

NEWSIN brief

Newsweek sold to digital news firm

BBC ONLINE

The former US current affairs magazine Newsweek has been sold to a US digital news company. IBT Media will buy what is left of the magazine, which published its last ever print edition in December, from owner IAC for an undisclosed price.

After 80 years, Newsweek became a digital-only publication amid falling ad revenues as audiences moved online.

It was last sold by the Washington Post for \$1 in 2010 and merged with the Daily Beast website.

China bans NZ dairy imports

AFP, Wellington

China has blocked all imports of milk powder from New Zealand, a New Zealand minister said yesterday, after bacteria that can lead to botulism was found in some dairy products.

Trade Minister Tim Groser said the ban was "entirely appropriate", after global dairy giant Fonterra said some exported whey products including infant formula may contain bacteria that could lead to the potentially fatal illness. However, China has not officially announced an import ban.

Israel to free 26 prisoners on Aug 13

AFP, Jerusalem

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat says that Israel will free the first batch of a promised 104 long-serving Palestinian and Israeli Arab prisoners on August 13.

Israel says that the men will go free in stages depending on progress in newly-resumed peace talks with the Palestinians. The prisoner release was approved by the Israeli cabinet last week to coincide with the talks, revived after a three-year hiatus.

Tunisia foils new assassination bid

AFP, Tunis

Tunisia said its forces killed a "terror" suspect in a dawn raid yesterday and separately foiled a political assassination, like the one that has plunged the country into crisis.

Overnight, the ministry said that police had foiled a new bid to assassinate a political figure and that two "very dangerous terrorists" had been arrested and guns and grenades seized.

The announcements came after rival protests for and against the Islamist-led coalition government, with the opposition demanding the resignation of the cabinet and the dissolution of the National Constituent Assembly.

My son is Superman

Manning's mother urges him not to lose hope

AP, London

In a rare interview, the British mother of US soldier Bradley Manning has urged her son not to give up hope, even as he faces up to 136 years in prison for disclosing hundreds of thousands of secret US documents.

In comments published by the Mail yesterday, Susan Manning said he should know she considered him her "Superman." "Never give up hope, son," she was quoted as saying. "I know I may never see you again, but I know you will be free one day. I pray it is soon."

Susan Manning, a 59-year-old from Wales, had not given an interview in years. She is divorced from her son's father, Brian. Manning's parents have largely stayed out of the spotlight since transparency group WikiLeaks began publishing the documents leaked to it by the 25-year-old Army private.

The soldier was convicted last month on a slew of charges, including Espionage Act violations, but was acquitted of the most serious charge, aiding the enemy. Sentencing hearings are expected to resume today.



STATEHOOD AGITATION IN INDIA

Bodo tribal youth shout slogans during a mass rally demanding a separate state of 'Bodoland' within the northeastern Assam state, at Kokrajhar, some 230 kms from Guwahati yesterday. The UPA government's decision to create Telangana has brought long-standing demands for separate states across India. India may have at least 50 states in future if demands for new states are to be conceded as the home ministry has received representations for the creation of more than 20 more states.

PHOTO: AFP

Dialogue the only way to interact with Iran Says Rowhani after taking oath

AFP, Tehran

Iran's new President Hassan Rowhani yesterday said the only way for the international community to interact with Tehran on its controversial nuclear programme was through dialogue and not sanctions.

"The only path to interact with Iran is through negotiations on equal grounds, reciprocal trust-building, mutual respect and reducing hostilities," he said in a speech after being sworn in before parliament.

"If you want a proper answer, do not speak with Iran with the language of sanctions but with the language of respect," he said, adding Iran would "not surrender to sanctions, nor be threatened with war."

He was referring to years of unfruitful negotiations with the so-called P5+1 group of the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany over Iran's nuclear activities, which the world powers suspect is aimed at military objectives despite Iranian denials.

Rowhani, who won a surprise June 14 presidential election, has promised to engage in constructive interaction with the world.

The inaugural speech indicated the path that Rowhani's moderate administration would take. He said Iran's ties with Syria will remain strong.

Efforts to resolve Egypt political crisis intensify Army chief meets with Islamists for solution

AFP, Cairo

Intense efforts were under way yesterday to try to resolve Egypt's political crisis pitting supporters of ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi against the army-backed interim leaders.

Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi met Islamist leaders overnight to try to mediate a solution with Morsi supporters who have staged two major sit-ins for more than a month demanding his reinstatement.

Sisi "met with several representatives of the Islamist movements... and stressed that there are opportunities for a peaceful solution to the crisis provided all sides reject violence," army spokesman Colonel Ahmed Aly said in a statement.

Among those attending the talks with Sisi were influential Salafist clerics Sheikh Mohammed Hassan and Mohammed Abdel Salam, who just days ago was addressing pro-Morsi supporters from the stage at the Rabaa al-Adawiya sit-in.

Sisi's meetings come after days of intense diplomatic activity that saw visits by US Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton and an African Union delegation led by former Mali president Alpha Oumar Konare.

Supporters of Morsi -- Egypt's first freely elected president -- see his July 3 ouster by the military as a violation of democracy and have insisted that nothing short of his reinstatement would end their protests.

