



(From bottom left, clockwise) A Muslim voter poses with her inked finger at a polling station in Sittoung; Aung San Suu Kyi casts her vote at a polling station in Yangon; people queue to cast their vote at a polling station in Yangon; President Thein Sein signs for registration after casting his vote in Naypyidaw; and supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi's party cheer as they watch a polling station count on a giant screen outside the party headquarters in Yangon, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Carter warns of conflict in S China Sea

AFP, Simi Valley

US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter on Saturday warned that land reclamation efforts and a military buildup in the South China Sea could lead to conflict between nations in the region.

Speaking at a defense forum at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California, the Pentagon chief also said America was adapting its military posture to counter increased Russian "aggression."

Appearing on the final leg of an eight-day trip that included meetings with defense ministers from several nations in the Asia-Pacific region, Carter said his concerns about the frantic pace of land reclamation in the South China Sea were broadly shared.

"The United States joins virtually everyone else in the region in being deeply concerned about the pace and scope of land reclamation in the South China Sea," Carter told an audience of senior defense figures.

Carter added he was worried about "the prospect of further militarization, as well as the potential for these activities to increase the risk of miscalculation or conflict among claimant states."

The Reagan National Defense Forum is an annual event that sees dozens of America's top defense figures -- including politicians from both political parties -- discuss America's defense policies.

Carter used his platform to take a swipe at recent Russian military moves. "At sea, in the air, in space and in cyberspace, Russian actors have engaged in challenging activities," he said.

"And, most disturbing, Moscow's nuclear saber-rattling raises questions about Russian leaders' commitment to strategic stability, their respect for norms against the use of nuclear weapons and whether they respect the profound caution nuclear-age leaders showed with regard to the brandishing of nuclear weapons."

Aung San Suu Kyi

Myanmar's opposition leader and democracy champion



- June 19, 1945 Born in Rangoon (now Yangon) to independence fighter Aung San and wife Daw Khin Kyi
- 1947 General Aung San is assassinated
- 1969 Moves to Britain to attend Oxford University
- 1988 Returns to Myanmar. Co-founds the National League for Democracy (NLD)
- 1989 Junta declares martial law after crushing the "88 Uprising". Imprisons Suu Kyi at home on Yangon outskirts, where she spends nearly 2 decades under house arrest
- 1990 NLD scores landslide victory in elections but the junta rejects the result
- 1991 Wins Nobel Peace Prize but unable to collect award in person as she remains under house arrest
- 2002 House arrest lifted
- 2003 Mob attacks Suu Kyi convoy killing 4 bodyguards. Imprisoned before being returned to house arrest
- November 13, 2010 Junta releases Suu Kyi from house arrest
- 2011 Outright military rule gives way to quasi-civilian reformist government under ex-general Thein Sein. Suu Kyi meets Thein Sein for the first time in August
- 2012 Wins seat in parliament
- 2014 NLD says 5 million people signed petition calling for change to Junta-era charter that bars Suu Kyi from becoming president
- 2015 Confirms NLD will stand in elections slated for November 8

MYANMAR ELECTION What are the likely scenarios?

SUU KYI'S OPPOSITION WINS CLEAR MAJORITY

This would be the dream scenario for Aung San Suu Kyi. An outright majority would give her National League for Democracy (NLD) party a much stronger footing in the jostling for who becomes president, a post that will be decided by Myanmar's legislative chambers early next year. To do that, the NLD need to win 67 percent of the 491 seats available (323 in the lower house, 168 in the upper). In contrast, her rivals -- the army-backed USDP party -- need only win 33 percent of the seats. That's because under Myanmar's junta-crafted constitution, a quarter of legislative seats are reserved for military appointees who would be allied to the USDP. Even if Suu Kyi wins she can't become president -- the constitution bars those with foreign born offspring from taking the top spot. An outright majority would help the NLD install a favourable president. In remarks before the election the 70-year-old NLD leader vowed to rule from behind the scenes and be "above

the president". But that would be unconstitutional and represent a "red line" to the army, according to independent analyst Richard Horsey.

