

Cambodian leader orders election law change

AFP, Phnom Penh

Cambodian leader Hun Sen yesterday ordered election laws to be changed to ban anyone who fails to vote in an upcoming poll from ever running for office -- a move that will affect exiled rivals.

The kingdom votes in a general election next month with Hun Sen's party running almost unopposed, after the main opposition outfit was barred on a technicality.

Rights groups accuse Hun Sen of using the legal system to crush any opposition to his power.

Hun Sen said he had asked officials to add a clause to election laws saying that anyone who does not vote in the upcoming poll has no right to run in future ballots.

"If you don't vote on July 23, 2023, you will have no right to be elected" in any future elections, Hun Sen said in a speech to garment workers in Phnom Penh.

'Outright lie' India denies threatening Twitter with shutdown

REUTERS, New Delhi

India threatened to shut down Twitter in the country unless it complied with orders to restrict accounts critical of the handling of farmer protests, co-founder Jack Dorsey said, an accusation Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government called an "outright lie".

Dorsey, who quit as Twitter CEO in 2021, said on Monday that India had also threatened the company with raids on employees if it did not comply with government requests to take down certain posts.

"It manifested in ways such as: 'We will shut Twitter down in India', which is a very large market for us; 'we will raid the homes of your employees', which they did; And this is India, a democratic country," Dorsey said in an interview with YouTube news show Breaking Points.

Deputy Minister for Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar, a top ranking official in Modi's government, lashed out against Dorsey in response, calling his assertions an "outright lie".

"No one went to jail nor was Twitter 'shut down'. Dorsey's Twitter regime had a problem accepting the sovereignty of Indian law," he said in a post on Twitter.

Contribute to ensuring

FROM PAGE 1

solution to the ongoing crises".

They made the call in a letter, dated June 12, to Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

The members of the European Parliament (MEP) who wrote the letter are Ivan Štefanec (the Slovak Republic), Michaela Šojdrová (the Czech Republic), Andrey Kovatchev (Bulgaria), Karen Melchior (Denmark), Javier Nart (Spain) and Heidi Hautala (Finland).

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs shapes the standing of the European Union on the global stage.

Charles Whiteley, EU ambassador to Bangladesh, has confirmed the authenticity of the letter, saying it reflects the opinion of the MEPs.

"With this letter, we would like to express our concerns about the violation of human rights in Bangladesh, and call to restore democracy and the rule of law in Bangladesh in view of its upcoming general elections," it reads.

The current government, in power since 2009, has curtailed the democratic space for the citizens and failed to show respect to their fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution, it adds.

"To consolidate its powers, the regime has been resorting to extrajudicial killings, abductions, tortures and false cases against the leaders and activists of the opposition political parties. Freedom of expression including the freedom of press have been undermined in recent years, most notably since the enactment of the

corruption, call for any report or information from government organisations.

It also gives the ACC the power to request the government to take action against organisations that fail to provide information.

The tax return has specific information of moveable and immovable properties, an ACC officer said. "We cross-check those with the sub-registry office

and banks. We may soon have to make wild guesses while investigating. This will not only take time but also reduce our chances to prosecute a corrupt person."

Since the sub-registry offices maintain the records manually, it will be almost impossible to find immovable property, he added.

Contacted, ACC

POST-COUP MYANMAR

Over 6,000 killed in first 20 months: report

AFP, Oslo

More than 6,000 civilians were killed in Myanmar in the first 20 months after the February 2021 military coup, a report published yesterday by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo said.

"Our data shows that the human toll of the conflict is higher than previously reported, and while the junta is clearly the main killer, anti-junta forces also have large amounts of blood on their hands," Stein Tonnesson, one of the two co-authors of the report, said in a statement.

The report said 6,337 civilians were killed "for political reasons" between February 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022, and 2,614 were injured.

That toll is much higher than others that have circulated, including those from international organisations.

According to the report, almost half of the deaths, 3,003, were attributed to the regime -- the army, police and militias -- while 2,152 were attributed to armed opposition groups.

Twelve were attributed to other civilians not affiliated with either the regime or opponents, and 1,170 to undetermined actors.

"This is a larger number than is normally cited in the media, and yet it is only an estimate, based on reported killings gathered from reliable media reports," the report said.

"The actual total is surely higher since many killings have likely gone unreported".

Alleging massive fraud, the Myanmar military annulled the legislative elections won by Aung San Suu Kyi's party and overthrew her government.

Since then, the junta has carried out a large-scale repression of any opposition, arresting more than 23,000 people according to a local watchdog.