Authorities have repeatedly called on them to go home, promising them that a safe exit would allow the Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood to return to political life.

Burns's visit, which followed trips by Ashton and German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle, was the latest move in a diplomatic drive to break the deadlock.

Washington also kept up the pressure from afar, with Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel urging Sisi to support an "inclusive political process", the Pentagon said.

QAEDA TERROR FEARS

Security tight at US ME missions

AFP, Sanaa

Security was tight at US missions around the Arab world on Sunday as Washington held urgent talks on an al-Qaeda threat that prompted it to close 22 embassies and consulates.

Measures were particularly strict in the Yemeni capital where Britain, France and Germany all closed their embassies too following the US warning that lawmakers in Washington said involved al-Qaeda's Yemen and Saudi Arabia branch.

But the US alert spread across most Arab capitals and extended beyond the Arab world to Afghanistan and Bangladesh, and saw embassies closed yesterday, the first day of the working week in many Islamic countries.

US National Security Adviser Susan Rice chaired White House talks to review Washington's response to the threat it revealed on Friday of major attack by al-Qaeda during the month of August. Also attending were Secretary of State John Kerry, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel and Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano as well as the heads of the CIA, the FBI and the National Security Agency, the White House said.

President Barack Obama did not attend but was briefed afterwards. On Friday, Washington issued a worldwide travel warning. And on Saturday Interpol issued a global jailbreak warning on Saturday citing al-Qaeda threats to western establishments.

General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told ABC News that the threats were directed at Western interests, and were "more specific" than previous threats.

TAX CONVICTION

Berlusconi backs govt at rally

REUTERS, Rome

Thousands of supporters of Silvio Berlusconi protested in Rome yesterday against a tax fraud conviction that has rocked Italy's fragile coalition, but the center-right leader said the government must continue.

Addressing the 2,000-strong crowd, a subdued Berlusconi again bitterly attacked what he calls leftist judges and insisted he was innocent, but said he would continue to support the shaky coalition of his center-right People of Freedom (PDL) party with the center-left Democratic Party (PD) of Prime Minister Enrico Letta.

"We have said loud and clear that the government must go forward to approve the economic measures that we asked for and were agreed," Berlusconi told the rally, making clear that he was in no rush to force a snap election as some of his hawkish supporters have demanded.

"What drives us is not our personal interests. Always the interests of everyone and of our Italy come first."

Italy's supreme court on Thursday upheld a four-year jail sentence - commuted to one year - for the media mogul. It was the first definitive conviction he has suffered in dozens of trials since he stormed into politics in 1994. He says leftist magistrates are trying to subvert democracy by forcing him out of politics.



River under Mexico gulf

DAILY MAIL ONLINE

Submerged in deep water, one of the last things a diver may expect to find 90ft below the surface is a river view.

But that's exactly what awaits those bold enough to dive in Mexico's Cenote Angelita.

The eerie landscape of swirling mist looks like a flowing river in the middle of the cave, complete with trees emerging from the surface.

The phenomenon can only be seen in person by extremely skilled scuba divers who can cope with exploring the depths of the 180ft pit.

Floods kill dozens in Pakistan, Afghanistan

AFP, Karachi

More than 45 people died in Pakistan and 40 more in Afghanistan as torrential rain flooded vast part of the countries, official said.

Pakistani disaster relief officials issued fresh flood warnings yesterday after the death toll from heavy monsoon rains rose to 45 and waters paralysed parts of the largest city Karachi.

Flash floods caused by monsoon downpours have inundated some main roads in the sprawling port city and swept away homes in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The National Disaster Management Authority warned that more thunderstorms and heavy rains were expected on Monday and some rivers may flood.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif sent three of his cabinet ministers to inspect damage in flood-hit areas.

In neighbouring Afghanistan, flash floods triggered by days of torrential rain have killed more than 40 people in Afghanistan, destroying dozens of houses, a senior disaster official said yesterday.

Heavy flooding that began three days ago hit nine eastern and southeastern provinces and some districts of the capital Kabul.



Aussie PM announces poll on Sept 7

AFP, Sydney

Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd yesterday named September 7 as election day, hoping to complete a stunning political comeback with victory for his Labor Party three years after it ousted him.

Kicking off an election campaign set to focus on the economy and a decision to send asylum-seekers to Papua New Guinea and Nauru, Rudd met Governor General Quentin Bryce in Canberra to pave the way for the polls.

The former diplomat became prime minister for a second time in late June when Labor members of parliament voted to remove the nation's first woman leader, Julia Gillard, in hopes of saving the party from catastrophic electoral defeat.

Rudd's first term in office, which began with his landslide victory over conservative leader John Howard in 2007 polls, ended suddenly in mid-2010 when his Labor colleagues turned on him and voted in Gillard.

Gillard went to the polls shortly afterwards but that vote ended in a hung parliament, and she was forced to form a minority government with the help of several independents.

Rudd had kept the nation guessing on when the 2013 election -- at which voting is compulsory in Australia -- would be held.

Opposition Liberal Party leader Abbott welcomed the election date.

Rule of the elderly

The world's oldest serving presidents

