



MIDDLE EAST DAILY BULLETIN

GÜNLÜK ORTADOĐU BÜLTENİ

Domestic Policy in the Middle East Countries

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1. IRAQ

- **Fugitive Iraqi Vice President Hashemi receives third death sentence**

A court in Iraq has handed fugitive Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi a third death sentence on charges of ordering his bodyguards to attack Shia pilgrims.

The court tried Hashemi in absentia on Sunday and sentenced him to death. The sentence was the third death sentence handed to him since the Iraqi judicial authorities began to try him over terrorism charges last spring.



His secretary and son-in-law, Ahmed Qahtan, was also tried at the court and sentenced to death over involvement in the attacks on Shia pilgrims.

The court in Baghdad heard that Hashemi ordered a car bomb attack on the pilgrims last December during the Ashura commemoration ceremonies in the southeastern part of the capital. The plot, however, was foiled by Iraqi security forces as they seized the car.

After being testified, the five bodyguards said they had received orders from Qahtan, who was passing Hashemi's orders to them.

On November 1, the same court handed Hashemi and Qahtan their second death sentence for attempting to assassinate an Iraqi interior ministry officer.

The fugitive Iraqi vice president and his son-in-law received their first death sentence on September 9 over involvement in terrorist activities and running a death squad.

Hashemi is accused of involvement in bomb attacks against government and security officials over the past years, including a November 2011 car bombing in Baghdad that apparently targeted the Iraqi prime minister.

On December 19, 2011, an investigative committee within the Iraqi Interior Ministry issued an arrest warrant for Hashemi after three of his bodyguards confessed to taking orders from him to carry out the terrorist attacks.

Hashemi later fled to Iraq's Kurdistan region and then Turkey.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/05/270513/wanted-iraq-vp-gets-3rd-death-sentence/>

- **Kuwait agrees to invest the compensation money in Iraq.**

Kuwait agreed to convert a large part of the war compensation to investment in Iraq.

According to Iraqiya semi-official TV channel ,Kuwait agreed to obtain compensation through investment in Basra and other Iraqi provinces.

Iraq pays financial compensation to Kuwait as a result of the effects suffered by Kuwait after Iraqi forces invasion in 1990.

http://www.ninanews.com/English/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GEGHKL

- **Al-Maliki meets Romanian foreign minister.**

BAGHDAD / NINA / Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki confirmed Iraq's willingness to develop the long standing and multiple relations with Romania in all fields, especially in the fields of agriculture and agro-industry as well as the infrastructure sector.

Al-Maliki, during the meeting with Romanian Foreign Minister, Titus Kurlatin called to "develop the cooperation between the two countries at various levels and to activate the High Joint Committee, which oversees the areas of cooperation between the two countries," a statement to his office says.

For his part, the Romanian Foreign Minister expressed his country's desire to develop cooperation with Iraq in various fields, particularly in the areas of transport, energy, agriculture, industry, health and education.

The statement noted that Kurlatin presented an official invitation from the Romanian Prime Minister to al-Maliki to visit Romania, al-Maliki, from his part, promised to response as soon as possible.

http://www.ninanews.com/English/News_Details.asp?ar95_VQ=GEGGED

2. IRAN

- **Iran to strengthen naval presence over disputed Gulf islands**

Iran will increase its naval presence in the Gulf to strengthen its authority over three islands which the United Arab Emirates says are its territory, Tehran said on Sunday.



The islands sit near oil shipping routes at the mouth of the strategic Strait of Hormuz and the challenge over their sovereignty is a constant threat to Iran's fragile relations with its Arab neighbors.

“The security of the Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf is part of the various strategies of the naval force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps,” IRGC Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari said, according to the website of state television IRIB.

Jafari was speaking at a ceremony inaugurating a fifth “naval defense zone” at the port of Bandar Lengeh. He said the IRGC was “increasing, expanding and improving the expert capability in naval defense” in the five zones.

“The fifth zone of the Guards’ naval force is one of the naval defence chains which is in particular responsible for the defense of the Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf,” he said.

The 41-year-old dispute between Shiite Muslim Iran and the Sunni UAE over the islands - Greater and Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa - has nationalist and ethnic overtones and was inflamed when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited Abu Musa in April.

In September, UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahayan said Iran’s “occupation” of the three islands was against international law.

Last month Iran’s Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said Tehran would consider downgrading ties with the UAE over the dispute, although the foreign ministry later denied the report, according to state television.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/04/247620.html?PHPSESSID=sprf6svcpk629ith5e0aIn6j85>

- **Israel threats against Iran, against int'l law: Algeria**

The Algerian ambassador to Tehran says the Israeli regime's war rhetoric against Iran and other regional countries is in flagrant violation of international laws and the UN Charter.



Sofiane Mimouni said on Monday that according to the United Nations Charter, any threat against a UN member state is "forbidden and unacceptable."

Mimouni said his country continues to support Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology, adding that the Islamic Republic has never violated the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"Algeria has constantly supported the legal rights of countries, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to possess and use peaceful nuclear technology," said the Algerian diplomat.

Tel Aviv has repeatedly threatened Iran with a military strike, falsely claiming that Tehran is pursuing non-civilian objectives in its nuclear energy program.

Iran argues that as a signatory to the NPT and a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has the right to develop and acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Iranian officials have promised a crushing response to any military strike against the country, warning that any such measure could result in a war that would spread beyond the Middle East.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/05/270537/israel-threats-against-iran-illegal/>,

- **Russian commander urges naval cooperation with Iran**

A senior Russian commander has called for closer cooperation between Iranian and Russian naval forces, saying he is interested to visit Iran Navy forces present in the Caspian Sea.



"There is just a wish to see how the Iranian flotilla is developing," Russian Caspian Flotilla Commander Rear Admiral Sergei Alekminski said on Sunday, IRNA reported.

Alekminski said a fleet of Russian ships and frigates would pay a visit to an Iranian port in 2013.

He also said that there were no particular relations between Russian and Iranian ships at present, reminding that this would be the first visit in 40 years.

On October 29, Iran Navy's 22nd fleet of warships called at a Sudanese northeastern port in the Red Sea, in line with the Islamic Republic of Iran's strategy of expanding its naval presence in international waters.

Iran's Navy has been multiplying its naval presence in the international waters since last year, deploying vessels to the Indian Ocean and dispatching, in February 2011, two ships via the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean Sea for the first time.

In addition, in line with the international efforts to combat piracy, the Iranian Navy has been conducting anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden since November 2008 to safeguard the vessels involved in maritime trade, especially the ships and oil tankers owned or leased by Iran.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/05/270474/russia-cmdr-urges-cooperation-with-iran/>

- **Iran urges national dialog in Syria**

Iran's deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs has underlined the significance of national dialog in Syria as a major step toward the restoration of peace and stability in the region.



