

## International

# Trial of Myanmar's Suu Kyi moved to prison compound

## Junta sentenced dozens of anti-coup activists to death as part of its crackdown on dissent

**YANGON, Myanmar:** Hearings for the trial of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi will be moved to a prison compound in the military-built capital Naypyidaw, a source with knowledge of the case said Tuesday. The Nobel laureate, 77, was detained by the military when it ousted her government last year and faces a raft of charges that could see her jailed for more than 150 years.

She has since been confined to an undisclosed location in Naypyidaw, leaving only to attend hearings in a municipal compound in the east of the sprawling, low-rise capital inaugurated by the army in 2006. Future hearings "will be conducted at the new Special Court in Naypyidaw Prison" following the completion of a new court building in the compound, said a source with knowledge of the case.

The source did not give further details. Suu Kyi's lawyers have been banned from speaking to the media and journalists barred from her trial. Under a previous junta regime, she spent long spells under house arrest in her family mansion in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city.

Her current detention has seen her links to the outside world limited to brief pre-trial meetings with her lawyers. She has already been convicted of corruption, incitement against the military, breaching COVID-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law, with a court sentencing her so far to 11 years.

Suu Kyi turned 77 on Sunday and brought a birthday cake to court to eat with her lawyers

ahead of a hearing on Monday, according to a source with knowledge of the matter. Meanwhile, the Myanmar junta's plans to execute political opponents may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity, a UN official said Monday. The junta said on June 3 it would execute a former lawmaker from Aung San Suu Kyi's party and a prominent democracy activist, both convicted of terrorism, in what would be the country's first judicial executions since 1990.

Four people, including former MP Phyo Zeya Thaw and democracy activist Ko Jimmy, "who were sentenced to death will be hanged according to prison procedures", junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told AFP then. Nicholas Koumjian, head of the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, said he was following this case closely. "The available information strongly suggests that under international law, fundamental rights of the convicted persons were blatantly violated in these proceedings," Koumjian said of the trials, which were closed to the public.

"Imposing a death sentence, or even a period of detention, on the basis of proceedings that do not satisfy the basic requirements of a fair trial may constitute one or more crimes against humanity or war crimes," he added.

The junta has sentenced dozens of anti-coup activists to death as part of its crackdown on dissent after seizing power last year, but Myanmar has not carried out an execution for decades. For a trial

Communist Party to hang on to power," he said.

Some critics say Britain could have done more for Hong Kong before the handover, but Patten insisted the country did not betray the finance hub. "Whatever we had done in terms of changes before 1997 were unlikely to have affected the way that the Chinese Communist Party behaved after the arrival of Xi Jinping in the top job," Patten said.

"I think the big changes have come since 2012, 2013, 2014 since Xi Jinping's been the dictator," Xi, the son of a revered communist revolutionary, was named general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012 before becoming president the following year.

### 'Constrain China'

The 25th anniversary marks the halfway point of Beijing's "One Country, Two Systems" promise for Hong Kong, a deal that was enshrined in the 1984 joint declaration signed by British prime minister Margaret Thatcher and Chinese premier Zhao Ziyang.

Recent coronavirus outbreaks in the territory have overshadowed plans for celebrations and it is still unclear if Xi will attend them in person. During the launch Monday of "The Hong Kong Diaries", his book based on his time as governor, Patten told reporters, "the most difficult part of the job was... negotiating with China to try to safeguard 'One Country Two Systems'." In his farewell speech in 1997, Patten said it had been "the greatest honour and privilege" of his life to have been governor and to have "some responsibility for Hong Kong's future".

"Now Hong Kong people are to run Hong Kong. That is the promise and that is the unshakable destiny," he added. But China, Patten now says, has breached the declaration "comprehensively". The former Conservative party chairman said things went "downhill" in the city partly because Xi and his colleagues were

The Indian head of state enjoys certain constitutional powers but largely acts on the advice of the government, making it more of a titular position. But agreeing on a candidate and getting him or her elected would be a symbolic victory for India's splintered opposition after eight years of rule by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The BJP is likely to announce its own candidate this week and may again put forward the incumbent, Ram Nath Kovind, a member of India's marginalised Dalit community, to serve another term. Gandhi, who was governor of West Bengal state between 2004 and 2009 after being appointed by the then-ruling Congress party, ran for vice-president in 2017 but lost out to a BJP candidate.

