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First with the news and what's behind it

WEDNESDAY APRIL 11, 2012 JUMADA AL-AWWAL 19, 1433 Newsline Nationline Businessline Lifeline Sportline Vol. 6 No. 2046 QR 2

EMIR IN PHILIPPINES



The Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani with Philippine President Benigno S Aquino III, in Manila, on Tuesday.

Qatar, Philippines agree to set up joint business council

QNA
MANILA

QATAR and the Philippines on Tuesday signed an agreement to establish a joint business council in addition to a number of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) during the Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani's one-day state visit to the Southeast Asian country.

The documents were signed during a round of official talks held by HH the Emir with the Philippine President Benigno S Aquino III which was attended by the dignitaries in the official delegation accompanying HH the Emir.

The two sides also discussed bilateral relations and means of enhancing and developing them in all fields, in addition to reviewing a number of issues of mutual concern during the talks.

After the talks, HH the Emir

Emir honoured with Order of Lakandula

MANILA PHILIPPINE President Benigno S Aquino III on Tuesday conferred upon the Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani the Order of Lakandula, the highest medal in the Republic of the Philippines in recognition his role in further enhancing bilateral

relations and his achievements in several fields. The Order of Lakandula is an order of political and civic merit, awarded in memory of Lakandula's dedication to the responsibilities of leadership, prudence, fortitude, courage and resolve in the service of the people. (QNA)

and the Philippine president witnessed the signing of the agreement to establish a joint businessmen council between Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), and Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

A set of MoUs were signed between the governments of the Qatar and the Philippines.

The MoUs are related to mutual cooperation in the tourism, legal, agricultural and fisheries sectors.

Qatar Holding also signed an investment MoU with the Philippines' Department of Trade and Industry prior to the talks. HH the Emir and the Philippine president held a bilateral meeting.

HH the Emir arrived in Manila earlier on Tuesday afternoon on a state visit to the Philippines and was welcomed upon arrival at Ninoy Aquino International Airport by Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert Del Rosario, Secretary of Energy Jose Rene Almendras and a number of other senior officials including Qatar's Ambassador to the Philippines HE Jassim bin Ali al Obeideli and Philippine Ambassador to Qatar HE Crescente R. Relacion.

Upon arrival, HH the Emir proceeded to the presidential palace where a red-carpet reception ceremony was accorded to him. Upon arrival at the presidential palace HH the Emir and the dignitaries of the accompanying official delegation were

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SEE ALSO PGS 6 & 24 ►

DOW JONES	12,779	QE	8,771
	-149 PTS		+14 PTS
SENSEX	17,243	CURRENCY	
	+21 PTS	Indian Rupee	14.18
		Philippine Peso	11.76
WEATHER	PARTLY CLOUDY HIGH: 34°C LOW: 24°C		

Newsline

Syrian troops kill 50

SYRIAN troops killed 50 people on Tuesday, in an assault on Assad's opponents. United Nations-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan said it was "a bit too early" to dismiss as a failure his attempt to halt the conflict and, in a letter to the UN, said Assad must make a "fundamental change of course" and adhere to a ceasefire due to begin on Thursday. (PG 2)

Yemen toll up to 127

HEAVY clashes overnight between Al Qaeda-linked militants and the Yemeni military in the country's south have killed 63 people, bringing the two-day death toll in the fighting to 127, army officials said on Tuesday. The latest fighting points to escalating hostilities between the government and militants linked to the terror network who have sought to take advantage of the turmoil roiling the country since last year against longtime authoritarian leader Ali Abdullah Saleh. (PG 3)

Rupee hits near 3-month low

THE rupee slid to a near-three-month low on Tuesday weighed by dollar demand from oil importers, while choppy local shares and worries over global growth kept risk appetite subdued. The rupee ended at 51.475/485 to the dollar, weaker than Monday's close of 51.14/15, after touching a low of 51.495, a level last seen on January 16. Emerging market currencies, including the rupee, received a boost after robust Chinese trade data raised hopes for improvement in risk appetite. (PG 25)

Moza visits Medanta hospital in India

QNA
NEW DELHI

QATAR Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza visited Medanta multi-super specialty hospital for medicine and research in New Delhi on Tuesday.

HH Sheikha Moza was briefed on a number of sections of the hospital including the cancer treatment division and its attached research centres, intensive care unit, outpatient clinics and laboratories, robotic surgery units, brain surgery units and medical laboratories.

She met with a number of the physicians and those in charge of the hospital and discussed the scope of future cooperation between the hospital and the health sector in Qatar in the medical, educational and research.

Medanta - the Medicity is one of India's largest multi-super specialty institutes and is located in Gurgaon, a bustling town in the country's National Capital Region.

The institution aims to bring to India the highest standards of medical care along with clinical research, education and training. Medanta is governed under the guiding principles of providing medical services to patients with care, compassion, commitment.

It is spread across 43 acres and includes a research centre, medical and nursing school. It has 1,250 beds and over 350 critical care beds with 45 operation theatres catering to over 20 specialties.



HH Sheikha Moza talking to a cancer patient at Medanta hospital, in Gurgaon, India, on Tuesday. (MAHER ATTAR/HHOPL)

Sheikha Moza inspects primary school in Delhi

QNA
NEW DELHI

QF CHAIRPERSON HH Sheikha Moza visited a primary school in New Delhi, in order to see a sample of the Education for India project. During the visit, HH Sheikha Moza met a number of teachers associated with the project and was briefed on its objectives, implementation mechanism and results. She also viewed the teaching techniques in one of the classrooms.

As an advocate of Millennium Development Goals (MDG), she praised the project and considered it a model for what should be done to accomplish the second Millennium Development Goal, which is to achieve universal primary education across the world by 2015.

Founded in 2009, Education for India is a non-profit project established to reduce inequality in qualitative education in India, by involving a number of academically and scientifically talented young people in teaching for two years.

It aims to invent new mechanisms of teaching in public schools, and make use of their expertise and skills in raising the educational level of children who can't afford private schools.

'Socio-cultural factors key to Qatari women's health'

JOSEPH VARGHESE
DOHA

SOCIO-CULTURAL factors play a dominant role in Qatari women's decisions to a healthy lifestyle, and cultural and religious factors appear to influence women's smoking habits.

These are some of the findings of a recent study conducted by a

professor of University of Calgary in Qatar (UCQ) and her team, on 50 Qatari women over 30, having a confirmed diagnosis of coronary vascular disease or coronary artery diseases.

In an exclusive interview with Qatar Tribune, UCQ Associate Professor Dr Tam Truong

Donnelly, and the lead researcher in the study, said that cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of mortality in Qatar.

"Studies have shown that CVD can be prevented or controlled by modifying lifestyle, such as physical inactivity, consumption of fast food,

and smoking. However, little is known about how to motivate Qatari women to engage in a healthy lifestyle to improve their cardiovascular health," she explained.

The team of researchers from UCQ and Hamad Medical Corporation conducted the



Dr Tam Truong Donnelly

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►

Tunis in shock after 'Black Monday' crackdown

AFP
TUNIS

TUNISIA was in shock on Tuesday after riot police brutally clamped down on protesters defying a demonstration ban in the capital, with even President Moncef Marzouki denouncing "unacceptable violence".

"Black Monday", "fascist behaviour", "savagery" were among the harsh comments after some of the worst violence since last year's revolution that led to the downfall of Tunisian strongman Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

Many people at Monday's rally in Tunis were protesting at the ban and against Ennahda.

At least 15 civilians and eight policemen were hurt as riot police on Monday fired tear gas and baton-charged protesters who had turned out in their hundreds on a main avenue in Tunis despite a ban on demonstrations there.

Outside the capital, dozens of protesters attacked the ruling Ennahda party offices in the eastern town of Monastir on Monday, but did not manage to storm the building, Nejjib Mrad, a

lawmaker for the moderate Islamist party, told AFP.

"They attacked the offices, climbed on the roof and tore down banners and Ennahda flags," he said, linking the incident to the Tunis protests.

Security officials said six people were arrested.

Many people at Monday's rally in Tunis were protesting at the ban and against Ennahda, which emerged as the biggest party after an October vote, the first democratic poll since the uprising that ousted Ben Ali.

"We are all in shock, what happened is horrible, a point of no return has been reached," said Sadoua Elleuch of the Doustourna network, a civil society group.

"Police officers were very, very brutal," lawyer Radhia Nasraoui told AFP. "I had the impression we were reliving the situation under Ben Ali. This government does not solve Tunisians' problems but it knows how to clamp down." Many demonstrators voiced outrage at what they saw as authorities' double standards as they would not rein in hardline Muslim Salafists but cracked down on left-leaning protesters.

The Ennahda party chief on Tuesday condemned the violence, but dismissed suggestions that the country was tipping back towards authoritarian rule.

50 killed in fierce assault on Assad's opponents

REUTERS
BEIRUT

SYRIAN troops killed 50 people on Tuesday, pursuing a fierce assault on President Bashar al Assad's opponents instead of silencing their big guns and leaving towns as promised under a fraying international peace plan.

United Nations-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan said it was "a bit too early" to dismiss as a failure his attempt to halt 13 months of conflict and, in a letter to world powers in the UN Security Council, said Assad must make a "fundamental change of course" and adhere to a ceasefire due to begin on Thursday.

"The plan is still on the table," he told a news conference in Turkey after visiting Syrian refugee camps and before flying on to Iran, a key sponsor of the Assad family's 42-year rule.

The former UN chief's plan, which calls for Syrian troops to pull back by the end of the day on Tuesday, won backing from Assad's friends in Russia and China, as well as from Western, Arab and other nations struggling to find a way to deflect the Syrian leader from his bloody crackdown on a popular uprising.

Annan said he had information the Syrian military was withdrawing from some areas but moving to others not previously targeted. He



People protest against Syria's President Bashar al Assad, in Kafranbel, on Tuesday. (REUTERS)

appealed to all sides to stop violence and to set no conditions for a ceasefire due to start at dawn on Thursday.

"I had hoped that by now we would have been much further ahead along the road to the government of Syria honouring its commitments and all the parties beginning to take steps to end all violence," he said, reiterating Thursday's deadline.

"We still have time between

now and the 12th to stop the violence."

In a letter to the Security Council, obtained by Reuters, Annan wrote: "The Syrian leadership should now seize the opportunity to make a fundamental change of course. It is essential that the next 48 hours bring visible signs of immediate and indisputable change in the military posture of the government forces throughout the coun-

try," he said, adding that the opposition also should cease fighting in order to "give no excuse for the government to renege on its commitments".

Shelling of restive parts of Homs killed at least 26 people on Tuesday and five died in violence elsewhere, opposition groups said, but there was no sign of a military pullback, with tanks still in cities such as Homs and Hama. Opposition activists say hun-

dreds of Syrians have been killed since Assad accepted Annan's proposals on March 27. Citing satellite images, a French foreign ministry spokesman endorsed that view and denounced a Syrian assurance that troops were, in fact, withdrawing as a "blatant lie". The White House also saw no sign of a pullback: "Leaders of the Assad regime ... make a lot of promises," spokesman Jay Carney said.

Libya appeals ICC order to extradite Qadhafi's son

AFP
THE HAGUE

LIBYA, which wants Moamer Qadhafi's son Saif al Islam tried at home, on Tuesday appealed a ruling by the Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) that he be handed over to the world court.

The ICC, which wants to try Saif on charges of crimes against humanity for his role in battling last year's uprising which toppled his father, issued a ruling on April 4 calling for his immediate transfer from prison in Libya to prison in The Hague.

"The Government of Libya submits that the chamber



Saif al Islam Qadhafi

committed a serious error of law" and wants it to "overturn" its earlier decision, Libya's legal representatives said in the document released

by the court on Tuesday.

The Libyan government will detail why it considers the ICC incompetent to judge the case in a submission to be

made on April 30, its representatives added.

The ICC issued an arrest warrant for Saif in February 2011 when Qadhafi-loyal forces were involved in an attempt to crush the so-called 'Arab Spring' rebellion.

Saif, 39, was arrested on November 19 in southern Libya, and is expected to be transferred from Zentem to Tripoli in the coming days, Ahmed Jehani, Libya's representative to the ICC said Sunday.

ICC defence official Xavier-Jean Keita has alleged that Saif has been attacked while in detention in Libya and should therefore be transferred to prison in The Hague.

Hunger striker's health is not critical: Bahrain

AP
MANAMA

THE government of Bahrain said on Tuesday that a jailed activist on a two-month hunger strike shows no signs of critical medical problems and has been taking fluids orally or by an IV drip.

A statement by the London-based Amnesty International on Tuesday said the activist's "health is rapidly deteriorating as he passes his 60th day of hunger strike."

The details on the health condition of Abdulhadi al Khawaja released by the authorities were an apparent attempt to counter growing international pressures on the Gulf state after a judicial panel last week refused Denmark's request to take custody of al Khawaja, who is also a Danish citizen.

Human rights organizations have urged Bahrain to free al Khawaja immediately because of fears he could die. A statement by the London-based Amnesty International on Tuesday said the activist's "health is rapidly deteriorating as he passes his 60th day of hunger strike."

Al Khawaja and seven other opposition leaders were sentenced to life in prison on anti-state crimes last year in a special security court, which was set up after Bahrain imposed martial law last March to quell political unrest.

Bahrain's majority Shiites began an uprising in February 2011 seeking a greater political voice.



Bahraini anti-government protesters carries an image of jailed hunger-striker Abdulhadi al Khawaja, in Manama, on Sunday. (AP)

Al Khawaja, 52, is a former Middle East and North Africa director of the Ireland-based Frontline Defenders Rights organization. He has been refusing food since February 8.

Bahrain's opposition supporters have been staging daily rallies for al Khawaja's release, frequently clashing with security forces.

The demonstrations have helped fuel rising tensions in the kingdom less than two weeks before it is to stage the Formula One grand prix race, its premier international event that was can-

celed last year because of the political unrest.

Al Khawaja was arrested last April during a government crackdown on dissent in the tiny, but strategically important Gulf island that is the home of the US Navy's 5th Fleet.

At least 50 people have died during the 14-months revolt.

The activist's lawyers appealed his conviction in Bahrain's highest court last week when judges refused to release him on bail.

Another appeals hearing for al Khawaja is set for April 23.

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Palestinians urge UN to condemn Israel over settlements

AFP
RAMALLAH

THE Palestinians have sent a letter to the UN Security Council seeking condemnation of Israeli settlement activity, the foreign minister said on Tuesday.

Riyad al Malki said Palestinian envoy to the United Nations Riyad Mansour submitted letters on Monday to the council and to UN chief Ban Ki-moon, ahead of a meeting of the peace-making Quartet in Washington on Wednesday.

"The letters called on the international community, and particularly the Security Council, to condemn settlement activity — which is illegal — and other illegal Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territory," Malki told AFP.

The letters called on the international community and to condemn settlement activity.

The message also called for "urgent measures to put pressure on the occupying power, which is Israel, to compel it to stop these actions and policies immediately," he said.

The text of the letter warns that Israel's "illegal and destructive plans not only inflames tensions but further underscores the dubious nature of the occupying power's claims of readiness to negotiate a peace settlement."

It said settlement activity was part of a campaign "being deliberately waged in an attempt to seize more Palestinian land and entrench (Israel's) control over the Palestinian territory."

Malki said the delivery of the message was carefully timed.

"The goal of these messages at this time in particular is to keep the issue of settlements at the top of the priorities of the Security Council and General Assembly," Malki added.

"These messages anticipate the Quartet meeting being held tomorrow, which will discuss the stalled peace process in the region," he said.

He said the Palestinians would seek a Quartet statement.

8 Yemeni troops, 5 rebels killed

REUTERS
SANAA

AT least eight Yemeni soldiers and five militants were killed when Islamist gunmen attacked an army checkpoint in the central Maarib province on Tuesday, a local official said.

In the southern city of Lawdar, where 57 people were killed on Monday in clashes between government forces and fighters from Al Qaeda-linked group Ansar Al Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law), fighting was intensifying, residents said.

Two tribesmen fighting alongside government forces and six militants were killed, residents and security officials said.

President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who took over in February after a year of mass protests against his predecessor Ali Abdullah Saleh, is under pressure from Washington to fight his country's Al Qaeda branch.

On Tuesday, gunmen in vehicles fired on the army checkpoint in Abar, some 300 km (186 miles) east of the capital Sanaa, killing eight soldiers and wounding four before fleeing, a local official said.

Five of the militants were also killed. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, blamed Al Qaeda-linked militants for the attack, but it was not clear if they were part of Ansar Al Sharia. The group claimed on Monday it had captured a large cache of arms and ammunition, including four tanks and anti-aircraft guns during fighting with Yemeni troops in Lawdar. Residents said fighting intensified on



Yemeni tribal gunmen near a bullet-riddled building, in Sanaa, on Tuesday. (AFP)

Tuesday with warplanes bombing two sites held by the Islamist fighters 10 km (6.2 miles) west of Lawdar, destroying at least one of the tanks the group had seized a day earlier.

According to a Defence Ministry website, some of the militants killed on Monday were foreigners, including some from Saudi Arabia.

Vehicles laden with fighters

and arms left the southern city of Jaar, which militants took a year ago, for Lawdar, witnesses said, while a local official in Lawdar said more tribesmen from neighbouring towns have joined the fight against the Islamists.

The Islamist group seized control of a significant amount of territory in the southern province of Abyan during the turmoil that led to

the replacement of Saleh by his deputy.

That included a rift in the army that threatened to spark civil war. Saudi Arabia and the United States backed the power transfer in hopes it would help prevent a slide into chaos that could provide Al Qaeda a foothold near key oil shipping routes. Conflict with Islamists in the south is only one of several challenges

facing Hadi, who took office vowing to fight Al Qaeda only to have more than 100 soldiers killed in attacks during his first few days in power.

Yemen's main airport in Sanaa was paralysed for a day after officers and tribesmen loyal to Saleh forced it to close in protest at the sacking of the air force commander, a half-brother of Saleh.

A government official said

they backed down only after pressure from the United States and Gulf countries, which had crafted the deal that made Hadi president.

