

Pakistan court annuls Musharaff's death sentence

● The prosecution now has the option to file a new case against Musharraf

Lahore | Pakistan

A Pakistan court yesterday annulled the death sentence handed to former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, ruling that the special court which had found him guilty of treason last year was unconstitutional, a government prosecutor told AFP.

The original ruling had marked the first time a former leader of the armed forces had faced such a sentence for treason in Pakistan, where the military



A High Court in Lahore ruled Pervez Musharraf's death sentence 'illegal'

maintains strong influence and senior officers are often considered immune from prosecution.

It caused a wave of controversy, with Musharraf -- exiled in

Dubai -- slamming it as a "vendetta" and the military expressing its disappointment.

A High Court in the eastern city of Lahore ruled it "illegal"

on Monday.

"The filing of the complaint, the constitution of the court, the selection of the prosecution team are illegal, declared to be illegal... And at the end of the day the full judgment has been set aside," the prosecutor representing the government, Ishtiaq A. Khan, told AFP.

"Yes, he is a free man. Right now there is no judgment against him any longer," Khan added.

Musharraf's lawyer, Azhar Siddique, also told media outside the court in Lahore that it has "nullified everything".

The prosecution now has the option to file a new case against Musharraf with the approval of the federal Cabinet.

The treason trial -- which began in 2013 and is just one of several involving Mushar-

raf -- centred on his decision to suspend the constitution and impose emergency rule in 2007.

Musharraf first took power after ousting prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup in 1999.

A cigar-smoking, whisky-drinking moderate, the general became a key US ally in the "war on terror" after the September 11 attacks and escaped at least three Al-Qaeda assassination attempts during his nine years in office.

His rule faced no serious challenges until he tried to sack the Supreme Court chief justice in March 2007, sparking nationwide protests and months of turmoil that led to the imposition of emergency rule.

After the December 2007 assassination of former prime

minister Benazir Bhutto, the national mood plunged further and Musharraf was left increasingly isolated by the crushing losses suffered by his allies in February 2008 elections.

He finally resigned in August 2008 in the face of impeachment proceedings by the new governing coalition and went into exile.

Musharraf returned to Pakistan in 2013 in an attempt to contest elections, but was barred from taking part in the polls and from leaving the country as a barrage of legal cases mounted.

The travel ban against him was finally lifted in 2016, and he travelled to Dubai for medical treatment, where he has been ever since.

The treason case against him was first launched by his old foe Sharif in 2013.

Thai royal motorcades will no longer shut down Bangkok

AFP | Bangkok

Royal motorcades will no longer completely shut down Bangkok's roads, a rare concession by the unsailable Thai king to public opinion.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn, 67, sits at the apex of Thai power and -- alongside senior royals -- is protected by a draconian defamation law, which makes public scrutiny of the family near impossible inside the kingdom.

Police routinely close down major roads when the royal family passes, adding serious delay on the congested streets of Bangkok and heaping frustration onto commuters.

Thais in recent months have taken to Twitter and Facebook to air their irritation over road closures believed to be linked to



Police routinely closed down major roads in Bangkok when the royal family passed, adding serious delay on the congested streets

the royal family's travels.

The hashtag #Royalmotorcade trended last year on Thai Twitter, drawing tens of thousands of mentions.

Late Sunday government spokeswoman Narumon Pinyosinwat said on Facebook that the king "has acknowledged

the traffic problem and is concerned for the people".

Roads will no longer be completely shut down, according to a police video she posted detailing the changes, with officers ordered to use orange cones instead to designate a pathway for travelling royals.

The other side of the road can also be used by motorists and pedestrians.

"Long live the King," she added in her Facebook post.

Police did not respond to requests for comment.

The new guidelines are "a good sign" of a monarch responding to public concerns, said political analyst Titipol Phakdeewanich.

"It could make people feel more connected to the institution of the monarchy and show that the monarchy is not ignoring them," he added.

Vajiralongkorn inherited one of the world's richest monarchies when he ascended the throne in 2016 following the death of his father.

He was officially crowned last May in an elaborate three-day coronation ceremony.

'French Spider-Man' scales Total tower in support of pension strikes

Reuters | Paris

Alain Robert, the free climber dubbed the "French Spider-Man", yesterday scaled the Tour Total, a 48-storey skyscraper in Paris, to demonstrate support for workers striking against the government's pension reform plans.

