



GAZA BURNING

A ball of fire is seen following an early morning Israeli air strike on Rafah in the southern of Gaza strip, yesterday. *Top right*, A relative mourns over a body of a victim killed in Israeli air strike. *Bottom right*, Palestinians carry a body after being removed from under the rubble of a home destroyed by Israeli air raid on Rafah. Israel could be violating the laws of war by bombing Palestinian homes in Gaza, the UN's human rights office said yesterday, as the death toll from the Israeli strikes rose to 100.



PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN brief

Call for global ceasefire during World Cup final

AFP, Vatican City
The Vatican yesterday called for a truce in wars around the globe during Sunday's World Cup final, taking to social media with the hashtag #pauseforpeace as a conflict in the Gaza Strip escalates and killings continue in Ukraine. A tradition of calling for a truce during Olympic dates back to the 9th century BC, and the International Olympic Committee has continued the custom and promotes peace initiatives

Erdogan vows new charter for new Turkey

AFP, Istanbul
Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday vowed to press for a new constitution if he is elected president in August elections, saying the old Turkey was a "thing of the past". Changing the constitution would allow Erdogan to give greater powers to the presidency, until now a largely ceremonial role. He is expected to win the

Chinese courts jail 32 in Xinjiang

AFP, Beijing
Chinese courts in the far-western region of Xinjiang have sentenced 32 people to prison terms ranging from four years to life for terrorism-related charges, state media reported yesterday. The sentences come after China launched a crackdown following several high-profile attacks blamed on militants from

EU adds 11 to Ukraine sanctions list

AFP, Brussels
The European Union yesterday slapped a travel ban and asset freeze on 11 people allegedly linked to separatist violence in eastern Ukraine. The decision brings the total number of people on an EU sanctions

Putin begins LatAm tour, arrives in Cuba

AFP, Havana
Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday arrived in Cuba on the first stop of a tour of Latin America that will also take him to Argentina and Brazil. The visit is Putin's second to the communist island in 14 years, the agency reported, saying his itinerary includes official talks with Cuban President Raul Castro. He is also expected to meet 87-

Germany eyes revived US ties after spy row

AFP, Berlin
Germany's foreign minister yesterday said he would urge a revived US partnership based on "trust and mutual respect" in talks with his American counterpart after Berlin's expulsion of a CIA station chief in a spying row.
Frank-Walter Steinmeier said he would tackle the diplomatic fallout from the latest twist in a more than year-long rift with the US over surveillance when he meets US Secretary of State John Kerry for weekend talks on Iran.
Germany's shock move Thursday to kick out the US embassy intelligence chief followed the emergence within days of two alleged US spying cases, re-igniting German fury after last year's NSA scandal.
Analysts said the highly unusual move, which came after the US ambassador was twice called in for talks, marked a watershed in German-US ties, with an openly rattled Berlin now ready to publicly take a stand against its Nato ally.
German newspapers applauded the expulsion as a long overdue act of protest.
Steinmeier said Germany's partnership with the United States was vital and, with escalating violence in hotspots such as Ukraine and the Middle East, transatlantic cooperation was needed more than ever.
But he cautioned that it must be based "not just on trust" but also "on mutual respect".

Baghdad-Kurd row escalates

Kurds seize more oil fields, suspends all participation in govt

AFP, Ramadi
Iraq battled a militant assault on key city Ramadi yesterday while accusing the Kurds of seizing oil fields, further dashing hopes of political unity to save the country from its feared break-up.
Upping the ante, Iraq's foreign minister yesterday said the Kurdish political bloc will no longer take part in Iraq's national government in protest against Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's accusation that Kurds were harboring Islamist insurgents in their capital.
"We have suspended our government business," said minister Hoshiyar Zebari, who is a Kurd.
Zebari told Reuters that Kurdish ministers were now suspending their day-to-day involvement the foreign, trade, migration and health ministries and the deputy premiership.
Zebari said the Kurds will continue to attend the parliament, elected on April 30, which is seeking to form a new government in the face of a Sunni insurgency that has seized large sections of northern and western Iraq.
The militant push to take Anbar's provincial capital comes two days before a planned parliamentary session meant to revive flagging efforts to replace the caretaker

government in power since April elections.
Sunni militants have captured areas west of Ramadi since the fighting began Thursday afternoon, killing 11 police, bombing a police station and taking control of another.
As the battle for Ramadi raged, Iraq's oil ministry accused the country's autonomous Kurdish region of grabbing key northern oil fields in the Kirkuk and Bey Hassan.
Kurd Peshmerga fighters have moved into stretches of disputed northern areas vacated by Iraqi forces during the initial militant offensive, and regional president Massud Barzani has said they will stay there.
Maliki has accused Barzani of exploiting the chaos created by the jihadist Islamic State (IS), and said the region was hosting militants involved in the offensive.
That claim drew derision from Barzani's office, which shot back Thursday that Maliki "has become hysterical and has lost his balance". Saying Maliki had "destroyed the country," it demanded he "apologise to the Iraqi people and step down".
The escalating war of words between Maliki and the Kurds has already cast a pall over the parliamentary session slated for tomorrow. So far, international calls for feuding politicians to come together to face the militant offensive have gone unheeded.