Iran attaches significance to the full establishment of the ceasefire in Syria and national dialogue with the presence of the representatives of the entire nation and government as an important step toward calm for the Syrian people and peace and stability in the region, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Monday.

Abdollahian said foreign interference, support for "irresponsible armed groups" and US-Israeli attempts to suppress the Syrian people and government constitute the fundamental issues in the Arab country.

Iran has repeatedly expressed its readiness to host the talks between the Syrian government and opposition in a bid to end the violence in the Arab nation.

Iran has repeatedly expressed its readiness to host the talks between the Syrian government and opposition in a bid to end the violence in the Arab nation.

Earlier on October, Amir-Abdollahian said the national dialogue among various Syrian groups would be held in one of the regional countries or probably in the Iranian capital of Tehran in the near future.

Syria has been experiencing unrest since March 2011 and many people, including large numbers of security forces, have been killed in the turmoil.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/05/270542/iran-urges-national-dialog-in-syria/>

- **Iran to react to further tough sanctions by reconsidering oil exports: Oil minister**

Tehran, Nov 5, IRNA – Iran would react to West's possible tougher sanctions to be imposed on the country through reconsidering its oil exports, said Oil Minister Rostam Qasemi on Monday.

"The lack of Iran's oil in international markets would lead to increase in its global price", said the minister according to a statement issued by the ministry's Information and Press Center.

He stressed that lack of Iran's oil in world markets would create a situation in which this would be "the people who should pay the cost of measures which have been taken by their governments."



Stressing that Tehran has no desire to experience such a situation, Qasemi said, absence of Iran's oil in the world markets would damage the supply and demand balance and would lead to insecurity and oil shortage in the global markets.

The minister said despite tough sanctions imposed on the country's oil industry by the West, the industry has successfully overcome problems and made remarkable progresses.

<http://old.irna.ir/News/Economic/Iran-to-react-to-further-tough-sanctions-by-reconsidering-oil-exports,-Oil-minister/80401382>

3. SYRIA

- **Syria envoy seeks fresh UN resolution**

Brahimi says transitional government needs formal political sanction, as opposition meets to reorganise in Qatar.

Lakhdar Brahimi, the joint UN-Arab League envoy to Syria, has called for world powers to issue a UN security council resolution based on a deal reached in June, in a bid to set up a transitional government and end the bloodshed in that country.

Brahimi's initiative came after talks with Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, in the Egyptian capital Cairo on Sunday.

Also on Sunday, hundreds of Syrian opposition leaders began a four-day conference in the Qatari capital Doha, with the aim of reorganising their ranks and creating a unified political and military anti-government front.

Speaking after the meeting in Cairo, Lavrov dismissed Brahimi's initiative, saying that there was no need for a resolution. He added that the violence in Syria's 19-month long uprising against President Bashar al-Assad was being stoked by foreign powers.

Brahimi wants a UN Security Council to formalise an earlier declaration adopted in Geneva, which called for a transitional administration but did not specify what role, if any, Assad would play in it.

"It is important that the Geneva Declaration be turned into a resolution from the security council to gain the power to enable it to become an applicable political project," Brahimi said after a meeting between him, Lavrov and Arab League chief Nabil Elaraby.

Lavrov said both sides should be forced to sit down to negotiations, saying Moscow backed the Geneva Declaration.

"Unfortunately, some countries which participated in Geneva don't speak with the government but only with the opposition and encourage them to fight till victory and this has very negative implications," he said.

In Doha, the opposition began a four-day conference on Sunday that would focus on, among other things, a US-backed initiative to create a new leadership structure, with fewer Syrian exiles and more military commanders, for it.

Riad Seif, a leading Syrian dissident, denied on Sunday that he planned to head a government in exile. Seif, a long-time government opponent, was reportedly touted as the potential leader of a new government dubbed the Syrian National Initiative.

Hundreds of figures from the Syrian opposition are taking part in the conference, all seeking a way to topple Assad and end the 19-month conflict that has killed tens of thousands of people.

There are, however, some notable absentees, including the National Co-ordination Body, a rival to the Syrian National Council (SNC), and the National Democratic Front.

Damascus fighting rages

In Syria, meanwhile, the fighting continued on Sunday, with an explosion rocking one of Damascus' government quarters, and shelling reported at the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp in the capital.

The Syrian army shelled rebel positions inside the camp, which is located on the edge of Damascus, killing at least 20 people, opposition campaigners said.

"Yarmouk is a dense area and shelling it always results in a human catastrophe. We have 20 people killed, including medics who had to tried to help injured people in the streets, and dozens of wounded," said Muhammad al-Hur, an anti-government activist.

Earlier on Sunday, state media confirmed that an explosion had taken place on Beirut street in Damascus, in an area where many government and military buildings are located.

At least seven people were injured in the explosion, at least one critically, state media said. The explosion occurred after explosives planted underneath a car went off in an outdoor lot near the government Labour Union building.

The Grandsons of the Prophet brigade, a part of the Free Syrian Army, claimed responsibility for the attack.

Elsewhere on Sunday, anti-government rights groups said Syrian warplanes had hit targets in the Ghuta area 50km northeast of the capital.

The air raids took place after dawn clashes between pro- and anti-government troops near a security building in Damacus, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/201211552650353858.html>

- **Assad's army bombards Damascus after opposition attacks: activists**

The Syrian army bombarded opposition strongholds in southern Damascus on Monday with artillery and from the air, hours after opposition fighters attacked a militia loyal to President Bashar al-Assad, opposition activists said.



At least eight people were killed and dozens wounded in the bombardment, after 20 people were killed by army shelling overnight, they said.

Syrian opposition fighters clashed with regime troops in Aleppo also on Monday as the opposition held makeover talks in Qatar and diplomatic efforts to end the violence spun their wheels.

The fresh clashes came as the opposition fighters sought to keep momentum after seizing a major oilfield and shooting down a warplane in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor on Sunday.

Warplanes fired rockets and tanks and artillery pounded the neighborhoods of Sbeineh, Yalda, Bibla, al-Tadamun and Hajar a-Aswad on Monday, the activists said.

The working-class Sunni Muslim neighborhoods have been at the forefront of the 19-month-old revolt against Assad, whose Alawite faith derives from Shi'ite Islam.

Free Syrian Army fighters attacked a pro-Assad militia in the southern neighborhood of Nisreen overnight, an area mainly populated by members of Assad's minority Alawite sect.

Opposition fighters also hit positions belonging to the Popular Front For the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), an Assad proxy, in the nearby Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk.

At least seven PFLP-GC members were killed in the fighting, and ambulances were seen taking dozens of casualties from Nisreen to a nearby hospital, activists in the area said.

