US 'unwavering' in protecting gay rights: Kerry

AFP, Washington

Secretary of State John Kerry said Friday the United States was "unwavering" in its commitment to protecting homosexuals worldwide, as he introduced Washington's first envoy for gay rights.

Randy Berry, who was named Monday, is tasked with helping countries coordinate US strategy on rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, as well as to highlight such issues around the

"The United States of America remains unwavering in our commitment to advance the human rights of all human beings, and that includes LGBT persons prominently, appropriately equal to everybody else -- here at home and around the world," Kerry said to wide applause.

"I'd just say loudly and clearly: no matter who you are and no matter who you love, we stand with you. That's more than a message, that is a movement that we can ignite and with our work together we will see this movement succeed."

Berry, standing with his husband and two children, decried the violation of LGBT rights worldwide.

"This love still stands ground for imprisonment, harassment, torture and far worse in too many places around the world. That is a violation of human rights," he said. Berry, the current consul-general in

Amsterdam, has had several postings, including in Nepal, New Zealand, Uganda, Bangladesh, Egypt and South Africa. US President Barack Obama's

administration has repeatedly pressed foreign governments on the human rights of gays and lesbians, systematically drawing attention to rights abuses or repression in several African countries.

The US Supreme Court announced last month it will hear a case on same-sex marriage later this year that is expected to finally settle the debate in America surrounding the longrunning civil rights issue.

Kiwis edge out

FROM PAGE 16

New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum had hit a 21-ball fifty at the top of the innings as the home side cruised towards their total, and even at 131 for four they were still in pole position.

But the slide started with Glenn Maxwell dismissing Corey Anderson for 26.

Starc then took the wickets of Luke Ronchi (six), Daniel Vettori (two), Adam Milne (0) and Tim Southee (0) to give Australia a sniff of an unexpected win before Williamson held his nerve. Earlier, Trent Boult claimed career

best figures of five for 27 as New Zealand dismissed the four-time champions for just 151.

From 80 for one, Australia lost eight wickets for 26 runs before Brad Haddin (43) and Cummins (seven not out) put on 45 for the last wicket.

Boult's five wickets came in the space of 18 balls for just one run as New Zealand condemned Australia to their second-lowest World Cup total.

Southee took two for 65 while leftarm spinner Vettori finished with two for 41 as New Zealand's bowling maintained the same momentum

which helped them dismiss England for 123 in Wellington. Australia, who beat England in their opener two weeks ago before

seeing the clash with Bangladesh rained off in Brisbane, are now fourth in the pool with three points, five behind New Zealand, with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh also ahead of them.

At the WACA in Perth, defending champions India didn't have to get out of first gear as they registered a third win in three matches as they cruised past the airline workers, ship-

ping clerks and bankers of the UAE. The part-timers were bowled out for just 102 in 31.3 overs after winning the toss and electing to bat,

recording the lowest World Cup score against India.

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin returned his best one-day figures of

four for 25 off 10 overs. Shaiman Anwar, who became the

first UAE player to make a century in a World Cup against Ireland last time out, again top-scored with 35 while also helping take his team past the three-figure mark in a 31-run, 10th wicket partnership with Manjula Guruge.

In reply, Rohit Sharma's 57 not out and Virat Kohli's unbeaten 33 took India past their 103-run target

after just 18.5 overs. India have been in rampant form so far, beating Pakistan by 76 runs and then trouncing South Africa by 130 runs in games where they racked

up two 300-plus totals.

Cops still clueless

FROM PAGE 1 Bloggers suspect there might be a

link between Ansar Bangla 7 and Ansarullah Bangla Team, which operates through websites, blogs and publications to instigate attacks on secular and progressive people terming them "enemies of Islam".

Ansarullah's spiritual leader Shaikhul Hadith Mufti Muhammad Jasimuddin Rahmani, who was arrested in August 2013 in the Rajib murder case, had identified a number of columnists, writers and bloggers as "atheists and nonbelievers who must be killed".

