

# NEWSIN brief

## Cambodia re-elects strongman as PM

AFP, Phnom Penh

Cambodia's parliament reappointed strongman premier Hun Sen for another five-year term yesterday, extending his nearly three-decade rule as the opposition threatened to mount fresh protests over fiercely disputed elections. The controversial move came despite recent mass public demonstrations and a boycott of parliament by Hun Sen's political rivals, who have alleged widespread fraud in the July polls. The opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) refused to take its seats for the opening session of the lower house on Monday, saying the kingdom was sliding

## Iraq violence kills 27

AFP, Baghdad

Violence in Iraq killed 27 people yesterday as the United Nations warned that an upsurge in sectarian attacks threatens to displace more civilians from their homes. In Anbar province west of the capital, militants attacked two police stations and a local official's house killing seven police and the official's brother. North of Baghdad, two soldiers and four militants died in clashes in the Hamreen area. Three people were killed in the northern province of Nineveh and two in Babil province, south of Baghdad.

## Delhi gang-rapists launch appeal

AFP, New Delhi

Four men condemned to death for the murder and gang-rape of an Indian student were Tuesday brought back to court as their lawyers confirmed before judges that they would appeal the sentences. The convicts were produced before the High Court in New Delhi where a panel of two judges said they would take up the case from today, the lawyer for

## Rain chaos kills 36 in Vietnam, Cambodia

AFP, Hanoi

Heavy monsoon rains exacerbated by Typhoon Usagi have pounded parts of Vietnam and Cambodia killing at least 36 people, authorities said Tuesday, with many swept to their deaths in floods. Despite not being directly hit by Usagi -- the world's most powerful storm this year -- parts of Southeast Asia have seen a worsening of their annual rainy season as the typhoon barrelled through the Philippines and China

US President Barack Obama speaks at the 68th United Nations General Assembly in New York City yesterday. Over 120 prime ministers, presidents and monarchs are gathering this week for the annual meeting at the temporary General Assembly Hall at the UN headquarters while the General Assembly Building is closed for renovations.



PHOTO: AFP

# Stop fuelling bloodshed

*Ban appeals to powers over Syria as he opens UN summit*

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon yesterday appealed to major powers to stop sending weapons to all sides in Syria, as he opened the annual General Assembly summit. "I appeal to all states to stop fuelling the bloodshed and to end the arms flows to all parties," Ban told world leaders. The UN chief also called on Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and the opposition - and "all those I this hall with influence over them" - to work immediately to arrange a second Geneva conference aimed at reaching a political solution. "Military victory is an illusion. The only answer is a political settlement," he said. Ban's appeal comes as the United States and Russia haggle over the language in a Security Council resolution meant to seal an agreement for Assad to give up chemical weapons. US Secretary of State John Kerry was to meet his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov later in the day. Russia is the main supporter of Assad, while the rebels receive support from Western nations and Sunni Arab monarchies.

# Syria, Iran dominate UN summit

*Obama seeks diplomatic solution with Iran; demands UN action on Syria*

AFP, United Nations

US President Barack Obama and his new Iranian counterpart Hassan Rohani were to battle for the spotlight at the opening of the UN General Assembly yesterday, with all eyes on a possible historic meeting between the two leaders. While the war in Syria dominated discussion, the world was watching to see whether a handshake or some other gesture would signal a possible thaw in ties between the arch foes. Iranian foreign ministry said there were no plans for a meeting, which would be a first contact between the two countries' presidents since the 1979 revolution in Iran. Obama delivered his speech at UN as the second speaker yesterday before more than 130 kings, heads of state and government leaders gathered at the UN headquarters in New York for a week of addresses and negotiations. Rohani, who was elected in June

and has indicated he wants better ties with the West despite a nuclear showdown, was to give his speech several hours later. In his speech, Obama pushed for pursuing diplomacy with Iran's new government, but went defensive on Syria despite refusing to rule out force over Syria's chemical weapons. "The roadblocks may prove to be too great, but I firmly believe the diplomatic path must be tested," said Obama. Obama said he had instructed US Secretary of State John Kerry to pursue a possible new diplomatic opening with Tehran. Kerry will meet tomorrow with his new Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif as well as foreign ministers from Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia at the United Nations headquarters. It will be the first such minister-level talks on the nuclear issue since the negotiations were launched a

decade ago. But Obama stressed that Iran must take "transparent" and "verifiable" actions to end international suspicions over its nuclear program. In a sometimes defensive speech at the UN General Assembly, Obama said the United States was ready to defend interests in the Middle East including ensuring "free flow of energy" and prohibiting weapons of mass destruction. "The United States of America is prepared to use all elements of our power, including military force, to secure these core interests in the region," Obama told world leaders. Obama said that the world's credibility was at stake after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's alleged use of chemical weapons. "There must be a strong (UN) Security Council resolution to verify that the Assad regime is keeping its commitments, and there must be consequences if they fail to do so,"

