

## Qatar emir hands over power to son

AFP, Doha

The emir of gas-rich Qatar, a major actor on the world diplomatic stage and key backer of Arab Spring uprisings, yesterday stepped down in favour of his 33-year-old son Sheikh Tamim.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani's abdication after 18 years on the throne marks a first in the Arab world although analysts do not expect significant changes in the way the super-rich Gulf state is ruled.

"I address you today to announce that I am handing the rule over to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani," the 61-year-old emir told Qataris in a televised speech.

The decision marks the beginning of "a new era in which a young leadership will hold the banner that would place the hopes of the coming generation upon its priorities," he added.



Tamim

# Syrians cutting out food, begging to survive: UN

## Kerry arrives in Saudi Arabia on Syria push

AFP, Geneva

Syrians caught up in their nation's civil war are increasingly having to cut out basic foods from their diets to save money, or are resorting to begging to survive, the World Food Programme warned yesterday.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Saudi Arabia yesterday in hopes of coordinating support for Syria's rebels amid fears that a prolonged civil war will embolden extremists.

Kerry was to spend several hours in the western city of Jeddah consulting with the leadership of the oil-rich Sunni Muslim monarchy, which has been outspoken in its opposition to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

President Barack Obama is cautious about deeper US involvement in the increasingly sectarian conflict but has vowed to step up support for the rebels after concluding that Assad defied warnings and used chemical weapons.

Elisabeth Byrs, spokeswoman for the UN food agency, said its teams had managed to carry out their first



John Kerry is greeted by Saudi FM Prince Saud al-Faisal in Jeddah.

assessment in the embattled city of Aleppo since December, as well as taking stock of the situation in other parts of Syria.

"The results are significant, notably regarding the coping mechanisms which the population has in place to deal with the lack of food and the difficulty of getting supplies," Byrs told reporters.

"The first alternative strategy is to switch to lower-quality food, in other words, to buy less fresh food, less meat, fewer eggs and dairy products," she said.

As prices climb, more than 50 per cent of family budgets were being dedicated to food, the WFP teams found.

"Another coping mechanism, unfortunately, is begging. Back in March, five percent of people had chosen to beg in order to survive, and in April and May it was up to nine percent," Byrs said.

Families were also struggling to pay rents, with some being forced to pool their meagre resources.

People no longer able to pay rent at all were increasingly squatting abandoned buildings, bus stations and warehouses.

More than 94,000 people have been killed and some 1.6 million have fled Syria since the war began in March 2011 after a crackdown on protests against strongman President Bashar al-Assad.

Within the country, a total of 6.8 million people are forecast to need aid this year, the majority of them those displaced by fighting.

With the Muslim ramadan fasting period looming, Byrs said the WFP was stepping up convoys.

## Time's 'Buddhist Terror' headline irks Myanmar

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar has reacted angrily to a Time magazine cover story on a prominent radical monk accused of fuelling anti-Muslim violence, accompanied by the headline "The Face of Buddhist Terror".

Social media users in the former junta-ruled nation also voiced dismay at the US magazine's July front page, which shows a photograph of controversial Mandalay monk Wirathu, whose anti-Muslim remarks have come under scrutiny following a wave of deadly religious violence.

The Time report "creates a misunderstanding of Buddhism which has existed for thousands of years and is the religion of the majority of our citizens," said a statement posted on the presidential office website late Sunday.

"The government is currently striving with religious leaders, political parties, media and the people to rid Myanmar of unwanted conflicts," it said, adding that the issue of religion should be handled respectfully by the media.

In a sign of the strength of feeling, one online petition started over the weekend to condemn the magazine had collected almost 40,000 names by Monday.

The use of the words "Buddhist" and "Terror" upset all followers of the faith, which is peaceful "and not for terrorists," a



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sage accompanying the petition said.

Eye-witnesses to violence which flared in March in central Myanmar said people dressed in monks' robes were involved in the unrest, which left scores dead, mainly Muslims.

Radical monks have led a campaign to shun shops owned by Muslims. Wirathu has also called for a law to restrict marriages between Buddhist women and men of other faiths.

Several episodes of religious fighting have exposed deep rifts in the Buddhist-majority country and cast a shadow over widely praised political reforms since military rule ended two years ago.

