

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

6 Former CJs Said Simultaneous Elections Won't Undermine Federalism, Constitution: JPC Chief

PANAJI, JUL 11: Legal experts including six former Chief Justices of India told the Joint Parliamentary Committee that the proposed 'One Nation, One Election' (ONOE) framework conforms to the Constitution and does not violate federal structure or democratic principles, panel chairman P P Chaudhary said here on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference at the end of the JPC's two-day visit to Goa, Chaudhary said the committee examined concerns over whether simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections would undermine federalism or violate the Constitution's basic structure.

"The first question before us was whether simultaneous elections are against the Constitution, against federalism or against democracy. We sought the opinion of legal experts, including six former Chief Justices of India. All of them independently told the committee that si-



multaneous elections do not violate the federal structure, democracy or the basic structure of the Constitution," he said. Three Supreme Court judges, the chairman of the Law Commission and several constitutional experts also expressed similar views before the committee, Chaudhary added.

"The consensus among constitutional experts is that simultaneous elections are fully in consonance with the Constitution and are not inconsistent with any constitutional provision," he added.

The BJP leader said the committee also consulted economists to assess the financial implications of holding simultaneous elections.

to the report of the high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind, he claimed that synchronised Lok Sabha and Assembly polls could add nearly Rs 7 lakh crore to the country's economy by reducing election-related disruptions and improving governance.

Frequent elections adversely affect education,

tourism and industrial production, Chaudhary said.

"Teachers in government schools are repeatedly deployed for election duties, affecting education. Tourist destinations such as Goa suffer losses because elections and the Model Code of Conduct disrupt tourism activity. Around five crore migrant workers move during election periods, affecting industrial production," he said.

According to Chaudhary, industries also face financial stress due to election-related disruptions, impacting production, loan repayments and the banking sector.

Simultaneous elections would provide governments with an uninterrupted five-year governance cycle instead of keeping the country in "continuous election mode", he said.

Tracing the history of simultaneous elections, Chaudhary said Lok Sabha and Assembly polls were held together between 1952 and 1967.

Hypertension no longer confined to old age; experts urge early BP screening

NEW DELHI, JUL 11:

Young adults in India are increasingly developing high blood pressure, a condition once considered more prevalent in the middle and old ages, with cardiologists attributing the trend to sedentary lifestyles, obesity, chronic stress and unhealthy diets.

They warned that many remain unaware of the problem until serious complications such as a heart attack, stroke or kidney disease occur.

The NFHS-6 (2023-24) data shows that 19.4 per cent of women and 22.1 per cent of men (aged over 15) have elevated blood pressure or are on medication for hypertension in India, with urban areas reporting significantly higher rates than rural regions.

Experts said one of the biggest concerns is that high blood pressure rarely causes symptoms until complications develop.

"Most young patients feel completely healthy. They often discover elevated blood pressure during a routine check-up, before surgery, or after a cardiac emergency," said Dr Rahul Chandola, chairman of the Institute of Heart Lungs Diseases Research Centre and founder of AI-based healthcare technology platform iLive Connect.

A single reading in a hospital is just a snapshot; what matters is how blood pressure behaves over weeks and months in daily life, he said.

"Connected home monitoring devices that share readings directly with a doctor's team allow us to catch



masked hypertension, adjust treatment early, and prevent complications before they occur," Dr Chandola said.

He said adults, especially those with obesity, diabetes, a family history of hypertension or heart disease, should monitor their blood pressure at home using validated digital devices.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-INDIAB study has shown that hypertension affects more than one in four Indian adults, with a large proportion of cases remaining undiagnosed.

The study identified obesity, diabetes, urban living, physical inactivity and excessive salt intake as major risk factors.

Dr Rajiv Narang, head of the Department of Cardiology at AIIMS, Delhi, said that 10 years ago, hypertension in people below 40 was relatively uncommon in routine cardiology practice. "Today, it is something we encounter

particularly among younger adults.

Regular physical activity of at least 150 minutes every week, maintaining a healthy body weight, reducing dietary salt, increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, avoiding tobacco, limiting alcohol intake, managing stress and ensuring adequate sleep can significantly reduce blood pressure and lower long-term cardiovascular risk, Dr Narendra Singh Jhajhria, Head of the Department of Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery (CTVS) at Dr RML Hospital and ABVIMS said.

He also pointed to the growing evidence linking excessive salt consumption with hypertension in India.

An ongoing ICMR-led initiative has found that average salt intake in both urban and rural populations exceeds the World Health Organisation's recommended limit of five grams per day, prompting researchers to evaluate low-sodium salt substitutes as a strategy to reduce hypertension and cardiovascular disease, Dr Jhajhria said.

With cardiovascular diseases remaining the leading cause of death in India, experts stressed that detecting and controlling hypertension early could prevent thousands of heart attacks, strokes and cases of chronic kidney disease every year.

"People often believe hypertension is an illness of old age. That misconception needs to change. Blood pressure should become as routinely monitored as body weight or blood sugar," Dr Jhajhria said.

