

briefly

UNITED STATES

Gunman to appear in court

Alleged Colorado cinema gunman James Holmes is scheduled to make his second court appearance on Monday as he is charged with committing one of America's worst ever mass shootings.

The few journalists allowed to attend the hearing will be watching to see if there is a repeat of the 24-year-old's bizarre behavior during his first court appearance a week ago.

Holmes could be charged with up to two counts of first-degree murder for each of the 12 people he allegedly killed. He could also face attempted murder charges for everyone who was in the cinema, not just those shot.

DPRK

Heavy rains flood buildings

Heavy rains pounded the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for a second day on Monday, submerging buildings, cutting off power, flooding rice paddies and forcing people and their livestock to seek safety on dry rooftops.

The latest rain follows downpours earlier this month that killed nearly 90 people and left more than 60,000 homeless, officials said. The floods come on the heels of a severe drought, fueling renewed food worries about a country that already struggles to feed its people.

In Anju city in South Phyongan Province, officials reported 1,000 houses and buildings were destroyed and 2,300 hectares of farmland were completely covered.

UGANDA

Six admitted with Ebola virus

A health official said on Monday that six more patients suspected to have Ebola after investigators confirmed an outbreak of the highly infectious disease in a remote corner of western Uganda.

Stephen Bayaruhanga, health secretary of the affected Kibaale district, said possible cases of Ebola, at first concentrated in a single village, are now being reported in more villages.

If the six new cases are confirmed as Ebola, it would bring to 26 the number of Ugandans infected with the virus this month. At least 14 people have died.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chinese fishermen to return home

Beijing reaches maritime deals with Moscow

By ZHOU WA

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Chinese fishermen detained by Russia earlier this month will be returning home soon, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

The diplomatic departments of the two countries are closely cooperating with

each other to arrange for the detained Chinese fishermen to return home as soon as possible, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said in a news release.

The two countries also agreed to discuss cooperation in the fishery sector.

Experts said the incident will not have a negative effect on China-Russia ties.

Sun Chuanjiang, a consul with the Chinese Consulate-General in Khabarovsk, Russia, told China Daily that the Chinese fishing boats will be sent back after all necessary procedures are finished, but he

refused to give a specific date.

Two Chinese fishing boats were detained on July 15 and 16 by Russia for entering its economic zones. On July 25, two more Chinese fishing boats were seized by Russia for the same reason. All four were sent to Russia's Nakhodka port.

China and Russia have remained close communication since the incidents, and Chinese consulate officials who visited the sailors in Nakhodka confirmed that all of the crewmembers were in good condition.

Hong said China and Rus-

sia agreed to establish a security cooperation mechanism on maritime law enforcement as soon as possible, to prevent illegal fishing.

With the agreements, China and Russia will regulate fishing operations in neighboring waters, said Sun Zhuangzhi, an expert with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Research Center of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The incidents are isolated cases in the economic sector, and will not affect the sound China-Russia strategic cooperative partnership, Sun said.

Maritime resources are

important for both countries, and cooperation in this field will bring benefits to both, he added.

The incidents brought challenges to the bilateral ties, but China and Russia have managed to solve the problem thoroughly before it triggered negative results, said Feng Yujun, an expert on Russian Studies with the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations.

The agreements provide a good foundation for the two countries to solve similar problems that may arise, Feng added.

Blackout hits more than 300 million in India

By AGENCIES

in New Delhi and Hyderabad, India

Grid failure left more than 300 million people without power in New Delhi and much of northern India for hours on Monday in the worst blackout for more than a decade, while a fire killed at least 32 sleeping passengers on an express train to a southern Indian city.

The grid failure lights in Delhi and seven states went out in the early hours, leaving the capital's workers sweltering overnight and then stranded at metro stations in the morning rush hour as trains were cancelled.

Electricity supplies were restored to Delhi and much of Uttar Pradesh, a state with more people than Brazil, by midday. But the states of Rajasthan, Punjab and Jammu and India-controlled Kashmir were still without full power in the early evening.

