

# Akhundzada elected as Afghan Taliban leader

## Kabul urges for peace as blast near Kabul kills 11

REUTERS, Kabul/Peshawar  
The Afghan Taliban named an Islamic legal scholar who was one of former leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour's deputies to succeed him yesterday, after confirming Mansour's death in a US drone strike at the weekend.

"All the shura members have pledged allegiance to Sheikh Haibatullah in a safe place in Afghanistan," the statement said. "All people are required to obey the new Emir-al-Momineen (commander of the faithful)."

Akhundzada, believed to be around 60 years of age and a member of the powerful Noorzai tribe, was a close aide to Omar and is from Kandahar, in the south of Afghanistan and the heartland of the Taliban.

Senior members of the insurgent group had been keenly aware of the need to appoint a candidate who could bring disparate factions together and repair the splits that emerged last year when Mansour was appointed.

An audio statement purporting to be from Akhundzada rejected peace talks, but the Taliban's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid later said the message was not authentic and did not come from the new leader.

The Afghan government called on the new Taliban leader to end the war, or face dire consequences.

The United States, Pakistan and China have also been trying to get the militants to the negotiating table to end a conflict that has killed thousands of civilians and security personnel and left Afghanistan seriously unstable.



Within an hour of the announcement of Haibatullah Akhundzada's appointment, a Taliban suicide bomber attacked a shuttle bus carrying court employees west of the Afghan capital, Kabul, killing up to 11 people and wounding several others, including children.

The new Taliban leader was named in a United Nations report last year as former chief of the sharia-based justice system during the Taliban's five-year rule over Afghanistan, which ended with their ouster in 2001.

Sirajuddin Haqqani, head of a feared network blamed for many deadly bomb attacks in Kabul in recent years, and Mullah Muhammad Yaqoob, son of Taliban founder Mullah Mohammad Omar, will serve as deputies.

The announcement, following a meeting of the Taliban's main shura, or leadership council, ended days of confusion during which the Taliban declined to confirm the death of Mansour in a drone strike in Pakistan on Saturday.



Republican US presidential candidate Donald Trump (bottom L) watches as police remove a protester as he holds a rally with supporters in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Tuesday. Protesters opposed to Trump hurled rocks and bottles outside a rally he spoke at in New Mexico on Tuesday, the same day the bombastic billionaire won the Republican presidential primary in Washington state. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Clinton pvt email server broke rules

## Finds a State Department probe

REUTERS, New York

Hillary Clinton broke government rules by using a private email server without approval while US secretary of state, an internal government watchdog said yesterday.

The long-awaited report by the State Department inspector general was the first official audit of the controversial arrangement to be made public so far, and was also critical of department record-keeping practices before Clinton's tenure.

It concluded that Clinton, now the front-runner in the race to become the Democratic presidential nominee, would not have been allowed to use the server in her home had she asked the department officials in charge of information security.

The report undermined Clinton's defense of her private server. She said it was allowed and that no permission was needed. The report's highly critical findings included an account of State Department technology staff trying to internally raise concerns about the arrangement in 2010 only to be told to keep quiet by an official in Clinton's office.

It immediately fueled Republican criticism of Clinton in an already acrimonious race. The report will also add to Democratic anxieties about voter perceptions of Clinton as untrustworthy and secretive.

Several other inquiries are continuing, including a US Justice Department investigation into whether the arrangement broke laws.



# World leaders gather in Japan ahead of G7

AFP, Ise-shima

US President Barack Obama yesterday arrived in Japan for a Group of Seven summit, kicking off a historic visit that will also take him to the atomic-bombed city of Hiroshima.

Obama was joining other leaders from the club of rich democracies for a gathering set to be dominated by the lacklustre state of the global economy.

Heads of state and government from Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and host Japan were also making their way to Ise Shima, a mountainous and sparsely populated area 300 kilometres southwest of Tokyo, whose mainly elderly residents rely chiefly on tourism and cultured pearls.

Security was tight across the region, with thousands of extra police drafted in to patrol train stations and ferry terminals, and to direct traffic on the usually quiet roads during the two-day meeting.

Obama is to visit Hiroshima on Friday. He will become the first sitting US leader to travel to the city, the site of the world's first nuclear attack, on August 6, 1945.

# Israel moves rightwards

## Netanyahu joins forces with ultra-nationalist to expand govt

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu joined forces yesterday with a hardline nationalist who is set to become defence minister, forming a government considered the most right-wing in the nation's history.

Avigdor Lieberman and his Yisrael Beiteinu party will add five lawmakers to Netanyahu's previously wafer-thin majority if the coalition deal is given parliamentary approval as expected.

Lieberman, who has spoken of harsh measures against Palestinian "terrorists", will take over the key role of defence minister after being sworn in.

