

International

Movement for Sharif's release soon: Kulsoom

KARACHI, June 4: Kulsoom Nawaz, wife of imprisoned former Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif, has said she will soon begin a public mobilisation campaign for the release of her husband, reports AFP.

"They want to eliminate my husband and I will go to every corner of the country to mobilise the people," she told AFP in a telephone interview late on Saturday.

Kulsoom said the movement would be launched from the southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital, although no date had been set.

"I will be at the forefront of the movement which will be different from previous political agitations in the country. No buses will be burnt and no one will be hurt," Kulsoom said.

A Pakistani high court on Friday admitted a state appeal demanding that a life term

given to Sharif on charges of hijacking and terrorism by an anti-terrorism court in April be replaced with the death penalty.

On the same day, the ex-prime minister was formally charged in a corruption case by an accountability court in the 16th century Attock Fort, where he is being detained, for alleged asset concealment and tax evasion.

"I don't expect justice from these courts," Kulsoom said.

Sharif has accused General Pervaiz Musharraf, who ousted him in a military coup in October, of waging a personal vendetta against him.

Musharraf has denied the charge, claiming he is not a vindictive man. "I have no personal vendetta against anyone," he said on Wednesday.

The 49-year-old Kulsoom said she had found her husband in good spirits after visiting

him in Attock Fort jail.

Sharif told the accountability court that he was ready to spend the rest of his life in jail and "even be hanged".

Sources within Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) party say they are divided over whether to launch a movement for the release of the deposed prime minister.

"I will be meeting the party leaders soon to chalk out the strategy," Kulsoom said.

"They (the regime) are underestimating me."

Dissenting voices in the PML are against any confrontation with the army-led government, the sources said.

Mian Mohammad Azhar, a former governor in Punjab, is a leading figure in the anti-Sharif camp in the PML, still headed by the former prime minister.

'No breakthrough in Pakistan HR situation'

NEW DELHI, June 4: Noted human rights activist of Pakistan Asma Jahangir has said there is no important breakthrough regarding human rights in the country and the honour killings continue unabated, reports PTI.

No, I do not think there is any change except oratory. And even amongst some measures that General Pervaiz Musharraf announced which were already there, he back-tracked, Asma was quoted by a newspaper in Pakistan as saying.

She said even in recent human rights report of Pakistan at least 1,000 incidents of honour killings were reported.

About the measures of Gen Musharraf, she said I really feel hesitant and I am concerned about the fact that the military government has made people think that there is no link between human rights and democratic developments.

On one hand they have actually destroyed an institution. So they are very sure on violating human rights. There is not a single measure that the general has taken to change the law. In fact it is just the same, Asma said.

Stating that human rights commission of Pakistan had to play a greater role in absence of a democratic institutions, Asma, who is also the special rapporteur of the UN, said so, when we talk about human rights and we have judiciary that has taken of loyalty to the army, where there is no parliament, where there is torture but not reported, where people are in arbitrary detention, there of course we have much more role today than we did even previously because at least state institutions were there to share the burden.

Vajpayee says

Pakistan must stop cross-border terrorism to restart dialogue

SHIMLA, June 4: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee yesterday said the onus of resuming the stalled Indo-Pak talks was on Pakistan and it must stop cross-border terrorism to create a conducive atmosphere to restart the dialogue process, reports PTI.

Islamabad must stop cross-border terrorism and other hostilities to create a congenial atmosphere for resumption of the dialogue, he told a largely attended public meeting at Keylong, headquarters of the tribal districts of Lahaul and Spiti.

Accusing Islamabad of reversing the process of friendship initiated by New Delhi, Vajpayee said India wanted peace with Pakistan and he had himself gone to Lahore with a message of peace and friendship but Pakistan betrayed us with the Kargil intrusion and indulged in indiscriminate killing for our soldiers.

He cautioned Pakistan against a repetition of Kargil-type misadventure and declared that India was strong enough to repulse any intrusion into its territory.