Meanwhile, the United Nations yesterday slammed the Myanmar junta's "unfathomable" decision to suspend travel authorisations for aid workers trying

to reach more than a million people in cyclone-ravaged Rakhine state.

Cyclone Mocha brought lashing rain and winds of 195 kilometres (120 miles) per hour to Myanmar and neighbouring Bangladesh last month, killing at least 148 people in Myanmar.

The cyclone destroyed homes and brought a storm surge to Rakhine state, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya minority refugees live in displacement camps following decades of ethnic conflict.

But despite the towering needs, the UN said last week that junta authorities had suspended "existing travel authorisations... for humanitarian organisations".

"Four weeks into this disaster response and with the monsoon season well under way, it is unfathomable that humanitarians are being denied access to support people in need," Ramanathan Balakrishnan, the UN resident and humanitarian coordinator in Myanmar, said in a statement on Monday.

Since the cyclone hit on May 14, humanitarian workers have been getting aid to a growing number of people using limited travel authorisations granted to organisations with long-standing operations in Rakhine.

Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told reporters in Geneva yesterday that more than 110,000 people had received shelter and other relief items during that time, while food assistance had reached almost 300,000 people in Rakhine thanks to those approvals.

He slammed the "effective ban" on access by humanitarian workers, "paralysing the distribution of life-saving food, drinking water, shelter supplies and other relief to affected communities."

"We had plans and material relief available for distribution in the coming weeks and months for one million people in Rakhine alone. That has been stopped," he said.

of the people to choose their representatives is yet to be determined as no mechanism is in place for acceptable elections in the country.

"This is a problem, as riggings, manipulations, and non attendance of the voters marred the 10th and 11th parliamentary elections."

While the 10th general election was non-participatory with the major political parties, including the BNP, boycotting the polls, the 11th was concluded "the night before".

Consequently, the governments have had no or little mandate from the people and failed to gain the approval of the international community, the letter says.

"We believe the EU has strong reasons to stand with the people of Bangladesh as the country

is our long-time partner in trade and development cooperation."

The EU needs to remain in constant dialogue with Bangladesh authorities on human rights agendas and produce tangible outcomes, adds the letter.

"Potential measures such as restriction of entry into the EEA zone of those responsible for and complicit in the human rights abuses, or regular reminding of the conditions for the GSP+ incentive to which Bangladesh is a bidder may be evaluated."

Earlier on January 20 last year, Ivan ŠTEFANEC wrote a letter to Borrell, expressing concerns over human rights violations and deterioration of democracy.

In response, Borrell said the EU remains in constant dialogue with Bangladesh on the issues concerned.

Seven die as cyclone barrels towards India, Pakistan

REUTERS, Mumbai

Four boys drowned in rough seas off the western Indian financial hub of Mumbai yesterday as India and Pakistan began evacuating people from coastal areas, two days before a cyclone is expected to make landfall.

Classified as a very severe cyclonic storm, Biparjoy is expected to land around tomorrow evening between Mandvi in India's Gujarat province and Karachi in southern Pakistan.

Meteorologists predict maximum sustained wind speeds of 125-135 km (78-84 miles) per hour, gusting to 150 km (93 miles) per hour.

"Four boys drowned at Juhu beach on Monday evening. So far, we have found the bodies of two, and the search is still ongoing to locate the remaining two," said a police official in Mumbai.

High waves in the Arabian Sea, accompanied by heavy rains and gusting winds pounded Gujarat's coastal areas, uprooting trees and resulting in a wall collapse that killed three people in Kutch and Rajkot districts, authorities said.

Eight districts in coastal Gujarat are expected to be affected. Fishing has been suspended until Friday and schools have declared holidays.

SPYING, BASING OVERSEAS

US diplomacy slowed China's expansion

REUTERS, Washington

The Biden administration has taken diplomatic steps that have slowed down a Chinese effort to project military power around the world, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Monday ahead of a visit to Beijing later this week. Washington's top diplomat was asked at a press conference about Washington's response to a Wall Street Journal report last week that cited US officials saying a new spying effort was underway on Cuba. Blinken said China's efforts in Cuba were part of a global effort by Beijing to expand its presence overseas, and that US actions to address this.

Russian missile strike kills 11 in Ukraine

28 injured; Kyiv says troops make gains

REUTERS, Kryvyrih

A Russian missile strike killed at least 11 people in an apartment building and a warehouse in President Volodymyr Zelensky's home town yesterday, while Moscow's forces yielded ground in the early stages of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Residents sobbed outside the burnt-out apartment block and smoke billowed after the early-morning attack in Kryvyi Rih, a half-hour drive from the huge reservoir emptied last week by the destruction of a dam that flooded a swathe of southern Ukraine.

