AFP, Tripoli Libyans were voting yesterday in a legislative election the authorities hope will end political turmoil and deadly violence that has gripped the country since the ouster of

dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

Voters in Tripoli and Benghazi took advantage of a public holiday called for the election, trickling in to cast their ballots. In the past few weeks, Libya has been

rocked by a crisis that saw two rival cabinets jostling for power amid a crippling showdown between Islamists and liberals, as violence raged in the east, where a rogue general is battling jihadists. A patchwork of militias, including

Islamic extremists, who helped to over-

throw Gaddafi in the NATO-backed uprising of 2011 have been blamed for violence that has continued unabated since the end of the revolt. The heavily armed rebels who ousted and killed Gaddafi have carved out their own fiefdoms in the deeply tribal country,

some even seizing oil terminals and crippling crude exports from a sector key to government revenues. The crisis came to a head in February when the General National Congress, whose term had been due to expire, decided

to prolong its mandate until December. That sparked street protests and forced lawmakers to announce the election.



Militants bomb Shiite places of worship in Iraq AFP, Kirkuk

Sunni militants bombed two Shiite places of worship, known as husseiniyahs, in northern Iraq yesterday, an official and witnesses said.

The two husseiniyahs in Sharikhan, north of Nineveh provincial capital Mosul, were bombed early yesterday, damaging the structures but causing no

Army, rebels clash kills 13 Yemen civilians

AFP, Sanaa

Clashes between Yemeni forces and Shiite Huthi rebels in the northern city of Amran claimed the lives of 13 civilians - including five children and two women, a medic said yesterday.

The fighting erupted when rebels attacked government forces near the university of Amran, in the western district of the city, a tribal chief said, adding that " dozens of houses and shops" were destroyed. The bodies were taken to the city's public hospital, the medic said, adding that they died after "their houses

Nearly 50 killed in fresh wave of violence in Central Africa AFP, Bangui

Nearly 50 people have been killed in

three days in a fresh surge of sectarian violence in the Central African Republic, a peacekeeping officer said yesterday. The violence was triggered by the kill-

ing of 17 Muslims at a camp in the central Bambari region on Monday, by gunmen claiming to be from a mostly Christian militia called the anti-balaka.

Peacekeepers say there have been a series of tit-for-tat attacks in the region

Husband of Sudanese 'apostate' says fearful family wants out AFP, Khartoum

The American husband of a Sudanese Christian woman cleared by a court of apostasy but facing death threats from extremist Muslims said yesterday they are fearful and want to leave Sudan. "We are worried. That's why we want to

get out of here as soon as possible," Daniel Wani told AFP from a Khartoum police station where his wife, Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag, 26, is being questioned. Police are investigating the authenticity of her travel documents after authorities stopped the family from leaving Sudan on Tuesday following an annul-

Judge opens way to trial for Spain's Princess

Cristina

AFP, Madrid

A Spanish judge ruled yesterday that King Felipe VI's sister, Princess Cristina, and her husband

must face fraud charges, opening the way to an unprecedented criminal trial.

Six days after Felipe, 46, took the Spanish throne promising an "honest and transparent" monarchy, the decision refocused attention on a scandal that had blighted the reign of his 76-year-old father Juan Carlos.

Cristina, 49, who was previously considered untouchable, is accused of tax and money laundering crimes linked to the allegedly dodgy business affairs of her husband, 46-year-old former Olympic



AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's premier rejected forming a unity government to confront jihadists whose sweeping offensive in the country was bolstered yesterday when Al-Qaeda's Syrian franchise pledged loyalty to them at a border town. NATO were to hold key discussions yesterday on

Iraq, where the UN says nearly 1,100 people have been killed as Sunni militants led by the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant overran swathes of five provinces north and west of Baghdad this month.

The onslaught has displaced hundreds of thousands, alarmed world leaders and put Iraq's Shiite prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, under pressure at home and abroad.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Al-Nusra Front, Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, pledged loyalty at the Iraq-Syria border to ISIL, a group it has battled for months.

The move clears the way for a joint push to take control of both sides of the frontier between eastern Syria and western Iraq, and removes a threat to ISIL.

"They are rivals, but both groups are jihadist and extremists," said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman.

In a televised address, Maliki ruled out forming a national emergency government to confront the crisis.

"The call to form a national emergency government is a coup against the constitution and the political process," he said. "It is an attempt by those who are against

the constitution to eliminate the young democratic process and steal the votes of the voters," added Maliki, whose bloc won by far the most seats in April 30 elections but fell short of an outright majority. His remarks came a day after the first of up

to 300 US military advisers began their mission to help the Iraqi army, but the Pentagon said the Americans were not taking on a combat role.

