

# 8.2 tremor jolts Chile

Triggers 2-meter tsunami; 6 killed  
AFP, Santiago

A powerful 8.2-magnitude earthquake hit northern Chile's Pacific coast on Tuesday, killing at least six people as tsunami waves of more than two meters lashed the shore.

The quake sent panicked residents pouring into the streets, with more than 900,000 people along Chile's coast heeding government orders to evacuate their homes and seek higher ground.

Chilean television showed sagging roofs, broken windows and shelves and merchandise on the floor at shopping centers in Iquique, the city closest to the quake's epicenter.

Thousands of people had slept in the open on hills surrounding the city during the night, waiting out a tsunami alert.

Similar evacuation warnings were issued in a ripple effect up the Pacific coast of South America and into Central America.

About 10 hours after the two-minute quake, the Chilean government lifted what remained of the nationwide tsunami alert.

Chilean Interior Ministry Rodrigo Penaillillo asked people returning home to remain on alert, as sea levels will remain as much as a meter higher than usual.

He said six people -- four men and two women -- were killed in Iquique and the nearby Alto Hospicio municipality.



PHOTO: AFP, AP

People embrace on the upper floor of an apartment building located a few blocks from the coast where they gathered to avoid a possible tsunami in Iquique, Chile. Inset, Locals take refuge at a city stadium following the tsunami alert after a powerful 8.2-magnitude earthquake hit off Chile's Pacific coast on Tuesday.

## ME peace talks in disarray

AFP, Brussels

US Secretary of State John Kerry was scrambling yesterday to save his faltering Middle East peace efforts, after both Israel and Palestinians delivered him a stunning slap in the face.

The top US diplomat, who has made the quest for a long-elusive peace treaty his personal holy grail, was blindsided late Tuesday as minutes before a press conference at the Nato headquarters, both sides went rogue.

The Palestinians, infuriated by Israel's refusal to release some 26 Palestinian prisoners by a weekend deadline, announced out of the blue that they were planning to take their claim for statehood to 15 agencies.

And Israel, having already broken the terms of a July deal to return to the negotiating table, unveiled tenders for 700 more homes in east Jerusalem.

Kerry, who only hours before had held a two-hour breakfast meeting with Israeli

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem following late-night talks, abruptly cancelled plans to fly back to the region Wednesday to see Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas.



Palestinians seek to join UN agencies

Israel unveils tenders for 700 more settler homes

Arabs to meet April 9 on progress of talks

If Kerry fails to get the peace talks back on track, it will mark a humiliating blow for him. The potential fallout from a second failed attempt to broker peace by this US administration would pose a grim prospect for President Barack Obama.

While Obama has endorsed Kerry's efforts publicly, it has remained unclear just how much he would be willing to back his top diplomat if things go AWOL. Already under fire both at home and abroad for his perceived weakness in foreign policy, such as a failure to conduct robust efforts to end the war in Syria, Obama and his team may be unwilling to give Kerry more rein to meddle in the Middle East.

## S Arabia declares all atheists are terrorists

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Saudi Arabia has introduced a series of new laws which define atheists as terrorists, according to a report from Human Rights Watch.

In a string of royal decrees and an overarching new piece of legislation to deal with terrorism generally, the Saudi King Abdullah has clamped down on all forms of political dissent and protests that could "harm public order".

The new laws have largely been brought in to combat the growing number of Saudis travelling to take part in the civil war in Syria, who have previously returned with newfound training and ideas about overthrowing the monarchy.

To that end, King Abdullah issued Royal Decree 44, which criminalises "participating in hostilities outside the kingdom" with prison sentences of between three and 20 years, Human Rights Watch said.

Article one of the new provisions defines terrorism as "calling for atheist thought in any form, or calling into question the fundamentals of the Islamic

## More legal woes for Thai PM

REUTERS, Bangkok

A Thai Court yesterday accepted a new case against Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra over her removal of the security chief three years ago, compounding her legal problems after months of sometimes violent anti-government protests.

Twenty-four people have been killed in the crisis, including a protester shot in the head on Tuesday after weeks of calm in the capital, Bangkok.

Yingluck's supporters plan mass rallies of their own this week to counter attempts to remove her from office by activists determined to stamp out the influence of her brother, ousted ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, seen by many as the real power behind the government.

The Constitutional Court accepted a case brought by a group of 27 senators who petitioned it to rule that her removal of National Security Chief Thawil Pliensree in 2011 violated the constitution. Their case is that the prime minister

abused her position by moving the security chief to an inactive post.

If found guilty, Yingluck could be removed from her post for violating constitution.

In another victory for the opposition, the court on Wednesday threw out a petition by Labour Minister Chalerk Yoombamrung asking it to rule that the protests aimed at bringing down the government violated the constitution.

Yingluck faces separate charges of negligence brought by the National Anti-Corruption Commission over a rice subsidy scheme that has run up huge losses. Should it forward the case to the Senate for possible impeachment, she could be removed.