Power Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said all power would be restored within hours.

Power shortages and a creaky road and rail network have weighed heavily on the country's efforts to industrialize. Grappling with the slowest economic growth in nine years, Delhi recently scaled back a target to pump \$1 trillion into infrastructure over the next five years.

Major industries have dedicated power plants or large diesel generators and are shielded from outages — but the inconsistent supply affects investment and disrupts small businesses. Office blocks,



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stranded foreign passengers wait for their train at New Delhi railway station in New Delhi, India, on Monday. The electricity grid across northern India failed, leaving hundreds of millions of people without electricity in one of the worst power failures of the past decade.

hotels and large apartment buildings all use backup diesel generators.

Chaos reigned on Delhi's always-hectic roads on Monday as stoplights failed and thousands of commuters abandoned the metro. Water pumping stations ran dry.

"First, no power since 2 in the morning, then no water to take a shower and now the metro is delayed by 13 minutes after being stuck in traffic for half an hour," said 32-year-old Keshav Shah, who works 30 km outside the capital.

"As if I wasn't dreading Monday enough, this had to happen."

The government's top

economic planning adviser, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, said the blackout may have been caused by a mix of coal shortages and other problems on the grid.

"I've no doubt that this is the area that we need to show improved performance in, and we also need show a clear sense of what we are doing to prevent it," Ahluwalia told Reuters at his office, where power had been restored some hours earlier.

He said the grid was better networked now than five years ago and power sharing was more common.

But blackouts lasting up to eight hours a day are frequent in much of the country and

have sparked angry protests on the industrial fringes of Delhi this summer, the hottest in years.

More than 200 trains were cancelled with some stranded. Authorities made restoring services to hospitals and transport systems a priority.

Train fire kills 32

Also on Monday, more than 32 people were killed when a fire ripped through a coach on an express train as it carried sleeping passengers to the southern Indian city of Chennai, officials said.

The accident, on a long-distance service from New Delhi, occurred in the early hours of the morning near the town of

Nellore in Andhra Pradesh state with an electrical short-circuit seen as the most likely cause.

"Thirty-two (bodies) have been pulled out from the coach," said Madhusudan Sarma, a senior administrative officer in Nellore district, adding that there were still more corpses inside.

Another 26 people have been admitted to hospital, he added.

There were two fatal accidents this May alone, including a collision that killed 25 people near the southern city of Bangalore. Four passengers also died after a train derailed in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

REUTERS—AFP

Syria claims gains in Aleppo

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

in Beirut, Lebanon

Syrian government forces mounted new ground attacks against rebel-controlled neighborhoods in Syria's commercial hub of Aleppo, the state media said on Monday, but failed to dislodge the opposition from their strongholds, according to activists.

The Syrian army has massed its forces around Aleppo, where rebels hold several neighborhoods after a 10-day offensive, and has been pounding it with tanks and helicopter gunships. There have also been periodic incursions of government tanks but the rebels have held on to their gains.

This use of heavy weapons, particularly helicopters, is just another nail in President Bashar al-Assad's coffin, US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said late on Sunday during a stopover in Tunisia as he kicked off a Middle East tour expected to focus heavily on the unfolding crisis in Syria.

Already an estimated 200,000 civilians — almost 10 percent of the population — have fled the fighting in Aleppo, according to the UN official for humanitarian affairs, Valerie Amos, citing the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Red Crescent.

Aleppo is Syria's largest city with around 3 million inhabitants.

Syrian state media reported late on Sunday that the army had "purged" Aleppo's southwestern neighborhood of Salaheddine and inflicted "great losses" upon the rebels in one of the first districts they took control of in their bid to seize the city.

Activists, however, disputed the claim and just described another day of fierce shelling of certain areas, backed up by the occasional foray on the ground.

"They have tanks in nearby Hamdaniya and there is fighting, and there have been random bombardments of Salaheddine," said Mohammed Saeed, who is based in the embattled city.

