

Over 10,000 rally against Musharraf

AP, Quetta, Pakistan

More than 10,000 protesters rallied in this southwestern city in Pakistan on Friday, demanding President Gen. Pervez Musharraf step down.

The supporters of a coalition of radical Islamic groups chanted "God is great" and "Pakistan will not be allowed to become a U.S. colony."

The six-party United Action Forum has accused Musharraf of renegeing on a promise to become a civilian head of state and leave his army job by the end of 2004.

No to Musharraf's uniform" and "Musharraf has to step down," two protester signs said. Police put the crowd at more than 10,000.

Musharraf has become a key ally of the United States in the war against terrorism since he seized power in a bloodless coup in October 1999.

While Musharraf held general elections in 2002 that elected a Parliament and a prime minister, he keeps a firm grip on power.

Seven killed in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Suspected Muslim rebels killed seven people, including three women of a Muslim family in revolt-hit Indian Kashmir, a police spokesman said yesterday.

He said suspected militants early Saturday barged into the house of Shabir Gujary in the village of Hassote in the state's southern Udhampur district and shot dead his mother, wife and infant daughter.

"Before fleeing, the militants also set fire to the house," the spokesman said, adding Gujary was a former militant who had surrendered last year.

Later, the militants barged into the house of another man in a neighbouring village and shot him dead.

Police said suspected militants also killed two more people in the southern districts of Anantnag and Rajouri.

None of the dozen rebel groups active in Kashmir claimed responsibility for the killings. Rebels have been targeting pro-India politicians, surrendered colleagues and people they suspected of working for Indian troops.

Meanwhile, rebels on Saturday shot dead a policeman in a gunbattle in the village of Yamrach, near Kulgam town, 70 kilometers (43 miles) south of the state summer capital Srinagar, police said.

"The gunbattle was going on when reports last came in," a police spokesman said in

Graffiti irk PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday vented her annoyance with the graffiti of different organisations and political parties, including the ruling BNP, that defiles the fair face of the just-beautified capital city.

A massive city beautification programme was completed just before the stalled Saarc summit.

Khaleda asked the authorities to take "legal measures, including fines", against those responsible for displaying posters at different points of the city, Prime Minister's Office (PMO) sources told the news agency.

She looked at the posters on her way to different programmes she attended on the Independence Day.

The prime minister asked the authorities concerned to be more sincere in keeping the city clean.

Job seekers

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talking to the returnees over mobile phones in front of journalists waiting at the airport.

According to sources the Bangladeshi came from the African country by an Emirates flight from Dubai in the afternoon. The International Organisation for Migration arranged their repatriation, the sources added.

On March 19, 24 Bangladeshi fortune seekers returned home a year after travel agents had sent them to western African country of Mali promising to get them job in Italy.

6 die

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In another accident, rickshaw passenger Wali Uddin, 45, hailing from Chandar village under Sadar upazila died on the spot when a bus ran over the rickshaw at Bhatbaur, Manikganj, police said.

The critically injured rickshaw-puller was admitted into Manikganj Sadar Hospital.

Amini's new theory on independence proclamation

UNB, Dhaka

The alliance made unexpected gains in the parliamentary vote mainly on a platform of opposition to Musharraf's support for the United States. It accuses Musharraf of working for American interests and imposing dictatorship on Pakistan.

At the rally Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the alliance's chief, demanded Musharraf should step down.

"Gen. Musharraf is not accepted to us neither as a president nor as the army chief," Ahmed said.

Musharraf has so far spurned the opposition demands, saying his staying in power will ensure stability in the country's policies, including the fight against terrorism.

Hundreds of police were deployed to provide security for the rally in Quetta but there was no violence, said Qazi Abdul Waheed, a police superintendent.

He said more than 10,000 attended the opposition protest.

Tripura cops gun down Bangladeshi

UNB, Comilla

A Bangladeshi youth was shot dead and his brother wounded by Tripura police when they crossed the border and entered a rubber garden to cut wood.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said Tripura police fired on Russell, 16, and his brother Rubel, 14, of Sadar upazila when they entered the rubber garden in Anandapara area under Sonamura Police Station at noon. Rubel died on the spot.

Being informed by their family members, BDR sent a protest letter to their counterpart, BSF. The slain youth's body was handed over to Bangladesh yesterday following a flag meeting between the two border forces.

Tripura police arrested Russell and filed a case against him.