Pak PM holds talks with Iran, Qatar leaders to revive stalled US-Iran negotiations

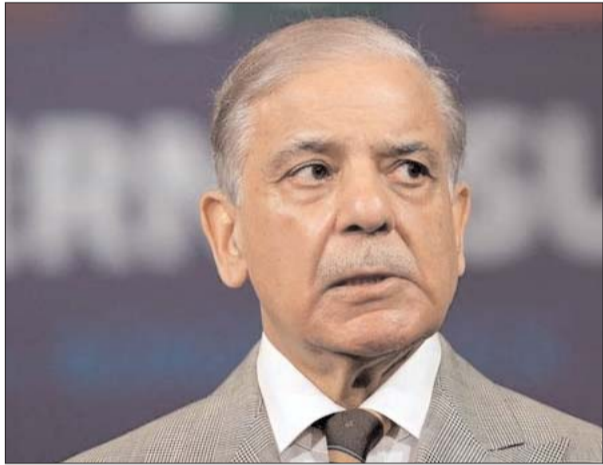
ISLAMABAD, JULY 11: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held separate talks with the leaders of Iran and Qatar in an effort to revive the stalled US-Iran negotiations.

The talks were held on Friday night as efforts picked up pace to mend the broken peace bridge between the warring sides after the recent escalation and attacks on the rival targets.

In his conversation with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Sharif expressed "deep concern over the recent escalation in tensions in the region" and underscored the urgent need to "restore regional peace and stability," according to a statement by the PM Office.

He urged parties to "exercise restraint and refrain from any action that could jeopardise the hard-earned peace gains achieved over the past few months".

Sharif stressed the importance of upholding the commitments undertaken under the Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), describing it as an enduring framework for promoting mutual understanding, respect and shared pros-



perity in the region and beyond.

Reaffirming Pakistan's steadfast commitment to regional peace, Sharif assured Pezeshkian of Islamabad's readiness to continue playing an "honest and sincere role" in facilitating dialogue and supporting all efforts aimed at preserving peace and stability.

President Pezeshkian thanked the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Field Marshal Asim Munir, and other senior Pakistani leaders for attending the funeral ceremony of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

He also reaffirmed Iran's commitment to peace and appreciated Pakistan's constructive support and sincere efforts for regional stability.

The two leaders also reviewed the implementation of the decisions taken during President Pezeshkian's visit to Islamabad last month and agreed to expedite follow-up actions to further strengthen bilateral cooperation across diverse fields.

Both leaders agreed to remain in close contact and continue consultations on matters of mutual interest and regional peace.

In a separate telephone conversation with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin

Hamad Al Thani, Sharif reiterated his "deep concern over the recent escalation in tensions in the region".

While conveying Pakistan's solidarity and support with the people of Qatar on the recent attacks, he stressed that all parties exercise restraint and refrain from any actions that could undermine peace in the region.

He conveyed Pakistan's sincere gratitude to the Qatari ruler for consistent and steadfast support in the peace efforts that culminated in the Islamabad MoU and the first round of high-level technical talks at Burgenstock.

The two leaders agreed upon the importance of sustained diplomatic engagement and dialogue, and adherence to the commitments made by all parties under the peace memorandum.

The US and Iran signed the MoU on June 18, aimed at restoring peace in West Asia. It was followed by technical-level talks in Switzerland on June 21, with Pakistan and Qatar as mediators. (PTI)

Trump threatens Iran after Khamenei's funeral saw open calls for his killing

DUBAI, JULY 11: US

President Donald Trump threatened Iran on Saturday after the funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saw open calls for his killing, further underlining the tensions gripping the Mideast as an interim deal to end the war buckles under repeated crossfire in the region.

Trump made the comments on his Truth Social after senior US officials demanded that Iran make a public statement saying the Strait of Hormuz is open and that ships crossing the vital corridor won't be attacked any longer.

So far, Tehran has not done so, instead insisting the route remain under its control and that it be allowed to charge ships moving through it, upending decades of precedence considering the strait an international waterway.

There had been multiple days of US airstrikes targeting Iran, as well as Iranian retaliatory fire targeting nations across the Mideast. Those strikes had been sparked by Iran attacking three ships in the strait earlier this week.

"1000 Missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands of more to immediately follow, should the Iranian Government act on its threat," Trump wrote on his website.

The US president described his threat as coming over threats "to assassinate, or attempt to assassinate" him. During Khamenei's funeral, mourners repeatedly held posters or banners calling for him to be killed along with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Iran war's opening moments on February 28 saw an airstrike that killed Khamenei, 86. Iran only buried Khamenei this week



in a dayslong funeral ceremony that saw his body taken to cities in both Iran and Iraq.

Trump added in his post that the US military would "completely decimate and destroy all areas of Iran - PRAISE BETO ALLAH!"

Trump repeatedly during the war and its uneasy ceasefire has invoked the name of God in Arabic, as well as threatened to destroy Iran's very civilization. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, a nationwide advocacy group, in the past has criticised Trump's "deranged mocking of Islam."

