

Two Indian journos
killed in 24 hours

AFP, New Delhi

Hit-and-run attackers have killed two journalists in 24 hours in separate incidents that underlined India's reputation as one of the most dangerous places for reporters, police said yesterday. Police yesterday detained a former village chief in Bihar state accused of running over and killing Navin Nischal, a reporter for Dainik Bhaskar. A television journalist, Sandeep Sharma, was mown down by a truck in the central state of Madhya Pradesh in the second attack.

Israel strikes Hamas in
Gaza for second day

AFP, Gaza City

An Israeli tank struck two Hamas positions in the Gaza Strip late Sunday after bullets were fired from the Palestinian enclave, the Israeli army said. Two observation points belonging to the armed wing of the Islamist movement were struck in the northern part of the enclave, the army said. Palestinian security sources said there had been no casualties. It was the second night in a row that Israel had struck the coastal territory.

UAE says its first nuke
reactor complete

AFP, Abu Dhabi

The United Arab Emirates said yesterday that one of four nuclear reactors at its debut plant has been completed as it moves closer to becoming the first Arab nation to produce atomic power. The announcement came after visiting South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed toured the \$20-billion Barakah plant, the state-run WAM news agency reported. The plant west of Abu Dhabi is being constructed by a consortium led by the Korea Electric Power Corporation (KEPCO).



Egyptians dance and celebrate with national flags outside a polling station on the first day of the 2018 presidential elections, in al-Omraniya neighbourhood in the capital Cairo's southwestern Giza district yesterday. Inset, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi casts his vote during the election in Cairo. Egyptians head to the polls in a three-day vote to choose between incumbent Sisi and little-known candidate Moussa Mostafa Moussa.

PHOTO: AFP

Modi app sends data to US firm without consent

Claim security researchers; BJP denies allegation

NDTV ONLINE

The official mobile app of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, downloaded over five million times on Android alone, sent user data to a US-based company without consent, security researchers have found in claims that were verified by NDTV.

Allegations against the Narendra Modi app, which have sparked a furore on social media and biting criticism from Congress President Rahul Gandhi, come at a time of heightened sensitivity around the alleged misuse of personal data amid the unfolding Facebook-Cambridge Analytica controversy.

The ruling BJP has denied the allegations and said the data was being used only for analytics to offer all users the "most contextual content". It also hit out at the Congress,

saying the opposition party's app shared data with third parties without consent.

It was a security researcher, who has previously highlighted vulnerabilities in India's national identity card project Aadhaar and who tweets under the pseudonym Elliot Alderson, who first posted a

series of messages on Twitter on Saturday stating the Narendra Modi app was sending personal user data to a third-party domain that was traced to an American company.

NDTV checked the claims, consulting experts and using a popular tool called Burp Suite. The findings showed that as a user kept entering personal information such as name, email address, gender and city, the data was being shared with the website in.wzrkt.com.



Porn star reveals 'threat' to keep silent on Trump fling

AFP, Washington

Porn actress Stormy Daniels said she was threatened in a bid to keep her silent about her alleged fling with Donald Trump, which she detailed in a highly-anticipated primetime TV interview broadcast Sunday.

She is seeking to be released from a non-disclosure agreement she signed 11 days before the 2016 presidential election that brought Trump to power, for which she was paid \$130,000 -- leading to allegations that the payment amounted to an illicit contribution to his campaign.

Daniels told Anderson Cooper on CBS's "60 Minutes" that Trump had not asked her to keep their 2006 sexual encounter secret, but said she was approached by a man in a Las Vegas parking lot after agreeing to sell her story for \$15,000 in 2011.

"I was in a parking lot, going to a fitness

class with my infant daughter. Taking, you know, the seats facing backwards in the back seat, diaper bag, you know, gettin' all the stuff out," she said.

"And a guy walked up on me and said to me, 'Leave Trump alone. Forget the story.' And then he leaned around and looked at my daughter and said, 'That's a beautiful little girl. It'd be a shame if something happened to her mom,'" Daniels said.

Cooper asked: "You took it as a direct threat?" "Absolutely," Daniels said. "I was rattled, I remember going into the workout class and my hands were shaking so much I was afraid I was gonna drop her," she said

of her daughter. Daniels said she was introduced to Trump at a celebrity golf tournament in Lake Tahoe in July 2006.

Meanwhile, Daniels's attorney said yesterday his client receives threats on a "near-hourly basis" -- the morning after she broke her silence on an alleged affair with Trump.



Army officers allied with the Huthis attend a rally at a parade square damaged by air strikes to mark the third anniversary of the Saudi-led intervention in the Yemeni conflict in Sanaa, Yemen yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Not our job'

Pak refuses to give security to
Musharraf upon his return

PTI, Islamabad

The Pakistan government has rejected former dictator Pervez Musharraf's request for security on returning to the country to face a special court trying him on treason charges, according to a media report.

The Ministry of Defence has conveyed to the Dubai-based former president through his counsel that providing him security is not its job, the Dawn newspaper reported.

