

NEWS IN
briefThai lese majeste
detainee dies

AFP, Bangkok

A famous Thai fortune teller charged with royal defamation has died in military custody, officials said yesterday, the second time in weeks a person caught up in a shadowy palace intrigue probe has been found dead while in detention. Thai authorities said Surian Surcharitpolwong died of a blood infection on Saturday evening.

Britain can survive
outside EU: Cameron

AFP, London

Britain can survive outside the European Union, Prime Minister David Cameron said yesterday as he denied he was planning to campaign for Britain to stay in the EU regardless of the outcome of reform talks. "The argument isn't whether Britain could survive outside of Europe. Of course it could," Cameron told the annual conference of the Confederation of British Industry, the country's main business lobby.

Egypt military detains
activist journalist

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian military prosecutors yesterday ordered the detention of investigative journalist and rights activist Hossam Bahgat on suspicion of publishing false information, the news site for which he works said. The Mada Masr website said Bahgat, 37, was ordered detained for four days for questioning on suspicion of "spreading false news aimed at harming national interests."

Jakarta plans crocodile-
guarded prison island

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesia's anti-drugs agency has proposed building a prison on an island guarded by crocodiles to hold death row drug convicts, an official said yesterday, an idea that wouldn't be out of place in a James Bond film. The proposal is the pet project of anti-drugs chief Budi Waseso, who plans to visit various parts of the archipelago in his search for fierce reptiles to guard the jail.

Jordan policeman kills
2 US instructors

AFP, Amman

A Jordanian policeman yesterday shot dead two US instructors and a South African before being gunned down at a police training centre east of the capital, a government spokesman said. Mohammed Momani said the assailant also wounded two other American instructors and four Jordanians before he was shot dead by police colleagues at the centre in Al-Mowayer, 30 kilometres from Amman.

Lanka minister
quits over arms
scandal

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's police minister resigned yesterday following allegations he tried to shield a private security firm under investigation for gun running and money laundering.

Law and Order Minister Tilak Marapana said he quit to protect the government of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe who was under intense pressure from cabinet colleagues to sack him.

Marapana told parliament last week the security firm had not committed wrong doing, despite an ongoing probe into the discovery of two floating armoured cars run by the company off Sri Lanka's southern coast.



STRONG START FOR SUU KYI'S PARTY

Myanmar opposition leader Suu Kyi applauds while delivering her speech from the balcony of the National League of Democracy headquarters in Yangon yesterday. Inset, a Buddhist monk reads a newspaper as another browses his smartphone in Yangon for official results. NLD won 49 of the parliamentary seats declared in the first round of results after Sunday's general election.

PHOTO: AFP

REFUGEE DEATH
Unrest hits Aussie
migrant centre

AFP, Sydney

Detainees set buildings alight and armed themselves with baseball bats in a riot at an Australian immigration facility on Christmas Island, people at the centre said yesterday, with officials admitting the situation was out of control.

The disturbance at the Indian Ocean island centre comes after the unexplained death of an escaped asylum-seeker.

Detainees have complained about their treatment at the facility, which currently houses 203 men, among them asylum-seekers awaiting processing and non-citizens being deported because they have criminal convictions.

"Order or control hasn't been regained within the centre," Immigration Minister Peter Dutton told Sky News.

He added that no injuries had been listed, no damage been done to the perimeter fence and no one had tried to escape.

The Department for Immigration and Border Protection described the incident as a "major disturbance" but denied there was a large scale riot.

"There is currently no large scale 'riot' involving the majority of the centre's population... but the centre remains tense and staff have been withdrawn from compounds for safety reasons," a department statement said.

US concerned by 'far
from perfect' vote

AFP, Washington

The United States welcomed Myanmar's landmark election Sunday, but warned of "important structural and systemic impediments" to full democratization in the Southeast Asian nation after decades of military rule.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said the massive turnout, which could see opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party catapulted to power, was a "testament to the courage and sacrifice shown by the people of Burma over many decades."

But "while these elections were an important step forward, we recognize that they were far from perfect," Kerry added.

"There remain important structural and systemic impediments to the realization of full democratic and civilian government."

The top US diplomat pointed to a large

number of unelected seats reserved for the military, the disfranchisement of minorities such as Rohingya Muslims and the "arbitrary" disqualification of certain candidates.