India could have crossed the Line of Control but it believed in maintaining the sanctity of LOC and exercised utmost restraint while evicting Pakistani intruders from Kargil, the Prime Minister said.

However, he maintained his policy of having only indigenous Fijians in the planned interim government, which will draft a new constitution and prepare the country for elections.

The talks were scheduled to



A plainclothes policeman stands guard on the Tiananmen rostrum overlooking Tiananmen Square in Beijing yesterday. Chinese authorities have blocked activists from commemorating the anniversary of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen massacre, detaining at least nine people for marking the event.

— AFP photo

Crackdown in China marks Tiananmen anniversary

BEIJING, June 4: Chinese authorities arrested at least nine activists in a crackdown on the commemoration of the June 4, 1989 Tiananmen massacre, a human rights group and witnesses said today, reports AFP.

But 50 dissidents in four cities began a 24-hour hunger strike to remember the victims and to demand the government re-evaluate the incident, which it calls a "counter-revolutionary rebellion," a Hong Kong human rights group said.

In addition, an AFP reporter saw two young men taken into custody at the politically-sensitive campus of Beijing University Saturday night when they lit candles to remember the victims.

Plainclothes campus security officials rushed over and blew out the candles seconds after the men's act on the steps of the school auditorium.

Police arrested three Christian activists in Beijing who had planned to gather to commemorate the victims, the Information Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said.

A group of ten dissidents in the northern city of Xian were

prevented from holding a similar gathering Saturday night as police stood guard outside their homes, the centre said. One of them has been detained.

Three other activists, one from Beijing and two from the northeastern province of Liaoning, were detained for writing a letter to Chinese authorities requesting they re-examine the incident.

Despite the heavy surveillance, dissidents and activists refused to let the anniversary go unnoticed.

Fifty dissidents, many of whom participated in the 1989 demonstrations and had served prison sentences, went on a hunger strike beginning at midnight.

Chen Wei, 31, said he has been refusing food every anniversary since 1992, because he could not forget what happened to his fellow demonstrators.

Zheng Baohe, one of the Xian dissidents who tried to gather Saturday night, was placed under house arrest.

Draft accord reached to end Fiji crisis: Coup leader

SUVA, June 4: A draft accord has been reached to end Fiji's political crisis, the rebel leader holding 31 politicians hostage since May 19 said today, reports Reuters.

Nationalist George Speight spent nine hours at the headquarters of Fiji's military rulers today, trying to thresh out a deal to free the hostages and return the country to civilian rule.

"I don't want to put any specific timetables on (the accord) except to say that we are well on the way now given the fact that all the initial barriers of concern between the parties have been broken down," Speight told reporters.

Speight, who took hostage Fiji's first ethnic Indian Prime Minister Mahendra Chudhury and most of his government,

told reporters the talks would resume on Monday morning.

The military rulers, who took power on May 29 when President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara stepped aside, said earlier they saw one sticking point remaining — when the South Pacific island nation to civilian control.

Both sides have agreed that the chief would appoint the president, a role they had in the 1997 multi-racial constitution that the military scrapped last week in a concession to Speight.

Speight has proposed his own chief — Ratu Jose Semiloli — as president and wants his supporters to play an important role in the interim government that would write a new constitution and call elections.

The military has expressed reluctance to have any of Speight's group in government.

Iran masterminded Lockerbie bombing'

WASHINGTON, June 4: An Iranian defector says he has evidence that Iran planned and financed the 1988 bombing to Pan Am flight 103, which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, killing 270 people, reports AP.

The defector, who says he is Ahmad Behbahani, coordinator of Iran's terrorism operations for a decade or more, told the CBS News TV programme "60 Minutes" that he has documents to prove his claims, during an interview scheduled to air in the United States on Sunday.

The CIA is debriefing Behbahani, now in protective custody in Turkey, according to CBS.

Bomb explodes outside Manila's int'l airport

MANILA, June 4: Officials tightened security further at Manila's international airport after a bomb exploded early Sunday outside the arrival area, badly damaging a public toilet but causing no injuries, reports AP.

