

NEWS IN brief

Musharraf formally arrested in Bugti murder case

DAWN ONLINE

Former military ruler Pervez Musharraf was formally arrested by a police team from Balochistan in the Akbar Bugti murder case.

Subsequently, an anti-terrorist court ordered a two-week-long judicial remand of the former army strong-man.

Musharraf is to remain at his farmhouse for the duration of the remand. The farmhouse at Chak Shahzad had earlier been declared a sub-jail.

Bugti was killed in a cave on August 26, 2006 during a military crackdown ordered by Musharraf who was president and army chief at the time.

Bugti had led an armed campaign to press for provincial autonomy and a greater share of profits from Balochistan's natural resources. The death of the colourful, British-educated chieftain sparked angry protests in the country.

Ethiopia ratifies Nile accord opposed by Egypt

AP, Addis ababa

Ethiopia's parliament has endorsed the Nile River Cooperative Framework Agreement, an accord that replaces colonial-era deals that awarded Egypt and Sudan the majority water rights to the world's longest river.

The agreement, already signed by five other Nile River countries, was unanimously endorsed by Ethiopia's 547-member parliament yesterday.

The vote comes amid tensions between Ethiopia and Egypt over the latter's Nile dam project that is diverting the Nile waters to a massive hydro-electric dam.

Egypt fears the dam will result in a diminished share of the Nile, which provides most of the desert nation's water needs.

Egyptian President Mohamed Morsy on Monday warned that "all options are open" to challenge Ethiopia's project. Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn responded on Tuesday, vowing "nothing" and "no one" will stop the dam's construction.

Doctors clear Imran Khan for travel

Dawn Online

Pakistan Tehrik-i-Insaaf chief Imran Khan has been given a go-ahead by his doctors to travel to Islamabad to take oath as a member of the National Assembly.

Khan was injured during a campaign rally in Lahore, three days ahead of the May 11 elections.

According to the PTI's media cell, Khan's recent tests have shown encouraging signs and doctors have given him a go-ahead to travel to Islamabad.

He was examined for about an hour on Thursday by a group of doctors headed by neurosurgeon Dr Kamran.

The doctors took some tests, including an x-ray of the PTI chief's backbone and a fitness test, and declared Khan fit, allowing him to travel to Islamabad.

After getting the medical fitness certificate, Khan immediately decided to travel to his residence in Bani Gala and to subsequently take oath as an MNA at the next session of the National Assembly.

6 Afghan policemen found shot dead at checkpoint

AP, Kabul

Six Afghan policemen were found shot at their checkpoint in the country's south and two other policemen were missing, raising suspicions they killed their comrades, an official said yesterday.

District chief Nayamatullah Samim said the policemen's bodies were discovered in the shelter near their checkpoint Wednesday night, after they did not check in with their superiors.

Two other officers assigned to the checkpoint were missing, along with vehicles and weapons.

So-called "insider attacks" in which Afghan forces open fire on their comrades or international forces threaten to shake the confidence of the two sides as the 2014 withdrawal of most of the international troops approaches.

US surveillance could encourage China: Ai Weiwei

AFP, Beijing

Bombshell revelations about the United States' wide-reaching surveillance programmes could spur China and other countries to expand their own efforts, Beijing-based dissident Ai Weiwei warned on Wednesday.

America's huge dragnet of Internet and phone data, exposed in recent days through leaks and reports, has triggered a heated debate about privacy and national security.

Chinese social media users have made comparisons to their own government, which conducts extensive domestic surveillance and faces mounting accusations of aggressive cyber-spying abroad.

The high-profile outspoken artist said America's behaviour was especially worrying because the country played a leading role in setting Internet norms.

Murdoch files for divorce

BBC ONLINE

News Corporation's boss Rupert Murdoch filed for divorce from his wife Wendi Deng, the company confirms.

The couple, who were married in 1999, have two children together.

According to a Hollywood gossip website, the couple filed their divorce papers at the New York state supreme court yesterday morning.

