

Pak senators decry alleged rigging in Feb 8 polls

Berate CEC for his 'failure' to ensure transparency

AGENCIES

A number of Pakistan senators in the upper house of Parliament yesterday decry alleged rigging in the February 8 elections and berated Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja for his "failure" to ensure transparency in the polls.

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Senator Mushtaq Ahmed demanded CEC Raja to step down from his position over the failure to hold transparent polls.

The JI senator, while addressing a Senate session in Islamabad, said the elections were fake and they would procreate a fake government. During the session, a number of senators also raised concerns regarding allegations of polls rigging.

Levelling serious allegations against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Mushtaq said the electoral body committed treason for which it should seek an apology from the nation.

"A legal proceeding should be carried out against the CEC under Article 6 of the constitution, for the ECP was given Rs50 billion from the national exchequer but it failed to hold transparent polls," he alleged.

The senator also rebuked the authorities over the suspension of social media platform, X, saying that it inflicted economic and educational damage as well as it was tantamount to robbing people's rights.

Imran Khan's PII yesterday also demanded that CEC Raja immediately resign, saying that the CEC failed to hold elections in a free, fair and transparent manner.

Meanwhile, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that he foresees a stalemate in government formation "if someone is not ready to change their stance".



Farmers holding chains shout slogans during a protest demanding minimum support prices (MSP) for all crops at a toll plaza on the outskirts of Amritsar, India yesterday. Farmers' unions have rejected five-year contracts for MSPs proposed by the government, one of their leaders said in a video posted on social media platform X.

PHOTO: AFP

US vetoes UNSC push for Gaza ceasefire

REUTERS, United Nations

The United States yesterday again vetoed a draft United Nations Security Council resolution on the Israel-Hamas war, blocking a demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire.

Thirteen council members voted in favor of the Algerian-drafted text, while Britain abstained. It was the third such US veto since the start of the Israeli offensive in Gaza on October 7.

"A vote in favor of this draft resolution is support to the Palestinians right to life. Conversely, voting against it implies an endorsement of the brutal violence and collective punishment inflicted upon them," Algeria's UN Ambassador Amar Bendjama told the council before the vote.

US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield signaled on Saturday

that the US would veto the draft resolution over concerns it could jeopardize talks between the US, Egypt, Israel and Qatar that seek to broker a pause in the war and the release of hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

"Any action this council takes right now should help, not hinder these sensitive, and ongoing negotiations. And we believe that the resolution on the table right now would, in fact, negatively impact those negotiations," Thomas-Greenfield told the council ahead of the vote.

"Demanding an immediate, unconditional ceasefire without an agreement requiring Hamas to release the hostages will not bring about a durable peace. Instead, it could extend the fighting between Hamas and Israel," she said.

The United States has since proposed a rival draft resolution calling for a

temporary ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war and opposing a major ground offensive by its ally Israel in Rafah, according to the text seen by Reuters. It said it plans to allow time for negotiations and will not rush to a vote.

Until now, Washington has been averse to the word ceasefire in any UN action on the Israel-Hamas war, but the US text echoes language that President Joe Biden said he used last week in conversations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The US draft resolution would see the Security Council "underscore its support for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza as soon as practicable, based on the formula of all hostages being released, and calls for lifting all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale."

India SC declares AAP's Kumar winner of Chandigarh polls

Cancels earlier result

NDTV ONLINE

India's Supreme Court yesterday made history by declaring the Aam Aadmi Party's Kuldeep Kumar the winner of last month's Chandigarh mayoral election, ending weeks of controversy after Returning Officer Anil Masih was caught on camera invalidating and discarding eight votes in his favour. The order - preceded by the counting of votes, including those erroneously rejected, in the courtroom rather than a counting centre - cancels the earlier result that saw the BJP's Manoj Sonkar elected Mayor. Masih also faces a contempt of court action initiated by the top court. Should Masih be prosecuted - in an earlier hearing the SC called his actions a "mockery of democracy" and indicated it would do just that - it will be a historic first in independent India, and a stern warning to potential hijacking of polls results weeks before the Lok Sabha election. The judgement also means the AAP and Congress have recorded the INDIA bloc's first win as it bids to defeat the BJP.

First brain chip patient can control mouse by thought

Says Elon Musk

REUTERS

The first human patient implanted with a brain-chip from Neuralink appears to have fully recovered and is able to control a computer mouse using their thoughts, the startup's founder Elon Musk said late on Monday. "Progress is good, and the patient seems to have made a full recovery, with no ill effects that we are aware of. Patient is able to move a mouse around the screen by just thinking," Musk said in a Spaces event on social media platform X. Musk said Neuralink was now trying to get as many mouse button clicks as possible from the patient. Neuralink did not immediately reply to Reuters' request for further details. The firm successfully implanted a chip on its first human patient last month, after receiving approval for human trial recruitment in September.