Robert, 57, stood with both arms aloft after reaching the summit of the 187-metre (613-foot) high tower, which stands in the French capital's business district, La Defense.

He has climbed more than 100 structures, including the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and the world's tallest building, the Burj Khalifa in Dubai. This is the ninth time he has climbed the Total tower. Robert often climbs without



Alain Robert

permission and has been arrested on numerous occasions. He climbs without a harness, using only his bare hands, a pair of climbing shoes, and a bag of powdered chalk to wipe off the sweat.

For more than a month, France has been mired in strikes and protests over President Emmanuel Macron's push to streamline the pension system.

Jessica Mulrone, Meghan Markle's right-hand woman



Jessica Mulrone (pictured May 2018) has been best friends with Meghan Markle since 2011

New York

Babysitter, stylist, confidante -- Jessica Mulrone is Meghan Markle's right-hand woman, but she's managed to fly relatively under the radar.

According to British media, the 39-year-old Canadian has been watching baby Archie, Meghan and Prince Harry's son, while the couple went back to England to make their bombshell announcement that they were quitting their frontline royal duties.

The two women met in 2011, while Meghan was living in Toronto to film the series "Suits." Nearly the same age (Meghan

is 38), they soon discovered numerous shared interests, including yoga, fashion and travel.

Rather than straining the friendship, Meghan Markle's entrance into the royal family appears to have brought the two women even closer.

Mulrone, a professional stylist who has worked with singer Shania Twain and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's wife Sophie, played a key role in planning the royal wedding, according to the magazine Vanity Fair, citing anonymous sources.

Her involvement went well beyond just clothing, though -- Meghan relied on her friend for a range of details, and Mul-



Jessica Mulrone (front) and Kate Middleton arrive at the wedding ceremony of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry, in May 2018

rone's two sons and daughter were pageboys and a flower girl in the May 2018 ceremony.

Always sharply attired, her sapphire blue dress caused a sensation at the royal wedding in St. George's chapel, where Mulrone was one of the best-situated guests, directly in the cameras' field of view.

Typically, the McGill University alum favors bright colors, tailored silhouettes and pantsuits.

Born Jessica Brownstein, Mulrone married television host Ben Mulrone, who is also the son of a former Canadian prime

minister.

Mulrone and her sisters-in-law co-founded the non-profit The Shoebox Project in 2011, the same year she met Meghan. The charity organizes donations of feminine health and beauty goods to low-income and homeless women in Canada.

'A bit of privacy'

Since the wedding, the mother of three has been in high demand. She regularly appears on the US television show "Good Morning America" on ABC.

She has also been hired as a stylist by US actress, screenwriter and producer Mindy Kaling (known for "The Office" and "Late Night").

In the clearest sign of her growing popularity, Mulrone has also nearly quadrupled her Instagram audience. Her account currently has more than 360,000 followers.

No reference is made to her friendship with Meghan Markle on ABC, nor on the Canadian talk show "Cityline", where Mulrone has been a fashion correspondent for years.

Mulrone appears to take visible precautions not to give the impression that she benefits from her relationship with Meghan.

Before Harry and Meghan made their relationship official, Jessica Mulrone shared

many photos of herself with the now-Duchess of Sussex on her Instagram.

But since the couple's marriage, Mulrone has been much more assiduous. She only posted one message after the wedding: "Proud friend, proud mom," she wrote.

"Every person has to have a bit of privacy in their life," Mulrone told Harper's Bazaar in March 2019, the only interview she has given since the wedding.

"There are things I'll never talk about for sure," she said, referring to her friendship with Meghan.

Mulrone has instead taken a more oblique approach. In August, following backlash that Meghan and Harry took a private jet to visit the singer Elton John on the French Riviera, she slammed so-called "critics" who attacked her friend.

"Shame on you, you racist bullies," she wrote on Instagram, without going into further detail.

And on Thursday, just after Harry and Meghan's announcement, Mulrone took to Instagram once more to share a quote from the black singer Gina Carey in an allusion to recent developments and a show of support for her friend.

"A strong woman looks a challenge in the eye and gives it a wink," she posted.

