

# POLITICAL CRISIS IN PAKISTAN Khan threatens to drag Sharif to court

IANS, Islamabad

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leader Imran Khan has said he would approach the supreme court to get Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif disqualified because he had allegedly lied in parliament, media reported yesterday.

Addressing protesters at Islamabad's D-Chowk, Imran Khan said the government's dialogue committee announced that five demands of the PTI have been accepted, Dawn online reported.

However, Khan said the government's dialogue committee was not giving in writing what it has accepted.

"The PTI leadership will approach the supreme court to get Sharif disqualified as he was telling lies on the floor of the National Assembly regarding the leadership of the PTI, Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) and the army," Imran Khan said.

Imran Khan alleged that the government was also lying to the people of Pakistan about Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit because the latter, in fact, had no plan to visit Pakistan.

The Chinese leader was only considering a visit to Pakistan, Imran Khan added.

Imran Khan reiterated his stance that he would not leave the D-Chowk until Sharif resigned.

PAT and PTI members began their protests Aug 15 in an attempt to topple Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif whom they have been accused of rigging the 2013 general elections.

Since then, the protesters have continued with their sit-ins in Islamabad.



Indian villagers look on at a missing section of a bridge across the overflowing Tawi river that was swept away in Jammu. Indian soldiers were battling yesterday to rescue thousands of people trapped in Kashmir's worst flooding for half a century. More than 250 people have been killed in the northern Himalayan region and in neighbouring Pakistan since torrential monsoon rains triggered flooding, landslides and house collapses in recent days.

PHOTO: AFP

# US expands Iraq airstrikes

AFP, Barwana

President Barack Obama has vowed to outline a long-awaited strategy against Islamic State jihadists on Wednesday, after Washington expanded its month-long air campaign to Iraq's Sunni Arab heartland.

The new strikes deepen Washington's involvement in the conflict and were a significant escalation for Obama, who made his political career opposing the war in Iraq and pulled out US troops in 2011.

US warplanes bombed fighters from the IS jihadist group around a strategic dam on the Euphrates River in an area that the militants have repeatedly tried to capture from government troops and their Sunni militia allies.

The only previous US strikes against IS outside of northern Iraq were carried out in support of an operation by the army, Shia militia and Kurdish fighters to break a months-long siege of the Shia Turkmen town of Amerli, north of Baghdad.

Iraqi forces sought to capitalise on the strikes, launching an offensive against jihadists in the area and retaking the town of Barwana.

Obama, who has drawn flak for saying he did not have a strategy to combat Islamic State (IS) jihadists, announced that he will make a speech on Wednesday to lay out his "game plan" to deal with the group.

## FIGHT AGAINST IS

Obama to outline strategy on Wednesday

Military and political means needed: Arab League

"I'm preparing the country to make sure that we deal with a threat from" IS, Obama said in an interview aired yesterday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

He said he would not be announcing the return of US ground troops to Iraq and would focus instead on a "counter-terrorism campaign" similar to other efforts over the last few years.

"We are going to systematically degrade their capabilities. We're going to shrink the territory that they control. And ultimately we're going to defeat them," Obama said.

US Secretary of State John Kerry and Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel are fanning out across the Middle East to put together a coalition to choke IS funding, possibly conduct military action in Syria and to stop the flow of foreign fighters which have boosted the ranks of a group which has killed two US journalists.

Arab League chief Nabil al-Arabi meanwhile called on the bloc's 22 members to confront IS militarily as well as politically.

"What is needed is a clear decision for a comprehensive confrontation, militarily and politically," Arabi said at a meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo.

Earlier, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif criticised Washington for not taking more decisive action.

## BUSH-ERA MEMOS

# President could wiretap Americans at will

AFP, Washington

The US Justice Department has released two memos detailing the Bush administration's legal justification for monitoring the phone calls and emails of Americans without a warrant.

The documents, released late Friday, relate to a secret program dubbed Stellar Wind that began after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

It allowed the National Security Agency to obtain communications data within the United States when at least one party was a suspected al-Qaeda or al-Qaeda affiliate member, and at least one party in the communication was located overseas.

