

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

FROM PAGE 1
Singapore, Thailand, South Africa and Switzerland.

Tarique also told the investigators that his uncle Maj (ret'd) Sayeed Iskendar, younger brother Arafat Rahman, and his business partner Giasuddin Al 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

FROM PAGE 16
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

FROM PAGE 1
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).

Judicial Council, Pakistan's top judicial accountability body. It will take up the case on Tuesday.

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 overturned 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.

N Korea nuke disarmament complex: IAEA

REUTERS, Beijing

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog said yesterday that moving to inspect and close facilities behind North Korea's nuclear weapons program would be complex as the two sides seek to rebuild severed ties.

International Atomic Energy Agency director Mohamed ElBaradei was in Beijing en route to North Korea, where he is to negotiate the return of agency inspectors as part of a February 13 accord.

That pact aims to wind down North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions in exchange for aid and security assurances.

"It's going to be a very incremental process," he told reporters on arrival in Beijing. "There's a lot of confidence that needs to be built."

IAEA inspectors have not visited the isolated North since 2002, when Pyongyang expelled them as a previous disarmament deal ruptured. Days later, North Korea announced its "automatic and immediate" withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"We need a lot of bridges to build, confidence to re-establish," ElBaradei said.

A shutdown of North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear plant by mid-April is the centerpiece of last month's accord reached in six-party talks grouping the two Koreas, Japan, Russia, the United States and host China.

"I hope we can agree with the DPRK (North Korea) to get our inspectors back in time to implement the agreement of the six-party talks," he said.

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 to 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

FROM PAGE 1
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 500 tonnes and retailers 10 tonnes up to one month.

WC gets rolling

FROM PAGE 1
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".

Brian Lara's West Indians had been showing signs of improvement in recent months but Friday's nine-wicket warm-up defeat to India was a reminder that they are a team that can easily press the self-destruct button.

Lara was one of only three batsmen to make double figures as his team were skittled out for just 85 and the skipper conceded his team had a "chronic" tendency towards batting collapses.

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 Shoab Akhtar and Mohammad Asif through injury, but replacements Mohammad Sami and Yasir Arafat have slotted in well.

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

Sonadia

FROM PAGE 1
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.

Baira gave replies on October 29 and again on December 6 but those were considered as 'not satisfactory'.

The commerce ministry's show-cause notice followed the Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Ministry's allegations referring to the reports of intelligence agencies and the media that Baira had been overcharging the workers who applied for migration to Malaysia.

Baira President MAH Salim, who is now under arrest by the joint forces, last year opened an office in Kuala Lumpur with 10 per cent share held by Baira and the rest by three Malaysians, which was without permission from the Bangladesh government.

Saarc Summit

FROM PAGE 1
forward in consolidating the bilateral relations.

In this context, the Indian envoy said Bangladesh and India have recently held a successful meeting on establishing railway link between the two countries.

He said the Saarc member states should expand contacts among themselves for strengthening their relations.

Ex-MP Lobi

FROM PAGE 1
submitted by the IO of the case.

MIR HELAL CASE
Barrister Mir Mohammad Helal Uddin's bail petition was rejected yesterday in the case filed against him and his father Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin for accumulating assets worth over Tk 24.39 crore through illegal means and abuse of power.

Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokon passed the order after Helal's lawyer submitted the bail petition.

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 there.

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.

Khartoum rejects the genocide term and says those numbers are exaggerated. It says Western media has blown the conflict out of proportion.

9 political bigwigs

FROM PAGE 16
made fixed deposits with various banks amounting to Tk 22 crore in seven months but he did not declare that in his wealth statement. He possesses gold ornaments worth Tk 1 crore. These were taken to a renowned jewellery for evaluation. Some of the ornaments are diamond studded," he pointed out.

"He lived a lavish life. A bathtub in one of his houses is shaped like a lotus. A drawing room at one house measured 2,500 square feet, which is as big as a posh apartment," he mentioned.

Lobi is among the 50 graft suspects on the first list published by the caretaker government on February 18. They were given a 72-hour deadline to submit wealth statements. So far, 35 have submitted wealth statements and among them, 33 are now in jail. And cases have been filed against three of them.

Moveable and immovable properties of the remaining 15, who did not submit wealth statements, are to be frozen by the government. The matter is now being processed by the home ministry, sources said.

"The process to freeze properties will be a legal measure. The government will have to take steps in this regard as per laws of the land," said ACC Commissioner Manzoor Mannan.

"Such large scale freezing of property has never taken place in the country before. So, we are viewing this as a critical legal issue," he noted.