Washington, which has pursued a campaign of assassination by drones and missiles against alleged al Qaeda targets in Yemen, is also pressing Hadi to unify the military, which split between Saleh's foes and allies last year.

Iraq's fugitive V-P arrives in Turkey

AP
BAGHDAD

IRAQ'S fugitive vice-president was in Turkey on Tuesday, his third stop in a regional tour that risks complicating Baghdad's relations with its neighbours.

A statement issued late on Monday by the office of Tariq al Hashemi, the top Sunni official in Iraq's Shiite-dominated government, said he arrived in Istanbul and plans to meet Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss developments in the region.

Istanbul is the third stop on a trip that has also taken him to Sunni powerhouse Saudi Arabia and Qatar, where al Hashemi sought political support as he tries to bolster his case that he remains a key member of Iraq's government despite being a wanted man in Baghdad. He is expected to do the same in Turkey, although it is unclear how long he intends to stay. Erdogan is on an official visit to

China until late Wednesday, and is scheduled to leave for Saudi Arabia on Thursday.

There was no immediate comment from Turkish or Iraqi officials on al-Hashemi's trip.

Al Hashemi is wanted in Iraq on terror charges for allegedly running death squads against Shiite pilgrims, government officials and security forces. Iraq's Shiite-dominated government issued a warrant for his arrest in December, touching off a political crisis in Baghdad and deepening the country's sectarian divide just days after the US military withdrawal.

Al Hashemi, who has denied the charges and says they are politically motivated, took refuge in the self-ruled Kurdish region in northern Iraq, where he was effectively out of reach from state security forces loyal to Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki.

Al Hashemi started his trip with a visit to Qatar.

Egypt statute body suspended

AFP
CAIRO

AN Egyptian court suspended on Tuesday the Islamist-dominated commission tasked with drafting a new constitution amid a boycott by liberals, moderate Muslims and the Coptic church.

The administrative court in Cairo said it was "suspending the constituent assembly" without explaining the reasons, but lawyers and liberal political parties had filed a complaint accusing the Islamist-majority parliament, which formed the panel, of having abused its powers.

The decision comes amid a tense stand-off between Islamist and secular forces just six weeks ahead of the country's first post-revolution presidential elections.

Mohammed Nur Farhat, a lawyer

and official of the liberal Social Democratic Party, said the "constitutional commission has been made null and void by this judicial decision and may not continue its work.

The administrative court in Cairo said it was "suspending the constituent assembly" without explaining the reasons.

"Parliament must meet to reform the constitutional commission, and we invite it to begin setting out the criteria that will guarantee an equitable representation of social and political forces, so that it is not dominated by a single political current," he added.

The 100-member panel, which is evenly divided between parliamen-

tarians and public figures, was elected by the parliament, which also voted for a number of reserve candidates who could replace the panelists.

But most of its members are from the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafist fundamentalists who hold the majority in both houses of parliament.

The head of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, Mohammed Mursi, said the FJP would not appeal Tuesday's decision. "The Freedom and Justice Party fully respects the decisions of the Egyptian judiciary, including the decision by the administrative court to suspend the constituent assembly," Mursi said in a statement. He said the FJP was ready to cooperate with all parties and groups in drafting a charter.





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Spanish prince shoots himself in the foot

AP
MADRID

THE 13-year-old grandson of Spain's King Juan Carlos was recovering in a hospital on Tuesday after shooting himself in the foot accidentally with a shotgun, the royal palace said.

A palace official said the child, Felipe Juan Froilan, was handling a small-caliber shotgun on Monday at a country estate owned by his father when the gun went off and hit him in the right foot. His father was with him at the time.

Under Spanish law, it is illegal for children under 14 to possess or discharge firearms. A palace official declined to comment on the infraction.

It is now up to a judge to decide whether to punish the boy's father. Spain's Civil Guard police said he could face a fine of up to €6,000 (\$7,900).

Widely known in Spanish media as simply Froilan, the boy is the son of Princess Elena, the eldest of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia's three children. His father is an aristocrat and banker named Jaime de Marichalar. The couple were divorced in 2009.

The royal palace said the boy underwent surgery on



Felipe Juan Froilan

a toe overnight and will be hospitalized for a few days. Froilan is the eldest of eight royal grandchildren.

It was not the first shooting incident in the royal family's history.

In 1956, Juan Carlos was handling a gun that accidentally went off and killed his 14-year-old brother. The accident happened in Estoril, Portugal.

The royal family has been the focus of much media attention in recent months on account of a judicial probe into whether the other princess' husband — Inaki Urdangarin — used his privileged position to secure lucrative deals for a nonprofit foundation he ran, then fraudulently diverted some of the money for personal benefit.

UK can extradite 5 terror suspects to US: EU court

AP
PARIS

BRITAIN can extradite a radical Muslim cleric and four other suspects to the United States to face terrorism charges, Europe's human rights court ruled on Tuesday.

The case centering on Mustafa Kamal Mustafa, also known as Abu Hamza al Masri, considered Britain's most recognizable extremist, has been closely watched as a sign of Europe's view on tough US prisons.

The court said Britain would not violate EU human rights rules by extraditing the suspects, who could face life sentences in a maximum-security prison.

Masri and the other suspects had argued that in the US they could face prison conditions and jail terms that would expose them to "torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" in breach of the European human rights code.

The European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, rejected those claims, saying in a ruling Tuesday that "detention conditions and length of sentences of five alleged terrorists would not amount to ill-treatment if they were extradited to the USA."

However, the court said the five "should not be extradited" until its judgment becomes final — a move that could take months — or until a possible appeals process ends.

It also put off ruling on the

case of a sixth suspect, Haroon Rashid Aswat, as it awaits further information about his schizophrenia and the conditions of his detention at a British hospital.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron said he was "very pleased" with the news.

"It is quite right that we have proper legal processes, although sometimes one can get frustrated with how long they take," he said.

The US is also pleased with the judgment, according to a statement posted on the US Embassy in London's website.

"We look forward to the court's decision becoming final and to the extradition of these defendants to stand trial in the United States," the statement said.

British Home Secretary Theresa May said the UK will work to see that the suspects are handed over to US authorities as quickly as possible.

Based on charges filed in the US, the suspects could get lifelong jail terms without parole in maximum security conditions, such as cells with concrete furniture, timed showers, tiny windows and no outside communications.

The various challenges against extradition rested on the suspects' likely detention in the ADX Florence "Supermax" prison in Colorado, where they would be held in solitary confinement. In their ruling Tuesday, the judges found that conditions at ADX would not amount to ill-treatment.



Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al Masri, in London, recently. (REUTERS)

Masri, 53, who is blind in one eye and wears a hook for a hand, is known for his fiery anti-Western and anti-Semitic outbursts. He claims he has lost his Egyptian nationality, but Britain considers him an Egyptian citizen. The court listed him as a British national.

Masri has also been linked to the taking of 16 hostages in Yemen in 1998 and to preaching jihad — holy war — in Afghanistan. He is also accused of setting up a terrorist training camp in rural Oregon.

In separate cases, Syed Talha Ahsan has been charged with conspiring to support terrorists via the Internet and 36-year-old Babar Ahmad is accused of

running websites to raise money, appeal for fighters and provide equipment — like gas masks and night vision goggles — for terrorists.

Ahmad's father, Ashfaq, said he and his family were "very disappointed" by the court's decision, calling it "a serious abuse of process."

Ahmad hasn't faced charges in Britain, but has been held without trial for 8 years in a UK prison. In an interview that took place after the BBC won a legal battle to speak with Ahmad, he insisted he did not condone terrorism and urged authorities to put him on trial in the UK.

Faras Baloch, a legal adviser to Ahmad's family, said their "best chance" of fighting extradition now lies in getting

a trial in Britain.

"We are going to press for him to be tried in the UK," Baloch said, adding that justice should not be outsourced to the US.

Ahmad's brother-in-law, Fahad Ansari, said the family hoped to appeal to the European Court's grand chamber. He questioned the alleged "torture" and "inhuman and degrading treatment" in Supermax prisons.

"It is completely inhumane and no country can justify sending one of its citizens to such a scenario," he said.

Two other cases were also considered by the European court, which decided extradition to the US would not violate EU human rights laws.

Norway killer found sane in new examination

AP
OSLO

THE right-wing extremist who confessed to killing 77 people in a bomb and shooting rampage in Norway is not criminally insane, a psychiatric assessment found on Tuesday, contradicting an earlier examination.

The new conclusion comes just six days before Anders Behring Breivik is scheduled to go on trial on terror charges for the massacre on July 22, and could prompt prosecutors to seek a prison sentence instead of compulsory commitment to psychiatric care.

It conflicts with an earlier assessment, which found Breivik psychotic both during and after the attacks, and diagnosed him as a paranoid



Geir Lippestad (right), lawyer of accused Norwegian militant Anders Breivik, outside Ila prison, in Oslo, on Tuesday. (REUTERS)

schizophrenic.

The court will take both psychiatric assessments into account during the trial, which starts on Monday and is scheduled to last 10 weeks.

The new assessment was

made by psychiatrists Terje Toerriksen and Agnar Aspaas on a request from the court after widespread criticism against the first diagnosis.

"Our conclusion is that he is not psychotic at the time of

the actions of terrorism and he is not psychotic now," Toerriksen said.

The full report was confidential and the psychiatrists declined to give details on why they reached a different conclusion than the first team of experts that examined Breivik. They said they will present their reasoning when they testify in the trial.

Breivik has confessed to setting off the bomb in downtown Oslo, killing eight, and opening fire at a youth camp outside the Norwegian capital, killing 69. But he denies criminal guilt, saying the attacks were necessary in what he calls a civil war against Islam in Europe.

When prosecutors indicted Breivik on terror and murder charges last month, they cited

the first assessment and said they would seek compulsory psychiatric care instead of imprisonment unless new information about his mental health emerged.

Breivik claims he's not insane and wrote a letter to Norwegian media saying the first review was based on lies. He was "satisfied" when he learned of the conclusions of the second examination Tuesday, his lawyer Geir Lippestad said.

Lippestad said the new report means Breivik's testimony will be crucial "when the judges decide whether he is insane or not."

Asked whether Breivik will defend his actions in court, Lippestad said: "He won't only defend it, he will also regret that he didn't go further."

Poland honours president killed in 2010 plane crash

AP
WARSAW

POLISH politicians held dual observances on Tuesday for President Lech Kaczynski and 95 others killed two years ago in a plane crash in Russia, as conspiracy theories about the crash still smoldered.

The April 10, 2010 crash was Poland's worst disaster in decades and claimed the lives of the first lady and dozens of top Polish civilian and military leaders.

Wreaths and lights were placed at sites in Warsaw and in Smolensk, Russia, where the plane crashed.

President Bronislaw Komorowski laid flowers at a plaque to the victims that was placed on the Presidential Palace.

Minutes later, Kaczynski's twin brother and opposition

party leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, laid a wreath at a different site in front of the palace. Dozens of his followers added lights, flowers and a wooden cross and the names of the victims were read out.

Kaczynski then went to the Military Powazki Cemetery, where he laid a wreath at a granite monument honoring those killed. Prime Minister Donald Tusk also laid flowers there.

In Smolensk, Polish Culture Minister Bogdan Zdrojewski, Russian Parliament Speaker Sergei Naryshkin and families of the victims laid wreaths at the site of the crash, which Russia's Foreign Ministry called a "deeply sad page in Polish-Russian relations."

Kaczynski, the head of the nationalist Law and Justice party, has been fueling theories that the crash was an



Relatives and officials take part in a remembrance ceremony at the site of the 2010 plane crash that killed former Polish president Lech Kaczynski, near the Russian city of Smolensk, on Tuesday. (REUTERS)

assassination, feelings backed by a sense that the Russians were not fully transparent or cooperative in investigating the crash. Much of the evidence, including the plane's wreckage, is still in Russia.

Talking about the crash, Kaczynski recently told Onet.pl news that "everything indicates that it ended in an assassination." He also indicated he will run in the 2015 presidential election.

On Monday night, Kaczynski's followers set fire to effigies of Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Tusk, after mentioning their names amid assassination theories.

Lech Kaczynski was skeptical of Russia, a historic foe that invaded Poland's eastern half at the start of World War II and controlled the country during the Cold War, so it is

little surprise that many of his and his brother's followers would voice distrust in Russia after the crash.

Polish and Russian investigations have concluded the 2010 crash was an accident due to bad weather conditions and inadequate crew training. Polish experts also blamed poor guidance from Russian air traffic controllers.

Polish military prosecutors are conducting a separate investigation for criminal charges.

The presidential delegation was traveling to Russia to honor 22,000 Polish officers murdered by Josef Stalin's secret police at the start of World War II in the Katyn forest, near Smolensk, and at other locations. That symbolism has only added to the national grief and to conspiracy theories.

Blog publishes
1028 Murdoch
data buy cases

AFP
LONDON

A BRITISH blog on Tuesday published the contents of a notebook seized from a private detective who sold personal data to journalists working for Rupert Murdoch's British newspaper wing.

The *Guido Fawkes* blog published details of 1,028 cases in which staff from News International titles, including the now-defunct *News of the World*, asked Steve Whittamore to provide data such as addresses and telephone numbers.

The spreadsheet includes the names of around 300 News International journalists, the information they asked for and, in most cases, the names of the targets — who include politicians, celebrities and crime victims.

Investigators from the Information Commissioner's Office, Britain's data protection agency, seized Whittamore's papers at his home in 2003 as part of Operation Motorman, a probe into the sale of private data to newspapers.

An investigation by ITV News claimed last month that several newspaper groups collectively spent £1.2 million (\$1.9 million, 1.5 million euros) on Whittamore's services, some of which may have been illegal.

Prince William's wife Catherine and her sister Pippa Middleton were among those targeted by newspapers, according to ITV, which had access to around 17,000 entries made in Whittamore's notebooks.

Whittamore was convicted of illegally accessing data in 2005 and received a conditional discharge.

Britain, Japan agree to jointly develop defence equipment

REUTERS
TOKYO

BRITAIN and Japan said on Tuesday they have agreed to jointly develop and build defence equipment, the first time since World War Two that Japan has concluded a weapons-building deal with a country other than the United States.

The announcement came at the start of a tour of Japan and southeast Asia by British Prime Minister David Cameron aimed at boosting trade ties with the region.

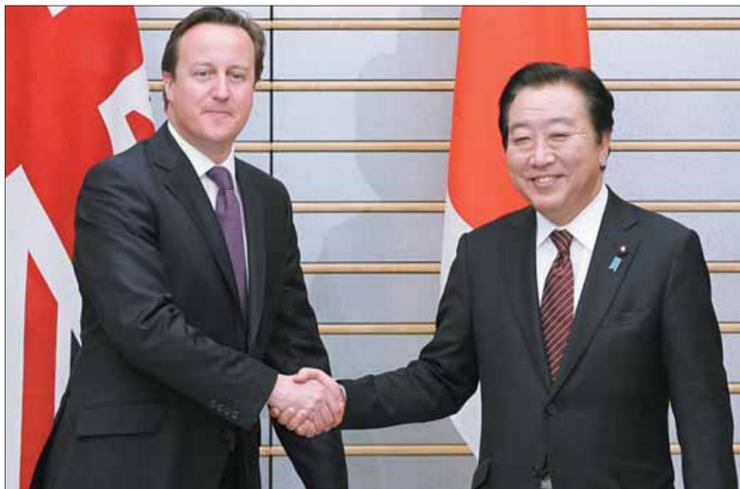
"We have decided to identify a range of appropriate defence equipment for joint development and production which contributes to both countries' security and presents industrial opportunities," said a statement from Cameron and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda.

Without elaborating, the leaders agreed to "seek to launch at least one programme of such defence equipment as soon as possible and explore the feasibility of a future major programme".

Japanese defence policy changed last December to allow Japanese companies to export weapons and collaborate with countries other than its main ally, the United States.

Hours before Cameron's plane touched down in Tokyo, Japanese carmaker Nissan Motor Co said it would spend \$200 million to build a new hatchback at its British plant.

Cameron's two-year-old coalition government is trying to boost British manufacturing



Prime Minister David Cameron with Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda (right), in Tokyo, Japan, on Tuesday. (EPA)

to lessen reliance on a financial services sector roiled by the 2008-2009 global financial crisis.

It also seeks to limit the economy's exposure to the crisis-hit eurozone by doing more business with fast-growing Asian economies and emerging markets around the world.

British officials said, in all, more than 200 million pounds (\$317.19 million) of Japanese investment in Britain had been agreed, including a Mitsui Corp wind turbine research project in Edinburgh and a Panasonic fuel cell research centre in Cardiff.

"This trip is really about British business, British exports and investment from Britain into these countries,

We have decided to identify a range of appropriate defence equipment for joint development and production which contributes to both countries' security and presents industrial opportunities.

and investment from these countries into Britain," Cameron told reporters.

"Nissan's investment in the UK is a huge vote of confidence in the skills and flexibility of the UK workforce. We want to attract more investment like this," he said.

Nissan's new car will go into

production in 2014 and create 225 jobs at its Sunderland factory in northern England and 900 more at the carmaker's British suppliers.

The new commitment comes on top of \$200 million earmarked for production of a new compact car Nissan announced last month and will take manufacturing capacity at Britain's biggest car plant beyond 550,000 vehicles a year.

Accompanied by about 35 executives from defence, energy, construction and other firms, Cameron will head from Tokyo to Indonesia on Wednesday and Malaysia the following day.

On Friday, Cameron is due in Myanmar where he will meet pro-democracy leader

Aung San Suu Kyi as the first major Western leader to visit the long-isolated country since a 1962 coup began a half century of military rule.

His visit, confirmed by sources in Myanmar, comes nearly two weeks after Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a historic by-election by a landslide, convincing the United States and European Union to consider relaxing economic sanctions imposed years ago in response to human rights abuses.

In Japan, Cameron and Noda were also discussing cooperation on nuclear decommissioning and free trade, as well as the violence in Syria and relations with Iran and North Korea.

