

PAKISTAN POLITICAL CRISIS Crippled economy fuels Imran Khan's anti-govt protests

AFP, Lahore

The tumultuous campaign by Imran Khan, Pakistan's most popular politician, to reclaim power has been driven by an economic crisis that ordinary people say has left them unable to feed their families.

Violent clashes erupted last week as supporters protested against Khan's arrest on corruption charges, with government buildings set on fire, military installations damaged and at least nine people killed.

Khan's ouster in April last year has galvanised support for the former international cricket star as the unsteady coalition that replaced him struggles to pull Pakistan back from the brink of default and control spiralling inflation.

"Right now, everyone is so affected by the economic crisis that they feel the need to come out on the streets," said 27-year-old doctor Shahab Afzal.

"You can't even afford the basics," he told AFP at a pro-Khan protest in the eastern city of Lahore.

Dollar reserves have dwindled to just \$4.4 billion, enough for only three weeks of imports, and crucial bailout talks with the IMF have stalled since November.

Food inflation soared to nearly 50 percent in April, according to official data. "The sense of economic deprivation is the rocket fuel for Imran Khan's anti-government movement," said analyst Mosharrar Zaidi.

"It creates room for hyper-growth of his support when you have trouble feeding your children." Many Pakistanis are feeling the pinch, even when buying essentials such as food or petrol.

There is a desolate calm at Islamabad's normally bustling G-9 market. "The whole market is deadly quiet," said Abdul Rehman, 63, who runs a drinks stall. "I've never seen it this bad."

Inflation began to spike in 2021 and was fuelled, analysts say, by a vast \$10 billion post-Covid stimulus splurge launched by Khan when he was prime minister.

The broad alliance of parties that joined forces to evict Khan in a no-confidence vote cited his economic mismanagement as a key reason for their intervention.

That seems to have backfired as the government struggled to control the crisis, exacerbated by the global slowdown caused by the war in Ukraine and last year's catastrophic monsoon floods.

"Honestly, if you take inflationary pressures out of the equation, the public aspect of Khan's threat will probably diminish as well," said political economist Umair Javed.

"There is disaffection at large, which currently finds voice through his agitational politics," he added.



Israelis and Palestinians argue near Damascus gate to Jerusalem's Old City as Israel mark Jerusalem Day in Jerusalem yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ukraine weathers wave of Russian missiles One person killed in Odesa, two injured

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine said yesterday it had downed nearly an entire barrage of Russian missiles overnight, the latest in an "unprecedented" wave of aerial attacks on the capital Kyiv.

The defence ministry said Russian forces had launched 30 cruise missiles from land, sea and air, targeting several regions and killing one person in Odesa.

The military said its air defence units had destroyed 29 of the cruise missiles and shot down four drones.

"A series of air attacks on Kyiv, unprecedented in their power, intensity and variety, is continuing," said Serhii Popko, head of Kyiv's civil and military administration.

The attack follows other recent barrages in which Ukraine claimed

to have downed several advanced Russian Kinzhal missiles.

The United States also confirmed that one of its Patriot air defence systems supplied to Kyiv had been damaged, following claims by Russia its forces had fully destroyed one of the advanced systems.

In Ukraine's southern port city of Odesa, one person was killed and two were wounded after a missile hit industrial infrastructure, the military said.

In Kyiv, officials reported explosions in the Desnyansky district and said a fire had broken out at a business in the Darnytsky neighbourhood as a result of falling debris.

The military also reported "cruise missile" attacks in the central Vinnytsia region, while local media reported explosions in Khmelnytskyi.

CYCLONE MOCHA Death toll rises to 202 in Myanmar

AGENCIES

The death toll from Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar rose to 202 as people on the ground started clearing away debris and counting casualties, with many fearing the death toll will climb far higher as hundreds are still missing, the Irrawaddy reported yesterday.

Relief organisations were awaiting clearance from military rulers to access areas devastated by the cyclone, reports Reuters.

