

Eight Killed In Beirut Car Bombing

BEIRUT (AP) — A car bomb ripped through Beirut on Friday, killing a top security official and seven others, shearing the balconies off apartment buildings and sending bloodied residents staggering into the streets in the most serious blast the Lebanese capital has seen in four years.

Dozens of people were wounded in the attack, which the state-run news agency said targeted the convoy of Brig. Gen. Wissam al-Hassan, the head of the intelligence division of Lebanon's domestic security forces.

Many Lebanese quickly raised the possibility the violence was connected to the civil war in neighboring Syria, which has sent destabilizing ripples through Lebanon for the past 19 months. Al-Hassan led an investigation over the summer that implicated a pro-Syrian Lebanese politician and one of the highest aides to Syrian President Bashar Assad in plots to carry out bombings in Lebanon.

Friday's blast was also a reminder of Lebanon's grim history, when the 1975-1990 civil war made the country notorious for kidnappings, car bombs and political assassinations. Even since the war's end, Lebanon has been a proxy battleground for regional conflict, and the Mediterranean seaside capital has been prey to sudden, surprising and often unexplained violence shattering periods of calm.

"Whenever there is a problem in Syria they want to bring it to us," said Karin Sabaha Gemayel, a secretary at a law firm a block from the bombing site, where the street was transformed into a swath of rubble, twisted metal and charred vehicles.

15-Year-Old Pakistani Able To Stand With Help

LONDON (AP) — The British hospital treating a 15-year-old Pakistani girl shot in the head by the Taliban raised hopes for her recovery Friday when doctors said she was able to stand with some help and to write.

Malala Yousufzai appeared with her eyes open and alert as she lay in a hospital bed, in the first photographs released by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham since she arrived from Pakistan on Monday.

It was a series of positive developments since the shooting, which was a brazen bid by the Taliban to silence the girl, who has been an outspoken advocate for girls' right to education.

Still, doctors said she shows signs of infection and faces a long, difficult recovery with uncertain prospects.

"She is not out of the woods yet," hospital medical director Dr. Dave Rosser said. "Having said that, she's doing very well. In fact, she was standing with some help for the first time this morning when I went in to see her."

Roadside Bomb In Afghanistan Kills 19

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A roadside bomb tore through a minibus carrying people to a wedding celebration in northern Afghanistan on Friday, killing at least 19 people and wounding 16, authorities said.

The blast underscored the heavy toll the war has taken on civilians who are frequently caught up in the fighting between insurgents and Afghan and foreign security forces.

The bus was taking guests to a wedding celebration in the Dawlat Abad district of the northern Balkh province, about 450 kilometers (270 miles) northwest of the capital, Kabul, police spokesman Shir Jan Durani said.

District police commander Bismullah Muslimyar gave the death toll and said six children and seven women were among those killed in the 6 a.m. blast. He said a police patrol had passed through the area during the night.

Muslimyar said the wedding had occurred Thursday, and the party was heading to the groom's home to congratulate the newlyweds according to tradition.

Dow Falls 205 As Earnings Pound Market

NEW YORK (AP) — Poor corporate earnings reports pounded the stock market Friday in a sour end to an otherwise strong week of trading. The Dow Jones industrial average fell more than 200 points for its worst day in four months.

Disappointing results from three giants of the Dow — Microsoft, General Electric and McDonald's — were partly to blame. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fared even worse, as widespread worries about companies' ability to keep churning out better profits drove the broader market down.

Through Thursday, with 115 companies in the S&P 500 reporting, earnings have dropped 3.7 percent compared with a year earlier, according to Thomson Reuters, a financial data provider, and ING, a financial company.

"And once you get one quarter of negative earnings, it's a precursor," said Doug Cote, chief market strategist at ING Investment Management in New York. "It's the cockroach theory: If you find one, there's probably many more."

Heading into this earnings season, financial analysts had estimated that corporate profits for July through September would fall compared with the same period a year ago. That would be the first such decline in three years.

Banana Boat Maker
Recalls Spray-On Lotion

WASHINGTON (AP) — The maker of Banana Boat sunscreen is recalling some half-million bottles of spray-on lotion after reports that a handful of people have caught on fire after applying the product and coming in contact with an open flame.

Energizer Holdings said Friday that it is pulling 23 varieties of UltraMist sunscreen off store shelves due to the risk of the lotion igniting when exposed to fire.

The recall includes aerosol products like UltraMist Sport, UltraMist Ultra Defense and UltraMist Kids.

A company spokesman said there have been five reports of people suffering burns after using the sunscreen in the last year. Four burn cases were reported in the U.S. and one in Canada.

More than 20 million units have been sold since UltraMist launched in 2010, the spokesman said.

Biel And Timberlake
Get Married In Italy

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel got married.

"It's great to be married, the ceremony was beautiful and it was so special to be surrounded by our family and friends," the couple said in a statement released Friday to People magazine.

Biel spokeswoman Meredith O'Sullivan Wasson confirmed the report.

