

INTERNATIONAL

Imran banned from airwaves

The Pak ex-PM moves Lahore HC against the move

AGENCIES

Pakistan TV stations have been banned from broadcasting speeches by former prime minister Imran Khan, the state media watchdog said, the latest hurdle facing the politician as he campaigns for early elections.

Khan was routed from office in a no-confidence motion last year and has been pressuring the fragile coalition which replaced him with daily speeches, regular rallies and allegations of corruption.

Meanwhile, the 70-year-old former cricketing superstar has been tangled in a slew of elaborate legal cases, a frequent fixture in Pakistan's mudslinging politics.

Late Sunday, as police attempted to arrest Khan in connection with a corruption case, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) banned his live speeches and reruns with immediate effect.

The order came after Khan addressed hundreds of supporters outside his house. "I am being summoned in fake cases and the nation should know about them," he said.

"It will be a bad omen for the country if the nation does not stand against the corrupt rulers."

PEMRA said he was "levelling baseless allegations and spreading hate speech... against state institutions and officers" which are "likely to disturb public peace".

Hours after the notice, PEMRA also suspended private TV station ARY News, which backs Khan.

Khan yesterday moved the Lahore High Court (LHC) against the Pemra's decision. A hearing will take place today, reported Dawn.

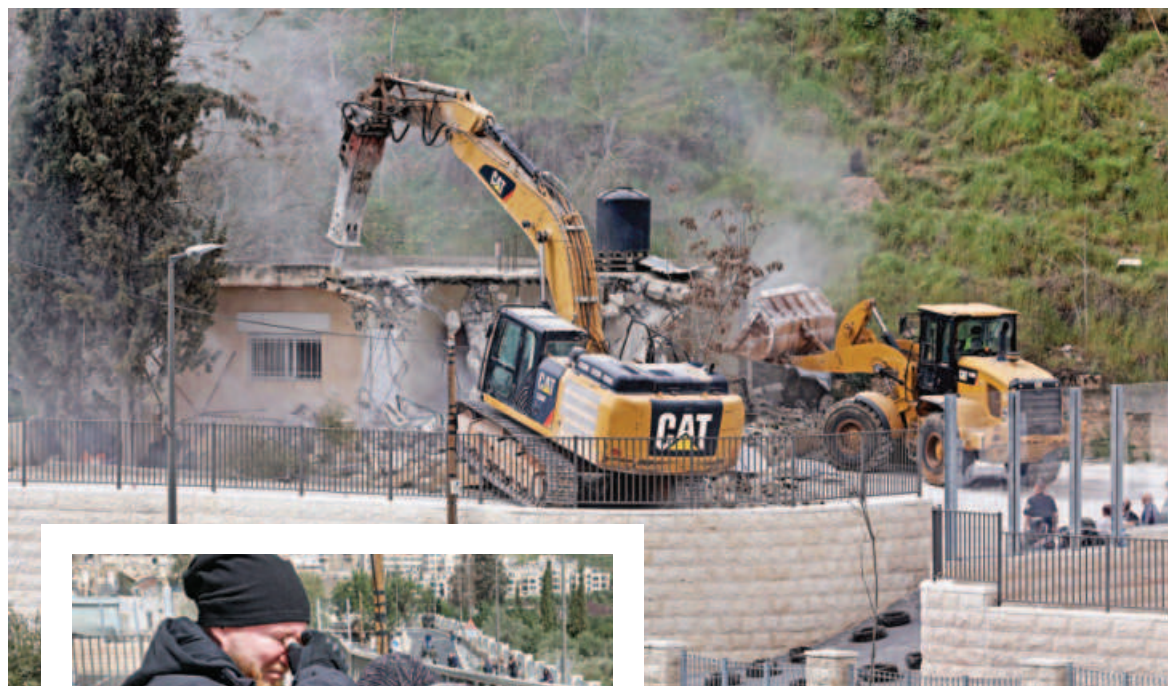
Sunday's directives were the third such ban of Imran's speeches and press talks. The first such restriction was set aside by the Islamabad High Court on Sept 6, 2022 and the other was withdrawn hours after being imposed by the government.

Pakistan has stringent speech controls. The constitution allows free speech to be restricted in the interests of "public order, decency or morality", a provision rights groups say is designed to quash dissent.

