

NEWSIN brief

Manmohan takes oath as RS member

PTI, New Delhi

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh took oath as member of Rajya Sabha yesterday after being re-elected from Assam. 80-year-old Singh, who is the leader of the upper house, was recently elected a member of Rajya Sabha from Assam for the fifth consecutive term. The election to the two Rajya Sabha seats from Assam had taken place on May 30 and Congress had won both the seats.

Prince Philip leaves hospital

REUTERS, London

A smiling Prince Philip, the 92-year-old husband of the Queen, left hospital after 11 days on Monday, slightly earlier than expected, following an operation on his abdomen.

Philip, also known as the Duke of Edinburgh, had been taken to hospital on June 6 for the planned operation, the fourth time he had been hospitalised in the last 18 months.

Aide's scam forces Czech PM to resign

BBC ONLINE

Czech Prime Minister Petr Necas is due to resign in the coming hours, in an effort to end political turmoil over a corruption inquiry.

Necas announced he would quit after prosecutors charged his chief of staff with corruption and abuse of power. His ruling coalition will try to form a new government led by someone nominated by his Civic Democratic Party (ODS).

Talks on Assange fail

AFP, London

Ecuador will continue to grant WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange asylum at its London embassy, the foreign minister said yesterday after failing to reach a solution to the case with Britain.

Ricardo Patino said the Australian was prepared to remain in the embassy for another five years if necessary until a diplomatic solution was found, insisting he had no plans to flee.

China, N Korea talks this week

AFP, Beijing

China will hold talks with North Korea this week, Beijing said yesterday, amid ongoing tensions on the Korean peninsula over the North's nuclear programme.

Chinese vice foreign minister Zhang Yesui will meet North Korean first vice foreign minister Kim Gye-Kwan in Beijing on Wednesday, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a regular briefing.



Fast moving water from the Alaknanda river destroys building during a heavy monsoon rain in Govindghat town in the Indian state of Uttarakhand yesterday. *Inset*, a building starts to collapse into Ganga in Uttarkashi.



India PM revamps cabinet Eyes third UPA term, urges Rahul to step in his shoes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Ahead of next year's parliamentary elections, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday reshuffled his council of ministers inducting four new faces in the cabinet and as many as junior ministers.

Oscar Fernandes, Girija Vyas, Sisram Ola and K S Rao were administered oath of office and secrecy by President Pranab Mukherjee at a function at the Rashtrapati Bhavan this here evening.

The Ministers of State are Manikrao Gavit, Santosh Chowdhury, J D Seelam and E M S Natchiappan sworn-in.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) cited Singh as saying his Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government was confident of a hat trick in the 2014 polls.

"We will have a third go as UPA and the people will again repose their faith in us," the premier said.

PTI said Singh also hoped Rahul

Gandhi, scion of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, would lead the UPA coalition administration.

"I will be very happy to see him step into my shoes...I hope he will lead the UPA alliance," he added.

His comments came a day after the left-leaning Congress unveiled its campaign committee, with members picked from a diverse range of areas throughout the country.

The Manmohan Singh government has been dogged by a string of scams which often tended overshadow efforts to push through promised pro-market reforms, curtail inflation and revive the economy.

But Congress has been bolstered by turmoil within the opposition coalition after the pullout of a key partner over the elevation of right-wing hardliner Narendra Modi to head its campaign for the elections due by next May.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP) has accused its partner, the Janata Dal (United) party, of betrayal over the pullout after a 17-year alliance as the bitterness of the turmoil played out Monday in the Indian media.

Modi was earlier this month named the BJP's election committee chairman, and is likely to be tapped as the candidate for the prime minister's post should the party win elections.

Modi has painted himself as a pro-business reformist who can revive the fortunes of the world's largest democracy.

But he remains a divisive figure nationally after being accused of doing little to stop religious riots in his state in 2002 in which some 2,000 people -- mainly Muslims -- were killed.

Singh also carried out a reshuffle of portfolios giving the key portfolio of Railways to Mallikarjun Kharge following the resignation of Pawan Kumar Bansal.

Ahmadinejad given court summons

New Iran president urges 'path of moderation'

AGENCIES

Iran's official news agency says a criminal court has summoned outgoing President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over a lawsuit filed by the country's parliament speaker and others.

Monday's report by IRNA gave no further details, but Ahmadinejad and the speaker, Ali Larijani, have waged political feuds for years. In February, Ahmadinejad released a barely audible videotape that purported to show discussion over bribes that included Larijani's brother.

A parliamentary committee also joined Larijani in the legal action.

Meanwhile Iran's newly elected President Hasan Rohani yesterday pledged to follow a "path of moderation" and promised greater openness over the country's



nuclear program, emphasising messages from Western leaders since his victory that have brought cautious hope of new openings with Tehran.

But he said he would not support halting Iran's uranium enrichment, which is a key stumbling block on talks between Iran and

world powers.

Iran's president does not have authority to set major policies such as the direction of the nuclear program or relations with the West. All such decisions rest with the ruling clerics and the powerful Revolutionary Guard, which have so far appeared to embrace Rohani.

Rohani described his election as opening a "new era" and said he would "follow the path of moderation and justice, not extremism."

Turkey may use army to end protests

BBC ONLINE

The Turkish government yesterday said it could use the army to end nearly three weeks of unrest by protesters in Istanbul and other cities.

The government would use "all its powers" and the armed forces if necessary, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc said on state-run television.

It is the first time the Islamist-rooted ruling party has raised the prospect of deploying the armed forces.

The issue is sensitive as the army is seen as a bastion of secularism.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan told hundreds of thousands of supporters at a rally in Istanbul on Sunday that the protesters were manipulated by "terrorists".

Trade unions have called a strike to protest against the police crackdown on demonstrators which has seen some 500 people arrested.

Medical officials estimate that 5,000 people have been injured and at least four killed in the unrest.

The protests began on 28 May against a plan to redevelop Istanbul's Gezi Park, on the city's central Taksim Square, but it snowballed into nationwide anti-government protests after the perceived high-handed response of the authorities under their three-term prime minister.



Demonstrators from the 'IF' campaign wearing masks depicting G8 leaders protest against tax avoidance during the G8 Summit in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland yesterday.

UK 'spied' on G20 delegates in 2009

AFP, London

Documents leaked by US former spy Edward Snowden appear to show that Britain spied on foreign delegates at the 2009 London G20 meetings, a newspaper reported yesterday.

Among the officials targeted were delegates from NATO ally Turkey and from fellow Commonwealth state South Africa, said British newspaper The Guardian.

Turkey yesterday reacted strongly and slammed the British move as unacceptable.

Britain used "ground-breaking intelligence capabilities" to monitor communications between officials at the two meetings in April and September of 2009, the daily reported.

The revelations are likely to be an embarrassment to Britain, which is hosting the two-day G8 summit in Northern Ireland from -- the biggest gathering of international leaders since the G20 four years ago.

British Prime Minister David Cameron refused to comment on the report.

The Guardian cited documents it had seen concerning the work of Britain's Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), its electronic eavesdropping agency.

According to the files, British spies tricked delegates into using specially prepared Internet cafes. Those cafes allowed the spies to intercept communications and monitor email messages and phone calls through delegates' BlackBerry devices.

The Guardian also said that GCHQ received reports from a US National Security Agency (NSA) attempt to listen in as Dmitry Medvedev, then the Russian president, made a call via satellite to Moscow.

G8 meets as clash on Syria looms

AGENCIES

The conflict in Syria was set to dominate the G8 summit starting in Northern Ireland yesterday, with Western leaders upping pressure on Russia to back away from its support for President Bashar al-Assad.

Increasingly isolated from fellow G8 leaders, Russian President Vladimir Putin was likely to get a frosty reception at the two-day summit in the lake-fringed Lough Erne golf resort.

