

NEWSIN
brief

Palestinian shot dead
in West Bank clashes

AFP, Hebron

A Palestinian man was shot and killed yesterday during clashes with Israeli forces in the south of the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry and medics said. Palestinian medical sources identified the man as 22-year-old Omar al-Badawi, who was hit in the chest with live fire before being taken to Ahali hospital in the nearby city of Hebron, where he was pronounced dead. The Israeli army did not immediately comment on the incident.

Singer Lata Mangeshkar
admitted to hospital

INDIA TODAY ONLINE

Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar complained of difficulty in breathing in the early hours of yesterday, following which she was rushed to Breach Candy Hospital, in South Mumbai. Earlier reports suggested that the singer is critical and has been admitted in the ICU. The authorities of Breach Candy say that she is under observation and her condition is currently stable. Lata Mangeshkar's niece Rachana said that the singer was admitted due to chest infection, and is on the road to recovery.

Former CEC of India TN
Seshan dies at 86

NDTV ONLINE

Former Chief Election Commissioner Tirunellai Narayana Seshan, who had become an icon of Indian bureaucracy for ushering in tectonic reforms in the country's electoral process during his tenure in the nineties, died of a cardiac arrest on Sunday in Chennai. He was 86. A retired 1955 batch Indian Administrative Service officer of the Tamil Nadu cadre, TN Seshan had led the Election Commission from 1990 to 1996.



BOLIVIA PROTESTS

Morales' exit
sparks night
of violence

EU calls for restraint

REUTERS, La Paz

Bolivia's capital La Paz was rocked by violent clashes overnight with buildings set on fire in apparent retaliatory attacks after Evo Morales, the country's president since 2006, resigned under pressure over a disputed election last month.

Morales said on Sunday he would step down to ease violence that has gripped the South American nation since a disputed election, though he stoked fears of more unrest by lashing out at a "civic coup" against him and saying his home had been attacked.

Tensions around the country, which have been simmering for weeks, mounted late into the night amid a political vacuum after Morales, his Vice President and many of his political allies in government stepped down.

In the capital and the eastern city of Santa Cruz, crowds cheered the resignation of Morales, who drew ire by running for a fourth term in defiance of term limits before claiming victory in an election mired in allegations of fraud.

But as night fell gangs roamed the streets, looting businesses and setting fire to properties. Prominent opposition figure and academic Waldo Albarracin tweeted that his house had been burned by pro-Morales supporters.

Meanwhile, the EU's diplomatic chief also urged all sides in Bolivia to exercise "restraint and responsibility" in a statement yesterday.



Iraqi firefighters hose down the scorched ministry of finance set ablaze by protesters at Baghdad's Khallani square during ongoing anti-government demonstrations yesterday. *Inset*, A protester flashes the victory sign as he rides past the scorched ministry. US has urged Iraq to hold early polls and carry out electoral reform, after a rights group warned a deadly crackdown on anti-government protesters could spiral into a "bloodbath".

PHOTO: AFP



Dozens detained in India

Police cybercrime units acted against more than 8,270 posts on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police have arrested dozens of people for social media comments that allegedly threatened "communal harmony" after the Supreme Court awarded a holy site once used for a mosque to Hindus, officials said yesterday. The site in the northern city of Ayodhya has in the past caused religious riots that have left thousands dead.

Security forces have been on alert since the verdict was announced on Saturday and remained on the city's streets as hundreds of thousands of Hindu pilgrims began arriving ahead of a religious festival. Hindu and Muslim leaders have called for calm.

Police said the social media posts on platforms including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube had threatened "communal harmony".

At least 77 people were arrested in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh -- where Ayodhya is located -- after the Supreme Court decision, a police statement said.

Authorities acted against more than 8,270 posts, with

steps including "reporting the posts to the social media platform" and "directly messaging the user to delete the message," the statement said.

In two cases police ordered users to take down their social media profiles, an Uttar Pradesh police spokesman said.

More than 2,800 posts were targeted on Twitter.

There were 1,355 allegedly inflammatory comments on Facebook, and 98 YouTube videos, authorities said.

Police cybercrime units said they were using "sentiment analysis" programmes to identify suspect social media posts.

A top Uttar Pradesh official said that several WhatsApp groups were asked to restrict their activities, according to media reports.

Eight other arrests were reported in the central state of Madhya Pradesh for social media comments.

A jail warden in the city of Gwalior was also arrested for celebrating with fireworks after the Hindu court victory.

AYODHYA SITE SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS



Delhi's air quality
plummets again

REUTERS, New Delhi

Haze shrouded India's capital city again yesterday, with residents braving dangerous air quality to return to work after a weekend of clearer air and better weather.

The air quality index of the US Embassy in New Delhi stood at "hazardous" levels of 497 as of 0630 GMT, with levels of airborne PM 2.5 - particles that can reach deep into the lungs - touching nearly 700 in parts of the city.

That is more than 10 times the recommended safe limit of 60 for PM 2.5.

A dip in wind speed and temperature is making air denser, trapping pollutants and worsening air quality, said Vivek Chattopadhyay, a senior programme manager at New Delhi-based non-profit Centre for Science and Environment.

The city government of Delhi, a metropolis of over 20 million, is restricting the use of private cars until November 15 with an "odd-even" system - allowing cars on alternate days, depending on whether their licence plate ends in an odd or even number.

The scheme, which includes a two-day waiver for a religious festival, has helped little, prompting environmentalists to call for urgent action.

"The chief minister (of Delhi) needs to declare an emergency," said Bharati Chaturvedi, founder of the Chintan environmental advocacy group.

Top Trump aides tried to
subvert him: Nikki Haley

AFP, Washington

Two top advisers to President Donald Trump ignored or undermined him because "they were trying to save the country," former United Nations ambassador Nikki Haley writes in a new book.

She says both then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and White House chief of staff John Kelly sought her help in undercutting or working around Trump but she refused, according to the Washington Post, which obtained a copy of the book, "With All Due Respect," ahead of its release today.

"Kelly and Tillerson confided in me that when they resisted the president, they weren't being insubordinate, they were trying to save the country," she wrote.

"It was their decisions, not the president's, that were in the best interests of America, they said. The president didn't know what he was doing."

She said Tillerson told her people would die if Trump was not restrained.

Haley, a former South Carolina governor of Indian descent, left the UIN job at the end of 2018 on good

terms with Trump. She has often been touted as a potential future Republican presidential candidate.

Kelly left the White House a few weeks after Haley, reportedly barely on speaking terms with Trump; the president had fired Tillerson -- via Twitter -- in March 2018, after the two had repeatedly clashed.

In the book, Haley supports many of the Trump foreign policy decisions that others in the administration opposed, including the unilateral withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal and the Paris climate agreement, as well as the decision to move the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

But Haley also pointed to several disagreements with the president: over his embrace of Russian President Vladimir Putin when they met in Helsinki in 2017, and over Trump's "moral equivalence" in suggesting there were good people on "both sides" after the deadly white supremacist march in Charlottesville, Virginia.

"The president's words had been hurtful and dangerous," she wrote, according to the Post.



Members of Catalan protest group Democratic Tsunami block traffic on a motorway linking Spain and France, in a fresh protest against the sentencing of nine of their leaders to lengthy jail terms last month.

PHOTO: AFP

UK GENERAL ELECTION

Farage withdraws
Brexit threat to PM

AFP, Hartlepool

Populist Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage yesterday withdrew his threat to challenge the governing Conservatives at every seat in next month's election, in a boost for Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Farage, a leading force behind the 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union, had faced criticism that he risked splitting the eurosceptic vote on December 12.

Instead, he promised to focus on seats held by the main opposition Labour party which voted "Leave" -- although this could still see him take votes from Johnson's Tories.

"The Brexit Party will not contest the 317 seats the Conservatives won at the last election," Farage said on the campaign trail in Hartlepool, northeast England.

The former leader of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) had earlier promised to field 600 candidates unless Johnson agreed to abandon the exit terms he agreed with Brussels.

Farage said the deal, which has yet to be ratified by parliament, would deliver "Brexit in name only".

But the prime minister refused and Farage has now given in, noting wryly: "In a sense we now have a Leave alliance, it's just that we've done it unilaterally."

Ignoring Tory-held seats, he promised to target Labour areas which voted for Brexit, seeking to capitalise on disillusionment with the opposition party's stance.

Farage said his decision "prevents a second referendum from happening. And that to me, I think right now, is the single most important thing in our country".

Johnson welcomed the move, saying: "I'm glad that there's a recognition that there's only one way to get Brexit done and that's to vote for the Conservatives."

Smoke seen in NZ as fires
threaten NSW, Sydney

Emergency declared; people urged to leave homes

CNN ONLINE

Thousands of people are in the path of deadly Australian bushfires that have produced clouds of smoke seen as far away as New Zealand.

A seven-day state of emergency has been declared in New South Wales, where strong winds, high temperatures and low humidity have prompted the Rural Fire Service to issue a "catastrophic" fire warning for the greater Sydney region.

It's the worst threat level ever issued for Sydney under the current system, which was introduced in 2009.

The city is home to around 4.6 million people, but the greatest fire risk lies in rural areas outside the city centre. They include the greater Hunter area, Illawarra, and Shoalhaven, which are also facing

"catastrophic" fire threats.

"Homes that are specifically designed and built to withstand bushfires are not done so for catastrophic conditions. Catastrophic conditions are where lives are

lost, it's where people die.

The risks are absolutely real," New South Wales Rural Fire Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons told CNN affiliate 9 News.

As of yesterday afternoon, more than 70 fires were burning across New South Wales, the fire service said.

A state-wide fire ban will remain in place today,

preventing people from lighting open fires and engaging in activities that could start a fire, like welding and grinding. Offenders risk on-the-spot fines of 2,200 Australian dollars (\$1,500).

AUSTRALIA BUSHFIRES



BJP decides not to form
govt in Maharashtra

In a setback, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party has decided not to form the government in the western state of Maharashtra - the country's richest - leaving opposition groups scrambling yesterday to cobble together an alliance. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as the single largest part in a state election in Maharashtra last month, and was expected to comfortably retain power with the help of its regional ally, the Shiv Sena. But in-fighting between the BJP and the Shiv Sena has culminated in the allies parting ways, dealing the first major political blow to Modi's ruling party since it retained power with a landslide mandate in a May general election.

Spain's repeat election
fails to break deadlock

Spain's Socialists faced tough talks to form a government yesterday after the party emerged on top but weakened from a repeat election which produced an even more divided parliament and propelled far-right Vox into third place. Neither the left nor the right bloc are anywhere near an absolute majority in the 350-seat assembly following Sunday's polls, prolonging a political deadlock in the eurozone's fourth largest economy after a similar result in the previous general election in April. The "elections did not solve the difficulties in achieving a governing majority. On the contrary, (they) worsened them," top-selling daily newspaper El Pais wrote in an editorial.

Malaysian ex-PM's first
1MDB trial to proceed



Malaysian ex-leader Najib Razak's first trial linked to the 1MDB scandal will proceed after a judge ruled yesterday that prosecutors had made a sufficient case, boosting efforts to bring him to justice over the mammoth fraud. The former prime minister will take the stand next month when his defence begins, in the case related to the theft of billions of dollars from sovereign wealth fund 1MDB. His coalition was ousted at the polls last year after six decades in power, largely due to the scandal, and he has since been arrested and hit with dozens of charges linked to the looting of the investment vehicle.

SOURCE: REUTERS, AFP