepare charges

*Suspects framed by FBI, claims father*

AGENCIES

US federal prosecutors are preparing charges against the surviving Boston Marathon bomb suspect Dzhokhar Tsarnaev as more details emerge of his capture, reports BBC.

If he is charged with using a weapon of mass destruction to kill people, he could face the death penalty.

Tsarnaev is in hospital, unable to speak because of a wound to the throat.

US media quoted anonymous sources as saying he had been responding to questions in writing, but this has not been officially confirmed.

The FBI's Boston field office and the Boston police department both said the information did not come from them.

Meanwhile, The father of the suspected Boston bombers insisted in an interview published yesterday that his sons Tamerlan and Dzhokhar were innocent and could not have carried out the bombings, reports AFP.

Their plans for the future had included returning to work in Russia, Anzor Tsarnaev said in the telephone interview with Komsomolskaya Pravda daily, adding that he hoped to travel to the United States where his younger son Dzhokhar is in hospital after his capture with serious injuries.

His two sons "were studying and working" in the United States, he said.



Anzor Tsarnaev

## 5 dead in Washington state shooting

AP, Federal Way

Gunfire erupted at an apartment complex in a city south of Seattle and five people were shot to death, including a suspect who was shot by arriving officers, police said early yesterday.

Officers responding to an emergency call at 9:30pm PDT Sunday at the apartments in Federal Way encountered a chaotic scene, with bullets flying.

"When officers arrived there were still shots being fired," said Federal Way police spokeswoman Cathy Schrock.

They found two injured men on the ground in a parking lot. One of the men reached for a gun as police moved in to assist the two, she said.

At that point, officers opened fire. The suspect died but police said it wasn't immediately clear if it was from their gunfire.

The other man on the ground and a third man in the parking lot were found dead.

In a search of the complex, police found a fourth man dead in one apartment and a slain woman in another unit. Schrock said police were trying to determine if the woman was accidentally hit by gunfire.

A total of eight officers fired their weapons, Schrock said. All have been placed on administrative leave, per standard policy, as the investigation continues.

There was no immediate word what set off the shooting.

## Serbian govt approves deal with Kosovo

AP, Belgrade

The Serbian government yesterday approved a potentially landmark agreement to normalize relations with breakaway Kosovo that could end years of tensions and put the Balkan rivals on a path to European Union membership.

The government approved the deal unanimously at an extraordinary session and ordered ministries to implement it, said government spokesman Milivoje Mihajlovic.

## China pandas panic in quake

AFP, Ya'an

Pandas living in a reserve near the epicentre of China's weekend quake clambered up trees in panic as their forest home was jolted, but none were injured, officials said yesterday.

More than 60 pandas at the Bifengxia Panda Base near Ya-an city were shaken early Saturday by the quake which struck just 50 kilometers (31 miles) away, leaving at least 188 people dead and more than 11,000 injured.

Some pandas climbed high into the tree canopy when the 6.6-magnitude earthquake struck and suffered "differing degrees of shock," the facility said on its website.

Pictures taken by the reserve showed the furry creatures clinging onto tree trunks, while state-broadcaster CCTV showed one panda perched perilously on the top of a tall pine tree, which swayed from side to side.



## Sufferings on

FROM PAGE 1

and torched at least 12 vehicles late yesterday afternoon at different busy intersections of the city, fire service sources say.

In Khulna city, at least 10 people, including two policemen, were injured in a clash between Jamaat-e-Islami elements and police.

The Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and its equivalent examinations slated for today and tomorrow have been rescheduled again and will be held on May 11 and May 10.

The 18-party opposition alliance called the shutdown immediately after a Dhaka court on Sunday denied bail to seven top BNP leaders in seven cases.

Earlier this month, Hefajat-e-Islam, a Chittagong-based Islamist group, enforced a daylong hartal on April 8, followed by the opposition's 36-hour countrywide shutdown from April 9.

The only working day left in the second week was not spared as the Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of the Jamaat, the key component in the BNP-led alliance,

observed a 24-hour hartal on April 11 protesting the arrest of its president.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, several labourers at the city's Karwan Bazar said hartal even caused anxiety among their children as they know their father will come home with nothing in hand.

"Hartal is like a punishment and my six-year-old girl also understands this. When I return home in the afternoon empty handed on a hartal day, she understands that she might have to spend the night half-fed," Chutu Mia, who works at the Karwan Bazar kitchen market, said while trying to take a nap in the afternoon in his round basket.

Chutu's colleagues, who were also preparing for a siesta, echoed his thoughts.

"Nobody cares about us. When the duration of a shutdown is longer, our livelihood almost comes to a halt," lamented another labourer to The Daily Star, not wishing to be named.

Panicking at pre-hartal vandalism and arson, commuters were seen yesterday

rushing to their respective destinations early in the evening. Vehicle movement also became thin, especially in the late afternoon, causing untold sufferings to working people and students and their guardians.

Near the BNP central office in Nayapaltan, activists of the party's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal vandalised and torched a vehicle around noon.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, after the core committee's meeting with the chiefs of law enforcement agencies at his office in the secretariat yesterday, told reports that photographs of perpetrators who are still at large would be published with an appeal for people's assistance in nabbing them.

Additionally, the 60-hour hartal called by the Islami Chhatra Shibir in Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj was going on peacefully yesterday. The organisation was observing the hartal, starting from Monday morning, to protest the "disappearance" of one of its local leaders.

## 'Life on Mars to be reality in 2023'

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

A few months before he died, Carl Sagan recorded a message of hope to would-be Mars explorers, telling them: "Whatever the reason you're on Mars is, I'm glad you're there. And I wish I was with you."

On Monday, 17 years after the pioneering astronomer set out his hopeful vision of the future in 1996, a company from the Netherlands is proposing to turn Sagan's dreams of reaching Mars into reality. The company, Mars One, plans to send four astronauts on a trip to the Red Planet to set up a human colony in 2023. But there are a couple of serious snags.

Firstly, when on Mars their bodies will have to adapt to surface gravity that is 38% of that on Earth. It is thought that this would cause such a total physiological change in their bone density, muscle strength and circulation that voyagers would no longer be able to survive in Earth's conditions. Secondly, and directly related to the first, they will have to say goodbye to all their family and friends, as the deal doesn't include a return ticket.

The Mars One website states that a return "cannot be anticipated nor expected". To return, they would need a fully assembled and fuelled rocket capable of escaping the gravitational field of Mars, on-board life support systems capable of up to a seven-month voyage.



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