Architecture and infrastructure firms and nuclear industry executives are with Cameron, reflecting British hopes for a slice of the vast sums Japan will spend to clean up and rebuild regions devastated by last year's earthquake and tsunami.

"British companies have significant expertise in nuclear decommissioning and clean-up, with 19 nuclear sites in the UK currently being managed through the process," Cameron said.

Progress on securing a free trade agreement between the European Union and Japan is also on the agenda.

In Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, the British delegation will focus on deals in energy, construction, retail, pharmaceutical, defence and financial services sectors.

Cameron to appear at press ethics probe

REUTERS
LONDON

BRITISH Prime Minister David Cameron is expected to give evidence at a judge-led inquiry into press ethics that he ordered last July in response to a phone-hacking scandal at Rupert Murdoch's *News of the World*, his spokesman said on Tuesday.

The Leveson Inquiry will also hear evidence from Murdoch later this month and likely from his son, James, as it extends its investigation into the relationships between Britain's politicians and the press.

Cameron's spokesman said: "I think it's fair to say that we expect him to be called. We expect a number of senior politicians to be called before that inquiry and we've always made very clear that we will attend."

The media conglomerate also owns 39 percent of BSkyB, the country's dominant pay-TV operator. British politicians have long feared the powerful Murdoch press but began to turn against it last year as the phone-hacking scandal became a public outrage.

Cameron was forced to accept the resignation of his then spokesman, Andy Coulson, who was a former editor of the *News of the World*.

The British press, particularly the tabloids, became subdued for a time but in recent weeks the *Sunday Times* and the *Sun* have gone on the offensive against Cameron, whom they helped to win the last election.



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Qatar, Philippines sign agreements

AP
MANILA

QATAR'S ruler has talked with President Benigno Aquino III at the start of his two-day state visit to the Philippines and witnessed the signing of four agreements to bolster ties.

The Emir HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani met with Aquino at the presidential palace on Tuesday.

It was the first visit of HH the Emir to the Philippines since ties were established 31 years ago. The agreements signed involved tourism, sharing of best legal practices, agriculture and fisheries, and investments.

It was the first visit of HH the Emir to the Philippines since ties were established 31 years ago.

Aquino's spokesman Edwin Lacierda says the agreements signed involved tourism, sharing of best legal practices, agriculture and fisheries, and investments.

Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario says the Philippines wants to discuss ways to increase opportunities for Filipino workers. Qatar is host to 175,000 of them.



The Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani with Philippines President Benigno Aquino III (right) during a welcoming ceremony at the Malacanang Palace, in Manila, on Tuesday. (EPA)

20 flights on N Korean rocket path rerouted

AP
MANILA

SEVERAL airlines will reroute flights over the Philippines to avoid a rocket North Korea is expected to launch between this and next week, the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines said on Tuesday.

About 20 flights including Philippine Airlines, Cebu Pacific, All Nippon Airways, Japan Airlines, Korean Airlines, Garuda Indonesia and Delta Airlines will be rerouted between Thursday and Monday, when North Korea says it will launch a satellite. The exact timing depends on weather.

Floramel Joy Songsong, spokeswoman for the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines, said the agency will temporarily close three northeastern air corridors, which will result in an additional 20 minutes of travel time for the airlines.

Japanese carriers JAL and ANA will change flight paths on routes connecting Tokyo to Manila, Jakarta and Singapore, while domestic flights will not be affected.

JAL has four flights a day on the expected rocket launch dates. Airline official Norio Higashimine said each flight will carry more fuel in case of an unexpected route change.

ANA is making similar route changes on five flights.

Philippine officials also told

ships and fishing boats to avoid northeastern territorial waters where rocket debris may fall.

North Korea says the satellite will observe crops and natural resources and denies suspicions that the launch is intended to test long-range missile technology.

North Korea has said that it chose the southerly flight path from the rocket launch site so debris wouldn't hurt neighbouring countries.

North Korea has said that it chose the southerly flight path from the rocket launch site so debris wouldn't hurt neighbouring countries. The first phase of the rocket is expected to fall into the Yellow Sea southwest of South Korea, and the second into the ocean about 140 kilometres (87 miles) east of the Philippines' main northern island of Luzon.

But there has been widespread fear over falling debris from the rocket. Japan's defence minister has ordered missile units to intercept the rocket if it or its fragments threaten to hit Japan. Seoul has also warned it might shoot down any parts of the North Korean rocket heading for South Korean territory.

Manila, Hanoi try football diplomacy in Spratlys

AP
MANILA

PHILIPPINE and Vietnamese sailors will play football and basketball matches on disputed South China Sea islands in a novel way to build trust in a region long feared as Asia's next flashpoint for armed conflict.

The navies of the two countries have reached an agreement to conduct the 'fun games' on two islands occupied by the Philippines and Vietnam, Philippine navy chief Vice Admiral Alexander Pama said on Tuesday.

China, which claims virtually the entire South China Sea, is likely to protest such a show of military alliance in the disputed region.

He said the games were part of a broader agreement he signed in October with his Vietnamese counterpart. While the games are unlikely to make much difference on the ground, the rest of the agreement calls for their navies to undertake confidence-building steps and share more information to allow them to better respond to maritime accidents in the disputed Spratly Islands.

China, which claims virtually the entire South China Sea, is likely to protest such a show of military alliance in the disputed region. The Chinese Embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

Last year, the Philippines and Vietnam separately accused Chinese vessels of intruding into their territorial

waters and disrupting oil explorations.

China has dismissed the protests, saying Beijing has indisputable sovereignty over those areas on historical grounds.

The three Asian nations, along with Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan, have been locked in a long-simmering rift over South China Sea territories, including the Spratlys, chain of islands, reefs and coral outcrops believed to be lying atop vast undersea deposits of oil and gas.

The Spratly Islands also straddle one of the world's busiest commercial sealanes.

Faced with China's formidable military, the Philippines and Vietnam have forged closer ties amid the territorial disputes.

Aside from the navy-to-navy accord, the two countries agreed to set up a hotline between their coast guards and maritime police to strengthen their capability to monitor "maritime incidents," such as piracy, and incursions into their territorial waters.

Under the naval agreement, Pama said Filipino navy men could visit the main Spratly island occupied by their Vietnamese counterparts and vice versa, then play football and basketball, although no date has been set for the friendly games.

They can exchange information on a variety of issues and plan how best to respond to accidents such as those involving fishermen, he said.

Mayor Eugenio Bito-onon Jr, who heads a small civilian community on Pag-asa, a Spratly island occupied by Philippine forces, welcomed the warming ties between the Filipinos and the Vietnamese.

Malaysia to end indefinite detention without trial

AP
KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIA'S government introduced legislation on Tuesday to stop arrests based on their political beliefs and indefinite detentions without trial.

The Security Offences Bill presented to Parliament's lower house would replace the 52-year-old Internal Security Act, which was enacted to give the government preventive powers against national security threats following a communist insurgency.

Over the decades, political opponents and government critics occasionally have been held for months without trial. In recent years, the ISA has been invoked mainly against militant suspects.

The new bill would limit security detentions without charge to 28 days and only for the purpose of active police investigations. It marks a big step in placating rights groups that have long accused authorities of using detention without trial to stifle dissent.

Those detained would be people suspected of terrorism

or security crimes, with the bill providing "an explicit commitment that no one can be arrested or detained on the basis of their political affiliation, activity or belief," according to a statement by Prime Minister Najib Razak's office.

Over the decades, political opponents and government critics occasionally have been held for months without trial.

Detainees would have the right to consult a lawyer while being held, and the law would provide for judicial oversight to ensure police accountability.

"This is a historic day for Malaysia and another major step forward on the road to reform," Najib said.

"I am confident (the new law) will give police the powers they need to protect national security and combat terrorism at the same time as introducing new safeguards for civil liberties to ensure the highest standards are



Protesters march to the Parliament House, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, recently. (AP)

upheld," he added.

Lawmakers in Parliament's lower house are expected to debate and approve the bill next week.

It must then be endorsed by the legislature's upper house and the country's constitutional monarch before it comes into force.

The bill could help bolster Najib's insistence that he is

serious about political reforms to improve human rights ahead of national elections expected within a few months.

Najib has pledged changes to other laws that opposition and rights activists have called repressive.

Earlier this week, the government moved to lift a decades-old ban on the involvement of university stu-

dents in politics.

Officials hope the measures will help them win back voters who deserted the National Front ruling coalition in 2008 elections amid complaints about a wide range of the government's political and economic policies.

Najib's National Front now has slightly less than a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

One soldier killed, 27 hurt in Philippine blast

AFP
ISABELA

A POWERFUL booby trap bomb killed one Philippine soldier and wounded 27 others as they patrolled a former stronghold of Al Qaeda-linked militants on Tuesday, the military said.

The soldiers were patrolling the outskirts of a remote camp captured last month from Abu Sayyaf extremists when the device went off, local army commander Colonel Ricardo

Visaya told AFP.

The Abu Sayyaf had formerly used the camp on the southern island of Basilan, to hide many of their kidnap victims until a large military assault dislodged the rebels in March, Visaya said.

"The camp had a lot of improvised explosive devices planted around it to strengthen the extremists' defensive position. They are very difficult to detect," he told AFP.

He described the device as an old booby trap left behind

The soldiers were patrolling the outskirts of a remote camp captured last month from Abu Sayyaf extremists when the device went off.

COLONEL RICARDO VISAYA

by the Abu Sayyaf before they abandoned the camp.

It was set off when soldiers tripped on it.

Helicopters were deployed

to airlift the wounded to a military hospital but one soldier died before he could be treated while six others remained in critical condition, Visaya said.

The heavily-forested island of Basilan is a known stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf, a group founded with seed money from late Al Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden in the 1990s.

The group has been blamed for the worst terror attacks in Philippine history and has frequently resorted

to kidnapping to raise funds, often targeting foreigners.

Seven foreigners — a Dutchman, a Swiss national, an Australian, two Malaysian traders, an Indian and a Japanese man — are believed to still be held by the Abu Sayyaf and other outlawed groups in the south.

US troops have been based in the southern Philippines for a decade to help train local soldiers in hunting the Abu Sayyaf.



Afghan investigators inspect the site of a suicide bomb attack, in which nine people were killed and 22 wounded, in Herat province, on Tuesday. (AFP)

19 killed, 33 injured in two Afghan suicide attacks

AFP
HERAT

AT least 19 people were killed and 33 wounded in two suicide attacks targeting police and government offices in Afghanistan just hours apart on Tuesday, officials said.

Eleven people died and twenty eight were wounded when two suicide attackers rammed a car bomb into a government compound near the western city of Herat, the interior ministry said.

Provincial police chief Sayed Agha Saqeb told reporters that the bombers were being pursued by police when they detonated the vehicle at the entrance to the

Guzara district compound along the road from the airport to the city.

"The car was under our surveillance. It was ordered twice to stop but they didn't stop," said the police chief.

"There were two individuals in the car, one was wearing a burqa.

One of the bombers is totally shattered and the other person's body is still there with his (suicide) vest still unexploded."

The dead included three policemen and eight civilians, a provincial spokesman said.

Just hours later, four policemen died when three suicide bombers stormed their compound in the south-

ern province of Helmand, a local government spokesman said.

Two of the bombers set off explosives strapped to their bodies and a third was shot dead by police guarding the Musa Qala police offices in the troubled province, Daud Ahmadi, the spokesman for the provincial administration, told.

"Three suicide attackers entered the police compound in Musa Qala district of Helmand.

Two of them detonated their explosives, one was killed by police," Ahmadi told.

Police chief Abdul Wali and four others were wounded in the attack, he said.

In the Herat bombing, most of the victims were civilians visiting the local administration offices on business, an official said.

An AFP reporter, among the first to arrive at the scene, said he saw bodies strewn among rubble and pieces of metal from the bombers' car.

Another witness told that women and children were present when the bombing happened.

"Shortly before it happened, I saw some women and children there.

After the bombing I saw up to 10 people lying in blood," the witness told.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for

either attack, but suicide bombings are a hallmark of Taliban insurgents fighting to topple the Western-backed government of President Hamid Karzai.

Herat, a business hub on the Iranian border, is normally relatively peaceful as most Taliban attacks are concentrated in their strongholds in the south of the country, including Helmand.

But the start of the new "fighting season" this spring has also seen a major attack in the northern province of Faryab last week, in which three US soldiers and seven Afghans were killed.

That attack was claimed by the Taliban.

No sign of spring offensive by Taliban: NATO

REUTERS
KABUL

AFGHAN insurgents have so far shown no sign of planning a repeat of last year's spring offensive against foreign and Afghan forces, preferring isolated attacks on small units and bases, a NATO spokesman said.

With the traditional summer fighting months only weeks away, German Brigadier General Carsten Jacobson said available intelligence did not point to a unified Taliban assault.

"No announcement has been made by the insurgency, but we are looking at what they are doing at the moment. We are looking at this year with very open eyes," Jacobson told in an interview.

"They are focusing on attacks on individual posts, on small groups, outposts of soldiers.

We haven't seen any cohesive action," he said late on Monday.

The Taliban last year launched "Operation Badr" named after a famous seventh century victory by the Prophet Mohammed - vowing to target NATO military bases, convoys and Afghan government officials, as well as foreign companies.

They mounted high profile suicide attacks on heavily-guarded Afghan and foreign bases in the months after, culminating in a September attack on the US embassy compound in Kabul by militants who occupied a nearby building site.

Jacobson said the attacks of last year - which also included the assassination of the head of the Afghan government peace council in charge of reconciliation efforts - had failed to revitalise the insurgency.

But the Taliban may be emboldened with the planned post-summer withdrawal of 23,000 US soldiers, and with 2012 being the final year of NATO's surge in troop numbers ahead of the pullout of most combat troops by end-2014.

"We are waiting, how

they are positioning themselves in their attempt to regain momentum.

We are very optimistic that we will be, as last year, able to stop all the efforts that they are throwing against us," Jacobson said.

More than a decade after US backed forces toppled the Islamic militant government from power, the Taliban are still a potent threat, not only waging attacks in their southern strongholds but also in the once-peaceful centre of the country.

Western commanders have attributed smaller scale attacks to battlefield reverses for the insurgents, who they say now prefer to rely on surprise strikes and suicide attacks rather than confronting foreign troops directly.

NATO-led forces are beefing up Afghan security forces ahead of the 2014 withdrawal in hopes the fledgling military and police can beat back insurgent groups and help secure the nation as the Western presence winds down.

In a step toward complete transition to Afghan forces, Afghanistan and the United States reached a deal on Sunday to curb night raids on Afghan homes, giving Kabul a veto over the operations despised by local people as a privacy intrusion.

Jacobson said Afghan special forces - though their numbers were still growing - were already capable of leading night raids while US troops would have a support and advisory role.

He said their training should not be directly compared against Western mentors, who were taught roles beyond anti-insurgency operations.

"Afghan National Security Forces have to deal with the challenges that are waiting for them," Jacobson said.

"They are not an army that has to be trained for endeavours outside Afghanistan's borders or overseas, or any role like that."

Suu Kyi to meet Myanmar president today

REUTERS
YANGON

MYANMAR Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi will have a rare meeting with President Thein Sein on Wednesday following her party's triumph in a by-election that won her a seat in parliament, an aide said.

The talks at the presidential palace in the capital Naypyitaw will be the second time the 66-year-old Suu Kyi has met the reform-minded president, a heavyweight in the ruling junta that kept her in detention for 15 years.

"It will be a one-to-one meeting between the president and her and there will



NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi

lunch hosted by the president's family," Suu Kyi's security officer, Khun Tha Myint, told on Tuesday, adding that some ministers were also expected to attend.

The meeting comes less than two weeks before Suu Kyi takes a seat in the lower

house after her National League for Democracy (NLD) party won an April 1 by election in a landslide, scooping 43 of 45 available seats in the legislature.

The invitation illustrates the huge political clout carried by the Oxford-educated Suu Kyi, the influential and wildly popular daughter of Myanmar's slain independence hero Aung San.

The election appears to have been endorsed by the West, and countries such as Britain, France and the United States have given heavy hints they may start to undo some sanctions in response to the ballot and other reforms in the year

since the authoritarian military regime ceded power to a civilian-led administration.

Thein Sein, the former

"It will be a one-to-one meeting between the president and her and there will lunch hosted by the president's family."

junta fourth-in-command widely seen as a moderate with a clean image, won the trust of Suu Kyi during a landmark meeting last August.

She views him as "honest" and "sincere" and believes she

can work with him for the benefit of the country.

Thein Sein, also 66, is widely believed to have convinced Suu Kyi to end the NLD's boycott of Myanmar's new political system, which is dominated by retired or serving soldiers and contains remnants of the regime that persecuted her allies, dissidents and journalists.

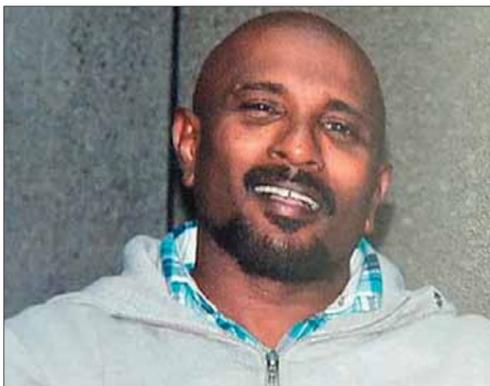
Although the president's ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) was trounced in the ballot, Suu Kyi's new role as a parliamentarian is a boon for a government seeking domestic and international acceptance for its fledgling parliamentary system.



A Taliban militant after joining the Afghan reconciliation and reintegration programme, in Herat, recently. (REUTERS)

Missing activist deported to Australia, says Lankan govt

AFP
COLOMBO



Premakumar Gunaratnam.

A RADICAL Sri Lankan activist reported by his party to have been abducted has been found safe and was deported to his adopted home in Australia, the government said on Tuesday.

Premakumar Gunaratnam, 42, a Sri Lankan-Australian citizen, went missing on Friday from Kiribathgoda, north of Colombo, where he was preparing to launch an anti-government Marxist party, according to his family and fellow activists.

