

Imran left with 15pc vision in right eye

Pakistan's top court orders medical review

AGENCIES

A court-appointed lawyer has claimed that jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has been left with just 15 percent vision in his right eye after authorities allegedly ignored his complaints for three months, adding another layer of contention over his imprisonment.

Barrister Salman Salfar, appointed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) as amicus curiae (friend of the court), conducted a two-hour interview with Khan on February 10 and inspected his detention facility before submitting a detailed seven-page report to the court on Wednesday.

The report paints a troubling picture of the 73-year-old's deteriorating health and prolonged isolation, since he was imprisoned in August 2023 on dozens of charges, reports Al Jazeera online.

It says Khan suffered rapid and substantial vision loss over the past three months while in custody under former jail superintendent Abdul Ghafoor Anjum, who was transferred in mid-January.

Despite repeated complaints of persistent

blurred and hazy vision, the report states that "no action was taken by the jail authorities to address these complaints".

"He stated that he subsequently suffered a sudden and complete loss of vision in his right eye," Salfar wrote.

A medical report dated February 6, 2026, diagnosed the condition as "right central retinal vein occlusion," Salfar noted.

An ophthalmologist from a leading government hospital in Islamabad was eventually consulted and confirmed the diagnosis, a blood clot that can cause severe retinal damage.

Salfar observed that the former premier was "visibly perturbed and deeply distressed," with watery eyes requiring tissues throughout their meeting.

The report warns that "any further delay poses a serious risk to the petitioner's well-being" and recommends an immediate independent examination by expert ophthalmologists, including Khan's personal physicians. "The issue of Imran's health is most important," Chief Justice Yahya Afridi observed, adding that "intervention was necessary."



Community members place flowers at a memorial during a candlelight vigil for victims of the mass shooting at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School, held Wednesday night in the small town of Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, Canada. The suspect in the shooting was an 18-year-old woman with mental health issues who killed her mother and stepbrother before attacking her former school, police said.

PHOTO: AFP

Risk of Nipah spread low Says WHO after cases in India, Bangladesh

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization (WHO) has said the risk of the deadly Nipah virus spreading was low after three cases of infection were recently confirmed in India and Bangladesh.

Nipah, which spreads from animals to humans, has no vaccine and a fatality rate ranging from 40 to 75 percent, according to the UN health body.

"In the past few weeks, three cases of Nipah – two in India and one in Bangladesh – made headlines and caused concern about a wider outbreak," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference in Geneva on Wednesday. WHO assessed the risk of spread of Nipah virus regionally and globally and found it low, he added.

Two cases of Nipah were confirmed last month in India's West Bengal state while one patient died in Bangladesh last week after contracting the virus.

"The two outbreaks were not related, although both occurred along the India-Bangladesh border, and share some of the same ecological and cultural conditions, as well as populations of the species of fruit bat that are known to be the natural reservoir of Nipah virus," Tedros said.

Nipah was first identified in 1998 after it spread among pig farmers in Malaysia.

In India, the first Nipah outbreak was reported in West Bengal in 2001.

In 2018, at least 17 people died from Nipah in Kerala, and in 2023, two people died from the virus in the same southern Indian state.

GREENLAND DISPUTE

US allies pledge to step up within Nato

Sweden to send fighter jets to patrol around the island

AGENCIES

US allies in Nato yesterday said they believed the crisis over Greenland had passed after the launch of a mission in the Arctic – and looked to press on with bolstering Europe's role in the alliance.

President Donald Trump's threats against Denmark's autonomous Arctic territory last month plunged the 76-year-old transatlantic alliance into its deepest crisis in years, before he abruptly backed off.

As part of a package to assuage Trump – who based his demands for the island on an alleged threat by Russia and China – Nato announced Wednesday the start of an Arctic Sentry mission to increase security in the region.

Dutch Defence Minister Ruben Brekelmans said he was "fully confident that this will also meet the concerns of the United States" at a meeting with counterparts from the 32-nation alliance in Brussels.

But while Europe breathed a sigh of relief about the apparent passing of that storm, the Greenland crisis has only reinforced for many the urgent need for Europe to take a greater role in Nato and its own defence in the face of the menace from Russia.

That is the message being sent by the Trump administration as well: that Europe needs to step up as Washington pivots to focus on other challenges such as China, reports AFP.

US deputy defence minister Elbridge Colby said that allies were making strides towards a situation where it is "Europe that leads the conventional defense of Nato" rather than traditionally relying on US military might.

"I think we have a really strong basis for working together in partnership," he said at the alliance's Brussels headquarters. "Kind of a 3.0 NATO that's based on a partnership rather than dependency."

Meanwhile, Sweden will patrol around Iceland and Greenland with Gripen fighter jets as part of Arctic Sentry mission, it said

yesterday.