The paternal grandson of India's freedom movement icon is considered a vocal critic of Modi's Hindu nationalist policies and has accused the government of crushing dissent in the world's largest democracy.

Gandhi is the third person to decline an offer by

Travel exemptions permitting 15 Taliban officials to go abroad for talks and negotiations were set to expire Monday. For 13 officials the travel exemptions were extended for at least two months, but they were scrapped for two education officials in response to the Taliban's decision to ban secondary girls' education.

According to a diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity, the officials now banned from traveling are Said Ahmad Shaidkhel, the deputy education minister, and Abdul Baqi Basir Awal Shah—also known as Abdul Baqi Haqqani—the minister of higher education.



**NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar:** File photo shows detained civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi (L) and detained president Win Myint are seen during their first court appearance in Naypyidaw, since the military detained them in a coup on February 1. —AFP

to be considered fair it must be held in public to the greatest extent possible, said Koumjian.

"Exceptions based on national security or other considerations must be limited to the extent that they are strictly justified," he said. But in these cases, "it appears that there were no public proceedings nor are the judgments publicly available".

This raised doubts as to whether the tribunal was impartial and independent, he added. The UN mechanism for Myanmar was created by the UN human rights council in 2018. Its task is to gather evidence of international crimes and human rights violations in the former Burma and document them with a view to facilitating criminal proceedings. —AFP

## Patten hits out at China's 'vengeful' acts in Hong Kong

**LONDON:** On June 30, 1997, Britain's last governor of Hong Kong Chris Patten left Government House for the final time, struggling to contain his emotions as the "Last Post" played and the Union flag was lowered.

The 25th anniversary is approaching of that rainy day and the midnight handover to China on July 1 that the BBC at the time called "the epilogue of empire". For Patten, now 78, the memory of his departure is still vivid.

"It was a big wrench. I had five extremely enjoyable and fruitful years in Hong Kong and I miss it," he told AFP on Monday. But in the intervening years, his "sadness" has been replaced by anger at Beijing and President Xi Jinping, whom he accuses of "vengefully" targeting the city's freedoms.

Under the Sino-British Joint Declaration, China agreed Hong Kong could keep some freedoms and autonomy for 50 years under a "One Country, Two Systems" model. But a National Security Law imposed by China in 2020 has eroded those freedoms, targeting pro-democracy activists and local media. Hong Kong once had a raucous law-making chamber but now only those who are loyal can stand for office to join a body which passes new laws.

### The 'dictator'

"China has ripped up the joint declaration and is vengefully and comprehensively trying to remove the freedoms of Hong Kong because it regards them as a threat, not to the security of China but to the ability of the Chinese

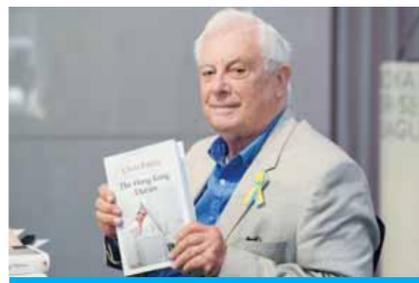
## Mahatma Gandhi's grandson bows out of presidential race

**NEW DELHI:** The grandson of India's independence leader Mahatma Gandhi has dropped out of the race to become president after his name was proposed by an alliance of opposition parties. Gopalkrishna Gandhi, 77, a diplomat turned politician said he had declined the request of the 17-party alliance to be their nominee for the largely ceremonial role.

"I am most grateful to them. But having considered the matter deeply I see that the Opposition's candidate should be one who will generate a national consensus and a national atmosphere beside Opposition unity," Gandhi said in a statement on Monday. National and state lawmakers are slated to vote on a new president on July 18.