"We must also acknowledge significant flaws and challenges that will need to be addressed going forward," said Washington's United Nations envoy, Samantha Power, as she urged calm in the post-election period.

"These are fundamental issues of fairness and inclusivity."

Millions of people cast their ballots for the first time in a quarter of a century, in an event heavy with history and filled with emotion. Early indications were of an 80 percent turnout.

"We will continue to watch the vote counting process, and encourage all parties to help ensure the tabulation is transparent and credible and any complaints are addressed promptly, transparently and appropriately," Kerry said.

He was detained at 1:00am after which he was in the FSB headquarters, where they insistently asked him whose death he wanted, she said.

"He told them 'What are you saying? I don't want anyone's death,'" she said.

Chavdar said it was unclear what charges Pavlensky could face but suggested "they could charge him with arson", for which he could be imprisoned for up to five years.

"I think it will be a criminal case, everything points to that. It's hard to say what charge: anything can happen in our country," the lawyer said.

In his statement, Pavlensky accused the FSB of "terrorism" and said that "the threat of inevitable reprisals hangs over everyone within the range of security cameras, phone-tapping and passport control borders."

He called the act a "reflex to fight for my own life."

Two journalists who watched were questioned before being released, reported the Dozhd independent channel, whose journalist was at the scene.

Pavlensky in 2013 stripped naked and nailed his scrotum to the cobblestones of Red Square to protest against tight police control. The case was eventually closed due to the lack of any crime.

He has been charged with vandalism and faces up to three years in jail for another performance called Freedom, held in Saint Petersburg last year.

'Results not a mandate
to disrupt parliament'

TNN, New Delhi

The government yesterday reminded the opposition that the victory of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar's assembly polls should not be used as ammunition to 'obstruct' the upcoming Winter Session of Parliament, because the results reflect the aspirations of the state's people and not the nation's.

"We will do a detailed analysis of the outcome, but all concerned need to understand that the Bihar verdict needs to be taken in the right perspective. To interpret the results as mandate to disrupt Parliament is questioning the wisdom of people of the state," said parliamentary affairs minister M Venkaiah Naidu in an interaction with the media, after a meeting of the cabinet committee on parliamentary affairs.

The minister said the BJP respects the verdict of the people of Bihar.

"The verdict is a clear statement of Bihar's aspirations as their develop-

Soul-searching
begins for BJP

NDTV ONLINE

Indian financial markets took a fright yesterday at the humiliating defeat suffered in the pivotal Bihar election by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party, whose leaders have begun meeting amid calls for a rethink of policies and priorities.

The PM will meet nearly a dozen senior colleagues of the BJP, including its president Amit Shah, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and Home Minister Rajnath Singh.

"We have to identify what went wrong," said Ram Madhav, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) general secretary.

Some BJP lawmakers have called now for the party to refocus on a more unifying agenda focusing on economic development after a campaign that used rhetoric in Bihar and was accused of attempting to polarise voters along caste and religious lines. "We have to be single minded focused on development, development, development," said Chandan Mitra, a BJP member of parliament. "We can't afford to be distracted by anything else."

He brought amaranth leaves to the Rayerbazar wholesale vegetable market on Saturday afternoon for selling. He sold each bundle at Tk 3.

Last week he sold it at Tk 5.

"Winter vegetables have grown well due to favourable weather," Shahabuddin said, adding that he suffered losses as excessive monsoon rain damaged his crop three times this year.

Winter vegetables account for nearly 70 percent of our annual vegetables production which amounts to nearly 1.42 crore tonnes in Bangladesh, according to Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

FH Ansarey, executive director of Agribusiness division of ACI, linked increased output to availability of seed, fall in crop duration, improved agro-ecological practices by farmers and use of growth promoter.

"Vegetables are grown in shorter periods now than before," he said.

Mo h a m m a d Shahabuddin, 60, grows vegetables all the year round in Keraniganj. He began to harvest leafy vegetables just two weeks after sowing the seeds.

Once it required 60-90 days to grow vegetables

NEPAL FUEL CRISIS
Domestic flights to
be cancelled

AP, Kathmandu

Airlines in Nepal have been forced to cancel more than half of their domestic flights because of an ongoing fuel shortage, an official said yesterday.

More than 70 percent of domestic flights were cancelled Sunday and about half were cancelled yesterday, said Utsav Raj Kharel, the manager of Kathmandu's airport.

International flights were operating on a normal schedule because they are required to fill their tanks before flying to Nepal.

