

# NEWSIN brief

## SpaceX launches commercial satellite

AFP, Washington

The private US company SpaceX said it successfully launched on Tuesday its first commercial satellite, designed to provide telecommunications services to China and other Asian countries.

On Tuesday the \$100 million satellite roared into space at 2241 GMT from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station in Florida, SpaceX

## Nigeria busts 'baby factory'; 16 freed

AFP, Lagos

Nigerian police yesterday said that they raided a home registered as a NGO and freed 16 pregnant girls and young women allegedly being forced to have babies to be sold. Officials said the rescued women and girls told officers that they were each offered 100,000 naira (632 dollars, 466 euros) to

## Poll says Turkey loses popularity in ME

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey's popularity in the Middle East, specially in Egypt and Syria, has dropped sharply over the past two years, an opinion poll showed yesterday, reflecting Ankara's sometimes controversial foreign policy strategy. The number of people surveyed in 16 countries slid to 59 percent this year from

## Looting as cops shun work in Argentina

AFP, Buenos Aires

People looted stores Tuesday in the central Argentine province of Cordoba after police demanding pay raises refused to leave their barracks, TV footage showed. Vandals, some on motorcycles, ransacked stores as they took advantage of the lack of

# Temporary truce holds in Thailand

AFP, Bangkok

Protesters and police yesterday observed a temporary truce as Thailand prepared to mark the birthday of its revered king, after police had stepped back in a dramatic move to calm violent clashes which killed five people.

The prevailing mood was calm in the capital, as demonstrators joined Bangkok authorities to clean up the area around Democracy Monument, where tens of thousands have camped out in more than a month of rallies against the embattled government of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra.

The area is a focus for the celebrations for the 86th birthday of King Bhumibol Adulyadej today -- a date normally observed in a spirit of calm and reverence.

Several days of street battles abruptly paused Tuesday. Protest leaders say they have not abandoned their campaign to overthrow Yingluck's administration and curb the political influence of her billionaire brother Thaksin Shinawatra, who was deposed by royalist generals in a coup seven years ago.

King Bhumibol, the world's longest-serving monarch, is treated as a near-deity by many and any violence on his birthday would be viewed as a serious sign of disrespect.

The current rallies were triggered by an amnesty bill which opponents feared would have allowed Thaksin to return to his home country. He fled in 2008 to avoid jail for a corruption conviction he contends is politically motivated.



AP, Lagos, Nigeria

Entombed at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean in an upended tugboat for three days, Harrison Odjegba Okeke begged God for a miracle.

The Nigerian cook survived by breathing an ever-dwindling supply of oxygen in an air pocket. A video of Okeke's rescue in May that was posted on the Internet more than six months later has gone viral this week.

Okeke's ordeal began around 4:30am on May 26. Always an early riser, he was in the toilet when the tug, one of three towing an oil tanker in Nigeria's oil-rich Delta waters, gave a sudden lurch and then keeled over.

As the boat sunk, he found a cabin that felt safe, he began the long wait.

# Man survives 3 days at bottom of Atlantic

He survived off just one bottle of Coke, all he had to sustain him during the trauma.

To this day, Okeke believes his rescue after 72 hours underwater at a depth of 30 meters (about 100 feet) is a sign of divine deliverance. The other 11 seaman aboard the Jascon 4 died.

Three days later, divers sent to the scene were looking only for bodies. They had already pulled up four bodies.

So when a hand appeared on the TV screen, everybody assumed it was another corpse.

"The diver acknowledged that he had seen the hand and then, when he went to grab the hand, the hand grabbed him!" one rescuer who was monitoring the operation said in a telephone interview on Tuesday, adding that it was a shock for everyone involved.

## US halts Nato supply thru' Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Former cricketer Imran Khan's party claimed a "tactical success" yesterday after the US military suspended shipments of equipment out of Afghanistan via a key Pakistani route, citing protests that posed a risk to truck drivers.

Activists in northwest Pakistan, some armed with clubs, have been forcibly searching trucks in an effort to halt Nato supplies in protest over US drone strikes in Pakistan's tribal belt. Pentagon said on Tuesday that the US had "voluntarily halted" shipments of cargo leaving Afghanistan through the Torkham border crossing in Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

# Truck with radioactive waste stolen in Mexico

AFP, Mexico City

Mexican authorities yesterday scrambled to find a truck containing "extremely dangerous" radioactive material used in medical treatment that was stolen by two gunmen two days ago, officials said.

The white Volkswagen Worker truck was transporting a "teletherapy source" containing cobalt-60 when it was stolen Monday in the central Hidalgo state town of Tepojaco, north of Mexico City, the International Atomic Energy Agency said.

The radioactive material came from a hospital in the northwestern city of Tijuana and had been on its way to a waste storage center in the central state of Mexico, authorities said.

Mexico's drug cartels have diversified their illegal activities in recent years, stealing oil by piercing pipelines and extracting coal and iron ore, but officials have not said

who the cobalt-60 thieves might be.

Experts have long warned about the risks posed by the large amounts of radioactive material held in hospitals, university campuses and factories, often with little or no security measures to prevent them being stolen.

More worryingly, though, such

## Cobalt-60 could be used in making 'dirty bomb'

material could in theory be put in a so-called "dirty bomb" -- an explosive device designed to spread the radioactive material over a wide area.

Major international efforts have been made since the end of the Cold War in 1991 and the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States to prevent nuclear material falling into

# Hezbollah leader killed near Beirut; Israel blamed

AFP, Beirut

Hezbollah yesterday said one of its top leaders was killed near Beirut, and blamed Israel, at a time of soaring tensions in Lebanon linked to the war in neighbouring Syria.

