

INTERNATIONAL

Pak military courts convict 25 PTI men

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan military courts have convicted and sentenced 25 people for involvement in pro-Imran Khan unrest last year, the armed forces said yesterday, with the majority handed decade-long prison terms.

Ex-prime minister Khan was arrested in May last year after being ousted from office and mounting an unprecedented campaign of defiance against the nation's powerful military leaders.

His detention over graft allegations sparked nationwide unrest, some targeting armed forces installations, and prompting rare prosecutions of civilians in military courts.

Amnesty International called the move "an intimidation tactic, designed to crack down on dissent".

All of the convicted are men and 14 have been sentenced to a decade of "rigorous imprisonment", the military said with the remaining 11 set to serve lesser prison terms.

"All sentences announced by the military courts are disproportionate and excessive," said a spokesman for Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. "These sentences are rejected."

The verdicts were announced just three weeks after the capital Islamabad was gripped by fresh unrest, as tens of thousands of Khan supporters flooded in to demand his release.

The government said at least five security personnel were killed whilst PTI allege at least 10 of their own were shot dead by security forces before crowds retreated.



Palestinian women mourn a dead child, killed in an Israeli strike the previous night, at Al-Ahli Arab hospital in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MYANMAR CIVIL WAR

Rebels 'capture junta western command in Rakhine state'

AFP, Bangkok

A Myanmar ethnic rebel group has captured a military regional command in Rakhine state, it said, in what would be a major blow to the junta.

The Arakan Army (AA) had "completely captured" the western regional command at Ann on Friday after weeks of fighting, the group said in a statement on its Telegram channel.

Ann would be the second regional military command to fall to ethnic rebels in five months, and a huge blow to the military.

Myanmar's military has 14 regional commands across the country with many of them currently fighting established ethnic rebel groups or newer "People's Defence Forces" that have sprung up to battle the military's 2021 coup.

Fighting has rocked Rakhine state since the AA attacked security forces in November last year, ending a ceasefire that had largely



held since the putsch.

AA fighters have seized swathes of territory in the state that is home to China and India-backed port projects and all but cut off state capital Sittwe.

The AA posted photos of a man whom it said was the Ann deputy regional commander, in the custody of its fighters.

AFP was unable to confirm that information and has contacted the AA's spokesman for

comment.

AFP was unable to reach people on the ground around Ann where internet and phone services are patchy.

In decades of on-off fighting since independence from Britain in 1948 the military had never lost a regional military command until last August, when the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) captured the northeastern command in Lashio in Shan state.

Myanmar's borderlands are home to myriad ethnic armed groups who have battled the military since independence for autonomy and control of lucrative resources.

Last month the UN warned Rakhine state was heading towards famine, as ongoing clashes squeeze commerce and agricultural production. "Rakhine's economy has stopped functioning," the report from the UN Development Programme said, projecting "famine conditions by mid-2025" if current levels of food insecurity were left unaddressed.

BORDER OUTPOST ATTACK

Pak Taliban kills 16 Pak soldiers

AFP, Islamabad

The Pakistani Taliban claimed a brazen overnight raid on an army outpost near the border with Afghanistan yesterday, which intelligence officials said killed 16 soldiers and critically wounded five more.

The siege started after midnight and lasted about two hours as around 30 militants pummeled the mountainous outpost from three sides, one senior intelligence official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

A second intelligence official also anonymously confirmed the toll of dead and wounded in the attack in the Makeen area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 40 kilometres (24 miles) from the Afghan border.

Pakistan's domestic chapter of the Taliban claimed the attack in a statement, saying it was staged "in retaliation for the martyrdom of our senior commanders". The group claimed to have seized a hoard of military gear including machine guns and a night vision device.

Drone attack hits Russia city 1,000 km from frontier

AFP, Moscow

Kyiv yesterday staged a major drone attack on the Russian city of Kazan, 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) from the frontier, as Moscow's troops captured a new frontline village in eastern Ukraine.

The drones damaged buildings in Kazan, capital of the Tartarstan republic, with a population of more than 1.3 million, but there were no victims, local officials said.

Kazan City hall said some fires had started and were being tackled by the fire brigade. The city's airport was temporarily closed, the Russian civilian aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, said.

Videos on Russian social media networks showed drones hitting high rise buildings setting off firebombs.

Russia on Friday staged strikes on the Ukraine capital, Kyiv, that left one dead and 13 wounded, according to the city's authorities. Another five people were killed in a Ukrainian attack on the Russian frontier region of Kursk, the local governor said.