Promote the ones selflessly serving society

FROM PAGE 12

from Chapainawabganj.

The PM said this after handing over the award to 21 recipients in recognition of their outstanding contributions in various fields at Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

She said Ziaul dedicated his life to spreading the light of knowledge among those who could not acquire education.

Pointing to the elites in the society, she said, "It is responsibility of ours, the people in the upper level of the society, to find the persons who are making such great sacrifices."

Ziaul received Ekushey Padak-2024 for social service as he dedicated his entire life to creating a public library and free-book distribution among insolvent students with the little profit he made from selling yoghurt.

Hasina said she would arrange a permanent land and building for the public library developed by Ziaul as he demanded while receiving the Ekushey Padak, the country's second

highest civilian award.

She added that the government would move to nationalise the school established by him, if he wanted.

Talking about the role of Bangabandhu in the Language Movement, Hasina said unfortunately there was an attempt to erase his contribution in the Language Movement from history.

She said Bangabandhu had been in jail for waging the movement. "Why was he in jail [at that time] if he had no contribution?" she asked.

The PM said it is her government that restored the glorious image of Bangladesh, which had been lost during the 1975-1996 period.

The cultural affairs ministry organised the event on the occasion of Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day 2024.

Among the award recipients, Ashraf Uddin Ahmed and freedom fighter Hatem Ali Mia were posthumously honoured with this award for their roles in the Language Movement.

Besides, Jalal Uddin Kha (posthumous), freedom fighter Kalyani Ghosh, Bidit Lal Das (posthumous), Andrew Kishore (posthumous), and Subhro Deb, were recognised for their contributions to music and Shibli Mohammad, Dolly Zahur, and MA Alamgir for performing dance and acting respectively.

Popular elocutionist Shimul Mustapha and Rupa Chakraborty were also conferred the Ekushey Padak.

Shahjahan Ahmed Bikash and Kawsar Chowdhury got the award for their contribution in painting and documentary films related to the Liberation War.

Md Ziaul Haque and Rafiq Ahmed were awarded for social services.

Muhammad Samad, Lutfur Rahman Riton, Minar Mansur, and Rudra Mohammad Shahidullah (posthumous) were conferred the award for contributing to language and literature and Jinabodhi Bhikkhu for his contribution to education.

We have witnesses," he added.

Meanwhile, Manjur Hossain, senior jail superintendent, said, "Rubel had a mental disorder along with withdrawal symptoms. We first kept him in a different ward, but later he was shifted to Padma Ward 3.

"When he complained of chest pain we took him to the prison hospital. Later, he was shifted to CMCH, where he was pronounced dead."

The jail official claimed Rubel was not tortured in the jail by guards or other inmates.

16 cops, jail officials sued

FROM PAGE 2

jail authorities. He was pronounced dead there. His body bore multiple injury marks.

His family members alleged that Rubel was tortured inside the prison by guards or other inmates.

According to the case statement, his wife said that on January 28, Boalkhali police picked up Rubel and demanded Tk 2 lakh as a bribe, threatening to implicate him in a liquor case otherwise.

When the money could not be arranged, police filed a case citing the recovery of 200 litres of homemade liquor from Rubel's possession.

In the case, his wife claimed that Rubel was physically assaulted by police during his arrest and later the jail officials also tortured him under the influence of the police officers, leading to his death in jail custody.

Contacted, SI Musa, said, "Rubel was physically fit during his arrest. We found nothing unusual about him while in our custody."

Musa also denied the bribery allegations made by Rubel's wife.

"Rubel is a professional liquor seller. You can ask anyone in the area. Our operation was done in public.

Extortion, clique jacking up prices of eggs

FROM PAGE 12

against extortionists on the highways, identifying it as a major contributor to the price hike of essential commodities.

Sumon said the marginal farmers buy feed and chicks from large farms because the latter have a monopoly on their production. That's why it is easy for the large farms to rise prices of their produce with the help of middlemen.

"Without opinions of the farmers, the livestock department fixed the price of a piece of chick at Tk 49 to Tk 52 only to favour the syndicate.

"The corporate groups produce chicks as per their demand and gave chicks to their contract farmers. The remaining low-quality chicks are being sold at a premium price of Tk 70 to Tk 80 per piece to the marginal farmers through their distributors," Sumon alleged.

In reply to the query whether the price will go up before Ramadan, he said due to the shortage of chicks, the price will increase before Ramadan. The price will start decreasing from the first week of Ramadan as the demand for eggs and chicken will be low.

Asked about the marginal farmers' demand to keep the market stable during Ramadan, he said, "Extortion and police harassment across the country should be stopped. At the same time, it is important to take steps so that the chicken and egg carts of the marginal farmers can ply during the daytime."

Bangladesh Poultry Association Vice President Bappi Kumar Dey, General Secretary Elias Khandkar, and entrepreneur Kawsar Ahmed, among others, were present at the briefing.

