

BIHAR POLLS DEBACLE

BJP veterans chide party leadership

AGENCIES

Two days after the BJP suffered a shocking defeat in Bihar, the veterans in the party have hit out at the leadership.

A joint statement by LK Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Shanta Kumar and Yashwant Sinha has sought a thorough review of the BJP's defeat in Bihar assembly elections, stating that the party failed to learn lessons from the fiasco in Delhi assembly elections.

"No lesson has been learnt from the fiasco in Delhi. To say that everyone is responsible for the defeat is to ensure that no one is held responsible. The principal reason for the latest defeat is the way the party has been emasculated in the last year," it said.

The statement also said that "the consensual character of the party has been destroyed because the party is being kow tow to a few".

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had, after a meeting of its parliamentary board said that the party took collective responsibility for the loss. Jaitley had also ruled out the resignation of party chief Amit Shah after the loss.

The statement by party elders however is clearly targeted at those running the affairs of the BJP especially Shah and his rather abrupt style of leadership.

The statement is likely to shake things up in the party, as organisational polls are underway.

Analysts said the failure will embolden the opposition and increase concern among some in Narendra Modi's own party over his once-charmed ability to deliver at the ballot box.

The defeat is also a setback to his plans to push major economic reforms through the national parliament where his BJP lacks a majority.



In this photo taken late Monday, a National League for Democracy (NLD) supporter reacts as others gather beside a large screen showing early election results outside the NLD party office in Mandalay. NLD appeared on the verge of a landslide election win yesterday that could finally reset Myanmar after decades of army control, as a top member of the ruling party said they had "lost completely".

PHOTO: AFP

Dead NLD candidate wins seat in polls

THE INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Aung San Suu Kyi appears set for a landslide victory in the Burmese elections, as the latest results showed victories for her National League for Democracy across regional and national levels.

So sweeping was support for the NLD that a candidate for the Sagaing regional parliament was voted in by an overwhelming majority - despite dying two days earlier.

U Soe Myint, the NLD's candidate for Myinmu Constituency 1 in the largely rural north-western region, was reportedly singing the party's song when he suffered a heart attack on Friday.

The 54-year-old was believed to have high cholesterol, the party said in a statement, though it was not known whether he suffered from heart disease.

Khin Maung Thein, the NLD's candidate for the Sagaing lower house, told Myanmar Eleven the incident "does not affect our overall campaign".

It was reportedly too late to replace the candidate or remove him from the ballot, and he went on to win the seat posthumously. The seat is expected to be taken up by the candidate for the military-backed USDP, however, who received the second-largest number of votes.

Here's what we know so far about the election and what it means for the nascent democracy.

WHO WON?

Right now it's hard to say unequivocally, as full results aren't in. But from the few seats declared, Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party is sweeping the board. Her party has won 78 of the 88 seats announced so far in the lower house, which has a total of 323 seats up for grabs. The NLD is also dominating many regional parliamentary seats -- 142 out of 162 declared so far -- which could give them significant influence over important local authorities. There are a total of 652 regional parliamentary seats to fill.

WILL THE NLD FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT?

At the current rate of results, it cer-

tainly looks like it. Under Myanmar's complicated 2008 military-crafted constitution, the NLD needs to take at least 67 percent of seats in both the lower and upper houses to form a government. In a BBC interview yesterday, Suu Kyi said she believed the NLD were on track to take 75 percent of seats, which would push her party well over the 67 percent threshold. CHALLENGES AHEAD Firstly, Suu Kyi can't be president -- she is currently forbidden from taking the top spot under the constitution, which bans those with foreign children. Her two sons are British. Secondly, even if she forms a majority, any major constitutional reform is going to be very difficult. The army bloc within the legislature can effectively veto any changes to the charter. That means a Suu Kyi presidency remains a distant prospect -- an obstruction the power-

house politician cryptically vowed to circumnavigate by being "above the president". A third issue is that the military still holds other constitutional cards, including the top security posts at the home, defence and border affairs ministries. HOW WILL THE PRESIDENT BE CHOSEN? Myanmar's president is directly elected by the legislature. Once the new parliament is up and running, electing the new president can begin, some time around February or March 2016. The lower and upper houses will each put forward a candidate, as will the military bloc. The whole parliament then votes on the three -- the winner becomes president and the losers vice presidents. Even if the NLD's chosen candidate wins, he or she will likely have at least one military-backed vice president.

MYANMAR ELECTION WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR

'I rule out nothing' Cameron says there will be no second referendum as he sets out conditions for EU membership

AGENCIES

David Cameron has said there will be no second vote on Britain's membership of the EU, as he revealed he will ask European leaders for a "clear, legally binding and irreversible commitment" that Britain will no longer be part of a push for "ever-closer union".