"Even in peacetime, absent congressional action, the president has inherent constitu-



tional authority ... to order warrantless foreign intelligence surveillance," then-assistant attorney general Jack Goldsmith said in a heavily redacted 108-page memo dated May 6, 2004.

"We believe that Stellar Wind comes squarely within the commander in chief's authority to conduct the campaign against Al-Qaeda as part of the current armed conflict and that congressional efforts to prohibit the president's efforts to intercept enemy communications through Stellar Wind would be an unconstitutional encroachment on the commander in chief's power."

The document was obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union rights group through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit.

# SUPREME COURT DIRECTIVE India to fast track cases against MPs

PTI, New Delhi

The Indian Home Ministry has asked all State governments to speed up cases against MPs and MLAs facing charges which attract disqualification, directing them to seek day-to-day trial in courts, appoint special public prosecutors and ensure regular monitoring.

The direction came in the wake of Supreme Court setting a deadline to complete trial in cases involving lawmakers.

The step is also in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's direction on July 24 asking the Home Minister and Law Minister to work out a mechanism to settle cases against politicians within a year to cleanse politics from tainted lawmakers.

Quoting the SC directive, Union Home Ministry has written separate letters to all CMs advising them to take action for ensuring the compliance of the directions of the apex court to complete the trial against sitting MPs and MLAs who have charges framed against them that attract disqualification. Any sentence which attracts punishment of two years and above can lead to disqualification from parliament or state legislature.

# N Korea to put US citizen on trial

AFP, Seoul

North Korea will put US citizen Matthew Miller on trial next Sunday, state media said, shortly after he made a highly unusual televised plea for help from Washington along with two other detained Americans. Miller, who is being held in North Korea along with Americans Kenneth Bae and Jeffrey Fowle, was arrested in April after Pyongyang said he ripped up his visa at immigration and demanded asylum.

# IS makes inroads in South Asia

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local cell with allegiance to Islamic State has been distributing pamphlets in the Pakistani city of Peshawar and eastern Afghanistan in the past few weeks, residents said.

The 12-page booklet called "Fatah" (Victory), published in the Pashto and Dari languages of Afghanistan, was being mainly distributed in Afghan refugee camps on the outskirts of Peshawar.

The pamphlet's logo features an AK-47 assault rifle and calls on local residents to support the militant group. Cars with IS stickers have also been spotted around Peshawar.

Sameeul Hanif, a prayer leader in a Peshawar neighbourhood populated mainly by Afghans, said the pamphlets were being distributed by a little-known local group called Islami Khalifat, an outspoken Islamic State supporter.

"I know some people who received copies of this material either from friends or were given at mosques by unidentified IS workers," he told

Reuters.

A Pakistani security official said the pamphlets came from Afghanistan's neighbouring Kunar province where a group of Taliban fighters was spotted distributing them.

"We came across them 22 days ago and we are aware of their presence here," said the official. "Pakistani security agencies are working on the Pakistan-Afghan border and have arrested a number of Taliban fighters and recovered CDs, maps, literature in Persian, Pashto and Dari."

**RECRUITMENT IN INDIA** Signs of Islamic State's influence are also being seen in Kashmir, the region claimed by both India and Pakistan and the scene of a decades-long battle by militants against Indian rule. Security officials in Indian-held Kashmir say they have been trying to find out the level of support for the Arab group after IS flags and banners appeared in the region.

Intelligence and police sources in New Delhi and Kashmir said the flags and banners appeared in the region.

were first seen on June 27 in a part of the state capital Srinagar, and then in July when India's only Muslim-majority region was marking Islam's most holy day, Eid al-Fitr.

Some IS graffiti also appeared on walls of buildings in Srinagar. A police officer said youngsters carrying Islamic State flags at anti-India rallies had been identified but no arrests had been made.

Another officer who questions people detained in protests against Indian rule, many of them teenagers, said most were only focused on winning independence from India.

