

POST-COUP MYANMAR

## Junta jails Suu Kyi for 6 more years for corruption

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's junta court yesterday sentenced ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to another six years in prison for corruption, a source with knowledge of the case said, taking the Nobel laureate's total jail time to 26 years.

Suu Kyi "was sentenced to three years imprisonment each for two corruption cases" in which she had been accused of taking bribes from a businessman, the source said, adding that the terms would be served concurrently.

Detained since the putsch last year, Suu Kyi has already been convicted of corruption and a clutch of other charges by a closed junta court.

In the latest case, the Nobel laureate -- who has been in military custody since the night of the coup -- was accused of taking bribes of \$550,000 from businessman Maung Weik.

Suu Kyi appeared in good health and would appeal, the source added.



Journalists have been barred from attending the court hearings and Suu Kyi's lawyers have been banned from speaking to the media.

Another junta court yesterday jailed a Japanese journalist arrested while filming an anti-coup protest for three more years for violating immigration law, a diplomatic source told AFP.

Toru Kubota, 26, who was detained in July and jailed for seven years last week, was sentenced to an additional "three years imprisonment", a diplomatic source at Japan's embassy said, citing the journalist's lawyer.

Myanmar's junta has clamped down on press freedoms, arresting reporters and photographers, as well as revoking broadcasting licences during its crackdown on dissent since seizing power last year.

Kubota, who was detained near an anti-government rally in commercial hub Yangon along with two Myanmar citizens, appeared in good health at the hearing yesterday, the source said, citing his lawyer.

## ABORIGINAL BAOBAB TREES Race on to save ancient carvings

AFP, Sydney

Researchers are scouring Australia's desert outback to document ancient Aboriginal carvings on massive baobab trees, warning yesterday that the recently discovered artwork could soon be lost forever.

Professor Sue O'Connor, from the Australian National University, said the long, looping carvings linked to Aboriginal creation stories were of huge cultural significance, with some dating back at least several hundreds of years.

"Sadly, after lasting centuries if not millennia, this incredible artwork, which is equally as significant as the rock art Indigenous Australians are famous for, is now in danger of being lost," she said.

It took researchers two years to find carvings on 12 trees in the Tanami desert, a remote stretch of land on the border between the state of Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

O'Connor said researchers were racing to investigate hundreds of other baobab trees, and to photograph any carvings before they died.

"Unlike most Australian trees, the inner wood of baobabs is soft and fibrous and when the tree dies, they just collapse," she said.

Brenda Garstone, an Aboriginal woman from Western Australia who was involved in the research, said she wanted to preserve the carvings for future generations. "We are in a race against time to document this invaluable cultural heritage," she said.

O'Connor said the next step was getting an accurate age for the baobab trees.

"They are often said to live for up to 2,000 years but this is based on the ages obtained from some of the massive baobab trees in South Africa, which are a different species. We simply don't know how old the Australian baobabs are."

Worldwide, there are eight species of the baobab tree -- six from Madagascar, one in continental Africa, and one in Australia. The need to preserve historical Aboriginal sites has been under the spotlight in Australia.

## HUMAN SACRIFICE Two Indian women killed

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police said yesterday they have arrested three people including a man claiming to be an occult practitioner for allegedly killing two women as human sacrifices in the belief they would become rich.

A couple in financial difficulties paid Mohammed Shafi 300,000 rupees to "arrange" two victims who he then "brutally abused and killed" in separate rituals three months apart, police said.

Shafi told Bhagaval Singh and his wife Laila from Kerala, that the "human sacrifice was the way to great riches".

Shafi "enticed" the first victim to Singh's home in June on the pretext of a role in a local movie. He then convinced couple to take part in a second sacrifice after they complained their fortunes had not changed, said police.



People take part in a protest against the fuel price hikes and asking increases in wages, near the Presidential Palace in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday.



