

Ghulam Nabi Azad quits Congress

Blames Rahul Gandhi for party's failings

REUTERS, New Delhi

A veteran leader of India's main opposition Congress party quit yesterday, issuing a scathing resignation letter in which he blamed the scion of the influential Gandhi family for the decline of the party that dominated Indian politics for decades.

After ruling for much of India's post-independence period, the 137-year old party, which traditionally promoted a secular state, has floundered against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The BJP has won two successive general elections since 2014 with landslides and looks well placed to win the next one, due by 2024.

Ghulam Nabi Azad, a former federal minister who also ruled the disputed region of Kashmir, said he was leaving Congress after nearly 50 years and blamed the party's de facto second-in-command, Rahul Gandhi, the son of party chief Sonia Gandhi, for its failings.

"Unfortunately after the entry of Shri Rahul Gandhi into politics and particularly after January, 2013 when he was appointed as vice president by you, the entire consultative mechanism which existed earlier was demolished by him," Azad said in a letter to Sonia. "All senior and experienced leaders were sidelined and new coterie of inexperienced sycophants started running the affairs of the party."

Congress spokesman Jairam Ramesh questioned the timing of the letter, saying it came as the party was working to organise campaigns against price rises, employment and religious polarisation.

"Unfortunately, at the national level we have conceded the political space available to us to the BJP and state level space to regional parties," Azad added in his letter blaming the party for giving the leadership to a non-serious person.



A family with their belongings wade through rain waters following rains and floods during the monsoon season in Jamshoro, Pakistan, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MONSOON FLOODING

Pakistan declares emergency

34 killed in last 24 hrs; more than 900 killed since June; 33m 'badly affected'

AFP, Sukkur

Heavy rain pounded much of Pakistan yesterday after the government declared an emergency to deal with monsoon flooding it said had affected more than 30 million people.

The annual monsoon is essential for irrigating crops and replenishing lakes and dams across the Indian subcontinent, but each year it also brings a wave of destruction.

The National Disaster Management Authority yesterday said that more than 900 people had been killed this year -- including 34 in the last 24 hours -- as a result of the monsoon rains that began in June. Officials say this year's floods are comparable to 2010 -- the worst on

record -- when over 2,000 people died and nearly a fifth of the country was under water.

"I have never seen such huge flooding because of rains in my life," octogenarian farmer Rahim Bakhsh Brohi told AFP near Sukkur, in southern Sindh province.

Like thousands of others in rural Pakistan, Brohi was seeking shelter beside the national highway, as the elevated roads are among the few dry places in the endless landscapes of water.

A statement from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's office said 33 million people had been "badly affected" by the flooding, while the country's disaster agency said nearly 220,000 homes were destroyed and half a million more badly

damaged.

Two million acres of cultivated crops had been wiped out in Sindh alone, the provincial disaster agency said.

Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman, who on Wednesday called the floods "a catastrophe of epic scale", said the government had declared an emergency, and appealed for international assistance.

Premier Sharif cancelled a planned trip to Britain to oversee the flood response, and ordered the army to throw every resource into relief operations.

A national fundraising appeal has been launched. The worst-hit areas are Balochistan and Sindh in the south and west, but almost all of Pakistan has suffered this year.

COVID-19 VACCINE

Moderna sues Pfizer/BioNTech for patent infringement

REUTERS

Moderna yesterday sued Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech for patent infringement in the development of the first Covid-19 vaccine approved in the United States, alleging they copied technology that Moderna developed years before the pandemic. Pfizer shares fell nearly 1 percent, while BioNTech US-listed shares were down about 1.5 percent and Moderna shares slipped 1.7 percent yesterday. The lawsuit, which seeks undetermined monetary damages, was filed in US District Court in Massachusetts. In a news release yesterday, Moderna said the lawsuit would be filed also in the Regional Court of Duesseldorf in Germany. "We are filing these lawsuits to protect the innovative mRNA technology platform that we pioneered, invested billions of dollars in creating, and patented during the decade preceding the Covid-19 pandemic," Moderna Chief Executive Stephane Bancel said in the news release.

Suspended Thai PM to continue as defence minister

REUTERS, Bangkok

Suspended Thai leader Prayuth Chan-ocha said on social media he will continue in his role as defence minister, in his first direct address to the public since a court ordered him to cease his duties as prime minister while it reviews his term limit. The Constitutional Court on Wednesday decided to hear a petition brought by the main opposition party arguing that Prayuth's years spent as the chief of a military junta after he took power in a 2014 coup, should count toward

his overall time in office. The constitution stipulates a term limit of eight years for the PM. It remains unclear when the court will deliver a decision on the review. Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan is serving as acting premier of Southeast Asia's second-biggest economy.

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The candidates may obtain the application form from the Website of the Department: www.dupublicad.com. The scanned copy of the filled in form may also be submitted online along with the proof of scanned copy of payment of application fee paid in the following bank account: Sonali Bank Ltd., Dhaka University Campus Corporate Branch, Name of account: Executive Master of Public Administration, Account Number: 4405702000948.

Application form may also be collected from and submitted to the Office of the Department of Public Administration on working days between 09:00am and 03:00pm and weekend between 10am and 8pm at a cost of Tk. 1000/- For more information contact the office of the Department of Public Administration, Arts Building, 3rd floor, Phone 9661920 ext. 6661, 6662 Cell: Mr. Arif 01711985186, 01400985186. Email: aamaruf@office.du.ac.bd

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