

briefly

SYRIA

Arab ministers delay meeting

The Arab League said it had postponed a meeting of Arab foreign ministers scheduled for Sunday to discuss the Syria crisis and to select a replacement for Kofi Annan, the United Nations-Arab League envoy, and would set a new date.

Deputy Arab League chief Ahmed Ben Hellil told Reuters the meeting was delayed because of the minor operation undergone by Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal. The royal court said on Saturday that he had undergone a successful operation to relieve an intestinal obstruction.

UAE

Oil tanker, US ship collide

An oil tanker collided with a US navy ship near the Strait of Hormuz on Sunday, but no one was hurt, the Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet said.

"The collision between USS Porter (DDG 78) and the Panamanian-flagged bulk oil tanker M/V Otowasan occurred at approximately 1 am local time," a statement on the Fifth Fleet's website said.

It said the Porter was a guided-missile destroyer and the oil tanker was Japanese-owned. The navy vessel remained able to operate under its own power after the collision, which was not combat-related, the statement added.

EGYPT

Six militants killed in fighting

Egyptian troops killed as many as six Islamist militants after storming their hideout near the isolated border with Israel on Sunday, security sources and eyewitnesses said.

The troops found the militants in the settlement of al-Goura, about 15 km from the frontier, as they searched for jihadists who killed 16 Egyptian border guards a week ago.

The latest clash is part of a security sweep that began on Wednesday and is the biggest military operation in the region since Egypt's 1973 war with Israel. No one has claimed responsibility for killing the border guards.

UNITED STATES

Soros to marry for third time

Billionaire investor George Soros had a lot to celebrate on Saturday evening: his 82nd birthday and the engagement to his much younger girlfriend Tamiko Bolton.

Soros and Bolton, who met in the spring of 2008, formally announced their engagement at a party at Soros' summer home in Southampton, New York attended by a small group of friends and relatives, according to a person familiar with the trader.

Soros proposed to Bolton, 40, a few weeks ago during a weekend visit to the Hamptons, a summer beachside colony on Long Island frequented by New York's wealthy.

IRAQ

Twin bombings claim five lives

Twin bombings and a shooting in and around Baghdad on Sunday killed five people, including three Iraqi policemen, security and medical officials said.

In the predominantly Sunni town of Jurf al-Sakhr, 60 km south of the capital, a roadside bomb blast at 10 am local time killed three policemen, a police major and a medic at the main hospital in provincial capital Hilla said. Both spoke on condition of anonymity.

When another police unit arrived at the scene of the attack, another explosion went off, wounding three more people, the officials said.

REUTERS—AFP

Earthquakes in Iran kill 300, injure thousands

By AGENCIES
in Dubai and Teheran

A massive search and relief operation was under way in northern Iran after two earthquakes killed some 300 people and injured thousands more.

The quakes, measuring 6.4 and 6.3 according to the US Geological Survey that monitors seismic activity worldwide, struck in East Azerbaijan province, on Saturday. Thousands of people have been forced to spend the night in emergency shelters. A series of aftershocks rocked the region on Sunday.

Rescue teams have been using sniffer dogs to search through the rubble.

"Search and rescue operations have ended and we are now working to ensure survivors' needs in terms of shelter and food," Interior Minister Moustafa

Mohammad-Najjar told state television.

Reza Sadiqi, the governor of Ahar county in East Azerbaijan province, told semi-official Fars news agency on Sunday that the number of fatalities in the quake stricken regions amounted to 300.

An official from Iran's Red Crescent Society told semi-official ISNA news agency that some 2,600 people were injured.

The Chinese embassy in Iran told China Daily there had been no reports of Chinese citizens being killed or injured.

"We have not received any calls for help," an embassy spokesman said.

There are nearly 4,000 Chinese citizens in Iran, he said.

Officials said casualty figures are expected to rise, as some of the injured were in critical condition while hundreds were trapped under rubble, inaccessible to

cue workers who were hampered by darkness in the first hours after the quakes.

"I saw some people whose entire home was destroyed, and all their livestock killed," Tahir Sadati, a local photographer said. "People need help, they need warm clothes, more tents, blankets and bread."

The worst damage and most casualties appear to have been in rural villages surrounding the towns of Ahar, Varzaghan and Harees, near the major city of Tabriz, Iranian media reported.

Many villages are hard to reach by road, hindering rescue efforts. Hospitals in Tabriz, Ardebil and other cities nearby took in many of the injured, residents and Iranian media said, and there were long queues of survivors waiting to be treated.