TV channels are regularly ordered to modify their coverage for political reasons, and last month the Wikipedia website was briefly blocked for allegedly hosting "blasphemous content".

Islamabad police officers, who travelled to Khan's home in Lahore, were ultimately unsuccessful in their attempt to detain him on Sunday after he failed to appear in a corruption case late last month. He is accused of failing to declare gifts received during his time in office.

In 2018, Khan swept to power thanks to an electorate weary of the dynastic politics of Pakistan's two major parties. He promised to do away with entrenched corruption and cronyism, but has become bogged down in like-for-like allegations with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Nonetheless, Khan remains hugely popular among the nation's youth.



Israeli military bulldozers demolish a house of a Palestinian family, built without the municipality's permission, in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Wadi al-Joz yesterday. Inset, Palestinian family members react as their house is being demolished by the bulldozers.

PHOTO: AFP

GLOBAL GREENHOUSE GASES

UN takes step towards new way of tracking

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations announced yesterday that it had taken a significant step towards trying to fill a key gap in the fight against climate change: standardised, real-time tracking of greenhouse gases.

The UN's World Meteorological Organization has come up with a new Global Greenhouse Gas Monitoring Infrastructure that aims to provide better ways of measuring planet-warming pollution and help inform policy choices.

The WMO's new platform will integrate space-based and surface-based observing systems, and seek to clarify uncertainties about where

greenhouse gas emissions end up.

It should result in much faster and sharper data on how the planet's atmosphere is changing.

"We know from our measurements that greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere are at record high," WMO chief Petteri Taalas said.

The three major greenhouse gases are carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Of those, CO2 accounts for around 66 percent of the warming effect on the climate.



"The increase in CO2 levels from 2020 to 2021 was higher than the average growth rate over the past decade, and methane saw the biggest year-on-year jump," Taalas said.

The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius above levels measured between 1850 and 1900 – and 1.5C if possible. WMO said there needed to be stronger underpinnings of climate change mitigation actions taken under the agreement.

Govt to sit again

FROM PAGE 12

said that there have not been benefits from the law, but I don't believe that to be true."

"When we saw that the law was being abused, we communicated with the United Nations Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and had a virtual meeting with them. Then I went to Geneva and spoke with the high commissioner," he explained, adding that since then they have been trying to identify good examples across the world.

"We have formed a committee along with the OHCHR comprised of officers from the law ministry, foreign ministry, home ministry and ICT division. The UN office has given some suggestions and the government is looking into it," said the minister.

He added, "I will not say that this law does not have any flaws. All laws have some procedural flaws and some problems in implementation. When there is a problem in implementation, then that can be fixed through a discussion. If we can solve the problem by changing any clauses, then we will do so."

"The way civil society adheres to the constitution, we do too. We too do not want that there be any law that goes against the constitution," he said, adding that the DSA was not formulated to violate the right to freedom of expression or independent journalism.

He said that DSA is only meant to curb digital crimes. "It is regrettable that many are abusing and misusing the law after it was made."

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, Jyotirmoy Barua, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, and academic Professor CR Abrar also spoke at the event while Randy Ali, deputy mission director of USAID, attended as the special guest.

Shakib denies England breakthrough.

FROM PAGE 12

Mushfiqur, the latter looking good to score a ton until he perished to an Adil Rashid googly.

Suddenly, the Tigers' innings started to flounder. Mahmudullah Riyad, Afif Hossain and Mehedi Hasan Miraz were dismissed cheaply, but Shakib held on, playing some immense shots on a difficult wicket with the deliveries often slowing down. Having completed his fifty, he edged the score to something defensible along with the tail-enders before departing for a 71-ball 75 as the hosts managed 246 all out.

England started their chase solidly and Phil Salt looked like he could take the game away after a fifty-run stand but Shakib turned up with the ball as well, getting the first

Many pointing at conflict

FROM PAGE 12

Salvation Army (Arsa) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) engaged in several clashes since January over control of the Rohingya camps. The first of those clashes was at Konarpara Rohingya Camp in Tambaru of Bandarban's Naikkhanchhari upazila in January.

The RSO maintained a strong presence in blocks A, B, and D of camp-II in Ukhiya since January. The Arsa was trying to establish its supremacy in those blocks for the last few days, the sources added.

Suicide blast

FROM PAGE 12

had been providing security.

There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack. "Terrorism in Balochistan is part of a nefarious agenda to destabilise the country," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said in a statement released by his office.

The country is facing overlapping political, economic and environmental crises, as well as a worsening

breakthrough.

From solidity, England fell into chaos as three wickets fell in the space of one run. After Salt, Ebadot Hossain left a good impression by getting David Malan out for a duck in the 10th over. Shakib then rattled Jason Roy's stumps with first ball of the next over and within a shout of a hat-trick, but Curran kept the delivery out.

Curran and James Vince put up another threatening partnership before Mehedi Miraz bagged the former. Shakib then produced a ripper of a delivery to send back Vince.

After Ebadot went through Moeen Ali's defences, the pressure on England was starting to tell. Jos Buttler was accelerating before he fell prey to Taijul Islam after a 24-ball 26 and

Many pointing at conflict

Arsa members set fire to the camp on Sunday afternoon to drive out the RSO members, said a source, adding that the two groups exchanged gunshots around 2:00pm that day.

Seeking anonymity, witnesses said exchange of fire between the two groups has become very common in recent days. The frequency of clashes increased since January when RSO members entered the Rohingya camps in Ukhiya.

"We first became stateless and now we are homeless. It's probably

3 students die

FROM PAGE 12

the spot, said Badrul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Hatikumrul Highway Police Station in Sirajganj.

They were returning to Pabna after attending a religious programme, he added.

Police are trying to identify the vehicle, he said. The bodies of the victims have been handed over to their relatives without autopsies, he added.

Three killed as bus, train

FROM PAGE 12

"Attaching oil tankers from the Padma, Meghna and Jamuna depots in Patenga, the train was heading out. The train hit the bus leaving two dead on the spot," Deputy Commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police Port Division Shakila Soltana told The Daily Star.

An injured passenger of the bus died on the way to Chattogram Medical College Hospital, she added.

At least 7 to 8 injured people were taken to the CMCH, she said.

The bus flipped on its side on impact.

The bodies were sent to the CMCH morgue.

Intel agencies

FROM PAGE 12

six months.... Different intelligence agencies do it. The prime minister through experts is also carrying out a survey. The surveys are now being conducted in every three months."

Quader said they were also getting feedback from the party leaders assigned to look after organisational activities at the divisional level.

"Considering everything, our decision is to nominate candidates who are the most acceptable to the people."

Asked whether the AL as a political party can use government agencies for its political works, Quader said, "When a government is in power, it is the duty of the intelligence agencies to file report on who is good, who is bad, who is acceptable, who has lost acceptance, or who is doing misdeeds. They have filed reports on misdeeds."

The minister said it is not that the AL would pick candidates only on the basis of the report of intelligence agencies.

'The culprits still around you'

FROM PAGE 12

chaotic situation around him. He later announced he would see to bringing the attackers to book and left the area.

Seeking anonymity, a victim said, "We could identify at least one person who led the arson attack on our area on Friday, and he was right here when the minister came to us today [yesterday]."

"We have shared the attacker's name with the law enforcers."

Earlier, around 11:00am, the minister visited Ahmednagar, another village of the Ahmadiyyas, and distributed relief among the victims.

At that time, Motalab Hossain Khan, a community leader, said, "We are grateful to you [for the relief]. But we don't want relief. Rather, we want security so that we can live here peacefully. We want justice."

Speaking at the relief distribution event, the railways minister claimed BNP-Jamaat forces carried out the attacks.

"The government is investigating the incident to check whether there were any administrative weakness or if law enforcers

Dollar crisis

FROM PAGE 1

The reason could be that exporters are not bringing in their proceeds to the country holding out for a better exchange rate. Exporters get the lowest rate for dollar.

As per rules, exporters are supposed to cash in their proceeds within four months.

An exporter gets Tk 104 per dollar now, whereas the official exchange rate is Tk 106.9.

At the same time, portfolio investment, which is investment in the country's stock market by foreign investors, crashed 95.5 percent in January from the previous month.

