

Pak court removes Facebook ban

BBC ONLINE

A court in Pakistan has ordered the authorities to restore the Facebook social networking site. The court had ordered the blocking of the site after a petition was filed against a competition featuring caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. The petition, filed by a lawyers' group called the Islamic Lawyers' Movement, said the contest was "blasphemous". Pakistan's deputy attorney told the court yesterday that Facebook had withdrawn the competition. The Facebook page in question contained caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad and characters from other religions, including Hinduism and Christianity, as well as comments both critical and supportive of Islam.

FALL IN RATINGS Japan PM may stay until polls

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, his coalition fractured and his ratings sinking, brushed aside calls to quit yesterday ahead of an upper house election despite fading chances of the decisive win needed to smooth policy-making. Some calls have emerged in Hatoyama's Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) for the premier to step down after a tiny leftist party bolted the ruling coalition in anger at his failure to keep a campaign pledge to move a US airbase off Okinawa island in southern Japan. But with times short and no guarantee that replacing Hatoyama would boost his party's fortunes in an upper house poll expected in July, analysts say Hatoyama will probably cling to his post. "If the sense of crisis mounts to such a level that they are ready to swallow someone who is less of a consensus maker, they may be ready to get rid of Hatoyama," said Sophia University professor Koichi Nakano. Most pundits have tipped outspoken Finance Minister Naoto Kan as likely successor if Hatoyama quits.

"But at the end of the day, Hatoyama would have to step down voluntarily and that's unlikely, though not impossible," Nakano said. Support for Hatoyama's government took another hit, falling as low as 17 percent in one of a spate of surveys published on Monday, after he fired the head of the tiny Social Democratic Party (SDP) from her cabinet post on Friday, prompting the party to leave the coalition two days later. The political future is distracting the government as it thrashes out a plan to cut Japan's huge public debt and a strategy to engineer growth despite a fast-aging population. Financial markets are keeping an eye on the political confusion, which has deepened since the Democrats swept to power last September, ousting the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) after more than 50 years of almost non-stop rule. "The political turmoil in Japan may not immediately deal a blow to the Japanese economy, but it may dampen foreign investors' appetite for Japanese stocks and stock falls may affect consumer sentiment," said Junko Nishioka, chief Japan economist at RBS Securities.

Jets attack kills 42 Pak militants

REUTERS, Kalaya

Pakistani jet fighters struck militant hideouts in the Orakzai region yesterday, killing 42 insurgents, government and security officials said, the latest in a series of assaults on militants in the country's northwest. Warplanes attacked militant positions in three areas of the Orakzai region where government forces have intensified attacks in recent weeks after largely clearing Taliban strongholds in other areas. "Our jet fighters carried out strikes after information that militants were present in these areas," said one security official, who declined to be identified. A government official, Nauman Khan, said 42 militants were killed and 18 wounded in the air assaults. A Taliban spokesman, Hafiz Saeed, confirmed the attacks but denied any casualties, saying the jet fighters only bombed abandoned houses.

Indian Maoist vows to 'punish' rogue rebels

BBC ONLINE

A Maoist leader in India has said that they will "punish" any rogue rebels if they are found responsible for Friday's train crash, which left 148 people dead. Police say Maoist rebels sabotaged the track, causing the derailment of the Calcutta-Mumbai express in West Bengal. Maoists have denied the charge. But top leader Comrade Aakash told the BBC they would carry out a "probe" to find out whether any rebels were involved. Train services have resumed on the affected route, railway officials say. Police say they have "definite evidence" that a local rebel Maoist militia were behind the disaster. They say a group of Maoist rebels forced a railway worker at gunpoint to unfasten links on the rails. The Maoists have denied responsibility for the incident and blamed the sabotage on the ruling Marxists. But now they have indicated that they would punish leaders of the local militia if they were found to be behind the attack. "Anybody, even if they are found close to us, will be punished if their involvement is proved beyond doubt," Comrade Aakash said. Railway officials in eastern India have cancelled night trains in Maoist-affected areas after Friday's incident. The restrictions would be in place until 0500 [1130GMT] on 3 June, the company said.

Nepali Maoists warn of 'crisis' unless PM steps down

AFF, Kathmandu

Nepal's opposition Maoist party yesterday urged the prime minister to step down quickly, warning that failure to do so would result in "serious crisis" in the troubled country. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal agreed last Friday to resign and pave the way for a new power-sharing government in a deal to secure the support of Maoist lawmakers for a bill to extend parliament's term. The eleventh-hour agreement brought Nepal back from the brink of political chaos, with parliament's term due to expire at midnight and leave the country without a functioning legislature. But the prime minister's office has so far refused to give a time frame for his resignation, angering Maoist leaders, who saying he made a verbal commitment to leave within five days.

Agatha storm toll rises to 99 in Central America

BBC ONLINE

A powerful tropical storm in Central America has left at least 99 people dead in floods and mudslides. The worst-hit country was Guatemala, where officials say at least 82 people died. Nine were killed in El Salvador and at least eight in Honduras. Storm Agatha swept in from the Pacific Ocean on Saturday, bringing torrential rains that added to disruption caused by a volcano erupting in Guatemala. The storm is dissipating but more heavy rain is forecast for the next few days. Rescue workers have been clearing debris from roads to reach cut-off communities. Many areas have not been reached and the number of dead is expected to rise. In Guatemala, where Agatha made landfall on Saturday, at least 53 people were reported missing.



Ukrainian babies, in the one year-old category, take part in the crawling run during a Baby Drive competition in Kiev yesterday. Dozens of babies will crawl today the four-meter distance on all fours during the International Children's Day celebration.