## UN revokes travel privileges for two Taliban officials

**UNITED NATIONS:** The United Nations on Monday banned two Taliban officials from traveling abroad in response to the harsh restrictions the hardline Islamists have imposed on Afghan women, diplomats told AFP.



**LONDON:** Former Hong Kong governor Lord Chris Patten, poses with his new book "The Hong Kong Diaries" at the end of a press conference to present it, in central London, on June 20, 2022. —AFP

"terrified" of what Hong Kong actually stands for.

But while Patten said it was necessary to "constrain China", he admitted it was also necessary to deal with China to tackle climate change and epidemics. "But I don't think we should delude ourselves; I think we have to be pretty clear about what is our real interest, and we have to constrain China, not contain it."

### Fears over Taiwan

After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, there have been heightened fears over similar action by China against self-governed democratic Taiwan. Beijing claims all of the island as its own territory, and has said it is determined to retake it, by force if necessary.

Patten said Xi must learn "what an incredibly dangerous enterprise it would be" after seeing the difficulties the Russian army has faced in Ukraine and the world's reaction. "My gut instinct is it's so dangerous for Xi Jinping to try that I hope the system will encourage him not to do it," he said. —AFP



**Gopalkrishna Gandhi**

the opposition to be their candidate. The Gandhi dynasty of assassinated former prime ministers Indira and Rajiv Gandhi, and of current opposition figure Rahul Gandhi, are descended from India's first premier Jawaharlal Nehru and not from Mahatma Gandhi. —AFP

Since seizing power in August, the Taliban have rolled back marginal gains made by Afghan women during the past two decades, limiting their access to education, government jobs and freedom of movement. In March, supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada ordered secondary schools for girls to shut, just hours after they reopened for the first time since the Taliban returned to power. The decree, which stops hundreds of thousands of teenage girls from attending schools, was met with international outrage. A top Taliban education official criticised the latest UN decision as "superficial and unjust".

"Such decisions will only make the situation more

## Islamists storm India-backed yoga event in Maldives

**MALE:** Islamic extremists stormed an India-backed public yoga session in the Maldives on Tuesday, with police in the South Asian tourist paradise firing tear gas to clear the mob. Dozens of people waving white flags emblazoned with religious slogans chased out a crowd sitting on gym mats and preparing to mark International Yoga Day at a football stadium in the capital Male.

Police responded with tear gas and arrested six people after the mob smashed billboards advertising the event, which was organised by the sports ministry and the local Indian Cultural Centre. Local media reports said the mob had claimed the meditative practice was against the teachings of Islam.

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih said the attack was of "serious concern", adding that police were investigating. "Those responsible will be swiftly brought before the law," he said on Twitter. Radicalisation has been a major concern for security forces in the Maldives, a Sunni Muslim archipelago nation southwest of India better known for its boutique beachside resorts and celebrity tourists.

Authorities blamed "religious extremists" for an assassination attempt on parliamentary speaker Mohamed Nasheed last year. The government has cracked down on extremism, with police arresting a suspected Islamic State recruiter in 2019, and foreign preachers are banned from entering the country.

Tuesday's yoga session in Male was one of many organised around the world to mark International Yoga Day, an annual event adopted by the United Nations in 2014. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the star participant of one outdoor practice on Tuesday morning next to an ornate palace complex in the southern city of Mysore. —AFP



**SRINAGAR:** People participate in a mass yoga session near the Dal Lake to celebrate the International Day of Yoga in Srinagar on June 21, 2022. —AFP

critical," deputy minister of higher education Lutfullah Khairkhwah told AFP. After difficult negotiations, the UN's Taliban Sanctions Committee compromised on an extension for the 13 other Taliban leaders for "60 days + 30 days," diplomats told AFP.

Some countries were in favor of revoking all of the travel exemptions due to the deterioration of women's rights, but others objected, according to diplomats. Under the terms of the agreement, the exemption will automatically be extended for 13 Taliban leaders in the third month "unless objected by any Council member," a diplomatic source said. —AFP