### Iran's Rouhani demands impartial judiciary

AFP, Tehran

President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday that Iran's judiciary must be independent from the political fray and uphold the rule of law, in a rare criticism of the conservative-dominated

The self-declared moderate president was speaking at a gathering of hundreds of judges, among them judiciary chief Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani.

#### Jihadists execute three Syria rebel officers

AFP, Beirut

Jihadists from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant have executed three officers of the Western and Arabbacked rebel Free Syrian Army, a monitor said yesterday.

The bullet-riddled bodies of the three were found on Friday, two days after suspected Islamist militants kidnapped them in the oilrich eastern province of Deir Ezzor, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

#### Israel arrests more Palestinians in hunt for teens

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli security forces have arrested 10 more Palestinians in the West Bank as they press their search for three teenagers believed to have been kidnapped, the army said yesterday.

"Ten people were arrested overnight, bringing to 330 the number of wanted Palestinians arrested since the beginning of the operation," a spokeswoman said.

#### Thousands gather at Britain's Stonehenge for solstice

AFP, London

Druids and pagans were among the nearly 40,000 people who gathered at Britain's ancient Stonehenge monument to hail the summer solstice at dawn yesterday.

Police said they arrested 25 people, mostly for drug offences, during the allnight celebration to mark the longest day of the year.

## Pakistan woman raped and hanged from tree

AFP, Lahore

A 21-year-old woman was raped and hanged from a tree in Pakistan, police said, in a case bearing a chilling resemblance to a spate of similar attacks that sparked outrage in neighbouring India.

The woman's boyfriend of six months, named by police as Muhammad Saqib, confessed to the rape and murder and has been taken into custody, police said.

cast their votes

5:00 pm on Saturday (0900 GMT).

choose which candidates can stand.

who registered to vote at elections in 2012.

AFP, Hong Kong

Beijing as "illegal".

Central movement.

300,000 people to take part.

around the city on Sunday.

the finger at China.

HONG KONG DEMOCRACY POLL

More than half-a-million

More than half-a-million people have voted in an unofficial

Hong Kong electoral reform poll, organisers said yesterday,

in a ballot hit by a massive cyberattack and labelled by

Online polling started on Friday at noon and 514,996

residents had taken part in the "civil referendum", which

been increasingly vocal calls for residents to be able to

China has promised direct elections for the next chief

Participation in the informal ballot has already beaten

The pro-democracy group said before launching the

The 500,000 who had voted in the first 29 hours of the

The ballot allows permanent residents of the semi-

autonomous city to vote through a website or on a

smartphone app and there are plans to open polling booths

But the online voting system has been targeted by a mas-

sive denial-of-service attack, with organisers swift to point

poll represents a sizeable chunk of the 3.47 million people

exercise, which runs until June 29, that they were hoping for

executive in 2017, but has ruled out allowing voters to

all expectations, surprising even its organisers, the Occupy

choose who can run for the chief executive post.



region of Lugansk

ence in disputed

May 11 referen-

dums, the legiti-

rejected by Kiev

and the West.



PHOTO: AFP

# Ukraine reports new rebel Putin orders central Russia attacks after ceasefire

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine said yesterday that pro-Russian rebels continued to mount fierce mortar attacks against government forces in the strife-torn separatist east after rejecting the terms of the new pro-Western leader's unilateral ceasefire.

The resumption of violence in the 11-week insurgency threatening to splinter the ex-Soviet state came as Washington slapped sanctions on top separatist leaders and warned Russia against sending troops into Ukraine.

And Russia appeared to be ratcheting up tensions further by putting its central forces on "full combat alert" and ordering snap military exercises that will involve some 65,000 troops.

Ukrainian border guards said the rebels used sniper and mortar fire to strike one of their bases in the eastern Donetsk region four hours after President Petro Poroshenko declared a unilateral halt to hostili-

ties that have claimed more than 375 lives. "Three soldiers were injured -one seriously -- and equipment damaged," the border guard service said in a statement.

It added that Ukrainian troops had to return fire when the same militia unit mounted a second attack near a different Russian border crossing a few minutes later.