The opposition fighters have scored significant wins in recent weeks and hold swathes of territory in the country's north, but have struggled to gain ground in and around Damascus and in the commercial hub Aleppo amid heavy bombardment from regime air power.

Strikes from regime warplanes and helicopter gunships have reached a new level of intensity in recent days as government forces try to reverse opposition gains on the ground.

Air raids continued Monday with jets hitting the eastern outskirts of Damascus, the northwest province of Idlib and near the Iraqi border in the east, the Observatory said.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/05/247743.html?PHPSESSID=sprf6svcpk629ith5e0a1n6j85>

- **Russia warns of Western anti-Syria move**

Russia has warned that Western countries are seeking a UN Security Council resolution that will aggravate the situation in Syria in order to pave the way for regime change in the country.



“If the priority is the change of the regime, then there will be more blood, but if the priority is to save lives, then there is no need for any type of resolutions. We have not yet tried to implement Geneva accords,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Sunday.

He made the remarks at a joint press conference with Arab League Secretary General Nabil al-Arabi and UN-Arab League Special Representative for Syria Lakhdar Brahimi in Cairo.

On November 2, the Russian Foreign Ministry released a statement saying the United States was giving “direct orders” to the “Syrian opposition.”

“We heard direct orders (from the United States) about what the Syrian opposition should do to form a ‘government in exile’, and about who should join such a government,” the statement read.

“US representatives are saying that they do not intend to wait for a change in Russia and China’s position. So they are bluntly making clear that they see the Syria conflict being settled exclusively on their terms,” the statement further read.

Syria has been the scene of unrest since March 2011 and many people, including large numbers of army and security personnel, have been killed in the turmoil.

The anti-Syria Western states have been calling for President Bashar al-Assad to step down, but Russia and China oppose the Western drive to oust the Syrian president.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/05/270498/russia-warns-of-western-antisyrria-move/>

4. ISRAEL-PALESTINE

- **Israeli army on high alert as Syrian tanks enter Golan Heights**

Three Syrian tanks entered a demilitarized zone of the Golan Heights, which was set up in the 1974 disengagement treaty, raising Israel's high alert as the Israeli military chief observed the area a day after the entrance of the tanks and warned his soldiers to be on high alert.



On Sunday, Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz warned Israeli soldiers, occupying the heights area, of the escalating violence in Syria and expressed concerns of possible spread of the Syrian conflict across the border.

"This is a Syrian affair that could turn into our affair," the army's website quoted Gantz during his visit to the troops on the frontier.

Marco Carminjani, an official with the U.N. body supervising the zone, said he could not immediately confirm the entry of the tanks. But if the report is true, he said, it would be a violation of the 1974 disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel. He said it would be the first such move in the zone since the accord.

Israel made a complaint to U.N. peacekeepers, a military spokesman said Saturday.

No comments were received from the Syrian government, according to international news agencies.

Syria remains formally at war with Israel, which captured part of the Golan Heights in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed it in 1981 in a move the international community does not recognize.

Since a 1974 disengagement agreement between the two countries, a 1,200-strong unarmed U.N. force has patrolled a buffer zone on the heights.

Israel's relatively low-key response of turning to the U.N. said it did not see immediate threat by the presence of the Syrian armor.

But the entry marks the most serious spillover of Syria's turmoil at the frontier to date. Misfired Syrian shells have exploded inside Israel on several occasions and a tourist site was temporarily closed after armed Syrians were spotted nearby recently.

Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria during the Mideast war in 1967. Later, it seized the strategic territory overlooking northern Israel in a move that is not recognized internationally. Prior to 1967, Syria used the highlands to shell Israeli villages and farms.

Although Syria and Israel have been enemies for over four decades, the Golan Heights has been at peace for the most part.

There is concern in Israel that if the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad is toppled, the country could fall into the hands of Islamic extremists or descend into sectarian warfare, destabilizing the region.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/05/247708.html?PHPSESSID=sprf6svcpk629ith5e0a1n6j85>

- **Netanyahu ordered strike on Iran in 2010, Israeli TV report reveals**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak in 2010 ordered the army to prepare an attack against Iranian nuclear installations, though the order was later rescinded, Israeli television said Sunday.



According to private television Channel 2, the order was not implemented due to opposition from the army chief at the time, General Gabi Ashkenazi, and from then Mossad chief Meir Dagan.

At a meeting of top ministers, Netanyahu decided to order the elevation of the army's preparedness level to "P plus," a code meaning the armed forces must be ready to take action.

But Dagan opposed the move, Channel 2 reported, noting that a decision to launch a war against Iran could be taken only by the security cabinet comprising around 15 ministers.

Ashkenazi also feared that raising the alert level risked "creating new facts on the ground".

Barak told Channel 2 that Ashkenazi had told Netanyahu the Israeli army was not ready and did not have the operational means to bring an attack against Iran.

According to Barak, the decision to raise the level of alert “did not necessarily mean war”. In any case, the plan to attack was eventually dropped.

The website of the daily Haaretz newspaper said that after leaving office, Ashkenazi told close associates that the army was ready for an attack, but that he was convinced such an option would be a strategic error.

Dagan, after having quit Mossad, publicly called the idea “stupid.”

Israel and Western nations fear Iran is trying to build a nuclear weapon that could be used against Israel and other states. Tehran says its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Experts estimate that Israel, which has never acknowledged a nuclear arsenal, has at least 200 atomic warheads.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/05/247693.html?PHPSESSID=sprf6svcpk629ith5e0a1n6j85>

- **Israeli forces kill unarmed Palestinian man in Gaza**

Israeli troops have killed an unarmed Palestinian in the Gaza Strip in the latest wave of attacks on the coastal enclave, which has been under Israeli blockade for more than five years.



Palestinian medical professionals said early on Monday that the victim was an unarmed mentally deranged man.

The medical professionals said Israeli forces did not allow them to pick the injured man up for a couple of hours and that the man died of injuries for which he could have been treated.

A Zionist military spokeswoman confirmed the killing of the 23-year-old, saying that the shooting took place after darkness fell on Sunday.

The Israeli forces frequently attack the Gaza Strip, saying the actions are being conducted for defensive purposes. However, disproportionate force is always used, in violation of international law, and civilians are often killed or injured.

Gaza has been blockaded since June 2007, a situation that has caused a decline in the standard of living, unprecedented levels of unemployment, and unrelenting poverty.

The apartheid regime of Israel denies about 1.7 million people in Gaza their basic rights, such as freedom of movement, jobs that pay proper wages, and adequate healthcare and education.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/05/270479/israeli-forces-kill-unarmed-palestinian/>

- **Palestinians reject Netanyahu call to drop UN initiative**

RAMALLAH (Reuters) -- President Mahmoud Abbas will press ahead with a bid to upgrade Palestine's status at the United Nations, a senior official said on Monday, brushing off a request by Israel to halt the initiative.



