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Musharraf memoirs set for 'hot sale' in India

AFP, New Delhi



Pervez Musharraf

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's memoirs appear set to become a best-seller in rival India, where opinion-makers have charged that the book, "In the Line of Fire", in part rewrites history.

The book is due to hit Indian shelves later this week following its release in New York on Monday. But the knives are already out for the memoirs' most contentious claim in Indian eyes: that the Indian army's desire to capture territory led to the 1999 Kargil conflict, which almost sparked a fourth war between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

"He's rewriting history with an eye on the 2007 elections in Pakistan -- he wants to project himself and the army as entities to be counted on," veteran Indian security analyst Uday Bhaskar told AFP.

"He has got 'chutpah', real nerve," he said.

"All that he is saying is a pack of lies, he attacked us and then lost -- that's the reality," former Indian National Security Advisory Brajesh Mishra told the CNN-IBN television network.

He dismissed Musharraf's

description of the Kargil conflict as a "landmark in the history of the Pakistani army."

"India did not cross the Line of Control (dividing Kashmir)," Mishra said. "The Pakistan Army did and it was defeated."

India has always maintained Musharraf was responsible for dispatching troops across the ceasefire line above the town of Kargil and that it repelled the invaders.

Musharraf, however, insists no Pakistani soldiers crossed into Indian territory and that New Delhi stepped up the conflict after its forces ran into Kashmiri militants who had moved

ahead of Pakistani troops.

The row over the book's contents comes as the two countries have decided to resume peace talks stalled in the wake of the July terrorist train attacks in Mumbai, which killed 186 people.

New Delhi said the attacks were carried out with "help from across the border" -- a charge that Islamabad has denied.

The book also carries Musharraf's call for an "out-of-the-box solution" to the dispute over the mountainous, Muslim-majority region of Kashmir, which lies at the heart of nearly six decades of hostility between the two countries.

India says it is waiting for Islamabad to live up to its pledge to halt cross-border terrorism before taking any steps on the Kashmir dispute.

All the controversy is making the book's publisher and vendors say they scent a winner.

"We've no doubt it's going to be a best-seller" in India, said Simon and Schuster's regional distribution manager Rahul Srivastava.

"We expect this could be as big as Bill Clinton's autobiography, 'My Life,'" said Srivastava, adding the former US president's hardcover memoirs sold some 20,000 copies in India, a sizeable sum in the country.

In his book Musharraf claims US intelligence has paid Pakistan millions of dollars for handing over Al-Qaeda suspects it has captured.

The memoir details how the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) paid undisclosed rewards totalling millions of dollars for the more than 350 prisoners Pakistan has handed over.

"We have captured 689 and handed over 369 to the United States. We have earned bounties totalling millions of dollars," Musharraf says in the book.

"Those who habitually accuse us of 'not doing enough' in the war on terror should simply ask the CIA how much prize money it has paid to the government of Pakistan," he says, without specifying where the money came from.

A CIA spokesman refused to respond to the claims when contacted by AFP.

The US State Department runs a "Rewards For Justice" programme promising millions of dollars in return for information leading to the arrest or conviction of a number of key suspects wanted for specific militant attacks.

Unlike Koizumi, who is known for one-line soundbites, Abe always speaks in formal complete sen-



PHOTO: AFP

Newly elected Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe receives applause from lawmakers at the Lower House's plenary session, at the National Diet, in Tokyo yesterday.

Abe 'committed to tearing up legacies of defeat'

AFP, Tokyo

Mild in his manners but passionate in his ideas, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is the first Japanese leader born after World War II and is committed to tearing up the legacies of defeat.

The 52-year-old, dubbed "the prince" for his elite pedigree, became Japan's youngest prime minister on Tuesday, fulfilling at an early age the ambitions of his family which has advanced conservative causes for generations.

"The time has come for our generation, who did not experience the war, to take the responsibility" to lead Japan, Abe said during the campaign.

Even though Abe is a political protégé of his predecessor Junichiro Koizumi, his style is a stark contrast to that of his flamboyant mentor.

Few could imagine Abe recreating the media-savvy photo ops of Koizumi, who jammed on an air guitar next to US President George W. Bush and showed up at the opera with an Olympic figure skater.

About the most non-conformist aspect of Abe is pictures showing he prefers Macintosh to Windows computer systems.

Unlike Koizumi, who is known for one-line soundbites, Abe always speaks in formal complete sen-

ences.

But Abe's calm, polite exterior belies a hawkish streak. In July, he stunned neighboring countries by openly mulling a theoretical pre-emptive attack on communist North Korea.

He has also followed Koizumi's lead in appealing directly to the public rather than to backroom powerbrokers who traditionally call the shots in Japanese politics.

