

## FAILURE TO PROVIDE FUNDS FOR POLLS Pak SC warns govt of 'serious consequences'

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan's Supreme Court (SC) yesterday warned the government of "serious consequences" if it failed to release the funds required for conducting polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It also declared as inadmissible for hearing the defence ministry's plea to hold general elections across Pakistan simultaneously upon completion of the terms of the national as well as Sindh and Balochistan assemblies.

The top court issued the warning while hearing the ministry's request to hold general elections across Pakistan simultaneously upon completion of the terms of the national as well as Sindh and Balochistan assemblies.

A three-judge bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijaz Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar heard the petition.

A day earlier, the defence ministry filed an application in the SC, requesting the top court to recall its April 4 order that had fixed May 14 as the election date for the Punjab Assembly.

The application asked the apex court to issue directives that general elections to the national and all provincial assemblies be held on the same date.

Along with the application, the defence

ministry also issued a report in court, laid before the SC in compliance with its directives to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and other departments to furnish reports after releasing Rs21 billion to the ECP for holding elections to the Punjab and KP assemblies.

In its report, the ministry highlighted the need of holding the elections on the same day in view of the heightened security situation in the country. It also said that the armed forces would be able to carry out election duties by early October.

"Due to the prevalent security situation and counter-terrorism operations being carried out in KP and Balochistan as well as the intelligence-based operations in Punjab and Sindh, the armed forces, Rangers, Frontier Constabulary and other forces are not logically available to be repositioned and re-posted for providing election security, twice in a span of six months," the report said.

"Significant time is required to prepare the members of the armed forces for the election duty, given much of the force has been actively engaged in operations for a considerable period of time," the application said, adding the security situation in Punjab and Sindh has been stable in the light of the efforts of the ongoing operations in KP and Balochistan, respectively.

### CORRUPTION, OTHER CHARGES

## Myanmar SC to hear appeal of Suu Kyi

REUTERS

The Supreme Court in military-ruled Myanmar will hear an appeal by deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi against her convictions for corruption and violating election and state secrets laws, according to a source familiar with the matter.

The 77-year-old Nobel laureate is serving 33 years in prison after convictions in more than a dozen cases that Suu Kyi has called absurd and her allies say were orchestrated by the junta to destroy her political career.

Suu Kyi's former ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party won re-election in a landslide in November 2020 but the army arrested her three months later during a coup and annulled the vote, citing unaddressed irregularities.

The source, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of matter, said no date had been set by the Supreme Court to hear the appeal of Suu Kyi and co-defendant Win Myint, the ousted former president.

"Today the judge accepted the proposals to listen to the appeals on those seven cases," the source said.

The appeal comes as the military struggles to assert control over large parts of Myanmar and intensifies air and ground operations against ethnic minority armies and a pro-democracy resistance movement.

Suu Kyi is currently being held in an annex of a prison in the capital Naypyitaw.

She led Myanmar for five years from 2015 during a decade of tentative democracy and tense power-sharing with the military after it ended its 49-year rule in 2011.

## Russian spy ships planning North Sea sabotage

Says media report; Kremlin dismisses the claim as a 'mistake'; Kyiv receives Patriot air defence systems

AFP, Stockholm

A documentary being aired by Nordic public broadcasters yesterday claimed Russia is suspected of having a spy programme in the North Sea planning the sabotage of energy infrastructures in Northern Europe.

The Kremlin yesterday dismissed the media claims as a "mistake" and "without basis", reiterating its appeal for "a transparent and impartial international inquiry" into the sabotage of the Baltic Sea Nord Stream gas pipelines in September 2022.

A joint investigation conducted by public television stations NRK in Norway, DR in Denmark, SVT in Sweden and YLE in Finland claimed Moscow is using dozens of military and civilian vessels to collect information on wind farms and communication cables.

The report cited intelligence officials in the Nordic countries.

The Russian spy programme is known by the acronym GUGI, or the Main Directorate of Deep-Sea Research, according to DR.

One ship documented was the Admiral Vladimirsky, officially an oceanographic research vessel, that was observed sailing near large offshore windfarm parks off Britain and Denmark at the end of 2022.

