

PAK PARLIAMENT Ex-PM Imran Khan’s party wins reserved seats

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan’s Supreme Court yesterday ruled that jailed former prime minister Imran Khan’s party was eligible for over 20 extra reserved seats in parliament, ramping up pressure on the country’s weak coalition government.

Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party candidates contested the February 8 election as independents after it was barred from the polls. They won the most seats but the election commission said independents were ineligible for the grant of 70 reserved seats, meant for political parties only.

The commission had ordered the reserved seats instead to be distributed among other parties, mostly to those in the ruling coalition.

“As a political party, the PTI is entitled to its reserved seats,” said Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa while



reading out the order, which was supported by eight judges and opposed by five of the 13-member full court bench.

The granting of 23 reserved seats does not affect the parliamentary majority of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s coalition government.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar told reporters after the decision.

The ruling coalition still has well over 200 members of the 336-member lower house of parliament. Khan’s party strength stood at 84 before the decision, and is expected to rise to over 100.

Under Pakistan’s election rules, parties are allocated 70 reserved seats - 60 for women, 10 for non-Muslims - in proportion to the number of seats they win. This completes the National Assembly’s total strength of 336 seats.



Rescuers search for survivors in the Trishuli River following a landslide in Simaltar, Nepal yesterday. At least 63 people were missing after the landslide triggered by heavy monsoon rains swept two buses off a highway and into the river, authorities said.

Tax billionaires more

India’s opposition Congress asks Modi in a bid to generate funds for stretched public services like education, health

REUTERS, New Delhi

India’s main opposition Congress party yesterday asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impose an additional tax on the country’s billionaires to generate funds for stretched public services like education and health.

The annual budget will be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23 at a time of deepening income inequality and high unemployment despite India’s world-beating economic growth of nearly 8 percent and booming stock markets.

Jairam Ramesh, senior Congress party leader, said in a post on X that a 2 percent tax on the wealth of India’s estimated 167 billionaires could raise as much as 1.5 trillion rupees (\$18 billion) or about 0.5 percent of gross domestic product.

“This could pay for schools, hospitals, renewable energy, and many more essential investments,” he said, urging the

government to tax the super-rich more.

Wealth concentrated in the hands of the richest 1 percent of India’s population is at its greatest level for six decades and its percentage share of national income exceeds that of countries including Brazil and the US research group the World

Jairam Ramesh, senior Congress party leader, said that a 2 percent tax on wealth of estimated 167 billionaires could raise as much as 1.5 trillion rupees.

Inequality Lab reported earlier this year.

Opposition parties are pressing the government to take steps to increase spending on welfare programmes after Modi lost his majority in parliament and had to rely on coalition allies to return to

office for the third time.

Government officials earlier ruled out the possibility of taxing the wealth of the ultra-rich, arguing it could encourage them to move to low-tax countries.

Congress also asked Modi to clarify what would be India’s position at the G20 meeting in Brazil later this month on the issue of supporting a global tax on billionaires, a proposal pushed by Brazil, which holds the G20 presidency this year.

Brazil’s proposal, crafted by French economist Gabriel Zucman from the independent EU Tax Observatory, calls for an annual 2 percent levy on fortunes exceeding \$1 billion, which could raise up to \$250 billion annually from about 3,000 individuals.

Government sources said yesterday India plans to overhaul more than 200 state-run firms to make them more profitable, signalling a departure from Modi’s aggressive privatisation programme that has struggled to take off.

Kejriwal gets interim bail in graft case

But he stays in jail due to his arrest in another case



REUTERS, New Delhi

India’s Supreme Court yesterday granted interim bail to opposition leader and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a graft case, but he will stay in jail due to his arrest in another case.

Kejriwal was arrested in March by the Enforcement Directorate (ED), India’s financial crime-fighting agency, over alleged corruption in the city’s alcohol sales policy.

A fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a former anti-corruption crusader, Kejriwal, 55, denies any wrongdoing and calls the case politically motivated. His lawyers had challenged his arrest in the top court, which referred the matter to a larger bench while giving him temporary relief.

“Given that right to life and liberty is sacrosanct, and Arvind Kejriwal has suffered incarceration for over 90 days ... we direct that Arvind Kejriwal will be released on interim bail,” Justice Sanjiv Khanna said.

India announces ‘Murder of the Constitution Day’ remembrance

AFP, New Delhi

India said yesterday it would hold an annual “Murder of the Constitution Day” from next year, commemorating a dark historical chapter tied to the family of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s chief political rival.

June 25, 2025 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Emergency, when then-premier Indira Gandhi suspended the constitution in response to a court ruling that threatened her hold on power.

The following months saw thousands of activists jailed, press freedoms suspended and an abusive compulsory sterilisation campaign that forced millions of men to receive vasectomies in an abortive population control effort.

Modi said on social media platform X that the new day of remembrance would “serve as a reminder of what happens when the Constitution of India was trampled over”. “It is also a day to pay homage to each and every person who suffered due to the excesses of the Emergency.”