Colombian police find drugs sub

BBC ONLINE

Police in Colombia have uncovered a submarine, which they believe was built by drug smugglers to transport cocaine.

The nearly complete eight-metre fibreglass vessel, capable of carrying 10 tonnes of the drug, worth \$200m, was found in the Pacific port of Tumaco.

Police had been monitoring its construction for six months.

They believe the Norte del Valle cartel, the last surviving Colombian drug trafficking organisation, planned to use it to smuggle drugs to the US.

Colombia's Department of Administrative Security says the submarine would have been used to evade radar and naval patrol ships, taking drugs out to sea where they could be transferred to high-speed motorboats for the journey to Central America and on to the United States.

"The ingenuity of drug traffickers is amazing. They will seek any way to avoid the coast guard," Eduardo Fernandez, head of Colombia's secret police in Valle del Cauca state, told the Associated Press.

The submarine was apparently designed to be ready for Easter, when the smugglers believed police would be less vigilant.

"On the contrary, security in the area has been boosted," said Mr Fernandez.

No arrests were made in Friday's operation.

In 2000, police found a 30-metre steel submarine under construction far inland, near the capital Bogota It would have been capable of carrying up to 200 tonnes of cocaine.

Bhutan

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constitution yesterday in public ceremonies across the country.

The proposed constitution will replace a royal decree of 1953 giving the monarchy absolute power and transform the majority Buddhist nation of 534,000 people into a parliamentary democracy, officials said.

Thirty-four articles in the proposed constitution will outline the role of the monarchy, clergy, fundamental rights and duties of the people while creating new constitutional offices including a National Council.

Chief Justice Sonam Tobgye said he expects every family in Bhutan to receive a copy of the constitution for discussion before a referendum is held later this year on whether to adopt it.

"It is posted in public domain for debate on the Internet in both English and the national language, Dzongkha, to extend the discourse on the constitution," Tobgye said.

"This follows the king's constant reminder of the need for people to understand the constitution and to provide their views on it."

Savar turns safe

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lawmaker is reportedly providing shelter to them at a Textile Mill in Akran of the union.

Niribili, a village adjacent to the National Memorial, as well as Gazirhat and Sreepur of Dhamnsuna union and a village resort in Shimulia union of another BNP lawmaker from Dhaka city are also known to be the meeting places of criminals, sources said.

Fantasy Kingdom, Demra, Tentuljhora, Imandipur, Mazidpur, Amin Bazar and areas adjacent to the Savar municipality (porosova) are meanwhile infested with crime and drug-peddling. Local activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal are allegedly involved in nursing the outside criminals.

With that declaration, he said, the struggle for liberating the subcontinent from the British rule started and the first independence movement was started under the leadership of Syed Ahmad Shaheed who embraced martyrdom in Balakot. The second independence movement was started in 1857 under Haji Emdadullah Mohajer Makki.

Later, "Resmi Rumal" movement was launched in 1919 under the leadership of Shaikhul Hind Mahmud Hassan, driving out the British from the sub-continent in 1947. "Had the Britons not been driven out, today's Bangladesh would not have been liberated," he said.

Claiming that ulema-masaekh had laid down their lives at the start of Bangladesh's Liberation War, Amini warned that they would not tolerate if the clerics are called "anti-liberation", "atheist" or "murtad".

nor an Iraqi Defence Ministry spokesman was able to confirm the operation at Musayib, 40 miles south of Baghdad.

Some of the suspected guerrillas planned to attack Shia Muslims expected to head in the coming days to an annual religious celebration in the nearby city of Karbala, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

There were no injuries to any US troops or Iraqi security forces, the official said, and no word on any casualties among the suspected insurgents.

The names of the US troops slain Saturday were not immediately released, and no other details were given on the car bombing.

The military also announced

that a Marine was killed a day earlier in strife-torn Anbar province, a heavily Sunni Arab region west of Baghdad that contains the flashpoint cities of Fallujah and Ramadi.

No further details were given of the death of the Marine, assigned to the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

As of Friday, at least 1,524 members of the US military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

On Iraq's political front, the interim government's deputy prime minister, Barham Saleh, said Friday that negotiators are intensifying efforts to bring in the country's Sunni Arabs, believed to form the core of Iraq's rebellion. That has caused delays, leading to public frustration with the nascent political process.

"It is not acceptable that two months on from the elections, that Iraq does not have a transitional government yet," Saleh told The Associated Press in an interview.