NO CLEAR MAJORITY ON EITHER SIDE

If this happens Myanmar will enter an intense period of political horse-trading and alliance building.

The NLD could take a majority in the lower house, but fail to seize control of the upper house. Suu Kyi would then need to find potential coalition partners. Her most likely allies are from the parties representing Myanmar's ethnic minorities. Myanmar is a patchwork of more than 100 ethnic groups, who make up around 30 percent of the population. Equally the USDP could also look to build alliances with ethnic groups. But that is a much harder proposition for them given the fact that many ethnic groups have been fighting wars for decades against the country's military.

THE NLD IS BEATEN, ARMY-BACKED USDP WINS

Few expect the NLD to receive a drubbing at the ballot box if the vote is free

and fair. But with no independent exit polls and a dearth of election data, it is very difficult to measure whether Suu Kyi's popularity will in fact translate into votes and seats. The USDP and current president Thein Sein has had ample time to prepare for this election and has remained bullish throughout, portraying themselves as the only group that can safely continue Myanmar's democratic transition to stability and prosperity.

THE WORST CASE SCENARIO: CIVIL UNREST

Given Myanmar's turbulent history and the military's track record of ignoring votes that don't go their way, a period of instability and even conflict cannot be ruled out. Such a scenario is much more likely if there are widespread allegations -- or proof -- of election fraud. Even if the poll is fair, danger still lies in thwarted expectations if the NLD do not claim a majority. The president and the military have insisted they will respect the election outcome. Only time will tell whether an institution with a track record of broken promises can keep this one.

SINAI PLANE CRASH '90 percent sure' of bomb on jet

Say Egypt investigators

REUTERS, Cairo

Investigators of the Russian plane crash in Egypt are "90 percent sure" the noise heard in the final second of a cockpit recording was an explosion caused by a bomb, a member of the investigation team said yesterday.

The Airbus A321 crashed 23 minutes after taking off from the Sharm al-Sheikh tourist resort eight days ago, killing all 224 passengers and crew. Islamic State militants fighting Egyptian security forces in Sinai said they brought it down.

"The indications and analysis so far of the sound on the black box indicate it was a bomb," said the Egyptian investigation team member, who asked not to be named due to sensitivities. "We are 90 percent sure it was a bomb."

His comments reflect a higher degree of certainty about the cause of the crash than the investigation committee has so far declared in public.

Meanwhile, Russia has returned 11,000 of its tourists from Egypt in the last 24 hours, RIA news agency said yesterday, a fraction of the 80,000 Russians who were stranded by the Kremlin's decision on Friday to halt all flights to Egypt.

In St Petersburg, where the flight was headed on Oct 31, the bell of St Isaac's Cathedral rang 224 times and a service was held in memory of the victims.

'Tone down your arrogance'

Rahul tells Modi; Lalu to launch nation-wide stir against Indian PM

AGENCIES

Taking a dig at Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi over NDA's setback in Bihar, Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi said that the prime minister should "step on the accelerator or people will throw him out of the driver's seat" even as he hailed the defeat of the "divisive agenda of BJP and RSS" in the assembly polls.

Gandhi also wanted the prime minister to either "give up or tone down his arrogance", noting that it would benefit not only the country but Modi too.

Gandhi, however, steered clear of questions on whether, like it had done in Bihar, Congress would enter into alliances in other states headed for elections.

He also declined to comment on whether his party would participate in the new government under Nitish Kumar.

"Since Modiji has become Prime Minister, there have been only promises. Start the work. One year has

BIHAR POLLS: REACTIONS

"This is a victory of unity over divisiveness. Humility over arrogance. Love over hate. A victory of the people of Bihar" -- RAHUL GANDHI

"Congratulations @NitishKumar ji, Lalu ji & your full team. And all my Bihar brothers & sisters. Victory of tolerance, defeat of intolerance" -- MAMATA BANERJEE

"Best wishes to the new government that is to be formed. I hope they lead Bihar on a progressive path" -- AMIT SHAH

passed and your car is not starting. "Press the accelerator. If you fail to press the accelerator, like Bihar, the people of the country will open the door and throw you out (of the driver's seat)", a beaming Gandhi told reporters at the AICC headquarters here as party workers celebrated the Bihar verdict. He also advised the prime minister

to give up his foreign tours and talk about Pakistan and instead reach out to the farmers, labourers and unemployed youth to whom he had promised jobs.

"The message from Bihar is echoing all over, which is that the prime minister should listen and try to understand ... Modi, BJP and RSS cannot divide this country. Cannot win elections by pitting Hindus against Muslims. The nation belongs to all," Gandhi asserted.

"This is a victory of unity over divisiveness. Humility over arrogance. Love over hate. A victory of the people of Bihar," the Congress leader said in a series of tweets.

Meanwhile, RJD chief Lalu Prasad yesterday declared Nitish Kumar will continue as Bihar chief minister despite his party emerging as the table topper, while he will launch a nation-wide stir against the "communal" Narendra Modi government.

A jubilant Prasad claimed continuance of the Modi government will "break the nation into pieces".

NEWSIN brief

Fighting in Yemen kills 50 people

REUTERS, Cairo

More than 50 people were killed in Yemen in the past two days in fighting pitting an Arab coalition against Houthi fighters backed by troops loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, medical sources and residents said yesterday. At least 5,600 people have been killed in seven months of war in Yemen, the poorest country on the Arabian Peninsula.

Iran appoints woman ambassador

AFP, Tehran

Iran has appointed its first woman ambassador since the 1979 Islamic revolution, naming foreign ministry spokeswoman Marzieh Afkham to head its embassy in Malaysia, the foreign minister announced yesterday. Iranian media first said back in April that Afkham was lined up for promotion to the rank of ambassador, but the reports were unconfirmed.

Croatia votes amid migrant crisis

AFP, Zagreb

Croatians voted in a general election yesterday with conservatives aspiring to return to power as the EU nation faces a wave of migrants and slowly emerges from six years of recession. Opinion polls predict a tight race between the ruling centre-left alliance, led by Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic's Social Democrats (SDP), and the rival conservative 'Patriotic Coalition', in Croatia's first parliamentary election since it joined the European Union in 2013. Neither camp is expected to win an outright majority.

Lennon's guitar sells for \$2.4m

BBC ONLINE

An acoustic guitar played by John Lennon has been sold at auction in California for \$2.4m (£1.5m).

Lennon is thought to have recorded and written a number of hit songs, including Love Me Do and I Want to Hold Your Hand, on the Gibson J-160E.

The guitar was one of only two of its type flown from the US to England in 1962 for Lennon and George Harrison.

Lennon used the guitar for about a year before swapping it with Harrison in 1963, after which it vanished. For more than 50 years the guitar's whereabouts remained unknown until a man in California discovered last year that an instrument in his possession may have historical value.

The Associated Press has named the man as John McCaw from San Diego, who bought the guitar for \$275 in the late 1960s. Last year he found an old magazine article about Harrison, which featured a photo of the instrument.

The guitar was then looked at by Beatles' instruments expert Andy Babiuk, who was able to identify it by its unique markings as the one Lennon used.



Six injured in West Bank car, knife attacks

AFP, Jerusalem

Car-ramming and stabbing attacks wounded six Israelis in the West Bank yesterday while two alleged Palestinian assailants were shot, authorities said, the latest in a weeks-long wave of violence. At least one attacker was killed.

The latest unrest came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prepared to leave for Washington to meet US President Barack Obama.

The wave of attacks since the start of October has left 73 Palestinians dead, around half of them alleged attackers. Nine Israelis have also been killed as well as one Arab Israeli.



An Indian Hindu devotee performs rituals after bathing in the polluted river Ganges near Sangam in Allahabad, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP