

Nawaz says, Pakistan 'violated' pact with India signed in 1999

LAHORE, May 28 (PTI)

FORMER Pakistan premier Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday admitted that Islamabad had "violated" an agreement with India signed by him and ex-Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in 1999, in an apparent reference to the Kargil misadventure by General Pervez Musharraf.

"On May 28, 1998, Pakistan carried out five nuclear tests. After that Vajpayee Saheb came here and made an agreement with us. But we violated that...It was our fault," Sharif told a meeting of the PML-N general council that elected him

President six years after he was disqualified by the SC.

Sharif and Vajpayee signed the Lahore Declaration on February 21, 1999, after a historic summit here. The agreement that talked about a vision of peace and stability between the two countries signalled a major breakthrough, but a few months later Pakistani intrusion in the Kargil district in Jammu and Kashmir led to the Kargil War.

"President Bill Clinton had offered Pakistan USD 5 billion to stop it from carrying out nuclear tests but I refused. Had (former prime minister) Imran Khan like a person been on my

seat he would have accepted Clinton's offer," Sharif said on a day when Pakistan marked the 26th anniversary of its first nuclear tests.

Sharif, 74, talked about how he was removed from the office of the prime minister in 2017 on a false case by then chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar. He said all cases against him were false while the cases against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder leader Imran Khan were true.

He also talked about the role of former ISI chief Gen Zahirul Islam in toppling his government in 2017 to bring Imran Khan into power.

Spain, Norway recognise Palestinian State

BARCELONA, May 28 (AP)

SPAIN and Norway moved to formally recognise a Palestinian State with Ireland to follow suit on Tuesday in a coordinated effort by the three western European nations. Israel slammed the diplomatic move that will have no immediate impact on its grinding war in Gaza but adds to international pressure on Tel Aviv to soften its devastating response to last year's Hamas-led attack.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said the Spanish Cabinet will recognise a Palestinian State at its Tuesday

morning meeting.

"This is a historic decision that has a single goal, and that is to help Israelis and Palestinians achieve peace," Sánchez, standing at the gates of the Prime Minister's palace in Madrid, said.

Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz lashed out at Spain on X, saying Sánchez's Government was "being complicit in inciting genocide against Jews and war crimes."

Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said in a statement that "for more than 30 years, Norway has been one of the strongest advocates for a Palestinian State."

China concludes elaborate military drills near Taiwan

China has concluded expansive military exercises around Taiwan, held in the wake of Lai Ching-te's inauguration as the island's president. The Chinese army has "successfully completed all the missions" directed against Taiwan, state-run military news channel CCTV reported on Saturday. A total of 111 Chinese aircraft and dozens of naval vessels had surrounded the self-ruled island over the past two days, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

The Chinese military's latest drills were the biggest in a year around the island.

The latest drills started a "new era of normalized practices," Zhang Chi, associate professor of the China People's Liberation Army National Defense University, said in an interview with CCTV. "The PLA will stake a step forward each time the Taiwanese separatists make a provocative act," Zhang said.

Beijing has signalled its displeasure with Taipei's new government in recent days, accusing Lai of seeking independence and destabilizing the region.

"China's recent unilateral military provocations have not only undermined the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, but also openly provoked the interna-



A Chinese warship is pictured while navigating at an undisclosed location in waters around Taiwan in this handout image, released by Taiwan defence ministry on Friday

US 'deeply concerned' over China drills

The US state department said on Saturday that the United States was "deeply concerned" over China's military drills in the Taiwan Strait and around Taiwan, and strongly urged it to act with restraint. "Using a normal, routine, and democratic transition as an excuse for military provocations risks escalation and erodes longstanding norms that for decades have maintained peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the state department said in a statement. REUTERS

tional order, and aroused serious concern and condemnation from the international community," Taiwan presidential spokesperson Karen Kuo said in a statement Saturday. Taipei calls on China to "shoulder global responsibility with Taiwan and work to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits and the region," she said.

