

# NEWSIN brief

## Fire kills 8 at Russian rehab centre

AFP, Moscow

Eight people died yesterday when a fire ravaged a drug rehab centre in Russia's Altai region, investigators said, the latest tragedy to raise questions about security standards at the country's medical care institutions. The fire left the building completely gutted, he said. Another six patients were injured in the accident. The emergencies ministry did not rule out negligence as a possible cause of the fire.

## Egypt Islamists get up to 88 yrs for rioting

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian court sentenced 13 supporters of deposed Islamist president Mohamed Morsi Saturday to prison terms ranging from five to 88 years for rioting, a judicial source said. They were accused of "rioting, sabotage and public order offences" in the southern towns of Samalut and Minya during protests against a bloody crackdown in Cairo on August 14 when hundreds of people were killed, the source said.

## Ethnic clashes kill 34 in Nigeria

AFP, Kano

Clashes between rival tribes have left at least 34 people dead with homes and barns torched in a village in central Nigeria, the state government told AFP yesterday. The violence erupted Saturday when a militia from the Eggon tribe attacked the Gwandara village of Egan following a dispute over farmland, said Nasarawa state spokesman Sani Musa Mairiga. Several homes and barns were burnt in the attack, sparked by a farming dispute in which an Eggon man was injured, he said.

## India gets new chief justice

IANS, New Delhi

Chief Justice Lodha succeeds Chief Justice P Sathasivam who demitted office on completion of his term Saturday. Lodha will preside over the Supreme Court for five months as his term will come to an end Sep 27, 2014. A law graduate from the Jodhpur University, Lodha practised law in the Rajasthan High Court dealing with constitutional, civil, company, criminal, taxation, labour and other matters.

## World's oldest man dies at 111 in Italy

PTI, London

The world's oldest man has died in Italy at the age of 111, just days before celebrating his 112th birthday, Guinness World Records said. Arturo Licata was awarded the Guinness World Records title of oldest living man on February 28, 2014 at the age of 111 years and 302 days. Licata passed away on April 24, aged 111 years and 357 days. He is survived by seven children, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

# World must isolate Russia

Says Obama as OSCE monitors presented before media as 'war prisoners'

AFP, Slavyansk

Pro-Russian militants in Ukraine presented a captured team of international observers as "prisoners of war" yesterday, raising the stakes in the crisis as US President Barack Obama warned Moscow against "provocation".

The self-styled mayor of rebel-held Slavyansk, which has become the epicentre of the crisis, led eight European members of an OSCE military inspection mission before scores of local and foreign journalists in the town hall.

With four armed rebels watching over him, a spokesman for the group, German officer Axel Schneider, said the team was in good health and stressed they were "OSCE officers with diplomatic status".

"I cannot go home of my own free will," he told reporters.

One of the OSCE men, a Swede, was later released as he suffers from diabetes, a rebel spokeswoman told AFP.

Pro-Russia militias this month occupied a string of towns and cities in eastern Ukraine, sparking a military response from the Ukrainian army, which is laying siege to Slavyansk.

Western nations and Kiev have accused Russia of stirring up unrest in its neighbor and supporting the armed separatists' revolt.

The detention of the OSCE men sparked global outrage amid the worst East-West crisis since the end of the Cold War.

AFP reporters in Slavyansk said tensions were running high at checkpoints, while militants were reinforcing their positions in the town and ordering journalists away.

The international community is on

edge, with one Western diplomat raising the possibility of an invasion in the coming days by Russia, which has some 40,000 troops massed on the border.

Speaking in Asia, Obama called for global unity as Europe and the United States prepare fresh sanctions against Moscow expected to come into force as early as today.

Obama said Russia had "not lifted a finger" to implement a deal struck in Geneva on April 17 aimed at easing the

## UKRAINE CRISIS



OSCE captives

crisis.

Continued Russian "provocation" would meet with "consequences, and those consequences will continue to grow", he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur.

He urged Russia to call on the militants in eastern Ukraine to leave occupied buildings and "participate with international observers and monitors rather than stand by while they are being bullied and in some cases detained by these thugs".

Russia has said it will also take steps to secure the European inspectors' freedom but has blamed Kiev for their capture, stressing it was up to the host

country to ensure their security.

The rebels have accused the OSCE team of being "Nato spies" and said they would only be freed as part of a prisoners swap.

As the crisis worsened, the Group of Seven leading economies and the European Union were readying sanctions that could be announced as soon as today in a bid to raise the pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The EU said top officials would meet today to weigh further sanctions. Diplomats have already approved in principle a list adding 15 people to the 55 Russians and Ukrainians already blacklisted.

The United States and European Union have already targeted Putin's inner circle with visa and asset freezes and imposed sanctions on a key Russian bank.

Obama stressed the need for a unified response to isolate Russia.