The ministry said it was "grossly unfair to arrive at the conclusion that there has been an abduction and point

a finger at the state." Police spokesman Ajith Rohana told that Gunaratnam was "dropped off" near a police station by his unidentified captors after his five-day ordeal.

"He has told us that he wants to return to Australia," Rohana said.

"We have given him a security escort to go to the airport."

Dimuthu Attygalle, leader of the new party's women's wing, who was seized minutes before Gunaratnam disappeared, was also found on Tuesday.

She said she was "abducted" by members of the security forces. The two political activists were held days before they formally launched their Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), a breakaway faction of the People's Liberation Front which led two failed armed uprisings in 1971 and 1987.

"Their questioning was about the formation of our party," Attygalle told reporters after six gunmen brought her to a suburb of Colombo and set her free with a warning to stay away from politics.

"They asked if we want to

revive the revolution through an armed struggle," Attygalle said.

"From the way they questioned me and the way they spoke with each other it is clear to me that they were security forces."

She said she was questioned about foreign funding for the FSP in the presence of Gunaratnam who had been seized in Colombo.

"I said we would not come out into the open and form a party if we were returning to an armed struggle," she said, adding that she had feared for her life.

Qatar Tribune

ESTABLISHED SEPTEMBER 3, 2006

HAMAD BIN SUHAIM AL THANI
CHAIRMANADEL ALI BIN ALI
MANAGING DIRECTORDR HASSAN MOHAMMED AL ANSARI
EDITOR-IN-CHIEFAJIT KUMAR JHA
EDITOR

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Westside

Children In Adult Prisons

It leads to more suicide and victimisation of children

AFTER an unconscionable delay of nearly three years, the Justice Department needs to issue the final, mandatory rape-prevention policies for federal prisons and state correctional institutions that receive federal dollars. They must improve on the proposed rules issued last spring.

Those rules included more effective ways to investigate alleged attacks, report assaults, and improve medical and psychiatric help for the victims. But they notably failed to call for an end to the barbaric practice of placing children and youths in adult jails and prisons. Children will never be safe without that change.

Thirty-two members of Congress made exactly this point last week in a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder Jr, noting that "such a prohibition would be consistent with congressional intent" as embodied in the federal



Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003.

An estimated 10,000 youths younger than 18 can be found in adult jails or prisons on any given day, according to federal statistics. As the members pointed out, data from a 2005 study showed that youths made up only 1 percent of the inmates in jails and prisons, but 21 percent of the victims of sexual violence.

Numerous studies show that placing children in adult prisons leads to more suicide, victimisation and recidivism, which is costly in both human and economic terms.

Based on this evidence, California has broken with the past and, with the rare exception, no longer houses children younger than 18 in adult prisons.

It is time for all states, with guidance from the Justice Department, to follow this sensible and humane example.

Eastside

Reverse Innovation

India's innovation strategies will boost its overseas presence

IT is certainly welcome news that even as the world makes a slow and painful recovery after the financial crisis, a growing number of companies in India are rapidly extending their global reach by launching innovative products.

But what really makes the Indian achievement stand out is that, unlike innovations in rich nations, they largely cater to those at the lower end of the pyramid.

And the second and more important aspect is that these innovative products are just not some no-frills cheaper versions of those products already available abroad but equally versatile products like portable ECG and cardiac devices, computer tablets, water purifiers, fridges, solar modules and even small cars which find a ready market across the globe.

Many of these innovations have a lot to do with reverse engineering, a process first perfected by Indian pharmaceutical

companies.

But the recent pickup in momentum is mainly due to the changing strategies of large companies, including multinationals, which tap local expertise and use India as a low-cost test bed or lead market before launching products in global markets.

The growing global reach of Indian companies reinforced these gains. However, sustaining and accelerating the momentum of innovation requires constant vigil.

The government policies should strengthen the essential core of eco-system for innovations, namely the large and growing markets, liberal investment policies and protection of intellectual property rights. And the strategies should also help expand the overseas presence of Indian firms to further boost the made-in-India brand and extend the market for such innovative products.

(NYT / Times of India)

Britain's Zigzag Economy

The UK's recovery is still fragile and will continue to be so during 2012

STEPHANIE FLANDERS | BBC-NYT NEWS SERVICE



WHEN Sir Mervyn King spoke of the 'zigzag' pattern we could expect in 2012, he wasn't wrong. Official data – and private surveys – have been all over the place lately.

But the underlying message has not changed: The recovery is still fragile, and so is the optimistic mood we have seen in global financial markets since the start of 2012.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development does not exactly have a shining record as a forecaster.

When it said recently it expected the UK economy to shrink slightly in the first quarter of 2012, I did wonder whether the downbeat prediction would turn out to be a counterindicator – a sign that we had definitely avoided a double dip.

And so it proved. No sooner had that forecast come out than we had a string of upbeat business surveys suggesting that growth in the first three months of 2012 might be stronger than we thought.

The purchasing managers survey for manufacturing – the PMI – hit a 10-month high in March, and the service sector survey for that month made back nearly all of the fall of the previous month.

On their own, the PMI surveys for the quarter as a whole are pointing to growth of around 0.5 percent in the first three months of the year.

That's roughly what the Bank of England has been expecting – but significantly above most city forecasts.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development does not exactly have a shining record as a forecaster. When it said recently it expected the UK economy to shrink slightly in the first quarter of 2012, I did wonder whether the downbeat prediction would turn out to be a counterindicator – a sign that we had definitely avoided a double dip.

But, as the PMI's manufacturing numbers confirm, the picture painted by these private surveys is a good deal stronger than that shown so far by the Office for National Statistics, which highlighted an alarming 1 percent fall in official manufacturing output in February.

What are we supposed to conclude from all this?

First, the surveys are unlikely to be completely wrong. When you look back at the past few years, they have been a pretty good guide to where the economy is heading.

However, as Geoffrey Dicks at Novus Capital markets pointed out recently, short-term, the correlation with the offi-

cial data is pretty weak.

On a month-to-month or quarter-to-quarter basis, the surveys are not good at telling us what the ONS will come up with – even if they do tell us which direction the wind is blowing.

Second, the best guess is still that the UK will record very modest growth in the first quarter. But if so, it will rely heavily on the relative strength in services.

Weakness in manufacturing and especially the construction sector could all too easily mess things up.

But, finally, even if we avoid a technical recession, we cannot assume that the second quarter will bring more growth. Indeed, with the extra Bank Holiday, the figure could very easily be negative.

Since the autumn of 2010, the UK has shrunk in three quarters and grown in two.

The best guess now is that it will grow slightly in the last quarter, then stagnate or even fall slightly in the spring, before gathering some steam in the second half of the year. But that is all it is – a guess.

UK and global investors seem to believe, among other things, that the eurozone crisis is over; that the US economy is back on track for a "typical" recovery; that the price of oil will not seriously disrupt global growth; and that China will engineer a soft landing for its economy.

Even if those brave assumptions turn out to be right, there will surely be plenty more zigs and zags in the UK recovery before 2012 is done.

The Many Faces Of China

Jonathan Fenby's new book highlights the complexity of contemporary China

JULIA LOVELL | GUARDIAN NEWS SERVICE

In 2010, Robert Fogel, a Nobel prize-winning economist, predicted in Foreign Policy magazine that China would end America's global dominance in 2040.

between the expansion of transport and infrastructure that has unified the country logistically as never before, the cities that are spearheading the country's economic miracle, the poor working conditions and growing militancy of its labourers, its diverse mass of enormous factories and cottage industries, the push and pull between the centre and the provinces, between Han Chinese, and Tibetans and Muslims. One of the big questions hanging over China's future concerns the stability of its political system. Until now, analysts have observed, the government has struck a successful

tactic bargain with its people: tolerate our authoritarian rule and we'll make you rich. Despite a phenomenal expansion of economic opportunity, political freedoms lag far behind. The Communist party is unflagging in its efforts to maintain its monopoly on power: "dissidence", Fenby writes, "is equivalent to treason."

And yet beneath this rigid power structure, a barely controlled chaos often prevails. Corruption is rife, and chancers taking advantage of market reforms have generated scandal upon scandal: food safety, thefts of the national heritage, horrifying rail and road accidents. One of Fenby's most gripping chapters is on the "trust deficit" that clogs so much of life in China.

In 2008, the country was rocked by revelations that one of its biggest baby-milk companies had been adulterating its formula with ground melamine. Doctors are routinely bribed by patients anxious for preferential treatment; medicines are often counterfeit. The architects of a pyramid scheme made billions of yuan persuading gullible customers to buy "medicinal ants" that needed feeding

with egg yolk and cake every three days. Political corruption is endemic. A couple of years ago, a six-year-old girl – when asked by a television interviewer what she wanted to be when she grew up – answered: "a corrupt official".

There is a risk that a book summarising such a monumental story might get bogged down in dry, statistical detail. Fenby avoids this through lively, first-person reportage and vivid vignettes. Throughout the book, he takes a serious-minded delight at the country's absurdities and grotesqueries: the local government that required female civil servants to have "symmetrical breasts"; the railway minister with 18 mistresses; the Daoist priest who won a wealthy following by sitting underwater for two hours without breathing ("it later transpired that he was encased in a glass box with a supply of oxygen").

No single book could ever describe the full complexity of contemporary China, and Fenby has made tough but judicious decisions about what to leave out. Tiger Head, Snake Tails is fast-moving, informed and illuminating.

Health is Wealth

JENIFER GOODWIN | HEALTHDAY NEWS

Children Born To Obese Moms Face Higher Autism Risk

CHILDREN born to obese or very overweight mothers are at higher risk of having autism or developmental delays, new research suggests.

The study of more than 1,000 children found that the offspring of obese mothers had a 67 percent higher risk of autism than the children of normal-weight moms, and more than double the risk of having developmental delays, such as language impairment.

"The odds of autism and other developmental delays were significantly higher in the children of moms who were obese versus those who weren't," said lead study author Paula Krakowiak, a biostatistician and doctoral candidate at the University of California, Davis.

The research included more than 500 children aged 2 to 5 with mild to severe autism, about 170 children with another type of developmental disability, and 315 typically developing children, all taking part in the Childhood Autism Risks from Genetics and the Environment, conducted between 2003 and 2010.

Children were assessed by experts from the university's MIND Institute to confirm their autism diagnosis, while mothers were interviewed about various aspects of their health before and during pregnancy. Information about weight came from either medical records or mothers' recollections of their weight before and during pregnancy.

Obesity is defined as a body mass index of 30 and up. Body mass index, or BMI, is a measure of body size based on height and weight.

While diabetes was also associated with increased odds of developmental delays in offspring, there wasn't a statistically significant association between diabetes and autism.

Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder in which children have difficulties with social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication such as reading facial expressions and understanding other social cues, and restricted interests and behaviours.

About one in 88 US children has a so-called autism spectrum disorder, which includes milder forms of the disorder, such as Asperger syndrome, according to updated figures from the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. One in six US children has a developmental delay, such as a speech or language impairment or other intellectual disabilities, the CDC says.

Considering that about one-third of the women of child-bearing age in the United States are obese and almost 9 percent have diabetes, the findings could have serious public-health implications, said Krakowiak.

Dr Andrew Adesman, chief of developmental and behavioural paediatrics at the Steven and Alexandra Cohen Children's Medical Centre of New York, said the findings "should not be ignored." However, he noted that other genetic or environmental factors are likely contributing to autism. Many parents of autistic children are of normal weight, while many obese parents don't have autistic kids.



Poverty of Economics

PAUL KRUGMAN | NYT NEWS SERVICE

What's interesting is the cult that has grown up around Ryan – and in particular the way self-proclaimed centrists elevated him into an icon of fiscal responsibility, and even now can't seem to let go of their fantasy.

THE GULLIBLE CENTRE

Obama's critique is putting the state in a difficult position

SO can we talk about the Paul Ryan phenomenon? And yes, I mean the phenomenon, not the man.

Ryan, the chairman of the House Budget Committee and the principal author of the last two congressional Republican budget proposals, isn't especially interesting. He's a garden-variety modern GOP extremist, an Ayn Rand devotee who believes that the answer to all problems is to cut taxes on the rich and slash benefits for the poor and middle class.

No, what's interesting is the cult that has grown up around Ryan – and in particular the way self-proclaimed centrists elevated him into an icon of fiscal responsibility, and even now can't seem to let go of their fantasy.

The Ryan cult was very much on display last week, after President Barack Obama said the obvious: The latest Republican budget proposal, a proposal that Mitt Romney has avidly embraced, is a "Trojan horse" – that is, it is essentially a fraud. "Disguised as deficit reduction plans, it is really an attempt to impose a radical vision on our country."

The reaction from many commentators was a howl of outrage. The president was being rude; he was being partisan; he was being a big meanie. Yet what he said about the Ryan proposal was completely accurate.

Actually, there are many problems with that proposal. But you can get the gist if you understand two numbers: \$4.6 trillion and 14 million.

Of these, \$4.6 trillion is the revenue cost over the next decade of the tax cuts embodied in the plan, as estimated by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Centre. These cuts – which are, by the way, cuts over and above those involved in making the Bush tax cuts permanent – would disproportionately benefit the wealthy, with the average member of the top 1 percent receiving a tax break of \$238,000 a year.

Ryan insists that despite these tax cuts his proposal is "revenue-neu-

tral," that he would make up for the lost revenue by closing loopholes. But he has refused to specify a single loophole he would close.

And if we assess the proposal without his secret (and probably nonexistent) plan to raise revenue, it turns out to involve running bigger deficits than we would run under the Obama administration's proposals.

The proposal is exactly as Obama described it: a proposal to deny health care and many other essentials to millions of Americans, while lavishing tax cuts on corporations and the wealthy – all while failing to reduce the budget deficit, unless you believe in Ryan's secret revenue sauce.

Meanwhile, 14 million is a minimum estimate of the number of Americans who would lose health insurance under Ryan's proposed cuts in Medicaid; estimates by the Urban Institute actually put the number at between 14 million and 27 million.

So the proposal is exactly as Obama described it: a proposal to deny health care and many other essentials to millions of Americans, while lavishing tax cuts on corporations and the wealthy – all while failing to reduce the budget deficit, unless you believe in Ryan's secret revenue sauce. So why are centrists rising to Ryan's defence?

Well, ask yourself the following: What does it mean to be a centrist, anyway?

It could mean supporting politicians who actually are relatively non-ideological, who are willing, for

example, to seek Democratic support for health reforms originally devised by Republicans, to support deficit-reduction plans that rely on both spending cuts and revenue increases. And by that standard, centrists should be lavishing praise on the leading politician who best fits that description – a fellow named Barack Obama.

But the 'centrists' who weigh in on policy debates are playing a different game. Their self-image, and to a large extent their professional selling point, depends on posing as high-minded types standing between the partisan extremes, bringing together reasonable people from both parties – even if these reasonable people don't actually exist. And this leaves them unable either to admit how moderate Obama is or to acknowledge the more or less universal extremism of his opponents on the right.

Enter Ryan, an ordinary GOP extremist, but a mild-mannered one. The 'centrists' needed to pretend that there are reasonable Republicans, so they nominated him for the role, crediting him with virtues he has never shown any sign of possessing. Indeed, back in 2010 Ryan, who has never once produced a credible deficit-reduction plan, received an award for fiscal responsibility from a committee representing several prominent centrist organisations.

So you can see the problem these commentators face. To admit that the president's critique is right would be to admit that they were snookered by Ryan, who is the same as he ever was.

More than that, it would call into question their whole centrist shtick – for the moral of my story is that Ryan isn't the only emperor who turns out, on closer examination, to be naked.

Hence the howls of outrage, and the attacks on the president for being "partisan." For that is what people in Washington say when they want to shout down someone who is telling the truth.

Bloggers' Borough

SCOTT EDINGER | HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

The One Skill All Leaders Should Work On

IF I had to pick one skill for the majority of leaders I work with to improve, it would be assertiveness. Assertiveness has its power to magnify so many other leadership strengths.

Assertiveness gets a bad rap when people equate it with being pushy and annoying. But that shouldn't stop you from learning to apply it productively. At least you know what pushy people think, but those who don't assert themselves can be keeping vital ideas hidden and useless when they don't speak up or speak too softly. So I'd assert that when you are able to balance this critical skill with your other leadership abilities, you greatly amplify your power and impact.

Here are some specific ways in which assertiveness complements a wide range of the critical leadership skills you may already have:

- **Creating a culture of innovation:** A couple of years ago I conducted a study to determine the characteristics of the most innovative leaders in one of the largest companies in the world. One of their most powerful traits was their ability to push back on the hierarchy. These leaders were by no means rebels; rather, they were perceived to be fearless. Coupling assertiveness with their ability to foster innovation enabled them to take on difficult issues – to fight for resources for new projects or openly disagree with more senior managers about policy changes that could have severe unintended consequences.

- **Being customer focused:** We typically think of service or business development professionals as being good at, and focused on, building relationships. But the most successful sales professionals, as Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson point out in their book and their book, *The Challenger Sale*, are not the ones who build relationships. They're the ones who push back, challenging their clients to see problems they hadn't anticipated. Essentially, assertiveness creates more value for clients than conciliatory relationship building does.

- **Fostering teamwork and collaboration:** It might seem like assertiveness has little to do with the skills you need to be a team player. But teams thrive when their members are able to express their not-always-popular points of view. Excellent team players would improve considerably by learning when to assert such views. And team leaders who are assertive in creating a safe environment for less-popular opinions will make their teams all the stronger by increasing all team members' ability to participate fully.

- **Leading change:** Constructive change rarely happens passively. Change requires the leaders to challenge the status quo and find new ways of doing things to further organisational goals. It's nearly impossible to lead change without some measure of assertiveness because in most cases, even when change is generally viewed as positive, some kind of resistance still needs to be addressed.

- **Acting with integrity:** There are plenty of highly principled people who are too timid to speak up in meetings – to question a decision that appears to violate a corporate value or is otherwise not in the best interests of the organisation. Assertiveness doesn't cause honesty or vice-versa, but when the two operate together they give people the courage not only to know what is right but to stand up for it as well.

