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Pakistan
suicide
bombing

AFP, Islamabad

At least five people were killed and five wounded when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside an army facility in northwest Pakistan yesterday, the military and police said.

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"Five people have lost their lives, three civilians and two army men," spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad said.

Police confirmed the death toll and said five people were wounded in the attack. "Some of the injured are in a critical condition," local police officer Abid Khan told AFP.

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Musharraf amends constitution

Pak judges take fresh oath after end of emergency

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf Friday amended the constitution to further legitimise his emergency rule, a day before lifting the state of emergency in the country, officials said.

Musharraf issued a constitutional amendment order late Friday which exempt him from getting parliamentary ratification for imposition of November 3 emergency rule, attorney general Malik Mohammad Qayyum told AFP.

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Judges who refused to take oath, Qayyum said, also referring to Musharraf's earlier decision to handpick judges.

"Whatever amendments are made in the constitution do not need ratification from the parliament," he said.

"The emergency will be lifted before 1.00pm on Saturday," Qayyum said.

This is the second time that Musharraf has amended the constitution since he imposed emergency rule on November 3.

"The new order reinforces the earlier one," Qayyum added.

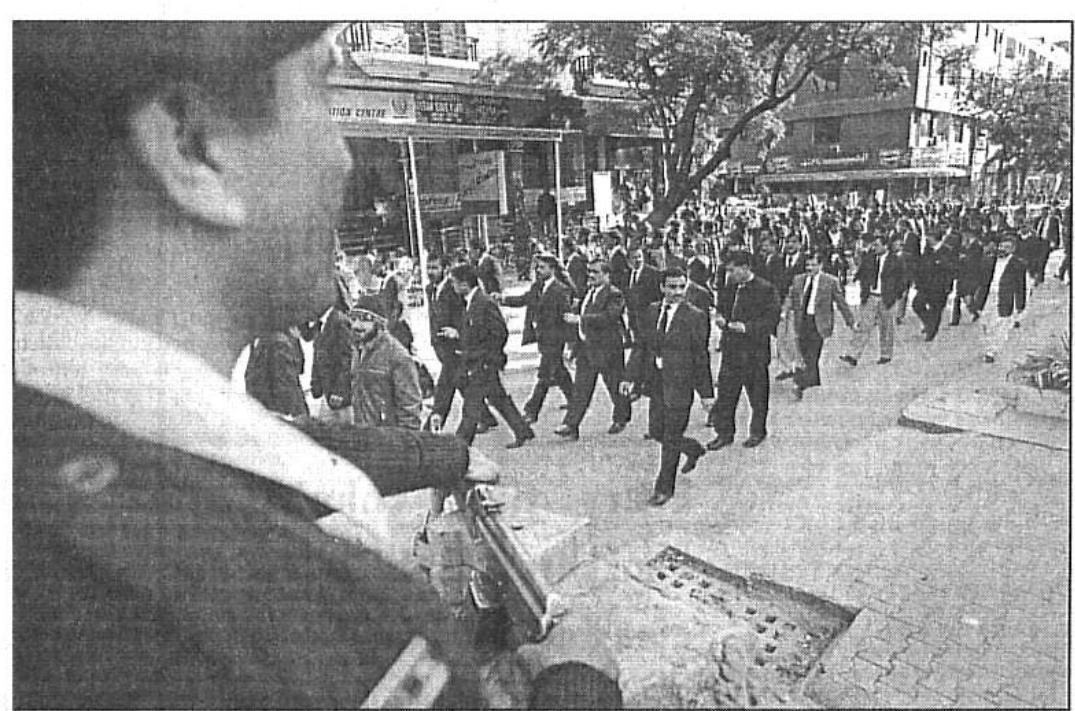
On November 21 Musharraf issued the first order to amend the constitution to stipulate that imposition of emergency

"is declared to have been validly made" and "shall not be called in question in any court or forum on any ground whatsoever."

Meanwhile Musharraf swore the Supreme Court into office under a new oath on Saturday after he lifted a controversial state of emergency and reinstated constitutional rule.

In a ceremony broadcast live on television, Musharraf installed the judges under the country's constitution, which was restored when he lifted the emergency.

