

## Pak province moves to implement Sharia law

REUTERS, Peshawar

Pakistani Islamists ruling a key northwestern province bordering Afghanistan were due to pass a law on Tuesday setting up a body critics say is modeled on the Taliban's religious police.

The introduction of a bill to set up a Hasba (accountability) Department in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) comes a day after the provincial parliament passed a bill to implement Sharia, or Islamic law, in the conservative region.

Provincial officials say the department, which will station officials in each district of the province, will be responsible for promoting religious observance.

Critics say it is modeled on the Department for Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue, the Afghan religious police under the Taliban regime toppled by US-led forces in late 2001.

North West Frontier came under the control of a six-party Islamic alliance after October elections.

Since taking power, the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), which includes two openly pro-Taliban parties, has taken steps reminiscent of the Taliban's religious fundamentalism.

On Saturday, it ordered civil servants to pray five times a day and urged businesses to close at prayer times.

This followed curbs on the sale of

music and videos, destruction of posters featuring women and advertising Western products, and the imposition of a complete ban on alcohol.

MMA has also banned music on public transport, medical examinations of women by male doctors, males coaching women athletes and male journalists covering women's sports.

The NWFP is the first province in Islamic Pakistan in recent years to announce it will impose Sharia, but it remains unclear how extreme the system will prove.

Under Sharia, judgments are reached with reference to Islamic teachings, and punishments can be severe depending on interpretation.

They can include amputations of hands for theft and stoning to death for adultery.

In announcing the decision, provincial officials said Sharia must be respected by the police and the judiciary. Under Pakistan's federal system justice is dispensed centrally.

Speaking to Reuters on Monday, provincial Law Minister Zafar Azam declined to clarify what the move might entail, but an assembly official said a commission would examine laws to bring them in line with Sharia, including its ban on interest on loans.

Observers say the MMA's latest moves could widen its differences with Musharraf's government.

## Musharraf rules out talks on his uniform

IANAS, Islamabad

In a move that is bound to raise the temperature between the government and the opposition, Pakistani President Musharraf has ruled out any discussion on his continuing as army chief and head of state.

According to The News, Musharraf told his political aides and Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali Monday that the issue of his uniform was not to be discussed with the opposition as it was not part of the Legal Framework Order (LFO) enacted last year giving him sweeping powers, including those to dismiss the federal and provincial governments.

Pakistan's opposition parties have been demanding that the LFO be repealed and that Musharraf shed his uniform and contest a presidential poll if he wants to continue as head of state.



PHOTO: AFP  
An Indian autorickshaw driver drinks water stored in claypots by the roadside in New Delhi on Tuesday. The heatwave affecting India has resulted in over one thousand deaths with temperatures soaring up to 47 degrees Celsius (116.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