Obama said. However, Obama said: "I do not believe that military action -- by those within Syria, or by external powers -- can achieve a lasting peace. Nor do I believe that America or any nation should determine who will lead Syria". The United States, Britain and France want a UN resolution that uses Chapter VII of the UN Charter to give legal force to the plan. Having first called for Chapter VII, Moscow now opposes the measure. But in a sign of a possible compromise, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov yesterday said the resolution could mention the article, which could only be invoked if the Russia-US chemical weapons deal was breached by either side in the conflict. Meanwhile, Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff used her speech ahead of Obama to launch a blistering attack on the United States for spying on her country.

# 'I had five sons, now I have four'

*Syria's grand mufti pardons rebels who killed his son*

THE INDEPENDENT ONLINE

'I met those men who assassinated my own son -- and they told me they didn't even know whom they were killing,' Sheikh Ahmad Badreddin Hassoun, the grand mufti of Syria, sits in a straightbacked chair, his immaculate white turban atop a narrow, intelligent and very troubled face. His son Saria was a second-grade student at Aleppo University when he was shot dead getting into his car. "I went to see the two men in the court and they said they'd just been given the number of the car's registration plate, that they didn't know whom they had killed until they went home and watched the news on television." I ask for his reaction to the men's confession, and the grand mufti puts his hands over his eyes and weeps. "He was only 21, my youngest son. It was 10 October last year. I am trying to forget that he is dead. In fact I feel as if Saria is still living. On that day, he was to be betrothed to his future wife.



The two men said that in all 15 were involved in planning my son's death. They said they were told he was a very important man. I said to them: 'I forgive you' and I asked the judge to forgive them. Sheikh Hassoun holds up a finger. "That same day I received an SMS message. It said: 'We are not in need of your forgiveness.' Then I heard on one of the news channels that the gang's leader had said he would 'judge the Mufti first. Then let him forgive us.' So I

sent a message: 'I have never killed any man and I don't intend to kill any man but I regard myself as a bridge of reconciliation. A Mufti must be a father to all. So what do you want to kill me for?' "They (the killers) said they received their command from Turkey and Saudi Arabia, that they were each paid 50,000 Syrian pounds. This shows that my son's killing was not out of doctrine or belief. The two men were 18 or 19 only." So each man was paid the equivalent of £350; Saria Hassoun's life was worth a total of just £700. "I had five sons," the Mufti says. "Now I have four." Sheikh Hassoun is, you might say, government-approved -- he prayed beside Bashar al-Assad in a Damascus mosque after a bomb warning -- and his family, let alone he himself, was an obvious target for Syria's rebels. But his courage and his message of reconciliation cannot be faulted. In whatever new Syria arises from the rubble, Sheikh Hussein should be there even if his President has gone.

# US to sign treaty on arms trade

AFP, United Nations

US Secretary of State John Kerry will this week sign the first global treaty to regulate the \$80 billion annual trade in conventional arms, seeking to stem the flow of weapons used in war crimes and genocide. A source familiar with the diplomatic maneuvers confirmed to AFP that Kerry would sign the treaty today after it was adopted earlier this year by the United Nations to regulate trade in tanks, armored combat vehicles, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, missiles as well as small arms. The treaty, which has been years in the making, was only adopted after tough negotiations at the United Nations. The talks had deadlocked last year after the United States asked for more time to pour over the draft text. Kerry praised the adoption of the treaty in saying it was "strong, effective and implementable" and insisted it would not infringe on the US Constitution and the Second Amendment right to bear arms. The pact "can strengthen global security while protecting the sovereign right of states to conduct legitimate arms trade," he added in his statement in April. It is the first major arms accord since the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and covers all conventional weapons. It has no automatic enforcement. However, it seeks to force the weapons industry within accepted boundaries.