The explosion, the fifth in the capital area in recent weeks, dug a crater in the sidewalk outside the women's toilet and ripped apart its walls.

"Admittedly, it was a strong bomb," said airport General Manager Col. Antonio Gana.

The explosion occurred in an area some distance from the main terminal where passengers are met by relatives or wait for taxis. The homemade bomb was apparently dropped from a

car passing along a road on an upper level, Gana said.

There were no signs of shrapnel, indicating that the bomb was not designed to kill or injure large numbers of people, he said.

Investigators also found no trigger mechanism or electrical wiring, he said.

Departing passengers waited in long lines to be inspected Sunday as security at the airport was further tightened.

Policemen distributed a sketch of a male suspect estimated to be between age 24 and 29.

Two women in the area wearing Muslim clothes were interrogated for several hours but explained they were waiting for a passenger arriving from the Middle East, police said.



Indonesian policemen collect flags of the Acehnese separatist movement after they removed them from private flagpoles at residential homes in Lhokseumawe, North Aceh, on the third day of a three-month truce between the government and rebels in Aceh yesterday. Separatism in oil and gas-rich Aceh, a staunchly Muslim province of 4.6 million people on the northern tip of Sumatra island, has been fuelled by Jakarta's failure to ensure the province benefits from its resources and by years of harsh military repression aimed at wiping out rebellion.

— AFP photo

UN peacekeepers strengthen positions in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone, told Reuters.

The peacekeepers have promised a vigorous response to any attack on Rogberi, close to a

position where four Zambian UN soldiers were killed trying to defend it when rebels defied a peace accord to advance a month ago.

But he told reporters: "The situation in Sierra Leone calls for peace and a ceasefire... The quantity of troops deployed in Sierra Leone is not the issue, what is important is confidence."

Clinton began his three-day summit with Putin on Saturday with an informal soiree in the Russian president's private Kremlin apartments, that wound up with a jazz concert.

Russia's legendary Oleg Lundstrem jazz orchestra provided the music, band leader Lundstrem offering to jam with the saxophone-playing US president.

The show's presenter, Aleksel Batachey, said Clinton declined the offer because of "the late hour."

BRIEFLY

World IPI congress in India:

After a gap of 35 years, India will host the world congress of the International Press Institute (IPI), a global network of editors and media executives devoted to the freedom of the press, in January next, PTI reports from New Delhi.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee will inaugurate the three-day congress in New Delhi on January 27, which will also be addressed by the Dalai Lama and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. The last time India hosted the world congress of IPI was in 1966. This year's congress was held in April at Boston, USA, where US Vice-President Al Gore was among the speakers.

Plane crash kills 6 in France:

Six people died Saturday when their plane crashed in Thury-en-

Valois, in northern France, killing all aboard, police and emergency workers said, AFP reports from Beauvais, France.

The plane, a Piper PA-46, was traveling from the English channel island of Jersey to Allendorf in Germany, police said.

The cause of the crash was not immediately known, although there was a violent storm in the area at the time. Experts were to examine the debris spread over the crash site.

Six killed in Bihar:

Six lower-caste Hindu labourers were killed and three others seriously wounded by unidentified gunmen in the lawless eastern Indian state of Bihar, a police official said Sunday, AFP reports from Patna.

"Six labourers were killed and three are seriously injured," said Bihar police chief K.K. Jacob. "The attackers opened fire."

The attack took place late Saturday at Rajubigha, some 140 km east of the provincial capital, he said.

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Suspected rebels kidnap female doctor in Philippines

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, June 4: Suspected Muslim rebels have kidnapped a female doctor, apparently to treat guerrillas wounded in recent fierce fighting with government troops, officials said Sunday.

The doctor, Epifania Asistre, was abducted by heavily armed men Saturday night from her clinic in Parang in southern Maguindanao province, army spokesman Capt. Noel Detoyato said.

The area is near the headquarters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, Camp Abubakar.

Government troops have overrun more than a dozen MILF camps in the past month, and many rebels, including commanders, are believed to have been injured, Detoyato said.

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