The 31-year-old Timberlake and 30-year-old Biel were wed in southern Italy. The couple got engaged in December after dating for several years.

Timberlake, who has been acting more than singing lately, stars in the Clint Eastwood baseball film, "The Trouble with the Curve." Biel stars in the remake of "Total Recall." She will next be seen in "Hitchcock."

Jobless Rate Falls In Most Battleground States

BY JULIE PACE AND
CHRISTOPHER S. RUGABER
Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Unemployment rates fell last month in nearly all of the battleground states that will determine the presidential winner, giving President Barack Obama fresh fodder to argue that voters should stick with him in an election focused squarely on the economy.

The declines, however, were modest. It's unknown whether they will do much to sway undecided voters who are considering whether to back Republican Mitt Romney or give the Democratic president four more years.

The statewide data released by the Labor Department on Friday provide one of the last comprehensive looks at the health of the U.S. economy ahead of Election Day, now a little more than two weeks away. Voters will get one more update on the national unemployment rate just days before the election. But the state reports matter greatly to the Obama and Romney campaigns, which believe the public's impressions of the economy are shaped mostly by local conditions rather than national ones.

In Ohio, perhaps the most crucial battleground state for both Obama and Romney, the unemployment rate ticked down last month to 7 percent from 7.2 percent, below the national average of 7.8 percent.

"I knew a lot of people who were laid off and now they're

working," said firefighter Matt Sparling, an Obama supporter from Parma Heights, Ohio. "So something good is happening here."

Obama's team is banking on the president getting credit for improvements in Ohio's economy, particularly for the bailout of the auto industry, which has deep roots in the Midwestern swing state. But Romney has opportunities to run on the economy in Ohio, too. The state actually lost nearly 13,000 jobs in September and the drop in the unemployment rate was probably due in part to people dropping out of the job market.

Obama's campaign released a new ad in Ohio on Friday, touting the president's rescue of General Motors and Chrysler. Without the auto bailout, one man in the ad says, "Ohio would have collapsed." Another man says, "Mitt Romney would have just let us go under — just let them go bankrupt." The ad's tagline shows the map of Ohio with the words: "Mitt Romney. Not one of us."

The president didn't mention the state jobless numbers during a campaign stop Friday in Virginia, one of two battleground states where the rate didn't drop. It held steady at the relatively low level of 5.9 percent.

Spirited on other topics, Obama quipped in a raucous rally at George Mason University that a case of "Romnesia" was preventing his opponent from remembering his own stances on health care, energy and a slate of policies.

"He's forgetting what his own positions are — and he's betting that you will, too," Obama said. "We've got to name this condition that he's going through. I think it's called Romnesia."

Romney was headlining a rally in Florida Friday evening after spending much of the day in New York meeting with advisers.

The candidates were stepping off the campaign trail this weekend for debate preparations ahead of Monday's third and final face-off in Boca Raton, Fla. Romney was staying in South Florida to practice, while Obama and top aides headed to Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, to prepare for the foreign policy-focused debate.

International issues competed with the economy for voters' attention Friday, as fresh questions arose over what the White House knew when about the deadly attack on Americans in Libya.

Republican vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan accused Obama of stonewalling, telling Milwaukee radio station WTMJ that the president was refusing to answer even basic questions.

"His response has been inconsistent, it's been misleading," Ryan said.

Romney and Ryan have criticized the administration for saying at first that the attack was a spontaneous mob reaction to an anti-Muslim video on YouTube when they now acknowledge it was a terrorist attack. U.S. officials told The Associated Press that the CIA station chief in Libya

reported to Washington within 24 hours of the attack to say there was evidence it was carried out by militants, although it's unclear who received that information right away.

Despite increased focus on Libya, the economy remains the No. 1 election issue for most voters.

Friday's jobs report showed the unemployment rate falling slightly in seven battleground states: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin. Rates held steady at 5.7 percent in New Hampshire and 5.9 percent in Virginia. Unemployment in both states has long been well below the national average.

Nevada's 11.8 percent rate is the highest nationally. Iowa has the lowest battleground state rate, with 5.2 percent out of work.

Obama has staked his re-election prospects on the notion that the economic crisis he inherited is easing. He's been backed by positive trends for a handful of recent economic indicators, as well as polls showing the public's view of the economy is improving.

But millions of Americans are still out of work, giving Romney an opportunity to cast the president as ineffective in solving the country's economic troubles. Romney, too, has plenty of economic data to back up his argument, including disappointing earnings reports Friday from major companies, including Microsoft and McDonald's.

Scout Abuse Files Release Sparks Interest

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The online release of files showing the Boy Scouts of America's cover-up of decades of sexual abuse has created interest among Americans who want to know who the alleged abusers are and whether people who molested them as Scouts are in the files.

The files were released Thursday. The attorneys who argued the 2010 civil case that led to the files being made public uploaded the files to their firm's website and said more than 200,000 people tried to access the files within three hours.

The files contain details about proven molesters, and also unsubstantiated allegations.



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