Passengers were stranded by the cancelled flights in Kathmandu, the capital, and other cities. About 2,000 passengers a day normally fly in and out of Kathmandu's airport on domestic routes.

For weeks, members of the Madhesi ethnic community protest-

ing Nepal's new constitution have blocked the southern border with India, preventing fuel and other essential items from entering the country.

India, which has close cultural ties with the Madhesis, has also restricted fuel supplies to Nepal, which relies on its giant neighbour for most of its fuel.

Nepal has struck a deal with a private supplier to fly in fuel from Bangladesh to ease crippling shortages that have sparked fears of domestic flights being grounded.

"We have reached an agreement with a private company, Petromax Nepal, who will air-lift ATF (aviation turbine fuel) from Bangladesh in the next three to four days," said Mukunda Ghimire, a spokesman for Nepal Oil Corporation on Sunday.

whereas now farmers can harvest the same vegetable crops in 50-60 days, he said.

"Consumers also eat more vegetables now than in the past. It has encouraged farmers to grow more," he said.

Mitul Kumar Saha, assistant general manager (Supply & Value Chain, Marketing, R&D) of Hortex Foundation, said, "Dhaka requires 4,000-4,500 tonnes of vegetables a day."

He also said, "The challenge is to ensure quality and safety. Growers should be made aware of good agricultural practices from land preparation to harvesting. It is also necessary to make them aware of sorting and washing."

Chaitanya Kumar Das, director of Field Services Wing of Department of Agricultural Extension, said harvest of winter vegetables would hit its peak from the second week of December.

'Medicine man'

FROM PAGE 16
means wise man.

Sharma is hopeful his unorthodox service is making a difference, albeit small, in a country where 65 percent of the population lacks regular access to essential medicines, according to the World Health Organisation.

In his trademark bright orange smock, Sharma cuts a familiar figure in Delhi's leafy neighbourhoods, and residents routinely carry out handfuls of medicines for him.

"This idea struck me a few years back when I saw how the poor struggled to buy medicines. When I first started, I was ridiculed and called a beggar but now people respect what I am doing," he said.

Medical treatment is free in Indian government-funded hospitals, but drug supplies at their dispensaries run out, forcing patients to fork out for medicines at

nearby chemists.

At his rundown Delhi home, Sharma painstakingly checks and sorts his haul that includes everything from calcium tablets to antibiotics, before the queues form outside.

"Some medicines have to be stocked in the fridge, so I have to be very careful," said Sharma, a retired blood bank technician. "All these medicines lying here are worth more than two million rupees (\$30,864)."

India spends just 1.3 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) on health, according to a 2013 World Bank report, lower than war-torn Afghanistan on 1.7 percent.

"The health care costs have increased greatly over the years," said doctor S L Jain, as he examined a newborn at his charity clinic that receives some of Sharma's medicines.

"So many people do not seek treatment simply

because they do not have the money to pay for medicines," he said as mothers line up clutching their sick babies.

With her carpenter husband earning just 5,000 rupees (\$77) a month, mother-of-four Pushpa Kamal fears for the future of her family as she waits at the clinic for treatment.

"My youngest son has asthma. He needs regular medication. The other kids also fall sick. Tell me how can I afford to buy so many medicines each time?"

India's generic drugs industry is a major supplier to the world of cheap, life-saving treatments for diabetes, hypertension, cancer and other diseases.

But experts say even these are out of reach of many of the 363 million Indians living below the poverty line, who make up about 30 percent of the country's mammoth population.

Welcome, winter

FROM PAGE 16

green chilli, radish, bean, cucumber and other items are also on the wane, thanks to favourable weather that boosted production of leafy and other sorts of winter vegetables.

The surrounding areas of Dhaka -- Savar, Keraniganj, Dhamrai, Manikganj, Tangail, Narisingdi and Munshiganj -- now meet up to 70 percent of the capital's demand for leafy vegetables and up to 50 percent for other winter vegetables, said Lokman.

Around 450 trucks and covered vans loaded with vegetables enter Karwan Bazar kitchen market every day. Of them, 100-150 are from greater Dhaka and the neighbouring districts, he said.

"Once we were highly dependent on northern districts for supply of leafy vegetables. But farming and production has increased in surrounding areas of Dhaka in recent

years. It has allowed city dwellers to get winter vegetables earlier nowadays than in the past," Lokman said.

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