Aidin, a Tabriz resident, said he went to give blood at a local

hospital on Saturday and saw staff struggling to cope with the influx of patients. Most patients had been taken there by their families, he said, indicating a shortage of ambulances.

Ahar's 120-bed hospital was full, said Arash, a college student and resident of the town. There were traffic jams on the narrow road between Ahar and Tabriz as victims tried to reach hospitals, he said by telephone.

The quakes cut communications and helicopters had to rush to the scene to gauge the severity of the quakes.

Teheran University's Seismological Center said the first quake struck at 4:53 pm. The second struck just 11 minutes later.

Wang Chenyan in Beijing contributed to the story.

REUTERS—XINHUA—AFP



Iranian residents and rescue workers search for survivors in the rubble of a house in a village, near the town of Varzaqan, Iran, after two devastating earthquakes hit that area on Saturday. The two devastating earthquakes in northwest Iran killed some 300 people and injured thousands. Rescue teams made massive efforts to dig survivors out of the rubble.

FARSHID TIGHEHSZ / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Clinton's Africa visit fuels debate on competition between US and China

By CHENG GUANGJIN
in Beijing
and TAN YINGZI in Washington

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has concluded an 11-day tour of Africa in which she promoted a new US strategy for the continent.

The visit also stoked international debate about whether the US and China, the world's two biggest economies, are competing for resources in Africa.

Clinton's remarks during the trip, although not mentioning any country by name, were widely interpreted by analysts and media to be targeting China and lobbying African leaders to cooperate with the US, which was replaced by China three years ago as Africa's biggest trading partner.

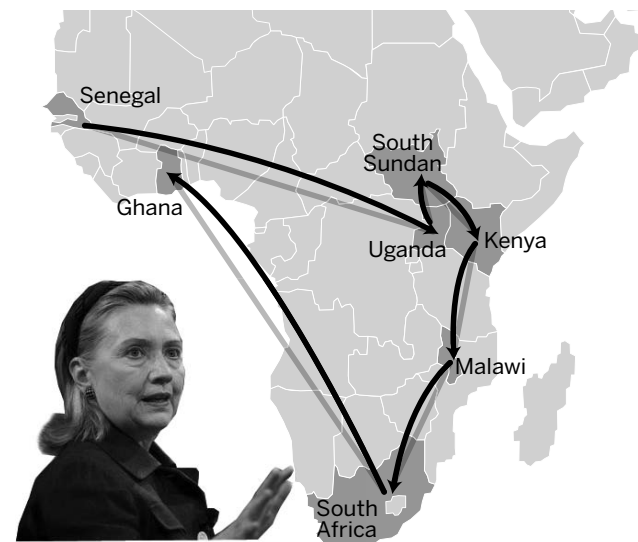
Clinton arrived in Senegal on Aug 1 and visited Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa and Ghana. It was the highest-level visit to the continent by a US official since Barack Obama's administration issued a new strategy for Africa in June.

Clinton said in Senegal that the US was committed to "a model of sustainable partnership that adds value, rather than extracts it" from Africa. She said unlike other countries, the US "will stand up for democracy and universal human rights even when it might be easier to look the other way and keep the resources flowing."

A Xinhua News Agency commentary said Clinton's trip had a "hidden agenda", which was aimed, at least partly, at discrediting China's engagement with the continent and curbing China's influence there.

"Her remarks betrayed an

US SECRETARY OF STATE HILLARY CLINTON'S 11-DAY AFRICAN TOUR



attempt to drive a wedge between China and Africa for selfish gain by the US," said the commentary headlined "US plot to sow discord between China, Africa is doomed to fail".

He Wenping, an expert on African studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said figuring out how to balance China's influence in Africa may be one of the strategic intentions of Clinton's visit to Africa.

"The White House has stated that China is no threat to the US, and called for closer cooperation to support Africa's development," He wrote in an article.

"But consider Clinton's accusations against China's 'new colonialism' during her visit to Zambia in June last year and her criticism of China's development and investment mode during her tour of China's neighbors in early July."

He wrote that the Obama administration recognizes that

the next economic boom may be in Africa and wants to "motivate US enterprises to participate in the African renaissance."

China-Africa trade ballooned to \$166.3 billion in 2011, as African exports to China jumped to more than \$93 billion.

Chinese direct investment in the continent has exceeded \$15 billion, with investment projects covering 50 countries.

In July, President Hu Jintao announced that China will provide \$20 billion in loans to help African countries develop infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, and small and medium-sized enterprises.

Accompanying Clinton were a number of US trade representatives. US Acting Secretary of Commerce Rebecca Blank is expected to arrive in Africa soon, becoming the first US commerce minister to visit the continent.