Planned face-to-face talks between Putin and US President Barack Obama were set to be especially prickly, with both leaders now offering military support to opposing sides in the war.

In Moscow yesterday, the foreign ministry said Russia would not permit a no-fly zone to be imposed over Syria, an idea that media reports say is being mooted in Washington.

The White House said last week Obama would try to persuade Putin to drop support for Assad at a summit of the G8 group of world powers

in Northern Ireland.

Putin showed no sign of being convinced. Speaking on the summit's eve, he hammered home his point that arming fighters was reckless, zeroing in on an incident last month when a rebel commander was filmed biting a piece of an enemy's entrails.

"One does not really need to support the people who not only kill their enemies, but open up their bodies, eat their intestines in front of the public and cameras," Putin said after meeting British host David Cameron.

Obama and Putin are due to meet at about 6:30pm British time.

The G8 meet comes days after the US said it was prepared to arm opposition forces in Syria saying it had evidence that President Assad's forces had used chemical weapons on a "small scale".

Cameron will host Obama, Putin, Hollande, Harper, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta.

Early monsoon hits India; 50 killed

PTI, New Delhi

Monsoon woes gripped several parts of north India yesterday as heavy rains wreaked havoc in the hill states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, leaving over 50 people dead and hundreds stranded, while several parts in Haryana were flooded after water level of Yamuna rose alarmingly.

Flash floods in the Ganga and its tributaries triggered by incessant rains for over 48 hours left a trail of death and devastation across Uttarakhand killing 30 people, injuring 19 and damaging 164 buildings.

Seven persons went missing and five vehicles including a chopper were swept away in the heavy showers which are still continuing at a number of places across the state, Disaster Management authorities in Dehradun said.

At least 15 people were killed in different incidents in Uttar Pradesh as flash floods lashed Saharanpur district following incessant rainfalls in neighbouring Uttarakhand.

ODDLY enough

Man survives 15th floor fall

BBC ONLINE

A British man has survived a fall from the 15th floor of a building in New Zealand, local media reported on Sunday.

Tom Stilwell fell from his neighbour's balcony in his apartment block in Auckland at 02:00 local time, reports said. His friends said that he had bone fractures and internal injuries, but was "fine" and "a very lucky man".

Cat, dog run for mayor in Mexico

AP, Mexico City

Disillusioned with the empty promises of human politicians, people of Mexico are nominating their pets and farm animals to run in July 7 elections being held in 14 states.

Morris, a black-and-white kitten with orange eyes, is running for mayor of Xalapa in eastern Mexico with the campaign slogan "Tired of Voting for Rats? Vote for a Cat." And he is attracting tens of thousands of politician-weary, two-legged supporters on social media.

Also running for mayor are "Chon the Donkey" in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, "Tina the Chicken" in Tepic, the capital of the Pacific coast state of Nayarit, and "Tintan the Dog" in Oaxaca City, though their campaigns are not as well organized as that of Morris.

Most coal must stay in ground

AFP, Sydney

Most fossil fuels must remain in the ground because burning them will unleash changes that will "challenge the existence of our society", a new Australian government agency report warned yesterday.

The Climate Commission study found that the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, a key Australian export, represented the most significant contributor to climate change.

"Burning all fossil fuel reserves would lead to unprecedented changes in climate so severe that they will challenge the existence of our society as we know it today," said the report, The Critical Decade.

"It is clear that most fossil fuels must be left in the ground and cannot be burned."

Most nations, including Australia, have agreed that the risks of the climate changing beyond two degrees Celsius are unacceptably high.

But to ensure the climate is stabilised, the world must "virtually decarbonise", the report said.

"In order to achieve that goal of stabilising the climate at two degrees or less, we simply have to leave about 80 percent of the world's fossil fuel reserves in the ground," report co-author Lesley Hughes told state broadcaster ABC.

"We cannot afford to burn them and still have a stable and safe climate."

