

Pak SC disposes plea seeking annulment of polls

Imposes fine on petitioner

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan's Supreme Court yesterday disposed of a plea seeking the February 8 general elections to be declared void and null after the petitioner failed to attend two consecutive hearings.

In an application filed last week, petitioner Ali Khan had urged the apex court to order new elections within 30 days to be held under the direct supervision and oversight of the judiciary "to ensure fairness, transparency and accountability".

He had also sought a stay order to stop the formation of a new government till the case was decided. During the previous hearing, the apex court had described the filing of the petition and its subsequent withdrawal as something which amounted to abuse of the court process.

"This court will safeguard that such manipulation does not take place," Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa had observed after it emerged that the petitioner failed to appear in the court.

Yesterday, a three-member bench — led by CJP Isa and including Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali — resumed hearing the petition. However, the applicant was once again absent from the courtroom.

Subsequently, the SC disposed of the plea and imposed a fine of Rs500,000 on the petitioner.

Meanwhile, the PML-N and the MQM-P have decided to continue mutual reconciliation, support and cooperation towards each other on the federal level, a joint-notification issued after a meeting stated.



Indian police and Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel blocking a highway fire teargas to prevent farmers from marching towards New Delhi during a protest to demand minimum crop prices, at the Haryana-Punjab state border in Shambhu at Patiala district yesterday. Farmers' group AIKS (All-India Kisan Sabha) alleged that a farmer has died during the police action. The farmers have also suspended their protest march to Delhi for two days, though the sit-in protest will continue. PHOTO: AFP

NAVALNY'S DEATH UK sanctions six officials at Russian prison

AFP, London

UK Foreign minister David Cameron said yesterday that London had imposed sanctions on six officials at the head of the Siberian penal colony where Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny died.

"Those responsible for Navalny's brutal treatment should be under no illusion — we will hold them accountable," Cameron said.

The sanctioned individuals will be subject to freezes of any UK assets and travel bans. They include Vadim Konstantinovich Kalinin, who oversaw the IK-3 Arctic Penal Colony "Polar Wolf", and five of his deputies.

The UK, which is the first nation to issue sanctions related to Navalny's death on Friday, also called for his body to be released to his family immediately.

China, India militaries to 'turn the page'

Says Beijing after talks on border issues

CHINA DAILY ONLINE

The Chinese and Indian militaries have agreed to maintain communication on current border issues to "turn the page" over the border situation, China's Ministry of National Defense said yesterday.

In a brief statement, the ministry announced that the 21st round of the China-India Corps Commander Level Meeting was held at the Moldo-Chushul border meeting point on the Chinese side on Monday.

The two sides conducted positive, in-depth, and constructive communication on resolving border issues of mutual concern, the news release said.

It said that both sides agreed to continue communication through military and diplomatic channels, guided by the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries, to reach an acceptable solution for both sides as soon as possible and "turn the page" in the border situation.

Indian and Chinese soldiers clashed at least two times in 2022 along their Himalayan frontier where they have been involved in a bitter standoff since 2020, according to new details from the Indian Army.

No deaths were reported in these incidents. At least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed in clashes in the area two years previously, in mid-2020.

These skirmishes in India's Ladakh region, the last of which is now known to have happened in November, 2022, show that the tensions along the undemarcated border continued much longer than previously reported.

Hunger grips Gaza as truce talks resume in Cairo

China warns US veto in UN ceasefire vote makes the Palestinian enclave 'even more dangerous'

AGENCIES

Heavy fighting rocked besieged Gaza yesterday as aid agencies warned of looming famine, a day after a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire was blocked by a US veto.

Washington, which argued the resolution would have imperilled ongoing efforts to free hostages, sent top White House official Brett McGurk to Cairo for renewed talks involving mediators and Hamas.

China warned yesterday that the US decision to veto the UNSC resolution pushed the conflict into an "even more dangerous" situation.

At The Hague, the United States said the International Court of Justice (ICJ) could not order the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied territories without taking into account Israel's security needs.

Global concern has spiralled over the high civilian death toll and dire humanitarian crisis in the Israeli offensive in Gaza that began on October 7.

Combat and chaos again stalled the sporadic aid deliveries for desperate civilians in Gaza, where the UN has warned the population of 2.4 million is on the brink of famine and could face an "explosion" of child deaths.

