

Nawaz Sharif taken to Court for speaking in English at UN: Report

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Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif faces a contempt of court case for failing to deliver his speech in Urdu at the UN General Assembly in violation of a verdict by the country's Supreme Court.

The court in September ordered the government to take steps for implementation of article 251 of the Constitution to make Urdu the official language.

The court also said that leaders and officials should use Urdu instead of English in speeches and formal communications.

The Dawn reported that the petitioner in the case, Zahid Ghani, has contended that Sharif flouted the September 8 Supreme Court verdict which directed the federal and provincial governments to use, without any delay, Urdu for official and other purposes.

He said the heads of other states, including Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, Cuban President Raul Castro, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko addressed the same UN meeting in their national languages.

Prime Minister Sharif, the petition said, had committed an offence and, therefore, should be prosecuted under Article 204 of the Constitution read with Contempt of Court Ordinance 2003.

This is the second such petition after another person had moved a similar petition requesting the Supreme Court to hold the prime minister in contempt for flouting, with impunity, its September 8 judgment.

Contempt petitions against sitting prime ministers are nothing new in Pakistan.

On April 26, 2012, the Supreme Court had handed down a symbolic punishment lasting less than a minute to then prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani for contempt.

- PTI