

INTERNATIONAL



Sarkozy begins
5-yr prison
sentence

REUTERS, Paris

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy began a five-year sentence yesterday for conspiring to raise campaign funds from Libya, arriving at La Sante prison in Paris in a stunning downfall for a man who led the country between 2007 and 2012.

The former conservative president, 70, left his home for the car journey to the prison, walking hand in hand with his wife Carla Bruni and cheered by a crowd of supporters.

Sarkozy, who was convicted and sentenced last month, is the first former French leader to be jailed since Nazi collaborator Philippe Pétain after WWII.

Sarkozy's conviction capped years of legal battles over allegations that his 2007 campaign took millions in cash from Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who was later overthrown and killed during the Arab Spring uprisings.

US VP in Israel to shore up shaky Gaza truce

Trump issues fresh warning to Hamas; Qatar says Israel violating ceasefire

AGENCIES

US Vice President JD Vance landed in Israel yesterday to shore up a fragile Gaza ceasefire deal, after President Donald Trump warned Hamas it would be wiped out if it breached the truce.

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were already in Tel Aviv, where they met Israeli hostages released by Hamas after two years of captivity in Gaza. "Welcome to Israel, Vice President Vance," Israel's foreign ministry posted on social media, along with a photo of Vance and his wife stepping off the plane.

"Together, the Promised Land and The Land of the Free, can secure a better future, including the release of the remaining 15 hostages," it added.

Vance is to meet Witkoff, Kushner and US military experts monitoring the truce. According to Israeli media reports he will meet Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today in Jerusalem.

After Israel said Hamas killed two soldiers on Sunday and accused the group of stalling the handover of hostages' bodies, it unleashed a wave of strikes on the territory -- later saying it had "renewed enforcement" of the ceasefire.

The US is now redoubling efforts to cement the fragile Gaza deal Trump helped to broker.

"The dynamic keeps going back and forth," Mairav Zonszein, senior analyst on Israel for the International Crisis Group (ICG), told AFP.

"Trump is on the one hand letting Israel do what it wants, and on the other hand, at the end of the day, he wants the ceasefire to hold," she said.

"Netanyahu is playing both approaches... He's talking about peace and giving peace a chance... And at the same time, he's bombing Gaza and he's trying to condition aid again,"



she added.

Trump says he believes the deal is still holding and that Hamas militants understand what will happen if they breach it. "They'll be eradicated, and they know that," he told reporters at the White House.

Later, Trump threatened to "straighten out" Hamas with allied forces.

"I told these countries, and Israel, 'NOT YET!'" There is still hope that Hamas will do what is right. If they do not, an end to Hamas will be FAST, FURIOUS, & BRUTAL! I would like to thank all of those countries that called to help," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

Hamas has denied any knowledge of Sunday morning's deadly violence in the southern Gaza city of Rafah.

Israel responded after the soldiers' deaths with an intense wave of bombings, which the

Hamas run territory's health ministry said killed 45 Palestinians.

Egypt's intelligence head Hassan Rashad was also in Israel yesterday to reinforce the truce, according to Netanyahu's office and Egyptian state-linked media.

The spy chief will also meet with US envoy Witkoff, Extra News reported.

US ally and fellow truce mediator Qatar accused Israel of what its leader called the "continued violation" of the now 11 day-old ceasefire.

Hamas's Gaza leader, in Cairo for talks with Egypt and Qatar, issued a statement expressing confidence that the truce will hold.

"What we heard from the mediators and from the US president reassures us that the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip has ended," Khalil al-Haya said.

Touhid refutes Asif's scrap list

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zone (Mireshrai and Mongla), and tugboat purchase agreement with Indian defence company, GRSE.

Asif further said the water distribution project on the Kushiara has been suspended and that Bangladesh is reconsidering the import of power from Adani and Ganges water-sharing agreements and is discussing the Teesta water-sharing treaty.

While explaining the deals, Touhid said only one agreement made with the Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers for purchase of tugboats has been cancelled because it was deemed not very profitable for Bangladesh.

Several agreements mentioned by Asif are under review, he said, but did not go into details. He said it is better not to talk about the matters under negotiation. A few of the remaining agreements are at various stages and not exactly under that name, he said.

For example, he said there are no projects named "Tripura-Chattogram rail

link" or "rail track expansion in Abhappur". Social media mentioned a project named the Ashuganj-Agartala corridor, which does not exist.

However, there is the Ashuganj-Sarai-Dharakhar project, which is currently ongoing. It is part of a package, and one portion of it has been cancelled.

There is no project called the Feni river water management, but there is an MoU on the withdrawal of 1.82 cusecs of water for Sabroom town in Tripura, and the MoU is still in effect, Touhid said.

The foreign adviser also said there is no project called the Kushiara water-sharing project, as mentioned in the list circulating on social media. However, there is an MoU on water withdrawal signed in 2022, which has not been suspended.

There is no deal on the development of roads and waterways for port use, but there is a deal on the use of Chattogram and Mongla ports for the movement of goods to and from India, signed in 2018. The deal is still in effect, he said.