The UN World Food Programme said it was forced to halt aid deliveries in north Gaza because of "complete chaos and violence" after a truck convoy encountered gunfire and was ransacked by looters.



More Israeli strikes pounded Gaza, leaving 103 people dead during the night, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, which put the overall death toll at 29,313.

"We can't take it anymore," said Ahmad, a resident of Gaza City, where entire blocks are in ruins and cratered streets are strewn with rubble. "We do not have flour, we don't even know where to go in this cold weather," he said. "We demand a ceasefire. We want to live."

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli troops killed three Palestinians during an overnight raid in the city of Jenin, the military said yesterday.

Particular concern has centred on Gaza's far-southern Rafah area, where 1.4 million people now live in crowded shelters and makeshift tents, fearing attack by nearby Israeli ground troops,

reports AFP.

Aid groups warn a ground offensive could turn Rafah into a "graveyard" and the United States has said the vast numbers of displaced civilians must first be moved out of harm's way.

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that "without properly accounting for the safety and security of those refugees, we continue to believe that an operation in Rafah would be a disaster".

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted the army will keep fighting until it has destroyed Hamas and freed the remaining 130 hostages, around 30 of whom are feared dead.

The World Health Organization called

➤ **US urges ICJ not to order Israel out of Palestinian lands**

➤ **Israeli troops kill 3 Palestinians in West Bank raid**

➤ **Death toll in enclave now 29,313**

the devastation "indescribable" around Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Yunis, where it said it managed to evacuate some 32 patients.

"The area was surrounded by burnt and destroyed buildings, heavy layers of debris, with no stretch of intact road," WHO said.



Taiwan seeking to 'hide the truth'

Says China about deadly boat incident

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday accused Taiwanese authorities of "seeking to evade their responsibilities and hide the truth" after two Chinese nationals died in a boat incident last week.

"We solemnly demand relevant parties in Taiwan to release the truth as soon as possible," spokeswoman for Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office Zhu Fenglian said in a statement published by state broadcaster CCTV.

The Chinese boat carrying four people capsized last week near Taiwan's Kinmen islands while pursued by the Taiwanese coast guard, throwing all onboard into the water.

Two of the crew died and the other two were rescued and temporarily detained in Kinmen — a territory administered by Taipei but located just five kilometres from China's city of Xiamen.

Wu Cheng, a spokesperson for Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), told reporters yesterday that the party and its chairman Lai hope the aftermath of the boat incident can be "handled properly". Lai also "supports the Coast Guard's firm law enforcement in the future and... to study how to avoid similar situation from happening again", according to Wu.

Taiwan previously defended its actions by saying the Chinese boat was in prohibited waters, while China vowed to up "law enforcement patrol operations" and its coast guard officials briefly boarded a Taiwanese tourist ship on Monday.



Paramilitary police officers remove snow from a road following snowfall in Beijing, China yesterday. Severe weather warnings were in place across swathes of China as temperatures plummeted across the south and Beijing shivered in snowy conditions. PHOTO: REUTERS

Taking pictures 'a major sin'

Afghan Taliban official tells journalists

AFP, Kabul

A Taliban official said journalists were committing "a major sin" by taking pictures, Afghan media reported yesterday.

Television and pictures of living things were banned under the previous Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001, but a similar edict has so far not been imposed since authorities took back power in Afghanistan in 2021.

"Taking pictures is a major sin," Mohammad Hashem Shaheed Wror, a senior official in the justice ministry, told a seminar for department staff in the capital Kabul on Tuesday,

according to footage broadcast by several media.

"Our media friends, Afghans, they are always busy in this sin and always pulled towards immorality."

Officials in the Taliban birthplace of Kandahar were ordered this week not to take any images of living things, but the ban did not extend to media or the public, the spokesperson for Kandahar's governor Mahmood Azzam told AFP.

Images of humans and animals are generally avoided in Islamic art, extending for some Muslims to an aversion to any images of living things.

CORPORATE BOOKING

Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will be reserved on 22nd February (Thursday), 2024 for Corporate Booking.

From 23rd February (Friday), 2024 Fantasy Kingdom and Water Kingdom will remain open for all.

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