The drills add to the complications Lai faces, among them a divisive campaign by rival parliamentarians to rein in the president's powers. The opposition is pushing through changes to the law that would expand lawmakers' ability to investigate the government, bringing thousands of people on to the street in protest. BLOMBERG

Day after UN court orders halt to offensive, Israel strikes Rafah

Biden Highlights US Commitment To Israel, Ukraine

West Point (New York)/Tel Aviv: Israeli warplanes and artillery pounded Rafah on Saturday, as the govt dismissed an order by judges at the International Court of Justice to halt its military offensive in the southern Gaza city. "What they are asking us, is not to commit genocide in Rafah. We did not commit genocide and we will not commit genocide," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, told Israel's N12 TV on Saturday.

At the same time, renewed international efforts were underway aimed at securing a ceasefire in the war sparked by Palestinian militant group Hamas' unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel. An Israeli official said the govt had an "intention" to restart stalled negotiations over the coming days, which the Hamas official denied later.

President Joe Biden emphasised the critical role of US support to allies around the world including Israel, Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific in a speech at the commencement for the US Military Academy at West Point, New York. In his speech before 1,036 graduating US Army cadets, Biden said



ITALY TO RESUME UNRWA FUNDING: Italy PM Giorgia Meloni with Palestinian Authority PM Mohammed Mustafa, in Rome, Italy, on Saturday. Italy has decided to resume financing specific projects (by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees or UNRWA) intended for assistance to Palestinian refugees but only after rigorous controls that guarantee that not even a penny risks ending up supporting terrorism, Italian foreign minister Antonio Tajani said

4 US Army vessels run aground near pier

Four US Army vessels supporting the temporary pier built to deliver aid to Gaza have run aground in heavy seas and Israel is aiding a recovery effort, US Central Command said Saturday. "The vessels broke free from their moorings and two vessels are now anchored on the beach near the pier. The third and fourth vessels are beached on the coast of Israel near Ashkelon," the statement said. "No US personnel will enter Gaza. No injuries have been reported and the pier remains fully functional," it said. AFP

"we are standing strong with Ukraine and we'll stand with them". He highlighted the US role in repelling Iranian missile attacks against Israel and support for allies in the Indo-

Pacific against increasing Chinese militarism in the region.

Palestinian medics said Israeli forces killed more than 30 people in new attacks in the Gaza Strip. AFP & REUTERS

Spanish defence minister says Gaza war is 'real genocide'

Madrid: The Spanish defence minister said on Saturday that the conflict in Gaza is a "real genocide", as relations between Israel and Spain worsen following Madrid's decision to recognise a Palestinian state. Reuters couldn't immediately reach Israeli officials for comment on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath.

Israel has strongly rejected accusations made against it by South Africa at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that it is committing a genocide against Palestinians, saying it is waging war on the Hamas militant group which unleashed an attack on Oct 7.

The remark by Spanish defence minister Margarita Robles in an interview with TVE state television echoed a comment by Spanish deputy prime minister Yolanda Diaz who earlier this week also described the Gaza conflict as a genocide. "We cannot ignore what is happening in Gaza, which is a real genocide," Robles said. She also said Madrid's recognition of Palestine was not a move against Israel, adding that it was designed to help "end violence in Gaza". REUTERS

Prez: Ukraine has control of areas in Kharkiv region

Two Killed In Aerial Attack By Russia

Kyiv: Ukrainian forces have secured "combat control" of areas where Russian troops entered the northeastern Kharkiv region earlier this month, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Meanwhile, two people were killed Saturday in an aerial attack on the city of Kharkiv, which is the region's capital, according to local officials.

Kharkiv is about 20km from the Russian border. Moscow's troops have in recent weeks captured villages in the area as part of a broad push, and analysts say they may be trying to get within artillery range of the city. Ukrainian authorities have evacuated more than 11,000 people from the region since the start of the offensive on May 10. "Our soldiers have now managed to take combat



Firefighters battle a blaze at a shopping mall struck by Russian missiles in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Saturday

control of the border area where the Russian occupiers entered," Zelensky said in his nightly video address on Friday evening. Zelensky's comments, however, appeared to be at odds with those made by Russian officials.

Viktor Vodolatsky, a member of Russian lower house of parliament, said Russian forces now controlled more than half of the town of Vovchansk, 5km inside the border, Russian sta-

te news agency Tass reported Friday. Vovchansk has been a flashpoint for fighting since Russia launched the offensive in the Kharkiv region. Vodolatsky was also quoted as saying that once Vovchansk was secured, Russian forces would target the cities of Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Pokrovsk in the neighbouring Donetsk region. Independent confirmation of the claims wasn't immediately possible. AP

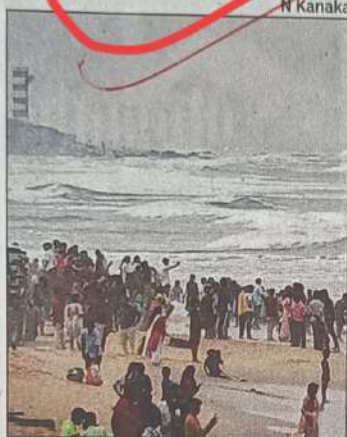
Bengal, NE on alert as cyclone Remal may make landfall today

Kolkata Airport To Shut Flight Ops For 21 Hrs From Sunday Noon

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata/Guwahati/Shillong/Mizoram: Severe Cyclone Remal is set to strike the Bengal-Bangladesh coast between 11pm Sunday and 1am Monday. Kolkata is expected to bear the brunt from Sunday afternoon till Monday afternoon as the storm, with wind speeds of 70-80kmph, gusting up to 90kmph, is predicted, along with very heavy rainfall, amounting to 200mm. Authorities at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport have decided to shut flight operations for 21 hours from Sunday noon as a measure of abundant caution. The shutdown will lead to the cancellation of 394 flights — 28 of them international — which will affect 63,000 passengers.

An official said airlines would refund them but if any passenger insisted on flying,



High tide lashes the beach in Visakhapatnam on Saturday due to the influence of Cyclone Remal in Andhra Pradesh

the airlines would try to accommodate them on next available flights. Airport authorities decided on the shutdown apparently to avoid the situation on a Singapore Airlines flight, where one passenger died and several others

were injured as the plane was rocked by severe turbulence.

“Met office has forecast winds of 93-111kmph in the approach path that could lead to severe turbulence and force suspension of operations,” an airport official said. Even overflights — planes that fly between East and West over Kolkata airspace — are deviating by up to 240km to avoid strong swirling winds.

Around 5.30pm Saturday, the system intensified into a cyclonic storm over north and adjoining east-central Bay of Bengal. It is predicted to make landfall between Khepupara and Sagar Island in Bengal around midnight, when the coastal areas of Bengal and Bangladesh are likely to see wind speeds of 110-120kmph, gusting up to 135kmph.

“Kolkata is likely to see most of the cyclone’s impact in the 24 hours between Sunday

and Monday afternoon. The first six hours from Sunday afternoon are crucial to determine the storm’s impact,” said Regional Meteorological Centre head of weather H R Biswas. Kolkata falls within the “high impact zone” of Cyclone Remal that could sail within 100km of the city after landfall, said an official. From Sunday afternoon, visibility is likely to drop to 50-200m. Met officials warned of the risk of losing electricity and communication links and damage to infrastructure in Kolkata and neighbouring south districts.

The northeast is also bracing for impact with the weather system likely to bring strong winds and heavy rainfall to various parts of the seven states in the region.

(With inputs from Subhro Niyogi, Aheli Banerjee, Prabin Kalita, Manosh Das and HC Vanlalruata)

Endurance test: It feels like 48°C, IMD says will get worse

Safdarjung Records Maximum Temperature Of 43.4 Degrees

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: As Delhiites stepped out to cast their votes on Saturday, severe heatwaves in several areas tested their mettle. The heat index or feel-like temperature was 48 degrees Celsius, according to IMD.

While the city's base station, Safdarjung witnessed about 2 degrees rise in the maximum temperature, several other areas saw sharp rise of four to five degrees. Safdarjung recorded maximum temperature at 43.4 degrees Celsius, three notches above normal, against 41.7 degrees Celsius a day earlier. The minimum temperature was 30.6 degrees Celsius, four notches above normal, against 30.8 degrees Celsius a day earlier.