- **Creating a safe environment:** This might seem self-evident – there are times when it's vital to speak up in the face of danger. And yet there are so many times when people don't, even in cases of life and death. The National Transportation Safety Board, for instance, has traced the cause of some plane crashes to copilots who were so deferential to their pilot in an emergency that they made suggestions too subtly. While most of us are not faced with life or death decisions each day, plenty of leaders are responsible for the safety of those they lead.

- **Communicating effectively:** Assertiveness adds power and conviction to a message and enables a leader's voice to be heard. You can clearly tell the difference between a message communicated with passion and vigour as a leader asserts his or her point of view and one that lacks the energy of conviction. Assertive leaders also tend to communicate more often, as their passion leads them to capitalise on every opportunity they can find to deliver a message.

Many leaders struggle with being assertive enough, whether through self-doubt, a lack of confidence, a fear of not being liked. Most people would probably say that I possess a reasonably strong level of assertiveness. Yet there are times that I become relatively timid and less likely to assert my point of view. Ironically, when I review those situations, I recognise that they may be some of the most important times for me to speak up.

(The author is the founder of Edinger Consulting Group.)

Have your say

Is there an issue you feel strongly about, or an article you want to comment on? QT will carry your voice to the public and to places where it matters. Write to us at

ADDRESS

PO Box 23493, Doha, Qatar

TELEPHONE

+974.44422077

FAX

+974.44416790

EMAIL

letters@qatar-tribune.com



No big deal

THIS is with reference to the report 'Binay move no big deal for Palace', published in *Qatar Tribune* on April 9, 2012.

It looks like Binay is too excited about and obsessed with becoming the next president. I think it is too early for him to set his political agenda for 2016. He already formed his senatorial slate in preparation for his presidential ambition.

The vice-president is committing a big mistake by aligning and identifying himself with those questionable characters from the previous administrations. He should be careful in choosing his allies. They might just be liabilities, not assets to the party.

I guess that is why it is no big deal for president Aquino even if Binay's political plans are proving to be separate from those of his ruling party.

But the president should not be complacent. He also needs better allies in the senate to support his national agenda.

ANGELO SANTOS
DOHA



Stop rocket launch

APROPOS the report, 'North Korea installs rocket on launch pad', published in *Qatar Tribune*, on April 9.

The world, especially Asian nations, are troubled with these developments. As much as we want to remain calm, the fear this rocket launch is bringing is quite unbearable.

As the rocket is expected to be launched anytime this week, we still hope that it will be stopped.

There have been fears in Japan, South Korea, China, and the Philippines that debris could fall from the rocket. In the Philippines, a 'no-fly zone' in some areas will be implemented this coming week to prevent injuries (or death) in case the rocket 'undershoots' or 'overshoots'.

Although US calls the launch a cover to test missile systems that could target parts of America and elsewhere, we are counting on North Korean officials' words that the rocket will simply carry a satellite into orbit to study crops and natural resources.

SALLIE SERRANO
DOHA



"100 years have passed - the legend of the Titanic is as compelling as ever."

SH KEITH PONCE



"As Ramsey kids, we were never on allowance, always on commission. Work = pay, no work = no pay. Teach your kids."

DAVE RAMSEY

Rahul, Bilawal contact important, says newspaper

IANS
ISLAMABAD

THE contact between Rahul Gandhi, General Secretary of India's ruling Congress party, and Bilawal Zardari Bhutto, who heads the Pakistan Peoples' Party, is "important given that both might lead their respective countries one day and determine the future course of events", said a daily.

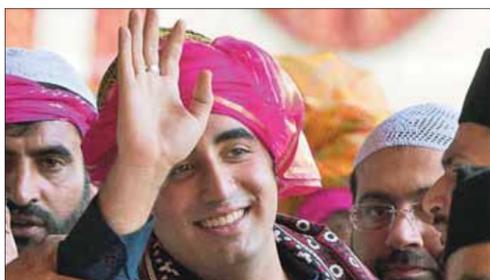
Rahul and Bilawal met on Sunday during a daylong trip by President Asif Ali Zardari to India. Zardari interacted with Indian

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and later paid obeisance at the *dargah* of a Sufi saint in Ajmer.

An editorial in the *News International* on Tuesday said that the general tone of friendship between the two leaders also "passed on to the torch-bearers of the future".

"Rahul Gandhi, 40, accepted an invitation from Bilawal Bhutto Zardari 23, to visit Pakistan.

"This initial contact between the two young men, who share some similarities as far as family history goes,



Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, son of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, at the shrine of Sufi saint Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, in Ajmer, India, recently. (AP)

is also important given that both might lead their respective countries one day and determine the future

An editorial in the *News International* on Tuesday said that the general tone of friendship between the two leaders also "passed on to the torch-bearers of the future".

course of events," it added. The daily said that private or otherwise, "any contact between Pakistan and India is important". Zardari "managed to discuss

some delicate but crucial issues during his pre-lunch talks with Manmohan Singh". Describing Singh as "a veteran politician", the editorial said that the Indian prime minister "did not stick to mere pleasantries, and said he was "taking advantage" of Zardari's presence in India to bring up some key issues". The fact that the interaction "seems to have taken place in a mainly cordial setting is encouraging".

It said that "the talks have set up an environment for potentially more cordial relations in the future between

the two countries".

"The foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan are due to meet soon and, significantly, Manmohan Singh has accepted an invitation to visit Pakistan.

"The talks establish the possibility of building a road to the future, and even though the president's devotional trip to Ajmer Sharif was controversial given what it has cost taxpayers, the discussions that were held have built some hope of improving the relations between the two neighbours," the editorial added.

Temple panel chief abducted in Balochistan

PTI
ISLAMABAD

THE chairman of the committee that manages the famous Hinglaj Mata temple in Balochistan province of southwest Pakistan has been kidnapped just two days before the beginning of the shrine's annual pilgrimage, according to a media report on Monday.

Maharaj Ganga Ram Motiyani was abducted at Lasbela in Balochistan by two men in police uniform. His followers organised a protest outside the Karachi Press Club on Monday and demanded that the government take steps for his recovery.

"Motiyani's kidnapping appears to be a conspiracy against Hindus since he was kidnapped two days before the gathering. He has not been kidnapped for ransom because he is a poor man," Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, patron of Pakistan Hindu Council and a former member of the Sindh assembly, was quoted as saying by *The Express Tribune* daily.

Thousands of Hindus, including yatis from India, travel to the cave temple of Hinglaj Mata for a pilgrimage in April.

According to Hindu beliefs, Lord Vishnu cut the body of Sati with his flaming disc into 50 pieces, which fell to the earth. Sati's head fell at Hinglaj.

Meanwhile, the Hindus of Sindh and Balochistan provinces have recently complained of forced conversions.

Some political parties and Hindu groups in Pakistan are furious over the kidnap ping and alleged conversion of Hindu girls in Sindh province.

They alleged that a Hindu girl, Rinkal Kumari was abducted and forcibly converted to Islam.

PROTEST AGAINST CLASHES

Shiite Muslim women during a protest against sectarian killings, in Gilgit, on Monday. The authorities had imposed curfew after riots erupted following violent clashes. (EPA)



Trial of 26/11 case suspects adjourned till April 17

PTI
ISLAMABAD

THE trial of seven Pakistani suspects, including LeT commander Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, charged with involvement in the Mumbai terror attacks was on Tuesday adjourned till April 17 as the chief prosecutor was unavailable.

Judge Shahid Rafique, who is hearing the case, put off the hearing for a week due to the absence of the public prosecutor representing the Federal Investigation Agency, officials said.

The same prosecutor is representing the FIA in the trial of seven persons charged with involvement in the 2007 assassination of former premier Benazir Bhutto.

There were no hearings in the case for the past two weeks as the judge was unwell.

The same prosecutor is representing the FIA in the trial of seven persons charged with involvement in the 2007 assassination of former premier Benazir Bhutto and that case too was adjourned till April 17.

The anti-terrorism court, which is conducting proceedings behind closed doors at Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi for security reasons, is unlikely to move forward in the Mumbai attacks case till it receives a report on a Pakistani judicial commission's interviews with Indian officials and witnesses in Mumbai. The eight-member judicial commission, which included prosecutors and defence lawyers, returned from a visit to India last month. The panel travelled to Mumbai, where it recorded the statements of the magistrate who recorded the confession of Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving attacker, the police officer who led the investigation into the attacks and two doctors who conducted the autopsies of the terrorists and victims.

The seven suspects, including Lakhvi, have been charged with planning, financing and executing the terror attacks.

Khar may be shifted out from foreign ministry in reshuffle

IANS
ISLAMABAD

HINA Rabbani Khar, Pakistan's first woman foreign minister conspicuous by her absence from President Asif Ali Zardari's entourage in India, may be on her way out, a media report speculated on Tuesday.

The *News International* reported that speculation was doing the rounds in the Foreign Office that Khar may be given a new portfolio in an upcoming cabinet reshuffle and a new foreign minister would lead talks with New Delhi.

Khar, who was just 34 when she was sworn-in as the foreign minister last year, was missing when Zardari and his dele-

gation spent a day in India on Sunday. In July last year, Khar had visited India and held talks with her Indian counterpart S M Krishna.

The foreign ministry was caught completely unawares when Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said in Lahore on Sunday that "a fresh team" would carry forward bilateral talks to resolve outstanding issues, the paper reported. Though the prime minister did not elaborate on what exactly he meant by "fresh team", the *News International* said the statement had raised the question of whether Khar's portfolio may be changed.

Khar had succeeded Shah Mehmood Qureshi as the foreign minister.

She hails from Punjab's Muzaffargarh district.

Sources close to her say there was no truth to rumours about a change in her portfolio. The sources as well as the Foreign Office failed to explain why Gilani used the term "new team" and why Khar was not included in Zardari's entourage.

The daily speculated that Zardari considers Khar a lightweight politician. "I have a hunch that if there is any truth in these speculations, then Zardari would go for Interior Minister Rehman Malik as the new foreign minister.

Where such important portfolios are related it is Zardari who calls the shots," Nusrat Javeed, an analyst, was quoted as saying. Rehman Malik had accompanied Zardari to India.



Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar, in Seoul, recently. (PTI)

Siachen avalanche workers continue search for trapped troops

AFP
ISLAMABAD

RESCUERS searching for 138 people buried under a huge avalanche at a Pakistani army camp are concentrating their efforts on five points at the site, the military said on Tuesday.

A huge wall of snow crashed into the remote Siachen Glacier base high in the mountains in Kashmir on

Saturday morning, smothering an area of one square kilometre (a third of a square mile).

Experts say there is little chance of finding any survivors at the site, which is at an altitude of around 4,000 metres (13,000 feet).

Despite harsh conditions, the military said efforts had intensified, with more than 450 people taking part — up from 286 late on Monday —

aided by mechanical earth movers, bulldozers and excavators, and work is focusing on certain key areas.

"Five points have been identified on the site where rescue work is in progress," the military said in a statement.

"Two points are being dug with equipment while three points are being dug manually." Photographs released by the military on Tuesday

showed diggers and rescuers at work on an almost feature-

Experts say there is little chance of finding any survivors at the site, which is at an altitude of around 4,000 metres.

less expanse of dirty grey snow and ice, with no trace visible of the camp that had been the 6th Northern Light

Infantry headquarters.

The total number believed missing in the disaster rose to 138 on Tuesday, as the military released an updated list naming 127 soldiers and 11 civilians.

They include a lieutenant colonel, a major and a captain. Army chief General Ashfaq Kayani visited on Sunday and said an avalanche of this magnitude was unprecedented in the 20

years the battalion had been based at the site.

Manzoor Hussain, the president of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, said the camp had probably been hit by a chunk of glacier that split from the main mass.

He said there was "no possibility" of anyone surviving and warned efforts to find those buried under the mass of snow using specialist equipment would become

harder.

"It is becoming difficult to locate people through thermal imagery camera and infra-red system because by now probably there would be no body temperature under the snow," he told AFP.

Retired Pakistani Colonel Sher Khan, a mountaineering expert, suggested the devastation may have been caused by a landslide rather than an avalanche.

Modi gets clean chit over Gulberg riots

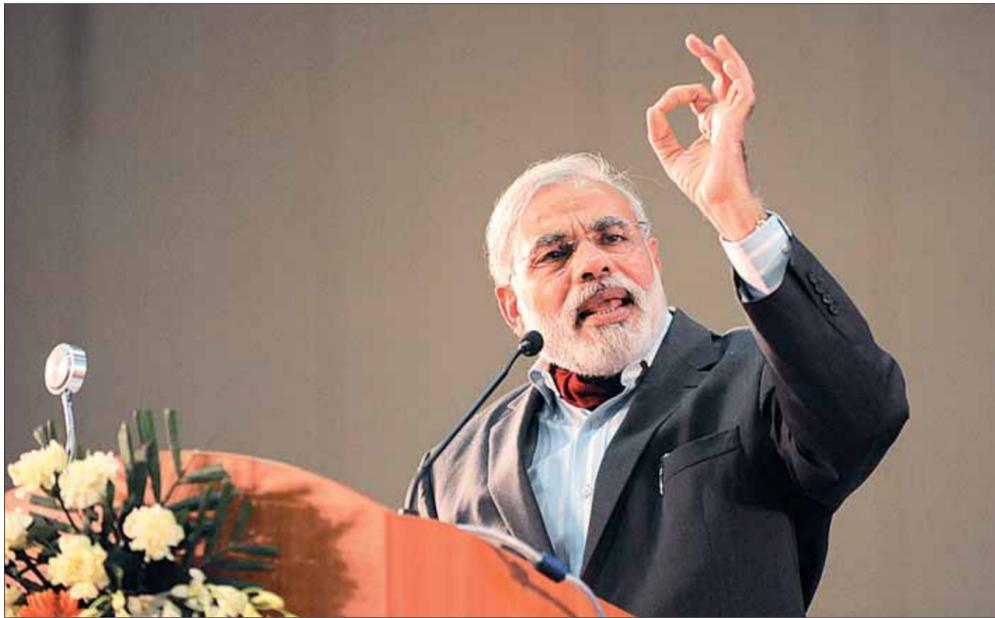
PTI
AHMEDABAD

THE Supreme Court-appointed Special Investigation Team has given him a clean chit in the post-Godhra Gulberg massacre case and sought its closure as it found no evidence against him.

"According to the SIT, no offence has been established against any of the 58 persons listed in Zakia's complaint," Metropolitan magistrate MS Bhatt said in his order on Tuesday on a batch of petitions in which Zakia Jafri, widow of former Congress MP Ehsan Jafri had named Modi and 57 others for alleged criminal conspiracy in the 2002 riots. Ehsan Jafri was among the 69 persons killed in the Gulberg society carnage.

The court ordered that a copy of the SIT report and related documents be given to Zakia Jafri within 30 days giving her the right to pursue her private criminal complaint against Modi and others.

It will now have to decide whether to accept or reject the closure report after hearing the complainant. "Therefore, as per the Supreme Court's order and principles of natural justice the complainant has to be given copy of the report and related documents," it said, adding no notice was needed to be issued to Zakia Jafri as she had already approached the court seeking a copy of the report. "It is hereby ordered that as per Supreme Court order Zakia will be given copies of the investigation report, statements of witnesses



Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi at the fifth Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, in Gandhinagar, recently. (AFP)

and all related documents within 30 days of this order."

Zakia Jafri had filed a complaint against Modi, his Ministerial colleagues, top police officials and BJP functionaries accusing them of wider conspiracy in the riots in which more than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, had been killed. The Supreme Court had ordered an inquiry into the complaint filed by her and appointed the SIT headed by R K Raghavan to probe it.

Raghavan said the complainant will have an opportunity to contest the findings of the SIT report.

"We have filed a report saying no evidence on the contents of the particular petition was available and we have recommended closure," he said.

"We have done our duty to the best of our abilities," he said, adding the integrity of the team cannot be questioned in arriving at its conclusion.

Raju Ramachandran, appointed by the Supreme Court as *amicus curiae* (friend of the court), hoped his independent report on the SIT document will also be given to the complainant, who has a right to file a "protest petition" in court. Refusing to disclose the

contents of his report, Ramachandran said he has given an "independent assessment" on the SIT report.

The SIT had submitted its report to the Supreme Court after conducting investigations into Zakia Jafri's complaint during which it questioned several people, including Modi.

The Supreme Court after going through the report had asked Ramachandran to independently verify the SIT's findings. He had also submitted his report to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court had

after going through both the reports directed the SIT to submit a final report, along with the entire material collected by the SIT, to the court of the Metropolitan Magistrate. The SIT submitted its final report on February 28, 2012.

In its order dated September 12, 2011, the Supreme court had said that if the SIT found there was no sufficient evidence or reasonable grounds for proceeding against any person named in the complaint, the court shall, before taking a final decision on such "closure" report, issue notice

to the complainant and make available to her copies of the statements of the witnesses, other related documents and the investigation report. Reacting to the SIT's closure report, Zakia Jafri said she was "pained" and vowed to continue her battle for justice. "In the court of the Lord above, justice can get delayed but not denied. I am sure that truth will come out and I will get justice," she said.

The court ordered that a copy of the SIT report be given to Zakia Jafri within 30 days giving her the right to pursue her case against Modi

Acknowledging that the path ahead was difficult, she said, "court follows the truth and I have full faith in it."

Teesta Setalvad of the NGO Citizen for Peace and Justice, working for the riots victims, said, "It is a huge disappointment as the SIT has filed a closure report, worst fears have come alive." Setalvad said the court should hear them before taking a final decision on the SIT report. Tanvir Jafri, son of Ehsan Jafri, said he had the apprehension about the SIT filing a closure report. "It is the SIT which is saying that (there is no evidence against Modi) and not the court. We had this fear that they are going to file a closure report.

"SIT's judgement (sic) is not of any value if magistrate decides against it. It may take time but we are going to fight it out," he said.

Ahluwalia cautions on inter-linking of rivers

PTI
NEW DELHI

AGAINST the backdrop of a Supreme Court direction asking the Centre to constitute a committee for rivers inter-linking, Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia on Tuesday said before inter-basin transfer of water a variety of issues needed to be settled first.

