

Myanmar votes today amid threats from junta

AP, Yangon

Some of the bigger parties contesting Sunday's election in military-ruled Myanmar have raised fresh complaints of unfairness, including voters being threatened if they don't back the ruling junta's party.

One party leader said the junta's proxy, the Union Solidarity and Development Party, and local authorities had stepped up their intimidation of voters in recent days as "the USDP feels threatened by the popularity of the democratic parties."

The election, the country's first in two decades, is part of the ruling junta's self-proclaimed "road map to democracy," but it has been widely panned as a sham designed to cement military rule. The main opposition party, detained Nobel Peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, has refused to take part in the polls, claiming the process is unfair and undemocratic.

Her party won a landslide victory in Myanmar's last election in 1990, but the military refused to hand over power.

Other parties not aligned with the junta are taking part in Sunday's vote, but the Union Solidarity and Development Party organization advertises of size, wealth and organization over its contenders.

Khin Maung Swe, leader of the National Democratic Force party, said Friday that many voters were being forced to take part in advance voting, which

allows authorities to gauge voter sentiment ahead of the actual polls and manipulate the vote if so inclined.

He gave the example in

HIGHLIGHTS

- 29 million eligible voters
- 40,000 polling stations
- Candidates from 37 political parties are contesting
- They will contest for 1,159 seats: 494 in the two-chamber Union Parliament and 665 spread among 14 regional parliaments
- Two main parties are the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, and the National Union Party. The third biggest party is the National Democratic Force, formed by break away members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy
- Suu Kyi's NLD was disbanded because it declined to run

Source: AFP

Mandalay division where the ward council chairman asked at least one member of each household to cast an advance vote. He said one man voted for the NDF and

was told to bring 10 cart loads of sand and repair a local road as punishment.

He also said authorities in some areas were manipulating the electoral rolls, which is another way that voting can be rigged.

The NDF is the nation's third biggest party, with 164 candidates, just a fraction of the 1,112 candidates running on the ticket of the junta-backed party.

The Democratic Party (Myanmar), which is fielding 47 candidates, as well as the National Union Party, second in size with 995 candidates, have made complaints similar to those of the NDF. Thirty-seven parties, most of them tiny, are contesting the polls.

Democratic Party chairman Thu Wai said local officials threatened voters after his candidate from Myitha constituency in Mandalay division campaigned there.

"Her sister, who is a schoolteacher, was also threatened with loss of her job as she provided meals to her sister during her campaigning," he said.

The Shan Nationalities Democratic Party the fourth largest with 156 candidates complained that villagers in Shan state, its homeland, were asked to cast advance votes and harassed if it was learned they did not vote for the USDP.

Khin Maung Swe accused the official election commissions at both the local and national levels of failing to respond to the complaints. Their inaction, he charged, "makes the Election Commission not independent and also make the elections less credible."

Disguised air traveller unmasked

BBC ONLINE

Canadian officials have detained a young Asian man who apparently boarded a flight from Hong Kong to Vancouver disguised as an elderly white male.

Canadian Border Services said the man wore a silicone mask covering his head and neck in what they called an "unbelievable case of concealment".

Suspicion was raised when an apparently elderly passenger was noticed with young-looking hands.

Later he emerged from a washroom looking like a man in his twenties.

An internal intelligence alert from the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), obtained by AP news agency, shows before-and-after photos.

The passenger was seen at the start of the flight as an "elderly Caucasian male who appeared to have young-looking hands," the CBSA bulletin said.

DISGUISE KIT

"The subject attended the washroom and emerged an Asian looking male that appeared to be in his early twenties."

The document said the man had a bag with a "disguise kit which consisted of a silicone type head and neck mask of an elderly Caucasian male, a brown leather cap, glasses and a thin brown cardigan."

"We can confirm that officials from the CBSA met a passenger arriving off AC018 Hong Kong to Vancouver on October 29 and the matter is still under investigation," Air Canada spokesperson Angela Mah told AFP news agency.

The man is reported to be seeking refugee status in Canada.



Hurricane Tomas lashes Haiti; six dead

BBC ONLINE

Heavy rain from Hurricane Tomas has battered western Haiti, causing floods, which have killed at least four people.

The eye of the storm clipped the island with winds of 140km/h (85mph). Up to 25cm of rain was forecast.

There is a danger of mudslides and further flooding, which could worsen the current cholera epidemic affecting parts of the country.

But the storm appeared to have spared the hundreds of thousands of people who rode it out in flimsy tent camps.

