

NEWSIN brief

Pak defence budget gets 10pc boost

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's new government yesterday announced a 10 percent increase in defence spending a week after taking office, despite a crippling budget deficit of 8.8 percent.

The new budget earmarked 627 billion rupees (\$6.3 billion) for defence, a 10 percent increase compared to 570 billion rupees in the outgoing year, end-

Myanmar man gets 26 yrs for inciting riots

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar has sentenced a Muslim man to 26 years in prison for an attack on a Buddhist woman that sparked a fresh outbreak of religious violence last month in the former army-ruled nation, police said yesterday.

The man was convicted of intent to kill, assault and drug use by a court in Lashio in eastern Shan State on Tuesday, Police Major Moe Zaw Linn told

Self immolation hits Jordan

AFP, Amman

A young Jordanian man died in hospital yesterday after setting himself on fire outside the ministry of social development last week in despair over failing to meet the minister.

His reasons were unclear. The so-called Arab Spring was sparked when Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself on fire in December 2010 after police confiscated his cart and prevented him from

France stalled by rail, air strikes

AFP, Paris

Thousands of flights in and out of French airports were cancelled yesterday as a strike by air traffic controllers intensified just hours before a nationwide rail strike was due to start.

The French air traffic controllers strike coincided with work-to-rule protests in a number of other countries over the European Commission's proposals to create a single European airspace that, according to the EU executive, will cut costs, reduce pollution and

Myanmar readmitted to EU trade scheme

AFP, London

The European Union yesterday readmitted Myanmar to its trade preference scheme, saying it wanted to support reform in the once pariah state through economic development.

Myanmar's membership of the scheme was withdrawn in 1997 due to concerns over the use of forced labour under the



TURKEY CLEARS PROTEST SQUARE

People run away as Turkish riot policemen fire massive volleys of tear gas on Taksim square on Tuesday. Demonstrators retreated from the Istanbul protest square yesterday after a night of running battles with riot police as Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan moved to crush mass demos against his Islamic-rooted government.

PHOTO:
AFP

Key ally set to snap ties with BJP over Modi

Mamata calls for new front with Bihar, Odisha

IANS, New Delhi

The political drama around the rise of Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi on yesterday threatened to impact Bihar, with the state's ruling JD(U) expected to snap its 17-year-old alliance with the BJP and the impending development triggering talk of a third front ahead of next year's Lok Sabha polls.

Even while veteran BJP leader LK Advani is learnt to have spoken to JD(U) stalwarts, the saffron party said it was prepared to sit in the opposition in Bihar.

In Kolkata, days after giving a call for a non-Congress, non-BJP federal front of regional parties, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said she spoke to Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar and Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik. While Nitish Kumar virtually controls the JD(U), Patnaik heads Biju Janata Dal. Both are regional outfits.

In Patna, a JD(U) leader indicated that the alliance with the BJP could be over soon. "Only a formal announcement is to be made for snapping ties with the BJP," said the leader.



Mamata Banerjee



Nitish Kumar

Bihar agriculture minister Narendra Singh categorically said Modi was not acceptable to his party as the NDA's prime ministerial candidate. He said Modi was tainted by his involvement in 2002 Gujarat riots, and Advani was more preferred.

The JD(U), which needs the support of 122 legislators in a house of 243 to remain in power in Bihar, has 119 lawmakers. They can maintain the government with the support of independents.

In Kolkata, Mamata Banerjee yesterday said she has spoken to Nitish Kumar and Naveen Patnaik on her proposal for a federal front. She said Nitish Kumar responded positively, while Patnaik has sought more time.

Over 10m children work as domestic labourers: UN

BBC ONLINE

Some 10.5 million children are believed to be working as domestic labourers worldwide, according to a new report.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) says that many work in conditions that are sometimes verging on slavery.

The report, released to mark the World Day Against Child Labour, suggests that 6.5 million of these children are aged between five and 14 years old and over 71% are girls.

The report also says many are subjected to physical and sexual violence.

Some are sent into work to supplement the family's income or to pay off debts. They are often denied access to education.

Pope Francis yesterday railed against the "deplorable" exploitation of children in domestic work, saying cases of child labour were on the rise in poor countries and affect young girls in particular.

Francis called on the international community "to take ever more effective measures to fight this plague," which he said was "a deplorable phenomenon constantly on the increase."

The ILO says domestic child labour remains largely hidden and is calling for new international regulations.

Terrorist to global icon

AFP, Johannesburg

So revered is Nelson Mandela today that it is easy to forget that for decades he was considered a terrorist by many foreign governments, and some of his now supporters.

The anti-apartheid hero was on a US terror watch list until 2008 and while still on Robben Island, Britain's late "Iron Lady" Margaret Thatcher described his African National Congress as a "typical terrorist organisation."

That Mandela's image has been transformed so thoroughly is a testament to the man's achievements, but also, in part, to a concert that took place in London 25 years ago this week.

For organiser Tony Hollingsworth the June 11, 1988 gig at London's Wembley Stadium had very little to do with Mandela's 70th birthday, as billed.

It had everything to do with ridding Mandela of his terrorist tag and ensuring his release.

Hollingsworth convinced Simple Minds, Dire Straits, Sting, George Michael, The Eurythmics, Eric Clapton, Whitney Houston and Stevie Wonder into the 83-



artist line up to perform.

With that musical firepower came contracts for a more than 11 hour broadcast.

