

Indian SC refuses urgent hearing

THE HINDU ONLINE

The Indian Supreme Court yesterday declined to grant an urgent hearing on a petition challenging the revocation of the special status given to Jammu and Kashmir.

During a brief hearing, advocate ML Sharma, who filed the petition, contended that Pakistan may take the matter to the United Nations.

However, a Bench headed by Justice NV Ramana declined urgent hearing while asking the petitioner whether the UN can stop the parliament from passing amendments.

Sharma, in his petition, challenged the August 5 notification of the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 2019, which amends Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and scraps its 65-year-old predecessor — The Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of May 14, 1954.

In a separate petition, the Supreme Court declined an urgent hearing on a plea of Tehseen Poonawala seeking withdrawal of curfew/restrictions and all other regressive measures, including blocking of telephone lines, internet and news channels in Jammu and Kashmir.

A Bench headed by Justice Ramana said Poonawala's plea would be put up before a bench headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi for appropriate listing.

Sharma said his petition referred to how the political leaders of Jammu and Kashmir were detained/arrested before the issuance of the August 5 notification. There was no meaningful legislative or representative debate, he submitted.

The government justified the notification by saying that it closes the "chasm" between residents of J&K and citizens of other parts of the country.



(From left, clockwise) Vehicles move past a police checkpoint in Jammu; Activists of Socialist Unity Centre of India display placards in New Delhi during a demonstration to condemn the government's move to scrap Article 370 that granted a special status to Jammu and Kashmir; and a Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) soldier stands guard as passengers walk past at the domestic terminal of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai.



PHOTO: AFP

Stop interfering

China tells US as HK protesters plan more demonstrations

REUTERS, Beijing

The Hong Kong office of China's Foreign Ministry yesterday lodged stern representations with the United States, urging US officials to stop sending wrong signals to the "violent separatists" in Hong Kong.

China also asked the United States to issue clarifications on media reports that US officials are in contact with leaders among the separatists, the office of the commissioner of China's foreign ministry in Hong Kong said on its website.

More protests are planned in several districts across the city this week, starting today, with demonstrators also planning a three-day rally at the city's international airport.

Police warned activists to protest peacefully and said they had detained three more people, raising the number arrested to nearly 600 since protests began in June, the youngest aged 13.

The United States raised its travel warning for Hong Kong, urging increased caution by visitors to the Chinese territory in the face of what it described as civil unrest after months of sometimes violent street protests.

"The protests and confrontations have spilled over into neighbourhoods other than those where the police have permitted marches or rallies," said the advisory, posted on the website of the US state department on Wednesday.

"These demonstrations, which can take place with little or no notice, are likely to continue," it added. The advisory was raised to level two on a four-point scale.

Australia also warned its travellers in an updated advisory.

Change now or endanger climate

UN report warns efforts to limit global warming could be wrecked without swift changes, presents a string of trade-offs in using land for climate change mitigation

AFP, Geneva

Humanity faces increasingly painful trade-offs between food security and rising temperatures within decades unless it curbs emissions and stops unsustainable farming and deforestation, a landmark climate assessment said yesterday.

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that efforts to limit global warming while feeding a booming population could be wrecked without swift and sweeping changes to how we use the land we live off.

Its report on land use and climate change highlighted the need to protect remaining tropical forests as a bulkhead against future warming.

But it offered a sobering take on the hope reforestation and biofuel schemes alone can offset mankind's environmental damage.

It cautioned that these mega-projects could endanger food security, underlining that reducing emissions will be central to averting disaster.

"This is a perfect storm. Limited land, an expanding human population, and all wrapped in a suffocating blanket of climate emergency," said Dave Ray, Professor of Carbon Management at the University of Edinburgh.

Land is intimately linked to climate. With its forests, plants and soil it sucks up and stores around one third of all man-made emissions.

Intensive exploitation of these resources also produces huge amounts of planet-warming CO2, methane and nitrous oxide, while agriculture guzzles up 70 per cent of Earth's freshwater supply. As the global population balloons towards 10 billion by mid-century, how land is managed by governments, industry and farmers will play a key role in limiting or accelerating the worst excesses of climate change.

