



PHOTO: AFP  
Pakistani lawyers shout anti-Musharraf slogans as they march with a car carrying suspended Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry in Islamabad yesterday. Chaudhry, the ousted head of the Supreme Court, led a procession as he left Islamabad for the northwestern city of Abbotabad, some 100km north of here to address the lawyers of Abbotabad Bar Association.

# Thousands join protests against Musharraf defying demo ban

AP, Islamabad

The government banned demonstrations in Pakistan's capital Friday, the latest effort to quell mounting political turmoil over President Gen Pervez Musharraf's decision to suspend the chief justice.

But a procession and rally in support of the chief justice got under way yesterday and police didn't intervene.

Thousands of Pakistanis have joined a series of protests since the March 9 ouster of Chief Justice Iftikhar Mohammed Chaudhry, accusing Musharraf of trying to sideline the independent-minded

judge before elections this year. Riots erupted last month when authorities stopped Chaudhry from leading a demonstration in the city of Karachi, leaving more than 40 people dead.

Musharraf, facing his deepest political crisis since taking power in a 1999 coup, emerged from a meeting with top military officers Friday with a strong reaffirmation of their support.

The military denounced a "malicious campaign" against the government "by vested interests and opportunists who were acting as obstructionist forces to serve their personal interests and agenda even at the cost of flouting the rule of law."

It said Musharraf assured the military that nobody would be able to destabilize Pakistan.

The two-month ban forces people to seek permission before organizing any political gathering of more than five people. The announcement came a day before Chaudhry planned to lead a procession from Islamabad to the city of Abbotabad.

"We have imposed a ban on rallies in Islamabad. A notification about it has been issued, and this step has been taken to ensure peace and avoid any inconvenience to the general public," said Mohammed Ali, Islamabad's deputy chief of administration.

# Lanka launches air raids against rebels

Trucks travelling from rebel territory to capital banned

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's air force yesterday bombed suspected rebel Tamil Tiger targets located in a jungle in the island's east, the defence ministry said.

Fighter jets bombed the jungles of Thoppigala in the eastern district of Batticaloa on Saturday morning, the ministry said. It gave no further details.

Government troops and Tamil rebels have been locked in combat following the breakdown of a 2002 Norwegian-arranged truce.

The conflict has killed more than 5,000 people in the past 18 months.

There was no immediate comment from the rebels about the

latest military claims.

Earlier Sri Lanka said it would not allow trucks coming from rebel-held areas in the northeast into Colombo after police claimed to have discovered explosives destined for the city in a goods carrier.

Residents in areas bordering rebel-held Wanni in the northeast were told not to send trucks south after police on Friday said they had seized 1,052 kilos (2,314 pounds) of C-4 type explosives from a truck.

Official sources in Vavuniya, 256km north of here, said they would not allow trucks or vans to go southward to the capital until further notice.

# Taliban to liberate Afghanistan from 'American slavery'

Attack on Afghan cop's home kills 15

AP, Quetta/ Kabul

A man described as the Taliban's new top field commander has vowed to liberate Afghanistan from "American slavery," a pro-Taliban cleric said yesterday.

Dadullah Mansoor made the remarks in an audiotape played Friday at a rally at Killi Nalai, a village about 45 miles west of Quetta near the Afghan border, said Abdul Sattar Chishti, the cleric who organised the event.

He said more than 12,000 people listened to the speech by the brother of Mullah Dadullah, the top Taliban commander who was killed in a US operation last month in southern Afghanistan. It was not immediately possible to verify Chishti's claims.

He said Mansoor vowed to avenge his brother's death and those of others killed while fighting US, Nato and Afghan forces.

"The blood of my brother will never go waste. We will never forget his sacrifices, and the role of other martyrs. We will complete

Dadullah's mission by expelling Americans and liberating Afghanistan," Chishti quoted Mansoor as saying.

He said Mansoor also asked youths to participate in holy war against infidels as emotional participants chanted slogans in favour of Taliban chief Mullah Omar and al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Suspected Taliban militants attacked a local police commander's home early Saturday, killing five of his family members and sparking a gunbattle with police that left 10 insurgents dead, an official said.

