

briefly

LIBYA

Pro-Islamist elected

Libya's newly empowered top legislative body elected a veteran opponent of Muammar Gadhafi's ousted regime, who is seen as pro-Islamist, as its president late on Thursday.

Mohamed al-Megaryef, a founding member of the Libyan National Salvation Front, defeated liberal independent Ali Zidane in a run-off by 113 votes to 85 in the 200-member General National Congress.

The vote in the assembly, elected in landmark polls on July 7, came after the National Transitional Council handed over power on Wednesday in a symbolic move marking the first peaceful transition in Libya's modern history after four decades of Gadhafi's rule.

MEXICO

Storm drenches southern Gulf

Tropical Storm Ernesto made landfall on Thursday afternoon near the port city of Coatzacoalcos and moved inland while drenching Mexico's southern Gulf, an area prone to flooding.

Ernesto spun over the far southern Gulf of Mexico, across waters dotted with oil rigs operated by the state oil company, after hurling rain across the Yucatan Peninsula but causing little major damage. The government closed its largest Gulf coast port, Veracruz and the smaller ports of Alvarado and Coatzacoalcos.

AFGHANISTAN

3 US soldiers killed

Three American special forces soldiers were killed on Friday by an Afghan police officer who had invited them for a meal, Afghan officials said.

The US military in Afghanistan confirmed that three US soldiers had been killed by "an individual in an Afghan uniform" in Sangin district of southern Helmand province, but gave no further details.

The attack was the third so-called green-on-blue assault, in which Afghan forces turn their weapons against their NATO allies, in just four days.

LIBYA

Rebels promise counterattack

Rebels fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's forces in Aleppo promised a counterattack on Friday after losing ground earlier, and residents fled in cars crammed with belongings during a lull in fighting.

The rebels were pushed back from the Salabeddin district on Thursday by troops seeking to reestablish control over Syria's largest city and its economic hub — a crucial arena in a struggle which the United Nations said would have no winner.

EGYPT

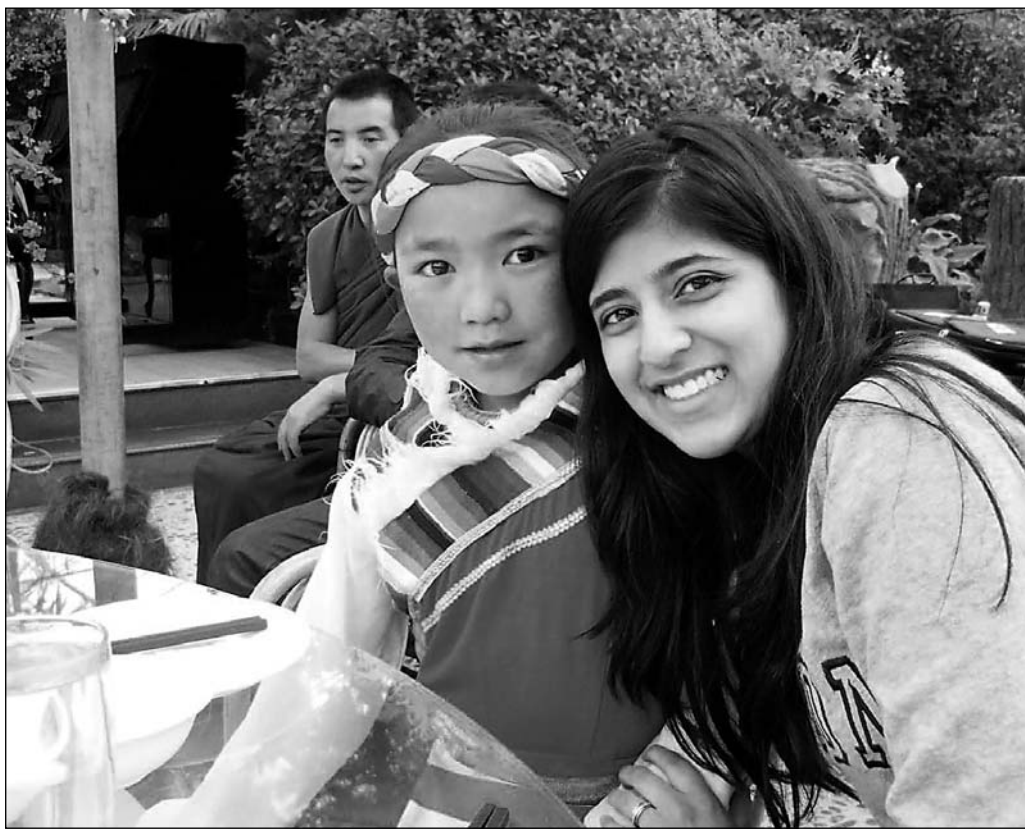
6 'terrorists' arrested

The Egyptian army has arrested six "terrorists" during a sweep in the Sinai Peninsula following a raid on the weekend that killed 16 soldiers, military and security sources said on Friday.