The judges had previously taken an oath under the provisional constitutional order he imposed when he announced the state of emergency on November 3.



Pakistani lawyers march during an anti-Musharraf protest rally in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf lifted a national state of emergency after making last-minute changes to the constitution to strengthen his hand against the courts and parliament.

PHOTO: AFP

India to continue dealing with
Musharraf

AFP, New Delhi

India's top security official said New Delhi regards embattled Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf as an "elected president" and will continue doing business with him, according to a report yesterday.

Musharraf on Saturday lifted a nationwide state of emergency imposed last month after he was re-elected to the presidency in October.

"I think as of now he is an elected President," National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan told India's private CNN-IBN news network in an interview.

"... but the legitimacy of his presidency will have to be declared properly after the new parliament approves of it with a two-thirds majority," Narayanan said.

Pakistan goes to polls on January 8 to elect a new parliament.

Europe, greens put on brave face after Bali climate deal

AFP, Nusa Dua

European countries and green groups put on a brave face to mask their anger and disappointment Saturday after the US thwarted their main goals for tackling dangerous climate change.

The accord in Bali launched a two-year round of negotiations for the most ambitious treaty ever attempted for reining in greenhouse gases, the carbon pollution from fossil fuels damaging Earth's

climate system.

But under US pressure, the deal dodged the goal of halving these emissions by 2050 or of embracing a commitment by industrialised economies to slash their own emissions by 2020 to help set the horse-trading in motion.

Both had been set down by the European Union (EU), supported by developing countries, as a prerequisite for negotiations that would be bold and put the whip to rich countries histori-

cally to blame for global warming.

French Ecology Minister Jean-Louis Borloo said that the key decision was that negotiations were now set in motion, and there remained two years to haggle over pledges before the process winds up in Copenhagen in 2009.

The future "is Copenhagen, it's not Bali," he said.

His deputy minister, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, acknowledged that the framework for negotia-

tions "is quite weak but ... still moves forward."

She noted that the US, for the first time, had signed up to text on "the comparability of efforts" of industrialised countries, a sign of its intentions of being a full-fledged member of the international climate club.

Green groups, though, accused the United States of gutting an agreement that would have ensured the negotiations got off to a flying start.

The figure would still be subject

Student killed as police open fire in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

One person was killed when police fired on hundreds of students calling for a college to be set up in their town in revolt-hit Indian Kashmir, police said yesterday.

"Police had to use force, including firing, after students set fire to a vehicle and attacked policemen," a police officer said, asking not to be identified.

One person was injured in the clashes died after being taken to the main hospital in Srinagar, the summer capital.

Two policemen were among others hurt in baton charges and stone pelting.

The protest in Magam township, 30km west of Srinagar, came a day after the Kashmir government said it would set up 18 new colleges across the insurgency-racked state. Magam was not included.

Fears of unrest as Bolivia splits over reforms

AFP, Lima

There were fears Bolivia could tip into civil unrest Saturday, as its four wealthiest provinces move to declare autonomy amid warnings from President Evo Morales that the army could intervene.

Demonstrations were due to take place during the day in the eastern regions of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni and Pando in which the governors were to formally announce greater self-rule.

Chuquisaca, the region that is home to the constitutional capital Sucre, also said it was gathering signatures on a petition with a view to calling a referendum soon on autonomy. A sixth province, Cochabamba, was wavering.

Zawahiri calls ME peace meeting 'treachery'

AFP, Dubai

al-Qaeda number two Ayman Al-Zawahiri lashed out at last month's US-hosted Middle East peace conference, calling it a betrayal of the Palestinians, in an audiotape broadcast on an Islamist website on Friday.

The tape, whose authenticity could not be verified, was entitled "Annapolis, the treachery," in an allusion to the US city where the meeting was held.

"It is a new conspiracy against Palestine and the countries of Islam," said Zawahiri, the right arm of Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden.

The message condemned Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas for leading the Palestinian delegation to the conference, describing him as a "traitor" and "acolyte".

