

World

AFGHANISTAN: The international community on Tuesday endorsed sweeping Afghan government plans to take responsibility for security by 2014, forge peace to end nine years of war and take greater control of aid projects.

RWANDA: Rwandan President Paul Kagame said Tuesday he was confident of re-election on August 9 as he kicked off a campaign already tarnished by a string of political assassinations and arrests.

FRANCE: France and Bayern Munich footballer Franck Ribery was charged with having had sex with an under-age prostitute Tuesday, as magistrates cracked down on an alleged celebrity vice ring.

CUBA: Cuba is ready to release more political prisoners after announcing this month it would free 52, and they could remain on the island if they wished, the Cuban parliament chief said Tuesday.

KYRGYZSTAN: The UN human rights chief said Tuesday she had information that security forces in Kyrgyzstan used torture and arbitrary detention since the eruption of June's deadly inter-ethnic clashes.

AUSTRIA: The world AIDS forum set aside rows about politics and funding on Tuesday, as delegates cheered South African scientists who announced a breakthrough in the quest for a vaginal cream to protect women from HIV.

Obama, Cameron navigate Lockerbie, BP rows

British Prime Minister David Cameron Tuesday rejected an inquiry into Scotland's release of the Lockerbie bomber, and said BP did not sway the decision, as he met President Barack Obama. Cameron however told his top civil servants to assess whether new information needed to be made public on the release last year of terminally ill Libyan Abdelbaset Ali Mohmed al-Megrahi. "I don't need an inquiry to tell me what was a bad decision," Cameron said,

but also rejected suggestions that a lobbying effort by energy giant BP helped win the release of Megrahi, who remains alive nearly a year after he was freed. "That wasn't a decision taken by BP - it was a decision taken by the Scottish government." Obama and his visitor carefully picked through raw political sensitivities surrounding the release of Megrahi, and over British-based BP's pariah status in the United States following the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster. And both leaders insisted that

war strategy in Afghanistan was correct, and said plans to hand over the country largely to Afghan forces by 2014 were realistic. In their first White House meeting, they also both pledged fealty to the US-British "special relationship" as Obama attempted to stamp out suggestions he did not value the long alliance in the same way as his predecessors. The two men held three hours of talks in the Oval Office, shared a lunch of Wild Striped Bass, and the president gave his guest a tour of

the White House living quarters - Cameron remarked on the Obama daughters' tidy bedrooms. Cameron forcibly condemned the decision by Scotland's devolved government to free Megrahi, who was the only person convicted in the bombing of a Pan Am jet over Lockerbie in 1988 that killed 270 people, mostly Americans. "I said this a year ago... it was a bad decision, it shouldn't have been made," said Cameron who was in opposition last year, and had no control over the decision.

Goldman Sachs profits fall

Goldman Sachs on Tuesday announced its profits slumped 82 percent in the second quarter, hit by a massive US fraud settlement and the costs of a new British tax on bonuses. Reporting its worst quarter since the height of the economic crisis nearly two years ago, the storied Wall Street firm said earnings were slashed on account of exceptional government payouts worth \$1.15 billion. The New York-based firm set aside \$600 million to pay for a new

British tax on executive compensation and \$550 million to settle government fraud charges. The announcement came just days after the firm agreed to pay the US Securities and Exchange Commission a record settlement for mistakenly giving "incomplete" information to clients. The SEC accused Goldman of allowing a prominent hedge fund to design a complex financial product for clients that was designed to fail and which the hedge fund was betting against.

Senate panel backs Kagan

A key Senate committee voted Tuesday to approve President Obama's second Supreme Court pick, Elena Kagan, sending her nomination to the full Senate for an all-but-certain confirmation. The Senate Judiciary Committee voted 13-6, with just one Republican joining all of Obama's Democratic allies in agreeing to refer the nomination to the full Senate, which was expected to take it up before a month-long August break. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, the

only member of the panel to break party ranks, highlighted Kagan's support for broad "war on terrorism" government powers as he announced he would vote to approve her. "She understands we're at war". Kagan would be just the fourth woman ever to reach the highest US court, and would bring the number of women justices currently serving to three. Kagan would be the second justice named by Obama, after Sonia Sotomayor became the first Hispanic to reach the bench.