They were arrested during joint army and police patrols searching for criminals in North Sinai province, state news agency MENA reported, without saying when.

A security source said that the six were known Islamist hardliners suspected of belonging to a jihadist group.

AFP—REUTERS



Reena Jailwala, an exchange student in Beijing, poses with a girl from an orphanage in Gansu province as she prepares to put on a performance for a school audience.

PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

US students' tales exemplify interest

By YU WEI and MOLLY BODURTHA in New York

Tao Tao Holmes had a straightforward, if exotic, plan: explore the Chinese language and maybe devote some free time during the summer to a worthy cause.

Multiple trips as a child to the Summer Palace in Beijing and the Great Wall — majestic but also packed with tourists — hadn't piqued her curiosity about the land where her mother was born.

"I've been to China many times," the 21-year-old from Connecticut said. "Most of them were over the summer growing up. But in recent years I've had more independent experiences, and my attitudes toward China have absolutely shifted as I've grown older."

One experience in particular, in May 2008 at Deyang Middle School in Sichuan province, transformed what had been a passing interest into fascination.

Holmes had been teaching English and volunteering at the school when Sichuan was hit by an 8.0-magnitude earthquake that ultimately took more than 69,000 lives. The losses — of relatives, friends and classmates — were so extensive, they nearly defy enumeration, much less understanding.

As seismic aftershocks rumbled intermittently, Holmes struggled not only with the difficulty of being the only foreigner around, but also seeing the hardships of her students, who weren't much younger than her.

"It was very hard to watch their tremendous pain," she recalled.

That unforgettable time in Deyang deepened Holmes' interest in China. Three years later, she returned to the country, this time to study in Beijing.

"Compared to other Americans, my Chinese is by now proficient and I can communicate suitably, but still I'd like to reach a point where I can fully communicate with all of my Chinese relatives," she said.

It's getting easier for people like Holmes to become adept in Mandarin.

"There are always grants and

fellowships to take advantage of," the Yale student said.

For instance, her university offers the Richard U Light Fellowship, a set of programs that enables undergraduates with facility in East Asian languages to study in China, Japan or South Korea.

"A lucky few, often in cities like New York and Washington, DC, take Chinese in high school, but a majority begin in college and stick to it," Holmes said.

"And some definitely end up as Sinophiles by the end of it."

That's certainly true of 17-year-old Reena Jailwala, from the Chicago suburb of Barrington, Illinois. Unlike Holmes, she had no family tie to China. Instead, she seized the rare opportunity to study Mandarin offered by her public high school.

Jailwala ended up "absolutely falling in love with the language," she said.

Eventually she let curiosity take over, embarking on a year-long study-abroad program in Beijing, which included staying with a local family. During her sojourn, which ended in July, she not only studied language and absorbed the culture, but also raised money for an orphanage in remote Gansu province. She called the experience one of the most valuable of her life.

"The orphanage wasn't getting the attention it needed," she said. "It was not only worthwhile but also necessary to raise money for these children."

Through bake sales, pledge drives and donations, the project raised 5,000 yuan (about \$800) to provide the orphanage toys, shoes, school supplies and much-needed medicines.

Recalling her initial encounter with the children, Jailwala said: "The look of joy in their eyes was enough to communicate how much they appreciated that people from halfway across the world cared."

Today, she remains grateful for the language program in Barrington that kick-started that once-in-a-lifetime chance and her enduring interest.

Not only was Mandarin recently incorporated into curriculum

at Jailwala's Barrington High School, in 2010 the Barrington school district's Chinese department received a \$500,000 grant from the federal government to enable students to begin studying the language as early as kindergarten.

"They are learning half their subjects, including science and math, in Chinese," Jailwala said.

To help serve growing interest in Chinese study, US President Barack Obama introduced the "100,000 Strong" initiative, which aims to increase the number of US students who spend a semester or more in China.

Nearly 14,000 US students in 2009-2010 alone received academic credit for study in China. The country remains the fifth-most popular study-abroad destination for US students, and the only one of the top five host countries outside Western Europe, according to the annual Open Doors report released by the Washington-based Institute of International Education.