In March at least 44 people were killed in sectarian strife in central Myanmar with thousands of homes set ablaze.

Communal unrest last year in the western state of Rakhine left about 200 people dead and up to 140,000 displaced, mainly Rohingya Muslims.

## NEWSIN brief

### Uttarakhand death toll climbs to 822

PTI, Gauchar

Helicopter rescue operations to evacuate around 9000 stranded people picked up pace after rain and fog in the morning delayed the mission in calamity-hit Uttarakhand where the death toll mounted to 822 with 127 more bodies recovered from Kedarnath.

Fresh incidents of landslips were also reported from Tehri district in which a woman and a child were killed.

Our New Delhi correspondent reported an Indian Air Force helicopter yesterday crashed during rescue operations in rain-ravaged Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, killing eight persons onboard, including five crew members.

This is the second incident of a helicopter crash this week in the hill state.

### Iraq bombings kill 14

AFP, Kirkuk

Bombings targeting protesters and pilgrims outside of Baghdad killed 14 people yesterday, the latest in a surge of violence that has sparked fears of a revival of all-out sectarian conflict in Iraq.

The latest attacks come a day after 35 people were killed nationwide, most of them in a series of car bombs across Baghdad, as the country grapples with a prolonged political deadlock and months of protests from its Sunni Arab minority.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks, but Sunni militants linked to al-Qaeda frequently target Shia Muslims -- both the protesters and the pilgrims were from Iraq's Shia majority -- whom they regard as apostates.

### Koreas websites shut down on war anniversary

AP, Seoul

Major government and media websites in South and North Korea were shut down for hours Tuesday on the 63rd anniversary of the start of the Korean War. Seoul said its sites were hacked, while it was unclear what knocked out those north of the border.

Seoul said experts were investigating attacks on the websites of the South Korean presidential Blue House and prime minister's office, as well as some media servers. There were no initial reports Tuesday that sensitive military or other key infrastructure had been compromised.



### ATTACKS IN SRINAGAR

## Manmohan, Sonia visit Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh faced protests as he arrived for a rare visit to Indian Kashmir yesterday, a day after militants killed eight soldiers in the deadliest attack in the region for five years.

Singh said India was united in the fight against terrorism after landing in the southern town of Kishtwar as part of the two-day trip, his first to the region for three years.

"India is firmly united against terrorism. (We) Won't let them succeed in their nefarious designs," the premier told Indian media in Kishtwar, where he laid a foundation stone for a hydro-power plant.

Singh stressed in a speech that violence "had shown a sharp decline and was the lowest in last two decades," the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Singh was accompanied by Sonia Gandhi, the president of the ruling Congress party, for the visit in which he will inspect major infrastructure projects and inaugurate part of a railway line to connect north and south Kashmir.

It is the first time the premier has visited the Indian-controlled part of the divided Himalayan territory -- which has been the scene of two wars with Pakistan -- since June 2010 and comes less than a year before India goes to the polls.

Police and paramilitary forces have been deployed in strength across the region for the visit, including in the main city of Srinagar where the premier is expected later Tuesday.

## Snowden never crossed border into Russia

### Says Sergei Lavrov; Russia, China reject US pressure

THE GUARDIAN

Russia's foreign minister has said the surveillance whistleblower Edward Snowden never crossed the border into Russia, deepening the mystery over his suspected flight from Hong Kong.

"I would like to say right away that we have no relation to either Snowden or to his relationship with American justice or to his movements around the world," Sergei Lavrov said.

"He chose his route on his own, and we found out about it, as most here did, from mass media," he said during a joint press conference with Algeria's foreign minister. "He did not cross the Russian border."

According to WikiLeaks, which said it facilitated his travel, Snowden fled Hong Kong on Sunday morning to transit via Moscow to an undisclosed third country.

Russian news agencies, citing anonymous sources, reported that Snowden had arrived in Moscow on Sunday evening and met Ecuadorian diplomats at Sheremetyevo



airport while awaiting a Monday afternoon flight to Havana, from where he would travel to Venezuela. Snowden did not show up for the flight. That fuelled speculation that Snowden may have been whisked from the plane before going through passport control. Olafur Vignir Sigurvinsson, an Icelandic busi-

nessman with links to WikiLeaks, told Reuters last week that he had readied a private jet to aid Snowden's flight from Hong Kong should the Icelandic government grant him asylum.

