

NEWS IN brief

Manjhi sworn in as Bihar CM

THE HINDU ONLINE
A new Bihar government headed by Jitan Ram Manjhi as the 32nd Chief Minister was sworn in yesterday following the resignation of Nitish Kumar. Governor DY Patil who administered the oath to Manjhi and 17 ministers at a function at Raj Bhawan directed the new government to seek a trust vote on the floor of the House on

Balkans floods death toll hits 49

AFP, Belgrade
Serbia declared three days of national mourning yesterday as the death toll from the worst floods to hit the Balkans in living memory rose to 49 and health officials warned of a possible epidemic by the worst floods in central Europe for more than a century. Weather officials warned that water levels of the mighty Danube could rise further today at its confluence with the Sava in the Serbian capital Belgrade.

Train collision near Moscow kills 5; 45 hurt

AFP, Moscow
At least five people were killed and 45 injured yesterday after parts of a freight train derailed and collided with a passenger train south of Moscow, officials said. The emergency ministry said the accident occurred at 1:00pm local time near the town of Naro-Fominsk, about 80 kilometres southwest of Moscow, as the passenger train was travelling from the Russian capital to Moldova's capital Chisinau. The cause of the accident was not immedi-

Man jailed for 25 yrs for Obama ricin plot

AFP, Washington
A Mississippi man who concocted and then sent potentially lethal ricin-laced letters to President Barack Obama and other senior US officials was jailed Monday for 25 years. James Everett Dutschke, a 41-year-old martial arts instructor, pleaded guilty in January to charges of developing and possessing ricin and mailing ricin-impregnated letters, including the one that threatened Obama, said the US Justice Department. Ricin is a biological agent and toxin which can be lethal in

Gunmen kill three cops in Egypt

AFP, Cairo
Gunmen travelling in a car yesterday opened fire on a group of Egyptian policemen outside Cairo's Al-Azhar university, killing three and wounding nine others, the interior ministry said. The attack comes just days ahead of a presidential election on May 26-27, which former army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi is expected to win. The number of attacks targeting policemen has risen since Sisi ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in

Abu Hamza guilty on US charges

AFP, New York
Jurors in the New York trial of British hate preacher Abu Hamza on Monday found him guilty of kidnapping and terrorism offenses. The former imam of the north London Finsbury Park mosque showed no reaction to the verdict, which carries a possible life sentence. He is to be sentenced September 9. The charges against him pre-dated the 9/11 attacks on New York and were over the 1998 abduction of 16 Western tourists in Yemen, four of whom were killed in a



Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) prime ministerial candidate Narendra Modi prostrates after arriving on the first step of the Parliament building in New Delhi, yesterday. India's prime minister-elect Narendra Modi choked back tears and promised to try to live up to expectations as he made his first visit to parliament since his sweeping election victory.

PHOTO: AFP

Talks on over next Indian cabinet

No consensus on Advani; Rajnath tipped for home, Jaitley for finance

AFP, New Delhi

The BJP leadership made some progress in settling top slots in the next Indian government with party chief Rajnath Singh tipped to be the home minister while senior leader Arun Jaitley could be the next finance minister. While a degree of clarity is emerging on ministry formation, the BJP is yet to resolve its dilemma over veteran leader L K Advani as the leader's apparent inclination to be Lok Sabha Speaker is not finding many takers. The hunt for a suitably distinguished post for Advani has not met with much success and the party leadership is unclear how to define the saffron elder's role and work out an arrangement where he can be a mentor. With Rajnath and Jaitley expected to occupy two key slots in the cabinet committee on security (CCS), PM-designate Narendra Modi is still left with the tough task of filling the two other CCS slots, external affairs and defence. Sushma Swaraj, who was Leader of Opposition in the 15th Lok Sabha, is keen on a CCS berth, but there are doubts if Modi will be keen to accommodate her. Though Swaraj is certain to be offered an important portfolio — HRD and health were referred to — her lack of enthusiasm for Modi's PM candidature may have weakened her claim to a seat at the ministerial highest table. Among allies, LJP leader Ramvilas Paswan is certain to get an important portfolio, keeping in mind the assess-



