

## Big quake rattles Tokyo, 17 injured

A strong 6.0-magnitude earthquake shook buildings in the Japanese capital Tokyo early Monday, slightly injuring 17 people, but officials stressed there was no risk of a tsunami. Tokyo inhabitants - set to enjoy a national holiday -- were woken shortly after dawn by the quake, which jolted the city's densely-built apartments and office blocks.

## Attack on Nato trucks kills 2 in Pakistan

Gunmen attacked three container trucks carrying Nato supplies en route to Afghanistan in Pakistan's troubled northwest on Monday, killing two people, officials said. The trucks came under fire in the Wazir Dhand area of Khyber, one of seven districts that make up Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal belt, as they were on their way to Afghanistan.

## Cargo ship sinks near Hong Kong; 11 missing

Authorities launched an air and sea rescue operation yesterday to find 11 crew members from a Chinese cargo ship after it collided with another vessel and sank just outside Hong Kong's teeming waters. Four helicopters and more than 20 ships from China and Hong Kong were deploying to the waters near Po Toi, an island lying at the edge of Hong Kong's territory where the ship sank in the early hours of the morning, officials said.

## Saudi MERS death toll reaches 115

Saudi health authorities yesterday announced that the death toll from the MERS coronavirus has reached 115 since the respiratory disease first appeared in the kingdom in 2012. The country's number of MERS infections has meanwhile risen to 414, the world's highest tally, the ministry reported. American health officials on Friday confirmed the first case of MERS in the United States, a health care provider who had travelled to Riyadh for work.

## 5 cops, 2 civilians killed in Afghan attack

Militants attacked a police checkpoint in northern Afghanistan yesterday, killing five policemen and two civilians during a two-hour-long shootout with security forces, officials said. The brazen assault took place in Gorzaiwan district near Maimana -- the capital city of Faryab province -- early in the morning, Mohammad Nahim deputy provincial police chief told AFP. No one claimed immediate responsibility but such attacks are often carried out by the Taliban.

# Combat rages in east

Russia says European peace at risk amid war fears

AFP, Slavyansk

Russia yesterday warned that Europe's peace was at risk over the escalating crisis in Ukraine, where deadly fighting raged around a flashpoint eastern city and the interim president warned of "war".

European leaders fearing all-out civil war was breaking out on their eastern flank have launched a desperate new peace bid, trying to force Ukraine and Russia to find a negotiated solution before it is too late.

The chairman of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Didier Burkhalter, was due in Moscow tomorrow amid calls for his group to mediate between Kiev and the separatists in the east.

But events on the grounds were overtaking the diplomatic initiative.

Fierce exchanges of fire were taking place to the east and south of the town of Slavyansk, the epicentre of the armed insurgency, as Ukrainian troops corralled pro-Russian gunmen towards the centre for what could be a devastating showdown.

"They are waging a war on us, on our own territory," Interior Minister Arsen Avakov told reporters as he oversaw the offensive in the combat zone. "My mission is to eliminate the terrorists."

He said there had been deaths in the exchange of fire by small arms and heavy weapons, but did not immediately give a toll for each side.

The advance on Slavyansk was part of a wider military operation in the east to root out the insurgents, who

are holding more than a dozen towns and who have declared two autonomous territories around them.

There were concerns also for the south of Ukraine, in the port city of Odessa, which was seething after a deadly day of clashes and a fire last Friday that killed 42 people.

Russia, which denies any hand in the eastern or southern violence, warned in a foreign ministry report yesterday that the unrest in Ukraine was now "fraught with such destructive consequences for Europe's peace, stability and democratic development that it is absolutely necessary to prevent it".

The report accused Ukrainian "ultra-nationalists" -- who Moscow claims controls Kiev's government -- of rights violations on a "mass" scale.

Earlier, Ukraine's interim president declared that Russian meddling had brought war to his country, and warned that pro-Russian provocateurs might stage violence in Kiev during celebrations on Friday marking the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

"War is in effect being waged against us, and we must be ready to repel this aggression," said Oleksandr Turchynov, who has placed Ukraine's armed forces on combat alert and reintroduced conscription amid fears of a Russian invasion.

On a visit to Odessa on Sunday, Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk vowed a full investigation into the violence that occurred there last week and blamed what he called the "inefficient" police force.

The unrest was part of a Russian plan "to destroy Ukraine and its statehood," Yatsenyuk charged.

## WHO declares polio emergency

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization yesterday warned that polio has reemerged as a public health emergency, after new cases of the crippling disease surfaced in a number of countries.

"The conditions for a public health emergency of international concern have been met," WHO assistant director general Bruce Aylward told reporters in Geneva following crisis talks on the virus long thought to be on the road to extinction.

"If unchecked, this situation could result in failure to eradicate globally one of the world's most serious vaccine preventable diseases," he added.

The WHO convened the emergency talks last week after the virus was discovered in 10 countries, including three where it is still considered endemic: Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan.

