



Pakistani shopkeepers try to extinguish flames after businesses were set alight by protesters in Karachi yesterday. Pakistan ordered extra troops into Karachi as deadly violence over the suspension of the country's chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry spilled into a second day, raising the death toll to 37.

Pak crisis may block Musharraf's bid for another term

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Islamabad

The worsening crisis in Pakistan over the suspension of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry could block President Pervez Musharraf's bid to seek a second term, a study by a Washington-based think tank has said.

More so, since Musharraf wants to retain his military uniform and seek re-election by the same electoral college, comprising members of the National Assembly and provincial legislatures, says Strategic Foresight (Stratfor).

The think tank, which had earlier said Musharraf could be cutting a deal with exiled former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, now says that this could only delay

his departure from power.

It says that strong-arm tactics are not an option in resolving the current crisis in Pakistan, The Daily Times reported Sunday.

Whichever way the crisis over the March 9 suspension of Chaudhry on charges of misuse of office to promote his son goes, Musharraf's losing power is inevitable, it says.

The news intelligence service points out that while Musharraf and his allies are maintaining that they will abide by whatever decision the judiciary makes, even if it amounts to Chaudhry's reinstatement, undoing the decision to sack him will not end the crisis.

It will only exacerbate it because an emboldened civil society and judiciary will not allow Musharraf to seek a controversial second term

Lanka faces aid cut over HR abuse

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's failure to share power with minority Tamils and put an end to extra-judicial killings have raised prospects of more aid cuts to the embattled island, officials and diplomats say.

A top US envoy left Colombo on Thursday after castigating the government of President Mahinda Rajapakse for not delivering on promises to reduce violence while Britain also froze debt relief to its former colony.

Japan, Sri Lanka's largest single

aid donor, was also planning to meet with international activists who are demanding the linking of aid to the island's human rights record, a diplomat, who declined to be named, said.

Human Rights Watch said it was encouraging Japan to be more proactive in Sri Lanka.

"We expect them to take a leadership role in pushing Sri Lanka's government to end human rights violations," a spokeswoman for the New York-based rights group said.

The visiting US official, Richard

Boucher, echoed the concerns of Sri Lanka's key aid donors last week.

"People are more fearful and face more difficulties," said Boucher, the US assistant secretary of state for Central and South Asian affairs.

"Overall there has been a deterioration in Sri Lanka's human rights record."

During his three-day visit, Boucher visited the besieged Jaffna peninsula where extra-judicial killings are rampant and heard the complaints of minority Tamils.

Mayawati takes oath as UP CM

AFP, Lucknow

A low-caste woman who took office as leader of India's most populous state yesterday after a stunning victory promised to rid the lawless province of crime and corruption.

Former school teacher Mayawati Kumari and 49 ministers took the oath of office in Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh state, after her party stunned rivals and defied exit polls in a win hailed as a political milestone.

Mayawati's win has been attributed to her plea to voters to set aside intense battles of religion and caste in the impoverished state.

"My government will provide a rule free of injustice, crime, fear and corruption and which is oriented towards development," the 51-year-old leader told reporters at her first news conference after taking office.

"There will be development for all, but priority will be given to lower castes and those left behind," the chief minister said in reiteration of her winsome election campaign through which she stitched a "rainbow" alliance.

Top Taliban commander Dadullah killed

55 other militants die in raids

AP, APP, Kandahar/Khost

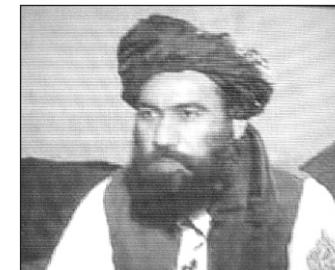
Mullah Dadullah, the Taliban's most prominent military commander, was killed in fighting in southern Afghanistan with Afghan and Nato troops, officials said yesterday.

Dadullah, a top lieutenant of Taliban leader Mullah Omar, was killed Saturday in the southern province of Helmand, said Said Ansari, the spokesman for Afghanistan's intelligence service.

Nato's International Security Assistance Force did not confirm the death.

"It certainly is an issue that we're tracking," said spokesman Maj. John Thomas. "But it's not our issue, it's an Afghan issue."

Dadullah would be one of the highest-ranking Taliban leaders to



be killed since the fall of the hard-line regime following the US-led invasion in 2001, and his death would represent a major victory for the Afghan government and US and Nato troops.

Kandahar Gov. Asadullah Khalid said Dadullah, who had only one leg, died during an operation by US-led coalition, Nato and Afghan troops.

"Mullah Dadullah was the

backbone of the Taliban," Khalid said. "He was a brutal and cruel commander who killed and beheaded Afghan civilians."

Khalid

showed

Dadullah's

body

to

reporters

at

a

news

conference

in

the

governor's

compound.

An

Associated

Press

reporter

said

the

body

which

was

lying

on

a

bed

and

dressed

in

a

traditional

Afghan

robe

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leg

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three

bullet

wounds

one

to

the

back

of

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head

and

two

to

the

stomach.