"This strengthens deterrence, protects our common interests, and contributes to stability in a region that is crucial for Europe and transatlantic cooperation," Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said in a statement.

"Sweden will initially contribute to Arctic Sentry with JAS 39 Gripen aircraft in the area around Iceland and Greenland," he said.

To make good on plans for Europe to play a bigger role, Nato needs to make strides on fulfilling the pledge made at its summit last year for countries to massively ramp up defence spending.

Military budgets have already increased since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and Trump has spurred on that trend.

"The good news is that the billions are coming in," said Nato boss Mark Rutte.

Rutte however insisted that he believed the United States would continue to play a central role in defending Europe.

"I predict that longer term, you will see, of course, the nuclear umbrella as the ultimate guarantor of our security here in Europe and Canada, but also a strong conventional presence of the US here in Europe," he said.

In a concrete sign of Europe taking more responsibility within Nato, the alliance this week announced the United States was handing two senior regional command positions to Britain and Italy.

The move was heralded by diplomats as a sign of increased "burden-sharing" within the alliance in action.

French Defence Minister Catherine Vautrin referred to a demand several months back from Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth that Europeans must be able to ensure their own security.

"Well, we are going to do it, we have started to do it," she said.

The next crucial staging post will be the Nato summit in Ankara this July when allies will have to convince Trump that they are already doing enough.



A truck lies on its side after strong winds from Storm Nils near Leucate, southwestern France, yesterday. Gales of 162km/h (100mph) were reported near France's south-west coast, and Alpine ski resorts in the east closed because of the high risk of avalanche, including La Plagne.

PHOTO: AFP

India farmers protest US trade deal

AFP, New Delhi

Farmers rallied across India yesterday to oppose a trade deal with Washington which reduces tariffs on US goods, warning that it would hurt Indian agriculture and endanger livelihoods.

Farmer unions have called the deal announced last week a "total surrender" to American agricultural giants, despite assurances from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

Waving flags and carrying banners, farmers and trade union members rallied in several cities, with minor scuffles with police reported in a few locations.

According to images shared by organisers, several thousand people took to the streets. Main opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said he stood with the "farmers and with their struggle".

"Farmers are apprehensive that trade agreements will strike a blow to their livelihood," he said in a social media post.

Under the terms of the trade deal, India will "eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods" and other food and agricultural products.

N Korea's Kim entrenches daughter as likely heir: Seoul

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has entrenched his daughter as heir apparent ahead of a landmark party conference, a South Korean lawmaker said yesterday after a briefing from Seoul's main intelligence agency.

The Kim family has ruled North Korea with an iron grip for decades, and a cult of personality surrounding their "Paektu bloodline" dominates daily life in the isolated country.

Kim's teenage daughter Ju Ae has long been seen as the next in line, a perception stoked by a string of recent high-profile outings.

South Korea's National Intelligence Service said Ju Ae has now been clearly "designated as a successor", lawmaker Lee Seong-kweon said after a parliamentary briefing with the spy agency.

The assessment was made "taking into account a range of circumstances – including her increasingly prominent public presence at official events", he told reporters.

S'pore to establish nat'l council to set AI direction: PM

AFP, Singapore

Singapore will establish a national council on artificial intelligence to provide "strategic direction" on the use of the new technology, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong announced yesterday.

Speaking in parliament to unveil this year's national budget, Wong said AI is "advancing at a remarkable speed", with immense potential to raise productivity and unlock new discoveries.

While AI has caused concerns about misinformation and jobs being displaced, Wong said the city-state must confront the technology and make it serve the country's needs.

He urged Singapore to move beyond "individual pilots and isolated experiments" and scale up the use of AI at the national level and across industries.

"Fear cannot be Singapore's response. If we allow uncertainty to paralyse us, we will fall behind in a world that is moving rapidly ahead," he said. "We must act with clarity and resolve," said Wong, who is also the finance minister.

Constitutional 'coup' under way Says Zimbabwe opposition

AFP, Harare

Leading Zimbabwe opposition figures accused the government Wednesday of a constitutional "coup" after the cabinet approved amendments that would allow President Emmerson Mnangagwa to extend his term in office.

Sweeping changes to the constitution accepted by the cabinet Tuesday include extending the presidential term to seven years and follow a decision by the ruling Zanu-PF that Mnangagwa should stay in office for at least two years after his term ends in 2028.

Other provisions scrap general presidential elections, giving parliament the power to choose the president. The amendments are to be presented to parliament, which is weighted in favour of the Zanu-PF, but the opposition insists they also need to be put to a national referendum.

"The process that is currently happening in Zimbabwe is a coup by the incumbent to extend his term of office against the will of the people," opposition politician Job Sikhala told AFP.