## ODDLY enough

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TNN, Bangalore

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**Toppled Czech PM weds his nemesis**

AFP, Prague

Former Czech prime minister Petr Necas has married his top aide Jana Nagyova involved in a bribery and spy scandal that toppled his cabinet, Czech media reported yesterday. The physicist turned prime minister was forced out of office in June amid a huge uproar after Nagyova, his chief-of-staff and lover, was charged with bribery and abuse of power. Police said Nagyova, 49, had asked military intelligence officers to tail Necas's then wife, Radka. The scandal triggered a political firestorm in the EU country of 10.5 million, eventually leading to an early election set for October

# Take bus to save fuel

*India urges citizens*

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday urged citizens to "take the bus" as it announced an energy savings campaign aimed at knocking \$5 billion off its fuel bill, which has risen sharply in recent months. The nation imports over 75 percent of its crude oil -- which is priced in dollars -- and the cost has risen dramatically because of high global prices and a plunging rupee, which has hit record lows. "We need to do more to conserve fuel or face tougher choices such as steep price increases or even quantitative restrictions," Petroleum Minister Veerappa Moily told a news conference. The proposed measures, all voluntary, included switching off engines at traffic lights, carpooling, encouraging workers to take public transport and tuning up vehicles to improve their fuel efficiency. "We want people to take the bus and other forms of public transport," he said.

# India's hidden massacre of 1948

BBC ONLINE

When India was partitioned in 1947, about 500,000 people died in communal rioting, mainly along the borders with Pakistan. But a year later another massacre occurred in central India, which until now has remained clouded in secrecy. In September and October 1948, soon after independence from the British Empire, tens of thousands of people were brutally slaughtered in central India. Some were lined up and shot by Indian Army soldiers. Yet a government-commissioned report into what happened was never published and few in India know about the massacre. Critics have accused successive Indian governments of continuing a cover-up. The massacres took place a year after the violence of partition in what was then Hyderabad state, in the heart of India. It was one of 500 princely states that had enjoyed autonomy under British colonial rule. When independence came in 1947 nearly all of these states agreed to become part of India. But Hyderabad's Muslim Nizam, or prince, insisted on remaining independent. This outraged the new country's leaders in New Delhi. After an acrimonious stand-off between Delhi and Hyderabad, the



government finally lost patience. Members of the powerful Razakar militia, the armed wing of Hyderabad's most powerful Muslim political party, were terrorising many Hindu villagers. This gave the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, the pretext he needed. In September 1948 the Indian Army invaded Hyderabad. In what was rather misleadingly known as a "police action", the Nizam's forces were defeated after just a few days without any significant loss of civilian lives. But word then reached Delhi that arson, looting and the mass murder and rape of Muslims had followed the invasion. Determined to get to the bottom of

what was happening, an alarmed Nehru commissioned a small mixed-faith team to go to Hyderabad to investigate. It was led by a Hindu congressman, Pandit Sunderlal. But the resulting report that bore his name was never published. The Sunderlal report estimated that between 27,000 to 40,000 people lost their lives. No official explanation was given for Nehru's decision not to publish the contents of the Sunderlal report, though it is likely that, in the powder-keg years that followed independence, news of what happened might have sparked more sectarian unrest. The Sunderlal report is now open for viewing at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi.

# Cabby held at gunpoint, biker molests women

TNN, Kolkata

Two women returning home in a yellow taxi were molested by a biker who stopped the cab, barged into the passenger seat and held the cabby at gunpoint, asking him to "follow instructions or be shot". It was a chilling replay of the September 6 attack on a group of deejays, two of them women, near Kolaghat on NH 6 by a biker gang that stopped their car, dragged the women out and beat them with empty beer bottles. The latest attack took place on Narkeldanga Main Road a little after midnight on Sunday, with the cab being helplessly driven around for 20 minutes under the gun-toting youth's command, tailed by two of his aides on a bike. Though the police claim to have increased night patrols to crack down on rogue bikers, the hostage cab wasn't detected till it reached Bakri Market in Rajabazar, where people were still at work. Showing great courage and presence of mind, the cabbie slammed the brakes suddenly and stopped the vehicle, catching the youth by surprise. As people instantly started running towards the cab, alerted by the driver's cries for help and the women's shrieks, the youth opened the door, and fled with his aides. A case of molestation and kidnapping has been filed.