The AP reporter said the body appeared to be Dadullah's based on his appearance in TV interviews and Taliban propaganda videos.

But Qari Yousef Ahmad, a purported Taliban spokesman, denied that the Taliban commander had been killed.

"Mullah Dadullah is alive," Ahmad told AP by satellite phone.

He did not give further details.

In Khost around 55 Taliban militants were killed in two separate battles with Afghan and international forces in eastern Afghanistan, a governor told AFP yesterday.

Up to 40 were killed in a battle

on Saturday in Paktika province's Gayan district, close to the border with Pakistan, provincial governor Mohammad Akram Ikhpalwak said.

Fifteen others were killed in

similar fight on Saturday in adjoining Barmal district, also on the border, he said.

The toll was the highest in the

region since Nato-led and Afghan

forces in January bombed groups

of militants spotted crossing from

Pakistan, killing 150 of them.

Thousands of Maoists surround Nepal parliament

APP, Kathmandu

Thousands of Maoist supporters surrounded Nepal's parliament building yesterday to demand the government abolish the monarchy and declare a republic, threatening more such protests this month.

Traffic came to a standstill in the capital as the former rebels encircled Singha Durbar, which houses the prime minister's office, parliament and key ministries, for an hour, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

"We have organized this programme to pressure the government, parliament and party leaders to oust the king and go for a republic immediately and declare a date for the constituent assembly polls," a Maoist commander Barsha Man Pun said as he handed a petition to Speaker Subash Nemwang.

The Maoists launched a campaign last week calling for an end to

the monarchy and said they had collected 1.5 million signatures in support.

The embattled monarchy's future is supposed to be decided in constituent assembly elections scheduled for June, but Nepal's top election official has said more time was needed to prepare for the poll.

Leaders of political parties and Maoists have, however, failed to come up with a new date for polls, dealing a setback to efforts to move forward the country's political process.

The delay has seen the former rebels step up demands for a republic even though the king has already been stripped of most of his powers, including his title as head of state.

Earlier this month Maoist leader Prachanda threatened to push the nation back into turmoil by launching huge nationwide protests from late May if their demands for a republic were not met.



Turkish protesters hold up their national flags during a massive secular rally in the western Turkish city of Izmir the previous day on the eve of the rally, killing one person and leaving 14 others injured.

Pak, Afghan forces trade fire: 8 killed

APP, AP, Khost

The clash was the second in less than a month. On April 19 security forces from both sides fought for several hours after Afghans tore down part of a fence being erected by Pakistan. No one was hurt.

Pakistan says it is putting up the fence to stop the cross-border movement of militants involved in the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan.

An official said last week that it had completed 20 kilometres of the fence. Another 15-kilometre stretch of the border would soon be fenced, Pakistan military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad told AFP.

The Afghan troops returned fire, the governor said.

The fighting continued into the afternoon and the Pakistani troops were using heavy weapons including rockets, he said.

"Two school children were killed when a Pakistani rocket landed in their school, and a police officer and another civilian were also killed by Pakistani rockets," Rahmat said.

Afghanistan also does not accept the border, which it calls the Durand Line. The frontier was drawn up by colonial Britain in 1893.

The Dalai Lama will keep his spiritual role but wants to lessen his political burden as he moves into "retirement," an official in the Tibetan spiritual leader's office said.

The remarks by the official came after the 71-year-old exiled spiritual head told students in the United States that he would "retire completely" within a few years and was already "semi-retired."

"The political leadership will be transferred over a period of time but he will continue to be the spiritual leader because as the Dalai Lama, the issue of relinquishing the post does not arise," Chhime Rigzing, a senior spokesman for the Tibetan leader, said on Saturday.

"He wants to transfer," said Rigzing by telephone from the northern Indian town of Dharamsala, in the foothills of the Himalayas, that serves as the seat of the Tibetan government-in-exile.

But "you can't transfer spiritual leadership in Buddhism, you can't change that," Rigzing told AFP.

EU proposes monitoring radical mosques

AP, Venice

Security officials from Europe's largest countries backed a plan Saturday to profile mosques on the continent and identify radical Islamic clerics who raise the threat of homegrown terrorism.

The project, to be finished by the fall, will focus on the roles of imams, their training, their ability to speak in the local language and their sources of funding. EU Justice and Home Affairs Commissioner Franco Frattini told a news conference after a meeting on terrorism.

Italian Interior Minister Giuliano Amato said Europe had extensive experience with the "misuse of mosques, which instead of being places of worship are used for other ends."

"This is bringing about a situation that involves all of our countries and involves the possibility of attacks and developing of networks that use one country to prepare an attack in another," Amato said.

The transit attacks in Madrid and London, along with several thwarted terror plots, have raised concerns across Europe about the susceptibility of disaffected young Muslims to the messages of extremist clerics.



Residents walk on the Manila street filled with candidates' campaign posters yesterday as Filipinos prepare to vote today in the mid-term elections. Filipinos are to vote for House of Representatives as well as most of the 12 seats being contested in the 24-member Senate, and some 17,000 local posts up for grabs.