BRIEF United States in

AFGHAN SOLDIER: An Afghan soldier opened fire at a training exercise in northern Afghanistan on Tuesday, killing two US civilian trainers and a fellow Afghan soldier in the second similar shootout in just a week.

OIL SPILL: The impact of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill was thrown into sharp relief Tuesday, as US data showed rising unemployment in Louisiana and experts warned the disaster could cost up to 100,000 jobs.

WAR GAMES: The United States and South Korea will launch a major military exercise on Sunday in the Sea of Japan as a warning to North Korea over the sinking of a South Korean ship, the two countries' defence chiefs said.

HOUSING: Housing starts plunged 5.0 percent in June, official data showed Tuesday, declining far more than expected as the home building industry reels amid a fragile economic recovery.

STOCKS: US stock markets reversed heavy losses on Tuesday, overcoming poor Wall Street results and fresh evidence of a sclerotic housing recovery to finish the day in the black. A mad upward dash in the final two hours of trade saw the blue chip Dow Jones Industrial Average finish the day up 75.53 points (0.74 percent) to reach 10,229.96 at the close.

BROADBAND SCHEME: Investment

firm Harbinger Capital Partners unveiled an ambitious plan on Tuesday to build a high-speed wireless broadband network that would cover more than 90 percent of the US by 2015.

CONRAD BLACK: A federal appeals court has granted disgraced media mogul Conrad Black bail as it considers whether to overturn his six-and-a-half-year jail sentence for defrauding shareholders. Black, who began serving his sentence in March 2008, was charged with raiding the coffers of his newspaper empire, Hollinger, and trying to cover up his crime.

LINDSAY LOHAN: Troubled Hollywood starlet Lindsay Lohan was taken in handcuffs from a courthouse Tuesday to begin a 90-day jail term for breaking her parole after a 2007 drunk driving conviction.

CHELSEA CLINTON: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Monday said her "lips are sealed" over daughter Chelsea's ultra-secret upcoming wedding. Almost nothing is known about Chelsea's marriage to investment banker Marc Mezvinsky except that it takes place July 31.

BANK ROBBER: A robber in New York came up with a disarming way to pull off his latest bank heist, approaching the teller's window with a large bouquet of flowers and handing over a hold-up note, media reported Tuesday.

Sports

SCOREBOARD:
MLB: AMERICAN LEAGUE
 Tampa Bay 8, Baltimore 1
 Texas 8, Detroit 6, 14 innings
 Cleveland 10, Minnesota 4
 Kansas City 5,
 Toronto 4, 10 innings
 Boston 2, Oakland 1
 Chicago White Sox 6,
 Seattle 1

MLB: NATIONAL LEAGUE:
 Milwaukee 3, Pittsburgh 1
 St. Louis 8, Philadelphia 4
 Florida 9, Colorado 8
 Cincinnati 7, Washington 2
 Houston 11, Chicago Cubs 5
 Arizona 13, N.Y. Mets 2
 San Francisco 5,
 L.A. Dodgers 2

NBA: Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki opted out of playing for Germany in next month's world championships in Turkey on Tuesday in order to focus on preparing with his club for the new NBA season.

WADE: Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade apologized on Monday to anyone who was offended for his use of the phrase "World Trade" in talking about the upcoming NBA season.

TENNIS: Serena Williams told her fans Monday she's feeling

better, but the WTA tour said her recent foot injury could jeopardize her participation in the US Open. Williams cut her right foot on broken glass shortly after winning her fourth Wimbledon title. "Hey guys I'm doing better," Williams tweeted Monday.

MLB: The San Diego Padres Monday extended manager Bud Black's contract for three years through the 2013 season, the Major League Baseball club said Monday.

BRAVES: Atlanta pitcher Jonny Venters was suspended for four games and fined by Major League Baseball on

Monday for throwing at Milwaukee's Prince Fielder in a game on Saturday.

NHL: The Philadelphia Flyers traded left wing Simon Gagne to Tampa Bay for defenseman Matt Walker and a fourth round draft selection, both of the NHL teams said Monday.

KOVALCHUK: Ilya Kovalchuk, the biggest prize of the NHL free agent market, will stay with the New Jersey Devils, the team said Monday. The Devils said the high-scoring forward had agreed to a new contract, ending weeks of speculation on where he would play next season.

The International Hotel Newspaper



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