While hoping that the proposed committee under the Water Resources Ministry will strive hard to work on the issue, he said various technical, environmental and economic issues need to be addressed for proposed inter-linking.

Referring to the Himalayan component of rivers inter-linking, Ahluwalia said "effective exploitation" of capacity of these rivers is critically dependent on the international agreements. "It is not a decision India can take alone," he said.

Referring to environmental issues, he said any large scale diversion of water will require environmental impact surveys. He was speaking at a technical session of India Water Week inaugurated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh this morning.

Pointing to certain studies, Ahluwalia said interference with the natural flow of river is not a good idea and any diversion which leads to reduction in flow into the Bay of Bengal will alter the layers of salinity in that part of the ocean.

Ahluwalia explained, "...upper layers have lower salinity...if that is altered beyond a certain point, it will alter the build up of heat in Bay of Bengal which could seriously disrupt the monsoon cycle."

On the economic aspects of inter-linking, the Planning Commission deputy chief said if rivers from north and east are connected, then enormous amount of power will be used to pump water upto the Deccan Plateau. "That will introduce additional element of cost surplus in some places," he said.

He also observed that some states are reluctant to agree that they have surplus water and said water that was surplus in 1950 may not be surplus today when its usage has increased manifold.

Katju appeals to Zardari for Sarabjit's release

PTI
NEW DELHI

PRESS Council of India (PCI) Chairman Justice Markandey Katju on Tuesday appealed to Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari to release Indian national Sarabjit Singh, who is languishing in a Pakistani jail.

In a letter addressed to Zardari through the Pakistan High Commissioner to India, Justice Katju said that Zardari's visit to India and Ajmer Sharif had created a climate for good relations between the two countries.

"I am appealing to you to order release of Sarabjit Singh and his return to India as a humanitarian gesture, exercising your power of pardon as the Pakistan President," Justice Katju wrote in his letter.

"By doing so you will add to the excellent impression among Indians created by your recent visit to Delhi and Ajmer Sharif," he added.

Justice Katju also mentioned the fact that Zardari

had earlier honoured an appeal made by the bench of the Indian Supreme Court (consisting of Justice Gyan Sudha Mishra and Justice Katju) to release Gopal Das, an Indian who had spent 27 years in Pakistani jails.

"By doing so you will add to the excellent impression you created by your recent visit to Delhi and Ajmer Sharif," Katju said.

Justice Katju reminded Zardari that the Supreme Court had quoted the famous couplet of Pakistani Urdu poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz: "Qafas udaas hai yaaron saba se kuch to kaho Kaheen to behar-e-khuda aaj zikr-e-yaar chale" in that judgement.

Thanking Zardari for releasing Gopal Das, Justice Katju appealed for similar generosity in the case of Sarabjit Singh, an Indian national, who has been on death row in a Pakistani jail for over 20 years.

Inadequate power, water pricing promote groundwater misuse: PM

PTI
NEW DELHI

NOTING that inadequate and sub-optimal pricing of power and water are promoting misuse of groundwater, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Tuesday stressed on the need to move towards participatory mechanisms of pricing of water by the primary stakeholders themselves.

He also said keeping in mind the limitations on increasing water supply, a large part of effort to plug the demand-supply gap must focus on increasing water use efficiency.

"There is no regulation of ground water extraction and no coordination among competing uses. Inadequate and sub-optimal pricing of both power and water is promoting the misuse of groundwater. We need to move to a situation where ground-water can be treated as a common property resource," Singh said.

Emphasising that India has nearly 17 percent of the world's population but only four percent of its usable fresh water, Singh on Tuesday called for a



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the water meet, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. (EPA)

legal framework to govern the use of groundwater. Speaking at the inauguration of India Water Week at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi, Manmohan Singh said conserving groundwater was an urgent priority.

"We should also examine seriously the proposal to have a

clear legal framework to govern the use of groundwater. Conserving our groundwater is now an urgent priority because we depend on it for more than two thirds of our water needs," he said. Singh also called for management of irrigation systems in the country.

"With nearly 17 percent of world's population and only four percent of its usable fresh water, India has scarcity of water. Our irrigation system should move away from a narrow engineering approach to a multi-disciplinary, participatory approach," he said.

Manmohan Singh said the National Water Mission sets a target of 20 percent improvement in water use efficiency, which is critical for the agricultural sector. "The planning, development and management of water resources has to keep pace with current realities. There is a suggestion that a broad over-arching national legal framework of general principles on water is necessary to pave the way for essential legislation on water governance in every state," he said.

India Water Week, being organised for the first time, will focus on water issues and provide a global platform for related issues that brings policy makers, industry and experts together. Around 1,000 participants from India and around 43 from abroad are taking part, said officials.

Indian armed forces better prepared to defend country: Antony

IANS
NEW DELHI

INDIA is well prepared to defend itself in the face of a war, Defence Minister AK Antony said on Tuesday, dismissing as "rumours" reports about a shortage of ammunition for the armed forces.

"These are all rumours that ammunition only for four days is left in the stock. India is well prepared," Antony told reporters on the sidelines of an Indian Air Force (IAF) function in New Delhi. He was asked about reports that a parliamentary panel was informed by senior IAF and army officers that stocks of



Defence Minister A K Antony (second right) with Air Chief Marshal NAK Browne (right) meet commanders during IAF Commanders' Conference, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. (PTI)

certain types of tank munitions were down to four days of reserves.

This follows the leaked letter army chief Gen VK Singh wrote to PM Manmohan Singh, referring to serious gaps in India's defence preparedness. But the defence minister denied any gaps in the preparedness of the armed forces.

"I can assure that India is fully prepared. On the whole, the Indian armed forces are better prepared to face challenges," he said.

Earlier, addressing the bi-annual air force commanders' conference, Antony assured the forces that the government

will provide all assistance to meet its rapid modernisation plans, but cautioned that this cannot be accelerated "in fits and starts" as it is a continuous and time-consuming process. He also said that capacity building is a steady process.

"Our government is aware of the need to modernise IAF at a rapid pace and of its long-term plans for capacity building. Modernisation is a continuous, time-consuming process and cannot be accelerated in fits and starts," he said.

Noting that the budget allotted to IAF has been fully utilised, Antony said the government will continue to support the modernisation

process to strengthen the capacity of IAF during the next three five-year plan periods.

"The air defence system of the IAF is being further strengthened with new inductions and integration of weapons and modern sensors. All airfields of IAF are being upgraded in a phased manner with modern navigation equipment and runway aids," he added.

Reiterating the need for indigenisation in defence procurement to achieve the goal of self-reliance, he said, "Even as we undertake the modernisation drive, our government is aware of the urgent need to encourage indigenisation."

SITUATION TENSE BUT UNDER CONTROL



Policemen at curfew-bound Maddanapet area, in Hyderabad, on Tuesday. The curfew was imposed on Sunday after a clash between two groups. (PTI)

Curfew continues in riot-hit old Hyderabad for 3rd day

IANS
HYDERABAD

CURFEW continued in the riot-hit areas of the old city of Hyderabad for the third consecutive day on Tuesday, with the situation remaining tense but under control. People in curfew bound areas under Madannapet and Saeedabad police station limits are reeling under the shortage of essential commodities. Daily wage earners are the worst hit.

Though police on Monday night announced that there would be relaxation in curfew between 12 noon and 2 pm on

Tuesday, the same was withdrawn. The indefinite curfew was imposed Sunday after communal clashes broke out following the desecration of a place of worship at Madannapet.

Police remained on high alert following the desecration of three more places of worship at Narayanguda and Kachiguda, both outside curfew-bound areas. A tense situation prevails across the old city due to sporadic incidents of violence. An uneasy calm prevails in the densely populated neighbourhoods around the historic Charminar and Mecca

Masjid as a sense of fear grips people. Business in the centuries-old markets in the old city has been badly hit. Many people are apprehensive to go out for work and their daily

People in curfew bound areas are reeling under the shortage of essential commodities.

chores outside the old city. Most of the buses of state-owned Road Transport Corporation are off the roads and only a few auto-rickshaws are plying.

Police Commissioner AK Khan has announced that prohibitory orders, banning the assembly of four or more people, would continue till April 14 in the city. Pillion riding on motorbike has also been banned during night hours. Residents in the interior areas of old city are complaining that they are facing a tough time due to barbed wires erected by police on many roads.

Meanwhile, in a related development, around a lakh textile traders in the state have decided to observe an indefinite bandh from April 30 seeking abolition of VAT on textiles.

At a press conference on Monday, president of Andhra Pradesh Federation of Textile Associations (APFTA), Ammanabolu Prakash and other office-bearers criticised the government for remaining indifferent to their repeated pleas to abolish 5 per cent VAT on textiles. They said the bandh would continue till VAT was withdrawn.

Andhra Pradesh was the only state to have imposed VAT on textiles. Following their pleas, Finance Minister Anam Ramnarayan Reddy had asked the Federation to submit alternative tax proposals.

Karunanidhi slams Lanka for raking up Kudankulam N-plant issue

PTI
CHENNAI

DRAVIDA Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) President M Karunanidhi on Tuesday slammed Sri Lanka for raking up the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project issue, saying India "will do what is required."

The Kudankulam project was not something new and had been started many years ago and work on it is currently in progress, he said, adding it cannot be "accepted if they rake up the issue now."

"Indian government will do what is required," he told reporters at his residence before leaving for the Assembly to sign the MLA's register.

His remarks came a day after Colombo voiced concern over the possible impact of radiation from India's nuclear power plants in the southern region, as it prepares to raise the issue with global atomic watchdog IAEA.

"We respect the right of India to have nuclear power stations. But our concerns are on the possible radiation effects they could have on Sri Lanka. We have already written a letter", Sri Lanka's Power and Energy Minister Champika Ranawaka had said.

Kudankulam nuclear plant in India's Southern coast is just 250 km from Sri Lanka's northwest coastal town of Mannar.

Meanwhile, in a separate development, The Madras

High Court has quashed criminal proceedings against son of Karunanidhi and former Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister, MK Stalin, his son Udayanidhi and four others in a case of alleged land-grabbing registered by the city police.

Allowing a petition by one of the accused, Justice T. Mathivanan said that the complainant and the petitioner had settled their dispute amicably at the instance of friends and well-wishers. Since the complainant had expressed willingness in his counter to withdraw the complaint against the petitioner, P.

The Kudankulam project was not something new and work on it is currently in progress, he said, adding it cannot be "accepted if they rake up the issue now."

Venugopal Reddy and five others, the Judge said he was of the view that the inherent jurisdiction of the High Court could be pressed into service for quashing the criminal proceedings.

The petitioner's company, Pioneer Builders Ltd. had purchased a property measuring 2.5 grounds together with a building measuring 4433 sq feet on Chittaranjan Road, Teynampet, from N. Seshadri Kumar, through a sale deed dated August 19, 2010 for Rs.5.54 crore.

SC notice to Kerala Police on Italian ship

IANS
NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notice to Kerala Police and the state's mercantile marine department on a petition by the owners of Italian ship MT Enrica Lexie seeking a direction for its release so that it could continue with its voyage, having been detained after two of its crew killed two Indian fishermen in February.

Notice was also issued to the central government and Doramma, the widow of one of the two fishermen who were killed by the Italian marines on board the ship.

An apex court bench of Justice RM Lodha and Justice HL Gokhale issued notice after senior counsel KK Venugopal said the two Italian marines

were already in police custody and their firearms had been seized.

He told the court that a forensic sciences laboratory too had submitted its report on the weapons of the two Italian accused. The two Indian fishermen were allegedly mistaken as pirates and shot dead by the marines aboard Enrica Lexie Feb 15 off the coast of Alappuzha, Kerala.

The senior counsel told the court that the ship had nothing to do with the offence and in no way formed the property of the case. As Venugopal said this, the court asked if a shot fired from a building resulting in the death of a person would also make the building a case property and it would be put under seizure.

The petition by the ship MT Enrica Lexie has challenged



Italian marines Salvatore Gironi (second right) and Latorre Massimiliano (left) at a court, in Kollam, Kerala, recently. (REUTERS)

the Kerala High Court order detaining the Italian ship by staying the single judge order that had directed the police to permit the ship to sail. The

division bench of the high court had stayed single judge order on a petition by Doramma. Venugopal said that appeal against the single judge

order permitting the ship to sail out was not maintainable. He said that his client had complied with the conditions imposed by the court in pursuance of the release order.

The apex court was told that the 100,000 tonne ship incurred a loss of Rs.200 crore ever since it was detained at the Kochi port and its losses were adding up every day.

The senior counsel told the court that the entire matter has become an emotive issue in the state. He said that an application was moved alleging that Enrica Lexie was a pirate ship and another application alleged that all those present on the ship were terrorists.

The apex court while issuing notices to police, the central government and others asked them to reply by April 20.



DMK supremo M Karunanidhi with his sons MK Stalin (right) and MK Alagiri, in Chennai, recently. (PTI)

BJP's decision on Yeddyurappa likely after April 13

AGENCIES
BANGALORE

Former Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa (right), in New Delhi, recently. (PTI)

THE Bharatiya Janata Party high command is expected to take a decision on the demand by BS Yeddyurappa to reinstate him as Chief Minister after the hearing by the Forest Bench of the Supreme Court scheduled for April 13.

The Forest Bench is expected to deliver its verdict on the recommendation by the Central Empowered Committee to order an investigation into the alleged bribery episode involving two real estate firms owned by Yeddyurappa's family mem-

bers. Similarly, the CEC which has been asked by the apex court to examine if there is a need to order a CBI probe into the alleged role of Yeddyurappa in illegal mining, is scheduled to hear the matter on April 11.

This has raised curiosity as there is a possibility of the CEC making its stand clear on whether a CBI probe is needed on that day. According to sources in the BJP, the party high command is waiting for the outcome of these cases to take a final call on Yeddyurappa's demands. At the same time, the party lead-

ership is learnt to have decided not to prolong the issue indefinitely. "The high command will be meeting soon after April 13 to take a call Yeddyurappa's demands," they said.

The party high command is waiting for the outcome of these cases to take a final call on Yeddyurappa's demands.

"In this power tussle, the balance appears to be tilting towards Yeddyurappa. The only issues which are standing

between Yeddyurappa and the chief ministerial post are the cases before the Supreme Court and the CEC. He may get the chief ministerial post if the Forest Bench of the apex court as well as the CEC do not make any harsh observations against him or desist from ordering any high-level inquiry against him," highly placed sources in the party said.

Explaining the process involved in decision-making by the party high command, the sources noted that normally the party central core committee would first meet to discuss the issue. This would be fol-

lowed by a meeting of the parliamentary board that would decide on the chief ministerial post. "Now, the ball is in the court of the Forest Bench and the CEC," they remarked.

Meanwhile, party national general secretary Dharmendra Pradhan, who is also in charge of Karnataka affairs, returned to Delhi after holding day-long informal interaction with leaders of the party state unit including Yeddyurappa. Pradhan's visit is being interpreted in party circles as an effort to provide crucial inputs to the party high command on the scenario in the State unit.

China ejects Bo from elite rank, to probe wife for murder

AFP
BEIJING

CHINESE politician Bo Xilai, once a rising star, has been stripped of his elite Communist Party post while his wife is probed for the murder of a British national, state media said on Tuesday.

The shock announcements — published by the official *Xinhua* news agency — shed some light on a mysterious political scandal involving Bo and a reported attempt by his former right-hand man to defect to the United States.

Analysts say the rare, public scandal has exposed deep rifts within the ruling party ahead of a key, once-in-a-decade leadership transition due to take place later this year.

Xinhua first issued a short dispatch late Tuesday announcing Bo had been suspended from the party's powerful and exclusive 25-member Politburo and the wider Central Committee, which consists of more than 300 top officials.

The report said "Comrade Bo Xilai" was suspected of being involved in "serious discipline violations", which in China usually refers to corruption, but gave no other details.

Bo was one of China's most high-profile politicians and a rising star in the party until he was sacked last month as party chief of the southwestern metropolis of Chongqing, and then as a Politburo member on Tuesday.

The 62-year-old's troubles started in February when Wang Lijun, his former police chief, fled to a US consulate and reportedly asked for asylum — an event that eventually led to Bo's suspension as Chongqing head.

The scandal remained shrouded in mystery until news emerged late last month that Britain had asked China to reinvestigate the death of a British

national in Chongqing last November amid rumours it may have been linked to Bo's family.

On Tuesday, in a second brief dispatch, *Xinhua* reported that police had reopened a probe into the death of Neil Heywood after finding evidence Bo's wife Gu Kailai may have been involved in his murder.

Gu has been "transferred to judicial authorities on suspected crime of intentional homicide" of Heywood, the report said, adding Wang made allegations about the death of the British businessman when he visited the US consulate.

"Police authorities paid high attention to the case, and set up the team to reinvestigate the case according to law with an attitude to seek truth from facts," *Xinhua* said.

"According to investigation results, Bogu Kailai, wife of Comrade Bo Xilai, and their son were in good terms with Heywood. However, they had conflict over economic interests, which had been intensified."

"According to reinvestigation results, the existing evidence indicated that Heywood died of homicide, of which Bogu Kailai and Zhang Xiaojun, an orderly at Bo's home, are highly suspected."

Those who break China's laws will be "handled in accordance with the law," the *Xinhua* report said.

It is unclear whether Bo's suspension from the Politburo is linked to Heywood's death.

But it ends the political career of the charismatic former commerce minister who had previously been tipped to become a member of the party's Standing Committee — the apex of the political power in China — later this year.

The brief *Xinhua* report said that the party's Central Committee had decided to suspend "Comrade Bo Xilai" from the Politburo.



Chongqing party secretary Bo Xilai attends a plenary session of the National People's Congress, in Beijing, recently. (AP)

Rocket ready for launch this week: Pyongyang

AP
PYONGYANG

NORTH Korean space officials said on Tuesday that the rocket built to carry a satellite into space was ready for liftoff this week as the nation's leadership makes a series of appointments before a major political gathering.