Jasimuddin and six members of the group are now behind bars in connection with the killing of Rajib. "It's hard to tell what this group

Ansar Bangla 7 exactly is. But they have members who operate online and identify who should be targeted for their opinions," said Baki Billah, a blogger and activist. Then there is Ansar al Islam, a

group that claimed responsibility for the murder of Professor Shafiul Islam of Rajshahi University on the Facebook community page "Bangladesh 2" on November 15. He was targeted reportedly for his unconventional views about spirituality and religion. At the time, there were specula-

tions as to whether Ansar al Islam was actually an offshoot of the Ansarullah Bangla Team. The matter is still under investigation. Contacted, DB officials said they

were unable to confirm if, and in what way, the groups are connected. Meanwhile, family members of

Avijit said his body will be kept at the Aparajeyo Bangla premises this morning before handing it over to either Dhaka Medical College Hospital or Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University. He had a wish that his body be

donated for medical research and education. SWALLOWING THREATS

Bloggers receiving threats from anon-

ymous sources was nothing new, said online activists. But it took an alarming turn following the February 2013 launch of Gonojagoron Mancha, a platform spearheading the Shahbagh movement demanding capital punishment to war criminals.

Bloggers and online activists were himself.

at the forefront of the movement.

"I have learnt to swallow threats," said another blogger seeking anonymity, adding that they seldom received feedback after informing law enforcers about the threats.

Even their families are often terrorised by unnamed callers.

Hours after the hacking of Avijit, an unknown person called on the cell phone of Ajoy Roy early Friday. "Tell him [Prof Roy] that he will

be punished just like his son," the person told a relative, who received the call.

It was the second call in 10 min-

Prof Roy received the first call which was made minutes after he returned from hospital after seeing his son's body.

"Look what has happened to your son," Prof Roy quoted the caller as saying. Prof Roy contacted Shahbagh and

Ramna police and gave them the

mobile phone number. He was pre-

paring to file a general diary with Ramna Police Station in this connection. Avijit himself had been threatened multiple times by a self-

proclaimed Islamist blogger, Farabi Shafiur Rahman. On January 25 last year, Farabi's Facebook status read, "It's a holy

duty of Bangalee Muslims to kill

Avijit.' Then on February 9 last year, he commented on a Facebook post: "Avijit Roy cannot be killed now. He

lives in America."

Farabi, who according to his Facebook profile studied physics at Chittagong University, had been arrested for his social media comments supporting the murder of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haider, also an activist of Shahbagh movement.

He was later released on bail.

This year, in a Facebook post dated February 4, he expressed sympathy for the six Ansarullah members arrested in connection with Rajib's murder.

According to the post, he visited the Kashimpur jail to meet Ansarullah leader Jasimuddin, but the jail authorities denied him permission as he didn't have a copy of his national ID and a picture of

Investigators said the murder

The killers evidently knew Nemtsov

They listed as initial hypotheses a link

weapon was believed to be a Makarov

pistol, used by Russian military and

was walking to his flat nearby, they

to "Islamist extremism" and the Charlie

Hebdo massacre, noting that Nemtsov

had received threats after he con-

demned the killings in Paris as well as

had urged Russians to join a planned

immediate end to the Ukraine war," he

said on popular Echo of Moscow radio,

rally after news of his death while the

authorities gave permission for a march

in memory of Nemtsov through the

Poroshenko called Nemtsov a "bridge

Ukrainian President Petro

"The murderers' shot has destroyed it.

"This is payback for the fact that Boris

consistently, for many, many years fought

for Russia to be a free democratic coun-

try," opposition leader Mikhail

Kasyanov, who served as prime minis-

ter under Putin, told reporters after

of the opposition is shot dead by the

Kremlin walls. It is beyond imagina-

"In the 21st century, in 2015, a leader

The former researcher rose to promi-

After leaving parliament in 2003, he

A passionate orator with a rock star

nence as governor of the Nizhny

Novgorod region in central Russia

led several opposition parties and

image and popular with women,

Nemtsov was a key speaker at mass oppo-

sition rallies against Putin's return to

corruption and misspending under

the estimated \$50 billion assigned to the

Olympic Games that Russia was to host

The Kremlin has denied the claims.

Echo of Moscow radio, wrote that

Alexei Venediktov, editor-in-chief of

He wrote a series of reports critical of

In 2013, he said up to \$30 billion of

before serving in Yeltsin's team.

Hours before his murder, Nemtsov

"The key political demand is an

Opposition activists scrapped the

the "situation inside Ukraine".

adding that Putin should quit.

city centre on Sunday afternoon.

between Ukraine and Russia".

I think it is not by accident."

visiting the murder scene.

tion."

groups.

the Kremlin in 2012.

in Sochi had gone missing.

politician as saying.

opposition rally today.