L K Advani Arun Jaitley Rajnath Singh

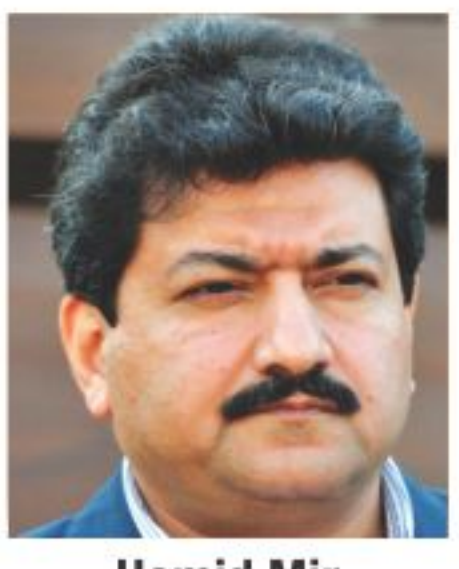
ment that the alliance helped the BJP gain a solid edge over rival RJD-Congress and JD(U). Modi held substantial discussions with Jaitley and BJP general secretary Amit Shah in Gujarat Bhawan where he is staying. Though Shah is not expected to join the government, he is likely to play a very major role in the new government's political management while also being a major influence in the BJP organization. The problem of a thin bench could be hampering Modi and BJP's top leaders in arriving at a decision on who should be external affairs and defence ministers. While the external affairs portfolio is closely aligned with PMO, defence needs a minister capable of rebooting stalled modernization plans and also displaying an appetite for strategic planning and geo-politics. There could, however, be a new element in Modi's approach to external affairs as he seems keen to reduce its bureaucratization and increase the trade and commerce element in foreign policy.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ISI Pakistan suspends 3 Geo TV channels

PTI, Islamabad

The licences of three television channels of the Geo TV network were suspended yesterday by Pakistan's electronic media watchdog for levelling allegations against the country's powerful spy agency ISI. The licences of Geo News, Geo Tez and Geo Entertainment have been suspended until May 28 by the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA), Mian Shams, a PEMRA member, told reporters. "The licences of these three channels have been suspended till May 28 when final decision will be taken about their future," said Shams. He said it was unanimously decided that the licence for Geo News be cancelled. However, due to a legal formality that could not be completed, the recommendations were sent to the Council of Complaints, advising that they respond before May 28, the date for the next meeting of PEMRA, Shams said. He said these channels have been

ordered to be taken off air and their offices will be sealed. However, it is not clear how the decision will be implemented as it was taken by private members only with government members of the PEMRA executive board not present in the meeting. State-run PTV quoted a PEMRA spokesman as saying that no meeting was held today and the reported meeting by some private members was "illegal". Last month, Pakistan's leading news anchor who works for Geo TV Hamid Mir, who narrowly escaped an assassination attempt, had said he faced threats from both non-state and state actors including the powerful spy agency ISI. Following the attack on Mir, Jang group which owns Geo TV had said, "We also want to bring it on the record that the ISI has been continuously and strongly complaining to our senior editors against some of our senior journalists, particularly against Hamid Mir. We will prove this and many other things at the proper time."



Hamid Mir

Maliki wins in Iraq polls

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki won by far the most seats in parliamentary elections, results showed, putting him in the driver's seat for a third term despite vocal opposition. His State of Law alliance fell short of an overall majority, however, meaning Maliki will have to court rivals, some of whom have refused to countenance his bid for re-election. Results from the election commission showed State of Law garnered 92 out of 328 parliamentary seats, with Maliki himself winning more than 721,000 personal votes. Both were by far the highest such figures from the April 30 vote -- the first since US troops withdrew from Iraq at the end of 2011 -- and marked significant increases on his performance in the 2010 general election.

Modi to resign from Gujarat CM post today

AGENCIES

Narendra Modi will put in his papers as Chief Minister of Gujarat today after heading the state for over 12 years. Modi, who was appointed prime minister of the country by President Pranab Mukherjee yesterday, will also resign as member of Gujarat Legislative Assembly. Modi, who has a packed schedule on Wednesday, will later attend a meeting of the BJP legislature party where his successor will be chosen. BJP has appointed senior leader Thavarchand Gehlot as observer for the exercise. The new chief minister is likely to take oath at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar tomorrow where Modi will also be present, Patel said. Modi has been the Chief Minister of Gujarat since October 7, 2001. Earlier, Modi choked back tears and promised to try to live up to expectations as he made his first visit to parliament since his sweeping election victory. The 63-year-old leader bowed and kissed the steps of the building as he entered for a meeting of his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies, later announcing that he would take the oath as prime minister on May 26th.