He succeeded in becoming a household name by talking tough on North Korea after Pyongyang admitted in 2002 that it had abducted Japanese civilians in the 1970s and 1980s.

His hawkish image may be softened by his wife, Akie Abe, a 44-year-old daughter of a prominent businessman who is known for her love of South Korean culture. The couple has no children.

Abe's rise is all the more meteoric considering that he held his first cabinet position -- his last job of chief cabinet secretary -- for less than one year.

One of his most passionate causes is revising the pacifist constitution, which was imposed on a defeated Japan by the United States in 1947, seven years before he was born into a leading political family.

At a campaign rally, Abe vowed, "I want to write the constitution with

my own hand."

His conservative beliefs are also deeply personal.

Abe's maternal grandfather Nobusuke Kishi served in the wartime cabinet and helped supervise the industrialization of Manchukuo, the puppet state Japan set up in northeastern China.

After the war, Kishi was jailed by US forces as a top war criminal although he was not tried. Kishi later became prime minister, fighting leftists to build the new alliance with Washington.

Abe has backed Koizumi's pilgrimages to the Yasukuni shrine, which honors war dead and war criminals. Koizumi's visits have infuriated neighboring countries haunted by Japan's aggression.

But Abe's views tilt further to the right than those of Koizumi. Abe has rejected the legitimacy of post-war trials of war criminals and hinted he feels Japan has apologized enough for its past.

His father was Shintaro Abe, a foreign minister, who never achieved his ambition of becoming prime minister due to a scandal and cancer, which cost him his life in 1991.

Shinzo Abe took over his father's parliament seat -- and in little more than a decade, has fulfilled his goal.

Saddam ousted for third time amid court room revolt

AFP, Baghdad

Saddam Hussein was thrown out of court for the third time in as many hearings of his genocide trial yesterday, prompting a revolt among the defendants after which the case continued without them.

"You are a defendant, I am the judge," said Judge Mohammed al-Oreibi al-Khalifa as he ordered Saddam to leave the court room after the ousted Iraqi leader ignored orders to keep silent.

Saddam left the court room with a smile on his face. In the past two sessions, he was ejected for similar reasons.

The ejection angered his six co-defendants, who demanded to leave as well.

"Get Saddam out and put the others back in their seats," Judge Mohammed al-Oreibi al-Khalifa ordered the court bailiffs.

Former Iraqi military commander Sultan Hashim Ahmed al-Tai was the most vocal of the defendants, refusing to sit down and continuing to shout and wave his finger at the judge.

"Don't raise your voice at me, you are the defendant," the judge said before also ejecting Hashim from court.

The other defendants renewed their demands to leave, led by the former deputy of operations for the

Iraqi Armed Forces Hussein Rashid al-Tikriti, who declared: "This is rude, you should be responsible."

Khalifa then announced a one hour recess. The judge gave no explanation for his decision to resume after the recess without any of the defendants present.

The trial has been plagued with problems since the Iraqi government's decision to remove former president judge Abdallah al-Ameri on the grounds he was too lenient with the defense.

In the following session on September 20, the defense lawyers protested this move and walked out of the proceedings, sparking protests by defendants who did not want to be represented by court-appointed lawyers.

When Saddam himself loudly contested the change, he was ejected by the judge, a pattern that would repeat itself in the subsequent two sessions.

Khalifa began Tuesday's session with a stern warning to Saddam to behave himself during the trial and not speak out of turn.

"You are a defendant here, you have rights and also obligations. You can defend yourself, question witnesses," said the judge. "And I am ready to allow you, but this is a court, not a political arena."

1993 MUMBAI BLASTS 5 cops sentenced for conspiracy

AFP, Mumbai

An Indian court on Tuesday convicted five suspended police officers of conspiring to help bring explosives from Mumbai that were used in India's worst ever terrorist attack 13 years ago.

The officers were charged with accepting bribes of 700,000 rupees (15,200 dollars) to allow arms and explosives from the the Raigad coast in southern Maharashtra state to reach the country's financial capital, a court official said.

Convicted were Vijay Patil, Ashok Nimeshwar, Pandharinath Mahadik, R.D. Mali and S.Y. Pashilkar who worked in or near Raigad. They were taken into custody after the verdicts.

Krishna Mokul, Krishna Pingale and M.M. More were acquitted of the same charges.

"This is a key judgement, with government officials (police) being found guilty in a mammoth case," said chief prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam. Sentencing will be announced separately.

The five are among 18 people convicted so far over the 'Black Friday' attacks, which killed 257 people, carried out in revenge for Hindu-Muslim religious clashes several months earlier.

Verdicts for the rest of the 123 defendants, who include Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt, are expected in the coming weeks with sentencing for the guilty to follow. Six people have so far been acquitted.