The attack in the southeastern province of Ghazni killed the commander's wife, two sons and two nephews, said Interior Ministry spokesman Zemer Bashary. The commander worked for Afghanistan's auxiliary police, a system of backup officers who supplement the country's regular police force.

Other auxiliary police called to the scene battled the insurgents,

killing 10 of them, Bashary said.

The attack came one day after Taliban fighters targeted the home of a police official in the eastern province of Paktia. That assault led to a gunfight that left six insurgents dead.

Taliban militants often target police and government officials. More than 1,900 people have been killed in insurgency-related violence in Afghanistan this year, according to an Associated Press count based on US, Nato and Afghan officials.

Pakistan is a key ally of the United States in its war on terror. It has deployed about 90,000 troops in its northwestern tribal areas to flush out remnants of the Taliban, al-Qaeda and their local supporters.

Although pro-Taliban elders have held similar rallies in northwestern tribal regions, protests the size of the one organised in Killi Nalai are rare.

# 3 more GLs killed in Iraq Mortar attacks kill 11 civilians

AFP, AP, Baghdad

Three more American soldiers have been killed in action in Iraq while 11 more civilians died in mortar barrage in Sunni neighbourhood, the military said yesterday.

Two of the soldiers died on May 30, statements said, bringing that month's death toll to 121, the worst since US marines famously stormed the insurgent city of Fallujah in November 2004.

A third soldier was shot dead in Baghdad on Friday, becoming June's first casualty, according to US command.

These latest fatalities bring the number of US soldiers who have died in combat and from other causes in Iraq since the March 2003 invasion to 3,474, according to an AFP count based on Pentagon figures.

A series of mortar barrages killed eight civilians and wounded 25 others early Saturday in a Sunni neighbourhood in central Baghdad, police said, while a strategic bridge was damaged by a bomb in northern Iraq.

The mortars began slamming into the Fadhil area in Baghdad at 1:30 am, and continued sporadically until 7 am, damaging five houses, a policeman said.

Three Iraqi children died when a US tank opened fire on suspected insurgent bombers in the western city of Fallujah, the US military reported Saturday.

A tank crew observed Friday three men that appeared to be installing a roadside bomb on the side of a highway southeast of the restive city and opened fire with its main gun. The men escaped and three children were found dead.

# War in Iraq cannot be won Says ex-British army chief

AFP, London

There is "no way" the war in Iraq can be won by the United States and its allies, a former British Army commander said Friday as he called for the troops to be withdrawn.

General Sir Michael Rose, who commanded the United Nations Protection Force in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1994 to 1995, said coalition forces in Iraq were facing an impossible situation.

"There is no way we are going to win the war and (we should) with-

draw and accept defeat because we are going to lose on a more important level if we don't," he said.

Though the coalition could not simply "cut and run," Rose said announcing a withdrawal date would help to dampen down the violence between Sunni, Shia and Kurdish factions.

"Give them a date and it is amazing how people and political parties will stop fighting each other and start working towards a peaceful transfer of power," he said.



PHOTO: AFP  
A Sri Lankan Tamil woman pleads with President Mahinda Rajapakse to find her loved one yesterday in Colombo when Rajapakse met with over 100 relatives of people who had gone missing in recent months.

# India's PM urges calm after Rajasthan riots

AFP, New Delhi

India's prime minister appealed yesterday for peace in the desert state of Rajasthan, where 28 people have died in ethnic violence in the past week.

Manmohan Singh also expressed grief over the loss of life, his office said in a statement, amid continuing tensions in the western tourist state.

His comments came after a protest campaign by the ethnic Gujar community to demand more government benefits degenerated into bloodshed and lawlessness.

On Friday, eight people were killed and up to 20 injured in clashes between the Gujjars and rival Meena community.

Earlier in the week, 20 people died in clashes between the Gujjars and the police.

The Gujjars, nomadic shepherds who make up about five percent of the state population, want to be included in a list of "scheduled tribes" given special treatment in education and government jobs.