



Residents walk past downed electric pylons in Talisay town, Cebu province yesterday, a day after Super Typhoon Rai pummelled the southern and central regions of the Philippines. At least 12 people have died in the strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines this year, the disaster agency said.

PHOTO: AFP

## POST-COUP MYANMAR Suu Kyi appears in prison uniform in court

REUTERS

Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi appeared in court yesterday wearing a white top and a brown wraparound longyi that is the typical uniform for prisoners in the country, a source with knowledge of the court proceedings said.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi, 76, was sentenced this month to four years in jail for incitement and breaching Covid-19 regulations by a court. Her sentence was later reduced to a two-year term of detention in her undisclosed location.

It was the first time Suu Kyi, who is known for wearing elegant traditional outfits sometimes with a flower in her hair, has been seen in a prison uniform in court and it was unclear if it signalled a broader change in how she and other senior officials on trial were being treated. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the coup against Suu Kyi's democratically elected government led to widespread protests and raised international concern about the end of tentative political reforms following decades of military rule.

The verdicts were the first out of nearly a dozen cases against Suu Kyi that carry combined maximum sentences of more

than 100 years in prison. Suu Kyi denies all charges.

A former mayor of the capital, Naypyitaw, Myo Aung, who is also on trial, was also seen in court in a prison uniform yesterday, said the source who asked not to be identified.



The wraparound sarong, known as a longyi, are traditional outfits worn by both men and women in Myanmar.

In remarks published on Tuesday, military ruler Min Aung Hlaing said in state media that Suu Kyi and ousted President Win Myint would remain in the same location during their trials and would not be sent to prison.

Suu Kyi, the daughter of the hero of Myanmar's independence, spent years under house arrest for her opposition to military rule but was freed in 2010 and led her National League for Democracy party to a landslide victory in a 2015 election before being arrested after the February 1 military coup.

Her trial in Naypyitaw has been closed to the media and Suu Kyi's lawyers have been barred from communicating with the media and public.

### INQUIRY ON PEGASUS CONTROVERSY

## Indian SC stays proceedings of West Bengal's commission

TNN, NEW DELHI

India's Supreme Court yesterday stayed all proceedings before the Madan B Lokur Commission, appointed by the West Bengal government, to inquire into the Pegasus controversy despite the state promising to hold its hand when the apex court was seized of the issue and awaiting report from its technical expert panel headed by Justice RV Raveendran, a former SC judge.

A bench of CJI NV Ramana and justices Surya Kant and Hima Kohli expressed strong reservations against the Lokur Commission proceeding ahead with inquiry despite an undertaking given by senior advocate AM Singhvi, appearing for the WB government, on August 25.

Singvi had mentioned in the undertaking that he will convey the apex court's reservations against the Commission going ahead with the inquiry.

Yesterday, the bench asked Singhvi - "What is this? You had given an undertaking that the Commission will not proceed during the pendency of the matter before us. Now the Commission is proceeding ahead."

Singhvi said, as a state government it could not interfere with the functioning of the Commission of Inquiry though he had conveyed the restraint that needed to be exercised, as desired by the Supreme Court. After the SC passed orders on October 27 (when it appointed a technical expert panel headed by Justice Raveendran), the Commission started its work, he said.

Appearing for petitioner NGO 'Global Village Foundation Charitable Trust', three senior advocates said that the Commission secretary should be made a party to the proceedings and the apex court should seek response from it.

## Release funds to stem migrants

Russia urges Western leaders; Taliban prepare new budget without foreign aid

AGENCIES

Russia has urged Western leaders to unfreeze Afghanistan's assets to fund humanitarian relief and avert an exodus of migrants to Europe fuelled by the Taliban's takeover in August.

The international community does not recognise the hardline Islamist group, which gained control of Afghanistan in August after foreign troops hastily withdrew from a two-decade deployment.

More than half of Afghanistan's 38 million people are facing food shortages, according to the United Nations, with the winter forcing millions to choose between migration and starvation.

Zamir Kabulov, the Kremlin's envoy to Afghanistan, said that Russia had warned the West its hold on assets and transfers could see thousands of Afghan families "run to Europe this winter".

"The West is afraid of migration flows," he told the Russian news agency RIA Novosti.

"So let's unfreeze Afghan money. We must do everything we can so there isn't any need for

hundreds of thousands of Afghan families to leave the country."

Washington seized nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank after the Taliban gained control of the country and the aid-dependent economy has effectively collapsed.

Russia since has voiced concerns over the proliferation of terror groups in the country,

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including the Islamic State group, and warned terror groups planned to infiltrate neighbouring ex-Soviet countries posing as refugees.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's finance ministry under the Taliban government has prepared a draft national budget that, for the first time in two decades, is funded without foreign aid, a spokesman said.

Finance ministry spokesman Ahmad Wali Haqmal did not disclose the size of the draft

budget -- which runs until December 2022 -- but told AFP it would go to the cabinet for approval before being published.

"We are trying to finance it from our domestic revenues -- and we believe we can," he told state television in an interview shared on Twitter.

The Taliban also made a fresh appeal yesterday for Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations after the ambassador of the former US-backed government left his post.

The UN seat, and some other embassies abroad, are at the centre of a tug-of-war between exiled diplomats of the old government and Afghanistan's new Islamist rulers. No country has yet recognised the Taliban regime.

Assistant UN spokesman Farhan Haq told AFP that Afghan ambassador Ghulam Isacai "relinquished his position as of December 15", according to a letter they received Thursday.

