

NEWS IN BRIEF

India takes control of online news media, social sites

The Indian government has issued an order bringing online news portals and content providers such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Hotstar under the Information and Broadcasting ministry. The notification, signed by President Ram Nath Kovind, was issued on Monday. The government regulations also apply to news on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Films, audio-visuals, and news and current affairs content on online platforms will come under the domain of the ministry. Until now, there was no law or autonomous body governing digital content.

Thousands flee as typhoon menaces Philippines

Thousands of people were evacuated from their homes in storm-battered parts of the Philippines yesterday as the third typhoon in as many weeks barreled towards the country. Vamco was expected to graze Catanduanes Island -- which was devastated by Typhoon Goni less than two weeks ago -- before making landfall on the most populous island of Luzon later Wednesday or early Thursday. Destructive winds and torrential rain were expected in parts of central and southern Luzon, the state weather forecaster said. The Bicol region, which Vamco will cross as it heads towards Manila, is still reeling from deadly typhoons Molave and Goni, which killed dozens of people and left thousands of families homeless.

Bahrain PM Khalifa, world's longest-serving, dies at 84



Bahrain's Prince Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa, the world's longest-serving prime minister who had held the post since independence in 1971, died Wednesday at the age of 84, state media announced. Prince Khalifa was a controversial figure during his five decades in office -- and deeply unpopular with the Sunni-ruled kingdom's Shia population. When Shia-led protesters occupied Manama's Pearl Square for a month in 2011, before being driven out by Saudi-backed security forces, their main demand was for Khalifa to step down. He played a key role in Bahrain's political and economic affairs, including setting the stage for a referendum that put paid to the Shah of Iran's claims to the tiny Gulf archipelago. Prince Khalifa died at the Mayo Clinic Hospital in the United States, the official Bahrain News Agency said.

Australian House to probe Murdoch media dominance

Australia's parliament will launch an inquiry into media ownership, a prominent senator said yesterday, after more than half a million people signed a petition demanding a probe into Rupert Murdoch's news dominance. The Australian arm of the New York-headquartered News Corp is the country's largest media organisation, owning papers in nearly every major city as well as cable television networks and magazines. The country's opposition parties united behind the move in the Senate to effectively sidestep the conservative government, which enjoys strong support from the Murdoch press and had not acted on the petition's demand for a royal commission.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A man is taken away by law enforcement officers during an opposition rally to demand the resignation of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan following the signing of a deal to end the military conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, in Yerevan, Armenia yesterday. Thousands of Armenian demonstrators, chanting "Nikol is a traitor", expressed their anger after the announcement of ceasefire. Pashinyan has called it a disaster but said he had no choice but to sign it to stave off a defeat.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'UNFAIR' MYANMAR ELECTION
Opposition snubs results, demands new vote

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's military-aligned opposition party yesterday rejected the results of this week's election as "unfair" and called for a fresh vote -- a demand immediately rebuffed by the election authorities.

Official results are still trickling in, but Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party has already declared a landslide victory based on its own tallies from across the country.

The opposition Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) went further, however.

"We reject the election because it was unfair," spokesperson Win Win Aung said, alleging that many ineligible people had cast ballots. "We call on the election commission to hold a new, disciplined election in cooperation with the military as soon as possible."

Observers broadly approved the overall conduct of the polls on Sunday.

Suu Kyi remains a heroine for many in Myanmar, even though her international reputation lies shattered over the Rohingya crisis.

Rights groups denounced the vote for its almost absolute disenfranchisement of Rohingyas, either living in refugee camps in Bangladesh or "apartheid" conditions in Myanmar.

The UEC's decision to cancel the election in many ethnic minority areas left a further 1.6 million more people -- from an electorate of 37 million -- without a vote.

US ELECTION 2020

Democrats secure House with reduced majority

Republicans wins another seat in Senate

AGENCIES

The Democratic Party secured control of the US House of Representatives but with a slimmer majority after winning at least 218 seats, the Associated Press reported.

Democrats secured the majority after AP declared three winners late on Tuesday; incumbents Kim Schrier in Washington, Tom O'Halleran in Arizona and Jimmy Gomez in California.

The 435-member chamber will now be controlled by the Democratic Party for another two years, but with a slimmer margin.

The Democrats went into Election Day with a 232-197 House advantage, along with one independent and five open seats. This will be only the second time since 1995 that they will control the chamber for four consecutive years.

