

NEWS IN brief

Military plane crash kills 4 in Spain

At least four people were killed when an Airbus A400M military plane crashed near Spain's southern Seville airport during a training flight, the first fatal accident involving the new transport craft. Andalusia's regional prefect Antonio Sanz said a burnt body had been found in the wreckage, bringing the death toll to four. Previously a spokeswoman for emergency services had said "there are at least three dead and two

N Korea tests submarine missile

North Korea yesterday said it has successfully tested a submarine-launched missile, which if confirmed would be a significant boost in its arsenal. Analysts say North Korea has several nuclear warheads but this development would be an advance as submarine-fired devices are difficult to detect. This latest test has not been independently verified. The US said using ballistic missiles was a "clear violation" of UN sanctions

Australia police foil alleged terror plot

Australian police yesterday said they had foiled an alleged terror bomb plot reportedly planned for Mother's Day, arresting a Melbourne teenager and detonating three suspected explosive devices. Australian Federal Police (AFP) and their Victoria state counterparts raided a home in the north Melbourne suburb of Greenvale on Friday, arresting and charging a 17-year-

Baltimore cops face civil rights probe

The US Department of Justice launched a federal civil rights investigation Friday into whether police in Baltimore have systematically discriminated against residents, after the death of an African-American man in police custody. The death of 25-year-old Freddie Gray, who succumbed to a serious spinal injury suffered while in the back of a police van last month, sparked violent unrest. Six police officers have been charged in connection with his arrest and death.

Shebab militants kill Somali lawmaker

Islamic militants have claimed responsibility for the assassination of a member of parliament on Friday in the semi-autonomous northern Somalia state of Puntland. Lawmaker Said Hussein Nur was shot dead as he left a mosque after



RUSSIA SHOWS MILITARY MIGHT AT VICTORY DAY PARADE

These pictures were taken during the Victory Day parade at Red Square in Moscow, Russia, yesterday to marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War Two in Europe. In what is seen as punishment for Kremlin meddling in Ukraine, Western countries led by Russia's World War II allies have boycotted the festivities, leaving Putin to mark the day in the company of the leaders of China, India, Cuba and other Moscow-friendly figures. Addressing thousands of foreign guests and veterans, Russian President Vladimir Putin chose to ignore the boycott, thanking Britain, France and the US for their "contribution" to the defeat of Germany.



PHOTO: AFP



Britain in new era after 'shock' polls

Press predicts Cameron's toughest fight yet to come despite emphatic win

Britain was adjusting to a new political landscape yesterday after a shock election victory for Prime Minister David Cameron that decapitated the opposition and bolstered secessionists in Scotland.

While Cameron spent the weekend drawing up his first all-Conservative cabinet, the Scottish National Party (SNP) was celebrating its seismic gains, insisting it would not be sidelined in the new parliament.

Despite pollsters predicting he would lose ground in Thursday's vote, Cameron's Conservatives won 331 of the 650 seats in parliament, giving him a second term in office -- this time with a majority for his centre-right party.

While there were dramatic gains for the Conservatives and the Scottish National Party (SNP), the opposition was left in disarray after the Labour and Liberal Democrat leaders quit over their party's drubbings.

However, the Conservative centre-right prime minister's second term in office is set to be much tougher than his first, despite winning a surprise majority in parliament, Britain's newspapers warned.

The victory gives the Conservatives a freer hand than in Cameron's previous government -- a coalition with the Liberal Democrats -- but the slender majority leaves them prey to rebellion from within their own ranks.

The Times said Cameron would need "every ounce of statesmanship" to surmount the challenges facing him. "His majority is slim and using it will not be easy. His real work starts now."

Cameron had already agreed to hold an in-out referendum on Britain's European Union membership by 2017 due to pressure from the Conservative right wing and a rising UKIP and he was quick to confirm his pledge on Friday.

There is growing concern in the business community about the referendum, even though Cameron has said he will campaign to stay in as long as he can negotiate reforms to cut down on EU migrants moving to Britain.

Cameron will also face a tough battle to keep Scotland in the United Kingdom and in a post-election speech pledged to grant sweeping new local powers.

Cameron has kept his top four main ministers in place and boosted the nominal power of his finance minister George Osborne, but was spending the weekend drawing up names for the remaining ministries.

Nepal to rebuild property within two years, says PM

Admits lapses in disaster preparedness; death toll hits 7,912

PTI, Kathmandu

Nepal will reconstruct all private and public properties destroyed by the devastating earthquake within two years, Prime Minister Sushil Koirala said as he called on citizens, neighbouring countries and migrant workers to lend their helping hands to the government.

A National Reconstruction Fund of Rs 200 billion would be mobilised to reconstruct the structures that were destroyed by the powerful 7.8-magnitude tremor two weeks ago, Koirala said addressing the Parliament on Friday.

Presenting the reconstruction programme endorsed by the Cabinet, he said damaged facilities and services such as schools and colleges, health centres, water supply, electricity and government offices would be restored within two years.

Religious, archaeological and cultural sites would be reconstructed in five years, Koirala said as he called on all Nepalis, neighbouring countries, migrant workers and political parties including the opposition to lend helping hands to the government in the reconstruction effort.

"No Nepali will be left homeless and let fall victim to

malnutrition. Let's unite to confront the national disaster, seizing this opportunity for transformation," he said.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the country's worst disaster in over 80 years rose to 7,912 yesterday, while the number of injured stands at 16,037, according to Nepal Police.

Nearly 2,90,000 buildings were completely destroyed and 2,50,000 were partially damaged in the quake.

The government admitted several lapses in disaster preparedness and rescue and relief operations though rescue and relief support poured in from different countries, My Republica reported.