The slain leader, identified as Hassan Hawlo al-Lakiss, was the most senior figure in Hezbollah to be assassinated since Imad Mughniyeh was killed in a Damascus bombing in 2008, which the movement also accused Israel of carrying out.

Virtually unknown before his death was made public, Lakiss was part of Hezbollah's secretive top leadership.

Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor dismissed the allegations as "yet another Pavlovian response from Hezbollah, which makes automatic accusations before even thinking about what's actually happened."

The Syrian government echoed Hezbollah's accusations against Israel, adding that it condemned the "terrorist,

# Kashmir can trigger another war: Sharif

PTI, Islamabad

Kashmir is a flashpoint that can trigger a fourth war between Pakistan and India anytime, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said, seeking an early settlement of the issue.

He also said he had a dream of seeing Indian Kashmir free and hoped to see it happen during his lifetime.

"Kashmir is a flashpoint and can trigger a fourth war between the two nuclear powers at anytime," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn daily in his brief address to the budget session of the 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Council' in Pak-occupied Kashmir yesterday.

The press release issued by his office last night did not carry the above statement.

The statement had however quoted Sharif as saying that the Kashmir issue should be settled according to the aspirations of the people and the UN resolutions as peace in the region was not possible without it.

"The prime minister said that he had a dream of seeing held-Kashmir free from the Indian occupation and desired that this dream could turn into reality during his lifetime," the statement said.

About Indo-Pak relations, the Prime Minister categorically reiterated that it was India which indulged in the arms race, it said.

"We were drawn into arms race by India," he said. "If we had a choice, we could have diverted these expenditures to the social sector uplift and eradication of poverty," he emphasised.

Sharif also expressed his satisfaction over the improvement of situation on the Line of Control (LoC).



India's Congress Party Vice-President and son of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi (2L) stands with others outside a polling station in New Delhi, yesterday, ahead of casting his vote in state assembly elections. New Delhi, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram states are all voting for new state assemblies and the results will be published simultaneously after counting on December 8.

PHOTO: AFP

## Record turnout marks Delhi assembly polls

TNN, New Delhi

A record 66 per cent of around 1.2 crore voters exercised their franchise yesterday in the Delhi assembly election, which is witnessing a tight triangular contest among ruling Congress, BJP and Aam Admi Party, TV channels reported.

"The polling has so far been peaceful and there were no reports of any untoward incident," Election Commission officials said.

Vice-President Hamid Ansari, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, chief minister Sheila Dikshit, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal, BJP's chief ministerial candidate Harsh Vardhan were among the early voters.

The Congress is facing a stiff fight from its traditional rival BJP while Aam Admi Party's entry into the electoral fray has made the contest an interesting one.

Price rise and anti-incumbency are seen as major issues that may trouble Congress which

# Arafat's widow challenges French death probe report

CNN ONLINE

Yasser Arafat's widow on Tuesday questioned the findings of French scientists that the Palestinian leader did not die from radioactive polonium poisoning but rather from natural causes.

The conclusion, leaked to multiple French media agencies and Reuters, contradicts the findings of Swiss forensic scientists who concluded last month that samples taken from Arafat's exhumed body were consistent with polonium-210 exposure but did not definitely prove that he was poisoned.

"I'm convinced there is something wrong, and he did not die from a natural death," Suha Arafat said at a news conference in Paris.

She said she is requesting that the Swiss findings be made available to French authorities investigating her husband's death. She said the medical experts in Switzerland and France came from different



medical fields.

"I don't doubt them. But they are different skills. They are different types of medicines," she said.

The French findings will do little to quell the rumors that Arafat was poisoned.

Arafat died at age 75 at a Paris military hospital in November 2004 after he had a brain hemorrhage and slipped into a coma. Palestinian officials said in the days before his death that Arafat had a blood disorder -- though they ruled out leukemia -- and that he had digestive problems.

Rumors of poisoning circulated at the time, but Palestinian officials denied them.

Polonium-210 made headlines in 2006, when it was used to kill Alexander Litvinenko, a former KGB agent who came to Britain in 2000 after turning whistleblower on the FSB, the KGB's successor.

In a deathbed statement from a London hospital, Litvinenko blamed Russia's President Vladimir Putin, an accusation the



Chinese President Xi Jinping, right, shakes hands with US Vice President Joe Biden inside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday. Biden told Xi Jinping that their countries' relationship will affect "the course of the 21st century" as he tried to ease tensions over an air zone declared by Beijing. His trip follows weeks of furore after Beijing declared the zone covering East China Sea islands disputed with Japan.

PHOTO: AFP

## ODDLY enough



## HUMAN!

AFP, New York

Walking, talking chimpanzees may be TV comedy gold but now three courts in New York are being asked to recognize four chimps as "legal persons" with fundamental rights.

The move would allow the animals to be released into sanctuaries where they could live out the reminder of their days in freedom, says the Nonhuman Rights Project behind the initiative.

On Monday it petitioned a court in Fulton County Court, New York State, in the name of Tommy, a chimpanzee held captive in a cage at a used trailer lot in nearby Gloversville.

The challenge is based on the principle of habeas corpus, which the petitioners said was used in New York and allowed slaves to challenge their status and establish their right to freedom.

Under habeas corpus, a person being held captive can petition a judge to have the captors explain why they think they have the right to hold that person.