Many people were killed by flash floods caused by storm surges, while others were struck by trees felled by strong winds, especially in Basara.

G7 leaders to squeeze Russia Weigh risk of China's 'economic coercion'

AFP, Hiroshima

G7 leaders arrived in Hiroshima, Japan yesterday to weigh tighter sanctions on Russia and protections against China's "economic coercion", surrounded by reminders about the harrowing cost of war. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida is hosting leaders from six other wealthy democracies in his hometown - a city synonymous with nuclear destruction and now peppered with peace monuments. Over three days, leaders including US President Joe Biden will try to forge a united front on Russia, China and a host of other pressing issues where the allies' interests do not always neatly align. Biden's delicate diplomatic offensive in Asia hit a bump even before Air Force One left the United States: a domestic budget row forced him to cancel stops in Papua New Guinea and Australia. He arrived in Hiroshima in driving rain yesterday. When the G7 summit gets underway today, Russia's 15-month-old invasion of Ukraine will top the agenda, after a long winter of grinding warfare in Bakhmut and other frontline towns.

'MILESTONE' SUMMIT Xi hosts Central Asian leaders

AFP, Xian



Chinese President Xi Jinping kicked off a summit with Central Asian leaders yesterday, seeking to build regional influence as G7 leaders hold a rival gathering in Japan. Held in the ancient Chinese city of Xi'an, the historic eastern end of the Silk Road that linked China to Europe through Central Asia, Beijing has said this week's summit is of "milestone significance".

It is the first of its kind since the establishment of formal relations 31 years ago. Beijing says trade with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan reached \$70 billion in 2022 and expanded 22 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2023. Central Asia has also become key to China's trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative.



Rescuers evacuate residents in a dinghy across a flooded street in the town of Lugo yesterday, after heavy rains caused flooding across Italy's northern Emilia Romagna region, killing 11 people.

PHOTO: AFP

KARNATAKA POLLS Siddaramaiah to be next CM

NDTV ONLINE

Siddaramaiah will be the next Chief Minister of Karnataka and DK Shivakumar his deputy, India's Congress party announced yesterday, ending five days of suspense after the party's emphatic election win.

They will take oath on Saturday.

The decision was announced after days of internal wrangling, with both contenders pushing for the top job.

Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala dodged a question whether the five-year term will be split among them, saying, "Power-sharing means sharing power with the people of Karnataka, nothing else."

Both leaders expressed their commitment to work together.

TURKEY RUNOFF Erdogan rival sharpens tone on migrants

AFP, Ankara

Turkey's opposition leader yesterday vowed to send back millions of migrants in a strident message aimed at winning the backing of an ultra-nationalist who helped push last weekend's presidential vote to a runoff.

Secular opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu delivered his first public address since a landmark election Sunday in which he came in almost five points behind President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Kilicdaroglu's performance was the opposition's best of the Turkish leader's two-decade rule.

But it fell short of expectations set by pre-election polling and left the opposition visibly depressed.

The 74-year-old has since revamped his campaign team and toughened his message to win over Turkey's right-wing voters in the May 28 runoff.

He also plans to meet Sinan Ogan

- a far-right figure who picked up 5.2 percent of the vote and is still weighing his endorsement.

Kilicdaroglu yesterday tried to toughen his message considerably from the more inclusive tone he set in the first stage of the campaign.

"Erdogan, you did not protect the borders and honour of the country," the former civil servant said.

"You have deliberately brought more than 10 million refugees to this country... As soon as I come to power, I will send all the refugees home."

Ogan has said he will only back a candidate who cracks down on migrants and fights "terrorism" - a code word in Turkey for Kurdish militants.

Erdogan and his Islamic-rooted party were lionised across swathes of the Muslim world for their more embracing stance towards those fleeing conflicts in countries such as Syria.

Turkey's five-million-strong refugee and migrant population became the world's largest in the past decade.



Official document from the Bangladesh Police regarding the recruitment of 1000 constables. It includes a table with columns for roll number, name, and other details, and a section for the recruitment process.