Addressing a parliamentary meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister Bamdev Gautam said: "The disaster was beyond our expectations and unprecedented in scale. So our efforts could not meet the expectations of quake victims on time."

The government was well aware of the high risk of earthquakes but lacked an adequate number of experts, technology and the skilled manpower for deployment in the field, he said, adding that at the same time it could not make prompt demands from other countries about the requirements.

DEATH TOLL 7,912



Pakistani soldiers carry the coffins of the wife of the Malaysian ambassador and the Norwegian ambassador Leif H Larsen during a ceremony in Gilgit, yesterday. The Pakistani government said they are investigating what caused the military helicopter to crash, killing seven people including several foreign diplomats, as flags flew at half mast on a national day of mourning.

PHOTO: AFP



Mubarak, sons get 3 years jail for graft

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian court sentenced ousted president Hosni Mubarak and his two sons to three years in prison yesterday after a retrial for embezzlement.

Mubarak and his sons Alaa and Gamal were present in the caged dock, wearing suits and sunglasses. Mubarak's lawyers may try to appeal the verdict.

They had already been sentenced to three years on the same charges but an appeal court overturned the original verdict.

It was not immediately clear whether the sentencing took into account time served. The three had all been arrested in 2011, months after Mubarak was toppled in a popular 18-day uprising after three decades in power.

Mubarak waved at his supporters in the benches before the judge read his verdict.

He and his sons were also fined 125 million pounds (\$16 million) -- the amount they were accused of embezzling from funds meant for the maintenance of presidential palaces.

They also have to give back 21 million pounds, the court ruled.

Before the verdict, Mubarak and his sons had been free men after their pretrial detention period expired.

Mubarak, who turned 87 this month, was cleared of charges in another trial over the deaths of protesters during the uprising in January and February 2011.

Miliband's 'tombstone' goes missing in UK

AFP, London

The hunt was on across Britain yesterday to find the defeated Labour Party's much-derided giant monolith bearing their election pledges carved in stone.

Ed Miliband, who quit as opposition Labour leader on Friday following the Conservatives' general election triumph, unveiled the tablet of stone on May 3, with six rock-solid commitments written on it.

The 2.6-metre-high monument was quickly dubbed the Ed Stone, the Millstone, the Policy Cenotaph and Miliband's political tombstone, with newspapers comparing the Labour leader to Moses and the Ten Commandments.

Conservative London Mayor Boris Johnson branded the grey limestone slab the "heaviest suicide note in history".

The monolith was to have been erected in glory in the Downing Street garden following Thursday's election -- but has now vanished. The Labour Party added to the mystery by refusing to discuss the stone at all.

It was unveiled in a car park in Hastings on the southern English coast. Britain's newspapers are on the trail: the Daily Mail is offering a case of champagne for information leading to the discovery of the Ed Stone. The Sun has opened a hotline.

Maoist guerillas take 250 villagers hostage in India

AFP, Raipur

Indian Maoist rebels took 250 villagers hostage in restive Chhattisgarh just hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi toured the central state yesterday, officials said.

Guerillas abducted the villagers late Friday in Sukma district, 80 kilometres away from where the right-wing Modi later addressed a public rally, said the state's chief minister.

"250 villagers have been abducted by the Maoists. We are trying our best to secure their release," Raman Singh said without giving further details.

Lawmaker Kawashi Lakma told AFP that the rebels grabbed locals from Morenga village and took them through deep forests to a nearby hill.

"The Maoists had been opposing the construction of a bridge on one of the rivers because they felt it would give the security forces easy access to their hideouts," said Kawashi Lakma.

"We have sent some people to negotiate with them." The abduction is the latest incident in a long-running conflict that pits the insur-

36 killed, 40 escapes in Iraq jail break

AFP, Baghdad

Six guards and 30 detainees were killed in a prison break north of the Iraqi capital during which 40 inmates escaped, an interior ministry spokesman said yesterday.

The spokesman said the break on Friday started when an inmate grabbed a weapon from a warden at the prison on the main police compound in Khalis, a town around 50 kilometres from Baghdad.

"One of the prisoners seized a weapon from a guard. After killing him, the inmate headed up to the weapons storage and he seized more weapons," Brigadier General Saad Maan told AFP.

"Clashes erupted inside. We lost a first lieutenant and five policemen, forty prisoners fled," he said.

US put Jazeera journo on terror list: Report

AFP, Washington

US authorities placed an Al Jazeera journalist on a watch list of suspected terrorists, linking him to al-Qaeda, a report said Friday, citing documents provided by former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

The online news site The Intercept said Al Jazeera's Islamabad bureau chief, Ahmad Muaffaq Zaidan, was on a terror watch list, and was described in the National Security Agency documents as "a member" of both al-Qaeda and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Zaidan told The Intercept he "absolutely" denied being part of the organizations, while noting that he had through his work conducted interviews with senior al-Qaeda leaders including Osama bin Laden.

Responding to the report, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said it was "deeply troubled" by the allegations.

"Coloring the legitimate newsgathering activities of a respected journalist as evidence of international terrorism risks chilling the vital work of the media, especially in Pakistan where journalists routinely interview Taliban and other militant groups as part of their coverage," said Bob Dietz, the committee's Asia program coordinator.

According to The Intercept, Zaidan was cited in the documents to highlight a program called SkyNet, which analyzes location and communication data from bulk call records in order to detect suspicious patterns.

Liberia Ebola free: WHO

AFP, Monrovia

The UN health agency yesterday declared Liberia Ebola-free, hailing the "monumental" achievement in the west African country where the virus has killed more than 4,700 people.

The World Health Organization said that 42 days had passed since the last confirmed case was buried.