

## INDIA ELECTION

## Opposition in J&K accuses govt of sabotaging campaigns

REUTERS, New Delhi

Opposition leaders in India's troubled Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) valley have accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration of denying or cancelling permissions to hold campaign events, to help his party's "proxies".

Omar Abdullah, a leader of the largest regional political party, the National Conference, said Modi's government was trying to sabotage his campaign ahead of voting in the first of Kashmir's three seats on Monday.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is skipping elections in Kashmir for the first time since 1996, which analysts and politicians in the region say belies his narrative of integrating Kashmir with the rest of the country and bringing peace and normality to the valley ravaged by a 35-year-old uprising against India's rule.

In 2019, Modi revoked Jammu and Kashmir state's partial autonomy, removed its statehood and divided it into two federally-controlled territories: Muslim-majority Kashmir with Hindu-dominated Jammu, and a mountainous Buddhist territory of Ladakh.

While the BJP has not fielded any candidate in Kashmir's three seats, it has said that, as part of its grand strategy, it would instead support other smaller regional parties, without naming which.

In a letter to the federal polls watchdog, Election Commission of India, on Thursday, Abdullah said the police cancelled permissions for his rallies, asking him to reschedule without providing any reasons.

He said on social media platform X that it was done to help the BJP's "proxy candidates". His rival Mehbooba Mufti, who heads other regional political powerhouse People's Democratic Party (PDP), also accused the police of not allowing her to hold campaign events.



Pro-Palestinian protesters march across campus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) after three other protesters were arrested for blocking a parking garage in Cambridge, Massachusetts, US on Thursday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Israel closure of Gaza crossings 'crippling' aid: UN

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's closure of key crossings into Gaza has cut off the main entry point for aid, and particularly fuel, rendering humanitarian operations all but impossible, a senior UN official warned.

"We lost the main entry point for all humanitarian aid," said Andrea De Domenico, who heads the United Nations humanitarian office, OCHA, in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israel on Sunday closed the key Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and southern Gaza, through which most humanitarian aid enters the Palestinian territory, after a barrage of Hamas missiles killed four Israeli soldiers in the area.

On Tuesday, the Israeli army seized and closed down the Palestinian side of the nearby Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza after ordering residents of eastern

Rafah to evacuate.

In an interview with AFP on Thursday, De Domenico said that although Israel says it reopened Kerem Shalom on Wednesday, getting aid through remains extremely tricky.

**Unicef chief warns if fuel is not allowed in, "the consequences will be felt almost immediately".**

And the Rafah crossing, through which all fuel into Gaza passes, remains closed, meaning no fuel is getting in. "In Gaza there are no stocks" of fuel, he said. That "means no movement," De Domenico said. "It is completely crippling the humanitarian operations."

The warning comes amid increasing international calls to ramp up aid into Gaza, where famine has already begun in the north, according to World Food Programme Executive Director Cindy McCain.

Even before the Rafah crossing closed, De Domenico said the UN had for weeks been pushing for alternative ways to bring fuel into the territory amid alarm over Israeli threats to launch a ground assault on the southern city, where the UN says 1.4 million people are sheltering.

Israel had assured the UN it was trying to find a solution, he said, adding that though that aid groups would likely access far less than the 200,000 litres (52,835 gallons) a day they had been striving to bring in before operations intensified.

The head of the UN children's agency (Unicef), Catherine Russell, warned that if fuel is not allowed in, "the consequences will be felt almost immediately".

## US destroyer 'driven away' in South China Sea

REUTERS, Beijing

China's military closely monitored and "drove away" USS Halsey that entered the territorial waters of Paracel Islands in the South China Sea yesterday, the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army said in a statement. The US move "seriously infringed on China's sovereignty and security," the military said. "It is yet another iron proof of its navigation hegemony and militarization of the South China Sea," it said, adding its troops would stay on high alert and safeguard national security. The US Navy said the destroyer asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the South China Sea near the Paracel Islands "consistent with international law." The USS Halsey exited the area after its operation and continued on in the South China Sea, it said. The latest dispute between China and the US came amid heightened tensions in the strategic South China Sea, with US ally the Philippines embroiled in a bitter diplomatic row with Beijing over disputed waters in the region.

## 12 Maoists killed in clash with India security forces

AFP, Raipur

At least 12 Maoist insurgents were shot dead by Indian security forces yesterday, police said, during the latest clash in a decades-long conflict waged in the country's central forests. The guerrillas were killed in a remote part of Chhattisgarh state, where there have been a number of deadly assaults on rebel encampments this year. "The bodies of 12 Maoists have been recovered during the search operation," local police chief Vivekananda Sinha told AFP. Sinha said security forces had cordoned off a forested area in Bijapur district after receiving intelligence that insurgent cadres were meeting there. Two members of the Indian security forces had been wounded by homemade bombs during the clash but neither was in a dangerous condition, he added. Search operations were continuing in the area, Sinha said. More than 100 Maoists have been killed in India this year, according to police figures, the vast majority in Chhattisgarh. The insurgents say they are fighting for the rural poor, have been carrying out guerrilla attacks since 1967.