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has renewed his call for an immediate resumption of peace talks and has warned President Abbas against making any unilateral moves in the UN General Assembly.

"Yesterday I invited President Abbas to start direct negotiations without preconditions," Netanyahu told Reuters television in Jerusalem, a day after repeating an appeal to the Palestinian leader for renewed dialogue.

"Unfortunately, I have still not heard back from the Palestinian side ... I hope they won't go to one-sided action in the UN because that will only push peace back and will only produce unnecessary instability," he said.

With the negotiations frozen since 2010 in a dispute over Israeli settlement construction in the occupied West Bank, Abbas plans to ask the UN General Assembly this month to upgrade the Palestinian's diplomatic status at the world body.

They are currently registered as an "observer entity", but want to become an "observer state", granting them access to bodies such as the International Criminal Court, where they could file complaints against Israel.

Commenting on Netanyahu's call to talk now, Abbas spokesman Nabil Abu Rdainah said any direct talks must await the UN vote, which the Palestinians look certain to win in the face of Israeli and US objections to the unilateral move.

"When we return from the UN General Assembly and are a non-member state based on 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital, the way to direct negotiations will be open to achieve security and stability on this basis," Abu Rdainah said.

Netanyahu has said a return to the lines that existed before Israel captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem in a 1967 war would leave it with indefensible borders.

US President Barack Obama drew Israeli ire last year when he called for the borders of Israel and a future Palestinian state to be based on the 1967 boundaries with mutually agreed land swaps.

The United States has also firmly criticized Palestinian maneuvering in the United Nations, saying it violates the 1993 Oslo accords, which were intended to pave the way to a "final status agreement" within five years.

Netanyahu's latest comments on talks followed criticism from former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and ex-Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni -- potential centrist opponents in Israel's Jan. 22 general election -- that he has not done enough to restart negotiations.

On Sunday, Israeli President Shimon Peres telephoned Abbas, a spokeswoman for Peres said, without disclosing any details of the conversation. The official Palestinian news agency, WAFA, said the two men discussed the peace process.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=534052>

- **Report: Netanyahu, Barak clashed with army over Iran attack**

JERUSALEM (Reuters) -- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak ordered Israeli defense chiefs in 2010 to prepare for an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities but were rebuffed, a television report said.



Excerpts released on Monday of an Israeli Channel 2 documentary said the armed forces' chief of staff at the time, Gabi Ashkenazi, and Mossad intelligence head Meir Dagan both objected to the order to raise the military's alert level to "F-Plus", which means a strike could be imminent.

Barak, interviewed on the Uvda investigative show, said Ashkenazi told him the army did not have the operational capability for a successful strike against Iran's nuclear program, which Israel believes is aimed at producing weapons, an allegation Tehran denies.

The documentary said Ashkenazi disputes Barak's account and that he told confidants that while the military was capable of carrying out such an attack, to do so would be a strategic mistake.

Ashkenazi, the report added, cautioned that just giving the order to raise the alert status could set off a chain of events that could spiral out of control and lead to a wider conflict.

In an excerpt broadcast before the program airs later on Monday, Barak played down the significance of the alert order.

"It is not true that creating a situation in which the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) ... are on alert for a few hours or a few days to carry out certain operations forces Israel to go through with them," Barak said.

Dagan, who since his retirement as Mossad chief has voiced opposition to a unilateral Israeli attack on Iran, accused Netanyahu and Barak at the time of trying to launch a war illegally without cabinet approval, the television report said, citing participants at security discussions.

Barak and Netanyahu have since signaled that an attack on Iran was not imminent. In September, Netanyahu told the United Nations that Tehran would be on the brink of nuclear weapons' capability only in the spring or summer of 2013.

Barak said last week that Iran has pulled back on its nuclear program, which has given Israel more time to contemplate its next steps.

<http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=533959>

- **IDF fires on Palestinian approaching Gaza fence**

Palestinian medics say soldiers killed unarmed, mentally unfit man; IDF: Officers shot at him after he ignored warning shots in air.

An IDF force fired upon a Palestinian approaching the border fence in the central Gaza Strip on Sunday evening.



The IDF Spokesman's Unit said that the soldiers first fired warning shots into the air, and only shot at the man's body after he continued approaching the fence.

Palestinian medics said the soldiers killed the man, and the soldiers confirmed that they had hit the suspect.

Palestinian medics said he was an unarmed, mentally unfit man and that they had to wait a couple of hours for permission to pick him up, early on Monday. They suspected he died of injuries for which he might have been treated.

The IDF could not confirm that information or say whether or not the victim was armed, saying more details about the case may become clearer later on Monday.

The shooting took place during a period of increased tensions at the Israel-Gaza frontier, with terrorists often firing rockets into southern Israel and the IAF launching aerial raids targeting terror targets

<http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=290521>

5. AFRICA and EGYPT

• Egypt's Coptic Christians choose new pope

Bishop Tawadros, of the Nile Delta province of Beheira, to lead the Middle East's biggest Christian community.

The Coptic Orthodox church has chosen a new pope, Bishop Tawadros, to lead the Middle East's biggest Christian community.

In a sumptuous ritual filled with prayer, chants and incense on Sunday at Abbasiya cathedral in Cairo, the 60-year-old bishop's name was picked by a blindfolded child from a glass bowl in which the names of two other candidates had also been placed.

They were Bishop Rafael, 54, a medical doctor and current assistant bishop for central Cairo; and Father Rafael Ava Mina, the oldest of the five original candidates at 70.

Tawadros, of the Nile Delta province of Beheira, replaces Pope Shenouda III who led the church for four decades until he died in March aged 88.

Many Copts will look to the new pope to ensure that the voice of Christians, who have long complained of discrimination in Egypt, are heard.

Acting Pope Pachomios laid on Sunday the three names, already selected in a limited vote in church last week, in plastic balls inside the chalice before starting Mass.

He selected on Saturday 12 altar boys between the ages of five and eight, one of whom was ordered to pick the name during Sunday's ceremony.

Tawadros will be the 118th pope in a line dating back to the origins of Christianity and to Saint Mark, the apostle and author of one of the four Gospels, who brought the new faith to Egypt.

Nearly 2,500 Coptic public officials, MPs, journalists and local councillors took part in the vote.

Sectarian fears

Strict measures were taken to ensure there was no foul play during the entire process, before a large congregation and televised. The three pieces of paper were all the same size, tied up the same way and placed in the box.