In 2011, Deng famously leapt to her husband's defence to slap a protester who threw a pie at him as British MPs quizzed him over phone-hacking.

Murdoch, 82, reportedly met his Chinese-born third wife in 1997, at a company party. They were married two years later, weeks after his divorce from Anna Mann.

He paid \$1.7bn (£1bn) in his divorce settlement from his last wife, according to CNBC news.



PHOTO: AFP

Supporters of Iranian adviser to the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and hopeful conservative presidential candidate Ali Akbar Velayati hold a giant poster during his campaign rally in Tehran on Wednesday evening.

IRANIAN PRESIDENTIAL POLLS TODAY Reformist candidate hopeful

AFP, Tehran

With Iran's conservative camp divided, reformists were confident of a good showing by the moderate cleric they back in Friday's presidential vote as they seek to avenge the disputed re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad four years ago.

Thanks to a late surge of support, cleric Hassan Rowhani has emerged as one of the front-runners in the poll and has a real chance of forcing a run-off against the conservatives, analysts say.

The support came after the moderate and reformist camps this week joined ranks behind 64-year-old Rowhani after pressuring the sole reformist candidate, Mohammad Reza Aref, to withdraw from the race.

Sources said behind-the-scenes negotiations were underway in the conservative camp on Thursday in a last-ditch attempt to unify ranks in a bid to beat back Rowhani's challenge.

Unofficial polls show the conservative frontrunners to be former foreign minister Ali Akbar Velayati, Tehran mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and chief nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili.

On Wednesday, efforts were reportedly made to persuade three of the five

conservative candidates in the six-horse race to withdraw in favour of those shown to be leading the field -- Qalibaf and Jalili.

However, the conservative contenders dismissed any suggestion of withdrawing, ensuring that a total of six candidates will line up on Friday, reports said.

Rowhani's backers were on Thursday working the phones and social media networks to urge a massive turnout in favour of the moderate-level cleric, who was Iran's chief nuclear negotiator from 2003 until 2005.

The unified support for Rowhani does not mean that reformists are united but it does boost his chances of forcing a run-off, according to Tehran-based conservative political analyst Mehdi Fazayeli.

Rowhani "is now regarded as one of the leading candidates and (his) chances of being in the second round, if there is one, are more evident," said Fazayeli.

The managing editor of the hardline Kayhan newspaper warned on Thursday said that the conservative candidates' stubbornness may "transform the river of conservative votes

into a multitude of small streams."

Reza Marashi of the US-based National Iranian American Council advocacy group, said it was vital for the conservatives to rally behind a single candidate.

"Unless the remaining conservative candidates coalesce, a splintered conservative field will face a candidate in Rowhani who has the backing of significant political and social forces in Iran," Marashi told AFP.

Rowhani has received the endorsement of ex-presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a pragmatist, and the reformist Mohammad Khatami.

"I ask everyone, especially reformists" to vote for Rowhani, said Khatami, who was president between 1997 and 2005.

Rafsanjani, a pillar of the Islamic republic who was in power between 1989 and 1997, too voiced his support for Rowhani, who also served him.

Rafsanjani urged voters Wednesday to vote despite "doubts," adding, according to the Mehr news agency, that "surveys show that Mr. Rowhani is ahead".

Four years ago, the reformists' hopes of returning to power were dashed by the disputed re-election of Ahmadinejad.

Google warns of password stealing in poll campaign

REUTERS, San Francisco

Tens of thousands of Gmail accounts belonging to Iranian users have been targeted in an extensive hacking campaign in the weeks leading up to the country's closely watched presidential elections on Friday, Google Inc said on Wednesday.

The US internet company, which described the attacks as broad "email-based phishing" attempts seeking to trick unsuspecting Gmail users into giving up their user names and passwords, said they originated in Iran and appeared to be "politically motivated in connection with the Iranian presidential election on Friday."