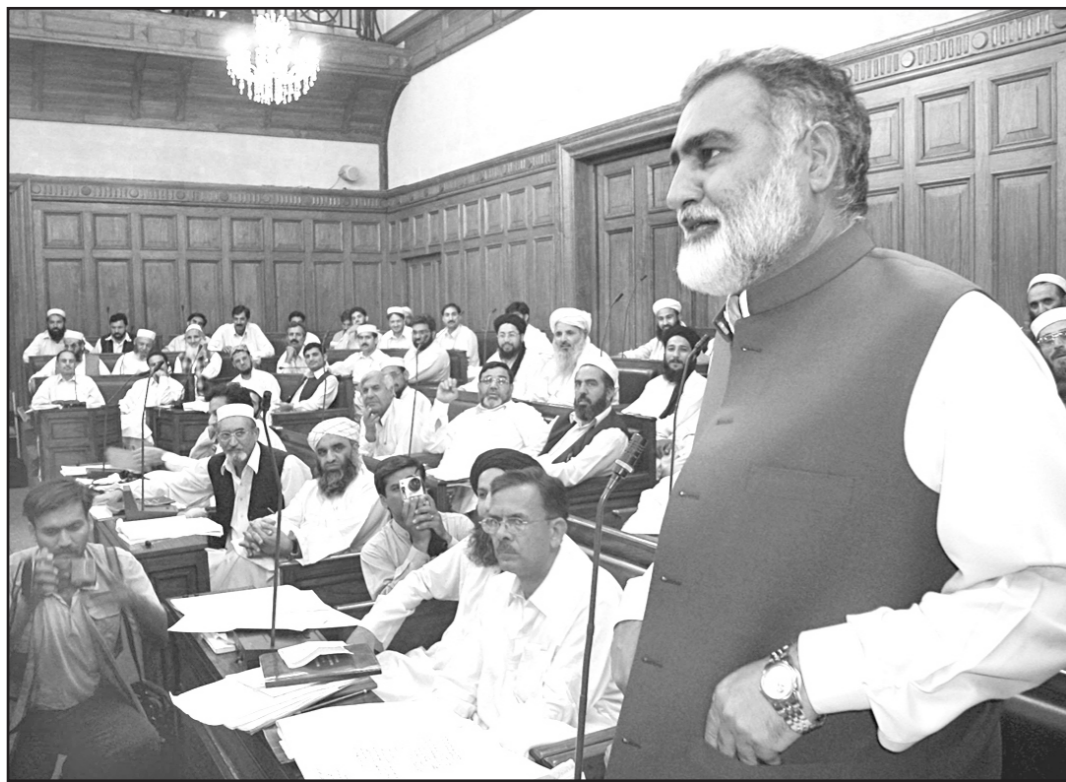


PHOTO: AFP

Provincial Chief Minister Akram Durrani makes a speech in the provincial assembly in Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar on Monday. The Islamist-led parliament in the North West Frontier Province adopted a bill to introduce Islamic Sharia law in the region bordering Afghanistan. Durrani thanked the opposition parties for lending their support to the bill.

## 'Suu Kyi unhurt' as calls for her release grow

REUTERS, Yangon

Myanmar's military government said on Tuesday opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi had not been harmed in clashes between her supporters and pro-government groups last week, rejecting rumors she had been injured.

World leaders have urged Myanmar to release the Nobel peace laureate and democracy leader who was detained on Friday after violence erupted as she toured a northern town.

The government said four people were killed and 50 injured in the disturbance in a northern town during a Suu Kyi visit, but there has been a flurry of rumors in Myanmar dissidents circles -- which include many exiles in Thailand -- that she had received a head injury.

Deputy foreign minister Khin Maung Win told diplomats in Yangon that was not true.

"The minister said that reports that Aung San Suu Kyi was injured were false," said one of the diplomats who attended a briefing by Khin Maung Win.

He said the junta cited "security" as the reason they would not divulge her whereabouts.

In Malaysia, an aide of a UN special envoy to Myanmar said he still planned to visit the country this Friday, despite Suu Kyi's detention and a crackdown on her party.

"We've received no indication from the government that he can't go," said the aide to veteran Malaysian diplomat Razali Ismail.

Diplomats have voiced fears that the latest detentions could deal a death blow to stalled reconciliation talks between the generals and Suu Kyi that began in 2000.

Khin Maung Win told the diplomats it was up to Razali if he wanted to visit, but suggested he might not be allowed to meet Suu Kyi.

After the military took Suu Kyi into "protective custody" other opposition leaders were detained, her party offices were shut and colleges and universities -- traditional bastions of dissent where Suu Kyi is believed to command strong support -- were closed.

## Kasuri sees real leadership in Vajpayee

PTI, Islamabad

Making it clear that it was not "ruffled" by statements from India insisting on Pakistan addressing cross-border terrorism, Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri on Tuesday said Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has "demonstrated real leadership" by taking the peace initiative.

"I absolutely believe that Prime Minister Vajpayee has demonstrated real leadership. He has shown much strength in the background of very provocative statements from his ministers.....I am quite happy with Vajpayee. His heart is in the right place," Kasuri said in an interview to well-known anchor Karan Thapar here for SAB TV.