Shenuda, known as a careful, pragmatic leader, died at a critical time for the increasingly beleaguered minority, which has faced a surge in sectarian attacks after an uprising overthrew Hosni Mubarak in February 2011.

Al Jazeera's Mike Hanna, reporting from Cairo on Sunday, said that traditionally speaking, the Coptic pope in Egypt have kept a low profile "although Pope Shenuda III had been accused of being close to the Mubarak regime".

"Many hope the new pope will engage more on the political field because now the new constitution is being drafted, and they are hoping for a secular constitution," he said.

The Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of All Africa in the Holy See of St Mark the Apostle serves as the spiritual leader of Egypt's Coptic Christians, who make up between six and 10 per cent of the country's 83 million population.

Amid increased fears about the community's future after Mubarak's overthrow, Tawadros will be its main contact with Egypt's first Islamist president, Mohamed Morsi.

The rise of Islamists after the revolution has sparked fears among Copts of further persecution at home, despite Morsi's repeated promises to be a president "for all Egyptians".

In the latest incident, five Copts were injured in clashes with Muslims at a church in a village south of Cairo on October 28, security sources said.

The violence broke out when Muslim villagers tried to block access to the church as the Coptic faithful arrived for Sunday mass.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/201211410426264481.html>

- **Security chief of Egypt's North Sinai fired**

General Ahmed Bakr relieved of his duties after a deadly attack on Saturday which killed three officers in El-Arish.

Egypt's interior minister has fired the security chief of North Sinai governorate after an attack killed three policemen in the regional capital on Sunday.



The interior ministry said on Sunday that General Ahmed Bakr was relieved of his duties, and replaced by General Sameeh Beshendi.

Three officers were killed and one wounded in Saturday's attack in El-Arish, which was likely carried out by Islamist fighters who Egyptian security forces have been hunting for in the region, according to security sources.

The gunmen escaped following the attack and have not yet been identified by authorities.

Dozens of policemen went on strike Sunday, blocking the main roads as the defence and interior ministers arrived. They demanded a stronger military campaign against the militants.

Egyptian forces launched the biggest security crackdown that the area near Israel has seen in decades following the killing of 16 border guards on August 5.

Disorder has spread in Sinai since Hosni Mubarak was ousted in a popular uprising last year, with fighters stepping up attacks on security forces near the Israeli border.

Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's new president, has pledged to restore security in the poor, desolate region.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/201211314523885471.html>

- **South Sinai checkpoints tighten security after police killings**

The South Sinai Security Directorate tightened security measures late Sunday at the governorate's entrances and exits, from Oyoun Moussa in Ras Sudr to northern Taba.

Sinai security deteriorated after unknown attackers killed three policemen in North Sinai Saturday.



The South Sinai directorate raised the number of troops and checkpoints for 850 kilometers along the international road. Authorities have also agreed with Bedouin tribal leaders to secure the mountainous areas and provide information about suspicious people who attempt to cross the area to the governorate.

North Sinai police had withdrawn and blocked vital roads to protest the killings. Some police officers held President Mohamed Morsy responsible for leaving them without protection in face of recurring assaults against police.

An official South Sinai source told state news agency MENA that IDs of people arriving in the governorate are being checked. South Sinai Governor Khaled Fouda said the security situation has stabilized, denying reports about terrorists infiltrating the governorate.

The governor pointed to an increasing tourist turnover in South Sinai, adding that hotel occupancy rates increased to 80 percent this week.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/south-sinai-checkpoints-tighten-security-after-police-killings>

- **Day before 25 January, Morsy derided protester organizers as 'kids,' says activist**

A day before the outbreak of the mass popular uprising that enabled him to win the presidency, Mohamed Morsy told a meeting of activists that the Muslim Brotherhood “will not follow a group of kids” to anti-government protests on 25 January 2011, according to a prominent political activist.



Ahmed Bahaa Eddin Shaaban, speaking at an anti-Muslim Brotherhood rally in Alexandria on Saturday, said Morsy could not deny saying this,

especially since so many political activists were present at the 24 January meeting.

Shaaban is secretary general of the Egyptian Socialist Party. He was also one founders of the Kefaya movement, which began in 2004 to pressure then-President Hosni Mubarak to step down from office.

Shaaban said at the rally that Morsy's current policies are similar to those adopted during the Mubarak regime, pointing to what he identified as repeated police violations against citizens.

Last month, human rights NGO Amnesty International said cases of torture in police stations continue in Egypt, citing the recent death by torture at a police station in a Delta town on 16 September.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/day-25-january-morsy-derided-protester-organizers-kids-says-activist>

- **Sheikh slams Nour Party leader for attending Turkish national celebration**

The deputy head of the Salafi Dawah movement strongly criticized the chairman of the Salafi Nour Party, Emad Abdel Ghafour, for attending the Turkish Embassy's celebration of the 89th anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish republic Wednesday.



"We are not pleased with that participation and were not informed about it in advance," said Sheikh Yasser Borhamy, the Salafi Dawah leader, answering questions from visitors of his website, salafvoice.com.

"A Muslim should not partake in a celebration marking the end of the Islamic Caliphate, which was the symbol of the nation's unity and was brought down by enemies of Islam," the sheikh said.

He decried the founding of the secular country.

"The founding of the secularist Ataturk republic that had fought against Islam stronger than infidels [did] was one of the major catastrophes. Marking the event is unjustifiable, even as a diplomatic custom," Borhamy maintained.

Turkey has sought closer relations with Egypt following the ouster of former President Hosni Mubarak in the 25 January revolution last year.

President Mohamed Morsy visited Turkey in September. Ankara later approved a US\$1 billion loan to Cairo.

<http://www.egyptindependent.com/news/sheikh-slams-nour-party-leader-attending-turkish-national-celebration>

6. JORDAN and LEBANON

- **France pledges support for Lebanon**

President Hollande pledges to protect country's security from ripples of Syrian conflict.

French President Francois Hollande, on a brief visit to Beirut, has pledged to "protect" Lebanon against threats of destabilisation caused by the conflict in neighbouring Syria.



"France will spare no effort to guarantee Lebanon's independence, unity and security," Hollande said at a joint news conference with Lebanese President Michel Sleiman on Sunday.

France is determined "to oppose with all its strength any bid to destabilise Lebanon," he added.

Sleiman said at the news conference that he reaffirmed to Hollande "Lebanon's commitment to avoid the negative repercussions of the (Syrian) crisis".

The visit comes two weeks after Lebanon's opposition called on Prime Minister Najib Mikati, whose cabinet is dominated by Hezbollah, a powerful Syrian government ally, to resign.

The Syrian opposition accuses Beirut of complicity with the regime of embattled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, a former powerbroker in Lebanon.