"The border guards opened fire and repelled the attack," the Ukrainian statement said.

A spokesman for Ukraine's "anti-terrorist operation" reported heavy fighting around the rebel stronghold city of Slavyansk while the defence ministry said one of its anti-aircraft bases was attacked by "50 men in camouflage".

Poroshenko declared the week-long unilateral ceasefire on Friday evening while stressing that "does not mean that we will not fight back against aggression toward our troops."

The order and simultaneous peace plan unveiled by the 48-year-old chocolate baron was immediately rejected by several rebel commanders and branded an "ultimatum" by the Russian foreign ministry.

Poroshenko's attempts to resolve the country's worst post-Soviet crisis two weeks into his term have also been complicated by a new deployment of Russian forces along parts of the border where the

# forces on 'full combat alert'

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered troops in central Russia on "full combat alert" for snap drills, the defence minister said yesterday.

The order came a day after the Kremlin confirmed it was beefing

up its military presence at the border with Ukraine.

"In accordance with his (Putin's) order, from 11:00 am Moscow time (0700 GMT) the troops of the central military district ... have been put on full combat alert,"

Russian news agencies quoted Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu as saying.

Shoigu added that the troops were ordered on full combat alert after Putin told the military to conduct unscheduled exercises

June 28.

to begin talks.

saying a Russian customs incident.

of military equipment would be involved in the new drills.

The Kremlin late Friday

slammed Kiev's ceasefire announcement, noting it lacked an invitation to east Ukrainian rebels Putin's office also demanded an

ing" of a border post

official had been wounded as a result of the Russia's chief of the

180 planes, some 60

Among key objectives of the drills will be troop movements over long distances, according to Russian news agencies.

that will last between June 21 and

apology from Kiev over the "shoot-

general staff, Valery Gerasimov, said more than 65,000 troops, over

helicopters and some 5,500 units



DHAKA SUNDAY JUNE 22, 2014

## expected to address US Congress

NDTV ONLINE

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, once denied a visa to enter the United States over massacres of Muslims, is expected to receive the honour of addressing a joint session of the US Congress during a visit to Washington in September.

California Republican Ed Royce, chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, wrote to House Speaker John Boehner on Friday and asked that he invite Modi to address a joint session of the House and Senate during his trip.

"In every aspect - whether it be in political, economic or security relations - the United States has no more important partner in South Asia," the letter said. "It is not an overstatement to say that the US-India relationship will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century."

Boehner's office did not immediately announce a response to the letter, which was also signed by North Carolina Republican Representative George Holding. Congressional aides said they expected an invitation would be issued to the Modi.

The administration of President George W Bush denied Modi a visa in 2005 under a 1998 US law barring entry to foreigners who have committed "particularly severe violations of religious freedom."



Afghan demonstrators shout slogans in support of presidential candidate Abdullah Abdullah in Kabul yesterday. The supporters marched through Kabul as fears grow of unrest erupting over alleged fraud in the election. Abdullah has boycotted the vote count, pitching Afghanistan into a political crisis as NATO combat troops withdraw from a 13-year war against Taliban insurgents. PHOTO: AFP

## 13 attackers killed in Xinjiang assault

AFP, Beijing

Chinese police shot dead 13 people in Xinjiang after they drove into a police building and set off an explosion yesterday, regional authorities said, in the latest attack to hit the restive region.

The vast area in China's far west, home to the mainly Muslim Uighur ethnic minority, has faced a series of violent attacks in recent years.

Beijing has vowed a year-long crackdown on terrorism in recent weeks following several high-profile attacks blamed on Xinjiang militants, which since late last year struck outside the region and targeted ordinary citizens rather than government or security personnel.

"Today thugs crashed a car into the public security building of Kargilik county in Xinjiang's Kashgar prefecture and set off an explosion. Police took decisive action and shot dead 13 thugs," the official Xinjiang government website Tianshan reported.

Three police suffered injuries but there were no other casualties, the report said, without providing further details. It was unclear if the attackers used one or more explosive devices.