Speaking in a keynote address setting out his plans for the renegotiation of the UK's role in Europe, Cameron said the referendum on EU membership was "perhaps the biggest decision in our lifetime".

The Prime Minister said he wanted to establish "a British model of membership" for members of the EU who are not in the Euro, giving them a clear promise so that they do not become "rule-takers instead of rule-makers".

Cameron said there would be "no second referendum" once Britain has voted. "This choice cannot be undone, if we vote to leave then we will leave," he said.

"This is our only chance to get this right, for Britain and for the whole European Union."

The prime minister hinted at a referendum date at the very end of 2017, but said he would not reveal exactly when a vote would be held until he had completed his renegotiations.

Setting out his reforms, Cameron said the UK was a "proud, independent nation" which made decisions "with its head, not its heart".

Denying that he had embarked on "mission impossible", the Prime Minister said he had learned "how much Britain can gain from its membership of the EU".

Cameron said: "I do not deny that seeking the agreement of 27 nations is a difficult task. But an impossible one? I do not believe it."

"The EU has a record of solving intractable problems, it can solve this one too."

The Prime Minister said he had "come up with a carefully-crafted package" for Britain to get the most out of the EU.

The European Commission yesterday said Cameron's EU renegotiation demands on curbs for migrant benefits are "highly problematic".

"We see a number of elements that seem to be feasible like finding ways to increase the role of national parliaments, some issues which are difficult like the relation between euro ins and outs," Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said.

"And some things which are highly problematic as they touch upon fundamental freedoms of our internal market. Direct discrimination between EU citizens clearly falls in this category," he added.



CAMERON'S EU DEMANDS

OBJECTIVE 1: "Protect the single market for others outside the eurozone."

GOAL: A new EU treaty to stop the 19 members in the eurozone ganging up on the nine "outs", including the UK, on EU-wide decisions.

CHANCES OF SUCCESS: Reasonable. In return, the UK will allow the eurozone countries to integrate further.

OBJECTIVE 2: "Write competitiveness into the DNA of the whole EU."

GOAL: To cut the overall burden of EU regulation on business.

CHANCES OF SUCCESS: Good. The European Commission is already moving this way. But any UK demands to dilute workers' rights could lose Labour and trade union support in the referendum.

OBJECTIVE 3: "Exempt Britain from 'ever closer union' - and bolster national parliaments."

GOAL: Legally binding and irreversible changes to allow a group of national parliaments to join forces to block proposed EU laws.

CHANCES OF SUCCESS: Reasonable. But will not satisfy Eurosceptics.

OBJECTIVE 4: "Tackle abuses of the right to free movement, and enable us to control migration from the EU."

GOAL: EU migrants who want to claim tax credits and child benefit should first live in the UK for a minimum of four years.

CHANCES OF SUCCESS: Slim. Eastern European countries say this would amount to discrimination, breaching EU free movement rules.



Russia to deliver S-300 missile systems to Iran

US air force secretary says war on IS needs 'boots on ground'

AFP, Moscow

Russia announced Monday that it has agreed to push on with a deal to deliver S-300 missile systems to Iran after Moscow halted an earlier agreement due to UN sanctions slapped on Tehran.

"The contract between Russia and Iran for delivery of S-300 missile systems is back in force," the state-run Russian Technologies corporation said in a statement, adding that the two sides had "signed a contract".

Moscow in April lifted a ban on selling the missile systems to Iran, ahead of Tehran sealing a final historic deal with world powers in July to curb its nuclear programme.

The decision sparked condemnation from Israel and concern from Washington, as it came before the lifting of the sanctions by the UN Security Council.

Moscow blocked deliveries of the surface-to-air missiles to Tehran in 2010 after the UN Security Council imposed the curbs on Iran over its nuclear programme barring hi-tech weapons sales.

Moscow says it has now offered Tehran more modern versions of the weapons but has yet to announce publicly when they will be delivered.

Russia and Iran are allied over their back-

ing for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, with both sides helping regime forces fighting on the ground.

Meanwhile, the US air force secretary yesterday said the air campaign against the Islamic State group has made progress in degrading the jihadist organisation but will not be enough without local boots on the ground.

The comments from Deborah Lee



James come just days after Pentagon chief Ashton Carter raised the possibility of deploying additional US special forces personnel to Syria.

"Air power is extremely important. It can do a lot but it can't do everything," James said. "Ultimately it cannot occupy territory and very importantly it cannot govern territory," she told reporters at the Dubai Airshow.

'For a happier life, give up Facebook'

AFP, Copenhagen

Always envious? Got a non-existent social life and struggle to concentrate? All this might be down to Facebook if you believe a study showing those who go a week without using the social network feel happier than others.