Palestinian men throw rocks during clashes with Israeli forces in Hebron, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday. Palestinians launched a rare strike in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem yesterday over a days-long operation by Israeli security forces in a refugee camp after a soldier was shot dead.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## MAHSA AMINI PROTESTS

## Iran indicts dozens for inciting 'riots'

Supreme leader says 'enemies' involved in protests

### AGENCIES

Authorities in Iran said they have indicted dozens of people in connection with "riots", as protests that erupted nearly a month ago over the death in custody of a young woman, Mahsa Amini, persist in cities across the country.

Ali Salehi, prosecutor general in Tehran, said yesterday that 60 indictments have been issued for "rioters" in the capital, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Another 65 indictments have been issued in the southern province of Hormozgan and arrest orders were in effect for 13 more individuals, said local judiciary chief Mojtaba Ghahremani.

The officials said the indicted individuals, about whom no information was disclosed, were responsible for "creating illegal gatherings, arson, and violation of a number of government and private places", reports Al Jazeera online.

The indictments come after Iran's judiciary chief, Gholam-Hossein Mohseni Ejei, had earlier ordered courts across the country to fast-track the cases of those arrested in connection with "riots" while last week, a top security official had issued a stern warning to participants.

"Anyone who is arrested at the scene of the riots will not be freed under any circumstances until the time of their trial, which will be held quickly and will issue assertive and deterring sentences," Majid

Mirahmadi, deputy for security and police affairs at the interior ministry, told local media.

However, authorities have repeatedly said that "most" of the people -- including students -- arrested during the protests that began last month have been released after signing declarations that they would not

in Tehran chanted in their first solidarity rally with the women-led demonstrations that have swept Iran since the 22-year-old's death, said Oslo-based Iran Human Rights. Soon after, they were seen running from under a cloud of tear gas, in footage distributed online by IHR despite a major internet outage, and



participate in demonstrations again. Many dozens are thought to have been killed, and more arrested, during the protests but Iranian authorities have not published an official tally yet.

Meanwhile, Iranian security forces yesterday fired tear gas at a lawyers' protest over Amini's death, said a rights group, which also raised the death toll to at least 108 from the crackdown on the nearly month-long movement.

"Woman, life, freedom," the lawyers

one lawyer later said three of the demonstrators were arrested.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a televised appearance yesterday, again accused Iran's "enemies" of stoking "these street riots".

"The actions of the enemy, such as propaganda, trying to influence minds, creating excitement, encouraging and even teaching the manufacture of incendiary materials, are now completely clear," he said.

## TREATMENT OF WOMEN

## US announces more sanctions on Taliban

APF, Washington

The United States announced new sanctions Tuesday against the Taliban as punishment for their repressive treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Secretary of State Anthony Blinken unveiled the new visa restriction policy for current or former members of the Taliban and others involved in repressing women through restrictive policies and violence.

Blinken made the announcement on the UN's International Day of the Girl Child.

"As a grim example, for more than a year, Afghanistan remains the only country in the world where girls are systematically barred from attending school beyond the sixth grade, with no return date in sight," Blinken said.

After coming back to power in August 2021 following the retreat of US forces, the hardline Taliban have barred girls from attending secondary school. But women are allowed to attend university.

A recent suicide bombing on a Kabul classroom killed and wounded dozens of pupils as they prepared for exams.

The United Nations has put the death toll at 53, including 46 girls and young women.

The bomber blew himself up next to women at a gender-segregated study hall packed with hundreds of students taking a practice test for university admissions.

Last Wednesday, an explosion hit a mosque in Afghanistan's capital near the heavily fortified interior ministry compound, killing four people and wounding 25, a ministry spokesman said.

The government did not immediately say what caused the blast in Kabul, where Islamist militants have carried out a number of attacks in recent months.

"The mosque was used by visitors and sometimes by interior ministry employees," said interior ministry spokesman Abdul Nabi Takor, who confirmed the casualty toll.

Italian NGO aid group Emergency, which runs a hospital in Kabul, said on Twitter that it had received 20 patients from the blast, two of whom were dead on arrival. The interior ministry compound is in a secure area next to Kabul international airport.