Calls for Mikati to quit were spurred by a massive car bombing in central Beirut last month that killed Wissam al-Hassan, a top security official, in an attack the opposition blamed on the Syrian regime and its allies in Lebanon.

Since the attack, Sleiman has pressed for all-party talks on forming a new government "that can pull Lebanon out of its impasse", saying only then can Mikati resign.

France is willing to host a meeting of Lebanese political figures if all parties were represented and if Beirut made an official request for such a gathering, a government source said in Paris.

Hollande said France was ready to help Lebanon probe the murder of al-Hassan, and said "there can be no impunity" for the assassination of Hariri and the security official.

The Beirut stop was a last-minute decision taken by Hollande to express France's solidarity with Lebanon after the October 19 assassination of al-Hassan, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) intelligence chief.

Saudi visit

Hollande later arrived in the Saudi city of Jeddah and discussed Iran and the situation in unrest-hit Syria with Saudi King Abdullah, a spokesman said.

"The president discussed with King Abdullah the peace process in the Middle East, the Iranian nuclear programme, the Syrian crisis, as well as cooperation between both countries," Romain Nadal told AFP news agency after a two-hour meeting between the leaders.

Saudi Arabia's official news agency SPA also reported they discussed "developments on the Palestinian issue and the current situation in Syria" in addition to bilateral relations.

"This visit to Saudi Arabia is primarily political," Hollande had told reporters aboard the aircraft taking him from Beirut to the Red Sea city.

"France plays an active role in the Middle East. We are the most active country on issues concerning Syria, Lebanon, and the peace process" between Israel and the Palestinians, he said.

Paris and Riyadh have "very similar views" on the nearly 20-month conflict in Syria, French sources said, adding that the two leaders would also discuss energy issues including nuclear power.

Hollande earlier this week said he would back more sanctions against the Islamic republic if there were no "concrete acts" from Tehran to prove it was not pursuing a nuclear arms drive.

Iran denies Israeli and Western suspicions that its nuclear programme is a cover for efforts to build an atomic bomb, but has been hit by several rounds of UN and Western sanctions over its activities.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012114134259622159.html>

- **Mikati discusses cooperation with Bulgaria**

BEIRUT: Prime Minister Najib Mikati held talks in the Bulgarian capital Sofia Monday on ways to boost bilateral relations and cooperation in key areas between Bulgaria and Lebanon.

Mikati met with the Bulgarian prime minister, the chair of the parliament and the country's foreign minister.



Accompanying him on his visit to the country is Foreign Minister Adnan Mansour, Minister of Social Affairs Wael Abou Faour, Environment Minister Nazem Khoury and Industry Minister Vrej Sabonjian.

Tsetska Tsacheva, the chair of the National Assembly, underlined the “depth of the friendship between Lebanon and Bulgaria.”

“The strong relations between the two countries translate significantly through the Parliamentary Friendship Committee,” she said.

Tsacheva also expressed hope that the crisis in Syria would not spill over into neighboring Lebanon.

“Lebanon and Bulgaria are located in hot geographic areas and we are following with concern what is going on around you and along your borders and we hope that the Syria crisis will not be exported to Lebanon,” she said.

She added that her country supports Lebanon's efforts to maintain stability and safeguard the borders.

Mikati, for his part, said Lebanon “looks forward to bolstering cooperation between the two countries in various fields.”

He also stressed the need to run flights between Beirut and Sofia “to facilitate the movement of individuals and businessmen and to strengthen bilateral cooperation.”

Mikati conveyed an invitation to Tsacheva to visit Lebanon from Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. The same invitation was extended to Berri from the Bulgarian National Assembly chair.

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Politics/2012/Nov-05/193938-mikati-discusses-cooperation-with-bulgaria.ashx#axzz2BM6jjPr1>

7. ARABIAN PENINSULA AND THE GULF OF BASRA

• Deaths reported in Bahrain explosions

Two Asian men killed and a third person injured as five homemade explosive devices go off in capital Manama.

At least two people have been killed in Bahrain's capital Manama after a series of blasts went off, authorities say.

The interior ministry said two Asian men, including one trash collector, were killed in Monday's explosions, adding a third person was only injured.



It said at least five homemade explosive devices exploded.

The apparently co-ordinated explosions point to escalating levels of violence by anti-government forces in the nearly 21-month uprising against the Arabian Gulf state's Western-leaning Sunni Muslim rulers.

The official Bahrain News Agency described the blasts as an "act of terrorism".

BNA gave no more details on the incidents which come after the government said last week it had banned all rallies and gatherings to ensure public safety.

The ban was condemned by the London-based Amnesty International as a violation of the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Police have been targeted by explosions several times this year, as the government has stepped up efforts to quell an uprising that has simmered since democracy protests broke out in early 2011.

But bombs targeting civilians are rare in the kingdom, where the Sunni Muslim Al Khalifa family rules over a majority Shia population.

Bahrain, a US ally, is home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet.

Foreign ministers from the Gulf Co-operation Council - made up of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - plan to meet in Manama on Wednesday to discuss regional issues.

The meeting will discuss Bahrain's tensions and growing clashes in Kuwait between security forces and an opposition led by Islamists.

More than 55 people have been killed in Bahrain's unrest since February 2011 as the nation's majority Shia press for a greater political voice.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/20121159403225795.html>

- **Kuwaiti security forces use tear gas at rally**

Police try to disperse thousands of protesters outside the capital calling for the repeal of new electoral law.

Kuwaiti riot police have used stun grenades, tear gas and smoke bombs against thousands of demonstrators who blocked a major road south of the capital.

Thousands of opposition supporters planned a rally to protest against a new electoral law on Sunday. The country's security forces completely sealed off the original protest site in Kuwait City, so organisers told supporters via Twitter to gather instead at Mishref, about 20km south of the capital.

Although most roads leading to the new location were quickly closed off by police, thousands of people still managed to get through and immediately started marching.

They briefly cut off the sixth ring road, the main motorway in the south of Kuwait, before calling off the demonstration barely an hour after it began.

"After we have expressed our message of rejecting any play in the constitution, we announce the end of the procession," said the organisers on their Twitter account named "The Dignity of a Nation."

Reports of arrests

Activists said a number of protesters were rounded up but there were no immediate reports of injuries.

The emir, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, met four opposition figures on Sunday, including two former Islamist MPs, in what appeared to be a mediation effort aimed at ending the stalemate.

Former MP Mohammad Hayef said on Twitter that the emir told them he would accept that the constitutional court rule on the disputed amendment to the electoral constituency law which triggered the current stand-off.

It was the first official meeting between the emir and the opposition since the dispute began several weeks ago.

Earlier, hundreds of members of the elite special forces and police, backed by armoured vehicles, deployed at two sites that the opposition had set for Sunday's demonstrations and blocked roads leading to them.