The US has warned Russia and China against helping Snowden as it seeks his extradition to face charges of espionage for gathering and disclosing documents outlining US surveillance programmes.

China and Russia rejected US accusations they helped a former US spy agency contractor escape prosecution in the United States, deepening a rift between powers whose cooperation may be essential in settling global conflicts including the Syrian war.

## BENAZIR MURDER CASE Charge sheet submitted against Musharraf

DAWN ONLINE

The Federal Investigative Agency (FIA) yesterday listed former military ruler General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf as the main accused in the Benazir Bhutto murder case and submitted charge sheet against him in Rawalpindi's Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC), DawnNews reported.

The FIA presented a four-point charge sheet against Musharraf in the ATC, accusing him for hatching a conspiracy, in connection with the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

Benazir was assassinated in a gun-and-bomb attack outside Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh on Dec 27, 2007. She was killed after addressing an election campaign rally in the city.

The charge sheet submitted contained the statements of four witnesses, including two American reporters, as well as Benazir's own statement.

Moreover, the charge sheet also leveled terrorism accusations against the former president.

The charge sheet stated that the statement of the American established Musharraf as the prime accused in Benazir's murder.

## Taliban attack Karzai palace, CIA base

AFP, Kabul

Taliban gunmen and bombers using fake Nato identification attacked an entrance to the Afghan presidential palace in the heart of Kabul yesterday, just a week after insurgent leaders opened an office in Qatar for peace talks.

A nearby building known to house a CIA base also came under attack as explosions and gunfire erupted for more than an hour in an area close to heavily secured Western embassies and ministry buildings.

Three Afghan security guards and all four assailants were killed, officials said.

The three guards were killed close to the Ariana hotel building, used as a CIA base since about 2002, but officials said neither the palace nor the CIA property were breached.

Karzai, who lives in the palace, was due to hold a press event in Kabul on Tuesday morning. Officials confirmed that he was in the building at the time of the attack but not in danger.

The attack came during a visit to Kabul by US envoy James Dobbins after a diplomatic spat over the Taliban's new office in Qatar, whose creation is meant to be a first step towards a peace deal to end 12 years of fighting in Afghanistan.

The Qatar office used the formal name of "Islamic Emirate Of Afghanistan" from the rebels' 1996-2001 government, and flew the white Taliban flag, displaying the trappings of power in a way that infuriated Karzai.

The president broke off Afghan-US talks on an agreement that would allow Washington to maintain soldiers in Afghanistan after 2014.

## ODDLY enough

### Death surfing with train!



STAR DESK

There's no sea in Johannesburg so the poor young men from the inner city of Soweto get their kicks by surfing high-speed commuter trains.

This dangerous pastime has claimed many lives throughout the years, but despite several initiatives to put a stop to it, train surfing remains pretty popular.

South Africa is considered the birth place of train surfing, with reports of people performing stunts on top of moving train cars dating back to the early 1980s.

From here, the extreme hobby spread all around the world, from Brazil, to Germany and Russia, but Johannesburg remains unique through its variety of styles.

### Toughest 400-metre race



STAR DESK

Even if you're not a professional athlete, completing a 400-metre race doesn't sound like that big of a challenge, right?

But what if that relatively short distance had to be covered up the steepest ski jumping hill in Europe? That certainly complicates things a bit, doesn't it?

The Red Bull 400 uphill race is the brainchild of former world-class sprinter Andreas Berger.

## Remembering the king of pop

HUFFINGTON POST

It's been four years since Michael Jackson died, on June 25, 2009, from cardiac arrest caused by a lethal combination of prescription drugs. His death, later ruled a homicide, shocked fans and musicians across the world.

Jackson rose to fame in 1964 as the youngest member of his family's Motown group, the "Jackson 5," and continued to dominate the music industry with best-selling hits such as "Thriller," "Billie Jean" and "Beat It."

Jackson is survived by his three children, Prince Michael Jackson II, Michael Joseph Jackson Jr and Paris-Michael Katherine Jackson.