He said Pakistan was not "ruffled" by a series of subsequent statements putting emphasis on Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism. "We politicians talk to different audience.....It happens all the time."

"We have to learn to live with each other. We cannot chose inter-

locutors. We have to deal with whosoever in power in both the countries," the Pakistani Foreign Minister said.

On Pakistan's perception that Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani was a hardliner, Kasuri said the Indians should stop demonising President Pervez Musharraf. Likewise, Pakistan too should stop demonising Advani.

"We have to learn to live with each other. We cannot chose inter-locutors. We have to deal with whosoever is in power in both the countries. Our relationship is far more important than to get bogged down with rhetoric," he said adding by doing that both the countries would be strengthening Vajpayee and Pakistan Premier Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali to bring about a meaningful dialogue.

Kasuri said though Agra summit achieved little, he considered it successful. "Both Vajpayee and Musharraf behaved very responsibly in Agra. Both of them were denied a Nobel Peace Prize in the last minute. They have agreed to a draft. I know it and you know it," he

said. He denied the existence of terrorists' training camps in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) and said that Pakistan prevented nine out of ten terrorists from crossing over to Jammu and Kashmir.

Replying to persistent questions about the allegations of the presence of 120 terrorist camps in PoK, he said, "These are allegations. The number you mention is staggering, unless they are referring to refugee camps. There are no training camps. There are no terrorist training camps. These are refugee camps."

Kasuri said Pakistan has sealed the LoC and if infiltration was taking place it was despite the efforts of Pakistan government.

"We try to seal the borders, which we have done by the way. If the infiltration is taking place, it is despite the efforts of the government of Pakistan. We are trying stop. Probably if there were ten people wanting to go, we are stopping nine. But we do not have Alladin's lamp," he said in the interview.

## BJP for 'smooth' transition from Vajpayee to Advani

AFP, New Delhi

India's ruling Hindu nationalist BJP party will give hardline Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani joint billing with the more moderate Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee ahead of provincial and state polls, a spokesman said Tuesday.

"Both the leaders are very much acceptable among the BJP cadre and the voters," BJP spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi told AFP, adding party posters will feature the faces of both men.

"We will openly project Mr. Vajpayee as the prime minister. There is no question of a successor, but it is also loud and clear that Mr. Advani is number two."

Vajpayee will be identified as the "development man" and Advani as the "iron man."

The party is to convene a brainstorming session of 100 leaders later this month to further thrash out electoral strategies.

Elections are due later this year in the Hindu-heartland states of

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the capital New Delhi, Chattisgarh and the tiny northeastern state of Mizoram.

Parliamentary polls are due in October next year, but analysts believe they could be brought forward to as early as February.

The BJP has already said the popular Vajpayee will be its prime ministerial candidate for the national elections, but analysts say Advani will rise to the premiership in due course.

Elections analyst Yashwant Deshmukh said the joint projection of Vajpayee and Advani was a testing of the waters by the BJP.

"They will contest under (Vajpayee's) name because Advani alone is not in a position to sail them through," he said.

"But Vajpayee will step down after the parliament elections and pass the baton to Advani. This decision now is to test the waters in the assembly elections -- to see how the voters and allies feel about the formula. It is an attempt to define the

line of control before elections begin."

Political commentator Pran Chopra agreed.

"The BJP has to accomplish a smooth transition. And what better way of doing it than projecting the party as being led by jointly by Vajpayee dressed up in one role and Advani in another role -- the two being equally necessary in government."

While Vajpayee is widely seen as the moderate face of the BJP, Advani still carries the image of a Hindu hawk, at the forefront campaign a decade ago that united Hindu radical forces across the country to build a temple in the northern town of Ayodhya where an ancient mosque stood.

The campaign led to the destruction of the mosque by mobs of Hindu zealots and culminated in nationwide Hindu-Muslim riots.