The government had vowed to use force if necessary to prevent the march, saying that processions and demonstrations are illegal without a permit.

A government statement late on Saturday said the interior ministry had not given permission for Sunday's demonstration, nor had it received a request from the organisers for one.

Interior minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Humud al-Sabah told the official news agency KUNA that security guards would maintain public order and curb any illegal activities.

Security forces used tear gas to break up two protests by tens of thousands of demonstrators in the past two weeks in which more than 130 protesters and 16 policemen were injured.

Almost all opposition groups have said they will boycott the December 1 poll in protest at what they see as a bid to create a rubber stamp assembly.

The opposition, made up of Islamists, nationalists and liberals, won a February general election but the constitutional court quashed the vote in June and reinstated the previous pro-government parliament which was dissolved last month.

Opposition leaders insist they have no desire to undermine the ruling Al-Sabah family, and on Friday pledged their loyalty to the emir while renewing their demand for the new electoral law to be repealed.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/11/2012114103748263921.html>

- **Two Saudi border guards killed in ambush in southern town**

Two Saudi Arabian border guards were killed on Monday in an ambush in Sharurah in the far south of the country, near its border with Yemen, Al Arabiya television said.

An Al Arabiya correspondent said that 10 of the attackers were previously jailed on terrorism charges.



Saudi border guards have in the past also clashed with smugglers along the long, porous desert frontier.

The ten Saudi militants who were recently released from prison, in addition to a Yemeni, were all arrested after they ambushed a border guard patrol and killed two soldiers, the ministry said.

"Security forces were able to pursue those assailants as they attempted to cross the Saudi border into Yemeni territory," the ministry said in a statement carried by SPA state news agency, adding that four gunmen were wounded in a firefight.

The ministry said the gunmen ambushed the patrol at dawn.

"All those arrested among the Saudi (militants) had been arrested in the past over links with the deviant group," the ministry said.

It said they were "recently released" from prison.

Al Arabiya has released the names of the dead border guards: Fahd bin Hussein Fahd Alhmanda and Mohammed bin Hassan Ali.

The names of the attackers are:

- 1 - Nhad Khaled Ayed Al-Otaibi
- 2 - Mohammed Faraj Solomon Anzi
- 3 - Khalil Hassan Yahya al-Zahrani
- 4 - Bandar Daij Harbi
- 5 - Abdullah Saad Mohammed
- 6 - Mohamed Salem Awad Sayari
- 7 - Fahd Mohammed Hamoud al-Bakri
- 8 - Ali Abdullah Saleh

- 9 - Issa Awad Ghazi Al-Otaibi
10 - Khalid Faisal Needless Otaibi

Sharurah is a small town in Najran Province, southern Saudi Arabia, approximately 200 miles east of the town of Najran.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/11/05/247735.html?PHPSESSID=sprf6svcpk629ith5e0aIn6j85>

- **Police attack opposition demonstration in Kuwait**

Kuwaiti police have clashed with thousands of people protesting against changes to an electoral law, which the opposition has called a constitutional coup by the government.



On Sunday night, the police fired tear gas canisters and stun grenades to disperse the opposition protesters at Mishref, about 20 kilometers south of the capital Kuwait City, AFP reported.

The opposition had planned a demonstration against the new voting rules for parliamentary elections on December 1 in Kuwait City but elite special forces and police completely sealed off the protest site. After the ban on the gathering, organizers told supporters via Twitter to assemble at Mishref.

The security forces moved quickly and blocked the roads leading to Mishref but thousands of protesters still managed to get through and immediately started protesting.

The police dispersed the main crowd, but many more demonstrators joined the protest rally in their cars or on the fringes of the main protest.

The protesters for a short time cut off the main motorway in the south of Kuwait.

Opposition activists said the security forces arrested a number of protesters but there were no immediate reports of casualties or injuries.

The opposition called for the demonstration after the government announced last week it was holding elections on December 1, 2012 and would change the electoral law "to preserve national unity".

Activists say a decision to change the electoral law by Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah is aimed at electing a rubber-stamp parliament.

Kuwait was the first Arab state in the Persian Gulf to establish an elected parliament in 1962. However, the Al Sabah family remained in control of most key posts, including the premiership and the ministries of defense, interior, and foreign affairs.

<http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2012/11/04/270461/police-attack-opposition-demo-in-kuwait/>

8. AFGHANISTAN - PAKISTAN

- **US troop-pullout plan worries Afghanistan**

Helmand governor fears his country faces insecurity, with foreign combat forces pulling out too soon.

The war in Afghanistan will be a challenge for whoever the next US president is. Both candidates have promised to bring combat troops home by the end of 2014, but as Al Jazeera's Bernard Smith reports from Helmand province, the country faces continuing insecurity.

Helmand's governor has told Al Jazeera he believes foreign combat troops are trying to pull out too soon.

Elsewhere in Afghanistan, Mario Monti, the Italian prime minister, made an unannounced visit to the western province of Herat on Sunday to see his country's troops and hold talks with President Hamid Karzai.

Monti visited the NATO-led Italian contingent at their base there to mark Italian armed forces day before heading to Kabul to meet Karzai.

"They are doing a really great job, transferring the responsibility of the region to the authorities, national and local," he told a joint news conference with Karzai.

"We are very proud of our 3,500 men spending a part of their lives in the interest of global peace and in the interest of civic and economic development of a peaceful Afghanistan."

Fifty-two Italian soldiers have so far died in the 11-year conflict against Taliban fighters, according to an AFP news agency count.

In another Afghanistan-related development, a US soldier is due to appear in a military courtroom in Washington state for the first time on charges that he slaughtered 16 Afghan villagers during a pre-dawn rampage last March.

Staff-Sergeant Robert Bales is scheduled to face a preliminary hearing at Joint Base Lewis-McChord south of Seattle that could last as long as two weeks.

Military prosecutors are expected to show video from a surveillance blimp that depicts Bales returning to his remote outpost in Kandahar province after the killings.

Part of the hearing will be held at night to allow video testimony from witnesses in Afghanistan.

The hearing will help determine whether the 39-year-old father of two faces a court martial. He could get the death penalty.

The massacre left 16 people, including nine children, dead.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/video/asia/2012/11/201211564549550842.html>

- **India ruling party stages pro-reforms rally**

Congress stalwarts, wary of voter backlash, seek to defend moves to liberalise retail, insurance and aviation sectors.

Sonia Gandhi, India's ruling Congress party chief, and Manmohan Singh, the prime minister, have addressed a major rally in New Delhi to gather support for contentious economic measures in the run-up to the 2014 parliamentary elections.



Gandhi, the head of the Congress, will be seeking to drum up support for the party in a bid to win elections for the third straight time.