One source pointed out, "The ACC does not have a list of moveable or immovable properties of these 15 persons because they did not submit any wealth statements. So, the ACC first needs to make its own list."

The ACC is also preparing to ask the 50 high profile graft suspects on a

LC margin low

FROM PAGE 16
banks to charge lesser margin against LCs by small importers. If necessary, they should take some risks."

The BB arranged the meeting to review the current import situation against the backdrop of spiralling prices of necessities.

Its officials placed a report on the recent trends in import of consumer products and fertiliser.

According to the report, LC opening for the consumer products including rice, lentil, wheat and edible oil has been increased by 21 per cent in the January-March period compared to the corresponding period last year. However, the rate of LC settlement of those items has come down by 21 per cent in the same period.

In case of fertiliser import, LC opening rate has risen by 4 per cent while the rate of LC settlement has shot up by 56 per cent.

The BB report also outlined 24 commercial banks' trends in setting LC margins against imported products in January-February. Keeping up to 50 per cent LC margin is a normal practice, but in some cases a few banks took 100 per cent cash margin in advance.

It, however, said the banks set

Price hike

FROM PAGE 1
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 the meeting.

He also cited other factors contributing to the price hike, giving the example of an institution, with an oblique reference to Rajuk (Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha), 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, Azizul 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 Hsane were present in the meeting, among other members of the executive committee.

Mahmudur

FROM PAGE 16
Five other journalists against whom the case was filed are two news editors Inam Ahmed and Syed Ashfaqul Haque, two chief reporters Zayadul Hsane and Rezaul Karim, and City Editor Sharier Khan.

Earlier on February 6, Mahmudur Rahman filed a defamation case against the same persons for the same charges.

In his plaint, Mahmudur, also former executive chairman of the Board of Investment (BoI), mentioned that the leading English daily ran a news item on February 5 headlined "Forces search for 41 political bigwigs, will disclose their names, ask them to surrender".

The report said the law enforcers would disclose the list of the 41 "big fish", who have been hiding since the crackdown began, and ask them to surrender if they were not captured in a couple of days.

Inclusion of his name in the list of 41 "big fish" vilified his name, fame and reputation in society, Mahmudur said. Moreover, the news item was false, fabricated and concocted, he added.

Kamal Majumder

FROM PAGE 16
Majumder and the three others.

The army-led joint forces arrested them on January 11. Later, they were sent to jail on 30-day detention.

Meanwhile, The High Court yesterday turned down the plea for ad-interim anticipatory bail for Sabera Aman, wife of detained former-state minister Amanullah Aman, but restrained the law enforcers from arresting her "without due process of law".

On March 6, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against former state minister for labour and employment Amanullah Aman and his wife with Kafrul Police Station accusing them of suppressing facts in their wealth statement submitted earlier.

Sabera, apprehending arrest by the army-led joint forces, surrendered yesterday before a division bench comprising Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury and sought anticipatory bail.

Khondker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, assisted by Ruhul Qudus Kajol, appeared for Sabera.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 16
permission from the home ministry for travelling abroad, AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah told the news agency that they don't know about such requirement.

"We didn't take any permission from the home ministry. She did never take such permission earlier," he said.

However, under the state of emergency former ministers and MPs require clearance from the home ministry to leave the country.

The AL chief is expected to return home after a month.

AL presidium member Zillur Rahman will work as the acting president of the party during Hasina's absence.

Qaiyum, wife

FROM PAGE 16
information about foreign accounts if any, details of transactions of their accounts or joint accounts with others, and even details of accounts that may have been closed.

Qaiyum, included in the list of corruption suspects released by the government, has already been arrested as part of the government's 'war against corruption'.

IS code

FROM PAGE 16
system may result in off-loading of the passenger from the aircraft.

The official said although the IS code system was introduced yesterday it may take a couple of days to make it effective.

Security, trade top Bush agenda in Guatemala

REUTERS, Guatemala City

President Bush yesterday will promote free trade in Central America and the need for greater security against an upsurge in political and drug violence in a visit to Guatemala.

Taking a break from official meetings, Bush will visit a rural farm cooperative and take an archeological tour of ancient Mayan ruins, to the chagrin of Mayan leaders who promised to spiritually "cleanse" the site afterward because they consider Bush an aggressor.

Guatemala is the second-to-last stop on Bush's five-nation, week-long Latin American tour, a trip in which he was dogged along the way by thunderous denunciations from his leftist nemesis, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

"The battle between the US empire and the great Latin American people is taking place again," Chavez said on Sunday in a speech in the colonial city of Leon, Nicaragua, a leftist stronghold during the Sandinista revolution of the 1970s.