Carried out by the Happiness Research Institute, the study involved a sample of 1,095 people in Denmark who were divided into two groups, half of whom continued using Facebook while the others stopped.

"We focused on Facebook because it is the social media that most people use across age groups," Meik Wiking, HRI's chief executive told AFP Tuesday in Copenhagen, the Danish capital.

After a week, those people who hadn't been on Facebook said they were more satisfied with their lives, with 88 percent of them describing themselves as "happy" compared with 81 percent from the second group. Facebook users are 39 percent more likely to feel less happy than non-users, the study says.



'ILLEGAL' IMMIGRATION IN US Court rules against Obama measures

AFP, Washington

A federal appeals court on Monday blocked measures announced by US President Barack Obama last year that give work permits and deportation protection to some four million undocumented migrants.

Obama issued decrees in November 2014 allowing people who illegally immigrated to the United States but whose children are legal residents, to remain in the country while their legal status is resolved and be allowed to work.

The measure affects more than four million people who would otherwise risk deportation.

Obama's measures however were quickly challenged by conservative governors of 26 US states, arguing that it was up to Congress, and not the president, to enact immigration reform.

A federal court in Texas in February ruled in their favor.

On Monday, in a 2-1 vote, the Fifth Circuit Appeals Court based in New Orleans ruled against an Obama administration request to overturn the February ruling.

There are nearly 12 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States. Republicans and Democrats agree that sweeping immigration reform is long overdue, but bitterly disagree on how to do it.

The White House yesterday said it will now take their case to the US Supreme Court. But it's unclear if a ruling can be issued before Obama leaves office in January 2017.

THAI HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE Hearing begins in court

BBC ONLINE

Thailand yesterday began a court hearing in a major people smuggling case involving 88 suspected human traffickers.

The suspects include an army general, senior police officers and local politicians.

The court hearing comes after an investigation into the trafficking of Bangladeshis and Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar through Thailand.

Several mass graves were discovered near the Thai-Malaysian border this year, sparking an international outcry.

The bodies were thought to be those of migrants trapped in camps in the jungle.

Bangladeshi migrants, and ethnic Rohingyas who face persecution in Myanmar, are normally brought by people smugglers to Thailand where they are effectively held ransom until they can raise money for their onward journey to Malaysia and beyond.

An investigation by the BBC's Jonathan Head has found entire communities in Thailand helping the traffickers.

The 88 suspects appeared in court yesterday for a pre-trial hearing.

The trial begins next week - however, there are about 500 witnesses, and a court

official has warned that it could take two years before the court reaches a verdict.

Describing the charges, one judge was quoted by AFP as saying: "All 88 defendants together let victims starve, denied health treatments for sick victims and hid bodies on the mountain [camps] where they died."

The Thai government launched a crack-



down on smugglers in May, arresting suspects including local mayor Banjong Pongphon, and transferring over 50 police officers suspected of links to human traffickers.

Following the crackdown, smugglers began to abandon boats carrying migrants, leading to thousands of Bangladeshis and Rohingya Muslims being stranded at sea.

Australia cops squash asylum unrest

AFP, Sydney

Australian police used tear gas to put down a two-day riot at a migrant detention centre yesterday, where detainees, reportedly armed with machetes, chainsaws and petrol bombs, were running amok.

Reinforcements were sent to the remote Christmas Island facility after violence erupted and fires were set in a protest triggered late Sunday by the unexplained death of a man.

"The department can confirm all areas of the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Facility are under the full and effective control of service providers and department staff," the Immigration Department said in a statement.

NEWSIN brief

Catalan House starts independence move

AFP, Barcelona

Lawmakers in Catalonia officially kicked off a process Monday to secede from Spain by 2017 in an unprecedented showdown with Madrid's central government. All 72 pro-independence lawmakers voted for a resolution to secede from the rest of the country. The text calls on the regional assembly to start working on legislation within 30 days to create a separate social security system and treasury, with a view to complete independence in 18 months.

Next round of Syria talks on Saturday

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State John Kerry will travel to Vienna for the latest round of negotiations on the conflict in Syria yesterday, the State Department said. The talks will be a continuation of a dialogue between 17 nations, along with UN and EU representatives, to agree on a plan to end the Syrian civil war.

Two more Palestinian knife attackers killed

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli forces shot dead two Palestinian attackers in separate incidents yesterday, police said. In one of the deadly incidents, a Palestinian was shot dead in West Bank after he attacked a security forces with a knife. In Jerusalem, security guards shot a 37-year-old Palestinian who ran at them with a knife near the walled Old City. Seventy-five Palestinians have been shot dead by Israeli security forces since Oct 1, including 44 people Israeli police said were carrying out attacks, while 12 Israelis have been killed.