The two men, who have in the past been bitter rivals, announced the deal at a ceremony at parliament, with Lieberman pledging to be "balanced" and saying he was committed to "responsible, reasonable policy."

The move to hand the defence ministry to the 57-year-old hardliner has sparked deep concern among Israeli centrist and left-wing politicians, as well as among some of Netanyahu's Likud party colleagues.

Religious nationalists from the Jewish Home party already hold key cabinet positions in Netanyahu's government.

Moshe Yaalon, a Likud member who resigned as defence minister on Friday and who has also served as armed forces

chief, warned of a rising tide of extremism in the party and the country as a whole.

Former Labour prime minister and defence minister Ehud Barak went further, saying Israel's government "has been infected by the shoots of fascism."

The Palestinian leadership condemned Lieberman's move into the government. "The existence of this government brings a real threat of instability and extremism in the region," Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat told AFP, adding that the appointment would "result in apartheid, racism and religious and political extremism."

An example of his provocative style was recently on display in comments directed at Ismail Haniya, Islamist movement Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip. Lieberman said he would give Haniya 48 hours to hand over two detained Israeli civilians and the bodies of soldiers killed in a 2014 war "or you're dead".

In 2001, the former nightclub bouncer advocated bombing the Aswan Dam in Egypt, accusing Israel's Arab neighbour of supporting a Palestinian uprising.

The deal brings to a stunning conclusion weeks of speculation over Netanyahu's efforts to expand his government, which has held only 61 of the 120 seats in parliament since elections in March 2015.



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, right, chats with Avigdor Lieberman who is tipped to become the new defence minister in Tel Aviv, yesterday.

# NEWS IN brief

## Lanka sets up office to trace war missing

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday announced it was setting up an office to trace thousands of people still missing seven years after the end of its ethnic war, to try to bring closure for families. The Office of Missing Persons (OMP) is given with wide powers to investigate the disappearance of more than 20,000 people. The Tamil separatist war between 1972 and 2009 claimed the lives of at least 100,000 people.

## Venezuela braces for rival demos

AFP, Caracas

Protesters seeking to drive Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro from office have vowed fresh street rallies starting from yesterday, a test of their strength in a tense political crisis. Maduro has imposed a state of emergency last week to control, what he says is a foreign plot to oust his socialist government.

## Court upholds arrest warrant for Assange

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A Swedish court has upheld an arrest warrant for Julian Assange in the wake of a United Nations panel's finding that the WikiLeaks founder was being subjected to "arbitrary detention". The 44-year-old is wanted by Swedish authorities for questioning over rape allegations dating back to 2010, which he denies. Assange has been held up at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since 2012.

## Yemen peace talks 'closer' to deal: UN

AFP, Kuwait City

The UN envoy yesterday said that Yemen's warring parties were closer to agreement at peace talks in Kuwait as he prepared to brief the Security Council on progress in negotiations. "We are moving towards a general understanding that encompasses the expectations and visions of the parties," Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed said in a statement.

## Egypt quashes jail terms for 47 protesters

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian appeals court has overturned five-year prison sentences for 47 people for participating in unauthorised protests, but upheld fines of more than \$11,000 each, judicial officials said yesterday. The defendants were among more than 150 people jailed in mid-May in connection with demonstrations on April 25 against Egypt's decision to hand over two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia.



This handout picture released yesterday by the Italian Navy (Marina Militare) shows the shipwreck of an overcrowded boat of migrants off the Libyan coast yesterday. At least seven migrants have drowned in the tragedy. The navy said 500 people had been pulled to safety, but rescue operations were continuing and the death toll could rise.

# Africans in India living 'in fear'

## Says group of African envoys

AFP, New Delhi

African nationals in the Indian capital live in a "pervading climate of fear and insecurity", a group of African ambassadors has said, after the brutal murder of a Congolese teacher sparked allegations of racism.

The Group of African Heads of Mission said they may recommend their governments not to send students to India until safety conditions improve, following a string of what they say are unpunished racial attacks.

In the latest case, Masunda Kitada Oliver, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was allegedly bludgeoned to death in New Delhi on Friday night by three Indian men after an argument over an auto-rickshaw.

In an embarrassment for New Delhi, the envoys said they would not participate in Africa Day celebrations being organised by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations today. They said the African community was in mourning over Oliver's death and asked for the event to be postponed.

Oliver had completed his postgraduate study in India and was teaching at a private institute in the capital.

# INDIA-IRAN CHABAHAR PORT DEAL

## US senators grill Nisha Desai

REUTERS, Washington

US senators questioned on Tuesday whether India's development of a port in southern Iran for trade access risked violating international sanctions, and a State Department official assured them the administration would closely examine the project.

