

Maldives SC bars Yameen from race

REUTERS, Male

The Maldives Supreme Court yesterday confirmed that jailed former president Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom is barred from the country's September presidential election.

The ruling is another setback for the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM), which declared Yameen its candidate before his December conviction for corruption and money laundering over kickbacks from a private company while he was president.

The party last week challenged the EC's block on his candidacy because he is serving an 11-year jail sentence, arguing the commission had misinterpreted the constitutional prerequisites for presidential candidates.

The commission's decision "that Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom is ineligible... under article 109 is the correct decision," Justice Husnu Al Suood ruled.

ETHNIC VIOLENCE 15 houses set ablaze, man shot in Manipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Fifteen houses were set ablaze in the Indian state of Manipur's Imphal West district and a man was shot at in a fresh bout of arson, officials said yesterday.

The incident took place on Saturday evening at Langol Games village as a mob went on the rampage, they said.

Security personnel fired several rounds of tear gas shells to disperse the mob and bring the situation under control, they added.

Fresh violence was also reported from Imphal East district's Checkon area where a large commercial establishment was torched on Saturday, officials said.

Three nearby houses were also set on fire, they said.

The incidents of violence were reported amid the 24-hour general strike called by the coordinating committee of 27 assembly constituencies, which paralysed normal life in the Imphal valley on Saturday.

Meanwhile, the Manipur police stated that they have retrieved 1,195 stolen weapons from various locations within the state. According to their statement, 1,057 arms were found in the valley districts, and 138 arms in the hill districts.



Firefighters extinguish a fire in the university building following a shelling in the course of Russia-Ukraine conflict in Donetsk, Ukraine, early yesterday. Russia carried out several waves of attacks on Ukraine overnight, while Kyiv hit bridges in occupied territories yesterday.

China water-cannoned boat in South China Sea

Says Manila; Beijing claims Philippine ships trespassed, carried illegal materials

REUTERS, Manila

The Philippines yesterday accused China's coast guard of blocking and water-cannoning a Philippine military supply boat in the South China Sea, condemning the "excessive and offensive actions" against its vessels.

China's coast guard countered that it had implemented necessary controls in accordance with the law to deter Philippine ships, which it accused of trespassing and carrying illegal building materials.

After the incident, the US State Department said China's "repeated threats to the status quo in the South China Sea (were) directly threatening regional peace and stability" and that Washington stands with its Philippine allies in the face of such "dangerous actions".

"The United States reaffirms an armed attack on Philippine public vessels, aircraft, and armed forces - including those of its Coast Guard in the South China Sea - would invoke US mutual defense commitments under Article IV of the 1951 US Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty," it said in a statement.

China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, an assertion rejected internationally, while Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei, Taiwan and the Philippines have various claims to certain areas.

Beijing often irks its neighbours with maritime actions they call



aggressive and with longer-term activities like building islands on reefs and equipping them with missiles and runways.

A Chinese coast guard vessel on Saturday blocked and water-cannoned the chartered Philippine boat on a routine troop rotation and resupply mission, "in wanton disregard of the safety of the people on board and in violation of international law", the Armed Forces of the Philippines said.

It said in a statement the incident occurred near the Second Thomas Shoal, which Manila calls Ayungin Shoal, a submerged reef where a handful of its troops live on a rusty World War Two-era US ship that was intentionally grounded in 1999.

The Chinese coast guard's

Western bid to get Global South to back Ukraine doomed Says Russia

REUTERS

Moscow said yesterday that weekend talks in Saudi Arabia including the US, China and India aiming to establish principles for a peaceful end to Russia's war in Ukraine were a doomed Western attempt to align Global South behind Kyiv.

Senior officials from some 40 countries were attending the 2-day meeting, part of a push by Ukraine to build support beyond its core Western backers among countries that have been reluctant to take sides in the conflict. Russia was not invited.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov called the meeting "a reflection of the West's attempt to continue futile, doomed efforts to mobilise the international community, and more precisely, the Global South, even if not entirely, in support of the so-called Zelenskiy formula, which is doomed and untenable from the outset".

Ukrainian President Zelensky said he hoped the initiative would lead to a peace summit of leaders from around the world this autumn to endorse principles for a settlement.

Imran's lawyers can't reach him in Pakistan jail Says his spokesperson

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistani former prime minister Imran Khan's lawyers could not reach him yesterday after he spent the night in a jail near the capital following his arrest the previous day on a corruption conviction, a spokesperson said.

Khan was taken by police from his home in the eastern city of Lahore on Saturday and transferred to the jail just outside Islamabad, where a court had convicted him of charges arising over the sale of state gifts. The conviction likely means the cricket star-turned-politician will be disqualified from running in a national election.

"Attock prison is a 'No Go' area for (his) legal team as well as locals in the vicinity," said Naem Haider Panjotha, Khan's spokesperson for legal affairs, adding they were unable to take him food or arrange the signing of legal documents.

Pakistan's information minister referred a request for comment on Khan's access to his lawyers to provincial authorities in Punjab, where the jail is located. Punjab's top information official could not immediately be reached for comment.

