

NEWS IN
briefAlbania earthquake
death toll hits 40

AFP, Durrës

The death toll from the most powerful earthquake to strike Albania in decades rose to 40 yesterday after more bodies were pulled from the wreckage overnight in a tragedy that has wiped out whole families. The 6.4 magnitude earthquake rocked the Balkan state while people were sleeping just before 4:00 am on Tuesday, razing buildings and trapping victims beneath the debris in towns near the Adriatic coast.

Indian govt extends
ban on ULFA for 5 yrs

PTI, New Delhi

The Centre has extended the ban on the Assam-based insurgent outfit ULFA for five years for continuing subversive activities, including killings, kidnapping and extortions. In a notification, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) yesterday said the ULFA has been indulging in various illegal and violent activities intended to disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India in furtherance of its objective of liberating Assam.

Two Turkish soldiers
killed on Syria border

AFP, Istanbul

Two Turkish soldiers died when a mortar hit their post on the Syrian border, the defence ministry said yesterday. "Two of our fellow comrades were martyred by a mortar attack" in Akcakale town, Sanliurfa province, on Wednesday, the ministry said in a statement. It did not specify if the attack came from Syrian territory, but said Turkish forces responded with intense artillery fire. Akcakale lies adjacent to areas that were targeted in Turkey's offensive against Kurdish militants.



Palestinians check the house of a man who reportedly carried out an attack against Israelis in August, after it was demolished by Israeli authorities yesterday, in the village of Beit Kahel near the West Bank town of Hebron.

PHOTO: AFP

THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY IN US

N Korea fires two
projectiles: Seoul

AFP, Seoul

North Korea fired two "unidentified projectiles" yesterday -- the Thanksgiving holiday in the US -- Seoul said, as nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington remain deadlocked.

The projectiles were fired eastwards from South Hamgyong province and came down in the Sea of Japan, also known as the East Sea, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

They added that the launch, the latest in a series by Pyongyang, was carried out at 16:59 pm local time (0859 GMT) -- or the early hours on the east coast of the United States, during one of the country's biggest annual holidays.

It was also one day short of the two-year anniversary of the North's first test of its Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile, which analysts say is capable of reaching the entire US mainland.

Pyongyang is banned from firing ballistic missiles under UN Security Council resolutions, and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that yesterday's launch was the latest in a series of violations.

"North Korea's repeated launches of ballistic missiles are a serious defiance to not only our country but also the international community," he told reporters in Tokyo.

Yesterday's launch came after Pyongyang fired what it called a "super-large multiple rocket launcher" system last month, and the JCS said the latest devices were presumed to be of a similar type.

They flew 380 kilometres and reached a maximum altitude of 97 kilometres, the JCS added.

BJP's arrogance rejected
Says Mamata after her party's by-polls victory

NDTV ONLINE

Trinamool Congress won all the three seats in the by-elections to three assembly seats in West Bengal yesterday. Trinamool supremo and Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee described it as a victory of the people and added that it was also a victory for development.

"The BJP's arrogance has cost them," she said.

The Chief Minister, who has been fighting to retain her grip on Bengal with an aggressive BJP chipping away at her strongholds, said the BJP's constant talk of the NRC or National Register for Citizens to weed out illegal migrants had cost it.

"So much arrogance and pride is not good. The BJP is too arrogant and proud. Sometimes they are saying NRC, sometimes they are saying they will evict people and then give citizenship rights," Mamata Banerjee said to a TV channel.

"This result's message is clear, people are saying goodbye to BJP. BJP should go back," she said.

The by-polls were held on Monday in Kharagpur Sadar, Karimpur and Kaliaganj assembly constituencies. In all three, the Trinamool and the BJP were locked in a tough fight.

The Karimpur seat was vacated by Mahua Moitra when

she contested and won the parliamentary election in May.

There was a huge outcry when the BJP's Karimpur candidate, Jay Prakash Majumdar, was heckled, assaulted and kicked into bushes by the side of the road by Trinamool supporters during polling. Trinamool's Bimalendu Sinha Roy humbled his nearest rival Majumder by 23,650 votes.

But more significant is the Trinamool's victory in Kaliaganj and Kharagpur Sadar, where the party has never won before.

"Today's spectacular victory in the Assembly bypolls proves that the people of Bengal are with us... For the first time in 22 years, since the formation of Trinamool Congress, we have won the Kaliaganj and Kharagpur Assembly seats," Banerjee wrote on Twitter.

Kaliaganj had always been a Congress domain. The seat fell

vacant after MLA Pramatha Ray died earlier this year.

In early leads, the BJP's Kamal Chandra Sarkar was ahead. But the Trinamool candidate, Tapan Deb Singh, overtook him and won by a narrow margin of over 2,000 votes.

The Kharagpur Sadar victory is also sweet for the Trinamool as BJP's Bengal chief Dilip Ghosh was an MLA from the seat and he had swept the Kharagpur parliamentary seat. This was a Congress stronghold before the BJP's rise.

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