

# Sharif vows to support sacked judges

## Pak ruling coalition wins by-polls

AFP, PTI, Islamabad

Former Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif pledged yesterday after his party won the most seats in by-elections that he would keep pushing for the restoration of judges sacked by President Pervez Musharraf.

The polls on Thursday were for five parliamentary constituencies and 23 provincial assembly seats left empty following general elections in February in which a coalition including Sharif's party trounced Musharraf's allies.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won three of the seats in the national assembly while the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) of slain ex-premier Benazir Bhutto, the senior partner in the coalition, took the other two,

official results showed.

PML-N also won eight of the 23 provincial assembly seats that went to polls, while slain former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's PPP romped home in seven.

Another coalition partner, the ethnic Pashtun Awami National Party, got two seats and independents six.

The elections were mostly peaceful thanks to tight security at polling stations but several people were wounded in clashes in one constituency on Thursday.

The turnout was low and polling was marred by sporadic incidents of violence, especially in Punjab province.

More than 20 people were injured in clashes between rival groups of political workers, who fired in the air at several places.

Women were not allowed to vote in Mardan in the North West Frontier Province, while an assistant presiding officer was reportedly kidnapped by Pakistan People's Party activists.

According to unofficial results provided by the Election Commission, the PML-N won the three seats in the National Assembly or lower house of parliament from Punjab province, including two in the garrison city of Rawalpindi.

PML-N chief Sharif's son-in-law Capt (retired) Muhammad Safdar bagged a seat in Rawalpindi.

Polling was postponed for a sixth parliamentary seat in the eastern city of Lahore because of legal wrangling over whether Sharif was eligible to contest.

The PPP bagged two National

Assembly seats, one in Mardan and another at Okara in Punjab.

Of the 23 provincial assembly seats, the PML-N won eight, the PPP seven and the Awami National Party two while independent candidates bagged six seats.

The coalition has been threatened by a rift between the two parties over the failure to honour a vow to reinstate the chief justice and dozens of other judges fired by Musharraf under emergency rule last November.

"We are grateful to God and to the people who voted for our party members for our victory in the by-elections," Sharif told reporters while speaking after the funeral of a politician in northwest Pakistan.

"We will continue to struggle for the restoration of the judges," Sharif said.



Pakistani commuters ride past closed shops at a shuttered market during a strike in Lahore yesterday. The traders' community has announced three-day complete strike over a court's decision to disqualify the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif from contesting by-elections.

## Thai premier survives no-confidence vote

AP, Bangkok

Thailand's prime minister survived a no-confidence vote Friday, fending off accusations of incompetence, mismanagement and yielding national sovereignty.

But despite Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej's success in the parliamentary vote, weekslong street protests demanding the resignation of his government continued.

The opposition's motion against Samak was rejected Friday in the 470-member lower house of Parliament by a vote of 280-162, with the rest of the lawmakers abstaining or absent. The lawmakers also rejected no-confidence motions against seven other Cabinet members.

The voting results were largely expected because Samak's six-party coalition, led by his People's Power Party, controls two-thirds of the seats in the lower house.



In this image from television, North Korea's 60-foot-tall cooling tower at its main reactor complex is destroyed yesterday in Yongbyon, North Korea. North Korea destroyed the most visible symbol of its nuclear weapons programme Friday in a sign of its commitment to stop making plutonium for atomic bombs.

# Pakistan fails to pressure Taliban on Afghan border

## Says Gates

AFP, Washington

US Defence Secretary Robert Gates on Thursday said Pakistan's failure to put pressure on Taliban forces on the country's border with Afghanistan had fuelled a rise in violence, but said Islamabad appeared to recognise the problem.

A 40 percent spike in violence in east Afghanistan in the first five months of 2008 "is a matter of concern, of real concern, and I think that one of the reasons that we're seeing the increase... is more people coming across the border from the frontier area," Gates told a news conference.

He said "the ability of the Taliban and other insurgents to cross that border and not being under any pressure from the Pakistani side of the border is clearly a concern."

Gates said the issue "needs to be addressed with the Pakistani government" that came to power after February 18 elections won by parties opposed to US ally President

Pervez Musharraf.

He said cross-border infiltration and violence had increased in the past few months after peace deals were negotiated with Taliban elements and other militants.

"What has happened is that as various agreements have been negotiated or were in the process of negotiation with various groups by the Pakistani government, there was the opportunity - the pressure was taken off of these people and these groups."

"And they've therefore been more free to be able to cross the border and create problems for us."

But he said he was encouraged by the response from Islamabad to the problem, citing a statement by the prime minister that the government plans to "reassert its control and authority in the northwest frontier province."

"The fact that the Pakistani government itself has recognised that this is a problem and that these groups' activities are a problem for

the Pakistani government as well as for those of us in Afghanistan, I think is a heartening sign."

He added: "And my hope is that the prime minister's statement today indicates a willingness to reassert that pressure."

Gates spoke amid growing unease in Washington and Kabul over Pakistan's efforts to broker deals with Taliban militants, which President George W. Bush's administration fears could give the insurgents a chance to regroup.

