

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Heavy snowfall blocks roads, cuts power in Europe

SOFIA: Heavy snow caused traffic chaos in Bulgaria and Romania on Monday, closing major highways, delaying flights and trains and cutting off electricity.

In Austria, where 12 skiers and snowboarders have died in the past week, authorities raised the avalanche risk because of heavy snowfall and high winds. Strong winds and heavy snow over the past 24 hours have blocked several roads including a motorway in southern Romania. Many schools were closed, including in the capital Bucharest, where the snow was up to 40 cm deep. About 60 trains were cancelled.

In Bulgaria, which saw about 60 cm of snow in the north and northeast, more than 160 cities and towns were left without electricity. Three districts declared a state of emergency as snow drifts closed roads and cut them off. The snowfall delayed more than 25 flights at Sofia airport and closed a stretch of highway linking Sofia to the Black Sea city of Burgas.—Reuters



KIEV: Supporters of presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich attend a rally to celebrate his victory in a presidential run-off vote in front of Ukraine's central electoral commission here on Monday. Ukrainian opposition leader Tymoshenko claimed a slender victory in a presidential poll that could tilt the ex-Soviet state back towards Moscow, but bitter rival Yulia Tymoshenko had yet to concede defeat. The words on a banner (C) read "Ukraine for the fair elections."—Reuters

Yanukovich, monitors, press Ukraine PM to concede

• Election commission says he narrow winner
• Financial markets, big neighbour Russia react cautiously

KIEV: Ukrainian opposition leader Viktor Yanukovich pressed rival Yulia Tymoshenko to concede defeat on Monday after a narrow victory in a presidential election that could tilt the ex-Soviet state back towards Moscow.

Adding to pressure on the fiery Tymoshenko, international monitors declared the election an "impressive display" of democracy and urged her to shake hands with her opponent.

With 98.4 percent of votes counted, official figures gave ex-mechanic Yanukovich, whose party is allied to the Kremlin's United Russia, a margin of 2.8 percentage points over Prime Minister Tymoshenko, meaning she could not catch him up.

Tymoshenko, who called supporters onto the streets in the 2004 "Orange Revolution" to overturn a Yanukovich election win that was ruled fraudulent, was uncharacteristically quiet on Monday. She put off a planned news conference until Tuesday.

Her supporters alleged numerous violations of electoral law in Sunday's runoff vote but election officials and monitors said they had not seen serious faults.

The international observer team headed by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) called on Ukraine's leading political leaders to "listen to the people's verdict."

The OSCE verdict was tantamount to a call for Tymoshenko to accept the fight was over.

"Normally for the good of the nation the one who loses shakes hands with the one who wins," Assen Agov, head of a Nato monitoring delegation, told a news conference.

She seemed likely to make clear her position on Tuesday.

Western investors and Ukraine's powerful neighbour Russia reacted cautiously to the election outcome, aware that a prolonged period of uncertainty over the result could hurt the country's sickly economy even more.

The hryvnia currency traded little changed from last week at 8.06/8.08 to the dollar by 1115 GMT, while prices for issuing Ukrainian debt against default were steady. Investors rate Ukraine's riskiest as among the world's riskiest after the economy contracted around 15 percent last year.

Andrew Wilson, a senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, said Yanukovich's small lead could be contested. "The temptation will be there for (Tymoshenko) to make a challenge," he said.

Just under 600,000 votes separated the two sides, reflecting Ukraine's deep divisions between its Russian-leaning east and south and the Western-friendly central and western regions.

More than a million voters chose to vote against both candidates, an option offered on the ballot paper. The official results signalled a comeback for the tough-talking Yanukovich, 59, and disillusionment among Ukrainians that the Orange Revolution democracy movement has not delivered hoped-for prosperity and stability.—Reuters

Pyongyang accuses Seoul of plot

SEOUL: Pyongyang accused Seoul on Monday of plotting to topple its regime, soaring relations again as a top Chinese official visited North Korea in a new drive to bring it back to nuclear disarmament talks.

In another blow for inter-Korean ties the two sides failed to agree on restarting a tourism project.