"We have been very clear with the Indians (about) continuing restrictions on activities with respect to Iran," Nisha Desai Biswal, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, said on Tuesday.

"We have to examine the details of the Chabahar announcement to see where it falls in that place," she testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday pledged up to \$500 million to develop the Iranian port of Chabahar, to try to give his country trade access to Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. The route is

currently all but blocked by Pakistan, long at odds politically with India.

Biswal said she believed India's relationship with Iran was primarily focused on economic and energy issues, and said the administration recognized India's need for a trade route.

"From the Indian perspective, Iran represents for India a gateway into Afghanistan and Central Asia," she said. "It needs access that it doesn't have."

Biswal said she had not seen any sign of Indian engagement with Iran in areas, such as military cooperation, that might be of concern to the United States.

Modi is due to visit the United States next month and will address a joint meeting of Congress, a rare honor.

Washington sees its relationship with India as critical, partly to counterbalance China's rising power. President Barack Obama has called it "one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century."



# GREECE BAILOUT Eurozone deal unlocks \$12b

AFP, Brussels

Eurozone ministers yesterday reached a vital deal to unlock urgent cash for Greece but analysts warned promises to tackle the country's debt mountain are sketchy, spelling trouble further down the road.

The agreement unlocks 10.3 billion euros (\$12 billion) in bailout cash that Greece needs to repay big loans to the European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in July, having already fallen behind in paying for everyday government payments and wages.

The bailout rewards Athens for meeting the terms of its 86-billion-euro bailout programme agreed last July.

# Russia frees Ukraine pilot

AFP, Kiev

Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko returned home to a hero's welcome yesterday after nearly two years in a Russian prison, drawing a line under a damaging diplomatic spat between Moscow and Kiev.

The 35-year-old army helicopter pilot flew home as part of an apparent prisoner swap with Moscow, with two alleged Russian soldiers leaving Ukraine earlier in the day.

"I'm ready to once again give my life for Ukraine on the battlefield," a defiant Savchenko declared as she touched down on home soil.

Savchenko, an Iraq war veteran, was convicted in March over the killing of two Russian journalists in eastern Ukraine and sentenced to 22 years behind bars. She had been held in captivity in Russia since June 2014.

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said the relatives of the two Russian journalists had asked him to pardon Ukrainian pilot Nadiya Savchenko.

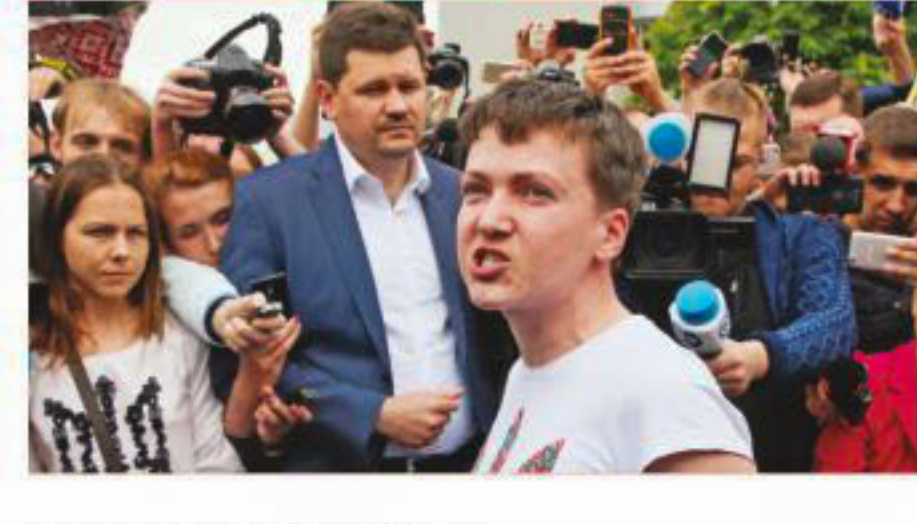
EU foreign affairs supremo Federica Mogherini hailed the release as "long awaited good news" and German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said he was "happy and relieved" at her release.

Meanwhile, President Petro Poroshenko yesterday vowed that Ukraine would take back the

annexed peninsula of Crimea and rebel-held territory in the east of the country following her release.

"Just as we brought back Nadiya, we will bring back Donbass and Crimea under Ukraine's control," Poroshenko said as he awarded Savchenko with a Hero of Ukraine order, his

# PRISONER SWAP



country's highest honour.

In Ukraine, Nadiya has become a symbol of resistance against what Kiev sees as Moscow's aggression in the east and has been elected to parliament in her absence.

While in prison, she launched several hunger strikes to protest her detention, refusing both food and water during her high-profile trial in southern Russia. She constantly defied the Russian authorities and even raised her middle