Google said it has a policy to alert users to "state-sponsored attacks and other suspicious activity," but did not identify the perpetrators beyond saying that it appeared to be the same group behind a Gmail hacking campaign in 2011 involving fraudulent digital certificates. The most recent phishing campaigns began almost three weeks ago, Google said. The "timing and targeting of the campaigns" suggested a connection to the election, Google said without elaborating.

On its security blog on Wednesday, the company posted a screenshot of a phishing email purporting to be from Google administrators. The email, sent from the account "Email.Settings@gmail.com," contained a link to a fake sign-in page that asked for the user's Gmail credentials.

Next Dalai Lama could be a woman Tibetan leader says

AFP, Sydney

The Dalai Lama waded into Australia's bitter gender war yesterday, saying his successor as the spiritual leader of the Tibetans could be a woman.

"If the circumstances are such that a female Dalai Lama is more useful, then automatically a female Dalai Lama will come," he told a press conference in Sydney to launch a 10-day tour of Australia.

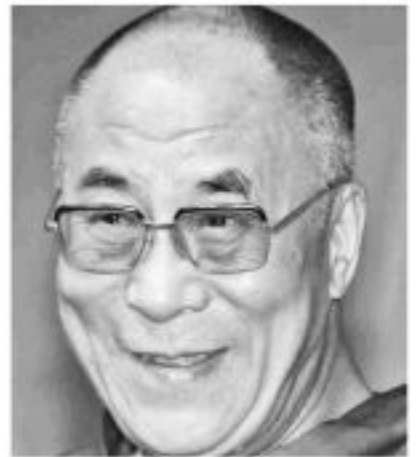
The exiled 77-year-old was questioned about the gender conflict reignited by Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard this week. He replied that the world faces a "moral crisis" of inequality and suffering and needs leaders with compassion.

"In that respect, biologically, females have more potential," the Dalai Lama said. "Females have more sensitivity about others' well-being."

"In my own case, my father, very short temper. On a few occasions I also got some beatings. But my mother was so wonderfully compassionate."

Labor leader Gillard claimed on Tuesday that the conservatives would marginalise women and set back abortion laws if they win national elections in September.

On Wednesday she accused opposition leader Tony Abbott of a pattern of misogynist behaviour, sparking angry recriminations.



Dalai Lama

Turkey protests

Two weeks of violent clashes between riot police and demonstrators

Main developments				
May 28 Peaceful protests against redevelopment of Gezi Park, near Taksim Square in Istanbul	May 31-June 1 Riot police fire tear gas to clear protesters. Violent clashes follow. Unrest spreads to other cities	June 2 Premier Recep Tayyip Erdogan calls protesters "vandals" and lashes out at social networking site Twitter used by protesters	June 3 President Abdullah Gul tells protesters their message has been "received". One person reported killed in Istanbul, when a car ploughed into protesters	June 4-6 Thousands protest across Turkey, calling for Erdogan's resignation. Death toll rises to 3, including a policeman
				
June 8 Tens of thousands rally peacefully in Taksim Square, while police fire tear gas to disperse 10,000 protesters in Ankara Some 4,800 people injured since unrest started	June 10 Erdogan agrees to meet with protest leaders in coming days Turkish stock index closes 15% lower than two weeks earlier	June 11 Riot police storm Taksim Square with tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets; demonstrators hurl stones, fireworks, molotov cocktails Death toll since start of protests: 4	June 12 Thousands gather in Taksim Square, mood subdued and peaceful. Erdogan says he would consider holding a referendum on plans for Gezi Park	

AFP, Ankara

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday said he would consider holding a referendum on plans to redevelop an Istanbul park that have sparked nationwide protests, in his first major concession in nearly two weeks of anti-government unrest.

The gesture came as thousands gathered in the city's Taksim Square, next to Gezi Park, for a 13th evening of demonstrations. The mood was subdued and peaceful, in stark contrast to the previous night when protesters fought running battles with riot police.

"We might put it to a referendum.... In democracies only the will of the people counts," said Huseyin Celik, a spokesman for Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) after talks between Erdogan and protest leaders. "We think that after this gesture of goodwill people will decide to go home."