Wang Jiarui, head of the Chinese Communist Party's international department, met senior communist party official Choe Thae-hok to reaffirm the two countries' friendship and exchange views "on other issues of common concern," Beijing's Xinhua news agency said.

The meeting came one day before Lynn Pascoe, top political adviser to UN chief Ban Ki-moon, was due in Pyongyang for a four-day visit.

South Korean media forecast that Wang, who has met leader Kim Jong-il several times in the past, would do so again before he departs Tuesday.

China hosts the six-party nuclear talks which its ally North Korea quit last April, a month before staging a second nuclear test. As conditions for returning to the nuclear forum, the North wants a US agreement to hold formal peace talks and a lifting of UN sanctions.

In an apparent conciliatory gesture to Washington, Pyongyang on Saturday freed a US missionary who had crossed the border last December 25 on a lone campaign to publicise rights abuses.

The message to Seoul was less conciliatory.

A statement from two security ministries said Pyongyang has a secret strike force to counter what it called Seoul's plots.

"We have world-level ultra-modern striking force and means for protecting security which have neither yet been mentioned nor opened to the public in total," the statement on official media said without elaborating.

The North criticised efforts by the South's military to defend the disputed Yellow Sea border — where the North fired artillery salvos late last month — and its "reckless" operations to destabilise the North.

It complained about "the daily escalating" scattering of propaganda leaflets by balloons, which were now penetrating deep into the country from border areas. Despite the tough talk, the North has been pushing to revive business projects with the South since it was hit by tougher sanctions for its missile launches and nuclear test last year.

The two sides held talks Monday after a possible resumption of talks which previously earned the cash-strapped state tens of millions of dollars a year.

Seoul suspended the trips after soldiers in July 2008 shot dead a Seoul housewife who strayed into an off-limits military zone at the Mount Kumgang resort in the North.

South Korea's unification ministry demands safety guarantees before it restarts them.—AFP

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT OFFICER BUILDINGS (W&S) DISTRICT OFFICER

Notified tenders II-IB-2 forms are hereby invited from the interested persons/contractors/companies/firms/parties as per PPR&A Rules 2004.

Sl. No.	NAME OF WORK	TAU/KA	EST. COST IN PKR	BIDDER AMOUNT	BIDDER IN PKR	TIME ALLOWED
1	M&B in Q101 Office	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
2	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.17	10000	750	04 Months
3	M&B in Industrial Looking at Chitral	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
4	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
5	M&B in Q101 Hospital	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
6	M&B in Q101 Hospital	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
7	M&B in Q101 Hospital	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
8	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
9	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
10	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
11	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
12	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
13	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
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27	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
28	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
29	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months
30	M&B in Q101 House	Urethane	0.15	10000	750	04 Months

The interested participants can purchase the separate set of tenders work upto 01.03.2010 during office hours, from the date of publication.

The tender will be received back and opened on 02-03-2010 at 2:00 PM in presence of the committee i.e Executive District Officer Works & Services District Officer and the undersigned and the Divisional Accounts Officer in presence of the bidders or their authorized agents who are present at that time, other terms and conditions can be seen in the office of the undersigned on any working day during working hours.

ATTEMPT	DATE OF SALE OF BANK TENDERS	DATE OPENING OF TENDER
1st	01/03/2010	02/03/2010
2nd	01/03/2010	02/03/2010

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE TENDERS

Contract documents and other terms and conditions can be seen and blank tenders obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of cost as shown against each and submission of call deposit of any reputed Bank of Pakistan in the name of undersigned.

If the undersigned happens to be out of the Headquarters on the date of tenders the same will be opened on the next working day at 1:00 PM.

Sd/-
District Officer Buildings Works & Services Unserkot

DNF-RKY No. 316/2010

The challenges are there. Given the goodwill of the common man of Pakistan who love the country and want to see it move into the future with confidence, I pray we strength in achieving freedom, rights and cooperation for one backward and poverty-stricken people (Shahid Murtaza Bhutto Bhutto).

UN patent filings dropped for 1st time since 1978

GENEVA: The number of international patent filings dropped last year for the first time since 1978 as companies hit by the global economic downturn sought fewer new protections on their intellectual property, the UN said Monday.