Some US analysts rejected the idea that the US and China

are competing for resources in Africa.

Morgan Roach, an African studies expert at the Heritage Foundation, said the Obama administration largely continued the Africa strategy of the past administration.

"There wasn't anything new and was a missed opportunity. Africa has changed a lot in the past decade and the United States needs a strategy that reflects this," she said.

She said there is a common misperception that the US and China are in competition in Africa.

"It suggests that they have the same interests. They don't. China perceives Africa as an ideal investment opportunity, where it can work quickly and efficiently with African leaders.

In the United States, relative good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights are prerequisites for engagement, economic or otherwise," she said.

"China often has more in common, at least ideologically, with African leaders than the United States does. This not only facilitates trade and economic growth, but leads to further cooperation in other areas of foreign policy for example, the United Nations," she said.

Douglas Paal, vice-president of studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said that Clinton's trip is "of no compelling strategic significance" as she is about to complete her term as secretary of state.

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BY PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Republican presidential candidate, Mitt Romney with his newly announced vice-presidential running mate, Paul Ryan, on stage during a campaign rally in Manassas, Virginia on Saturday.

Romney picks Paul Ryan for running mate

By STEVE HOLL
in NORFOLK, Virginia,
Reuters

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's selection of Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan as his vice-presidential running mate could dramatically shift the race for the White House into a debate between two sharply contrasting views of government spending and debt and its role in the daily lives of Americans.

In choosing Ryan — a budget hawk whose provocative plan to reduce government spending has won him fans in the conservative Tea Party movement and made him a target for Democrats — the typically cautious Romney on Saturday took the biggest gamble of his year-long candidacy.

He has embarked on a high-risk, high-reward strategy of aligning himself with Ryan, whose budget plan would cut taxes and restructure Medicare, the popular government-backed health insurance program, and other safety-net social programs to try to inspire investment and rein in runaway government spending.

Democrats say Ryan's plan would amount to draconian cuts in programs that help protect the nation's most vulnerable people.

Democrats — whose platform focuses on middle-class tax cuts, higher taxes for the wealthy and a healthcare overhaul that requires most Americans to buy insurance — already are blasting Romney for picking Ryan, and vowing to cast Romney as an enemy of programs that benefit the poor and elderly.

The potency of such an argument by Democrats — particularly in crucial states such as Florida, which has a large elderly population — was clear on Saturday.

Shortly after he announced Ryan as his running mate before a cheering Romney campaign emphasized to reporters that picking Ryan did not mean that Romney supported his entire budget plan.

Romney needed a burst of energy for his campaign after falling behind Democratic President Barack Obama in recent polls.

He chose Ryan, the chairman of the House of Representatives Budget Committee, after ruling out more conventional candidates — such as Ohio Senator Rob Portman and former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty — whose impact on the race likely would have been more benign.

Welcomed onstage by Romney on Saturday, Ryan said the United States is in a "dangerous" moment of trillion-dollar budget deficits and rising national debt.

"We're running out of time and we can't afford four more years of this," said Ryan, 42, who has been in Congress for 13 years. "Politicians from both parties have made empty promises which will soon become broken promises with painful consequences if we fail to act now."

Romney and Ryan appeared before reporters on their flight to North Carolina for another day of joint campaigning to play up their pairing against Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden, with Romney saying "two on two is better than two on one".

Ryan, a Catholic who is a fitness aficionado and avid deer hunter, has many fans in the anti-tax, limited-government Tea Party movement, although some activists have not forgiven him for voting for a \$700 billion Wall Street bailout in 2008.

He drew his biggest reaction when he said that "our rights come from nature and God, not from government".

His selection drew fire from Democrats, who said they relished the opportunity to showcase Ryan's proposed reductions for Medicare and other social programs.

"Mitt Romney has chosen a leader of the House Republicans who shares his commitment to the flawed theory that new budget-busting tax cuts for the wealthy, while placing greater burdens on the middle class and seniors, will somehow deliver a stronger economy," said Obama campaign manager Jim Messina.

Beijing Huiyuan Media Village Apartment



Beijing Huiyuan Media Village (Huiyuan Service Apartment) is located in the central area of the business district of the Olympic and Asian Games villages, about 500 meters away from the National Stadium (the Bird's Nest). As the media village of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, it was home to more than 1,000 Chinese and foreign journalists. It offers a number of different varieties of apartments. Spacious and well-lit, they have ample facilities and furnishings and are suitable for residential or business use. Businesses may be registered here and it is ideal for individual business or tourist customers.

Preferential rents are available. Contact us for details.

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