Rohingya repatriation looking like pipe dream

FROM PAGE 12

Over the last several years, the Myanmar army violated airspace and bullets landed on Bangladesh territory, leaving people injured. Bangladesh repeatedly protested the incidents.

Bangladesh’s physical relation with Myanmar is through Rakhine state, and that configuration is now changing with the non-state actors controlling this border, said Sakawat, also a former election commissioner.

“Clearly, there is a huge security threat ... the options for Bangladesh are limited.”

If the Myanmar junta counterattacks the AA, the situation will only worsen at the border, Sakawat said. “What would happen if the Arakan Army crosses the border to Bangladesh while fighting? Will Bangladesh take their side?”

As the Myanmar military has conscripted Rohingyas into the force, the AA’s position is against them. So, there is a risk of Rohingya-AA direct confrontation, he said.

Another side-effect of the fighting is that drug smuggling through the Bangladesh-Myanmar border may be rampant as the warring forces often make money out of drug sales, Sakawat added.

Subsequently, Bangladesh must send security reinforcements along the 271 km-long land and maritime border, according to experts.

“We are absolutely troubled by the conflicts and their implications on Bangladesh,” said an official of the foreign ministry.

The Myanmar authorities have

been warned not to make Bangladesh a casualty of their fighting. “We have beefed up border security measures so that Rohingyas cannot enter our territory,” he added.

Bangladesh will not be able to shoot the Rohingyas if they forcefully enter Bangladesh en masse, said Munshi Faiz Ahmad, a former ambassador.

Before that happens, Bangladesh needs to take serious diplomatic initiatives so the Rohingyas can stay in Rakhine, maybe in camps, under international supervision.

He suggested Rohingyas raise its voice at the UN and hold dialogues with the US, India and China regarding the matter.

“We cannot be burdened again and again by the Rohingya crisis created by Myanmar,” said Ahmad, also a former chairman of the Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies.

The UN Security should seriously consider deploying UN peacekeepers in Rakhine to maintain peace, said Shahab Enam Khan, a professor of international relations at Jahangirnagar University.

“International law is not only applicable to Bangladesh. Bangladesh has limits too. How long can the people of Bangladesh take responsibility for the Rohingya?”

Bangladesh can support developing a humanitarian corridor, allowing international aid agencies to reach food and other emergency supplies to Rakhine State for the displaced Rohingya, he added.

Sakawat suggested that it would be best if the UN could arrange places

within Rakhine where the Rohingya can take shelter.

“The UN can make a global call on this instead of pushing Bangladesh to take the responsibility,” he said.

There are about one million Rohingyas in the camps in Cox’s Bazar, with yearly births of 30,000.

Rohingya repatriation could not be possible, even under a tripartite initiative led by China, as Rohingyas were not convinced by the guarantee of safety and citizenship in Rakhine.

The NUG, the Myanmar government in exile since 2021, had pledged citizenship and recognition of Rohingyas as an ethnic group of Myanmar. However, analysts expect the AA to have stronger autonomy even if Myanmar becomes a federal democracy.

Also, the AA thinks Rohingyas are outsiders, so it will be difficult to continue repatriation efforts if the AA controls the Rakhine state.

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said repatriation of the Rohingya under the present conditions in Rakhine is not possible in the near future. However, the government will continue to engage the international community in Rohingya repatriation.

Until then, the burden on Bangladesh is getting heavier, with funding for Rohingyas on the wane.

As much as \$852 million is needed for the upkeep of Rohingyas in the camps in 2024. So far, less than 30 percent of the sum has come through.

“It is important for Bangladesh to establish contacts with the Arakan Army, even if informally. If they control Rakhine, there will be no alternatives to establishing relations with them,” Ahmad said.

Biden faces more calls to quit race

FROM PAGE 12

want someone else, that’s the democratic process,” Biden said, before shifting to the stage whisper he often uses for emphasis to add, “It’s not gonna happen.”

Biden perhaps did not reassure those who were spooked by his poor presidential debate performance against Trump on June 27.

At one point, he referred to his vice president, Kamala Harris, as “Vice President Trump”. That came just hours after he introduced Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as “President Putin” at the Nato summit, drawing gasps from those in the room.

Biden occasionally garbled his responses at the news conference, yet he also delivered detailed assessments of global issues, including Ukraine’s war with Russia and the Israel’s offensive in Gaza, that served as a reminder of his decades of experience on the world stage.

Some Democrats were not reassured.

“We must put forward the strongest candidate possible to confront the threat posed by Trump’s promised MAGA authoritarianism. I no longer believe that is Joe Biden,” said Representative Jim Himes of Connecticut, who called on the

president to end his campaign after the news conference.

A senior campaign official who spoke on condition of anonymity called the performance the “worst of all worlds. Not good. But not bad enough to make him change his mind ... It’ll give some enough cover to back him publicly, only to say he’s not up for it privately.”