When a DR team approached the vessel in a dinghy, masked and heavily-armed men appeared on deck, an excerpt published by the Danish broadcaster showed.

Russian intelligence is also accused of using fishing trawlers, cargo ships and even yachts kitted out with underwater and radio surveillance technology, the investigation claimed.

The documentary, titled "The Shadow

War", says Norwegian police who boarded two Russian fishing trawlers discovered old Soviet-era radios, with an operator in a locked compartment.

In Sweden, 27 suspect vessels have allegedly sailed through its waters or docked in its ports in the past five years, SVT said.

In Norway, over a period of 10 years, at least 50 Russian vessels "had the possibility to collect information clandestinely", according to a tally based on the ships' Automatic Identification System (AIS), NRK said.



Segments of the documentary have already been released, with the full report due to be broadcast late yesterday.

It elicited an immediate response from Moscow, which has blamed the West for the spectacular sabotage involving the explosions of Nord Stream pipelines linking Russia to Germany.

"The media in these countries have made a mistake in their investigation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

"They prefer to once again accuse Russia without basis."

"We would prefer that they focus more attention on the attacks against Nord

Stream and on a transparent and impartial international inquiry," he said.

Meanwhile, Russia launched a drone attack on Ukraine's southern port city of Odesa early yesterday but there were no reports of casualties, authorities said.

"At night, the enemy carried out an attack by UAVs of the Shahed-136 type on the Odesa region," Yuriy Kruk, head of the Odesa district military administration, said in a statement on Telegram.

Kruk said Ukraine's air defences had destroyed most of the attacking drones but some civilian infrastructure had been hit.

In Kyiv, Ukraine's defence minister confirmed yesterday that Kyiv had taken delivery of Patriot air defence systems, and said this made Ukrainian skies more secure.

"Our air defenders have mastered them as fast as they could. And our partners have kept their word," Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov wrote on Twitter. He did not specify which partners he was referring to but his tweet offered thanks to Germany's defence minister.

Washington late last year said it would provide Ukraine with its Patriot air defence system as Russia pounded Ukraine's energy infrastructure from the air.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said the system will "significantly" strengthen Ukraine's defence against Russian strikes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed the announcement at the time, saying Russia will find an "antidote".

Germany announced in January that it was following the United States in sending one of the advanced missile defence batteries to Ukraine. The Netherlands said it would supply parts of a Patriot air defence system to Ukraine.

### JERUSALEM SHOOTING

## Israel arrests Palestinian teen

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank arrested a Palestinian teenager suspected of wounding two Israelis in a shooting in annexed east Jerusalem, the army said yesterday. Special military and police forces operating in Nablus overnight "apprehended within a few minutes the terrorist who carried out the shooting attack in Jerusalem yesterday", an army statement said. The suspect, who is from the Askar refugee camp near Nablus, "linked himself to the incident during the initial inquiry", the army said, adding that he was being held by the Shin Bet internal security service for further questioning. Tuesday's attack saw a gunman open fire on two Israeli motorists in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of east Jerusalem, near the tomb of Shimon Hatzadik, a site frequented by religious Jews. The wounded men, one aged 48 and the other in his 50s, were hospitalised in moderate condition.

### NEW ANTARCTIC STATION

## China ramps up construction

REUTERS, Washington

China is increasing its Antarctic footprint according to new satellite imagery collected by a Washington-based think tank that shows construction has resumed for the first time since 2018 on the country's fifth station in the southern polar region. Beijing has sought to develop new shipping routes in the Arctic and expand its research in Antarctica, but Western governments worry its increasing presence in the polar regions could provide the People's Liberation Army (PLA) with better surveillance capabilities. The new station, on Inexpressible Island near the Ross Sea, is expected to include an observatory with a satellite ground station, and should help China "fill in a major gap" in its ability to access the continent, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) said in a report.



French President Emmanuel Macron talks to a person opposed to the pension reform, in Selestat, eastern France yesterday.



Rescuers help a migrant child disembark from a Spanish coast guard vessel in the port of Arguineguin, in the island of Gran Canaria, Spain yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Let the Blessings Go Around!

With compassion in our hearts, HBL wishes a very happy Eid Mubarak!

0088 01977742523 | www.hbl.com/bangladesh