However, the Democrats fell short of their goal of taking a Senate majority and lost seats in the House of Representatives, making Republicans well positioned to block major legislative initiatives of President-elect Joe Biden.

Republicans held on to a seat in the US Senate on Tuesday after a close race in the state of North Carolina Republican Senator Thom Tillis was assured re-election after his Democratic opponent, Cal Cunningham, conceded the race.

Cunningham said in a statement that he had called Tillis to congratulate him even though complete results from the November 3 election have not yet been announced.

Republicans now hold 49 seats in the 100-seat Senate compared to the Democrats' 48.

All eyes are on a pair of runoff Senate elections set to take place in Georgia on January 5 likely to decide which party will control the legislative body. A third seat -- in Alaska -- remains undecided, but Republican Senator Dan Sullivan is ahead there for now.

In the case of a tie, incoming Vice President Kamala Harris would break it, according to Senate rules.

The new Congress convenes on Jan 3.

CONTENTIOUS COMMENT OVER US TRANSITION

Pompeo softens tone after criticism

AGENCIES

Facing criticism, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo softened his tone after he voiced confidence that once every "legal" vote was counted, it would lead to a "second Trump administration."

Chuck Schumer, the top Democrat in the Senate, said Pompeo was out of touch with reality.

"Secretary Pompeo, Joe Biden has won. He's won the election. Now move on," Schumer told reporters. "We have a Covid crisis raging. We don't have time for these kinds of games."

Representative Eliot Engel, chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, said the State Department should begin preparing for Biden's transition now.

"Secretary Pompeo shouldn't play along with baseless and dangerous attacks on the legitimacy of last week's election," he said.

Richard Boucher, a retired diplomat who was the longest-serving State Department spokesman, said Pompeo's comment about a second Trump administration could be passed off as a joke but also served to protect him from White House criticism.

Hours after withering criticism over his comments, Pompeo, a close ally and appointee of Trump, in a Fox News interview appeared to soften his tone.

"I am very confident that we will have a good transition, that we will make sure that whoever is in office on noon on January 20th has all the tools readily available so we don't skip a beat with the capacity to keep Americans safe," Pompeo said.

Earlier at a State Department

briefing, he said: "There will be a smooth transition to a second Trump administration."



Those comments drew praise from Trump, who tweeted a video late on Tuesday of Pompeo's comments, saying: "That's why Mike was number one in his class at West Point!" referring to the US Military Academy.

Biden said earlier that nothing would stop the transfer of power in the US government. The former vice president secured more than the 270 votes in the Electoral College needed to take the presidency by winning Pennsylvania on Saturday.

But Trump and his allies insist

"illegal" ballots may have been cast despite no evidence of mass voter fraud, which is extremely rare in US elections.

Pompeo did not make any comments in either set of remarks to suggest he recognized Biden as the president-elect.

Asked during the Fox News interview if he was being "serious" regarding his comments about a "second Trump administration," Pompeo did not say either way but did not repeat the phrase.

He spoke as leaders of other countries, including Washington's close allies the UK, France and Canada, have already congratulated Biden.

Asked if the United States can still be issuing statements urging free elections around the world, Pompeo called the question "ridiculous" and said the United States was following standard procedures.

In his first official travel since the election, Pompeo is due to go to France, Turkey, Georgia, Israel, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia from Nov. 13 to 23. The leaders of some of those countries have already congratulated Biden.

Trump has fired his defence chief on Monday, in a sign that experts say may be a part of a tactic that might come useful in case of wide scale unrest in US over the election outcome.



Pan-democratic legislators in Hong Kong announce their resignation from the Legislative Council yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Remembrance Day attack in Saudi city wounds several

Says France, condemns 'cowardly' attack

REUTERS, Paris/Riyadh

A blast at a World War One remembrance ceremony in Jeddah wounded several people yesterday, France said, urging its citizens living in Saudi Arabia to exercise maximum vigilance following what it called an attack using an explosive device.

The explosion was the second security incident to take place in the Red Sea port city in the last couple of weeks, and the first attack with explosives in years to attempt to hit foreigners in the conservative kingdom.

France's Foreign Ministry said the attack had taken place at a ceremony in Jeddah involving foreign embassies. A Greek official told Reuters four people had been wounded.

"There was some sort of a blast at the non-Muslim cemetery in Jeddah. There are four slightly injured, among them one Greek," the Greek official told Reuters, declining to name.