It was not clear whether Khan would appear in court today, after a trial court's surprise weekend decision sentencing him to three years in prison.

The nationwide reaction was largely quiet, despite calls by his party on Saturday for nationwide peaceful protests.

SHIPWRECKS OFF ITALY 30 migrants missing in rough seas: survivors

AFP, Rome

At least 30 migrants are missing following two shipwrecks off the Italian island of Lampedusa, according to survivor testimony, the UN's migration agency said yesterday. Around 28 people were reported lost at sea by survivors on one boat, while three were reported missing from the second, after both went down in stormy weather on Saturday, said the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Both were rickety iron boats believed to have set off from Sfax in Tunisia on Thursday.

Cultural mediators with the IOM believed there were "at least 30 people missing" after speaking to the survivors, press officer Flavio Di Giacomo told AFP. An investigation into the shipwrecks has been opened in Agrigento, on the nearby Italian island of Sicily. Agrigento's chief of police Emanuele Ricifari said the traffickers would have known rough seas were forecast. "Whoever allowed them, or forced them, to leave with this sea is an unscrupulous criminal lunatic," he told Italian media. "Rough seas are forecast for the next few days. Let's hope they stop. It's sending them to slaughter with this sea," he said. As the stormy weather continued, firebrigade and alpine rescue teams were preparing yesterday to pull to safety some 20 migrants trapped on a rocky part of Lampedusa's coastline. The migrants have been there since late Friday, after their boat was tossed onto the rocks by strong winds. They have been provided with food, water, clothes and emergency thermal blankets by the Red Cross, but the coastguard has been unable to rescue them by sea due to the high waves.



Waterlogging in Ctg worsening

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fertilisers, and industrial raw materials are among the goods.

Water Transport Cell, a private organisation responsible for operating lighter vessels, said they allocated 25 lighter vessels for unloading goods of 12 large vessels out of 25 at the outer anchorage.

But none of the lighter vessels could reach the anchorage due to rough seas, said a WTC official, adding that this disruption could damage goods.

Due to disruption in unloading at outer anchorage, vessels are having to stay longer.

Contacted, Md Omar Faruk, secretary of Chattogram Port Authority (CPA), said unloading from five bulk carriers and 10 container vessels berthed at the jetties was going on but at a slow pace.

MV Amis Brave, a bulk carrier with 59,000 tonnes of cement clinker, arrived at the outer anchorage on July 23, but it was yet to be emptied fully.

Zahur Ahmad, managing director of ship's local agent Seacom Shipping Lines Ltd, said the importer would have to pay around \$15,000 per day as fixed operating cost for the vessel.

Meanwhile, situation at the Khatunganj-Chaktai market, one of Bangladesh's largest wholesale hubs for household essentials, has

worsened as rainwater and tidal water inundated most areas, resulting in a 50-60 percent fall in trade activities.

Ahmedul Haque, executive member of Chaktai-Khatunganj Warehouses Samiti, said most traders and labourers were passing days without work as business activities have almost come to a halt.

"The roads have been submerged for the last two days, but water could not enter shops and warehouses."

Many low-lying areas are still waterlogged as it has been raining heavily over the last three days.

The Chattogram Met Office yesterday recorded 231.4mm rainfall, the highest in the district this year, in the 24 hours until 3:00pm, said Assistant Met Officer Jahirul Islam.

This worsened the waterlogging situation.

The Daily Star yesterday found ground floors of most houses and business establishments were flooded in Muradpur, Bahaddarhat, Badurtola, Kapasgola, Sholashahar, Prabartok, Agrabad, Halishahar, Chawk Bazar, KB Aman Ali Road, and DC Road in the port city.

There were fewer vehicles on the streets. Some vehicles broke down on waterlogged streets.

"I had to change three vehicles to travel around two kilometres from Sholashahar to Chawkbazar as the streets in our area went under knee-to-waist-deep water," said Maruf

Hossain, an employee of a company.

"My paddy fields have gone underwater, and the crops will be destroyed soon," said Mohammed Akbar, a farmer from Hathazari upazila.

Low-lying areas of Raozan, Rangunia, and Hathazari upazilas went underwater, said locals.

The Chattogram district administration evicted 800 families from risky hill slopes in the city as pouring rain caused landslides in the Tiger Pass area on Friday.

The Chattogram Development Authority, which is implementing a Tk 11,344 crore mega project to mitigate waterlogging, had said before the monsoon that this year's inundation would be less than that of previous years due to digging of many canals to mitigate the problem.

The city dwellers alleged that CDA gave them false hope.

Blaming the CCC for the waterlogging, CDA Chief Engineer Hasan Bin Shams said the drainage system has become ineffective as the CCC is not cleaning the drains properly.

Contacted, Mobarak Hossain, chairman of the CCC Standing Committee on Conservancy, said the CDA has been working with 36 major canals in the city, and until those are handed over to the CCC, they cannot do anything in the canals.



Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui and representatives of bereaved families enshrine a list of the atomic bomb victims at the cenotaph during a ceremony to mark the 78th anniversary of the world's first atomic bomb attack, at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP