

## Musharraf meets legal experts amid protests

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf is consulting constitutional experts ahead of the swearing in of Rana Bhagwandas as chief justice amid protests demanding the president's ouster.

Suspended chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry told a fellow judge that he planned to address bar meetings from next week and continue the fight against his removal, Friday's medial reports said.

He was quoted as saying that he felt 'under no pressure to resign'.

Bhagwandas, who has just returned from India, is to be sworn in Saturday at the Supreme Court's registry in Karachi by Justice Javed Iqbal, appointed to that post when Musharraf suspended Chaudhry March 9.

Media reports said Iqbal would fly to Karachi for the ceremony. Lawyers close to Chaudhry said the Islamabad court would not accept Bhagwandas as head of the Supreme Court.

The government, bracing itself for more protests over the issue, charged the opposition with stoking the fire.

They were trying to 'settle legal and constitutional issues on the streets and roads rather than in the courts', Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Muhammad Ali Durrani was quoted as saying Friday.

But lawyers, furious over the suspension of Chaudhry and having failed to restore his position, have now turned against Musharraf.

In Peshawar, the All Pakistan Lawyers' Convention has rejected the government's dialogue offer and demanded that Musharraf resign and be tried for high treason for subversion of the constitution.

Supreme Court Bar Association president Munir A. Malik presented the resolution that was unanimously passed by thousands of lawyers from across the country, gathered at a convention at the Peshawar High Court Thursday.

A worried Musharraf conferred with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, select cabinet members and 'certain constitutional experts' at an unscheduled meeting to gauge the intensity of protests by lawyers and political parties across the country, the Daily Times said Friday.

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