US to offer Palestinians half billion dollars

AFP, Washington

The United States will offer the moderate Palestinian leadership more than half a billion dollars in economic support for Palestinians in the 2007-2008 budget which began on October 1. That amount has not been approved.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas is seeking a total of 5.6 billion dollars between 2008 and 2010 to help tackle poverty, build a viable Palestinian state and give impetus to a new peace process with Israel.

The US will make a generous contribution," a government official said on condition of anonymity.

"The expectation would be 100 million dollars more than last year's context, in the vicinity of 500 million (dollars) plus."

The figure would still be subject

to approval by US Congress.

The administration of US President George W. Bush had asked Congress to approve 400 million in economic support for Palestinians in the 2007-2008 budget which began on October 1. That amount has not been approved.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will fly Sunday to the donors' conference aimed at supporting Palestinian reform of political, security and economic institutions that would underpin a future Palestinian state.

Ninety delegations are expected

at the one-day Conference of Donors for a Palestinian State, the biggest of its kind since 1996, which aims to shore up the peace process jumpstarted in the US city of Annapolis last month.

Bombings, unrest kill 14 in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Two bombs struck the Afghan capital yesterday, one of them killing five civilians, while nine people died in new attacks in a Taliban insurgency that is in its bloodiest year so far, officials said.

A car-bomb placed outside Kabul police headquarters tore through a busy area of the city, killing at least four civilian bystanders, officials and a witness said.

The second bomb was remote-controlled and detonated near the city's main jail, causing only minor damage to a military vehicle, the defence ministry said.

The extremist Taliban movement claimed responsibility for the car-bomb, saying it was aimed at

the city police who share a compound with the governor's office and courts.

"Five civilians have been killed and two police have been wounded. Some civilians have been wounded too," interior ministry spokesman Zemarai Bashary told AFP.

The government ambulance service said however one of two dead bodies it evacuated was that of a policeman. Seven wounded people were also evacuated, said the regional coordinator of the Kabul Ambulance Service, Badr-Raja Badar.

The interior ministry said the bombing was "unprecedented" and appeared to be a new "terrorist tactic."

India speeding up nuke missile production

AFP, New Delhi

Nuclear-armed India said on Friday it was ready to jump-start production of long-range nuclear missiles which can hit targets deep in China or Pakistan.

VK Saraswat, the chief of India's missile development project, said the assembly lines were in place to speed up the production of the precision rockets.

Military insiders told AFP the announcement was a response to reports of growing cross-border military intrusions into India by China, which has an unresolved border dispute with its smaller Asian neighbour.

31 rebels, 1 soldier killed in Lanka battle

AP, Colombo

Clashes between Sri Lankan soldiers and separatist Tamil Tiger rebels in the country's embattled north left 31 guerrillas and one soldier dead, the army said yesterday.

Soldiers and rebels exchanged artillery, mortar and small arms fire Friday in two villages in Mannar district, just south of the rebel-held north, said Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara. One soldier was wounded in the attack.

Rebel spokesman Rasiah Ilanthirayen could not be reached for comment, and it was not possible to independently verify the military's claims because access to the battle area is restricted.

The fighting left 17 rebels and one soldier dead and five other soldiers wounded, he said.

Battles in nearby Vavuniya district left 11 rebels dead, while another rebel was killed in the

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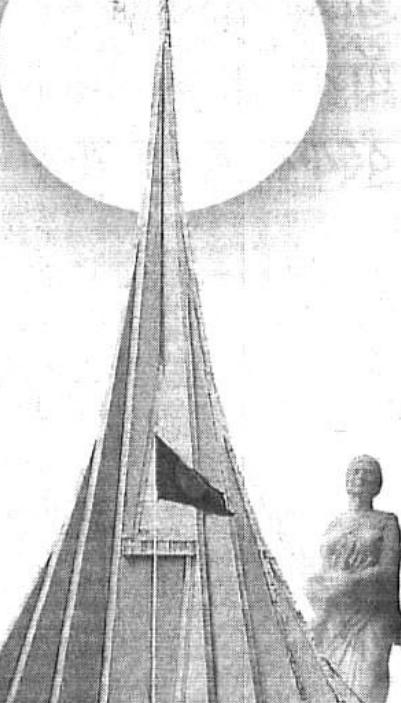
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