"And is where we live," IPCC co-chair Hoesung Lee said during the report's launch yesterday.

"Land is under growing human pressure and land is part of the solution, but land cannot do it all."

The IPCC is the world's leading authority on climate change. Last year it warned that limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius — the optimal level aimed for in the Paris climate deal — would be impossible without a drastic drawdown in greenhouse gas emissions.

The land use report warned that any delay in reductions — across industry, transport, agriculture and infrastructure — "would lead to increasingly negative impacts on land and reduce the prospect of sustainable development."

It also presented a string of looming trade-offs in using land for climate change mitigation.

Forests, an enormous carbon sink, can be regenerated to cool the planet. But with industrial farming covering a third of land today, there's limited space.



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'GRAFT CHARGES'

Pak ex-PM's daughter arrested

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani anti-corruption officials arrested opposition leader and daughter of former Pakistani prime minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif yesterday, one of the most high-profile arrests in a crackdown on alleged graft.

Sharif is the latest member of her family to be targeted under the government of Imran Khan, who swept to victory last year.

Her father Nawaz Sharif, who served as prime minister three times, was sentenced in 2018 to seven years in jail for corruption. Her uncle, former Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif, has also faced investigation, along with other relatives.

Her detention sparked a walk out by opposition legislators at the country's parliament yesterday.

"Today in this new Pakistan, Miss Maryam Nawaz has been arrested without any conviction, so I am walking out of this house," announced Bilawal Bhutto, chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, during an address to parliament.

Sharif's arrest in the eastern city of Lahore comes just a day after authorities took former finance minister and Sharif family loyalist Mifiah Ismail into custody on graft charges.

Last month, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and former president Asif Ali Zardari were also arrested.

Pakistan halts train, bans films

REUTERS, Srinagar/Islamabad

Pakistan halted its main train service to India yesterday and banned Indian films as it kept up the diplomatic pressure on New Delhi for revoking the special status of Kashmir, the region at the heart of 70 years of hostility between them.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government this week withdrew Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir's right to frame its own laws and allowed people from outside the region to buy property there in a bid to tighten its grip over the contested region.

Kashmir remained under a communications "blackout" on Thursday with mobile networks and internet services suspended and at least 300 politicians and separatists in detention to prevent protests, according to police, media and political leaders. AFP put the number of detainees much higher.

Kashmir's leaders have warned of a backlash and Pakistan, which also lays claims to the territory, vowed to



Pakistanis protests against New Delhi's decision to revoke Jammu and Kashmir's special autonomy in Peshawar.

protests, two police officers said, speaking on condition of anonymity. At least 13 people have been injured in stone-throwing protests across the city since Tuesday night, one officer said.

"There is a lot of anger among the people," one of the police officials said.

Kashmiris see Modi's decision to withdraw the special status as a breach of trust and opening the way to flooding their region with people from the rest of India, eventually altering the demographics of the territory.

Already tens of thousands of people have died in the armed revolt to secede from India that erupted in 1989 and has ebbed and flowed since then.

Two leaders from the National Conference, a major regional party, said at least 100 politicians — including former state ministers and legislators — had been detained. They did not want to be named because of the sensitivity of the information.

fight for the rights of people living there.

The nuclear rivals have twice gone to war over Kashmir and fought an aerial duel in February.

Modi's Hindu nationalist led government, which has long campaigned for an end to Kashmir's special status, said it would split the state into two federal territories that the region's leaders labelled a further humiliation.

Thousands of paramilitary police have been deployed in Kashmir's largest city, Srinagar, schools shut and roads and neighbourhoods barricaded.

There have been sporadic

Indian airports on high alert

Flyers urged to report early

AGENCIES

Authorities have beefed up security for all the major airports in India in view of the security alert issued by the government.

According to the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security sources, all the civil aviation establishments have been asked to tighten their security ahead of Independence Day celebrations.

Indira Gandhi International Airport authorities have asked flyers to report early and have ordered the closure of "meet and greet" area till August 20.