On the other hand, Democratic fundraiser Dmitri Melhorn said other donors told him they saw a strong performance from the president. “This is the person who can beat Trump. The mistakes are baked in and the upside is strong,” he told Reuters.

AL to go tough to quell infighting

FROM PAGE 1

civil society platform Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) on July 4 said AL grassroots leaders have become further apart as several party men ran for chairman in almost all upazilas. It said the situation may get worse.

Asked about the reasons behind the intra-party feuds, several senior AL leaders blamed party leaders’ desperation for winning polls, establishing supremacy, securing party posts, and rivalries between party lawmakers, local leaders, independent MPs and the newly elected upazila chairmen.

They said internal feuds have caused the organisation to reach a point where some leaders cannot even tolerate their party colleagues.

The senior leaders said the AL high-ups are trying to restore discipline, but it might be tough.

Infighting within the ruling party became so grave that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had to ask the home minister to ensure arrests of all those linked to clashes and killings within the AL.

In a meeting on July 8, AL leaders and several ministers said that intra-party conflicts have become the party’s main cause for concern.

Sources said the ruling party is going to take some drastic measures. The AL organising secretaries have been asked to identify the party units that have internal feuds and those responsible, and report to the AL high command.

Top AL leaders will tour different districts, hold talks with the leaders

of the troubled units and summon leaders to Dhaka, if required, to end the disputes. If necessary, the party will take organisational actions against errant grassroots leaders, the sources added.

AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said intra-party conflicts within a big party like AL are “quite normal”.

“But we will not spare anyone if party discipline is violated. We will do everything needed to restore discipline in the party,” he told The Daily Star.

Conflicts within the AL became a common occurrence as different factions clashed over establishing political dominance, rivalries, taking control of illegal sand business, controlling bus and autorickshaw stands, business establishments, land, and party offices.

Rabiul Islam, 42, chairman of Sarapur Union Parishad under Khulna’s Dumuria upazila and also a local AL leader, was shot dead on July 6.

Rabiul’s wife Shayla Erin filed a case with Dumuria Police Station saying her husband might have been killed over political rivalry.

Police arrested local AL leader Asgar Bishwas in the case. Asgar ran for Dumuria upazila chairman and Rabiul reportedly took a stance against Asgar.

On July 7, HM Suman Haldar, chairman of Panchgaon Union Parishad under Munshiganj’s Tongibari upazila and also a local AL leader, was shot dead due to a rivalry over the election to a school

managing committee.

Police arrested three people in connection with the murder. The three are involved in AL.

On June 22, at least 30 people were injured in a clash between two AL factions in Rajshahi’s Bagha upazila. Of the injured, Ashrafur Islam Babul, upazila AL general secretary, died of his wounds on June 26.

Police arrested Bagha municipality Mayor Akkas Ali, also a district AL leader, in connection with the murder.

A recent report by Bangla daily Prothom Alo said clashes between AL or pro-AL men left 51 people dead in Bogura over the last 15 years.

The report cited establishing dominance, rivalries over securing party posts, control over narcotics trade, control over establishments, extortion in the transport sector, and control over sand trade as the reasons behind the clashes.

A top Bogura AL leader said, “No visible steps are taken to end the longstanding intra-party feuds.”

He said grassroots leaders and activists used to maintain close contact with their respective unit leaders and also follow their instructions because their recommendations were necessary for them to win party tickets for local government polls.

“But as Awami League decided not to field party candidates in the local government polls, party men who ran as independents created their own groups of supporters. This ultimately weakened the chain of command,” he observed.

Nepal PM Dahal loses confidence vote

FROM PAGE 12

Dahal, 69, was forced to either resign or prove his majority in parliament after his largest ally, the liberal Communist Unified Marxist Leninist (UML) party, led by Oli, withdrew support last week.

Oli, who has been prime minister twice before, struck a deal with the centrist Nepali Congress (NC) at the end of June, securing enough seats for a majority, meaning he is poised to govern, but no date has been set for the new government to take office.

Dahal, a former Maoist rebel chief, needed at least 138 votes in his

favour in the 275-member house to retain power. A total of 63 of the 258 lawmakers present in the chambers voted for him, 194 voted against, and one abstained.

“The confidence vote sought by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal has been rejected,” Parliament Speaker Dev Raj Ghimire declared after the ballots were counted.

In his third term as prime minister, which began in December 2022, Dahal changed his main coalition partner three times and had to seek a vote of confidence five times, including the one he lost yesterday.

“The new coalition was necessitated by a need for political stability,” UML lawmaker Yogesh Bhattarai said.

In a speech ahead of yesterday’s vote, Dahal said Oli’s coalition of the two biggest political parties was against democratic practice.

UML is the largest party in parliament and NC is the second largest.

“I am concerned this might lead to regression and authoritarianism,” said Dahal, whose Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) is the third largest party.