"The majority of them have no religious bent of mind," he said. "Some of them, less than 1 percent, of course are religious and radicalized and end up joining militant ranks. They are influenced by al Qaeda, Taliban, Islamic State."

Islamic State is also trying to lure Muslims in mainland India, who make up the world's third-biggest Islamic population

but who have largely stayed away from foreign battlefields despite repeated calls from al-Qaeda.

In mid-July, an IS recruitment video surfaced online with subtitles in the Indian languages of Hindi, Tamil and Urdu in which a self-declared Canadian fighter, dressed in war fatigues and flanked by a gun and a black flag, urged Muslims to enlist in global jihad.

That came out just weeks after four families in a Mumbai suburb reported to the police that their sons had gone missing, with one leaving behind a note about fighting to defend Islam. It soon turned out that the men had joined a pilgrimage to Baghdad.

They later broke off from the tour group and never returned. Indian intelligence believe the men ended up in Mosul, the Iraqi city captured by Islamic State in June, and that one of them may have died in a bomb blast.

Last week, the Times of India newspaper said four

young men, including two engineering college students, were arrested in the eastern city of Calcutta as they tried to make their way to neighbouring Bangladesh to join a recruiter for Islamic State based there.

"It's not just these four, but our investigations have found that there could be more youngsters who are in touch with IS handlers and this is a bit of a scary proportion," the newspaper quoted a senior officer as saying.

A top official at India's Intelligence Bureau in New Delhi told Reuters: "The problem is we know so little about this network or who is acting on their behalf here."

"We know roughly where the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Indian Mujahideen [organisations backed by Pakistan] support groups are, where they make contacts. But this is a different challenge. Youth getting radicalised in their homes on the Internet, in chatrooms and through Facebook are not easy to track."



## GAZA GOVERNANCE Abbas threatens to end unity with Hamas

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has threatened to break off a unity agreement with Hamas if the Islamist movement does not allow the government to operate properly in the Gaza Strip.

The threat drew an angry reaction from Hamas, which denounced the president's allegations as "baseless" and raised fresh questions over the future of a fragile intra-Palestinian unity deal aimed at ending years of bitter rivalry.

"We will not accept the situation with Hamas continuing as it is at the moment," Abbas said on arrival in the Egyptian capital late Saturday, in remarks published by official Palestinian news agency WAFA.

"We won't accept a partnership with them if the situation continues like this in Gaza, where there is a shadow government... running the territory," he said.

"The national consensus government cannot do anything on the ground," he charged.

Abbas's remarks came on the eve of talks in Cairo with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and a key address to the Arab League nearly two weeks after a ceasefire ended a major 50-day confrontation with Israel in Gaza.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Palestinians agreed to form an interim consensus government of technocrats, ending seven years of rival administrations in the West Bank and Gaza.

## NEWS IN brief

### Afghan rape gang sentenced to death

AFP, Kabul

An Afghan judge yesterday sentenced seven men to death for the gang-rape of four women in a case that sparked nationwide outrage and highlighted the violence women face despite reforms since the Taliban era. The seven men were found guilty of kidnapping and attacking the female members of a group that was driving home to Kabul from a wedding. In a televised trial, the court heard that the men, who had obtained police uniforms and were armed with guns, stopped a convoy of cars in the early hours of August 23. They dragged the four women out of the vehicles, robbed them, beat them up and then raped them.

### Shebab rebels appoint new leader

AFP, Mogadishu

Somalia's al-Qaeda-linked Shebab militants on Saturday announced the appointment of a successor to their former leader Ahmed Abdi Godane who was killed in a US air strike. The Shebab statement said they had named Ahmad Umar Abu Ubaidah as their new leader. The group also vowed to avenge the death of Godane.

### Myanmar axes by-polls

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's election commission yesterday scrapped November by-elections in 35 parliamentary seats, citing the pressure of hosting an upcoming regional summit and extra costs ahead of a nationwide poll in 2015. Explaining the decision, the commission said the number of lawmakers who would have been returned to parliament in the by-elections "will not make a big difference" to voting. But critics say it is an attempt to prevent a Suu Kyi-led NLD landslide in 2015.