

NEWS DIGEST

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Military seizes power in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP) — Pakistani troops staged a coup against the democratically elected government Tuesday, seizing state-run media and confining the prime minister to his home in a lightning move that raised tensions in the world's newest nuclear region.

In a televised address, Army Chief Gen. Pervez Musharraf accused the democratically elected government of "systematically destroying" state institutions and driving the economy toward collapse.

"You are all well aware of the kind of turmoil and uncertainty that our country has gone through in recent times," Musharraf said. "Not only have all the institutions been played around with and systematically destroyed, the economy too is in a state of collapse."

Sharif was under apparent house arrest in Islamabad hours after he tried to fire Musharraf as army chief and replace him with his ally, Gen. Zia Uddin, former head of Pakistan's secret service.

Musharraf accused Sharif of imposing "self-serving policies ... that rocked the very foundation of the federation of Pakistan."

Musharraf's address to the nation was brief. He said the army takeover was a response to public demand.

"The armed forces have been facing incessant public clamor to remedy the fast declining situation from all sides of the political divide," he said.

As troops moved through the main cities, many Pakistanis danced in the streets and waved flags, celebrating the ouster of a prime minister

who has become increasingly unpopular.

Sharif has been accused of trying to consolidate his power by weakening institutions like the judiciary, provincial governments and the opposition, and of using heavy-handed tactics to quell opposition protests in recent weeks.

Word of the coup led the army of nuclear rival India to go on high alert along the border between the two countries, a senior officer in India's northern command in Kashmir said.

In New Delhi, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee held a crisis meeting with his top security and foreign policy advisers.

The reports from Pakistan "are causing grave concern," said Vajpayee's spokesman, Ashok Tandon.

Tuesday's developments followed reports in recent weeks of a yawning rift between the military and the civilian government in this impoverished and overwhelmingly Muslim country of 140 million people.

The army has ruled Pakistan for 25 of its 52-year history, and army takeovers have happened repeatedly.

But democratically elected governments have been in place since 1985.

Sharif fired Musharraf while the military leader was on a visit to Sri Lanka. Musharraf flew back to Pakistan and was met by a large contingent of soldiers at the airport in the southern city of Karachi.

The conflict between the two men developed this summer after the prime minister ordered militants to withdraw from Indian territory in the

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PERVIAZ MUSHARRAF
Army chief general

Kashmir region, ending two months of bitter fighting with India.

Musharraf reportedly orchestrated the incursion into Kashmir, and the withdrawal of the militants was considered humiliating to Pakistan's military.

President Clinton had negotiated the withdrawal with Sharif amid fears the border dispute would escalate into an all-out war between the world's two newest nuclear powers.

Pakistan carried out its first nuclear tests in May last year, and has insisted it will maintain a nuclear arsenal to defend itself against India, which also conducted its first nuclear tests last year.

Asked if the situation in Islamabad had raised concerns about control of nuclear weapons technologies in Pakistan, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said: "No concern like that has been raised to me."

Court turns down church-state issues

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court turned its back on three church-state disputes Tuesday, a triple dose of bad news for those who favor more government help for religious schools and enterprises.

Far from settling anything, the rejected appeals are likely to fan the national debate over tuition vouchers and other financial help. One immediate result: Maine can continue subsidizing children who attend some private schools while denying such vouchers for those who go to religious schools.

The justices also refused to let Pennsylvania exempt religious publications from sales taxes and rejected New York's effort to revive a public school district in a community of Hasidic Jews.

The court's actions set no legal precedent but drew immediate reaction from partisans.

"It certainly appears the justices are in no mood to use the current term to move the boundary markers on church-state separation," said the Rev. Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

Lynn said the court's denial of

review in the Maine case pleased him most.

The court's signals to date have been mixed. Just last week, the justices let Arizona give tax credits to people who donate money for scholarships at religious schools. The court previously had declined to strike down a voucher program that aids religious-school students in Milwaukee.

The justices have one church-state dispute on the 1999-2000 term's decision docket. They will decide, sometime by late June, whether computers and other instructional materials paid for with taxpayer money can be used by religious schools.

In the Maine case, the justices rejected without comment an appeal in which parents of religious-school students said the state violates their rights by refusing them the same financial help given to parents whose children attend private, nonreligious schools.

Many of Maine's public school districts in sparsely populated areas do not operate schools for all grades but instead pay tuition to send some children to nearby public or private schools of their choice.