Asked what led the interim government to reconsider some agreements

Touhid said the ministry is not aware of any project involving Bangladesh's financial assistance for the Farakka Barrage or the Sylhet-Silchar link project.

"There has been no treaty signed on the petroleum pipeline expansion."

Bangladesh and India had a primary discussion on expanding the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline from Numaligar of India to Parbatipur of Dinajpur in Bangladesh, but there was no agreement inked, he added.

The social media list spoke of cancelling the Indian economic zone project under the Indian Line of Credit in Mongla. The process of cancellation is underway," the adviser said.

On power from Adani, Touhid said the deal with the Indian company is under review as per the High Court order.

The tenure of the Ganges water sharing treaty will end next year, and Bangladesh is discussing its renewal with India, he said.

The Daily Star could not reach Adviser Asif for comments, as he did not respond to our phone calls or text messages.

under the Indian Line of Credit (LoC), Touhid said a project is undertaken with the assumption that it will be profitable, but such projects are also reviewed when they do not progress properly or become stalled.

"In many cases, we haven't been able to fully utilise a Line of Credit that has arrived because of the terms and conditions attached. It happens for other countries too," he added.

"They propose projects keeping their own interests in mind. We look at whether our interests are also protected."

In certain cases of Indian credit, he said the government has seen that the conditions, especially the procurement conditions, are often not practical.

"Then we try to back away from it or don't proceed. If you review the lines of credit, you will see that they couldn't be implemented as quickly as anticipated," Touhid said.

The Daily Star could not reach Adviser Asif for comments, as he did not respond to our phone calls or text messages.

agents will be unable to transport specific raw materials that require strict temperature control, he added.

Pharmaceutical companies typically maintain raw material stock for four to six months, while those imported by air generally cover two to three months of supply, said M Mosaddeq Hossain, senior vice president of BAPI.

Syed S Kaiser Kabir, vice-president of BAPI, described the fire at the cargo village as "a major governance failure", attributing the issue not only to the current government but also to previous administrations.

The absence of a firefighting system at the cargo village is totally unacceptable," he said, calling for the establishment of an international-standard warehouse at the airport.

Approximately 90 percent of the raw materials used in the pharmaceutical industry are imported from China, India, and various European countries, BAPI said.

In addition to raw materials, the sector also relies on imported packaging materials, capital machinery and spare parts.

Urgent and high-value raw materials are typically transported by air, while bulk volumes are mostly brought in via sea routes.

RMG, pharma fear snag in production

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of garment accessories, said one of his buyers reduced his work orders to 26,000 pieces of T-shirts from the previously confirmed 80,000 pieces taking into account the reduced inventory of raw materials.

Normally in the pharmaceutical sector's import activities will not return before Thursday at the earliest, said Md Zakir Hossain, secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI).

Most of the sector's imports such as vaccine, insulin and sensitive medicine items need to be stored under minus temperature or a certain degree of temperature range. But the cold storage facilities at the cargo village were burned down in the fire.

So, many companies are delaying the import of pharmaceutical raw materials because of the space crisis in the cargo village following the fire incident.

Since there is a crisis of space, the importers, including those who bring in pharmaceutical raw material, are requested to take delivery of goods on the same day of import, said Md. Firoz Salahuddin, manager import operations of HSIA Cargo Village.

Bangladesh's

pharmaceutical sector may face an economic impact of about Tk 4,000 crore due to the destruction of raw materials in the fire at the cargo village of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Saturday.

Although the incident is not expected to immediately affect the supply chain or medicine prices, pharma sector leaders warned that disruptions may occur if the damaged import system for raw materials is not restored promptly.

At a press conference yesterday, BAPI leaders presented a 14-point set of demands, which include reimbursement of customs duties, taxes and VAT already paid by importers for the destroyed goods; waiver of bank charges and interest related to affected letters of credit; and cancellation of any charges or penalties imposed against the Bill of Entry for the damaged items.

In his written speech, BAPI Secretary General Hossain said raw materials worth approximately Tk 200 crore belonging to the country's top 45 pharmaceutical firms have been damaged in the fire.

"We believe the total economic impact will be even greater once other companies report their losses," he said, adding that the burnt materials included essential raw ingredients

used in the production of antibiotics, vaccines, hormones, diabetes medications and cancer drugs.

Additionally, several spare parts and machinery have been damaged, and re-importing them for pharmaceutical manufacturing will be time-consuming.

As a result, the production processes are also expected to be affected.

A significant portion of the burnt goods consisted of items approved by the Narcotics Division and re-importing these products would be both complex and time-consuming as they require multiple layers of approval.

"All these materials are essential for producing each finished product. Therefore, the loss of a single raw material can jeopardise the entire production of a finished item. Naturally, we estimate that the economic impact could exceed Tk 4,000 crore."

The medicine supply chain is not expected to be affected for now, and there will be no increase in medicine prices, he added.

Problems may arise after a month if the system is not restored, said Muhammad Halimuzzaman, treasurer of BAPI.

Without a functioning cold chain, forwarding

agents will be unable to transport specific raw materials that require strict temperature control, he added.

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