That would require the votes of three-fifths of the senators. Thailand's 150-seat Senate is made up of 77 elected senators. The other 73 are appointed and are largely seen as opponents of the government.

Weekend Senate elections suggest it will have a pro-government majority.

## MH370 TRAGEDY

### Criminal probe narrows on crew

REUTERS, Perth, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian police have ruled out involvement of any passengers in the disappearance of a missing jetliner, while Australian officials warned bad weather and a lack of reliable information were impeding efforts to find wreckage from the plane.

Authorities have not ruled out mechanical problems as causing the disappearance, but say all the evidence suggests the plane was deliberately diverted from its scheduled route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Malaysia's police chief said the investigation was focusing on the cabin crew and pilots, after clearing all 227 passengers of possible involvement in hijacking, sabotage or having personal or psychological problems that could have been connected to the disappearance.

The search and rescue teams are in a race against time to locate the plane's black box recorder, which has an expected battery life of around 30 days and without which it may never be possible to find the wreckage.

Retired Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, the head of the Australian agency coordinating the operation, said that a lack of reliable flight telemetry and punishing conditions at sea were making the operation even more challenging.

"In other words, we don't have a precise aircraft location for six hours before the aircraft went into the water somewhere," he said in an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"The reality is it's the most complex and challenging search and rescue operation, or search and recovery operation now that I've ever seen."

## INDIAN LOK SABHA POLLS 2014

### BJP fields Smriti Irani against Rahul

TNN, New Delhi

TV star-turned-BJP politician Smriti Irani will take on Rahul Gandhi in Amethi turning the contest into a high profile clash with Aam Aadmi Party's Kumar Vishwas already in the fray.

Irani will spice up the contest with Vishwas campaigning in Amethi in a bid to challenge the Congress leader who has won elections from Amethi in 2004 and 2009 and continues to be the favourite.

The decision to pit Irani, a Rajya Sabha MP seen to be close to Narendra Modi, comes after BJP decided that it

should try and raise the ante against Rahul and Sonia in their boro-oughts that have been Gandhi bastions. The move is also based on an assessment that the going may be tougher than usual for Congress's top duo with BJP staging a comeback in Uttar Pradesh on the back of perceived support for Modi.

VARUN GANDHI PRAISES RAHUL

Varun Gandhi was forced to issue a clarification yesterday after Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi welcomed a positive comment made by the BJP leader on development work in Amethi.

Varun on Tuesday night, in a meeting with teachers and NGOs, praised Rahul Gandhi for the work he has done in his constituency Amethi. However, Varun Gandhi was quick to deny that he had in any way endorsed any political party or candidate.

### No place for dynasty in democracy: Modi

PTI, Uttar Pradesh

BJP prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi yesterday criticised Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Samajwadi Party supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav, JMM chief Shibu Soren and RJD president Lalu Prasad for practising "dynastic politics" and said it has no place in a democracy.

"The Congress is a party of mother and son, the SP is a father, son and daughter-in-law party, the RJD is a husband and wife party, the JMM is a father and son party," Modi told an election meeting here in Palamu district.

"Dynastic politics has no importance in a democracy," he said.

Modi accused regional parties of being "chowkidars of a corrupt government" in New Delhi and said, "The government at the Centre is a liability. Change it."

Targeting Rahul Gandhi over his party's alliance with fodder case convict and RJD supremo Lalu Prasad,

Modi asked if the Congress vice president plans to guard the country's resources by allying with leaders accused in scams.

Referring to Rahul, he said the 'shehzade' had said that the country



needs its 1.25 crore people to act as watchmen guarding its resources but he was himself relying on tainted leaders.

Modi said that Rahul's watchmen would be Ashok Chavan, whose name had figured in the Adarsh scam and Lalu, who had been arrested in a fodder scam case.

Lalu Prasad, who has been

convicted and sentenced to five years imprisonment last year, is on bail and had allied with the Congress both in Bihar and Jharkhand.

Continuing his attack, the BJP's prime ministerial candidate said that he had not yet seen a cat, who could be trusted with guarding milk.

Recalling former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi's famous quote on central funds that only 15 paise of a rupee reached the people, Modi took a swipe at Congress's symbol. "It's the wonder of the hand," he said.

Modi said while a BJP victory in the elections is a foregone conclusion, people should ensure that the BJP gets 300 seats because a strong government would ensure that countries who act hostile now will change their approach.

When there is a strong government in the country, even big powerful countries like the USA accept it, he said.

He said that for the government at the centre, democracy was on a means

### Sonia files nomination for Rae Bareilly Tiny parties can be the king-maker

THE HINDU ONLINE

Congress president Sonia Gandhi yesterday filed her nomination from the Rae Bareilly seat for the Lok Sabha elections, declaring assets worth Rs 2.8 Crore.

"I have a special bond with Rae Bareilly. The people have adopted me with affection. I hope all will be well and the people will make me victorious again," the 67-year-old sitting MP who was accompanied by her son and party vice-president Rahul Gandhi told reporters after filing her papers.

Sonia kicked off the day with a road show from Fursatganj airport enroute to the district party office before moving to the district collector office. Supporters, who gave her convoy a rapturous welcome, are confident that this time around too the contest in Rae Bareilly will be 'one-sided.'

"Rae Bareilly owes its identity to Soniji. She will win by 5 lakh votes. No contest," Mohammad Ubaid, a supporter predicted.

The Congress is regularly targeted by the BJP for following dynasty politics. However, sentiments in Rae Bareilly differ. "She doesn't change her seat like BJP leaders. Look at Rajnath Singh and Murli Manohar Joshi run from here to there. They are not faithful to their people. Soniji shows her dedication and maintains civil language," said JK Vajpayee, another supporter.

Sonia Gandhi has assets worth about Rs.9 crore though she does not have a vehicle in her name. She has movable assets worth Rs. 2.81 crore and immovable assets worth Rs. 6.47 crore, according to the affidavit submitted along with her nomination papers she filed for the Rae Bareilly seat.



Top political parties are grabbing the headlines in the run-up to elections, but it might be the unrecognized small parties and independents that make news once the results come out. Despite a success rate of less than 5%, these parties and independents have together accounted for an average of 22 seats every poll since 1989 and cornered 5.34 crore votes in the 2009 elections.

In a closely contested election, these numbers can become significant. Not surprisingly, all national parties, in particular the BJP, are vying for their favour as every seat counts.

The BJP, given the unacceptability of its PM candidate Narendra Modi to several big regional parties, has already struck alliances with more than 15 small parties.

Their visible newfound importance is not without reason. In this election, there are about 1,600 unrecognised parties with a large of them likely to contest. Since 1999, the collective performance of these parties along with independents has been steadily improving with 16 seats in 1999, 20 seats in 2004 and 21 seats in 2009. The number of votes polled

### Blast kills six cops at Afghan ministry

REUTERS, Kabul

A Taliban suicide bomber blew himself outside Afghanistan's interior ministry in central Kabul yesterday, killing himself and at least six policemen, the latest in a string of attacks ahead of Afghanistan's April 5 presidential election.

Taliban insurgents also killed nine civilians including a provincial council candidate in northern Afghanistan, local officials said.

The Islamist Taliban have promised to do everything in their power to disrupt the April 5 vote when Afghans elect a successor to the incumbent president, Hamid Karzai, who is barred by the constitution from running again.

The Kabul attack came on the last day of campaigning for an election that is intended to mark the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack on ministry in an e-mail, saying the bomber had penetrated a third ring of security at the ministry before setting off the blast.

### Water crisis may lead India to war

AGENCIES

Asia is facing the brunt of climate change and will see severe stress on water resources and food-grain production in the future, increasing the risk of armed conflict among India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and China, the latest report of a UN panel has warned.

UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its report assessing impacts of climate change on human health, settlements and natural resources released on Monday, carried a dire warning. "The worst is yet to come," it said, if no measures are taken to curb the ill-effects of global warming.

India, like other developing economies, may lose up to 1.7% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) if the annual mean temperature rises by 1 degree Celsius compared to pre-industrialization level, hitting the poor the most.

India has several disputes with neighbours, specially with china, relating water issues. It also faces internal state-state disputes relating share of river water.

Among other things, the report warns that climate change increases the risk of armed conflict around the world because it worsens poverty and economic shocks.

"Climate change is already becoming a determining factor in the national security policies of states", said a statement issued by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which has been working to arrive at a global climate deal by 2015 to fight the menace effectively through combined efforts of nations.

Besides the UN report, a series of reports from intelligence agencies and research groups indicate the prospect of a water war is becoming increasingly likely.

In March, 2012, a report from the office of the US Director of National Intelligence said the risk of conflict would grow as water demand is set to outstrip sustainable current supplies by 40 per cent by 2030.

"These threats are real and they do raise serious national security concerns," Hillary Clinton, the then US secretary of state, said after the report's release.



### Let Musharraf go abroad: Pak army

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistani Army chief Gen Raheel Sharif is said to have advised the government to allow former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, indicted for treason, to go abroad for treatment and to look after his ailing mother.

The possible exit of 70-year-old Musharraf was discussed during a meeting between Gen Raheel and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday. ISI chief Lt Gen Zaheerul Islam also attended the 'informal consultations' to decide the fate of the former President, Express Tribune reported yesterday.

However, there was no official word on the high-level meeting.

"A well-informed security" official told the daily that Musharraf's name should be removed from the Exit Control List (ECL)

after a clear verdict by the special court, which is trying the former army chief for treason charges.

Anybody whose name is on the ECL cannot leave the country without permission.

Musharraf was indicted on Monday by a special court hearing the high treason case against him, becoming the first-ever military ruler to face criminal prosecution.

However, the federal government yesterday rejected an application from former President General Pervez Musharraf to have his name taken off the ECL so he can travel abroad.

Speculation is rife here that Musharraf is likely to leave the country, as the army headquarters is reportedly pressing the government to pave way for the ex-general's safe exit from Pakistan.