The domestic flyers have been requested to reach the airport minimum of three hours in advance and international flyers have been asked to reach four hours prior to their scheduled flight.

The enhanced security measures included through screening of passengers, tightening access control in aviation installations, strengthening of anti-terrorism and anti-sabotage measures, enhanced security in cargo terminals and parking areas and strict vigil on the movement of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) around aviation installations, the sources said.

General Industries Security Force (GISF), which is responsible for airport security, has tightened security measures including scanning of luggage and frisking of passengers, the sources said.

Floods kill 33 in India

Heavy rains and overflowing river displace thousands in Maharashtra, Karnataka

REUTERS, Mumbai/Bengaluru

Floods brought by heavy rains and overflowing rivers across large swathes of western and southern India have killed at least 33 people and forced the evacuation of 180,000 from their homes, officials said yesterday.

Seasonal monsoon rains from June to September cause deaths and mass displacement across South Asia every year, but they deliver more than 70 per cent of India's rainfall, crucial for farm output and economic growth.

The tally of dead in the floods was 25 in the western state of Maharashtra by yesterday, officials said, while government data in the neighbouring southern state of Karnataka showed eight dead.

Rivers burst their banks in some parts of Maharashtra after authorities released water from dams brimming with as much as 670mm of rain received in a week.

If we get more rainfall, then we have no option but to release water in rivers," said the current lockdown will only fuel a sense of growing resentment.

"People are not going to take this lying down," said Iltija Javed, daughter of former Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti who was detained at the weekend.

"It's not physically possible to keep people under captivity for the rest of their lives," Javed told AFP from Srinagar.

Another key concern is Pakistan, whose Prime Minister Imran Khan vowed Tuesday to challenge India's "illegal" action at the UN



Members of a rescue team waded through a water-logged area past a submerged temple during heavy rains on the outskirts of Kochi in the southern state of Kerala, India, yesterday.

state's industrial city of Pune were full.

A boat full of villagers trying to escape the floods capsized yesterday, killing at least nine people, with rescuers searching for three or four still feared missing, he added.

Thousands of trucks were stuck on a national highway linking the financial capital of Mumbai with the southern technology hub of Bengaluru, as waters submerged the road in some places, Mhaisekar said.

In Karnataka, officials said some major reservoirs were nearly full, and warned that nearby villages could be hit by large discharges of water.

"We have sought help from the central government to rescue any people who may get stranded because of the floods," Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa told media.

Temples and electric poles were underwater as the floods flowed unabated, in video images posted by a journalist in a northern district of Karnataka.

Weather officials have forecast heavy rain in the region, including the nearby states of Kerala and Goa, over the next three to five days.

Philippines 'open' to the use of dengue vaccine: Duterte

AFP, Manila

"Yes, I am open to the use of Dengvaxia again. So many people are dead. It's an epidemic. Now compare it vis-a-vis, with those who died (allegedly due to the vaccine)," Duterte told reporters.

Dengue, or haemorrhagic fever, is the world's most common mosquito-borne virus and infects an estimated 390 million people in more than 120 countries each year — killing more than 25,000 of them, according to the World Health Organization.

It said Dengvaxia is now licensed for use in 20 other countries.

The dengue-prone Philippines in 2016 became the first nation to use Dengvaxia in a mass immunisation programme.

But controversy arose after Sanofi disclosed a year later that it could worsen symptoms for people not previously infected by the virus.

The disclosure sparked a nationwide panic, with some parents alleging the vaccine killed their children, though a government-commissioned investigation found no conclusive proof that it did.

Ex-president detained in fresh raid

AFP, Bishkek

Kyrgyzstan's former president Almazbek Atambayev was detained in a major security operation yesterday, Kyrgyz media said, after clashes between his supporters and law enforcement left one dead and dozens injured.

Atambayev was detained by security services at his residence in the village of Koi-Tash near the capital Bishkek, Kyrgyz media outlets 24.kg and Kloop.kg reported.

"Security forces have taken former president Almazbek Atambayev from his residence," the outlet said.