## Tigers eke out feeble victory

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Campbell out in the middle, the visitors were threatening to take the game away and register their first win in the series. However, it was Mustafizur, who recently had an impressive campaign in the ongoing Indian Premier League for Chennai Super Kings, who brought Bangladesh into the game by removing Burl (19 off 20) and Luke Jongwe (one off two) in the 15th over to end a 35-run stand and reduce Zimbabwe to 94 for six.

Mustafizur then removed Faraz Akram in the penultimate over, finishing with figures of three for 19 in his four overs, claiming the player-of-the-match award for his efforts.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh suffered a batting meltdown despite a good start. Tanzid Tamim and Soumya Sarkar, who replaced out-of-form Liton Das, stitched a 101-run opening stand but the Tigers went on to lose their last nine wickets for just 42 runs to end up with a mediocre score.

Tamim smashed a 37-ball 52 and stood out with the bat in hand for the Tigers.

## India SC grants

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go to the polls on May 25 and June 1 respectively.

Votes will be counted on June 4 and results are expected to be announced the same day. Kejriwal left from Tihar Jail in his convoy, accompanied by his wife Sunita Kejriwal and his daughter Harshita, reports AFP.

The Enforcement Directorate, India's financial crime-fighting agency, arrested Kejriwal on March 21 in connection with corruption allegations related to the capital territory's liquor policy.

Kejriwal's government and his AAP have denied the allegations. Modi and BJP say the investigating agencies are only doing their job and the government is not influencing them, reports Reuters.

Abhishhek Manu Singhvi, Kejriwal's lawyer, had argued that Kejriwal was arrested just before the vote to stop him from campaigning against Modi, who opinion polls suggest will win a comfortable majority and secure a rare third straight term.

## Donald Lu to visit Dhaka

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discuss US-Bangladesh cooperation, including addressing the climate crisis and deepening economic ties.

In Chennai, Assistant Secretary Lu will meet with consulate personnel to bolster bilateral engagement in southern India, according to a statement from the State Department.

He will then travel to Colombo to engage with officials from across the political spectrum and deepen the United States' partnership with Sri Lanka.

"In his meetings, he will reaffirm the United States' support for Sri Lanka's economic recovery, as well as the importance of a robust civil society as a cornerstone of a free and democratic society," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen on Thursday told journalists that the scope and thrust of Donald Lu's visit is likely to differ greatly from previous ones -- before

## UNGA backs Palestinian bid

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membership, but simply recognises them as qualified to join.

The General Assembly resolution "determines that the State of Palestine ... should therefore be admitted to membership" and it "recommends that the Security Council reconsider the matter favourably."

"We want peace, we want freedom," Palestinian UN Ambassador Riyad Mansour told the General Assembly before the vote. "A yes vote is a vote for Palestinian existence, it is not against any state.... It is an investment in peace."

"Voting yes is the right thing to do," he said in remarks that drew applause.

Under the founding UN Charter, membership is open to "peace-loving states" that accept the obligations in that document and are able and willing to carry them out.

More than 100,000 Palestinians have fled Rafah in recent days, the United Nations said yesterday, with the southern Gaza city under threat of a full-scale Israeli ground invasion.

Israel's military on Monday called for Gazans to leave eastern Rafah, which triggered widespread international alarm.

The UN children's agency Unicef said more than 100,000 had left, with the UN humanitarian agency OCHA putting the figure at more than 110,000.

Georgios Petropoulos, head of OCHA's sub-office in Gaza, said the situation in the besieged Palestinian territory had reached "even more unprecedented levels of emergency". Israeli tanks captured the main

the elections in Bangladesh.

"The pre-election scenario and the current one are totally different. A new government has been formed. A stable government is carrying forward its activities by engaging with various countries. All countries think of engaging with Bangladesh," Momen said.

He said all elements of mutual relations -- political, economic, and even security issues will be discussed. "We have many mechanisms, platforms, and dialogues with them [US]. It will be looked into how all these can be reactivated and what are the mechanisms we can take forward," said the foreign secretary.

Asked about the pre-election discomfort, the foreign secretary said Bangladesh never felt discomfort. They might have felt that.

"From our side, there was no discomfort before the elections, and still we do not have any discomfort," he said.

## David Meale

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Foreign Service with the rank of minister-counselor, is currently serving as the deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy in Beijing, China, where he also served as Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

Prior to this role, he was deputy assistant secretary for Trade Policy and Negotiations for the Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs.

He also served as the deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy in Dhaka. He joined the foreign service in 1992.

Prior to his foreign service career, Meale held positions in corporate finance with Sprint Telecommunications.