India Rail Fare Hike

## 'Decision difficult but correct'

Says Arun Jaitley

PTI, New Delhi

Defending the steep hike in rail fare and freight rates as a 'difficult but correct decision' finance minister Arun Jaitley yesterday said the railways can survive only if users pay for

availing of facilities. "The passenger services have been subsidized by the freight traffic. In recent years, even freight fares have come under pressure," he said in his first reaction to the 14.2% increase in passenger fares and 6.5% hike in freight rates.

Stating that the choice before the government was to allow the railways to bleed and eventually walk into a debt trap or raise fares, Jaitley said, "India must decide whether it wants a world-class railway or a ramshackled one.

"The railway minister has taken a difficult but a correct decision... the Indian railways for the last few years have been running at a loss. The only way that railways can survive is when users pay for the facilities that they avail."

Jaitley, who will present the Union Budget next month, said a loss-making railway would provide below-par services and would eventually not even have the resources to meet its expenditure.

In a Facebook posting titled 'The Truth of Railway Fare Hike', the minister said the decision to increase the rates was mooted by the Railway Board on February 5, when the UPA was in power. The board proposed a 5% increase in freight rates and a 10 per cent increase in passenger fares.

# Shia militia show of force raises tensions

**BBC ONLINE** 

Thousands of Shia militia loyal to the powerful cleric Moqtada al-Sadr have paraded through the streets of Baghdad, raising sectarian tensions amid continued fighting in areas of Iraq.

asks how voters would like to choose their next leader, by The cleric, whose Mehdi Army fought the US in Iraq for years, had called for a military The former British colony's leader is currently appointed parade across the country. by a 1,200-strong pro-Beijing committee but there have Correspondents say the show of force

will be seen as a very disturbing development by the Baghdad government. Sunni extremists have seized control of

large swathes of territory across Iraq.

The militants yesterday - led by jihadist group Isis - were reported to have seized a strategically important border crossing to Syria, near the town of Qaim, killing 30 troops after a day-long battle.

Thousands of largely Shia Iraqis have volunteered to fight Isis, urged on by a call from the country's highest Shia religious authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.

But the BBC's Jim Muir, in northern Iraq, says the impressive-looking parade of men in battle fatigues accompanied by serious military hardware will only raise sectarian tensions at a time when the government is under pressure to rally the country together against the extremists.

## ISIS IN IRAQ

Estimated **10,000** fighters in Iraq and Syria

Joined in its offensives by other Sunni militant groups, including Saddam-era officers and soldiers, and disaffected Sunni tribal fighters

Exploits standoff between Iraqi government and the minority Sunni Arab community, which complains that Shia Prime Minister Nouri Maliki is monopolising power

Isis led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, an obscure figure regarded as a battlefield commander and tactician Meanwhile, US President Barack

Obama said Isis - which has an estimated 10,000 fighters in Iraq and Syria - had exploited a power vacuum in Syria to amass arms and resources, but denied this was because the US had not moved to back moderate rebel forces fighting President Bashar Assad.

## Guildford Four's Gerry Conlon dies

**BBC ONLINE** 

Gerry Conlon, who spent 15 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, has died at the age of 60.

> Conlon was wrongly con-

victed of the 1974 Guildford IRA pub bombing that killed five people and injured 65. He was one of the Guildford Four, whose convictions were quashed by the Court of Appeal in 1989.

Conlon's case was highlighted in the 1993 Oscarnominated film In The Name Of The Father, starring Daniel Day-Lewis.

Conlon was jailed for life in 1975 for the pub bombing along with Paul Hill, Carole Richardson and Paddy Armstrong. After Conlon was jailed, seven other men were arrested because of a family connection to Conlon. Among them was Conlon's father Giuseppe, who was arrested while travelling to

London from Belfast to help his son. They became known, as the Maguire Seven and were convicted and jailed for handling explosives, based on scientific evidence which was later entirely discredited. Giuseppe Conlon died in prison in 1980.

In October 1989, the Court of Appeal quashed the sentences of the Guildford Four amid doubts raised about the police evidence against them.