"We are under pressure, and we have to respond to public sentiment and have a government established as soon as possible."

Jawad al-Maliki, a negotiator from the Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance, said Shia and Kurdish officials agreed to hold their second National Assembly session on Tuesday.

Since holding their first session on March 16, lawmakers elected in Jan. 30 elections have repeatedly

DCC renames

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Liberation War to introduce the valiant freedom fighters to the new generation.

The major first announced the move to rename city streets after the sector commanders at a freedom fighters' reunion on December 16 last year.

Three roads have earlier been renamed after three sector commanders since March 20.

The president took salute at the ceremonial march-past by contingents of freedom fighters, armed forces, BDR, police, BNCC and Ansar-VDP at the National Parade Ground at 9:00am. The prime minister also attended the function.

Rajbari: The Independence and National Day was observed here with much enthusiasm.

Different political parties and socio-cultural organisations placed wreaths at Rajbari Shaheed Muktijoddha Smriti Saudha.

National flag was hoisted atop all important government, semi-government and private buildings. The ceremonial march-past was held at Rajbari Stadium.

The district administration accorded a reception to the freedom fighters at Rajbari Stadium.

Faridpur: The day was observed here with much enthusiasm. National flag was hoisted atop all important government, semi-government, and private buildings.

District administration, Faridpur municipality, different political organisations and socio-cultural organisations placed wreaths at Swadhinata Smriti Minar at Ambika Maidan at 7:00am.

Sammiti Sangskritik Jote arranged a cultural function at the local Swadhinata Chhatra in the evening.

Manikganj: The district Muktijoddha Sangsads, on the occasion of the Independence and National Day, named two roads after two valiant freedom fighters.

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Family of 64 valiant freedom fighters and 17 war-wounded freedom fighters were accorded reception at the district Muktijoddha Sangsads Office at noon.

They are Julmat, 35, Magar Uddin, 31, Ibrahim, 28, Oli Ahmed, 28 and an unidentified man, 40.

Narsingdi Police Superintendent Mir Rezaul Karim admitted the incident and said no police team reached the spot till filing of this report.

5 robbers

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Local people rushed to the spot and nabbed the robbers with a pistol and two mobile phone sets.

Severely beaten by the mob, all of the five died.

They are Julmat, 35, Magar Uddin, 31, Ibrahim, 28, Oli Ahmed, 28 and an unidentified man, 40.

Narsingdi Police Superintendent Mir Rezaul Karim admitted the incident and said no police team reached the spot till filing of this report.

Rab-7 punishes 6 own men, kills 22 in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Highlighting a successful first year for Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) operations in Chittagong, a top Rab official also acknowledged yesterday that disciplinary actions have been required on several occasions against wayward members of the elite force.

Speaking at a press conference at Rab-7's Patenga headquarters, Major Sharif Hasan, the second-in-command of Rab-7, revealed that the Chittagong force apprehended 482 criminals, 22 of whom died in 'crossfire', and recovered 234 firearms, including AK-47s, AK-56s, M-16 rifles, and seized 1,767 rounds of ammunition in the last one year, ending on March 5.

Major Sharif claimed that Rab has conducted its operations with total transparency and honesty during the past twelve months, saying that around ten Rab-7 men were sent back and six punished for questionable activities that went beyond the strict ethical and lawful bindings set by the government.

"Besides, one sergeant of Rab-7 who come from the air force is now undergoing a departmental court martial for similar reasons. These disciplinary actions are indeed a testimony to our transparency," Sharif told journalists.

He added, "We generally take action against any member of our force as soon as we can see any wrong or misdoing."

Major Sharif observed their major success lies in the fact that Rab operations have sent criminals on the run and into hiding. "I think we could imbue a sense of insecurity in the minds of all criminals and this is our success."

Of the 482 criminals, 22 top-notch terrorists of the city and district were killed in 'crossfire' with Rab members.

They were Md Idris, Ahmadul Haq alias Ahmadya, Minhaz, Jane Alam alias Jannah and his nine associates, Nabir Hossain, Mohiuddin alias Mohim, Iqbal Bahar Chowdhury, Sajal Kanti Nath, Aminul Haque alias Aminya, Aminul Islam alias Khalifa Amin, Babar Aliya alias Petkababar, Hossain Ahmad Munna alias Foyez Munna and Abu Naser alias Gitti Nasir.