In a letter written to Musharraf's counsel Akhtar Shah, the ministry said "provision of security in the subject case does not fall under the purview of Ministry of Defence", according to the report.

The 74-year-old retired Army general has been living in Dubai since last year when he was allowed to leave Pakistan on the pretext of medical treatment.

He was indicted in March, 2014 on treason charges for imposing emergency in 2007 in the country which led to the confinement of a number of superior court judges in their houses and sacking of over 100 judges.

He has been declared "proclaimed offender" by courts in the treason and the Benazir Bhutto assassination cases.

He is the first general to face trial for treason in Pakistan's history and if convicted, he could be given life imprisonment or the death penalty.

FIRST ASSESSMENT OF GLOBAL LAND HEALTH

Land decay to displace tens of millions by 2050

AFP, Medellin

Land degradation will unleash a mass migration of at least 50 million people by 2050 -- as many as 700 million unless humans stop depleting the life-giving resource, dozens of scientists warned yesterday.

Already, land decay caused by unsustainable farming, mining, pollution, and city expansion is undermining the well-being of some 3.2 billion people -- 40 percent of the global population, they said in the first comprehensive assessment of land health.

The condition of land is "critical," said the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

"We've converted large amounts of our forests, we've converted large amounts of our grasslands, we've lost 87 percent of our wetlands... we've really changed our land

surface in the last several hundred years," IPBES chairman Robert Watson said of the findings.

"The message is: land degradation, loss of productivity of those soils and those vegetations will force people to move. It will be no longer viable to live on those lands," he told AFP.

"Between now and 2050, we estimate the number could be 50 (million) to some 700 million people."

The lowest number is a best-case-scenario projection, said Watson.

The main drivers of land degradation, said the report, were "high-consumption lifestyles" in rich countries, and rising demand for products in developing ones, fueled by income and population growth. The problem of land decay does not only impact the people who live on it, the assessment underlined.

The main drivers of land degradation were high-consumption lifestyles in rich countries: report

SYRIA WAR

Rebels blame each other for Ghouta defeat

REUTERS, Beirut

Syrian rebel factions are blaming each other for opening the way to their defeat near Damascus, underlining splits that plagued the armed uprising against President Bashar al-Assad since its earliest days.

The rivalry between the factions of eastern Ghouta - Failaq al-Rahman and Jaish al-Islam - had led to the effective partition of the enclave since 2016 and fuelled bouts of deadly violence that played to the government's advantage.

Their rivalry has at some points mirrored tensions between their regional sponsors: Saudi Arabia, which has backed Jaish al-Islam, and Qatar, which supported Failaq al-Rahman.

Adopt 'serious attitude' for peace, end sanctions

N Korea urges US ahead of denuclearisation talks

REUTERS, Geneva

North Korea yesterday called on the United States to understand its position and adopt a "serious attitude" to contribute to maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

Ri Jong Hyok, director of North Korea's National Reunification Institute and deputy head of its Supreme People's Assembly, said that his country sought to build a "just and peaceful new world, free from aggression and war" and nothing could block the goal of inter-Korean dialogue and reunification.

"Now is the high time to put an end to the US anachronistic anti-DPRK hostile policy and its futile moves of sanctions and pressure," Ri told the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), referring to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

A high-ranking North Korean official appeared to have arrived by train in Beijing, Japanese media reported, though specula-

tion that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is currently visiting the Chinese capital has not been confirmed.

Kyodo, citing sources close to the matter, said the visit of the official was intended to improve ties between Beijing and Pyongyang that have been frayed by North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and China's backing of tough sanctions against North Korea at the United Nations Security Council.

Reuters was unable to immediately confirm that a top North Korean official had arrived by train.

Beijing has traditionally been North Korea's closest ally, but Kim is due to hold summit meetings separately with rivals South Korea and the US.

Asked earlier at a daily news briefing about reports of an important North Korean visitor arriving at the Chinese border city of Dandong, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said she was unaware of the situation.

High-level N Korean official may be visiting Beijing: Japanese media

TELECOM GRAFT CASE

Israel police question PM Netanyahu

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israeli police yesterday questioned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over his alleged dealings with the country's largest telecommunications company, Israel Radio said, in one of three corruption cases weighing on the leader's political future.

It was the second time the prime minister had been questioned in the investigation. He is suspected of awarding regulatory favours to Bezeq Telecom Israel in return for favourable coverage on a news site the company's owner controls.

Netanyahu has denied any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a witch hunt.

Israeli media said Netanyahu's wife and son would be questioned separately in the telecoms inves-



tigation over their relationship with Bezeq's owner and his spouse.

Video footage showed a police car pulling into the driveway of the prime minister's official residence in Jerusalem. A police spokesman and a lawyer for the Netanyahu family declined comment.

Bezeq has denied wrongdoing. Police have yet to make a recommendation about charges in the case.

Two former Netanyahu confidants have agreed to turn state's witness in the case. One is Shlomo Filber, the former director general of the Communications Ministry; the other is Nir Hefetz, a former spokesman of Netanyahu.