In support of the Obama initiative, China's Ministry of Education is offering 10,000 "CPE" scholarships — under the bilateral Consultation on People-to-People Exchange — for US undergraduates to study at one of several top Chinese universities.

"People-to-people exchanges are perhaps the best way to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of who we are and how we can build respectful, win-win relationships moving forward," said Tom Watkins, a former Michigan state superintendent of schools.

Watkins said he would like to see more of America's youth travel to China to get to know their global classmates.

"Getting to know each other on a personal level will make for a better world," he said.

Tensions between the US and Chinese governments "now confound" Jailwala, she said. "I learned that on a personal scale there are no differences between my Chinese friends, family, teachers and me."

Contact the writer at yuwei12@chinadailyusa.com

Recalling Shanghai as WWII refuge for European Jews

By CHINA DAILY and MOLLY BODURTHA in New York

Hunched and weary, the "stateless refugees" lined up out the door of a soup kitchen in pre-revolutionary China during the winter of 1937.

Peering anxiously at the place that would soon become their home, the men, women and children who gathered that day in search of a meal were the most recent group of German and Austrian Jews to flee Nazi-occupied Europe for the promising shores of the Far East.

The moment is immortalized in a photo included in *Destination Shanghai: The Jewish Community of Shanghai, 1936-1949*, at the Center for Jewish History in New York. The exhibit, which opened in late June and continues through October, tells the story of a far-flung outpost of the post-World War II Jewish diaspora.

But the real subject of *Destination Shanghai*, says curator Renata Stein, isn't only the plight of European Jews but also the hospitality and empathy of their Chinese hosts.

Stein and her colleagues at New York's Leo Baeck Institute organized the exhibit to encourage some of the era's surviving refugees to tell their stories.

"We were also interested in having it now so that some of the people who were there would still see it and get the idea that we are very interested in their story," Stein told China Daily.

On the eve of Nazi occupation of Europe, Jews in many countries noted rising anti-Semitism and quickly applied for emigration, with many fortunate to escape the horrors of the Holocaust.

The world's superpowers, however, didn't always offer help.

For Franz Friedlander, an Austrian whose journey to Shanghai is highlighted in the exhibit, the United States initially represented a potential haven. But Friedlander was assigned to a waiting list along with thousands of other would-be emigrants. A brief form notified him that "no details could be released as to if or when a visa would be granted."

German Jewish refugee, Alfred Buchler was 12 at the time his application for a visa to Chile was processed. The Chilean consulate issued visas to Buchler and other emigrants, only to invalidate them soon after.

For the wave of people struggling to find somewhere to resettle, the only hope seemed to be Shanghai, an international city that didn't require an entrance visa.

While gaining entry to Shanghai was relatively easy, obtaining permission to leave Germany was nearly impossible. A citizen of a Nazi-occupied country needed an exit visa to emigrate.

In the wake of Kristallnacht, the November 1938 pogroms in Austria and Germany, the Chinese ambassador to Austria, Ho Fengshan, began issuing Austrian Jews emigration visas to China.

The Baeck Institute houses the papers Ho issued to Aus-

trian citizens Oskar Fiedler and Hermine Moser on July 20, 1938, and June 9, 1939, respectively. Although his bold actions directly disobeyed orders from his immediate superior and resulted in a demerit in his file, the diplomat believed the lives saved outweighed risks to his career.

In 2000, Ho was posthumously given a Righteous Among the Nations award by Yad Vashem, the organization that runs Israel's official Holocaust museum, for "humanitarian courage" at a time of moral collapse in the world. Because of his sacrifices, 1,200 Austrian Jews were able to escape a grim fate. Some were even released from concentration camps to begin their search for freedom on the journey to Shanghai.

The arrival of many European Jews to the Chinese city in 1937 came at a trying time. In July of that year, Japan launched a full-scale invasion of China, sparking the War Against Japanese Aggression. Shanghai was occupied and reduced to rubble.