Atambayev decided to surrender, "24.kg reported.

An AFP correspondent on the scene saw security forces break up a crowd of hundreds of supporters using tear gas and smoke

Missiles don't impact talks

Pompeo downplays North Korea's latest warning

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Wednesday downplayed North Korea's latest missile launches, saying they won't alter the prospects for negotiations on Pyongyang's nuclear weapons.

One day after North Korea called a new round of short-range missiles a "warning" against joint US-South Korea military exercises, Pompeo told reporters that it didn't impact Washington's approach to the region.

The latest launches were the fourth pair of projectiles fired in less than two weeks by the North. They came after the South Korea and US militaries began mainly computer-simulated joint exercises on Monday to test Seoul's ability to take operational control in wartime.

Asked if the missile launches dampened the environment for negotiations on denuclearization, Pompeo replied "No."

"President Trump's administration strategy with respect to North Korea hasn't changed," he said.

"Our effort is to achieve the full, final denuclearization of North Korea. We are hopeful that in the coming weeks we will get back to negotiating table to achieve that."

Pompeo noted that the recent launches by North Korea did not involve the medium and long-range ballistic missiles that had raised alarms in 2017 and 2018, and that Pyongyang has stopped testing nuclear weapons since September 2017.

"Those are both good things," he said.

"Now the task is for us to deliver on what the two leaders agreed to back in June of last year in Singapore," he said, referring to meetings between President Donald Trump and North Korea leader Kim Jong Un, when the North made a vague pledge on denuclearization.

Meanwhile, the US government has approved the sale of \$800 million worth of helicopters to South Korea, the Pentagon announced Wednesday, hours after President Donald Trump said Seoul had agreed to pay more for the US military presence in the country.

The Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency said the State Department had approved the sale of 12 MH-60R Multi-Mission Seahawk Helicopters and extensive auxiliary radar, communications and weaponry equipment.

Pompeo also discussed maritime security. Iran and Yemen with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in a phone call on Wednesday.

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'They are not spoil of war'

Activists slam 'deeply sexist' remarks on Kashmiri women

REUTERS, New Delhi

Women's rights advocates have slammed a torrent of online posts by men from across India who expressed enthusiasm about marrying women from Kashmir after 370 removal, a girl one, referring to the constitutional provision.

Adding to those voices on Wednesday was a BJP lawmaker, Vikram Saini, seen urging party workers to marry "Kashmiri girls" in a video clip.

"We can get the bachelors among our party workers married there now, there is no problem," Saini, standing in front of a Modi poster at a rally in northern India, added.

"Our Muslim party workers should be happy, now they can go and marry fair-skinned Kashmiri girls."

Mihira Sood, a Supreme Court lawyer in New Delhi who specialises in gender issues, decried the objectification of women.

"It's one thing if someone thinks that Article 370 should have gone, but a whole another to be chest-beating about it," she said. "Kashmiri women are not spoils of war."

Many internet activists extol Kashmiri women, and men, emphasising the fair colour of their skin. Google Trends data shows searches in India for "Kashmiri girl" surged from Aug. 5.

Modi's high-stakes J&K gamble

Experts say move can trigger new conflict with Pakistan, re-ignite insurgency

AFP, New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strong-arm move to tighten control on Muslim-majority Kashmir is a gamble that could trigger conflict with Pakistan and re-ignite an insurgency that has already cost tens of thousands of lives, experts warn.

Revoking Kashmir's special status, stripping away constitutionally guaranteed privileges to land and jobs, is widely seen as Modi's most spectacular effort yet to push his Hindu nationalist agenda after a landslide election victory in May.

His government insists it will bring peace and prosperity, but the massive military reinforcement that accompanied the measure is a clear acknowledgement of the underlying risks.

While many Hindus celebrated, the Kashmir valley — focus of a 30-year-old Muslim insurgency against Indian rule — was smothered under one of the heaviest security clampdowns it has seen.

AS Dulat, a former chief of the Indian intelligence service and government advisor on Kashmir, said keeping a lid on violence was critical if Modi was to claim victory for his dramatic power play.