On Sunday, about 50 Maya Indians from the highlands, accompanied by a leftist party, protested in Guatemala City. They sang revolutionary songs, some wearing traditional Mayan-style red devil masks, spray painting anti-Bush slogans on walls. They marched past the US embassy.

Worried about Chavez's growing anti-US influence, Bush has used the tour to try to improve ties with leaders of the right and moderate left in Latin America, where the Iraq war and US trade and immigration policy have made him deeply unpopular.

BUSH VS. CHAVEZ
White House officials accused reporters of turning Bush's tour into a Bush vs. Chavez trip instead of concentrating solely on Bush's agenda.

"We didn't pack anybody else in our luggage," said White House spokesman Tony Snow.

Bush, on the first visit by a US president to Guatemala since Bill Clinton came in 1999, will offer support for Guatemalan President Oscar Berger, considered a key US ally in the war on drugs.

Guatemala will ask Bush for support to fight drug traffickers who have infiltrated the country's police forces and may be involved in eight murders of politicians and policemen here last month.

"Guatemala is in urgent need of helicopters and modern ship navigation systems to track down groups that have more advanced technology," Berger's advisor Richard Aitkenhead told Reuters. The annual State Department

Seized wildlife

FROM PAGE 16
department, joint forces and the park authorities from the retreats, farmhouses or residences of former ministers, lawmakers and party leaders of the immediate-past BNP-led alliance government.

These include -- 70 spotted deer, 18 barking deer, one sambar deer, one freshwater crocodile, one black bear, one 'Cheetah' cat, nine peacocks, one Mathura (Kalij pheasant), two mynahs, two doves, three golden pheasants, one silver pheasant, 17 Turkish pheasants and two emus.

"This is the largest recovery of wildlife in Bangladesh since its independence," Dr Tapan, also the project director of the safari park, said.

Of them, 17 spotted deer belongs to former lawmaker Mosaddak Ali Falu, two peacocks to former political secretary of the former prime minister Harris Chowdhury, rescued from his Gulshan house on March 4, five spotted deer, seven peacocks, 11 Turkish pheasants, two mynahs, two emus, three golden pheasants, one dove and 19 eggs of peacocks seized from Sirajganj town house of former state minister for power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku on March 6, 38 spotted deer seized from the farm houses of former lawmaker Rahimuddin Bharsa in Rangpur and three spotted deer from the house of Nasiruddin at Hasnabad of Keraniganj in Dhaka on March 9.

Besides, nine barking deer were found on February 28 from a remote place near Sonargaon Hatchery in Cox's Bazar, another six spotted deer being kept in cages were rescued from two residences in Faridpur town on March 6, two barking deer from Eidgaon in Cox's Bazar on March 7, three barking deer from Chokoria Pourasava area on March 8, three spotted deer from Savar on March 5 and three barking deer from Habiganj town on March 6.

Separate cases were filed in these connections with the Ashulia, Gulshan, Sirajganj Sadar, Faridpur Sadar, Rangpur Sadar, Keraniganj, Chakaria and Habiganj Sadar Police Stations, sources in the forest department said.

All these wildlife, except the deer rescued from Falu's retreat, have

human rights report released last week highlighted corruption and impunity in Guatemala's security forces, citing complaints of kidnappings, rapes and murders carried out by police in 2006.

"Security is the number one issue of interest to the average Guatemalan, so we expect to cover that," said Dan Fisk, South American expert for the National Security Council.

Fisk said another key item for discussion is immigration. Thousands of Guatemalans have immigrated illegally to the United States and Bush is seeking to gain passage in the U.S. Congress of a new immigration law creating a guest-worker program for illegal immigrants.

Bush starts his day in the town of Santa Cruz Balanya, to see a US military exercise that brings together US military doctors with their Guatemalan counterparts to provide medical and dental care to people in poor rural areas.

He will push the benefits of free trade at the Labradore Mayas Packing Station in the village of Chiriqui. The cooperative, started from scratch by a farmer named Mariano Canu, now ships vegetables to companies like Wal-Mart Central America.

Bush also will see native dances performed at the Iximche ruins, the capital of the Kaqchikel Mayan people before the 1524 Spanish conquest.

Bombs, arms seized from AL man's house

UNB, Faridpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized bombs and firearms from the house of an Awami League activist at Shibrampur on the outskirts of the town yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab men searched the house of Bipul Ghosh in the morning and seized 10 bombs, one LG, one pipe gun, and a cartridge.

Bipul had gone into hiding.

In another drive, members of the elite force arrested outlawed party leader Aslam Chowdhury at Mohendapur village in Pangsha upazila yesterday.

They also seized firearms during the drive. Rab sources said Aslam was wanted in five murder cases