Workers' Party delegates are scheduled to convene on Wednesday for the fourth conference of North Korea's ruling political party, where new leader Kim Jong-un is expected to inherit titles once held by his father, the late Kim Jong-il.

North Korea's national flag and the red hammer-and-sickle flag of the Workers' Party fluttered across chilly Pyongyang on Tuesday as delegates toured historic sites, including the birthplace of late President Kim Il-sung. North Korea celebrates the 100th anniversary of his birth Sunday, a major milestone in the country he founded.

New posters in the capital welcomed the delegates from provincial towns across the country. Workers scrambled to spruce up the city were painting railings a military green and crouching along roads to plant flowers.

Space officials, meanwhile, told foreign journalists at a news conference that the launch of the three-stage rocket is on target to take place between Thursday and Monday as part of the centennial birthday commemorations for Kim Il-sung.



Deputy director of space exploration Ryu Kum-chol with international media personnel, in Pyongyang, North Korea, on Tuesday. (AP)

"All the assembly and preparations of the satellite launch are done," including fuelling of the rocket, Ryu Kum-chol, deputy director of the Space Development Department of the Korean Committee for Space Technology, said at the briefing at the Yanggakdo Hotel.

The Kwangmyongsong-3 satellite, equipped with a camera designed to capture images of North Korea's terrain and send back data about weather conditions, was being mounted on the rocket on Tuesday.

The United States, Britain, Japan and others have urged

North Korea to cancel the launch, saying it would be considered a violation of UN resolutions prohibiting the country from nuclear and ballistic missile activity.

Experts say the Unha-3 carrier is the same type of rocket that would be used to launch a long-range missile aimed at the US and other targets. North Korea has tested two atomic devices but is not believed to have mastered the technology needed to mount a nuclear warhead on a long-range missile.

Ryu dismissed assertions that the launch is a cover for

developing missile technology, calling the accusations "nonsense."

Ryu said a missile launch would require more sophisticated technology, and would not take place from a fixed, openly visible station.

"No country in the world would want to launch a ballistic missile from such an open site," he said. He said the UN space treaty guarantees every nation's right to develop its space programme.

"We do not recognise any UN Security Council resolution that violates our national sovereignty," Ryu said. "I believe

that the right to have a satellite is the universal right of every nation on this planet."

Kwangmyongsong means "bright, shining star," while Unha means "galaxy."

This week's satellite launch from a new facility in the hamlet of Tongchang-ri on North Korea's west coast would be the country's third attempt since 1998. Two previous rockets, also named Unha, were mounted with experimental communications satellites and sent from the east coast.

Officials say the 2009 satellite reached orbit, citing Russian confirmation. But the US North American Aerospace Defense Command said Kwangmyongsong-2 did not make it into space, and shortly after the launch, the Interfax news agency quoted an unnamed senior Russian military official saying the same thing.

The third rendition will be North Korea's first working satellite, and is designed to transmit data to the Agriculture and Transportation ministries, said Paek Chang Ho, head of the North's Central Satellite Control.

"As preparations at the pad near completion, Pyongyang is stepping up a public relations campaign intended to project the image of a strong, powerful nation at home and abroad that will culminate in the launch itself," said Joel Wit, visiting fellow at the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

Maliens march for 'liberation' of rebel-held north

REUTERS
BAMAKO

AROUND 2,000 Maliens marched through the capital Bamako on Tuesday appealing for foreign help to dislodge Tuareg-led rebels in the north, saying a humanitarian crisis was looming and civilians had been abused.

Rebels capitalised on the disarray after a March 22 coup to seize the three northern regions they claim as their desert homeland of "Azawad", a secession bid that has been shunned by Mali's neighbours and foreign capitals from Paris to Washington.

But while coup leaders have since agreed to hand power back to civilians, there is no prospect of a push to win back the northern desert zone larger than France, which analysts fear could be a haven for Islamist groups and al Qaeda agents.

"We are asking the international community to carry out its duty and secure the Malian territory," said 28-year-old Mahamadou Dioura, one of



Northern Maliens march, in Bamako, on Tuesday. (REUTERS)

the organisers of the march.

"During the taking of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao nearly everything was destroyed — hospitals, medical centres, water supplies," he said of pillaging in the main towns during the rebel advance just over a week ago.

The 15-state ECOWAS grouping of West African countries is preparing an intervention force of up to

3,000 troops but has said its mandate is to prevent any further rebel advances rather than win back the lost ground. Ex-colonial power France has offered logistical support but ruled out sending troops.

The destruction of medical infrastructure and pillaging of supplies stored locally by aid agencies preparing to tackle the latest food emergency in

the drought-prone region has added to the predicament of local people.

Eyewitnesses have in the past few days reported victims of traffic accidents being left to die in the road and women dying during childbirth because of the lack of medical care.

Participants in the march, many of whom have family connections with people in

the north, reported allegations of widespread rape in a region where law and order has broken down.

While such allegations were impossible to verify, they will make it harder for any future Malian government to open negotiations with the rebels on a possible compromise such as autonomy stopping short of full independence.

"There have been too many negotiations," Homeny Belco Maiga, the head of the regional assembly for Kidal, said at the march.

"If it continues this way, we will not join the process and we will take matters into our own hands. What I mean is that the population will revolt," he added.

The regular army, hit by desertion, has taken no visible steps to re-take territory, and hundreds of young Maliens in Bamako have said they will form militias to go and fight at the front.

But their chances of success are slim against rebels equipped with heavy weapons brought in from Libya.

Blast hits UN convoy in Libya Protesters clash with policemen in Moscow

AFP
TRIPOLI

AN explosive device was thrown at a convoy carrying the head of the United Nations mission to Libya on Tuesday, a UN spokeswoman said, adding that there were no casualties.

"While on a visit to Benghazi, the head of the United Nations Support Mission to Libya had what appeared to be an explosive device thrown at his convoy," Hua Jiang said.

UN envoy Ian Martin, who is tasked with assisting the interim authorities in their transition to democracy, was aboard the convoy.

No one was hurt in the blast, which could have been caused by a hand grenade, Hua told AFP.

Mohammed al Gezziri, spokesman of the high security council of the city, confirmed there were no casualties and said "investigations were underway to determine who is behind the attack."

Gezziri said the convoy was attacked on its way to visit his council.

He said investigators will use footage recorded by security cameras in a bank near the site of the blast to identify the assailant.

"The person who carried out

the attack wanted to send a message to the West that Libya is not stable when the opposite is true," he said.

Several Western and Arab diplomats have visited the country without incident since the regime of Moamer Qadhafi was toppled last year.

But the blast could push foreign dignitaries and expatriates in the oil sector to think twice before coming back to the north African nation.

Libya's neighbours and analysts warn that Qadhafi's weapons have spread across the region and fallen into the hands of al Qaeda linked groups.

AFP
MOSCOW

PROTESTERS clashed with police on Tuesday after opposition leader Alexei Navalny descended on the Russian city of Astrakhan to back a local politician who is on a hunger strike to protest election fraud.

Former mayoral candidate Oleg Shein from the opposition party A Just Russia has not eaten for 25 days to protest what he says was mass vote-rigging in March 4 elections won by the ruling United Russia party's candidate.

Supporters of the man some media have dubbed "the Russian Gandhi" held a series

of impromptu rallies in the city on Tuesday together with Navalny, but police attempted

Shein, who officially gathered only 30 percent of votes, against his opponent's 60 percent, said that his hunger strike will continue until officials announce a date for new polls.

to stop them several times and detained some people.

"There were clashes between our protesters and those who support the mayor-elect and the party of power United

Russia," Shein told AFP by telephone from Astrakhan.

"Several hundred protesters wanted to peacefully walk towards the city hall to meet the election commission chief," said Shein, who has lost 10 kilos (22 pounds) in weight since he began refusing food.

Protesters later held an impromptu rally that unexpectedly gathered 600 people, Shein said, obviously tired and struggling with words. "We didn't plan it, we just phoned people asking them to come."

Shein, who officially gathered only 30 percent of votes, against his opponent's 60 percent, said that his hunger strike will continue until offi-

cials announce a date for new polls.

Shein and a group of around two dozen supporters from A Just Russia declared a mass hunger strike more than three weeks ago to call for new elections in the southern Volga city.

Shein claims votes were not counted and United Russia's Mikhail Stolyarov was arbitrarily declared the winner.

The conflict escalated on Tuesday as several opposition politicians including Navalny, who is one of the leaders of the protest movement against Vladimir Putin, arrived in the city and backed Shein's calls for a new mayoral election.

Inside US

Teen births fall to 34 per 1000 girls

NEW YORK Teen births fell to a record low in the United States in 2010, according to a new government report. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention previously reported that US births by mothers of all ages had dropped in 2010 for the third straight year.

Experts think the economy is a factor. The rate for teenage moms reached its lowest point since record-keeping began in 1940.

The rate fell 9 percent to about 34 per 1,000 girls ages 15 through 19. The decline was seen among all racial and ethnic groups. The CDC report released Tuesday focused on state figures.

The authors say the teen declines have been attributed to pregnancy prevention efforts.

They note that a recent government survey showed more use of contraception by teens. The highest rate was again recorded in the southern state of Mississippi.

Nearly every state saw a decline in teen births from 2007 to 2010, with the biggest drop in the southwestern Arizona at 29 percent.

Rates stayed about the same in three states: Montana, North Dakota and West Virginia.

Even as it leads the US with 55 teen births per 1,000 girls, Mississippi's rate has been falling like everywhere else. It dropped 21 percent over three years. New Hampshire has the lowest teen birth rate at just under 16.

Since 1991, the overall teen rate has dropped by 44 percent. Without that decline, the authors calculated, there would have been 3.4 million more babies born to girls by 2010. (AP)

Santorum's 3-year-old daughter out of hospital

WASHINGTON The 3-year-old daughter of Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum has been released from a Virginia hospital and is settling in at home with her parents, a campaign spokesman said on Tuesday.

Bella Santorum, who suffers from a rare genetic condition called Trisomy 18, was hospitalized on Friday as her father began a brief holiday break from campaigning.

Santorum did not campaign on Monday so he could be with his daughter, who was discharged from the hospital on Monday night. (AP)

Clinton praises movie on Myanmar's Suu Kyi

WASHINGTON French director Luc Besson's biopic of Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has won an unusual endorsement.

Hillary Rodham Clinton says she watched the movie, *The Lady*, as she flew to the military dominated country in December on the first trip there by a US secretary of state in 56 years.

She said: "It was a moving experience for me and I think it will be for you."

Clinton was speaking before a screening on Monday to a select audience in Washington, attended by Besson and the movie's star, Michelle Yeoh, who plays Suu Kyi.

Clinton thanked Besson for going to a lot of trouble to get her a DVD of the movie, "so I could watch it as I was travelling to actually meet the real person."

She paid tribute to Suu Kyi, and said the screening was an opportunity to celebrate "this extraordinary woman's struggle to bring democracy to her people."

Suu Kyi, a Nobel peace laureate, recently won a seat in Myanmar's parliament as her party swept recent by-elections, prompting the US to ease some economic sanctions. (AP)

Kids stop school bus, prevent accident

WASHINGTON Police are praising teenage students who safely stopped a school bus after the driver was apparently stricken with a heart attack.

Jeremy Wuitschick (WIT-shick) grabbed the wheel, steered the bus toward the curb, pulled the key from the ignition and started chest compressions after the driver slumped over and passed out on Monday morning.

The 13-year-old told KING-TV, "I was just thinking 'I don't want to die.'"

Another student identified as Johnny Wood hurried to help with the chest compressions.

Other students called emergency dispatchers.

Police in the town of Milton quickly showed up and the 12 students were escorted off the bus.

Deputy Schools Superintendent Jeff Short told The News Tribune newspaper the 43-year-old driver was in "grave condition" at a hospital.

He says students go over emergency procedures several times annually, learning what to do if a bus driver is incapacitated. (AP)

Obama to push Buffett Rule in Florida, target Romney

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Barack Obama's campaign team attacked his likely Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, on Tuesday for not paying his "fair share" of taxes ahead of a speech by the president on why millionaires should bear a larger tax burden.

Obama, who has made tax fairness a key part of his reelection message, travels to Florida where he will urge support for the Buffett Rule, named after billionaire investor Warren Buffett.

It calls for people making over \$1 million a year to be taxed at a higher rate than middle-class families. Republicans dismissed the speech as a political stunt and complain that increasing taxes on the wealthy would do nothing to create jobs or lower gasoline prices at the pump, which are the issues they say ordinary Americans care most about.

Obama's populist message is a clear swipe at Romney, the wealthy Republican front-runner likely to face him in the November 6 election, as the Democratic president seeks to appeal to blue-collar voters he will need to win a second term.

"Mitt Romney opposes the Buffett Rule - he thinks mil-



President Barack Obama with supporters upon arrival, in West Palm Beach, Florida, on Tuesday. (REUTERS)

lionaires and billionaires should keep paying lower tax rates than middle-class families. In fact, Romney himself isn't paying his fair share," the Obama campaign said in a statement.

One of the richest men ever to seek the White House, Romney paid an effective tax

rate of 13.9 percent in 2010 on more than \$21 million in income. Obama's campaign is anxious to paint him as elitist and out of touch with ordinary Americans.

Obama's speech, in a vital election battleground state, comes ahead of a vote in the Democratic-controlled

Senate on the Buffett Rule on April 16, the day before the income tax filing deadline.

Even if it passes the Senate it is unlikely to make it through the House of Representatives, which is in Republican hands.

Republicans oppose the measure and said it showed

their opponents were trying to distract voters from their failure to boost growth or curb high unemployment.

"This is yet another sign that they're out of ideas and simply focused on tax hike show-votes," said Mitch McConnell, the top Senate Republican.

Obama healthcare will worsen debt: Republican

REUTERS
WASHINGTON

INSTEAD of curbing government spending, President Barack Obama's healthcare law could add up to \$530 billion to the federal debt over ten years, a Republican expert on US government benefit programs said on Tuesday.

A study by Charles Blahous, a George Mason University research fellow and the Republican trustee for the Medicare and Social Security entitlement programs for the elderly, challenged the administration's contention that the 2010 law would reduce healthcare costs.

But the Obama administration defended the law as a cost-saver and sharply criticised the report by Blahous, an economic policy adviser under former President George W. Bush.

Known as the "Affordable Care Act," or by conservatives as "Obamacare," the measure to expand health insurance for millions of Americans is considered Obama's signa-

ture domestic policy achievement.

The Supreme Court is weighing whether Congress overstepped its authority to regulate commerce in approving the law.

The justices heard arguments in the high-stakes case two weeks ago.

Republican presidential candidates have promised to repeal the law if one of them wins the White House in the November election.

Conservatives denounce the sweeping overhaul as an unwarranted government intrusion.

Obama and the Democrats believe the law will control skyrocketing costs and curtail government "red ink."

White House health adviser Jeanne Lambrew said Blahous' analysis wrongly charges that some savings are "double counted."

She said government estimates from the Office of Management and Budget and from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office show the 2010 law would lower federal deficits over a 10 year period.

"This new math fits the old pattern of mischaracterisations about the Affordable Care Act when official estimates show the health care law reduces the deficit," Lambrew, deputy assistant to the president for health policy, wrote in a blog post on the White House website.

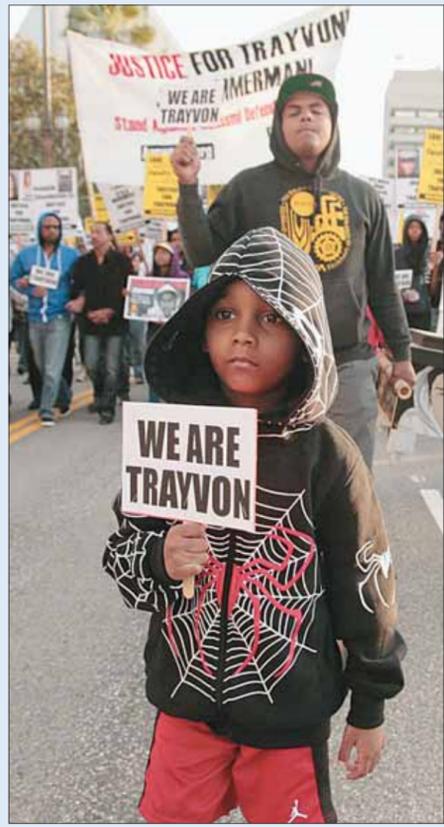
But Blahous, who also served as the deputy director of the National Economic Council under Bush, said in his research that the law is expected to boost net federal spending by more than \$1.15 trillion and add between \$340 billion and \$530 billion to deficits between 2012-21.

"Relative to previous law, the (healthcare law) both exacerbates projected federal deficits and increases an already unsustainable federal commitment to health care spending," he concluded.

The analysis, first reported by the Washington Post late on Monday, also comes a month after the Congressional Budget Office cut the estimated net cost of the healthcare law by \$48 billion to \$1.08 trillion through 2021.

ALL FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

A 5-year-old boy marches with civil rights activists and protesters seeking justice for 17-year-old slain Trayvon Martin, in Los Angeles, California, recently. (REUTERS)



Three Maryland friends claim part of \$656 million jackpot

AFP
WASHINGTON

THREE public school employees in Maryland have claimed a share of the record \$656 million Mega Millions jackpot, the state lottery said on Tuesday.

"We are thrilled that three such deserving Marylanders have won this money," said lottery director Stephen Martino.

"It's gratifying to know that these individuals, who have given so much to the public through the years, have had this wonderful luck.

It couldn't have happened

to nicer people," he said.

Calling themselves the "Three Amigos," the winners two teachers and a school administrator arrived at the headquarters of the Maryland lottery with their financial advisers, and chose the \$158 million cash option, the lottery said.

After taxes, they will each take home just under \$35 million, it said.

Martino said all three wanted to remain anonymous but the lottery said one was a woman in her 20s, another a man in his 40s, and the third a woman in her 50s.