In 1988, the disease was endemic in 125 countries.

The decision to categorise polio as a public health emergency brings with it recommendations for countries where the disease is endemic to implement vaccine requirements for anyone wishing to travel abroad.

Polio, a crippling and potentially fatal viral disease that mainly affects children under the age of five, has come close to being beaten as the result of a 25-year effort.



A woman carries placard to press for the release of missing girls during a rally in Lagos, yesterday.

## 'I abducted your girls' Boko Haram threaten to sell all Nigerian schoolgirls as slaves

AFP, Kano

Boko Haram yesterday claimed the abduction of hundreds of schoolgirls in northern Nigeria that has triggered international outrage, threatening to sell them as "slaves".

"I abducted your girls," the Islamist group's leader Abubakar Shekau said in the 57-minute video obtained by AFP, referring to the 276 students kidnapped from their boarding school in Chibok, Borno state, three weeks ago.

Fifty-three of the girls managed to escape from the militants but 223 were still being held, state police said last Friday.

Nigeria's President Goodluck Jonathan and his administration have been under mounting pressure to act since gunmen stormed the girls' school on April 14, forcing them from their dormitories onto truck and driving them into the bush.

Jonathan pledged in his first public comments on the abduction on Sunday evening that the government would find the girls and return them to their families.

In the latest video, Shekau is seen dressed in combat fatigues standing in front of an armoured personnel carrier and two pick-up trucks mounted with sub-machine guns. Six armed men stand beside him with their faces covered.

The images are blurry at times but zoom in to Shekau, who speaks in the local Hausa language and Arabic, as well as English.

For the first 14 minutes, he takes a swipe at democracy, Western education, efforts for Muslims and Christians to live in peace and rails against non-believers in Islam.

"I abducted a girl at a Western education school and you are disturbed. I said Western education should end. Western education should end. Girls, you should go and get married," he said.

"I will repeat this: Western education should fold up. I abducted your girls."

"I will sell them in the market, by Allah," Shekau said, claiming his group was holding the girls as "slaves".

"I will marry off a woman at the age of 12. I will marry off a girl at the age of nine," he said elsewhere in the video.

Unconfirmed reports from local leaders in Chibok suggested that the girls had been taken across Nigeria's borders with Chad and Cameroon and sold as brides for as little as \$12.

Boko Haram has been waging an increasingly deadly insurgency in Nigeria's north that has claimed more than 1,500 lives this year alone.

The violence has largely been confined to three north-eastern states -- Borno, Yobe and Adamawa -- which have been under a state of emergency since May last year.



Pro-Russian militants carry an man with his eyes covered outside the regional state building they seized in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## ASSAM VIOLENCE Calm returns; curfew relaxed

PTI, Guwahati

Curfew was relaxed yesterday in violence-hit Baksa and Kokrajhar and neighbouring Chirang districts of Assam where 34 persons were killed in the mayhem unleashed by NDFB-Songbijit militants since Thursday last.

With no fresh incident reported so far, the district administrations relaxed the prohibitory order imposed since Friday night for eight hours from 10:00am at Baksa, for six hours at Kokrajhar and for seven hours from 10am at Chirang respectively.

Flag march by the Army continued to instill confidence among the people even as the security forces were patrolling the affected areas to prevent further outbreak of violence, the sources said.

Bodies of two women, feared drowned while attempting to flee, were recovered at Durmonighat under Barpeta Road police station on Sunday taking the toll to 34.

Thousands of people, who fled their homes during the violence, were being

provided shelter by the government in relief camps.

Meanwhile, a day after Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah alleged that Narendra Modi was responsible for stoking communal fires in Assam, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday made a similar, but veiled attack on the BJP prime ministerial hopeful.

"Certain comments of some political parties, including the aspirant of high offices are adding fuel [to the violence in Assam]," she posted on Facebook.

At a rally in Nadia district, she said: "Fires would burn throughout the country" if a candidate who talked about driving away certain sections of people, was elected to head the nation.

Campaigning in Bankura in West Bengal on Sunday, Modi, however, repeated a line that has been a controversial theme of his campaign in the Northeast: "Illegal Bangladeshi migrants who are being brought to India in the name of vote-bank politics will have to go back to Bangladesh."

## MIGRANT TRAGEDY 22 killed in Greece as boat sinks

AFP, Athens

At least 22 migrants including four children drowned in the Aegean Sea yesterday after a yacht and a dinghy carrying them towards Greek shores capsized, coastguard officials said.

Some 65 migrants were attempting to make the crossing from neighbouring Turkey when their vessels went down near the Greek island of Samos.

The authorities have so far picked up 36 survivors. A search was underway for half a dozen migrants still believed to be missing, backed by two helicopters, Greek and EU coastguard patrol vessels and three fishing boats.