It was vital to avoid "falling into the trap of interpreting this as the US is trying to pull Ukraine out of Russia's orbit, circa 1950. Because that's not what this is about," he said.

"We're going to be in a stronger position to deter Mr Putin when he sees that the world is unified and the United States and Europe are unified rather than this is just a US-Russian conflict," Obama added.

A senior US official said the sanctions would target Russia's defence industry as well as individuals and companies close to Putin.

While Obama has ruled out sending US or Nato forces into Ukraine, Washington has begun deploying 600 US troops to bolster Nato's defences in nearby eastern European states.



John XXIII



John Paul II

# Popes become saints

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Francis yesterday proclaimed John Paul II and John XXIII as the Catholic Church's newest saints at a ceremony joined by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims for the two pontiffs who helped shape 20th century history.

"We declare and define as saints the blessed John XXIII and John Paul II," the Catholic leader said in a Latin prayer, as pilgrims and foreign dignitaries massed in St Peter's Square applauded and chanted: "Amen!"

In his homily, Francis praised them as "men of courage" who worked "in renewing and updating the Church".

"They were priests, bishops and popes of the 20th century. They lived through the tragic events of that century but they were not overwhelmed by them. For them, God was more powerful," he said.

Pope emeritus Benedict XVI, 87, who last year became the first pontiff to step down since the Middle Ages, made a rare public appearance in his white papal cassock and Francis embraced him before the ceremony.

Francis was co-celebrating the mass with Benedict XVI and hundreds of bishops and cardinals -- the first time that two living popes said mass together.

It was also the first time that two Catholic Church leaders were being declared saints on the same day.

Commentators defined the event as a "four-pope day" and the Vatican said 800,000 people followed the event in Rome, including 500,000 in and around St Peter's Square.

John Paul II was hugely popular but was also a divisive figure who alienated many leftist Catholics during his 27-year reign and has been criticised for turning a blind eye to revelations of child sex crimes by priests.

The charismatic globe-trotting John Paul helped topple Communism in Eastern Europe and John XXIII or "Good Pope John" is best remembered for launching a process of reform of the Catholic Church in the 1960s.

John XXIII helped bring to an end official Catholic prejudice against Jews and has been credited for his pacifying role during the Cold War, including in defusing tensions during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.



Indian supporters of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) gather to listen to Mayawati address an election rally in support of local candidates, in Allahabad, yesterday. Inset, Congress Party president Sonia Gandhi greets supporters during the Congress party election campaign public meeting in Hyderabad. India's 814-million-strong electorate is voting in the world's biggest election to form a new government.

PHOTO: AFP

## Syria chemical deadline passes

OPCW says regime still holds 8% of toxic material

AFP, Damascus

Syria still holds around eight percent of its chemical weapons material, missing a deadline to remove or destroy it all, the mission overseeing the destruction of its arsenal said yesterday.

Despite the slip, the head of the mission (OPCW) Sigrid Kaag, said she was still hopeful a June 30 deadline for the complete destruction of the chemical arms would be met.

Parliament meanwhile announced that four new candidates had submitted applications to run in Syria's June 3 presidential elections.

On the ground, at least 21 people were killed when rebels carried out a mortar attack on regime-parts of the northern city of Aleppo.

Kaag told reporters in Damascus that 7.5-8.0 percent of Syria's declared chemical weapons material remained in-country, at "one particular site."

"However, 92.5 percent of chemical weapons material removed or destroyed is significant progress," she said.

"We also however need to... ensure the remaining 7.5-8.0 percent of the chemical weapons material is also removed and destroyed."

Under a US-Russian deal negotiated last year, Syria signed up to the Chemical Weapons Convention and agreed to hand over its entire chemical arsenal by June 30 of this year.

Kaag acknowledged the security challenges facing the mission, but said Syria was required to meet its commitments nonetheless.

## 'Holocaust most heinous crime'

AFP, Ramallah

The mass killing of Jews in the Holocaust was "the most heinous crime" against humanity in the modern era, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said yesterday in his strongest remarks yet on the Nazi genocide.

The statement comes at a sensitive time for US-led peace efforts, with Israel having suspended faltering talks last week after Abbas reached an agreement with the Islamist Hamas movement to form a unity government.

In a statement released just hours before Israel began marking Holocaust remembrance day, the Palestinian leader expressed sympathy with families of the six million Jews who were killed by the Nazi regime.

"What happened to the Jews in the Holocaust is the most heinous crime to have occurred against humanity in the modern era," Abbas said.

He also expressed his "sympathy with the families of the victims and many other innocent people who were killed by the Nazis".

His remarks, made in response to a question during talks last week with an American rabbi promoting Jewish-Muslim understanding, came as Israel and the Palestinians traded blame over the collapse of the peace talks.

Although the Palestinian leader has condemned the Holocaust in the past, his attitude has come in for heavy scrutiny since the early 1980s, when in his doctoral thesis he questioned the total number of Jews killed.