According to IMD, the maximum temperature is likely to increase further and reach 44 degrees Celsius on Sunday, and 45 degrees Celsius on Monday.

The weather department expects no respite and has issued 'red alert' for heatwaves and severe heatwaves in several areas until Wednesday, May 29. "The moist easterly wind will cease, and the city is likely to revive westerly wind component which will lead to rise in the day temperature and cause heatwaves," said an IMD official. Meanwhile, the areas which did not qualify for the heatwaves too witnessed unbearable suffering, prompting the Election Commission and volunteers to distribute water and arrange shade across several polling booths.

The humidity oscillated



The striped mattresses were a striking sight at the queues outside the polling centre in Faridabad's Gaunchhi

between 64 and 26%. According to the weather analysts, the city saw moisture laden easterly winds towards evening and dry and warm westerly during afternoon. Moisture kept the outdoor hot and humid causing excessive sweating. Meanwhile, several areas also saw warm night conditions, which occurs when maximum temperature is above 40 degrees Celsius and the minimum is at least 4.5 notches above normal.

In Gurgaon, many held their umbrellas steady. Some huddled around coolers, and others kept handkerchiefs handy, wiping their faces and sipping water frequently.

But the most striking sight was in Faridabad's Gaunchhi, where groups of men supported striped mattresses over their heads and another crouched down to take refuge — all to avoid

the harsh summer sun as they waited in line to cast their votes.

"We have been standing for the last two hours. There is no arrangement of drinking water. It is extremely hot here. They just want us to vote but they will never provide facilities to the poor," said Kanhaiya Kumar (43), one of the men holding the mattress at the Government Senior Secondary School polling centre in Gaunchhi. Another voter Anand (24) said, "We all have been standing for long hours in this heat holding a mattress on our heads. What option do we have?"

Voters in Gurgaon parliamentary constituency had similar complaints.

"It was too hot today, and in our polling booth, there were no arrangements. We had to wait for two hours in the sun to cast our votes," said Parikshit Dubey, who was

at a polling centre in Tattva Villa, Gurgaon.

Data by the Met department showed that temperature reached a high of 44.4 degrees Celsius in Gurgaon on Saturday, the day all ten seats of Haryana voted in the Lok Sabha election. The maximum temperature was 45 degrees Celsius in Faridabad and 46 degrees Celsius in Nuh. Relative humidity levels ranged between 20 and 47% across south Haryana.

A voter in Nuh said he came prepared.

"I came to the polling booth early and carried my own water bottle just in case there is a lack of water supply at the booth. Water is a huge issue even in the area," said Abdul Kalim (68) at Pinangwan.

Election officials said no voter complained of serious health issues due to heat, except some who felt dizzy and tired waiting in lines.

2023 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for Major Radhika Sen

UNITED NATIONS, May 28 (PTI)

MAJOR Radhika Sen, an Indian woman peacekeeper, who served with the UN mission in Congo, will be honoured with a prestigious military gender advocate award, with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres describing her as a “true leader and role model.”

Major Sen, who served with the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), will receive the prestigious ‘2023 United Nations Military

Gender Advocate of the Year Award’ from Guterres during a ceremony at the world body’s headquarters here on May 30 marking the International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

She served in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from March 2023 to April 2024 as the Commander of MONUSCO’s Engagement Platoon for the Indian Rapid Deployment Battalion (INDRDB), a UN press release said.

Born in Himachal Pradesh in 1993, she joined the Indian Army eight years ago. She grad-

uated as a biotech engineer and was pursuing her Master’s degree from IIT Bombay, when she decided to join the armed forces. She was deployed to MONUSCO in March 2023 as the Engagement Platoon Commander with the Indian Rapid Deployment Battalion and completed her tenure in April 2024. Major Sen is the second Indian peacekeeper to receive this prestigious award after Major Suman Gawani, who had served with the UN Mission in South Sudan and was honoured with the 2019 UN Military Gender Advocate.