Both short-term and long-term loans have dropped exponentially, in perhaps a reflection of Moody's putting the Bangladesh's sovereign rating and that of seven Bangladeshi banks under review for downgrade.

Commercial banks are also liquidating their nostro accounts with foreign banks to clear their dues.

"Money is flowing out everywhere. There are more outflows than inflows," Hussain said.

As a result, reserves are not looking up.

As of March 1, foreign reserves stood at \$32.3 billion, down 29.8 percent from a year earlier, according to BB.

Reserves are poised to come down to about \$31 billion after the forthcoming \$1.05 billion payment to the Asian Clearing Union for imports from the Saarc region.

"What is there to be done from the administrative side has already been done but it is not bringing any change in improvement. Stick didn't work – now it

is time for carrot."

In the absence of any major policy changes, it is unlikely that the government would be able to meet one of the mandatory conditions to get the second tranche of the \$4.7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, Hussain said.

As per the condition set for June and December, Bangladesh's net international reserves (NIR) cannot be below \$22.9 billion in March, \$24.5 billion in June, \$25.3 billion in September and \$26.8 billion in December.

At present, Bangladesh's NIR is in the neighbourhood of \$24 billion.

If exporters do not cash in their proceeds within the stipulated time and remittance inflows do not increase much, it would be tough to meet the IMF's condition.

"If you put more curbs on imports, what will happen to the economy? There is no space to put more curbs."

Moody's forecast GDP growth will slow to 5 percent this fiscal year and 5.5 percent next fiscal year, down from 7.2 percent registered for fiscal 2021-22.

In January, the World Bank pared back Bangladesh's growth forecast for this fiscal year by 1.5 percent to 5.2 percent.

Earlier in December, the government revised down the growth forecast from 7.2 percent to 6.5 percent due to the impacts of the Ukraine war, bringing it in line with the projection made by the Asian Development Bank (6.6 percent) in September last year and the IMF (6 percent) the following month.

8,200 unnamed people.

Abdul Latif Miah, officer-in-charge of Panchagarh Police Station, said 81 people have so far been arrested and additional forces have been deployed in the area to maintain law and order.

On Friday, two people were killed and at least 30 others, including seven policemen, injured in a clash between law enforcers and supporters of Islamist organisations demonstrating against the Ahmadiyya community.

The agitators set fire to many houses and four shops belonging to the members of the community. They also attacked a local police station, vehicles of law enforcers and a traffic police office.

The Ahmadiyyas claimed that some 150 houses were looted and vandalised before being torched.

Members of several Islamist organisations, including the Islamic Andolon Bangladesh, were staging demonstrations since Thursday, demanding cancellation of the three-day-long Jalsa Salana, an annual gathering of the Ahmadiyya community.

Building had no fire safety

FROM PAGE 12

reasons," Brig Gen Md Main Uddin, director general of the fire service, said, while talking to reporters after attending an event in Mirpur yesterday.

The bomb disposal unit of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime found no sign of explosive substances but found the presence of gas at the scene.

The CTCIC suspect the explosion might have originated from the office of the insurance company.

Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) declared the Shirin Mansion as "risky" and put up a banner, restricting entry to the building.

Six injured employees of the insurance company were admitted to the

Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

Three of them – Zahur Ali, with 44 percent burns, Ayesha Akter Asha, with 38 percent burns, and Akbar Ali, with 37 percent burns, – are in critical condition, said Dr Samanta Lal Sen, coordinator of the hospital.

A Dhaka University student Nur Nabi, 23, on whom parts of the wall collapsed, is fighting for his life at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"His condition is critical. We are doing our best," Dr Asit Chandra Sarkar, chief of DMCH's neurosurgery department, told The Daily Star, after conducting surgery on his head yesterday.

Meanwhile, shop owners of the building are worried.

"There were goods worth Tk 50 lakh inside my two shops. Ramadan and Eid are coming up fast. The frequent college student clashes on top of the Covid pandemic have already done enough damage to our business. Now, this is another massive blow," said Mahabub Mollick, proprietor of two shops in the market.

Shafiqul Gani Shabu, officer-in-charge of New Market Police Station, said, "As far as we've come to know, the owner of the building – Shirin Chowdhury lives abroad. We have yet to contact her."

An unnatural death case was filed over the incident last night.