Thai PM faces no-confidence motion

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Thailand's parliamentary opposition has accused Abhisit Vejjajiva, the prime minister, of human rights abuses in a no-confidence motion centred on the use of violence during a crackdown on anti-government protests. The two-day debate that began yesterday aims to focus attention on tough measures used to break up the "red shirt" protests, which ended on May 19. Abhisit might find himself forced to defend the firing of live ammunition by government troops during a six-week period in which 88 people were killed and nearly 2,000 wounded. "The government and army had no intention to attack people. What had happened was there was a militia group which attacked the military and that led to clashes. We will explain this fact and we show our sincerity by allowing an independent committee to investigate," Abhisit said ahead of the debate. OPPOSITION CHARGE The opposition has also accused Abhisit and five cabinet ministers of corruption and economic mismanagement. The no-confidence motion is led by the Puea Thai Party backed by ousted former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Puea Thai, popular in rural north and northeastern provinces, is widely expected to win the most seats in the next election. But Abhisit is expected to survive the motion during a vote on Wednesday with strong support from his six-party coalition. "I'm here to ask for justice for the victims of the clashes. There has to be a proper investigation instead of the government blaming terrorists for everything," Jatuporn Prompan, a red-shirt leader and Puea Thai legislator, told reporters before the debate. Puea Thai speakers said excessive and illegal measures, such as night-time operations and the use of live ammunition, were used by troops in attempts to surround two protest sites and disperse demonstrators. Al Jazeera's Aela Callan, reporting from Bangkok, said the opposition is gunning in particular for the deputy prime minister for his controversial role. The red shirts blame Suthep Thaugsuban for ordering an earlier crackdown on April 10 - which left 29 people dead and hundreds injured.

Hundreds die in Indian heat wave in a week

GUARDIAN ONLINE

Death toll expected to rise as India faces record temperatures of up to 122F in hottest summer on record. Record temperatures in northern India have claimed hundreds of lives in what is believed to be the hottest summer in the country since records began in the late 1800s. The death toll is expected to rise with experts forecasting temperatures approaching 50C (122F) in coming weeks. More than 100 people are reported to have died in the state of Gujarat where the mercury topped at 48.5C last week.

Hopes for breast cancer vaccine

BBC ONLINE

American scientists say they have developed a vaccine, which has prevented breast cancer from developing in mice. The researchers - whose findings are published in the journal, Nature Medicine - are now planning to conduct trials of the drug in humans. But they warn that it could be some years before the vaccine is widely available. The immunologist who led the research says the vaccine targets a protein found in most breast tumours.

How Bush's grandpa helped Hitler's rise to power!

GUARDIAN ONLINE

George Bush's grandfather, the late US senator Prescott Bush, was a director and shareholder of companies that profited from their involvement with the financial backers of Nazi Germany. The Guardian has obtained confirmation from newly discovered files in the US National Archives that a firm of which Prescott Bush was a director was involved with the financial architects of Nazism. His business dealings, which continued until his company's assets were seized in 1942 under the Trading with the Enemy Act, has led more than 60 years later to a civil action for damages being brought in Germany against the Bush family by two former slave labourers at Auschwitz and to a hum of pre-election controversy. The evidence has also prompted one former US Nazi war crimes prosecutor to argue that the late senator's action should have been grounds for prosecution for giving aid and comfort to the enemy. The debate over Prescott Bush's behaviour has been bubbling under the surface for some time. There has been a steady internet chatter about the "Bush/Nazi" connection, much of it inaccurate and unfair. But the new documents, many of which were only declassified last year, show that even after America had entered the war and when there was already significant information about the Nazis' plans and policies, he worked for and profited from companies closely involved with the very German businesses that financed Hitler's rise to power.

Road crash

FROM PAGE 1

Shahnur lost half her teeth and could hardly speak clearly. But it could not stop her for a second from enquiring about her sons Rahat and Robin. The mother was admitted at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with critical injuries in her right hand and a major part of her face. She however firmly rejected receiving treatment and was mumbling about the last moments she had with her children after the accident. As the correspondent stood nearby, in soliloquy Shahnur was recollecting how Robin, her eight-year-old younger child, was requesting her to take him on her lap. As her left hand broke, she took Robin on her lap holding him in the other hand while Robin was restless and crying in pain. She was so traumatised that she cannot remember that Robin died on her lap on way to hospital. Rahat, the 12-year-old elder son, died after his admission to DMCH. The accident occurred when a Laguna human hauler hit the rickshaw-van they were travelling in and ran them over as they fell on the road. Relatives have told Shahnur, whose husband Nazrul Islam

abandoned her 10 months ago, that her sons were being treated at Barisal Medical College Hospital (BMCH). "She is physically in a critical condition. The accident occurred before she could accept the pain of her estrangement. She would either become mad or die if she hears the tragic end of her children," said Shahnur's elder brother Shawkat Hossain. The mother was not at all happy with her relatives' "decision of sending her children to BMCH". She was probably partly in disbelief about the explanation and was repeatedly seeking to see her sons. The hopeful mother however complained that relatives should have shown her the boys before taking them to Barisal. The relatives said they would bury the unfortunate kids in Barisal without informing their mother. They said a case would be filed with Tongi police after the burial. Police could not arrest either the driver or helper of the vehicle. Two ambulances -- one carrying Shahnur and the other her sons -- left Dhaka for Barisal last evening. In her unawareness Shahnur accompanied her children in their last journey, which she would come to know after quiet along time.

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অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলে বর্ণিত আছে।