A native of Virginia, Meale holds a MS from the National Defense University's Eisenhower School, an MBA from Tulane University, and a BA from the University of Delaware. He is also a recipient of the Baker Wilkins Award for Outstanding Deputy Chief of Mission and has studied Chinese, Ukrainian, and French.

## Encampment

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slogans but were dispersed by 6:00 am.

At the University of Arizona, campus police in riot gear fired tear gas late Thursday at protesters before tearing down an encampment that included wood and plastic barriers on campus, reports AP.

In statement, the University of Arizona said it made the decision because the encampment violated school policy. The school also said that police vehicles were spiked, and rocks and water bottles thrown at officers and university staff.

In Philadelphia early yesterday, police detained people who were at an encampment that has been in place at the University of Pennsylvania's campus for more than two weeks. Officers moved in after giving pro-Palestinian protesters a warning to leave campus or face possible arrest.

Police have descended on dozens of campuses to sweep up students in mass arrests, adhering to an approach many criminologists have found to be outdated and counterproductive.

New York police arrested nearly 300 people at Columbia University and City College of New York on April 30 during protests over the offensive in Gaza, setting off flash bangs to stun and disorient demonstrators, reports Reuters.

Two nights later in Los Angeles, police collared more than 200 people at UCLA. At schools in Connecticut, Georgia, Texas, New Hampshire and elsewhere, protesters have been arrested by the dozens.

## US needs to work more

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that such a scenario is not seen in Bangladesh when the Awami League is in power.

He, however, said it was seen during the martial law, Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan, Ziaur Rahman, and HM Ershad regimes.

The foreign minister said they want to work with the development partners on human rights from the front and want to see that human rights are protected in the US and European countries.

Hasan said they are surprised to see how those who are protesting in the US are being brutally suppressed.

Asked about the nomination of the new US ambassador to Bangladesh, he said they received the name much earlier.

US President Joe Biden has nominated David Slayton Meale, currently deputy chief of mission in Beijing, as the next US ambassador to Bangladesh.

Regarding the upazila parishad polls, the foreign minister said 35 percent of votes were cast in the first phase despite the BNP's call of boycotting the election.

"It is a good turnout. I would not say it is very good. And there was no violence. I hope voters' turnout will increase in the second phase."

Former foreign minister AK Abdul Momen, former state minister for foreign affairs Md Shahriar Alam, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, and diplomats stationed in Dhaka were present at the function.

## Strapped down

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According to the accounts, the facility some 18 miles from the Gaza frontier is split into two parts: enclosures where around 70 Palestinian detainees from Gaza are placed under extreme physical restraint, and a field hospital where wounded detainees are strapped to their beds, wearing diapers and fed through straws.

"They stripped them down of anything that resembles human beings," said one whistleblower, who worked as a medic at the facility's field hospital.

"(The beatings) were not done to gather intelligence. They were done out of revenge," said another whistleblower. "It was punishment for what they (the Palestinians) did on October 7 and punishment for behavior in the camp."

Responding to CNN's request for comment on all the allegations made in this report, the Israeli military, known as the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), said in a statement: "The IDF ensures proper conduct towards the detainees in custody. Any allegation of misconduct by IDF soldiers is examined and dealt with accordingly. In appropriate cases, MPCID (Military Police Criminal Investigation's Division) investigations are opened when there is suspicion of misconduct justifying such action."

"Detainees are handcuffed based on their risk level and health status. Incidents of unlawful handcuffing are not known to the authorities."

The IDF did not directly deny accounts of people being stripped of their clothing or held in diapers. Instead, the Israeli military said that the detainees are given back their

clothing once the IDF has determined that they pose no security risk.

Reports of abuse at Sde Teiman have already surfaced in Israeli and Arab media after an outcry from Israeli and Palestinian rights groups over conditions there. But this rare testimony from Israelis working at the facility sheds further light on Israel's conduct as it wages offensive in Gaza, with fresh allegations of mistreatment. It also casts more doubt on the Israeli government's repeated assertions that it acts in accordance with accepted international practices and law.

CNN interviewed over a dozen former Palestinian detainees who appeared to have been released from this camp.

"We looked forward to the night so we could sleep. Then we looked forward to the morning in hopes that our situation might change," said Dr Mohammed al-Ran, recalling his detention at a military facility where he said he endured desert temperatures, swinging from the heat of the day to the chill of night. CNN interviewed him outside Gaza last month.

"I was there for 23 days. Twenty-three days that felt like 100 years," said 27-year-old Ibrahim Yassine on the day of his release from a military detention camp.

He was lying in a crowded room with over a dozen newly freed men -- they were still in the grey tracksuit prison uniforms. Some had deep flesh wounds from where the handcuffs had been removed. "We were handcuffed and blindfolded," said another man, 43-year-old Sufyan Abu Salah. "Today is the first day I can see."