China, Russia eye multi-polar world

AFP, Shanghai

Chinese President Xi Jinping and visiting Russian leader Vladimir Putin pledged Tuesday to build ties between the two UN Security Council members, who both face international criticism and territorial disputes. Putin is visiting China for the first time since Xi took office last year to launch a week of joint naval exercises in the East China Sea and attend an Asian security summit. Russia's relations with the United States and European Union have plunged to a post-Cold War low in recent months over its seizure of Crimea and Western accusations that Moscow is fomenting unrest in the east of Ukraine. At the same time, Beijing is bickering with neighbours over maritime territorial disputes, including Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines. Xi, who called Putin "my old friend" as they met for talks in Shanghai, said building a strategic partnership was a necessary choice for developing a multi-polar world, the official Xinhua news agency reported. Putin called for boosting bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2015, up from nearly \$90 billion last year, through cooperation in the aviation, aerospace, manufacturing and energy sectors, Xinhua said. The two countries signed a "large" number of agreements, Xinhua said, but did not immediately offer details. Meanwhile, China and Russia started joint naval exercises off Shanghai yesterday. Beijing says a combined 14 surface ships from both countries will take part in the week-long drills in the East China Sea which are aimed at a "maritime threat" and include live-fire exercises. The exercises show "the unshakable determination and will of China and Russia to together face new threats and challenges to protect regional security and stability", Xi was quoted as saying by the government-backed China News Service. Putin said he hoped "the two militaries can strengthen cooperation under the new situation", it added.

WANTED BY THE FBI

Conspiring to Commit Computer Fraud; Accessing a Computer Without Authorization for the Purpose of Commercial Advantage and Private Financial Gain; Damaging Computers Through the Transmission of Code and Commands; Aggravated Identity Theft; Economic Espionage; Theft of Trade Secrets



Huang Zhenyu Wen Xinyu Sun Kailiang Gu Chunhui Wang Dong

US charges China officials over cyber-espionage

Beijing accuses US of 'hypocrisy', summons US ambassador

AFP, Beijing

Beijing summoned the US ambassador and accused Washington of double standards yesterday as a diplomatic row escalated over the unprecedented indictment of five Chinese military officers for cyber-espionage. The world's top two economies have long been at loggerheads over hacking and China's defence ministry denounced Washington's allegations as "a pure fabrication by the US, a move to mislead the public based on ulterior motives". "From 'WikiLeaks' to the 'Snowden' case, US hypocrisy and double standards regarding the issue of cyber-security have long been abundantly clear," the ministry said in a statement on its website. China also summoned US ambassador Max Baucus to lodge a "solemn representation" over the indictment, suspended cooperation with the US on cyber-security issues and banned the use of Microsoft's Windows 8 operating system on all new government computers.

Beijing's furious response came one day after the US charged five members of a shadowy Chinese military unit with allegedly hacking US companies for trade secrets. In the first-ever prosecution of state actors over cyber-espionage, a federal grand jury indicted the five on charges they broke into US computers to benefit Chinese state-owned companies, leading to job losses in the US in the steel, solar and other industries. Cyber-spying has long been a major sticking point in relations but Washington's move marked a major escalation in the dispute. Analysts said the US was unlikely to be able to put the men on trial but the indictments were an attempt to apply public pressure on China over the issue. The grand jury indicted each of the five on 31 counts, which each carry up to 15 years in prison. US Attorney General Eric Holder called on China to hand over the men for trial in Pittsburgh and said the United States would use "all the means that are available to us" should it refuse.



People walk past Thai army soldiers sitting in a jeep mounted with a machine gun as they secure a main intersection in Bangkok, yesterday. Thailand's army declared martial law across the deeply divided kingdom yesterday to restore order after months of deadly anti-government protests, deploying armed troops in the capital but insisting the move was "not a coup".

PHOTO: AFP

100 arrests in global hacker takedown

AFP, New York

Police across Europe and North America have arrested nearly 100 people over a global scam that allowed hackers to infect 500,000 computers, steal data and demand ransom money. An online business known as Blackshades sold thousands of cybercriminals the malware called RAT (Remote Access Tools) for as little as \$40, US officials said Monday. It allowed hackers to access private photographs, passwords, spy on victims through webcams, lock data and then send out "ransom notes" to extort money. The FBI said Blackshades generated sales of \$350,000 between September 2010 and April 2014.

'ILLEGAL' OVERSEAS ASSETS Court summons Pak PM Sharif

DPA, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday summoned Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and more than two dozen other politicians to explain assets allegedly maintained outside the country. The High Court in central Punjab province ordered the premier and 25 others, including former president Asif Ali Zardari to appear before next month. Judge Khalid Mehmood Khan said the court wanted to know if they had transferred the money from Pakistan illegally. The court order came weeks after Finance Ministry said it would take steps to repatriate about 200 billion dollars illegally held in Swiss banks by Pakistanis. Economic Minister Ishaq Dar said the government had already initiated the process with Switzerland's authorities under a 2010 Swiss law known as the Restitution of Illicit Assets Act.