The BBC's Laura Trevelyan, in Haiti, said many people have already spent one miserable, windy, muddy night in exposed conditions.

The government had urged those living in tented homes to find better shelter, but many said they had nowhere to go.

Our correspondent says that the storm has underlined the fact that nearly a year after Haiti's devastating earthquake, more than 1.3m people are still living in makeshift canvas homes.

Rains continued off and on for hours after the storm moved on to Cuba.



This file photo shows, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse (L) and Britain's Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex (R) attend the closing ceremony of the XIX Commonwealth Games at Nehru Stadium in New Delhi. President Rajapakse has postponed his planned visit to Britain this month, due to a busy schedule, a foreign ministry official said on Friday. But The Times of India reported that the president called off the trip fearing arrest over alleged war crimes under British law.

PHOTO: AFP

Afghan Taliban threaten death to all talking peace

AP, Kabul

Scribbled notes from Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar have surfaced in mosques all over Afghanistan's ethnic Pashtun heartland, threatening death to anyone who takes up a government offer to negotiate for peace, according to a long-time Taliban member.

Trying to quash rumours of a break in their ranks, the Taliban also have vehemently denied reports including one by The Associated Press that representatives of the militant group were involved in negotiations with the Afghan government.

The leadership could be worried that commanders might strike separate deals that would threaten to undermine the insurgency and cripple the morale of their rank-and-file fighters.

President Hamid Karzai has made reconciliation a top priority and recently formed a 70-member High Peace Council to find a political solution to the insurgency. At the same time, the US-led coalition has ramped up its military campaign in an effort to pound Taliban commanders to the negotiating table.

There are no signs that either strategy is having much effect on the senior Taliban leadership.

A veteran Taliban member who recently visited the powerful shura or council in the Pakistani city of Quetta and controlled by Mullah Omar said there was no talk of negotiation among those who control the insurgency.

Volcano eruption causes flights cancellation

Death toll rises to 128

AFP, Jakarta

Airlines cancelled at least 36 flights to and from Jakarta yesterday, affecting international carriers from Europe to Asia, because of ash from the Mount Merapi volcano, an airport spokesman said.

The airlines that cancelled their flights were Singapore Airlines, Air Asia, Emirates, Malaysia Airlines, JAL, Turkish Airlines, Lufthansa, China Airlines, Korean Air, Tiger Air and the local airline Mandala.

Mount Merapi, on Central Java, first started erupting on October 26, a day after a tsunami killed more than 400 people in a remote area off Sumatra island.

The volcano, which is 430 kilometres (267 miles) from Jakarta, has so far killed 128 people, but this is the first time international flights have been affected.

Singapore Airlines said that flights to and from the capital were "temporarily suspended" while Malaysia Airlines said flights were cancelled at least until Sunday.

Flights to cities closer to Merapi -- including Yogyakarta, Solo and Bandung -- have also been affected.

US President Barack Obama is scheduled to arrive in Jakarta on November 9 for a highly anticipated visit. White House officials said Saturday there was no sign so far of any disruption to the schedule.

Thousands mourn slain Pak politician

Twin mosque attacks toll hits 72

AP, AFP, Islamabad/Akhurwall

Thousands of mourners attended the funeral yesterday of a Pakistani politician who was stabbed in London in September in a slaying that set off rioting in his hometown of Karachi.

Imran Farooq, who lived in self-imposed exile after fleeing a crackdown on his party in 1992, was killed outside his London home. No one claimed responsibility, and his wife, Shumaila Imran, has appealed for help to solve the case. Authorities in London say they are still investigating.

The body of the 50-year-old politician was flown home Saturday and his funeral was held at a public park in Karachi, in the south of Pakistan. TV footage showed a large crowd at the funeral.

Farooq was a prominent member of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement, which is allied with President Asif Ali Zardari's government.

Meanwhile, the toll from a suicide bombing on a mosque packed with worshippers rose to 82 yesterday, as four others died in an attack nearby, ending a lull in violence in Pakistan's militant-riddled northwest.

In the country's deadliest attack in two months a mosque was reduced to blood-spattered rubble strewn with body parts after a suicide bomber detonated explosives as worshippers attended Friday prayers.

The blast, which occurred in the Darra Adem Khel region, was followed hours later by a grenade assault on a second mosque in the same area, which killed at least four people.

"Sixty-eight people are now confirmed dead in the mosque suicide bombing," top local administration official Shahidullah told AFP.