Modi accepts Obama's US visit invitation

AFP, New Delhi
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday accepted an invite to meet US President Barack Obama in Washington in September, a statement said, as the two countries look to rebuild strained relations.
US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns formally invited Modi during a meeting between the pair in New Delhi yesterday, as part of a two-day visit to India to strengthen diplomatic and trade ties.
"Prime minister thanked President Obama for the invitation and looked forward to a result-oriented visit with concrete outcomes that imparts new momentum and energy to India-US strategic partnership," a statement from Modi's office said.
Modi had been widely tipped to meet Obama in September when he travels to the US for the UN General Assembly meeting, after the president extended his invite by phone in May.
Modi was controversially refused a visa to visit the US in 2005 over allegations he turned a blind eye or worse to deadly anti-Muslim riots three years earlier in Gujarat state which he was then running.
But US and European governments have been rushing to court Modi since his right-wing party swept to power in May on a pledge to



A Bosnian Muslim woman, survivor of the Srebrenica 1995 massacre cries by the coffin of a relative, layed out among others at the memorial cemetery in the village of Potocari near the eastern-Bosnian town of Srebrenica, yesterday. Several thousand people gathered yesterday in Srebrenica for the 19th anniversary of the massacre of some 8,000 Muslim males by ethnic Serbs forces, Europe's worst atrocity since World War II.

PHOTO: AFP

Truce hope tatters as rebels kill 23 troops

AFP, Donetsk
Ukraine's military yesterday reported losing 23 servicemen in clashes across the separatist east that threatened to shatter slim Western hopes of a truce in Europe's deadliest conflict in decades.
The defence ministry said the toll included 19 troops who died in a hail of rockets fired from a truck-mounted Grad rocket launcher system -- a type of weapon both Kiev and Washington insist could only have been covertly supplied to the rebels by Russia.
The official spokesman of Ukraine's intensifying eastern assault added that 93 servicemen had sustained "wounds and contusions of varying severity".
"The rebels will pay for the life of every one of our servicemen with tens and hundred of their own," Ukraine's Western-backed President Petro Poroshenko told an emergency security meeting.
The tide in the eastern uprising turned last weekend when resurgent government forces managed to flush out the separatists from a string of eastern towns and cities that hold historic Russian ties. The conflict has claimed the lives of more than 500 people so far and displaced tens of thousands.

UKRAINE CRISIS

Obama pays up after jumping queue

AFP, Austin
At Franklin's, a famed barbecue joint in Texas, pushing to the front of the line will cost you. President Barack Obama learned this lesson the hard way on Thursday when he stepped into the meat-lovers paradise in Austin.
The line for food at the restaurant can reputedly sometimes be two or three hours. But the president -- exercising the prerogatives of his office -- apologetically jumped the queue.
He did however offer to stump up for lunch for the family next to him at the counter -- then got a shock.
"Hold on, how many folks are y'all feedin'?" the president quipped as Bruce Finstad of Houston and his daughter Faith, from Austin, taking advantage of their luck, ordered three pounds of beef, two pounds of ribs, a half pound of sausage and a half pound of turkey for their already seated family.
A bill that came to more than \$300 which proved too much for the stash of \$20 bills the president pulled sheepishly from his pocket. So Obama settled the check with his credit card before making off with his smoky



Girl, 11, raped to punish brother!

AFP, Patna
Police in eastern India have made two arrests over the rape of an 11-year-old girl which was allegedly ordered by a village leader to punish her brother, an officer said yesterday.
Police said medical examinations confirmed the girl had been assaulted on Monday with investigators now working to unravel another shocking case of sexual violence in India.
Jharkhand police said the girl's brother was accused of attempting to molest a neighbour in a village in Bokaro district.
When the woman and her husband complained to village elders, one of them suggested that the husband rape either the sister or daughter of the alleged molester as a punishment for him.
"They took her to the jungle and raped her," the mother of the victim told CNN-IBN news channel.
Police spokesman Gupta said the husband had been arrested for the alleged, along with the village leader for ordering the crime.

AFGHAN ELECTION TURMOIL US seeks to broker a deal

AFP, Kabul
US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday sought to mediate an end to the political crisis in Afghanistan, warning that a bitter dispute over presidential polls threatened the country's future.
As the top US diplomat met separately with the rival candidates, Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, Kerry stressed that results released Monday showing Ghani in the lead were "preliminary".
"They are neither authoritative nor final, and no-one should be stating a victory at this point in time," Kerry said, as he held back-to-back meetings in the heavily-fortified US embassy.
"We want a unified, stable, democratic Afghanistan. It is important that whoever is president is recognised by the people as having become president through a legitimate process," he said.
Despite Monday's announcement, Abdullah, who has already once lost a presidential bid in controversial circumstances, has declared himself the true winner, saying massive fraud robbed him of victory in the June 14 run-off vote.
In a swift boost for Kerry's diplomacy, Ghani threw his backing behind US calls for a wide audit of the elections.
A statement from the office of outgoing President Hamid Karzai said UN officials had put forward a plan late Thursday to audit some 8,000 ballot boxes, representing 43 percent of the total votes -- or around 3.5 million votes.
Abdullah thanked Kerry for coming as well as continued US support and for "the sacrifices that your people have done alongside the Afghans".
But he said that "the future of our achievement depends upon the success of the democratic process".
The election stand-off has sparked fears that protests could spiral into ethnic violence -- and even lead to a return of the fighting between warlords that ravaged Afghanistan during the 1992-1996 civil war.
UN officials have said a full audit of the results could take up to two weeks, but some Afghan officials are pressing to stick by an election calendar that would see the new president inaugurated on August 2.