Pakistan has denied charges from US and Afghan officials that it is turning a blind eye to Taliban and al-Qaeda forces based in restive tribal zones, saying it faces a porous border and that security forces have had bloody clashes with militants.

Relations between the United States and Islamabad have been strained since a US air raid in Pakistan on June 11. Washington said it was targeting militants but Pakistan said 11 of its soldiers were killed.

## New poll blow for British PM on first anniversary

AFP, London

Britain's governing Labour Party yesterday slumped to a humiliating fifth place in a worse-than-expected by-election result, in a new poll blow exactly a year after Gordon Brown took office.

Although Labour was never expected to win the seat of Henley, southern England, the scale of the loss was a surprise, with Labour losing its deposit as vote share fell more than 11.5 percent on the last general election in 2005.

The main opposition Conservative Party retained the safe seat vacated by Boris Johnson when he became London Mayor on May 1 by a comfortable 10,116 majority over the Liberal Democrats, slightly down on 2005.

The Green Party and the far-right British National Party were ahead of Labour, which with just over 1,066 votes was not enough to meet the five percent threshold to retain its deposit.



Pakistan Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi (R) shakes hands with Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee before a meeting in New Delhi yesterday. Pakistan's foreign minister arrived in India to boost a slow-moving peace process between the South Asian rivals, still at odds over the 60-year-old Kashmir dispute.

## Bill Gates exits Microsoft

AFP, San Francisco

Macintosh computer fanatics won't have Bill Gates to kick around anymore.

The Microsoft co-founder whose boyish face and nerdy manner epitomized the US software colossus spends his last day at the office on Friday.

Paul Allen, who teamed with Gates to start Microsoft in a garage in 1975, will be among those "roasting" his childhood friend at a gala dinner affair Friday night.

After decades devoted to Microsoft, Gates turns his attention full time to the philanthropic Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation he established with his wife.

Gates leaves Microsoft to wrestle with a fast-changing computer era and growing challenges from Internet juggernaut Google and longtime rival Apple, which makes Macintosh computers.

Three people will essentially fill the void Gates leaves behind at Microsoft.

Gates' job as chief software architect is being handled by Ray Ozzie.



This June 20 image released on Thursday by Nasa shows a microscopic view of fine-grained material at the tip of the Robotic Arm scoop as seen by the Robotic Arm Camera (RAC) aboard Nasa's Phoenix Mars Lander on the 26th Martian day, or sol, of the mission.

## Martian soil good enough for asparagus: Nasa

AFP, Washington

Martian dirt is apparently good enough for asparagus to grow in, Nasa scientists said Thursday, as they announced the results of a soil analysis collected by the US Phoenix Mars Lander.

"There is nothing about the soil that would preclude life. In fact it seems very friendly," said Samuel Kounaves, the project's lead chemist at the University of

Arizona in a telephone press conference.

"The soil you have there is the type of soil you have in your backyard," said Kounaves. "You may be able to grow asparagus very well."

The analysis is based on a cubic centimeter of soil scooped up by the lander's robotic arm and introduced into one of its eight ovens, where it was gradually heated up to 1,000 degrees Celsius.

## Voters led to polls in Zimbabwe election

### African FMs bicker over how to handle Mugabe

AP, AFP, Harare

Paramilitary police deployed in a park in Zimbabwe's capital and marshals led voters to polling stations yesterday for an internationally discredited presidential runoff held in an atmosphere of intimidation.

In contrast to the excitement and hope for change that marked the first round of elections in March, a defiant President Robert Mugabe is the only candidate in this round, and the election was expected only to deepen the nation's political crisis.

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who withdrew from the runoff after an intense campaign of state-sponsored violence, said the results of the election would "reflect only the fear of the people of Zimbabwe." Dozens of opposition supporters have been killed and thousands of people injured.

Tsvangirai's name remains on the ballot because electoral offi-

cials say his withdrawal Sunday came too late.

Mugabe, the country's ruler since independence in 1980, was expected to use violence and intimidation to get people to vote for him in the hope that a massive turnout could demonstrate he still has support and to make his inevitable victory appear credible.

About 20 paramilitary police in riot gear were stationed in a central Harare park.

In the capital's crowded Mbare suburb, lines built up at polling stations as voters arrived in groups, led by marshals who were carrying books filled with names. In one side street, names were being called and ticked off as a group of about 25 people gathered before heading to a tented polling station.

In Sharm el-Sheikh, African Union foreign ministers bickered behind closed doors on Friday over how to handle Zimbabwe as they prepared for a summit next week under the shadow of its political crisis.

## Your pathway to a top UK university

Ms S. Norman, International Marketing Manager, will be conducting interviews and offering on-the-spot admissions at the following times and venues:

Date: Sunday 29 June  
Time: 10am - 6pm  
Venue: 15 Barun Bhaban (3rd Floor) Gulshan Circle-2 Dhaka-1212

Date: Monday 30 June  
Time: 11am - 6pm  
Venue: 58 (3rd Floor), Road: 5 O.R. Nizam Road, Chittagong

For appointments, please contact Overseas Study Counseling Ltd. on:  
Dhaka Office: Tel: 9888735, 9896516, 8854002, Mobile: 01914 243055-66  
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