"But, my own apprehension is there will be repercussions and there will be an escalation of violence," he told AFP.

DS Hooda, a retired lieutenant general who once commanded Indian forces in Kashmir, also voiced fears of "anger, alienation and law and order disturbances."

Militant activity, after some years of decline, reared up after the killing of charismatic rebel leader Burhan Wani in 2016, and Kashmiris say the current lockdown will only fuel a sense of growing resentment.

"People are not going to take this lying down," said Iltija Javed, daughter of former Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti who was detained at the weekend.

"It's not physically possible to keep people under captivity for the rest of their lives," Javed told AFP from Srinagar.

Another key concern is Pakistan, whose Prime Minister Imran Khan vowed Tuesday to challenge India's "illegal" action at the UN

Security Council.

Late Wednesday Islamabad took a step further, announcing it was expelling the Indian High Commissioner and suspending bilateral trade in a downgrading of diplomatic ties over the decision.

The nuclear-armed rivals have already fought two wars over Kashmir, which is divided between the two countries and claimed by both.

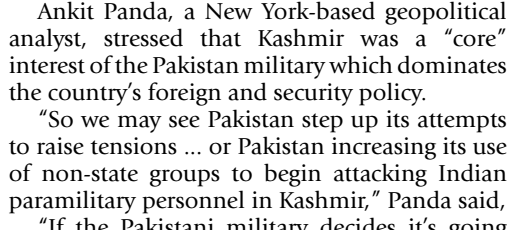
Ankit Panda, a New York-based geopolitical analyst, stressed that Kashmir was a "core" interest of the Pakistan military which dominates the country's foreign and security policy.

"So we may see Pakistan step up its attempts to raise tensions ... or Pakistan increasing its use of non-state groups to begin attacking Indian paramilitary personnel in Kashmir," Panda said.

"If the Pakistani military decides it's going to react in that way ...things start to get very dangerous."

Sadanand Dhume, an analyst at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, said it was still too early to say if Modi's move would be seen "as a wise decision or an historic blunder."

"But two things are clear: India has ignored Kashmiri sentiment, and taken a risky decision with almost unfathomable implications," Dhume said.



Special forces failed Wednesday to capture the former president in a raid on his compound in Manila. One officer died and a police chief in a critical condition.

US CRACKDOWN ON UNDOCUMENTED MIGRANTS

Raids sweep up hundreds

AFP, Miami

US officials said that some 680 undocumented migrants were detained in a major series of raids Wednesday at food processing plants in the southeastern United States.

President Trump's announced crackdown on illegal immigration.

Most of those detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents were Hispanic migrants, officials said.

TV footage showed lines of arrested migrants heading to buses parked outside the processing plants with their hands behind their backs under the watchful eyes of ICE agents.

Those who were not detained, including some children, stood by waving at their friends and relatives. Several wiped away tears they gave to families.

Special agents executed administrative and criminal search warrants resulting in the detention of approximately 680 illegal aliens," said Mike Hurst, US Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi.

"They have to follow our laws, they have to abide by our rules, they have to come here legally or they shouldn't come here at all," Hurst said at a news conference.

The US attorney did not spare the employers.

"To those who use illegal aliens for competitive advantage or to make a quick buck, we have something to say to you: If we find that you have violated federal criminal law, we're coming after you," he said.

Matthew Albence, the interim ICE head, said the raids were the result of a year-long investigation.

He said that the children of detained parents will be sent to live with relatives or other families.

Some of the migrants will be released with electronic ankle monitors as they await a court hearing.

ICE agents raided plants in the towns of Morton, Carthage, Canton, Pelahatchie, Sebastopol and Bay Springs, all in the state of Mississippi, officials said.



Anti-Trump protesters hold signs outside the makeshift memorial to the victims of the Walmart shooting that left a total of 22 people dead, in El Paso, Texas, on Wednesday. President Donald Trump consigned victims of a mass shooting in Ohio on Wednesday but protesters and opponents denounced what they say is his extremist rhetoric on race and immigration.

PHOTO: AFP