The Taliban's nominee for the position, Suhail Shaheen, said the seat should be now given to the new government of Afghanistan, adding it was a matter of credibility for the world body.

### 'DRONE' ATTACK Pak Taliban commander escapes strike

AFP, Peshawar

A top leader of the Pakistan Taliban escaped unhurt from a suspected drone strike on a safe house in eastern Afghanistan, the militant group said yesterday.

The strike on Thursday evening came a week after a ceasefire between the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the government collapsed, with militants accusing Islamabad of killing its fighters.

The TTP plunged Pakistan into a period of horrific violence after forming in 2007.

## India to raise marriage age for women

Rights activists fear the move could be a 'real disaster'

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

The Indian government has cleared a proposal to raise the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 to 21, according to media reports, as women's rights activists fear the move could lead to a "real disaster".

The decision to raise the age was made during a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, the reports said. Currently, the minimum age of marriage for men is 21 and 18 for women.

Following cabinet approval, the government is likely to introduce an amendment to the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, and consequently bring amendments to the Special Marriage Act and personal laws such as the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

During his Independence Day speech in August last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi mentioned the proposal, saying the government

"is constantly concerned about the health of daughters and sisters".

"To save the daughters from malnutrition, it is necessary that they are married at the right age," Modi had said.



Earlier this year, hundreds of girls from the northern state of Haryana, which has one of the lowest gender ratios of females to males among Indian states, had written to Modi, urging him to raise the marriage age

from 18 to 21.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her federal budget speech in February last year said the decision was important and will be looked into. "As India progresses further, opportunities open up for women to pursue higher education and careers," she had said.

"There are imperatives of lowering MMR (maternal mortality rate) as well as improvement of nutrition levels. The entire issue about the age of a girl entering motherhood needs to be seen in this light," she said as she appointed a task force to look into the matter.

The high-level task force -- which had officials from health, law, and women and child development ministries -- backed the proposal, recommending that a woman must be at least 21 at the time of her first pregnancy.



People attend an oath-taking meeting ahead of the 10th anniversary of former leader Kim Jong Il's death, in Pyongyang, North Korea on Thursday. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un marked the 10th anniversary of the death of his father Kim Jong Il yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Can buying arms from Russia help India make peace?

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Last week India signed a pact with Russia to produce more than 600,000 Kalashnikov AK203 rifles in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The \$675m deal may be relatively insignificant in dollar terms compared to the standard of complex missiles and submarines that are typical of defence deals. But it is the latest iteration of the strategic value that the country gets with its defence orders, say analysts.

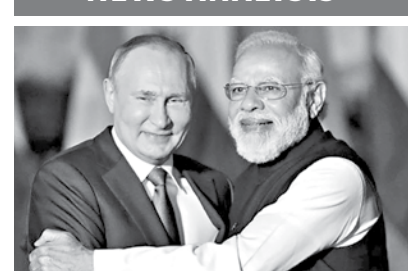
The deal was signed during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to New Delhi for the 21st India-Russia Annual Summit, only the second time he went abroad this year, after his meeting with US President Joe Biden in Geneva.

That Russia and India also agreed to renew their ten-year military cooperation agreement at the time is a sign of the strategic balancing act Delhi is striking between Russia and the US while keeping China's growing influence in check by keeping Moscow close to Delhi.

India's defence purchases from Russia and the US serve different purposes, said Angad Singh, project coordinator at New Delhi think-tank Observer Research Foundation's Strategic Studies Programme. "Fundamentally all defence

purchases are aimed at maintaining the balance of power against adversaries, but I think India understands that defence ties with Russia and the US are serving different purposes beyond basic capability-based arithmetic," Singh told Al Jazeera. "The US is an Indo-Pacific power with skin in the

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game against China. Russia is able to share sensitive strategic technologies. Both work to India's advantage in different ways."

Sure enough, both Russia and the US operated from behind the curtains as border tensions with China moved towards today's uneasy peace.

"A country like Russia with ties in Delhi and Beijing is well placed to facilitate talks," said ORF's Singh.

"But equally, between Russia straddling the fence and the kind of military access and capabilities

provided by the US -- for example during the Doklam crisis in 2017 -- I think policymakers in Delhi know the US is no less important."

But apart from business, there is a more strategic imperative here as well for India and Russia to be "clinging" to each other to slow, if not altogether halt, what they see as "the other's strategic drift", Arzan Tarapore, South Asia Research Scholar at Stanford University, told Al Jazeera.

New Delhi is keen to ensure that Russia does not slip further into China's orbit just as Moscow is no doubt concerned by India's steadily deepening alignment with the US, he said.

Such arms deals, he noted, offer a way for India and Russia to maintain a diversified portfolio of security partners, and keep each other from drifting too far into US and China-dominated camps.

The US appears to have less of a choice in this respect and so far, at least, it has not activated the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) against India, a law that empowers it to impose sanctions against officials and countries doing, among other things, big-ticket defence deals with Russia.



North-West Power Generation Company Ltd.  
ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 Certified  
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)



Office of the Chief Engineer  
Sirajganj Power Station, NWPGL  
Soydabad, Sirajganj

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Date: 15/12/2021

### e-Tender Corrigendum/Amendment Notice (OTM)

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)):

Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Field Name	Published in Tender (Old Value)	Amended (New Value)
626711	Supply, Installation and Testing of Fire Detection and Fire Suppression System Equipment.	Last Selling Date & Time	20/12/2021 10:30 AM	29/12/2021 10:30 AM
		Opening Date & Time	20/12/2021 12:00 PM	29/12/2021 12:00 PM

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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