Their primary task is to evaluate Iraqi forces and not to turn the tide against the militants, Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby said.

He added that the United States had expanded its surveillance flights over Iraq, with manned and

Ukraine seeks Putin help to save truce

РНОТО:

AFP

AFP, Slavyansk

Ukraine's new Western-backed leader sought urgent talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday after separatist rebels shot down an army helicopter despite orders from their own commander to observe a fragile The death of nine servicemen outside the pro-Russian

stronghold city of Slavyansk and loss of two other soldiers in militia attacks prompted Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko to threaten to unleash a powerful new military campaign in the industrial east. Poroshenko's warning dealt a crushing blow to hopes of

the sides mediating an end to 11 weeks of fighting that has killed more than 435 people and brought the ex-Soviet nation to the brink of collapse.

Kiev's temporary ceasefire was picked up by separatist commanders on Monday but was due to expire tomorrow morning after just one round of inconclusive and indirect talks.

Putin urged both sides to extend the truce and further asked senators to revoke his March 1 authorisation to invade his western neighbour in a self-proclaimed bid to "protect" ethnic Russians from the nationalists now in power in Kiev. Russia's rubber-stamp upper chamber approved Putin's request yesterday in a 153-1 vote.



Egypt's Sisi on state visit to Algiers

AFP, Algiers

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi arrived in Algiers yesterday for his first trip abroad since being elected in May, official media reported.

The ex-army chief was welcomed on arrival by Algerian premier Abdelmalek Sellal and Senate speaker Abdelkader Bensalah, and was due to meet President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, whose chronic health problems have severely limited his move-

ments. The leaders of the two North African nations will focus on ways of "promoting the brotherly relations and cooperation that exist between the two countries and on issues linked to the situation in the Arab world and Africa," the

APS news agency said. The army's overthrow of Egypt's first freely elected president in July 2013 and its subsequent crackdown on his Muslim Brotherhood movement have prompted references to the Algerian army's decision in the early 1990s to cancel elections that an Islamic party was poised to win.

The move sparked almost a decade of devastating civil war, in which up to 200,000 people were killed in fighting between Islamist insurgents and the military, which remains a dominant force in Algeria.

India's Rajdhani Express Derails Rail accidents, lost lives, and unknown reasons

THE HINDU ONLINE

In the second consequential railway accident in less than a month, at least four passengers lost their lives and several were injured when a dozen bogies of the Delhi-Dibrugarh Rajdhani Express derailed near Chapra in Bihar during the early hours yesterday.

Railway Board Chairman Arunendra Kumar felt prima facie the Maoists were involved while Home Minister Rajnath Singh was circumspect but inclined towards a similar view. "Even the Prime Minister agrees it is too early to blame

the Naxals [Maoists]. Let us wait for further report on the incident," said Singh who also mentioned another derailment of a goods train about 60 km away from where Rajdhani Express derailed. `There was a blast on the track, which could have caused

the derailment," he added.

Of the 12 coaches that derailed, five went off the tracks immediately leading to casualties and another seven derailed later, said Kumar.



Rescue work in progress after 12 coaches of the Delhi-Dibrugarh Rajdhani Express derailed near Chapra in Bihar yesterday.

РНОТО: PTI

Palestinian prisoners say hunger strike 'only choice'

AFP, Ramallah

Stuck indefinitely in Israeli jails, Palestinian prisoners see starving themselves -- to death if necessary -- as their only choice in the face of archaic detention laws.

who had refused food for 62 days ended their hunger strike following a deal with the Israel Prisons Service.

During the night, dozens of prisoners

All were protesting over being held without trial or charge under procedure called administrative detention, which can last for

Although there were no immediate details on the deal, the IPS said it would not involve suspending administrative detention, a practice which has driven many to the brink of despair.

Of the 5,000 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons, around 200 are administrative detainees, but that number looks set to double following a vast arrest operation to find those behind the suspected kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers on June 12.

So far, Israel has arrested 371 Palestinians with most expected to be held without charge.

Despite the risks, the families fully support their loved ones' decision.

In a move aimed at thwarting future hunger strikes, Israel is rushing through a bill allowing the force-feeding of those in critical condition after refusing food, with

a parliamentary vote due Monday. Rights groups are up in arms over the

Cameron under pressure after hacking verdict

AFP, London

British Prime Minister David Cameron was braced yesterday for difficult questions over his decision to hire Andy Coulson as his media chief, as the former News of the World editor convicted of phone hacking awaited a verdict on other charges.