## Young blood: elixir of youth?

AFP, Paris

Young blood may hold the long-sought cure for the decline of the ageing brain, according to research which showed injections of juvenile mouse blood boosting learning and memory in older rodents, scientists said Sunday.

Multiple blood transfusions from three-month-old mice, the equivalent age of 20 to 30 years old in humans, yielded improvements in the brain structure and function of 18-month-old rodents -- about 56 to 69 in human years, a team wrote in the journal Nature Medicine.

"I think there is definitely something special within young blood that can improve many aspects of ageing," study co-author Saul Villeda of the University of California School of Medicine in San Francisco told AFP.

"I think it is most warranted to now extend studies to ageing humans."

Villeda and a team tested the older mice before and after the injections to compare their results in tests of learning and memory, governed by the hippocampus region of the brain.

## Mona Lisa world's first 3D artwork!

MAIL ONLINE

Leonardo da Vinci could have pioneered the world's first 3D image by painting two similar portraits of the Mona Lisa, it has been claimed.

The Renaissance artist produced two almost identical copies, which when viewed next to one another would create the impression of depth, according to German art researchers.

The effect would reportedly be similar to superimposed images used today to create the impression of three-dimensional drawings, which are often viewed with red and blue tinted glasses.

The extraordinary theory was revealed in a paper by Claus-Christian Carbon and Vera Hesslinger, according to the Huffington Post.

It relies on a similar painting to the Mona Lisa - unveiled in 2012 - being produced by the artist himself rather than a student, as has been theorised.

The researchers analysed the copy, called the 'Prado Mona Lisa', at the Museo del Prado in Madrid, Spain, as well as the famous portrait of Mona Lisa that hangs at Paris's Louvre museum.

They discovered there was a slight perspective shift between the artworks - with

the painter (or painters) having created them from different vantage points.

These points measured around 2.7 inches in horizontal distance - which is similar to the average distance between a person's eyes, they found.

Using this notion, they concluded that the two paintings, when viewed together, could present the first stereoscopic image in



the world.

The researchers added that they had used a red-cyan anaglyph to combine the two portraits - and it had backed their theory that the finished product portrayed depth.

But they admitted it was impossible to know whether the stereoscopic masterpiece was a coincidence, or whether da Vinci had knowingly created it as part of a science project.

## SEEKING VOTE IN THE NAME OF RELIGION

## Modi in hot soup

EC seeks report as TMC demands arrest

PTI, Kolkata

Keeping up the heat on BJP's prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi, Congress and Trinamool Congress yesterday wrote to Election Commission seeking action against him alleging that he has violated the model code by 'seeking vote in the name of religion' and party chief Mamata Banerjee renewed her demand for his arrest.

Modi addressed a rally in Faizabad with the images of Hindu god Ram and what was purportedly a Ram temple prominent behind him. Faizabad is right next to Ayodhya, the town where the 16th century Babri mosque was razed by Hindu activists in 1992. The BJP and its affiliates have been campaigning for a Ram temple at the disputed site.

Modi skirted any reference to his party's pet theme of building Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya but made several references to Lord Ram to exhort people to defeat Congress, SP and BSP and support BJP.

The Congress instantly said it would

complain to the Election Commission.

"TMC has written today to the Election Commission asking for action against Modi for seeking vote in the name of religion, spreading communal disharmony and breaking the model code of conduct," the party's national spokesperson Derek O'Brien told PTI.

Addressing an election meeting at Bongaon in North 24 Paraganas district bordering Bangladesh during the day, Mamata said "The person who is talking about racial riots, he has no right to become the Prime Minister. This is a violation of the model code of conduct. Instead he should be sent to jail with ropes tied to his waist. He should be arrested."

If the Election Commission deems that his Faizabad rally violated its rules, Modi could face the second case in a week.

An FIR or First Information Report was filed against him on Wednesday for flashing his party's lotus symbol and addressing the media near the polling station where he cast his vote in Gandhinagar.

## Smriti Irani, who?

NDTV ONLINE

"Who?" was Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's cutting response to questions on Sunday about Smriti Irani, who is running against her brother, Rahul, in Amethi.

Irani, BJP leader, was equally scathing in her response. "I am not surprised. If u forget scams done by a family member why wud u remember my name:)" (sic)," the actor-turned-politician tweeted today, referring to allegations of corruption that are swarming around Priyanka's husband, entrepreneur Robert Vadra.

The exchange of fire comes a day before Narendra Modi, the BJP's prime ministerial candidate, arrives in Amethi to rally support for Irani.

Narendra Modi yesterday called Irani his sister and promised to change the face of the Lok Sabha constituency, currently represented by Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi.

Opinion polls show the BJP positioned to win the most seats in the national election. The Congress, fronted by Rahul Gandhi, is struggling with predictions of one of its poorest performances ever. The party is headed by his mother, Sonia.

Priyanka is not contesting the election, but as campaign manager for her mother and brother, she has become a headline-stirrer in the last few weeks on account of an aggressive confrontation with Modi.