The Makkah governorate said the attack caused two injuries - a Greek consulate employee and a Saudi guard.

A source with knowledge of the matter said the attack happened early yesterday when several diplomatic delegations from the European Union and other countries were present at a Remembrance Day event organised by the French Embassy.

On Oct 29 a Saudi man was arrested after attacking and wounding a security guard at the French consulate in Jeddah.

It followed the beheading earlier in October near Paris of a French school teacher by a man of Chechen origin who had said he wanted to punish the teacher for showing pupils cartoons of a topic deeply sensitive to Muslims in a civics lesson.

French officials have since reasserted the right to display the cartoons as a matter of free expression, stirring anger in parts of the Muslim world.

OUSTING OF FOUR HK LAWMAKERS
All pro-democracy lawmakers to resign

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's pro-democracy lawmakers yesterday said they would all quit in protest at the ousting of four of their colleagues by the city's pro-Beijing authorities.

The four were disqualified in line with a resolution adopted earlier in the day by China's parliament authorising the local government to expel any politician it deemed a threat to national security.

The resignations will reduce the semi-autonomous city's once-feisty legislature to a gathering of Chinese loyalists, effectively ending pluralism in the chamber.

They also mark another blow to Hong Kong's beleaguered pro-democracy movement, which has been under sustained attack since China imposed a sweeping national security law earlier this year.

"We... will stand with our colleagues," Wu Chi-wai, convener of the 15 remaining pro-democracy legislators, told a press conference.

"We will resign en masse."

Earlier Wednesday, Hong Kong authorities ousted the four members just minutes after one of China's top lawmaking committees ruled the city's government could remove any legislator deemed a threat to national security without going through the courts.

Hong Kong's leader is chosen by pro-Beijing committees, but half of its legislature's 70 seats are directly elected, offering the city's 7.5 million residents a rare chance to have their voices heard at the ballot box.

China passed the sweeping security law in June to quell the protests, describing it as a "sword" hanging over the heads of critics.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the move against the lawmakers was "a further assault on Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and freedoms."

Chris Patten, the city's last colonial governor, also criticised the removals. The disqualified lawmakers were defiant.

"If observing due process, protecting systems and functions and fighting for democracy and human rights would lead to the consequence of being disqualified, it would be my honour," said Dennis Kwok, one of the ousted four.

The quartet had initially been banned from running in the city's legislative elections -- which were scheduled to be held September 6 -- after calling on the United States to impose sanctions on Hong Kong officials.

Those elections were postponed, with authorities blaming the coronavirus.

Hong Kong's pro-Beijing leader Carrie Lam defended the disqualifications yesterday saying they were "constitutional, legal, reasonable and necessary".

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Inviting Nominations for "French Language Course DELF A1 Level" (Online) from 29 November 2020 - 12 May 2021

The National Academy for Planning and Development is inviting nominations for 'French Language Online Course' from 29 November 2020 - 12 May 2021. This course will be organized by the professional French Language experts. Course time will be 06:30-09:00pm (2.5 hours a day, 2 days a week- Monday and Thursday). Nominations should be sent to the Director General, National Academy for Planning and Development, 3/A, Nilkhet, Dhaka-1205 or the undersigned along with a Cash or Bank Draft of Tk 35,000/- (Tk Thirty-five thousand only) as course fee for each participant. Participants can also register online (www.napd.gov.bd). For any query or further information please contact the undersigned or Md. Sirajul Islam, Associate Instructor & Course Coordinator (Cell: 01688-738283 & Email: siraj04cu@gmail.com).

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GD-1805

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Inviting Nominations for "Arabic Language Course" (Online) from 13 December, 2020 - 28 February, 2021

The National Academy for Planning and Development is inviting nominations for 'Arabic Language Online Course' from 13 December, 2020 - 28 February, 2021. This course will be organized by the professional Arabic Language experts. Course time will be 06:30-08:30pm (2 hours a day, 3 days a week- Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday). Nominations should be sent to the Director General, National Academy for Planning and Development, 3/A, Nilkhet, Dhaka-1205 or the undersigned along with a Cash or Bank Draft of Tk 25,000/- (Tk Twenty-five thousand only) as course fee for each participant. Participants can also register online (www.napd.gov.bd). For any query or further information please contact the undersigned or Md. Nurul Amin, Assistant Programmer & Course Coordinator (Cell: 01818357782 & Email: nurulamin.cse@gmail.com).

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