The gig at Wembley attracted broadcasters in nearly 70 countries and was watched by more than half a billion people around the world, still one of the largest audiences ever for an entertainment event.

Nelson Mandela was released from jail 19 months later, after 27 years in prison. A second concert was later held to celebrate.

"Before the first event, the prospect of Nelson Mandela's imminent release from prison seemed completely unrealistic," Terry would later say.

"Yet within 20 months he walked free and I have no doubt that the first event played a decisive role in making this happen," Hollingsworth said.

FLOODS IN EUROPE

Fled from the flood, two deers swim in the flooded water of the Danube river to look for shelter at the Gemenc Forest, about 170 km south from Hungarian capital Budapest. Disastrous floods in Europe began to subside yesterday after leaving at least 19 people dead.

PHOTO:
AFP



Greece in crisis over state TV closure

AFP, Athens

Greece was in the grip of a new political crisis yesterday as the government faced a storm of public protest and a general strike over the shock shutdown of state broadcaster ERT.

The broadcaster's television and radio stations were abruptly pulled off air late Tuesday and its 2,700 staff suspended as part of the conservative-led coalition government's deeply unpopular austerity drive.

"The ERT lockup amounts to a coup d'etat," leading union GSEE said in a statement it announced a 24-hour general strike on Thursday, the third in the crisis-hit country this year.

Prime Minister Antonis Samaras's government defended the closure of the 60-year-old institution, saying it was a "haven of public waste" and too corrupt to save.

But the sudden shutdown of ERT caused uproar, with journalists kicking off a 24-hour strike yesterday while defiant staff staged sit-ins at the organisation's offices in Athens and Greece's second largest city Thessaloniki.

ODDLY enough



World's oldest ever man dies

AFP, Tokyo

The world's oldest person and the oldest man ever to have lived has died of natural causes aged 116, officials in Japan said yesterday.

Jiroemon Kimura, who was born in 1897, died in hospital early Wednesday morning "from old age", an official in Kyoto's Kyotango city said in a statement.

Kimura, who was from Kyotango, was hospitalised in early May suffering from pneumonia. A few days ago doctors noted that his condition was worsening.

Kimura was recognised by Guinness World Records as the world's oldest living person in December 2012, after a woman from the United States died at the age of 115.

That month he also broke another record when he was verified as the oldest man ever to have lived, after reaching the age of 115 years

Syrian rebels kill 60 Shias in east town

Austria peacekeepers begin Golan pullout

REUTERS, Beirut

Sunni Muslim insurgents have killed about 60 Shi'ite Muslims in a rebel-held eastern Syrian town where President Bashar al-Assad's agents had been trying to recruit and arm fighters for his cause, according to opposition sources yesterday.

The attack was another sign of how a revolt that began more than two years ago with peaceful protests against four decades of Assad family rule is descending into sectarian bloodshed.

In the Damascus area, rebels reported that 27 of their comrades had been killed in an ambush near the town of al-Maraj.

Assad's forces, backed by the Lebanese Shia group Hezbollah, won a significant victory by seizing the border town of Qusair last week and are now believed to be preparing offensives on rebel-held areas near Damascus and Aleppo.

Meanwhile, Austrian troops, who form the biggest contingent of UN peacekeepers on the Golan Heights, began to withdraw yesterday over security concerns after battles between Syrian soldiers and rebels spilled into the ceasefire zone.

Web giants seek easing of secrecy rules

IANS, Washington

Amid a raging controversy over a sweeping US Internet surveillance programme, top tech companies in a concerted move have asked the government ease the secrecy surrounding national security investigations.

Google, Facebook and Microsoft in requests echoed by a top official from Twitter also asked US officials Tuesday to lift long-standing gag orders covering the nature and extent of information collected about Internet users by the National Security Agency.

In an open letter to Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. and FBI Director Robert S. Mueller III Google sought to be allowed to significantly expand its semiannual "transparency reports" on the information sought by courts and police worldwide.

Facebook soon after issued a statement suggesting that it may start publishing its

own "transparency reports" - a move the company has long resisted.

"We urge the United States government to help make that possible by allowing companies to include information about the size and scope of national security requests we receive, and look forward to publishing a report that includes that information," wrote Ted Ullyot, general counsel to Facebook.

Microsoft issued a statement as well, saying that greater transparency "would help the community understand and debate these important issues."

The Washington Post and the Guardian last week had cited NSA documents to suggest Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Microsoft, Apple and other technology companies were "providers" to PRISM, an NSA programme that reportedly let intelligence analysts review a wide range of information that users shared with the companies.



Aussie PM subject of 'grossly sexist' menu

AFP, Sydney

Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard yesterday accused the opposition of a pattern of misogynist behaviour, branding a menu for a party fundraiser "grossly sexist and offensive" after it featured a quail dish named after her that offered "small breasts" and "huge thighs".

The menu was used at a dinner in March for Mal Brough, a former government minister under prime minister John Howard and now an opposition candidate for the September national elections.

The menu only surfaced on Twitter yesterday, listing a dish called "Julia Gillard Kentucky Fried Quail: Small Breasts and Huge Thighs and A Big Red Box". Conservative Liberal opposition leader Tony Abbott condemned the description. But the flame-haired Gillard, whose comments on misogyny last year won her global acclaim, said it demonstrated a "pattern of behaviour" within Liberal ranks and called for Abbott to disavow Brough.

Gillard said Abbott had previously stood next to signs which described her in a sexist way, including as a bitch and witch, and young Liberals had hosted a function where jokes were made about the death of her father.