Civic activist Shamim gets bail

FROM PAGE 12

Corporation (MCC), filed a case with the Cyber Tribunal around 11:30am.

Judge Md Bazlur Rahman of the tribunal recorded statements of the complainant and directed the Police Bureau of Investigation to submit a report by April 1 after investigating the case, said Abdul Malek, bench assistant of the tribunal.

According to the case statement, Shamim released some posters in the city using the city corporation's logo with "confusing information using the digital platform".

Meanwhile, protesting the arrest and immediate release of Shamim Ashraf, who is also a poet, cultural activists formed a human chain at

the city's Zero Point area around 11:00am.

The event was organised under the banner of "Bikhhon: Mymensingh Sahitto Sangsad O Mymensingher Bikkhubdo Sangskritikormikul" where the speakers said Shamim was arrested for narrating the sufferings of the people by designing posters.

Addressing the event, cultural activists said every person has the right to protest public sufferings, social discrimination, and injustice and the cultural activist should be honored for doing what he did. They demanded the withdrawal of the case filed against him immediately.

Similar protest programmes were also held at Muktagacha in

Mymensingh and Susang Durgapur in Netrakona.

A team of Kotwali police on Sunday night arrested Shamim for designing posters allegedly as part of a "propaganda campaign".

Contacted, Mayor Ekramul Haque Titu said recently city corporation authority informed Mymensingh district administration and police to investigate the posters, which use the city corporation's logo but do not mention the address of the printing press. The city corporation said it tarnished the image of the city corporation and its mayor.

Later police detained Shamim, he said, adding that the posters created a negative impact on the citizens.

Lull across border, calm in Teknaf

FROM PAGE 12

Naf river before the conflict started around a month ago, said Solimullah, a fisherman from Shahporir Dwip.

Some fishing trawlers were preparing to sail for the Bay of Bengal for fishing when the correspondent visited the Shahporir Dwip yesterday.

But the small boats, which used to fish in the Naf river, were anchored on the shore of the jetty. Some fishers were seen catching fish with a hand net near the shore.

"We have no job now -- it's becoming difficult for us to earn the bread and butter for our families," Solimullah said.

Besides, the Border Guard

Bangladesh (BGB), the Coast Guard and the Bangladesh police members were also seen being vigilant to prevent Rohingyas from entering the border areas.

Police patrols have been increased in the areas around the border, said Osman Gani, the officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station.

The residents of the place are being made aware that the Rohingyas cannot enter.

In Teknaf town, it was seen that people were being urged to prevent Rohingya infiltration in the areas through loudspeakers.

At the beginning of this month, fierce clashes broke out between

the government troops of Myanmar and the rebel Arakan Army at the Tumburu border in Ghumdhun union in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila.

At one point, 330 members of the Myanmar government forces, mostly Myanmar Border Guard Police, fled to Bangladesh. They were handed over to the Myanmar authorities on February 15.

Meanwhile, the clashes have moved to the other side of the border of Naikhongchhari, where many Rohingyas live in the villages in Rakhine state. The Arakan Army has established its dominance in that area.

Ashfaque, wife denied bail

FROM PAGE 12

Earlier on February 18, Ashfaque and his wife were sent to jail after Investigation Officer Mohammad Shariful Islam, an inspector of the Detective Branch (DB) of police, produced them before the court on completion of a four-day remand, seeking their confinement in jail custody.

Previously on February 13, police produced the couple before the court with a 10-day remand petition, but the court granted four days' remand in police custody in the case filed by the victim's father, a tea garden worker, under section 304A of the Penal Code, which deals with death caused by negligence.

Preeti, 15, from Moulvibazar, died after she fell through an opening on Ashfaque's eighth-floor flat around

8:00am on February 6.

Police took Ashfaque and Tania into custody within hours of the incident.

They were first produced before a Dhaka court with a five-day remand petition on February 7, but the court asked the police to interrogate them at the jail gate and submit the report within three working days.

Preeti's death came around six months after a seven-year-old house help at the same couple's residence suffered injuries as she tried to flee through an opening of the eighth-floor flat.

The victim's family had lodged a case over the incident, but police submitted a final report before the court as they did not find any evidence to bear out the charges in the case, filed under the Children Act 2013.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Tea Workers' Union Central Committee and Bangladesh Tea Workers' Union Sylhet Valley formed two human chains yesterday demanding justice for Preeti.

They also demanded a fair trial of the case and exemplary punishment to those responsible for her death.

The first human chain was held in front of the Labour House in Sreemangal upazila town of Moulvibazar at 12:00pm. The other was held in front of Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar at 3:00pm.

In another development, three rights activists, including Rahnuma Ahmed and Saydia Gulrukh, took position at the District and Sessions Judge Court premises in Old Dhaka with placards, demanding justice for Preeti.