"No one can confirm or deny the figure peddled about by the rumour that six million Jews were among the victims," he wrote, suggesting the number "may number six million or be far fewer, even fewer than one million". In 2011, he reportedly said that he now accepts the figure of six million Jewish victims.



## An 'off switch' for the brain?

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have developed an "off-switch" for the brain to effectively shut down neural activity using light pulses.

In 2005, Stanford scientist Karl Deisseroth discovered how to switch individual brain cells on and off by using light in a technique he dubbed 'optogenetics'.

Research teams around the world have since used this technique to study brain cells, heart cells, stem cells and others regulated by electrical signals.

However, light-sensitive proteins were efficient at switching cells on but proved less effective at turning them off.

Now, after almost a decade of research, scientists have been able to shut down the neurons as well as activate them.

Deisseroth's team has now re-engineered its light-sensitive proteins to switch cells much more adequately than before. His findings are presented in the journal Science.

Thomas Insel, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, which funded the study, said this improved "off" switch will help researchers to better understand the brain circuits involved in behavior, thinking and emotion.

This technique could help scientists develop treatments for patients with some brain diseases as it could allow problematic parts of the brain to be switched off with light and tackled with minimal intrusion.

## 20 YRS SINCE END OF APARTHEID Glad that Mandela not alive, says Tutu



AFP, Cape Town

Nobel peace laureate Desmond Tutu said in an interview published yesterday that he was glad Nelson Mandela was not alive to witness the current state of South Africa.

"I'm glad that Madiba is dead. I'm glad that most of these people are no longer alive to see this," Tutu told South Africa's Sunday Times newspaper, referring to what he saw as the slow pace of change in the 20 years since apartheid.

His comments were published as South Africa was celebrating the 20th anniversary of its first all-race elections that ended decades of racial oppression under apartheid and brought Mandela to power as its first black president.

"I didn't think there would be a disillusionment so soon," the Anglican archbishop emeritus was quoted as saying.

Tutu, 82, who is still regarded as a moral beacon in South Africa, had confirmed on Wednesday that he would not vote for the ruling ANC in the May 7 elections.

However, President Jacob Zuma, who led the celebrations on the 20th anniversary of post-apartheid democracy in South Africa, insisting it is closer to its dream of a multi-racial nation despite stubborn inequality, poverty and corruption.

But its successes have been sullied by mismanagement and high-level corruption blamed largely on the ANC-led government, as well as a legacy of racial inequality, poverty, rampant crime and a lack of basic services.

For many South Africans, Freedom Day brings back sweet memories of the euphoria of the election on April 27, 1994, when black, Indian and mixed race voters stood in long lines alongside whites to cast their first ever ballots.

Tutu has said the day felt like "falling in love".

FW de Klerk, apartheid South Africa's last president who shared the Nobel peace prize with Mandela, described the day as "our proudest moment as South Africans".

Twenty years on, the euphoria has died down and the country is counting both the gains and failures of the democratic era.



TNN, New Delhi/Rae Bareilly

The war of words between Congress and BJP escalated yesterday with Priyanka mocking Modi over his 56-inch chest remark and the BJP releasing a video targeting Robert Vadra.

The BJP on Sunday released a video targeting Robert Vadra for his land deals in Haryana and Rajasthan under the Congress-ruled governments.

The video named Damad Shree accused the Haryana and Rajasthan governments of colluding with Robert Vadra to help him acquire lands fraudulently.

The video also accused Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi of facilitating illegal land deals for Vadra.

BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad detailed the charges against Vadra and said Sonia and Rahul should answer the questions raised by the party.

Accusing Vadra of violating land

ceiling laws, the BJP asked Congress to explain the Vadra model of development.

BJP's attack came hours after Priyanka Gandhi, addressing a meeting in Rae Bareilly, took a jibe at Narendra Modi for his 56-inch chest remark.

Taking a dig at Modi, Priyanka



Gandhi said a 56-inch chest is not needed to run the country but you need a "big heart" and "moral strength".

"A 56-inch chest is not needed to run this country, a big heart is needed to run it. To run this country cruel force of power is not needed, but moral

strength is needed. It needs an internal strength," Priyanka said while addressing a meeting in Rae Bareilly.

Modi had said during the Gorakhpur rally that it would take a "56-inch chest" to convert UP into Gujarat.

"Netaji (Mulayam Singh), do you know the meaning of converting UP into Gujarat? It means 24-hour electricity, no power cut for 365 days in every village and street. You can't do it. You don't have the guts to turn UP into Gujarat. It takes a 56-inch chest," Modi had said.

Priyanka said this is the country of Mahatma Gandhi and people of all religions, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhist, Jains, sacrificed their lives for its freedom.

"This is your country and you are its guard. This is my country and the blood which runs in my veins has mixed with its soil," Priyanka said, adding, "It your duty to protect the country and the 'dharma' of my family".