Most patents filed in 2009 were for computer technology, followed by pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. Innovations in computer chip designs and nanotechnology saw the greatest rise in patents.

The World Intellectual Property Organization, or WIPO, received about 155,000 international patent filings last year, a drop of 4.5 percent compared with the nearly 164,000 filings received a year earlier.

Inventors in the United States still registered the highest number of international patents, 45,790, or almost a third of the total. But US filings were down 11 percent compared with 2008.

Third-ranked Germany saw its patent filings drop by a similar amount to 16,736.

Asian inventors on the other hand increased their share and overall registrations, with Japan filing 29,827 international patents through WIPO. South Koreans registered 8,066 applications, just ahead of China's 7,946 filings in an increase of almost 30 percent year-on-year.

Japan's Panasonic Corp. was the company with the most patent filings, ahead of Huawei Technologies Co. of China and German firm Robert Bosch GmbH.

WIPO's annual patent figures are an important indicator of global IP protection efforts and therefore innovation.

For a fee, companies can file a request for patent protection in any or all of the 142 countries that have subscribed to the UN's Patent Cooperation Treaty, avoiding the need to make individual filings in each country.

WIPO is the only United Nations agency whose income comes largely from services it provides to private industry, rather than contributions paid by member states.—AP

Dead man found in landing gear of US jet in Japan

TOKYO: Japanese authorities have found the body of a man in the landing gear of a Delta jetter that arrived in Tokyo from New York and said Monday they were seeking US help in identifying him.

A mechanic found the body in the landing gear bay of the Boeing 777 after Delta Flight 59 landed at Tokyo's Narita International Airport at about 6:55 pm local time Sunday, a Chiba prefecture police spokesman said.

"Doctors say he probably flew to death and that he suffered a shortage of oxygen at an altitude of more than 10,000 metres (about 30,000 feet)," said another police official, Narita airport station spokesman Yoshimi Ichihara.—AFP

Chinchilla becomes Costa Rica's first female president

SAN JOSE: Laura Chinchilla, a social conservative who opposes abortion but wants more help for the poor, became Costa Rica's first female president after a convincing election triumph.

Her main opponents conceded defeat and the 50-year-old ruling party candidate joined thousands of supporters celebrating in San Jose early Monday.

First results showed she won 47 percent of the votes counted, way ahead of her rivals and above the 40 percent needed to avoid a run-off.

Latin America now has five women leaders.

"Thank you, Costa Rica," Chinchilla said in an address in a hotel in the capital. "It's certainly a moment of happiness, but above all of humility... I won't betray that confidence."

Center-left opposition candidate Orton Solis won 24 percent of the votes counted and right-wing lawyer Otto Guevara garnered 21 percent.

The slight, long-haired graduate of Georgetown University in Washington served as vice president to Arias and is socially conservative on issues such as abortion. The mother of one teenage son has promised to increase grants for poor students, expand the pensions for the poor and open day-care centers to support working mothers.—AFP

Muslim man wins discrimination case over non-handshake

STOCKHOLM: A Swedish court Monday ordered the country's labor agency to pay damages to an unemployed Muslim man who lost his benefits because he had refused to shake hands with a female job interviewer.

He had visited the firm for an interview when looking for a training position, and instead of shaking hands, the man laid his hand against his chest.

The Public Employment Services agency withheld his unemployment benefit, saying his refusal to shake hands showed an unwillingness to work.

The court however ruled that the man had declined to shake hands with the woman on religious grounds, and his unemployment benefit should not have been withheld. It ruled that he was to be awarded damages of 60,000 kronor (8,000 dollars). Equality Ombudsman Katri Linnu welcomed the ruling.—dpa

Russia offers Sri Lanka arms finance deal

MOSCOW: Russia has extended a 300 million-dollar credit line to Sri Lanka for arms purchases, Russian news agencies reported Monday following Kremlin talks between the leaders of the two countries.

Sri Lanka will have access to the financing for five years and any portion of it tapped to buy Russian weapons must be repaid in 10 years, the agencies quoted Deputy Finance Minister Dmitry Pavkin as saying.