Top Putin critic shot dead political aims," it suggested.

police.

added.

in tears, filed by on the bridge, heaping flowers and photos of Nemtsov at the spot where he fell.

Police closed off a lane of traffic to let them through. Investigators said Nemtsov was shot

in the back while walking with a woman, who was not injured. She was later identified as 23-year-old Ukrainian model, Anna Duritskaya, by Russian state television.

The murder, investigators added, was the work of one or more gunmen who shot seven or eight times at the opposition figure who in the 1990s served as deputy premier under then president Boris Yeltsin.

He "left his trace in Russia's history, in politics and public life," Putin said in the message to his 86-year-old mother, Dina Eidman.

"He always directly and honestly announced his position, stood up for his point of view," Putin added.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev praised Nemtsov as a "principled person" who "acted openly, consistently and never betrayed his views."

Hours earlier the Putin critic and anticorruption crusader had called on Russians to join an opposition rally on Sunday against the Kremlin stance in Ukraine.

US President Barack Obama condemned a "brutal" and "vicious murder" and urged a probe and British Prime Minister David Cameron said the "callous murder" must be investigated 'fully, rapidly and transparently".

The brazen assassination is one of the highest-profile killings in Putin's 15 years in power and recalls the shooting of anti-Kremlin reporter Anna Politkovskaya, who was gunned down on Putin's birthday in October 2006.

Earlier, Putin and other officials suggested the crime was aimed at smearing the authorities. It "had all the hallmarks of a contract killing and is entirely provocative in nature," he was quoted as saying by the Kremlin.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told Kommersant FM radio station that the crime "can look very much like a provocation" since "Boris Nemtsov was known as being in opposition to the Russian leadership." Even the last Soviet leader Mikhail

Gorbachev believed the killing was aimed at "destabilising the situation in the country, at heightening confrontation" with the West.

And the powerful Investigative Committee leading the probe said it was looking into a possible "provocation to destabilise the political situation in the

country." Nemtsov could have been "offered as a sacrifice" by those who are "not averse

to using such a method to reach their

Nemtsov, who leaves behind four chil-Putin.

dren and an elderly mother, knew he was taking risks by openly criticising "But I will not leave Russia, who would fight then?" he quoted the veteran

Greek PM vows no retreat in 'battle' with creditors

AFP, Athens

Greece's prime minister yesterday vowed not to back down in his "battle" with the country's creditors, in line with his election promise to abandon austerity and avoid a third bailout. "The battle will continue," Prime

Minister Alexis Tsipras told the central committee of his hard-left Syriza party. "Anybody thinking that we are going to go away will be disappointed." Tsipras said that in the talks that landed Greece a four-month extension

to its 240-billion-euro (\$270-billion)

bailout Tuesday, the pressure from

other European countries "had the character of blackmail". "Conservative forces (in Europe) tried to set a trap for us, to drive us into budgetary asphyxia," the 40-yearold said. "We will not retreat from the difficulties or from our own princi-

ples.' Syriza swept to power in January on a promise to ease the hardship caused by past government spending cuts imposed in return for the eurozone country's two bailouts in 2010 and 2012.

Tsipras reiterated Friday that once the current bailout expires on June 30 there would be no "third memorandum" as the previous agreements tying aid to spending cuts are known.

"Memorandums are finished," he said.

MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB Is it unclear however whether Tsipras

can avoid another rescue package. His self-declared "government of

social salvation" faces a major challenge in keeping both voters and Greece's international creditors happy by providing relief for the poor while also keeping government spending in check.

Thursday saw the first protests in Athens since the bailout extension, with several hundred anti-capitalists and anarchists taking to the streets, some smashing shop windows and setting fire to rubbish bins.

Greece must also repay billions of euros in debt in the coming months.

Tsipras has said he wants to renegotiate the country's 320-billion-euro debt pile, despite fierce opposition, particularly in Germany, to any new debt "haircut".

Meanwhile, Greece's nascent recovery from six straight years of recession also looks in trouble, with official data on Friday showing a contraction of 0.4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2014.

Initial estimates had forecast a 0.2 percent drop in gross domestic product.

After winning four months of breathing space from its creditors, the government now has until the end of April to provide them with more details of its reform programme in order to receive the final bailout tranche.