All of them worked part-



Maryland Lottery Director Stephen Martino announces 3 winners of the Mega Millions jackpot, in Baltimore, on Tuesday. (REUTERS)

time jobs to make ends meet. "The teachers said they all

planned at this point in time to remain public school

teachers, not just this school year but going forward," said Martino at a news conference.

The three friends shared one of the three winning tickets in the March 30 drawing for the record \$656 million dollar prize, the largest in US lottery history.

Tickets with the winning combination of 2, 4, 23, 38, 46 plus Mega Ball 23 were sold in Illinois, Kansas and Maryland amid an unprecedented nationwide lottery-buying frenzy.

Kansas lottery chief Dennis Wilson said his state's winner turned up at his offices in Topeka shortly before noon

Friday with a lawyer and financial officer in tow — as well as a request to stay out of the headlines.

No one has stepped forward yet with the third winning ticket bought at a MotoMart store in Red Bud, Illinois.

The Maryland winners had pooled their money to buy 60 one-dollar tickets, which were then held by the youngest winner.

"I had all 60 tickets spread across my floor," the lottery quoted the youngest winner as saying. "Once I realised one was a winner, I called my two friends right away."

Another winner had put the lottery out of her mind and gone to bed early the night of the drawing when she got the call.

"It was around 11:30 pm, and my phone just kept ringing and ringing.

I finally decided to answer it, thinking something was wrong," she was quoted as saying. On the line were the two other winners who told her: "Get dressed. We're coming over right now."

The lottery said the winners made copies of the ticket, signed it, and then one of the women drove to her mother's house and put it in her safe.

Romney better-suited to revive economy: Poll

AFP
WASHINGTON

PRESIDENT Barack Obama holds a commanding lead over Mitt Romney on campaign issues like world affairs and health care, a poll showed on Tuesday, but trails the Republican frontrunner on one key front: handling the US economy.

Obama enjoys double-digit advantages on women's issues, protecting the middle class, likability, and better understanding the economic challenges of the average American, according to a Washington Post/ABC poll, which had Obama winning 51 percent to 44 percent if the election were being held on today.

But the survey of 1,103 adults shows that voters, by more than three to one, still see the US economy in a recession, and such pessimism could leave Obama vulnerable in the November election if he is perceived as being unable to turn the

country around.

Romney's lead in the protracted Republican nominations race is now nearly unassailable, and the general election is shaping up to be a battle between him and Obama, who is seeking a second term.

With less than seven months before the election, the US economy is only slowly pulling out of its worst recession in decades.

Romney is ahead or within the poll's 3.5-percent margin of error on some pressing economic issues that will be front and centre in the election. On handling the economy, Romney leads 47 percent to 43 percent.

Romney's lead on handling the federal budget deficit is a more substantial 51-38, while on the matter of creating jobs,

Obama nips his rival 46-43.

The president remains well ahead in a range of issues, especially personal traits, with respondents giving him a more than 2-1 advantage on friendliness and likability.

Romney has a troubling deficit among women voters, with the poll showing Obama trouncing Romney on women's issues 53-34 percent.

But Obama draws negative marks for his acumen on the economy, with nearly half of respondents (46 percent) saying it's a reason to oppose his reelection, compared to 32 percent saying it's a reason to support him.

With less than seven months before the election, the US economy is only slowly pulling out of its worst recession in decades.

The unemployment rate this week dropped to 8.2 percent, a three-year low, but the economy generated just 120,000 new jobs last month, fewer than expected by many economists.



President Barack Obama signs posters made by children at a fund raising stop, in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, on Tuesday. (REUTERS)

COPS & THEIR CARTS

Policemen get ready with their T3 Series electric standup vehicles for patrolling near Dodger Stadium, in Los Angeles, California, on Tuesday. (AFP)



Panetta, Afghans take up US role after 2014

AFP
WASHINGTON

US AND Afghan defence chiefs on Tuesday discussed the future of American troops in Afghanistan after 2014, with both sides calling for a long-term security partnership.

US defence Leon Panetta hosted Afghan defence Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak and Interior Minister Bismillah Khan Mohammadi at the Pentagon two days after Washington and Kabul signed a deal putting Afghans in charge of controversial night raids, removing a major obstacle to a security pact governing the US military's future presence beyond 2014.

"We are looking forward to an enduring, long-term cooperation (with the United States)," Wardak said in English at the start of the meeting.

"We can say that it is vital for the survival of our country in that volatile, dangerous neighbourhood," he said.

Panetta, with top US military officer General Martin Dempsey at his side, said he looked forward to discussing "our ability to arrive at a strategic partnership agreement that will

again be another step forward in our relationship."

The Pentagon chief called the newly-signed memorandum on night operations a milestone in a gradual handover from NATO to Afghan security forces,

"There's no doubt we are in a critical juncture. But after years of struggle, tomorrow's goal is in sight," Wardak said.

scheduled to be complete by the end of 2014.

"The fact that we were able to achieve an agreement I think was a very important step forward to ensure that we will make the transition to Afghan operations, but we will do it in a responsible and effective way," Panetta said.

He said the two sides would discuss the future of Afghan security forces, including the troop levels that will be reached in a short-term "surge" and "ultimately the levels you can sustain in the future."

US commanders have recently signaled that the eventual troop strength of the Afghan forces would be dramatically scaled back

from initial plans, amid concerns about the cost that will be absorbed mostly by the United States and its allies. He said both countries shared the same goal of establishing "a sovereign Afghanistan that can in fact secure and govern itself."

Wardak and Mohammadi thanked their US counterparts for the sacrifices of American troops and the defence minister said Afghan forces had made genuine progress on the battlefield over the past year. "There's no doubt we are in a critical juncture. But after years of struggle, tomorrow's goal is in sight," Wardak said. He said that "continued US support and cooperation will play a decisive and vital role" in the country's future stability. Most of the 130,000 NATO-led troops in the country are due to leave by the end of 2014, but US officials have left the door open to retaining a smaller US force.

Washington and Kabul still have to hammer out what bases and airfields US forces would be able to use after 2014 and possible legal protections for American troops — an issue that derailed a possible security deal in Iraq last year.

Jindal, Haley top Romney running mate list

PTI
WASHINGTON

AMERICANS Bobby Jindal and Nikki Haley are emerging as possible vice-presidential running mate of Mitt Romney, who is expected to bag the Republican Party's nomination for presidential polls.

However both Jindal, the Governor of Louisiana, and Haley, the Governor of South Carolina, have repeatedly denied that they are in the race for being considered as the vice-presidential running mate for Romney, who is now almost all set to bag the party's ticket to challenge incumbent President Barack Obama in the November presidential elections.

In its list of 10 possible running mates of Romney, CBS News a major American media outlet named both Jindal and Haley.

In an interview to the news channel, top Republican Senator, John McCain, said likely Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney should consider Jindal.

"There are a number of candidates we have out there, Bobby Jindal.

Obviously Marco Rubio is in the top tier, Chris Christie," McCain said.

"Two-term governor of Louisiana is considered a rising star within the Republican Party.

The son of Indian immigrants, Jindal campaigned during his first campaign to be governor on rooting out political corruption and turning around a state budget heading to financial crisis. He reduced the deficit through spending cuts that includes reducing state employee pensions," CBS News said.

The first Indian-American to serve as Governor, Jindal endorsed Rick Perry, the governor of neighbouring state of Texas, early in the campaign and has remained neutral since Perry dropped out.

Currently the youngest governor in the country and the first Indian-American woman to run a state, Haley garnered national attention during her campaign and former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin endorsed her, it added.

Rousseff tells Obama of 'currency war' worries

AFP
WASHINGTON

BRAZIL'S President Dilma Rousseff has voiced concern to US President Barack Obama that the easy money policies of developed countries threaten the growth of emerging economies like Brazil.

The comments from the leader of Brazil, the world's sixth largest economy, came on Monday on her first visit to the White House — for talks that yielded little in the way of concrete announcements.

"Such expansionist monetary policies... ultimately lead to a depreciation in the value of the currencies of developed countries, thus impairing growth outlooks in emerging countries," Rousseff said.

Brazil is suffering from an appreciation of its currency, the real, against the dollar, which the government blames on a "currency war" that has

flooded the country with cheap dollars generated by easy credit.

Rousseff welcomed the improving economic picture in the United States and told Obama that Washington had a key role to play "not only in containing the effects of the crisis but also in ensuring proper resumption of prosperity."

"The BRICS countries currently account for a very substantial share of economic growth worldwide," she said, referring to Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

"But it is important to realise and bear in mind that the resumption of growth in the medium term future certainly involves a substantial resumption of growth in the US economy," she added.

She later drove home the point in a speech before the US Chamber of Commerce, saying: "Brazil rejects all

forms of protectionism, including... exchange rate protectionism."

Rousseff and Obama praised each other on the solid

"The good news is that the relationship between Brazil and the United States has never been stronger. But we always have even greater improvements that can be made," Obama said.

state of US-Brazilian ties, even if they said there was more to be done.

"The good news is that the relationship between Brazil and the United States has never been stronger.

But we always have even greater improvements that

can be made," Obama said.

"I feel very fortunate to have such a capable and far-sighted partner as President Rousseff, so that not only Brazil and the United States but the world can benefit from our deeper cooperation," he said.

The two leaders said their talks were a good opportunity to exchange views ahead of a summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia this weekend, which they will both attend.

Rousseff's visit comes more than a year after Obama's trip to the South American giant, in which he tried to reset relations ruffled by differences with former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, particularly over Iran's disputed nuclear activities.

Although Rousseff is regarded as less ideological than Lula, her government has resisted US-backed sanctions against Iran and Syria,

which could be a sore point in the talks.

Another irritant is the US Air Force's abrupt cancellation one month ago of a contract to buy 20 Super Tucano aircraft from Brazil's Embraer, angering the South American nation, which is in turn weighing US, French and Swedish offers for the sale of 36 fighter aircraft.

Earlier, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Brazilian Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota spoke at a day-long binational meeting of business leaders at the US Chamber of Commerce.

Clinton announced plans to open two new US consulates in Brazil in Belo Horizonte and Porto Alegre and said she would visit the country next week. The United States currently has consulates in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Recife.

"There is tremendous

India challenges US immigration rules at WTO

REUTERS
NEW DELHI

INDIA has launched a complaint at the World Trade Organisation over the cost of US work visas, which it says are too high and discriminate against a group of Indian IT firms, in the latest sign of prickly trade ties between the two allies.

The complaint is at the level of WTO "consultations" between the two parties - the last step to resolve a disagreement before entering a full-fledged legal dispute.

India's complaint is about a US law from 2010 that almost doubled visa fees for skilled workers to \$4,500 per applicant.

"India is taking up consultations on this issue and hopes to solve it amicably," an official at the trade ministry said on Wednesday, asking not to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter.

The official did not say when the complaint was taken to the WTO, but said Trade Minister Anand Sharma raised the visa issue with US Commerce Secretary John Bryson on a visit to India on March 26.

Last month, the United States began the same type of action at the WTO to open India's market for poultry meat and eggs, saying an Indian ban on US imports intended to stop the spread of bird flu was not based on sound science.

A US embassy spokesman had no immediate comment.

Commercial ties between India and the United States flourished after India's economic liberalisation in 1991, but in recent years each side have accused the other of erecting unfair barriers to trade and investment growth.

India's economy has benefited greatly from information technology firms doing off-shore work for US companies, but such outsourcing has become an issue in the US presidential campaign, with President Barack Obama vowing to woo jobs home from overseas.

India's complaint is about a US law from 2010 that almost doubled visa fees for skilled workers to \$4,500 per applicant. The bill's sponsor, Senator Charles Schumer, a Democrat from New York, said at the time that the move was aimed at a small group of companies exploiting U.S. law to import workers from abroad.

"I think the government of India is right that this is a barrier to trade," Vineet Nayyar, CEO of large Indian software services exporter Tech Mahindra, told Reuters on Tuesday.

However, Nayyar said Indian industry did not expect visa fees to be reduced and would either become more efficient or raise prices marginally to offset the cost.

"I think by and large the Indian industry is taking for granted that this will continue and we're trying to see how we can manage it," he said.



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at a ceremony to mark the National Nuclear Day, in Tehran, recently. (EPA)

Iran can withstand 2-3 years of US oil blockade: President

REUTERS
DUBAI

IRAN has enough funds to withstand a total embargo on its oil sales for two to three years, Iranian media quoted President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as saying days before the resumption of talks with world powers on Tehran's nuclear programme.

The European Union is set to impose a total embargo on Iranian crude oil from July following similar measures imposed by the United States to try to force Iran to abandon uranium enrichment.

"We must say to them that we have that much saved that even if we didn't sell oil for two to three years, the coun-

The EU is set to impose a total embargo on Iranian oil from July following a similar US move.

try would manage easily," a report on Tuesday from Fars news agency quoted Ahmadinejad as saying during a visit to Hormuzgan province.

The United States and its

allies hope the sanctions on Iran's energy and financial sectors will force it to abandon uranium enrichment which they suspect is aimed at developing nuclear weapons. Iran says its goals are entirely peaceful.

Iran is due to resume talks this week with Western countries plus Russia and China on its nuclear programme.

The International Energy Agency recently said that the wide-ranging sanctions against Iran could reduce its oil exports by as much as 1 million barrels per day, or 40 percent, from the middle

of the year.

European member states, including Greece, Spain and Italy have been significant customers to Iran and are scrambling to find alternative supplies before the ban is introduced.

Ahmadinejad accused Western countries of being solely interested in plunder, Fars reported.

"Whoever wishes to abuse Iran's rights, the young people of Hormuzgan will punch them in the mouth to the extent that they won't be able to find their way home," he said.

Chicago Tribune set to end bankruptcy

REUTERS
CHICAGO

TRIBUNE Co, the bankrupt publisher of the *Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*, moved closer to ending its three-year bankruptcy after a judge resolved lingering disputes about the order in which noteholders should be repaid.

Monday's ruling by Delaware Bankruptcy Judge Kevin Carey also found that the company's proposed plan to emerge from bankruptcy does not unfairly discriminate against certain creditors.

That could blunt one line of attack against the company's bankruptcy plan, which could once again come under fire from noteholders when Carey is asked to approve it at a June 7 hearing. "This puts us on a flight path to successful emergence," said David LeMay, an attorney with Chadbourne & Parke LLP, which represents the unsecured creditors committee in the bankruptcy.

Carey's 50-page opinion determined the order of repayment among the company's unsecured noteholders, an issue he left unresolved in key rulings last year because he wanted more evidence.

He found that senior noteholders will be repaid ahead of securities known as Phones, which he determined had a claim of \$759.3 million. Carey determined that last in line are the EGI Notes, which are held by financier Sam Zell. Carey also rejected an argument that it amounted to unfair discrimination to divide some of the repayments under the plan evenly between senior noteholders and others, such as trade and retirement claims.

'Socio-cultural factors key to Qatari women's health'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

study to find ways to increase participation in physical activity, maintenance of a healthy diet, and strengthen the non-smoking habit among Qatari women. The other members of the research team are Hamad Medical Corporation Consultant Cardiologist and Cardiovascular

Research Department Director Dr Jassim al Suwaidi and a team of nurse researchers including Noora Rashid al Enazi, Asmaa Hassan Abu Hassan, Asma Mohammad Rehman, Zeinab Idris, Khadra Yassin and Asma Mohammad Albulushi.

The study found that the influence of cultural and social factors and the emphasis on the taste of food has a direct impact on their diet. Taste, colour and appearance of food are of great importance among Qatari and Arab women. The participants found that salt and oil play an imperative role in creating taste, colour and the appearance of food.

Similarly, hospitality and generosity are central to women's beliefs and values in Qatari culture. The study states "These social activities can lead to unhealthy food choices for some women. As one of them described, it is particularly difficult for her when friends or

family members want her to eat by requesting, 'just taste it' or 'one bite please'." Another important aspect of the study is the influence of cultural and social factors on physical activity, as well as the accessibility of recreational facilities. A majority of the participants believe that exercise is important to maintain health, reduce weight and prevent cardiovascular disease.

Most agree that cultural beliefs and values are not the primary influence on women's decisions to participate in physical activities and exercise. Although several participants believe that younger generations have more opportunities to engage in physical activities, all women in Qatar can be more physically active. One of the participants in the survey, Zeinab says, "Cultural values and beliefs do not influence my and other Qatari women's decisions to participate in physical activity. At least nowadays, most ladies can participate in different physical activities at the Aspire Zone without restriction or objection from anyone."

Similarly, another participant, Noor stated, "Nowadays, a lot of Qatari women go for a walk at the Corniche and Aspire in order to maintain their health and wellness. Females have become more concerned about their health and more aware of diseases associat-

ed with not exercising."

In addition to individual health problems and some traditional cultural beliefs that are negative influences on women's ability to engage in routine physical activities, analysis of the data reveals that although participants were aware of their health needs, many might have overlooked the importance of physical exercise.

Performing family roles and taking care of others took priority and is viewed as more important for these women than their own individual health. Though smoking is a cultural taboo among Qataris, many participants in the survey believe that the increasing cultural diversity in Qatar has had a significant impact on women smoking. In their opinion, expatriate workers or immigrants may have imposed their beliefs and practice of smoking on the Qatari population.

Participants also suggest that there should be health education as one of the main strategies to increase awareness. Some participants also feel that public lectures are needed to increase health awareness among the community. Other participants suggested that lectures about healthy food or the causes of heart diseases would be a welcome component of clinic visits. Many participants recommended that the promotion of physical activity and regular exercise should start early in life.

Qatar, Philippines agree to set up joint business council

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

welcomed by President Aquino III, senior military and civil officials and members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Philippines. HH the Emir and the accompanying official delegation left New Delhi earlier on Tuesday wrapping up a three-day

state visit to India.

In the evening, HH the Emir attended a dinner banquet hosted by the Philippine President in his honour.

Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario, Secretary of the Energy Department Jose Rene Almendras, Qatar's Ambassador to the Philippines, Philippine

Ambassador to Qatar and a whole host of senior officials were present at HH the Emir's farewell at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

In a written message to President Aquino III, HH the Emir expressed his thanks for the good reception he and his accompanying official delegation were accorded.

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