Assad's regime has been plagued by a string of defections, including three high ranking diplomats and several military commanders. On Monday, a Turkish official announced that a Syrian brigadier general who was deputy chief of police in Syria's Latakia region, had defected.

The general was among a group of 12 Syrian officers who crossed into Turkey late on Sunday, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because of Turkish government rules. His defection raises the number of generals to have left

for Turkey since the start of the 17-month-old uprising to 28.

But Syria's army remains mostly intact and still vastly outguns the rag-tag rebel army, which is armed for the most part with assault rifles, machine guns and doesn't have the heavy weapons necessary to effectively oppose tanks and helicopter gunships.

The government boosted its forces outside Aleppo and began an assault over the weekend to retake the commercial hub, bombarding rebel neighborhoods and leaving streets littered with rubble and empty apartment blocks with gaping smashed windows, according to videos of the city posted online in recent days.

Fleeing residents described to The Associated Press incessant shelling, shortages of food and gasoline and soaring black market prices for everyday staples.

"I am extremely concerned by the impact of shelling and use of tanks and other heavy weapons on people in Aleppo," Amos said in a statement from New York late on Sunday. "Many people have sought temporary shelter in schools and other public buildings in safer areas. They urgently need food, mattresses and blankets, hygiene supplies and drinking water."



ANOTHER CUB FOR BAI YUN

PHOTO BY DENIS POROY / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Four-year-old Panda cub Zhen Zhen leans against mother Bai Yun in their enclosure at the San Diego Zoo during a media preview in San Diego on Dec 21, 2007. Zoo officials on Sunday said Bai Yun has given birth to her sixth cub at the zoo.

Clinton to play key role at DNC: Officials

By JULIE PACE

and KEN THOMAS

in Washington

The Associated Press

Former President Bill Clinton will have a marquee role in this summer's Democratic National Convention, where he will make a forceful case for President Barack Obama's re-election and his economic vision for the country, several Obama campaign and Democratic Party officials said.

The move gives the Obama campaign an opportunity to take advantage of the former president's immense popularity and remind voters that a Democrat was in the White House the last time the American economy was thriving.

Clinton's prominent role at the convention will also allow Democrats to embrace party unity in a way that is impossible for Republican challenger Mitt Romney.

Obama personally asked Clinton to speak at the convention and place Obama's name in nomination, and Clinton enthusiastically accepted, officials said on Sunday. Clinton speaks regularly to Obama and to campaign officials about strategy.

George W. Bush, the last Republican to hold the White House, remains politically toxic in some circles. While Bush has endorsed Romney, he is not involved in his campaign and has said he does not plan to attend the Republican convention.

Clinton will speak in prime time at the Democratic convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, on Sept 5, the night before Obama formally accepts the party nomination. While the number two on the ticket often speaks that night, the Obama campaign has instead decided that Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden will speak on the same night.

Biden will introduce Obama on Sept 6 before more than 70,000 people expected to fill an outdoor stadium in Charlotte, and millions more on television.

The vice-president's speech will focus on outlining many of the challenges the White House has faced over the past four years and the decisions Obama made to address them, officials said.

"To us it's about deploying our assets in the most effective way," Obama campaign strategist David Axelrod said. "To have President Clinton on Wednesday night laying out the choice facing voters, and then having Vice-President Biden speak right before the president in prime time on Thursday, giving a testimony to the decisions the president has made, the character of his leadership and the battle to rebuild the middle class that's so central to our message."

Clinton's role at the convention was scheduled to be formally announced on Monday. It was first reported by The New York Times.

Clinton spoke at the 2008 convention, part of a healing process for the Democratic Party following the heated primary battle between Obama and the former president's wife, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Since then, the ties between Obama and Bill Clinton have strengthened significantly. Obama has called on the former president for advice several times during his term and the two have appeared together this year at campaign fundraisers for Obama's re-election bid.