MUMBAI ATTACKS Pakistan hands over 13th dossier

NDTV, Islamabad

Pakistan has handed over to India its latest dossier on the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks and a formal request regarding its proposal to send a commission to interview key witnesses in India in connection with the trial of seven Pakistani suspects linked to the incident.

Indian Deputy High Commissioner Rahul Kulshreshtha was called late on Friday evening to the Foreign Office, where Director General (South Asia) Afrasiab Mehdi Hashmi handed over Pakistan's 13th dossier on the Mumbai incident and the formal proposal for sending the commission to India.

"During the meeting, (Kulshreshtha) was handed over Pakistan's Dossier No 13 pertaining to the Mumbai terror attacks case and the detailed formal information on Pakistan's proposal to send a Commission to India," said a brief statement issued by the Foreign Office.



Green activists had attempted to block a controversial train carrying radioactive nuclear waste by crept across eastern France towards Germany yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Nancy Pelosi bidding to stay in post

BBC ONLINE

The top Democrat in the US House of Representatives has said she wants to continue to lead her party in the chamber despite its big losses in the mid-term elections.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she was driven by the urgency of protecting the Democrats' legislative accomplishments.

Republicans snatched 60 seats and the House majority, in Tuesday's polls.

Analysts say Ms Pelosi's move could widen rifts between her liberal allies and more moderate Democrats.

Ms Pelosi, 70, the United States' first female speaker, said many colleagues urged her to seek the post of minority leader in the new Congress that convenes in January.

KSA warned US of package bomb plot weeks ago

AP, Washington

Western officials are crediting a Saudi intelligence tip they received in early October, nearly three weeks before terrorists in Yemen managed to smuggle mail bombs onto airplanes, with heading off what could have been a series of catastrophic explosions aboard jetliners.

The Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula claimed responsibility Friday for sending the two bombs addressed to synagogues in the US and intercepted in Dubai and Britain.

The group also said Friday it was responsible for the crash of an UPS cargo plane in Dubai in September and threatened even more attacks on passenger and cargo aircraft.

Investigators say they believe the UPS crash was an accident, not a terror attack, but they're not discounting the al-Qaeda claim.

"A terror act is an unlikely cause. But it doesn't mean we eliminate it," said the head of the United Arab Emirates' civil aviation authority, Saif al-Suwaidi. "The investigation is ongoing. Of course we are investigating all possibilities."

The Saudi tip contained no mention of cargo planes, or any details of the plot carried out last week, said US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss classified matters. But they said it gave the US and other Western officials enough of a warning to know what to look for when another Saudi tip arrived last week.

Notice For

New Enlistment & Renewal of Suppliers

Applications are invited from the bonafide suppliers for enlistment with Pan Pacific Sonargaon, 107 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka in the following categories for the period from 1st January to 31st December 2011.

i) Food Stuff ii) General Materials Supplies iii) Engineering Supplies & Maintenance iv) Printing Materials Supplies and v) Workshop for Maintenance of Limousine Cars/Microbus/Mini Buses

The following documents are requested to be furnished with the application.

1. Valid Trade License, Up-dated Income Tax Certificate, VAT Registration Certificate and Current Bank solvency Certificate from any Schedule Bank. For Printing Materials Supplies, valid "Declaration Letter" For Workshop Ownership documents of the Garage must be submitted along with the application.
2. Experience Certificate in support of good performance as Supplier for the last three consecutive years from responsible executives of two reputable organizations having business in the related fields.
3. Name of the Establishment and the proprietor with Telephone/Mobile Number, Fax Number, E-mail and complete Mailing Address.

Application addressed to the Purchase Manager, Pan Pacific Sonargaon in the respective letterhead pad will be received up to December 05, 2010 during office hours.

All successful applicants will be required to pay an amount of Tk. 5,000.00 (Taka Five thousand) only as a New Enlistment Fee (non-refundable) and Tk. 50,000.00 (Taka Fifty thousand) only each category for new suppliers enlistment as Security Deposit (Refundable) per year in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any schedule Bank in favour of Pan Pacific Sonargaon, 107 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215

Renewal fee Tk. 5,000.00 and Security Deposit additional (Refundable) Tk. 25,000.00 for existing enlisted suppliers will be received based on their current documents as per Sl. No. 1 & 3

Authority reserves the right to accept / reject any or all the applications partially or whole without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Purchase Manager, Tel (880) 2 8111005 (Extn : 4164)

PAN PACIFIC SONARGAON
Dhaka