A list of reforms submitted by Athens this week, which focused on tackling tax evasion and excessive bureaucracy, was described by German Chancellor Angela Merkel as just a "starting point".

Germany's parliament nonetheless overwhelmingly approved the bailout extension Friday, despite a minor rebellion by members of Merkel's party, surveys suggesting German voter unease and the country's Bild daily saying "greedy" Greece should get no more money.

On Saturday, Yanis Varoufakis, Greece's maverick new finance minister, promised "no pity" in tackling tax evasion and said that the government might impose a one-off levy on the rich to help fill government coffers.

Latif Siddique FROM PAGE 16

where he has been undergoing treatment since December 6.

care unit around 9:00am after the cardiac arrest at the Cabin Block of the hospital, Senior Jail Superintendent Farman Ali of Dhaka Central Jail told The Daily Star.

Latif was moved to the coronary

Latif, former telecommunications minister, is now being treated by Dr Sajal Banarjee, said his family. The former Awami League leader

was transferred to the Cabin Block from Dhaka Central Jail on December 6 when he complained of chest pains and high blood pressure. Latif's younger brother Kader

Siddique, president of Krishak Sramik

Janata League, went to see his ailing brother around noon yesterday. The 77-year-old politician is now behind bars in a case filed for hurting

religious sentiments of the Muslims with his comments on hajj and Tablighi Jamaat. On November 25 last year, a Dhaka court sent the expelled AL leader to prison after he surrendered

to the Dhanmondi Model Police Station. If Latif is found guilty, he could be sentenced to one year's imprison-

ment or be fined, or both. He is facing around 22 cases filed in 18 districts in connection with offending religious sentiments.

Sorry, folks, gig's up

old aspiring singer from Scotland, after noticing her friends saw different colours in the photograph.

The image has become an online sensation, with posts arguing over the dress's original colours - and science behind the debate - being viewed and shared millions of times. Even celebrities weighed in on the

fashion debate, with Kim Kardashian asking her 29.4million Twitter followers to help settle a disagreement between herself and husband Kanye West. And #TheDress started trending

worldwide on Twitter as the debate when global. There had been more than 1 million tweets mentioning the hashtag by yesterday. The photograph that started the Tumblr days after the wedding.

Bleasdale while she was deciding on what to wear to her daughter's upcom-

frock to her daughter, Grace, to ask the bride-to-be what she thought. Grace, in turn, shared it with her then-fiance,

purchased here, and here, Grace sought more opinions online. The bride-to-be then posted the picture on Facebook, and her friends continued to debate the colour of the

colours of the dress, which can be

The debate was forgotten until

Caitlin McNeill, a close friend of the newlyweds, posted the picture on

2 more arson victims die

FROM PAGE 16

Five of the 13 labourers sitting on boxes in the truck were also burnt.

Meanwhile, Islami Chhatra Shibir activist Abdul Alim, 30, had his wrist blown off in a blast while he was allegedly making crude bombs inside his home in Chandna of Gazipur around 10:15am yesterday.

While fleeing after the incident, police caught him and admitted him to a local hospital. His associate, however, fled, police said.

Bomb making materials were recovered from the house.

Alim and his elder brother Jamir Uddin, who is a Jamaat leader, face charges of subversive activities. Criminals torched at least nine

vehicles in Dhaka and Narayanganj yesterday. They torched two lorries and a bus in Jatrabari area in the evening. Bus passenger Sumi, 18, sustained injuries

when picketers threw patrol bombs at

the bus heading for Sylhet. She was admitted to DMCH. Two cars, and a microbus, owned by television channel Desh TV, were also burnt in front of Desh TV and daily Bhorer Kagoj offices in Mouchak and Khilgaon.

cast by Desh TV in its 9:00pm bulletin, around 20 criminals took position in front of the offices about an hour before vandalising the vehicles with cricket bats and then setting them on fire. In the afternoon, criminals burnt

According to CCTV footage broad-

two buses -- one in Kakoli level crossing area and the other at Mirpur-10 intersection, said officials of Fire Service and Civil Defence. Rickshaw-puller Momen, 30, was

injured in a bomb blast in the city's Banga Bazar area around 8:30pm. He was taken to DMCH. Meanwhile, alleged pro-hartal

activists torched a bus in Narayanganj

city around 2:35pm. Police arrested one person with two

petrol bombs at Tejgaon Industrial Area early yesterday. A mother and her daughter suffered

burn injuries when criminals hurled petrol bombs at Paharika Express heading for Sylhet near Shahjibazar Railway Station in Habiganj around 9:00pm. They were rushed to Habiganj Sadar