Coulson was found guilty on Tuesday following an eight-month trial, in which the jury dramatically cleared his co-defendant, former colleague and one-time lover Rebekah Brooks of any wrongdoing.

Within hours of the verdict, Cameron issued a sombre televised apology for hiring Coulson as his head of communications in 2007 despite rumours about his involvement in hacking at Rupert Murdoch's now-defunct News of the World tabloid.

The sister of a prominent hacking victim, murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler, added to the pressure by calling on Cameron to keep his promise to change the way newspapers are regulated following the hacking scandal.

The revelation in 2011 that the News of the World had accessed Dowler's voicemail messages when she went

missing caused public revulsion and prompted Murdoch to close down the 168-year-old tabloid in disgrace. While Cameron comes under fire, the acquittal of Brooks on charges of phone hacking and bribing public officials

took some of the pressure off Murdoch. However, Murdoch now faces the prospect of being

interviewed by police over allegations of crime at his British papers, according to The Guardian newspaper.

The daily, which helped expose the hacking scandal, said detectives agreed to wait until the trial ended before formally interviewing Murdoch.

MH370 LATEST

Pilot's wife breaks silence

Confirms 'he spoke final words from cockpit'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The wife of one of the pilots on board the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 has reportedly confirmed her husband spoke the final words from the cockpit not his co-pilot, as the airline has previously suggested.

Flight MH370 disappeared with 239 passengers and crew on board after taking off from Kuala Lumpur, bound for Beijing, on 8 March, with the search to locate the plane now focusing on the sea bed.

Two New Zealand-based journalists claim to have spoken with the wife of captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah.

Geoff Taylor, deputy editor of New Zealand's Waikato Times, said he and Ewan Wilson, his co-author on the book they are writing about the missing jetliner, spoke on the phone with Faizah Khanum, who reportedly said the voice from the cock-pit delivering the final sign-off was that of her husband.

This contradicts the initial claim by Malaysian Airlines chief Ahmad Jauhari Yahya, who said the words "good night Malaysian 370" were spoken by Fariq Abdul Hamid, the co-pilot. Weeks later, the airline revealed they were unsure as to who had delivered the words.

EU sees progress in US data protection talks

AFP, Athens

The EU yesterday said the US had taken an "important step" in ongoing privacy protection talks by pledging new legislation to allow Europeans to sue over improper use of their personal data.

promise of legislation by US Attorney General Eric Holder was "an important step in the right direction." The planned legislation, to be enacted by Congress,

would permit EU citizens to seek redress in US courts if personal data released by their home countries to US agencies for law enforcement purposes are subsequently disclosed, the US Attorney General said.

"The Obama administration (will) seek to work with Congress to enact (the) legislation," Holder said in a statement. The legislation would "fill the gap between the rights US

citizens enjoy in the EU today, and the rights EU citizens do not have in the US," Reding said in a statement. "Now the announcement should be swiftly translated |

into legislation so that further steps can be taken in the negotiation," she said. Reding and Holder are in Athens for a justice and home affairs ministerial meeting under the rotating EU presi-

dency held by Greece. The EU and the US have been in talks since 2011 on a data protection agreement to protect personal information transferred for law enforcement purposes.

The negotiations are in a "final stage" according to Brussels. In the EU, personal data protection is considered to be a basic right whose commercial use must be carefully controlled.

A key concern in Europe -- where memories of surveillance by fascist and communist dictatorships remain alive -is the pressure Washington exerts on giant US companies to hand over personal data, including those of EU citizens, on national security grounds.

Hong Kong activists predict biggest protest

AFP, Hong Kong

Activists said yesterday they expect more than half a million people to take to the streets on Hong Kong's EU Justice Commissioner Viviane Reding said the annual protest day in what would be the biggest march since Britain handed the city back to China.

> largest July 1 protest since the handover in 1997 came after 740,000 people voted in an unofficial poll organised by pro-democracy activists. "We expect the numbers of participants in the rally might

The predictions for the

actually exceed the numbers of 2003," Johnson Yeung, head of the Civil Human Rights Front, which organises the annual march, told AFP. That march saw 500,000

take to the streets in protest

at a security bill, which was

then shelved. "If the number exceeds that, this will be the largest (since the

handover)," said Yeung. "Hong Kong people have started to think about their

future and they fear that future may be oppressed by the central government," he added.