Officials said at least four people were killed in the apartment building and another seven in the warehouse. Twenty-eight were injured.

Broken glass and bricks were strewn across the street and courtyard outside the apartment block. At least five cars were ruined husks.

Survivors described two explosions. Olha Chernousova said she was thrown out of her bed by a violent blast wave. She escaped onto her balcony to wait for rescuers. "I thought I would have to jump into a tree."

"Russian killers continue their war against residential buildings, ordinary cities and people," Zelensky, who was born in the city, said on Telegram.

Moscow denies intentionally targeting civilians but has repeatedly struck apartment buildings with long-range missiles, often at perceived turning points in the war.

Win fails to bring joy to AL camp

FROM PAGE 1

have already issued a press release congratulating the newly-elected mayor. But we didn't get the chance to congratulate him in person."

Khair yesterday said that he did not want any division and was eager to work with everyone irrespective of party affiliation.

A day after winning the BCC polls, he made the remark when a reporter asked him whether he would work with all AL leaders and supporters as many were not seen with him during his campaign.

Speaking on the matter, Rafiqul Alam, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Barishal city unit), said the city's development would encounter obstacles if the conflict within the AL was not addressed.

LOW TURNOUT OUT OF FEAR

The voter turnout was poor at the polling centres that are located in areas that are known to be dominated by Sadiq.

There was a 37.07 percent turnout at the Matri Mandir Primary School centre, 36.03 percent at the Abdur Rab Serniabad centre, and 38.05 percent at Adarsha Pouro Primary School centre.

Sadiq's followers were not a part of Khair's campaign and Khair also kept them aside since he got the party nomination.

As a result, most voters in these areas avoided polling centres for fear of harassment by Khair supporters, said an AL supporter close to Sadiq.

Prior to the election, there were reports of a rift between Khair and his nephew Sadiq after Khair received the AL ticket to run for mayor.

"We didn't go out on election day and a number of Sadiq's men left the city on the day," he added.

Even at the Barishal Government College centre, where Sadiq is a voter and where Khair cast his ballot, there was a 53 percent turnout.

Meanwhile, at polling centres on the city's outskirts, the voter turnout was between 60 and 73 percent.

MOST COUNCILLORS ARE SADIQ'S FOLLOWERS

According to election results, 21 of the 30 councillors are from the AL, six from the BNP, one from Jamaat, and two are independent.

Sources say, 13 of the 21 AL councillors support Sadiq, while the remaining eight support Khair.

Meanwhile, eight of the 10 female councillors are from the AL and two are from the BNP.

IAB WON ONLY TWO CENTRES

Mufti Syed Faizul Karim, the Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB) mayoral candidate, received 33,888 votes, which is 23.86 percent of all votes cast.

After analysing centre-by-centre results, it was discovered that the IAB nominee won in only two of the total 126 polling centres.

One of these two centres is Government Saheed Abdur Rab Serniabat High School, where Faziul voted, and the other is in the same area.

According to the result sheet, the IAB candidate received the majority of votes in the city's extended areas -- Sagordi, Harinafulia, and Koladema -- where the majority of the madrasas are located.

Tax bill proposes clipping ACC wings

FROM PAGE 1

"If the act passes without dropping the provision, such words will become a joke," he said, expressing his dismay.

Several officials pointed out that the proposed act would override the ACC Act 2004, which said that the commission might, at the time of inquiry or investigation into allegations of

corruption, call for any report or information from government organisations.

It also gives the ACC the power to request the government to take action against organisations that fail to provide information.

The tax return has specific information of moveable and immovable properties, an ACC officer said. "We cross-check those with the sub-registry office

and banks. We may soon have to make wild guesses while investigating. This will not only take time but also reduce our chances to prosecute a corrupt person."

Since the sub-registry offices maintain the records manually, it will be almost impossible to find immovable property, he added.

Contacted, ACC

Moizammel (enquiry) Commissioner Haque Khan said the government might have found the provision logical. "There is always an option to amend an act," he said.

Iftekharuzzaman said that the provision would drastically curtail the investigation capacity of the ACC.

"Creating such arbitrary barriers against access

to key information on the spoils of corruption will have a crippling effect on the process of ensuring accountability for corruption in general and accumulation of income and wealth disproportionate to legitimate income in particular," he said.

"In reality, this appears to be designed to protect and promote abuse of

power and corruption on the one hand, and further cripple the legal and institutional capacities of the state to control the cancerous disease of corruption on the other."

Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Finance, could not be reached over phone for comment.