The US officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe to reporters the state of play with Iran, said the resumption of strikes this week came after what they described as a rogue faction of Iranian hard-liners trying to sabotage the ceasefire between Tehran and Washington.

However, Iran has insisted its theocracy is unified after the war under the country's new supreme leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei. The US officials said Friday that Trump is giving US

negotiators limited time to reach a deal with Iran, but, in a sign of the challenges ahead, they underscored that the president had a wide range of options if talks fall apart.

Moments before the US officials spoke, however, Tehran's diplomat at the United Nations told reporters that any activity in the Strait of Hormuz, including its opening or demining operations, "rests exclusively with Iran."

Iran has said the strait must now be under its sole control and that vessels should begin to pay fees to Tehran - even though the world for decades has considered it an international waterway. About a fifth of all traded oil and natural gas passed through the strait before the war began.

Iran's grip on the strait during the conflict led to a global energy crisis, though oil prices have sharply dropped since wartime highs of USD 120 a barrel.

After the US wrapped up its latest strikes on Thursday, more attacks reportedly hit Iran, leaving questions about who else may be targeting

the Islamic Republic. Israel didn't claim them, meaning the Gulf Arab states may have launched them, likely as a means to deter Iran from attacking them again. Iran on Thursday retaliated for US strikes by targeting Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi plans to discuss the strait with his Omani counterpart at a meeting Saturday in Oman, Iran's state-run IRNA news agency said. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan told his country's state broadcaster TRT that he believed "a solution can be reached" this weekend between Iran and Oman, which lie on opposite sides of the narrow waterway.

However, Araghchi on Saturday accused the US of violating the interim deal by ending waivers allowing Iran to sell crude oil on the open market in US dollars. Washington did that in response to the attacks on ships in the strait.

"Reality check: There can only be mutual compliance," Araghchi wrote on X.

The US continues to urge mariners to travel on a southern route through Oman's territorial waters to avoid Iranian waters and the commands of its paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. That has angered Tehran and sparked the attacks in the strait.

The US officials also told journalists that any deal on Iran's nuclear program would require Tehran to turn over its stockpile of highly enriched uranium. That's something Iran has repeatedly refused.

If the US does not reach a deal with Iran to turn over its nuclear material, it has military options to ensure that it remains buried underground forever, the officials said. They did not detail those options.

Taiwan and eastern China brace for Typhoon Bavi as winds and rain hit Japan's southern islands

TAIPEI, JULY 11: Typhoon Bavi has brought strong winds and rain to Japan's southern islands, as Taiwan and eastern China brace for the powerful storm with evacuations and high alerts.

Earlier, at least 17 people were killed in the southern Philippines mostly due to landslides that were set off by seasonal monsoon rains that Bavi intensified before the typhoon blew away toward Taiwan, Philippine officials said Saturday.

With maximum sustained winds of 144 kph (89 mph) near its centre, Bavi is forecast to pass north of Taiwan on Saturday, according to Taiwan's Central Weather Administration. It is expected to move toward Zhejiang in eastern China and, according to China's National Meteorological Centre, make landfall in the early hours of Sunday.

Across Japan's southern islands in the prefecture of Okinawa, local authorities have warned of high waves, strong winds and storm surges, with more than 200 flights cancelled across the region, according to Japan's



public broadcaster NHK. Strong winds and rain have hit islands including Ishigaki.

As of Saturday at 8 am, Taiwan's Central Emergency Operation Centre registered at least 36 injuries from Typhoon Bavi, many sustained while riding motorcycles in rain and winds on slippery roads.

A total of 14,210 people had been evacuated around the island as of Saturday morning, including from the eastern county of Hualien and the central city of Taichung. Schools and offices in most parts of Taiwan were suspended Saturday.

In southeastern China, cities near the coast are

preparing for the impacts of Typhoon Bavi. In the city of Ningde in Fujian province, more than 3,700 people were relocated from high-risk onshore areas as of Friday evening, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Authorities in Fujian province have placed over 17,000 emergency rescue workers on standby. Live News Feed

China's National Meteorological Centre issued an orange typhoon alert, the second-highest on a four-tier level, with many schools and ferry services suspended. Hundreds of flights have been cancelled, and some high-speed railway services halted.

The centre on Saturday also issued the first red alert for rainstorms of the year, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

In the Philippines, a landslide set off by monsoon rains that Bavi intensified hit a village before dawn Friday in the coastal town of Malapatan in southern Sarangani province, killing at least 10 villagers and leaving three others missing, Office of Civil Defense spokesperson Diego Mariano said.

A separate landslide in Calanog town in southern Lanao del Sur province before dawn on Friday killed five people, with six others missing, he said.

Two people drowned in floodwaters Wednesday in the southern province of Bukidnon, Mariano said without providing other details.

Office of Civil Defence deputy administrator Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV said about 11,000 villagers moved to 77 emergency shelters mostly in southern Philippine provinces in recent days due to the stormy weather. (AP)