A campaign to save Gezi Park's trees from being razed to make way for a replica of Ottoman-era military barracks was met with a heavy-handed police response on May 31. The crackdown sparked a countrywide outpour-

ing of anger against Erdogan, seen as increasingly authoritarian.

Hundreds have since been camping out in Gezi Park. Police have not interfered with the tent city that has sprung up there, but on Tuesday they retook Taksim Square, the focal point of the protest movement.

Officers fired tear gas and water cannon at tens of thousands of demonstrators, some of whom hurled back fireworks and molotov cocktails.

Erdogan has faced international condemnation over his handling of the crisis, which has left four dead and injured nearly 5,000 demonstrators, tarnishing Turkey's image as a model of Islamic democracy. The premier has repeatedly warned that he was running out of patience with the demonstrators, but he held out on olive branch by meeting with some of the protest representatives.

The representatives, a loose coalition of environmental campaigners, did not comment on the referendum proposal after the talks. Critics say they do not speak for most of the protesters and were cherry-picked for the meeting with the premier.

Is third front a dream or viable in India's politics?

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Ever since the coalition politics set in India more than two decades ago, it has become almost ritualistic to talk of a third political force away from Congress party and Bharatiya Janata Party.

It is no exception this time when fresh parliamentary elections are just a few months away.

The only difference is that time the idea was floated and the initiative taken by none other than Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee.

Is Mamata's idea just a pipe-dream or a reflection of political realities in keeping with the decline of Congress and BJP over the years.

True, the political space for both Congress and BJP at the national level have shrunk over the years with the rise of regional parties.

The percentage of votes polled in last parliamentary elections in 2009 by Congress, which leads United Progressive Alliance, was 28.5 percent as against 18.8 percent by BJP.

The regional parties, which now rule ten states of India individually or in coalition.

The third front, which is essentially a coalition of disparate regional outfits as an alternative political formation at the national level, is nothing new in India.

The previous occasion the third front experiment made some progress had come during the United Front rule between 1996 and 1998 when Congress had provided it crucial support from outside.

It collapsed the moment Congress withdrew support.

The third front is unstable by nature largely due to lack of a common ideological glue to keep them together. Mere reservations against Congress and BJP have failed to provide stability to third front. By contrast, the coalitions United Progressive Alliance and National Democratic Alliance led by Congress and BJP respectively have seen by and large stable between 1999 and till date.

ANGER OVER RAPE Protests outside Mamata's house in Kolkata

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Women activists demonstrated outside West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's residence in South Kolkata yesterday to protest against a spate of rape cases in the state.

The protesters wanted to meet Mamata and submit a memorandum of demands. But after about an hour, police dispersed the women activists and arrested 13 of them.

The demonstration, led by 'Maitree', an umbrella organisation of women activists, seek her response to a report released by the National Bureau of Crime Records which alleges that West Bengal has the maximum number of crimes against women in the country.

India ignored my asylum plea Says Julian Assange

TNN, London

India should give political asylum to American whistleblower Edward Snowden for exposing the US cyber snooping programme that targeted India in a big way, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange told TOI on Wednesday.

Assange, who is holed up in the Ecuadorian embassy in London since June 19 last year, said in an exclusive interview that India was among the first countries he had approached for asylum. But he never heard back.

"I was disappointed and saddened that India, known for upholding human rights, never got back despite several requests by me for asylum. Indians are also great supporters of WikiLeaks. I therefore contacted the foreign office through the Indian high commissioner. I wrote to them but they never responded," Assange said over telephone.

When contacted, MEA officials in New Delhi said they had no record of Assange seeking asylum in India.

The WikiLeaks founder said that if a small nation like Ecuador could have the guts to provide him asylum, India which has considerable global standing with a billion-plus population should not be afraid of "standing up for human rights" and giving Snowden asylum. "Ecuadorians showed immense courage and granted me asylum," he added.