Modern Hospital. Criminals also blasted crude bombs

at Chandna High School and College in Gazipur creating panic among teachers and students around 9:45am. Joydevpur Police Station SI Abdul Hamid said a tape-wrapped bomb was hurled at the second floor of the main

building of the college. An intellectually-challenged child, Dolna Akhter, was injured as she was playing with a crude bomb she found on the street near her home at Nama Shyampur of Kadamtoli in the capital

around 4:30pm yesterday. She had treatment at DMCH for splinter injuries.

Police arrested five activists of Jamaat-e-Islami from Rangpur city, Mithapukur, and Pirganj upazilas in connection with vandalising vehicles. They were produced before a Rangpur court that sent them to jail, police said. In Chittagong, police recovered 17

petrol bombs, 16 homemade bombs, two kilograms of gun powder and four kilograms of splinters from an abandoned garage at Fakirhat of Bandar Police Station Friday night.

Police had detained Imran, 18, of Bandar area on Friday and conducted the drive after gleaning information from him, said police, adding that Imran was involved in Jamaat-Shibir.

The government estimated financial loss of Tk 120,000 crore due to the ongoing political chaos. About 1,200 vehicles have been torched and vandalised so far since January 6.

Violence architects

FROM PAGE 16

governance and human rights, in particular, the implementation of the international human rights standards relating to the judiciary and freedom of expression.

The discussions also focused on other issues of mutual interest and concern, including recent developments on the rule of law, good governance, transparency, accountability for extrajudicial killings, freedom of the media, freedom of assembly and civil society, labour rights, the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, the situation of the Rohingyas, women and children's rights, the death penalty and migration issues.

Bangladesh's membership of the UN Human Rights Council should be an opportunity to work more closely with the EU to promote and protect human rights, the delegation said during the discussion.

The EU and Bangladesh agreed to continue their dialogue on these issues. **GRANTS SUPPORT**

At the sub-group on Development Cooperation, the EU confirmed new grants up to €690 million through the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2020 for Bangladesh.

The funds will focus on three sectors that are vital for poverty reduction and inclusive and sustainable growth -democratic governance, food and nutrition security and education and skills development.

TRADE AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The sub-group meeting on Trade and Economic Cooperation highlighted the growth of bilateral trade flows in the last three years. This was particularly an indication of an increase in Bangladesh's exports to

the EU, as a result of the preferences granted under the Everything but Arms (EBA) scheme. The meeting also discussed the Sustainability Compact to promote better labour rights and safer working

conditions, as well as more responsible supply management in Bangladesh. The recommendations of the recently launched "EU Business Council Bangladesh" to improve the business climate and spur foreign direct investment and economic growth in

Bangladesh were also presented. During the meeting, the EU-Bangladesh Horizontal Aviation Agreement was initialled. The EU side also presented the opportunity for Bangladesh to participate in the new EU programme on research and innovation "Horizon 2020".

Mexico's 'I'm tired now' attorney general steps down Murillo Karam concluded that the AFP, Mexico City

Mexico's much-maligned attorney

general, who has faced public anger them over to a drug gang that killed over the investigation into the presumed slaughter of 43 students, will step down Friday to take up another cabinet post. Jesus Murillo Karam will be sworn

in as the new minister of rural, territorial and urban development at a ceremony presided by President Enrique Pena Nieto, the government said. Murillo Karam's exit was widely expected under a reform that will

his handling of the case.

turn the federal prosecutor's office into an autonomous department. But he was also heavily criticized

by human rights groups, protestors

the young men and incinerated their bodies in September. But Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and an inde-

students were abducted by corrupt

local police officers who handed

pendent team of Argentine forensic experts have questioned his conclusions, saying it was too soon to declare the students dead without more physical evidence. Only one body has been identified among charred remains. Murillo Karam also drew public

scorn when he declared "I'm tired now" to wrap up a press conference in November in which he first indiand parents of the 43 students over cated the students were probably dead.

FROM PAGE 16 internet storm was taken by Cecilia Tumblr by Caitlin McNeill, a 21-yearing wedding.

Bleasdale sent the picture of the Kier Johnston. The couple disagreed over the