

French tourist shot dead in Bangkok by off-duty Thai cop

Bangkok, Thailand

A French tourist was gunned down early yesterday by an off-duty Thai cop after a drunken bar fight in a seedy Bangkok district, police said.

The 41-year-old Parisian was shot dead at a downtown apartment block after an altercation with the police sergeant major who had approached the tourist's Thai girlfriend.

"They were drunk... they started to argue and then had a fist fight but the policeman couldn't fight back," the Chief of Thailand's Immigration Police Surachate Hakpan told AFP.

"The policeman followed him back to his place and shot him twice," he said, adding the victim had been in Thailand for several months.

The officer has been arrested and "will be fired... and prosecuted on a murder charge", Surachate added.

Police are hunting a second suspect seen on CCTV.

Grotesque pictures circulated on Thai media showed the victim lying in a pool of blood in front of a doughnut shop at his apartment block.

We accept people's mandate: PM Modi

India's ruling party concedes defeat in key state elections

AFP | New Delhi, India

India's ruling party suffered stinging election defeats in at least two stronghold states, results showed Tuesday, in a big blow to Prime Minister Narendra Modi before national polls in 2019.

The votes held earlier this month and in November were seen as a dress rehearsal for next year when Modi will likely go head-to-head with an emboldened Rahul Gandhi of the Congress party for a second term.

"We accept the people's mandate with humility," Modi said late Tuesday on Twitter.

"I thank the people of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan for giving us the opportunity to serve these states. The BJP Governments in these states worked tirelessly for the welfare of the people."

In both the central state of Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in the west, the chief ministers



Rahul Gandhi



India's Congress party supporters



Narendra Modi

from Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) conceded defeat, while in Madhya Pradesh the outcome was on a knife-edge.

In Chhattisgarh, ruled by the BJP for 15 years, results showed the BJP winning just 16 seats, down from 49 in the outgoing parliament, trailing Congress on 68 in the 90-seat state par-

liament. Congress also trounced the BJP in Rajasthan, governed since 2013 by the BJP's Vasundhara Raje, an unpopular local princess, winning 99 seats ahead of the BJP on 73 -- 89 fewer than in the last election.

Television footage showed jubilant Congress workers bursting firecrackers and dancing at

regional party offices.

Before the BJP ruled 19 out of 29 Indian states either outright or in alliance with local parties. Congress rules just two states, including one in partnership.

Analysts have linked the BJP's apparent dwindling support to growing rural distress and unemployment.

Spacewalkers take sample of hole at space station

Moscow, Russia

Using knives and shears, a pair of Russian spacewalkers Tuesday cut samples of material around a mysterious hole in a Soyuz spacecraft docked on the International Space Station that a Moscow official suggested could have been deliberate sabotage.

Roscosmos space agency said the aim was to discover whether the "small but dangerous" hole had been made on Earth or in space.

The two-millimetre cavity on the Soyuz spaceship docked at the ISS caused an air leak detected in August, two months after the craft's last voyage.

During the seven hour, 45 minute spacewalk, veteran cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Sergei Prokopyev struggled, but eventually succeeded, in cutting away the insulation covering the hole and taking out a sample to analyse.

What made it especially hard is that the Soyuz spacecraft, unlike the ISS, was not designed to be repaired in spacewalks and has no outside railings for astronauts to hold onto.

US nuns stole money to gamble in Vegas

Los Angeles, United States

Two California nuns who stole around \$500,000 dollars from the school where they worked and splashed out on travel and gambling in Las Vegas are facing criminal charges, their order confirmed Tuesday.

Sisters Mary Margaret Kreuper and Lana Chang, who are said to be best friends, reportedly embezzled the huge sum over the course of a decade from St James Catholic School in Torrance, south of Los Angeles.

The Archdiocese of Los Angeles said the money was discovered missing during a routine audit after Kreuper, who was principal at the school for 29 years, retired earlier this year. Chang was a teacher at the school for 20 years and also retired this year.

The nuns' order confirmed it



Sisters Mary Margaret Kreuper, left, and Lana Chang, have admitted to taking the money (Courtesy of The Telegraph)

had been informed the Archdiocese had filed a criminal complaint against the pair.

"As a religious community we will not defend the actions of our Sisters. What happened is

wrong. Our Sisters take full responsibility for the choices they made and are subject to the law," it said in a statement to AFP.

It added the two sisters have been removed from their res-

idence, placed in a religious house under supervision, and banned from all public ministry.

"This has definitely been shocking to the entire school and parish community," Adrian Alarcon, head of media relations for the Archdiocese, said.

She added the case was all the more disquieting given the Church's teachings that clearly spell out "thou shall not steal."

The order on Monday said Kreuper and Chang admitted to their misdeeds and were cooperating to determine the full amount of money taken.

The sisters expressed remorse over their actions in a letter shared with parents at a school meeting last week, and their order has vowed to make full restitution.

"Justice demands this of us," it said in its statement.

Stormy Daniels to pay Donald Trump nearly \$300,000



Adult film actress Stormy Daniels speaks during an appearance at a local book shop to promote her book in Washington, DC

Los Angeles, United State

A US federal judge in California has ordered porn star Stormy Daniels to pay Donald Trump nearly \$300,000 for filing a defamation suit against the president that was dismissed.

US District Judge S. James Otero said Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, must pay Trump \$293,000 to cover the president's attorney fees and costs plus \$1,000 in sanctions for filing the lawsuit.

Daniels in her dismissed suit had accused Trump of defamation for characterizing as a "total con job" her claims of a presidential affair.

Otero, however, ruled that

the language Trump used in his tweet was "rhetorical hyperbole" and therefore protected under the First Amendment.

Clifford has also sued Trump over a non-disclosure agreement. The judge has not dismissed that case.

Daniels's attorney Michael Avenatti said in a tweet after the latest ruling that his client planned to appeal and will likely never have to pay a dime.

"If Stormy has to pay \$300k to Trump in the defamation case (which will never hold up on appeal) and Trump has to pay Stormy \$1,500,000 in the NDA case (net \$1,200,000 to Stormy), how is this a Trump win?"

Egypt says probes images of naked couple atop pyramid

Cairo, Egypt

Egyptian authorities have launched an investigation into images said to show a naked couple who scaled the Great Pyramid that has sparked outrage in the conservative Muslim country, an official said Tuesday.

In a video titled "Climbing the Great Pyramid of Giza", Danish photographer Andreas Hvid appears to scale the 4,500-year-old tomb on the outskirts of Cairo at night with an unidentified woman who is later seen taking off her top.

Hvid says the video was taken in late November but it was



Horse riders gallop near the Giza pyramids

published on YouTube on December 8.

A photograph released by Hvid appears to show the cou-

ple completely naked on top of each other while looking in the direction of a nearby pyramid with the horizon illuminated.

"The public prosecution is investigating the incident of the Danish photographer and the authenticity of the photos and video of him climbing the pyramid," Mostafa Waziri, the secretary general of Egypt's supreme antiquities council, told AFP.

If the video was actually filmed at the top of the pyramid, that would make it a "very serious crime", Waziri said.

The nearly three-minute video has taken social media by storm and has been the subject of late night talk shows. It has notched up almost three million views on YouTube alone.