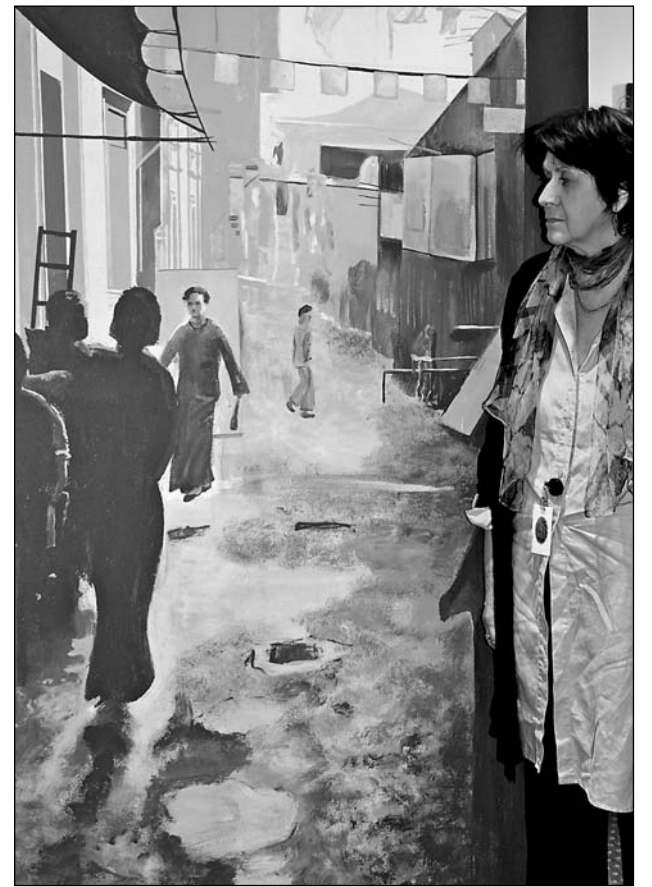
Aileen Jacobson, the daughter of two Jewish "Shanghai-lander" refugees, caught the exhibit's opening on June 15 and was back on a recent Monday for a second look. Although her parents relocated to Atlanta shortly after she was born in 1947, Jacobson grew up hearing about the hunger her parents endured in Shanghai before they left.

"In the mornings, there would be people dead on the street," she said. "They would die overnight and a wagon would come pick them up in the morning."

"They would only be Chinese bodies, because the Jews had that little bit of that safety net," referring to support from foreign-aid organizations.

"The Chinese were very generous," Stein said. "They did not have anything themselves. And no one was particularly hostile to the refugees."

Despite abject poverty and starvation in the city, the Jewish arrivals received substantial care and aid from the local community.



MOLLY BODURTHA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Curator Renata Stein looks at a mural included in *Destination Shanghai*, at New York's Center for Jewish History.

Japanese cabinet leader urges ministers to avoid Yasukuni Shrine

By ZHOU WA

zhouwa@chinadaily.com.cn

Japanese Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura on Friday urged cabinet ministers not to visit the Yasukuni Shrine, after two Japanese top politicians told reporters they will visit the shrine on Wednesday, according to Xinhua News Agency.

Experts and Chinese media said the politicians are

attempting to inflame public hostility against other Asian countries in order to gain support to win Japan's upcoming election.

Zhou Yongsheng, an expert on Japanese studies at China Foreign Affairs University, believed that visiting the shrine, which honors Japan's war criminals from World War II, is an affront to China and South Korea, which have maritime and historical dis-

putes with Japan, and will harm relations.

Fujimura said at a news briefing that his stance is in line with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda's and every cabinet minister should act accordingly, a Japanese news network reported.

Fujimura said he hopes Noda and his cabinet will maintain restraint on the issue, "considering factors such as relations with other countries."

China's Foreign Ministry said it is aware of the Japanese government's stance and urges Tokyo to keep its word to avoid damaging relations with victimized countries, which suffered greatly from Japanese occupation during World War II.

However, some Japanese politicians continue to visit the shrine, and the visits have damaged Japan's relations with countries that were invaded during the war, such as China

and South Korea, according to a previous Xinhua report.

Fujimura's statement shows that Japan doesn't want to worsen ties with China, especially given a recent chill in relations following Japanese provocations over the Diaoyu Islands, Zhou said.

But Zhou added that Japanese politicians will continue to play up the disputes in order to help win the election.

According to Xinhua, Japa-

nese Transport Minister Yuichiro Hata confirmed he will visit the shrine, but added that he will not visit the shrine as a cabinet minister but as a citizen.

Hata, 45, is the son of former prime minister Tsutomu Hata, and both father and son have visited the shrine every year in the past.

If Hata visits the shrine, then he will become the first incumbent cabinet minister in the ruling Democratic Party of

Japan to visit the shrine.

Meanwhile, Jin Matsubara, a member of Japan's House of Representatives, also said he is considering visiting the shrine, AFP reported.

"Since I've been going there every August for more than two decades, I'd like to decide on it appropriately," he said.

China and South Korea have criticized high-profile visits to the shrine by Japanese politicians in the past.