Sri Lanka was considering purchase of Russian helicopters, Interfax said, quoting Pavkin but providing no further details.

Russia's ambassador to Sri Lanka, Vladimir Mikhailov, said last week it would be up to Sri Lanka to decide what to do with that loan.

"The Sri Lankan side will determine what to purchase — whether it will be transport helicopters, speed boats, trucks, or whether it will use it for the modernization," RIA-Novosti news agency quoted Mikhailov as saying.

Announcement of the financing plan came as President Dinesh Mahipalve hosted his Sri Lankan counterpart, Mahinda Rajapakse, at the Kremlin.

"You know Sri Lanka is facing a very big problem of terrorism," Rajapakse told Mahipalve, according to comments released by the Kremlin.

"This is a serious problem for our state, for all of us."—AFP

Nato, Afghans to hold Taliban bastion 'forever'

LASHKAR GAH: (Afghanistan) Nato forces and their Afghan allies will hold territory seized from the Taliban in an imminent major operation "forever", the commander of British forces in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province said.

British and US forces are poised to take the town of Marjah, the last major bastion of Taliban control in the province, in what will be one of the biggest operations of the eight-year-old war.

Troops have ridged Marjah in the past, but lacked the forces necessary to hold it. The commander of the nearly 10,000-strong British contingent in Helmand said this time they were coming to stay, under a "clear, hold, build" counter-insurgency strategy.

"What's the counter-insurgency? It is not about defeating the enemy in old fashioned victory; it is about winning the people," Brigadier James Cowan told Reuters television on Monday at his headquarters in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah.

The Nato-led force in Afghanistan now numbers more than 114,000 and is due to rise to nearly 150,000 this year under an escalation ordered in December by US President Barack Obama.

The assault on Marjah will be the first operation to take advantage of those extra troops, which commanders say will give them the force they need to finally impose a lasting Afghan government presence over formerly Taliban-held areas.—Reuters



UK's Labour suspends lawmakers facing expenses trial

LONDON: Britain's ruling Labour party on Monday suspended three legislators facing criminal charges over their expenses to try to limit the damage from the case before an election to be held by June.

The three, already barred from standing again as Labour candidates, will remain members of the House of Commons but will be excluded from Labour party meetings and will no longer be part of its parliamentary bloc.

Opposition Conservative leader David Cameron said the suspension was a "humiliating change" for Prime Minister Gordon Brown's Labour and said it was in "headlong retreat".

Cameron had sought to exploit public outrage over the legislators' conduct after a week of opinion polls showing the Conservatives slipping to a single-digit lead over Labour.

Analysts say that could lead to a hung parliament with no party winning a majority in the election, an outcome that worries financial markets already concerned over Britain's record 178 billion pound budget deficit.

Cameron had raised the pre-election rhetoric by launching a personal attack on Brown, calling him a "shameless defender of the old elite" and a roadblock to political reform for failing to take action against the men.

The Labour party said it had been considering the position of the three members of parliament (MPs) — Elliot Morley, David Chaytor and Jim Devine — since they were charged on Friday. It said it made the suspensions "in the light of the serious allegations against them".

The Conservatives had already suspended from their party Lord Hanningfield, a member of parliament's upper chamber, who was charged with false accounting along with the three Labour legislators.

The prosecutions are the most serious turn in a long-running scandal over parliamentary allowances that has seen legislators from all leading parties blamed for excessive and frivolous claims for dog food, meat clearing and ornamental duck houses.

Public anger over expenses makes the election outcome even more difficult to predict.

The legislators are expected to argue in court next month they have protection from prosecution under parliament's centuries-old right of privilege.

Politicians from all parties have dismissed the suggestion the jealously guarded privilege, which gives MPs immunity over what they say in parliamentary debates, could also block a criminal prosecution.

On Monday, Brown's spokesman said the prime minister did not believe any MP was above the law.

"Criminal law obviously applies to MPs in the same way as it does to anyone else," the spokesman said. "Obviously parliamentary privilege was not intended to cover this use by MPs."—Reuters