Devotee killed, valuables looted at Natore crematorium

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The Daily Star.

"A stone statue is also missing. We found that the lock of the temple's storeroom was broken. The iron grill of the window was cut off," he added.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the body, said Shafiqul Islam, inspector (investigation) of Natore Sadar Police Station.

"Primarily, we suspect that the victim was strangled to death as he could identify the criminals. We are investigation the incident to get details," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, the

victim's elder brother Arun Chandra Dash said, "Tarun used to run a laundry at a local market until 2006. Then he became a bit imbalanced mentally. He often used to stay at the crematorium."

Tarun has a son and daughter. His son Topu Dash filed a murder case in this connection, said Arun.

Contacted, Subrata Sarker, general secretary of Natore district unit of Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Oikya Parishad, said, "The criminals killed Tarun to loot the cash and valuables from the crematorium. We demand a fair investigation into the incident and immediate arrest of the killers."

Brazil bus accident kills at least 32

AFP, Sao Paulo

At least 32 people died early yesterday when a bus crashed into a truck and then caught fire in southeastern Brazil, officials said.

Around four in the morning, the bus travelling from Sao Paulo blew a tire near the town of Lajinha, in the state of Minas Gerais, causing the driver to lose control of the vehicle and hit a truck, the state's fire department said in a statement.

The bus went up in flames and at least 32 passengers died, the statement said. Another vehicle rammed into the bus from behind, but its occupants survived.

Uprising leaders drafting charter

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The suggested names will be put to a vote, the sources told The Daily Star.

They are now examining the structure, operation and political practice of some youth-based parties in South Asia, including the Aam Aadmi Party and Lok Janshakti Party in India, and the National People's Power in Sri Lanka.

When asked about the plan to form a new political party, Nasiruddin Patwary, the convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, confirmed to this newspaper that they have not finalised the name yet.

"A draft on the name and other relevant matters is being made now. We hope to reach a decision soon after consulting the stakeholders. After that, we will publicise everything."

The charter will be finalised upon consultation with civil society members and other stakeholders, three leaders of the two platforms told this newspaper.

Although the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement will not be directly affiliated with the new party, many individuals from the platform are expected to take leadership roles in the new party.

Information and Broadcasting Adviser Nahid Islam, who was a key organiser of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, may quit the council of advisers to lead the new party, the sources said.

Akhter Hossen, member secretary of Jatiya Nagorik Committee; its spokesperson Samantha Sharmin; and Sarjis Alam, a key organiser of the movement and general secretary of July Shaheed Memorial Foundation, are likely to be in the forefront of the new party, said sources inside the two platforms.

The plan to form a new party by the leaders of the student-led uprising has been in discussions since the ouster of the Awami League on August 5.

They launched their civic

platform the Jatiya Nagorik Committee in September. According to the leaders of the platform, the foundation for the political party will be established once the civic platform's organisational structure is established at the grassroots level.

Talking to The Daily Star, a key leader of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee said they have expanded their activities nationwide by forming committees in around 100 districts and upazilas over the past three months.

"We believe that we will complete the formation of committees in all possible areas by December. In the next phase, as we expand ward by ward, we can begin the process of creating our political party," said the Nagorik Committee leader, wishing to be unnamed.

The leader also said they did not want to specify a time for the formation of the party, but they are hopeful about the launch within one or two months.

London to help Dhaka

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legislation and instruments which can be used to support asset recovery requests," said the statement.

"Requests require significant domestic political support, as well as cooperation from law enforcement agencies and the judiciary. We are in discussions with the International Anti-Corruption Coordination Centre hosted by the UK's National Crime Agency and the International Centre for Asset Recovery on how to support the Interim Government of Bangladesh," it added.

The statement went on to say that in October, the UK National Crime Agency visited Dhaka as part of the UK's effort to support Bangladesh in this area.

"We will continue to support these recoveries to the extent that we can," it said.

Hatton's question to the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs is the latest in line of British parliamentarians criticising kleptocracy in Bangladesh.

A newsletter sent on Friday by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on

Anti-Corruption & Responsible Tax said that they have engaged with all 56 MPs representing constituencies where the properties of former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury are located.

On October 15, the group held a parliamentary briefing to discuss how the UK can help Bangladesh recover its stolen money.

The parliamentary group's chair Joe Powell MP posted on his X profile, "We are at the epicentre of the housing crisis and must do what we can to prevent kleptocrats from snapping up London property with illicit wealth."

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