## China poses no threat to India: Beijing

PTI, Beijing

Ahead of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit later this month, China on Tuesday urged India not to view its northern neighbour as a "threat" and suggested taking further steps to enhance mutual trust and cooperation to boost Sino-Indian ties.

"It is important that both countries do not consider each other as threats," Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said while commenting on the recently-released annual report of India's ministry of defence, which pointed out at the nuclear asymmetry between the armed forces of China and India, Beijing's continued close defence ties with Pakistan and threat from its missiles to major Indian cities.

"We believe that if both sides adhere to the five principles of peaceful co-existence, increase trust, strengthen cooperation, Sino-Indian relations then can continuously develop," Zhang said when asked to comment on the MoD report.

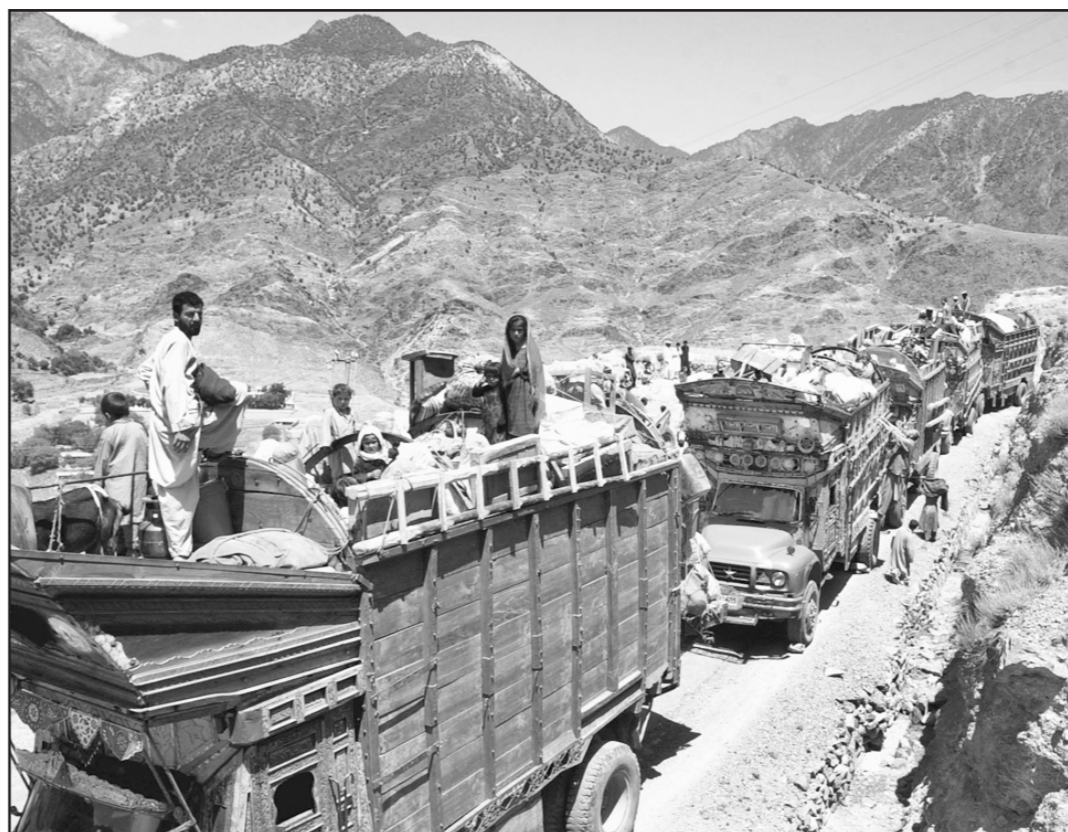


PHOTO: AFP

Afghan refugees are riding on trucks to make their way home in Afghanistan from Pakistan's northern region of Chitral on Monday. Some 2,000 Afghan refugees head home from Chitral under the UNHCR's voluntarily repatriation programme. Pakistan, Afghanistan and the UNHCR signed an agreement in March under which some 1.8 million Afghan refugees will return home over the next three years.