

SACKING OF CHIEF JUSTICE Pak lawyers clash with cops, boycott courts

AFP, Lahore

Baton-wielding riot police clashed with thousands of lawyers during a nationwide day of action yesterday in Pakistan against the sacking of the country's top judge, witnesses said.

More than 20 people, including an opposition lawmaker, were injured in the turmoil in the eastern city of Lahore.

The clashes broke out amid a lawyers' strike triggered by President Pervez Musharraf's suspension Friday of chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

Witnesses said around 3,000 protesters chanting "Go Musharraf, go," and "Down with Musharraf" dismantled barriers in an attempt to stage a sit-in on a main road outside the Lahore High Court building.

Police moved in to break up the rally with truncheons and some 20 lawyers were wounded, including senator Latif Khosa of the opposition Pakistan People's Party and his son, said local bar council president Mohammad Ahsan Dhoon.

Some policemen were injured as protesters pelted them with stones, police and witnesses said.

"We condemn the police brutality against unarmed lawyers. This will not deter us and we will continue our protest against Musharraf's illegal action," Dhoon said.

The riot police, with helmets, padded protective gear and plastic shields, used their batons to hit some lawyers who were wearing smart black suits and white shirts.

At least one lawyer was seen with blood streaming from a head wound.

In Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, some 500 lawyers wearing black armbands rallied outside the city courts. They blocked traffic and torched portraits of Musharraf before dispersing peacefully, witnesses said.

Advocates did not attend the Supreme Court in Islamabad while lawyers also boycotted courts in towns across central Punjab province.

"It's a complete boycott of the superior and lower courts by all lawyers," Supreme Court Bar Association president Munir Malik told AFP.

Rights groups, opposition parties and lawyers have condemned the move by Musharraf -- a military ruler who took power in a bloodless coup in 1999 -- as an assault on the independence of the judiciary.

Musharraf says Chaudhry was abusing his position and has referred the case to the Supreme

Tarique

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Singapore, Thailand, South Africa and Switzerland.

Tarique also told the investigators that his uncle Maj (retd) Sayeed Iskandar, younger brother Arafat Rahman, and his business partner Giasuddin Ali Mamun look after his distillery, advertisement firm, and water transport businesses.

Tarique, who had used to flaunt his ruling party rank in the government administration's face and always had seemed beyond the reach of law enforcers during the BNP-Jamaat rule, was arrested from his mother's cantonment residence in a midnight raid by the joint forces on March 8.

Meanwhile, the joint forces yesterday confiscated a luxurious Porche sports utility vehicle from detained former BNP lawmaker Mosaddak Ali Falu's DOHS residence in the capital. The retail price of the SUV in the US currently starts at \$43,000 to \$93,000. The confiscated vehicle was later handed over to Cantonment police.

Rab killing suspects

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killing, he said the killed Rab members went to the kiln of Tara Mia, the place where they were killed, in the guise of brick buyers in plainclothes for an investigation.

As soon as they reached the place a gang of hijackers, showing firearms, tried to hijack them that initiated a scuffle, the official said.

The hijackers decided to kill the Rab men after being confirmed about their identity to avoid legal actions in future, he added.

Biman

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flight was to reach Dhaka at 12:45pm.

Just before lifting off, the captain heard an unusual sound in the nose area and aborted the takeoff that caused some damage to the airplane, said the Biman Officials.

The insurance companies--Messrs AON in London and Messrs CTC--have already been informed of the incident.

According to the official website of Dubai airport, the closure affected a total of 71 flights, of which 36 flights that were ex-Dubai were cancelled while 35 incoming flights were diverted to airports in Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Al Ain, and Ras Al Khaimah in the UAE, and to Muscat (Oman), Kuwait and Shiraz (Iran).

WC gets rolling

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Cliff and Gregory Isaacs, as well as contemporary performers Sean Paul and Shaggy, entertained the crowd of around 10,000 and the squads of the competing nations.

Chris Dehring, CEO of the event, said fans at the World Cup would see "the world's best cricketers competing against the backdrop of the most blessed place on earth."

Chaudhry has since been confined to his official residence in Islamabad and journalists are barred from meeting him. The government denies reports that he is under house arrest.

He had been at loggerheads with the government ever since the supreme court overruled the sale of Pakistan's state-run steel mills in June 2006.

Analysts say he also had a reputation for taking a firm stance on rights abuses and cases of missing people allegedly in government custody.

The good news for Lara is that, prior to the debacle against India, two of his frontline batsmen -- Jamaicans Marlon Samuels and Chris Gayle -- both produced confident knocks against Kenya -- Samuels retiring after reaching his century.

Group D opponents Pakistan were roundly beaten in both a Test and one-day series in South Africa but then cruised to a seven-wicket win over those same opponents in their warm-up on Friday.

Pakistan's preparations suffered a blow with the late withdrawal of fast bowlers Shoib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif through injury, but replacements Mohammad Sami and Yasir Arif have slotted in well.

Pakistan beat the West Indies in a home series in late 2006 but captain Inzamamul Haq said it would be a tougher challenge in the Caribbean.

Sonadia

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A meeting of the steering committee on deep-sea port headed by the shipping adviser is to be held next week to overview developments of the project.