In her speech at the rally in the Indian capital on Sunday, she vowed that her party was working with the best interests of the country's impoverished at heart.

Congress leaders are defending the government's recent moves to allow wider foreign investment in the retail, insurance and aviation sectors aimed at spurring a sharply slowing economy and creating jobs.

Rahul Gandhi, Sonia's 42-year-old son, made a rare public address at the rally, spurring speculation that he will be put up as the Congress Party's prime ministerial candidate were they to win the polls in 2014.

"We need economic reforms because only when businesses operate well will there be progress, and then we can run programmes to benefit the poor," he said.

Gandhi vowed to help push through policy changes that will transform India's retail sector by allowing global supermarket chains such as Walmart and Tesco to open in India and tap into its burgeoning consumer market.

"The world is saying that India is standing up," he told the rally. "The youth here will show not just India but also the whole world the way forward."

The grounds where the event is being held can hold more than 100,000 people, and was largely full while the addresses were taking place.

The party is wary of voter backlash in the elections, due in 18 months, over the policy reforms it has so far put into place.

Critics say that while the reforms are investor friendly, they do not address the concerns of the majority of India's 1.2 billion citizens, many of whom live in poverty.

Broad-spectrum opposition

Congress faces a broad spectrum of opposing forces from political parties hostile to foreign firms to trade unions worried about job losses and is now a now a minority in parliament, having lost an ally who quit over the sensitive issue of allowing foreign supermarkets into the family-dominated retail sector.

At the same time, however, the party knows it has to restore its credibility as a force fit to govern in the face of a drumroll of corruption charges that have put it on the defensive almost since the last elections in 2009, analysts say.

"The attempt now is to shift the debate from negativism of corruption to positives like growth and employment to which the aspirational India responded [in the 2009 elections]," DK Singh, a columnist, said.

The rally is being staged a week after Singh, 80, overhauled his cabinet to include a number of younger ministers.

"Young MPs tell me that you all want to change the system, and together we can," Rahul Gandhi told the rally. "The biggest problem is that our political system is shut for the common man."

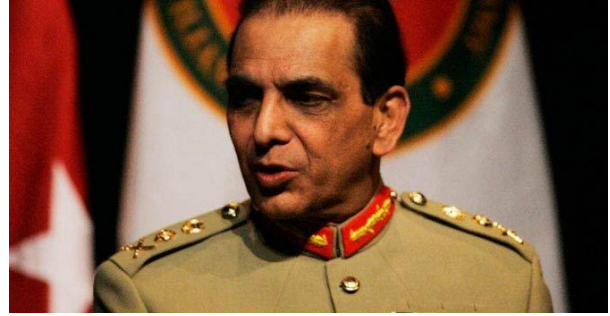
Rahul, whose family has dominated politics in India for most of its post-independence history, has rebuffed attempts to get him to join the cabinet, leading to doubts about his appetite for the demands of political life.

He has insisted, however, that he prefers to work at the grassroots to "build the party" and Congress officials say he is tipped soon to be named second in the party hierarchy after the 65-year-old Sonia.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2012/11/201211465150945665.html>

- **No individual or institution alone can decide national interest: Kayani**

RAWALPINDI: Army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani on Monday said that any effort to create a divide between the people and Armed Forces undermines Pakistan's larger national interest.



"The Armed Forces draw their strength from the bedrock of the public support. National security is meaningless without it. Therefore, any effort which wittingly or unwittingly draws a wedge between the people and Armed Forces of Pakistan undermines the larger national interest," said the military chief according to a press release by the army's PR wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Speaking to officers at the Army's General Headquarters (GHQ) in the garrison town of Rawalpindi, Kayani said that the country's national interest could emerge only through a consensus between the people and institutions.

"No individual or institution has the monopoly to decide what is right or wrong in defining the ultimate national interest," said the military chief according to a press release by the army's PR wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

"It [National interest] should emerge only through a consensus, and all Pakistanis have a right to express their opinions. The constitution provides a clear mechanism for it."

“As a nation, we are passing through a defining phase. We are critically looking at the mistakes made in the past and trying to set the course for a better future,” added the Army chief.

<http://dawn.com/2012/11/05/no-individual-or-institution-alone-can-decide-national-interest-kayani/>

- **Leaders from Indian-administered Kashmir to hold talks in Pakistan**

SRINAGAR: Leaders from Indian-administered Kashmir said Monday they would travel to Pakistan for their first talks with officials in nearly four years, a move that could revive cross-border tensions.



Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a leader of the moderate All Parties Hurriyat Conference, said that Pakistan had invited him and other leaders who oppose India’s rule of Kashmir to several days of meetings in Islamabad next month.

“We will be meeting members of the ruling party, opposition leaders and government officials,” Farooq told news agency AFP, adding he wanted to convince all sides that “peace is impossible without resolution of Kashmir”.

According to a report by the Kashmir Media Service, Farooq said in a media interview in Srinagar that a high-level delegation of the Hurriyat Conference would visit Pakistan next month.

Farooq said that ahead of the weeklong visit commencing on December 17, the APHC leaders would meet with the Pakistani High Commissioner, Salman Bashir, his deputy, Babar Amin, and other officials in New Delhi.

Farooq said that they were scheduled to meet various political leaders apart from government functionaries and various civil society groups during their visit to Pakistan.

India suspended its peace process with Pakistan after the 2008 Mumbai attacks and talks only resumed in February last year.

Both sides remain deadlocked over Kashmir, but have made some progress in less contentious subjects such as bilateral trade.

Muslim-majority Kashmir, which India and Pakistan both claim but rule in parts, has been racked by militancy since 1989 when an insurgency against Indian rule erupted.

According to some figures, around 47,000 people have died, though militant violence has been reported to have fallen in recent years.

The neighbouring countries have fought three wars since independence in 1947, two of them over the Himalayan region, which remains divided by the heavily militarised Line of Control.
<http://dawn.com/2012/11/05/leaders-from-indian-administered-kashmir-to-hold-talks-in-pakistan/>

This media summary is prepared by **ORSAM Middle East Research Assistant Sercan DOĞAN. It covers news and commentaries as reported by the national media sources publishing in the Middle Eastern countries. The views expressed are not those of ORSAM and their inclusion does not imply factual accuracy.*

Bu bülten **ORSAM Ortadoğu Uzman Yardımcısı Sercan DOĞAN tarafından hazırlanmaktadır. Bülten Ortadoğu ülkelerinin yerel haber kaynaklarından derlenmektedir. Belirtilen görüşler bölge ülkelerinin haber kaynaklarına ve ismi geçen yazarlara ait olup ORSAM'ın görüşünü yansıtmamaktadır.*