Senate moves closer to decision on delay

Leaders are working toward a compromise on the test ban treaty vote.

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hopelessly outnumbered Senate supporters of a global ban on nuclear testing moved closer to a deal with Republican leaders Tuesday for a face-saving postponement of a planned vote.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., said details still need to be worked out and put off a decision until Wednesday.

Still, the two sides seemed closer than at any previous point during the contentious debate on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to agreeing to put off a vote.

The apparent breakthrough came as Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, D-S.D., announced he was ready to pledge — in writing and in statements on the Senate floor — not to press for a vote on the pact until after a new president and a new Congress take office in 2001.

Lott tentatively agreed to the arrangement, both Republican and Democratic participants in the talks

said. But conservatives who want to see the treaty killed — including Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and John Kyl, R-Ariz. — raised questions.

"They were not happy with the language," Lott told reporters Tuesday evening. "There are 100 senators. Daschle and I are only two."

Leaders said both sides would resume talks Wednesday about a possible way out. The Senate adjourned for the day without acting on the treaty after a second day of debate.

"We ... believe on seeking a delay. We believe many colleagues are of a like view, irrespective of how they would vote at this point," Sens. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, D-N.Y., and John Warner, R-Va., said in a joint letter to Lott.

The two senior senators — Moynihan a supporter of the pact, Warner an opponent — were leading an effort to build bipartisan support for a delay.

Republican leaders had wanted President Clinton to pledge not to try to bring up the treaty in the presidential election season. But Daschle's offer to do it in his place appeared to be winning favor.

Under the proposed compromise, Lott and Daschle would jointly make a motion for the Senate to return the treaty to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a motion requiring a simple 51-vote majority, said GOP and Democratic aides, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

Democrats had discussed offering a motion that would force the Senate out of its treaty-considering mode, effectively postponing the treaty indefinitely.

But at an afternoon party strategy session, Republicans agreed among themselves to oppose such a move as undermining the calendar-setting prerogatives of the majority, participants said.

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World and Nation

Datelines

■ Miami
O.J. Simpson calls 911, asks for assistance for drug user

MIAMI (AP) — O.J. Simpson called 911 Sunday night, saying he was trying to get help for a woman he said had been on a two-day cocaine binge with a former baseball player.

The 52-year-old Simpson placed the call from the townhouse of his 26-year-old girlfriend, Christie Prody, in southwest Miami-Dade County. A police report said Simpson told officers who showed up at the house that he was trying to get help for Prody.

A day later, the couple denied she was on the drug binge Simpson described to police. Simpson told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he was trying to get help for one of Prody's friends, whom he identified as "Pinky."

■ South Korea

Riot police break up dispute among monks; 10 injured

SEOUL (AP) — Monks brandished sticks and smashed collapsible metal chairs on the shaved heads of rival monks Tuesday in a leadership dispute within South Korea's largest Buddhist order. At least 10 monks and lay people were injured.

Hundreds of gray-robed monks from opposing factions of the Chogye order wielded metal pipes, discharged fire extinguishers and hurled stones and glass bottles. At least two monks bleeding in the face were dragged off by rival monks.

The 30-minute fight ended only after hundreds of riot police, armed with clubs and shields, forcibly separated the two groups. Hundreds of dismayed lay people looked on.

■ South Africa

Details of apartheid deaths may not be heard in court

PRETORIA (AP) — The man accused of running apartheid South Africa's chemical and biological weapons program won a legal victory Tuesday when a judge dismissed charges that involve more than 200 deaths abroad by poison.

The ruling in Pretoria High Court, if it is not overturned, means that some of the most chilling details of the apartheid state's alleged murder techniques will not be heard during the trial of Dr. Wouter Basson, dubbed Dr. Death by the local media.

Basson, 49, could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted on the 61 remaining charges, which range from drug dealing to murder.

■ Washington

Critics say Web system strips away measure of anonymity

WASHINGTON (AP) — A proposal to improve the way information flows across the Internet is drawing attention from privacy advocates, who worry its design could be used to trace a sender's identity.

Engineers creating a new Internet address system are proposing to include a unique serial number from each personal computer within every parcel of data. That could vastly simplify the sometimes befuddling job of setting up computers so they can talk to each other on a network.

But critics warn that, if adopted, the move could potentially strip away a measure of anonymity and security enjoyed by tens of millions of home computer users who dial into America Online Inc. and other Internet providers over traditional telephone lines.