The country has long been planning to set up a deep-sea port in the Bay of Bengal with the hope of winning business from Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan and India's seven northeastern states -- all of whom are looking for quicker access to deep-sea facilities.

The cabinet committee on purchase in June 2006 approved a contract worth \$2.33 million with the Japanese firm for conducting a feasibility study.

The consultancy firm was assigned to assess the overall impact of a deep-sea port on the economy of the country and on the two existing ports -- Chittagong and Mongla.

The firm will prepare a report recommending the location, facilities and details of infrastructure and services to be provided through a detailed study/ analysis on technical, social, economic and financial viability of the deep-sea port, ministry sources added.

Baira executive

FROM PAGE 1
Kuala Lumpur without government permission.

But he was not certain the IAEA and Pyongyang could agree on how to proceed in time to meet the 60-day deadline for the shutdown.

MOVE FORWARD

"I'd like this trip at least to establish the framework and then gradually move forward," he said of North Korea's denuclearization. "It is in their interests obviously to keep that deadline, but we'll see."

South Korea's chief envoy to the nuclear talks, Chun Yung-woo, on Monday gave North Korea good marks for living up to its initial obligations under the February 13 deal.

"I believe we should be able to implement the initial steps of denuclearization without any major obstacles if (the countries) continue to do their utmost, as they have been until now," Chun told reporters, Yonhap news agency reported.

Japan's top government spokesman said positive results from ElBaradei's trip were vital to convince the world that North Korea was sincere about scrapping its nuclear arms.

Hoarding cases

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country as they found inedible rotten wheat or rice in those.

In the wake of the crackdown, import of various goods decreased significantly as businessmen hesitated to go for import fearing harassment. So, supply of such goods in the market decreased greatly, resulting in their price hike.

An inter-ministerial meeting organised by the commerce ministry on Sunday drafted a proposal fixing the quantity and period of storing nine essential items namely, paddy, rice, wheat, lentil, sugar, edible oil, onion, milk powder and baby food, sources said.

Meanwhile, the government formed a 28-member taskforce comprising all related to the commerce ministry. Headed by Finance and Commerce Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, the committee already met several times and took a number of decisions including hanging of wholesale price chart in kitchen markets in the capital. But those virtually yielded no positive results.

The commerce ministry's draft divided hoarding at three levels -- import, wholesale and retail -- and proposed highest one month for storage of an item at each level. An importer/trader will be allowed to store 5,000 tonnes imported paddy and rice up to one month, wholesalers a few weeks took 100 percent cash margin in advance.

Deputy Director of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Sharmin Ferdousi filed the case against them with Gulshan Police Station on March 6 and Helal and his father were shown arrested in the case following a petition submitted by the IO.

Sudan orchestrated Darfur crimes Says UN mission

REUTERS, Geneva

A UN human rights mission yesterday accused Sudan's government of orchestrating and taking part in war crimes in Darfur and called for urgent international action to protect civilians.

The United Nations mission, led by Nobel peace prize laureate Jody Williams, was dispatched by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate charges of widespread abuse in Sudan's vast western region, where observers say some 200,000 people have been killed since revolt broke out in 2003.

"The situation is characterized by gross and systematic violations of human rights and grave breaches of international humanitarian law," the mission said in a report to the Council.

"The mission further concludes that the government of Sudan has manifestly failed to protect the population of Darfur from large-scale international crimes and has itself orchestrated and participated in these crimes," the 35-page report said.

It urged the UN Security Council to take "urgent further action" to protect the civilian population in Darfur, including through the deployment of peacekeepers.

The Sudanese government denies responsibility for abuses and blames them on rebel groups which refused a 2006 peace deal.

The Darfur violence, described as genocide by Washington, has killed tens of thousands of people and driven 2.5 million from their homes as rebels, charging the government in Khartoum with neglect, battle pro-government Arab militias.

Humanitarian agencies say they face mounting difficulties in getting help to the desperately needy, and increasingly aid workers themselves are targets of the violence.

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But one team member, Indonesia's ambassador Makarim Wibisono, withdrew when it failed to get access to Darfur. His country, a leading member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), has dissociated itself from its findings.

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Price hike

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noted that the government has little to do to control the market in a free-market economy.

Mirza Aziz said that high inflation impedes both poverty reduction and economic growth.

"Poor and fixed-income group of the population are largely affected due to price spiral of essentials," he told

He also cited other factors contributing to the price hike, giving the example of an institution, with an oblique reference to Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha), which he said was trying to bring drastic changes to its operations after a ten-year slumber.

Cases of sending false letters in the name of several institutions have also been reported recently, Aziz said. A letter was sent to several shops at the Bangabandhu National Stadium in the name of NBR (National Board of Revenue), asking the shop-owners to send a record of their sales in the last 10 years, but the NBR did not send any such letter, he added.

NBR Chairman Badiur Rahman, ERF President Zakaria Kazal and Secretary Nazmul Ahsan were present in the meeting, among other members of the executive committee.

It traveled instead to Chad's border with Sudan, where the conflict in Darfur has spilled over, and to Addis Ababa, headquarters of the African Union, which has been trying to contain the violence in Darfur with some 7,000 peacekeepers.

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