

## Huge swing of support to Pak Islamic parties

REUTERS, Islamabad

Hardline Islamic parties made surprising gains yesterday in Pakistan's first elections since a 1999 military coup, potentially giving them the balance of power in a future coalition government.

With results in for more than half of the national assembly's 272 constituency seats, a party loyal to President Pervez Musharraf led the way but was well short of an overall majority.

Religious parties exploited anger at Pakistan's cooperation in the US-led war on terror to virtually sweep the board in conservative parts of western Pakistan bordering Afghanistan.

Widespread voter apathy and the fact that former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif were both excluded from the polls also appeared to have played into their hands.

Political commentators said the religious parties -- some of them vocal supporters of Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime -- could now hold the balance of power in a coalition government.

"This is extremely significant and ominous," said Najam Sethi, editor of

the influential Friday Times. "They are a very serious force to be reckoned with."

With results in from 187 seats, a pro-Musharraf faction of the Pakistan Muslim League, the PML (QA), had 58 seats.

Independent and regional parties were likely to swing behind PML (QA) -- dubbed the "king's party" for its support for Musharraf -- in its efforts to form a coalition government.

But the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) religious alliance had won 40 seats in the national assembly, compared to just two for its member parties in the 1997 elections.

It was also likely to become the strongest party in two of the country's four provincial assemblies, in Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province.

With the MMA parties controlling the levers of power in those provinces "the task of hunting down the rebellious Taliban and hostile al-Qaeda will become almost impossible," said Sethi, adding they might also start enforcing sharia law practices.

"It is a revolution," MMA Vice-President Qazi Hussain Ahmed told sup-

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## Arrival of cargo ships at Ctg port declines

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

At least 30 per cent jetties and berths at the Chittagong Port have remained vacant over the last one month due to a slide in arrival of cargo ships.

Eight to ten jetties and berths out of 34 have been lying vacant, Harbour Master of the Chittagong Port Kamrul Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Now, there is no race for berthing as before...earlier, shipping agents used to book berths in advance," Kamrul said.

Trade circles say business activities slumped after the September 11 attacks on the USA coupled with global economic recession.

Director of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Anwar Shawkat Afser said the number of ships

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## Govt has become champion of terrorism in one year: Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the only success of the one-year rule of BNP-Jamaat coalition was pervasive spread of criminality and corruption and renaming projects left over by the past Awami League government.

The ex-premier's appraisal of the present government's one-year rule came a day after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addressed the nation marking the first anniversary of her government on Thursday.

"This government in the one year has become the champion of terrorism, corruption and falsehood; they have become successful only in

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## Congress gives Bush authority to go to war against Iraq

AFP, Washington

The US Congress yesterday gave President George W. Bush authority to go to war against Iraq, citing a "continuing threat" posed by Baghdad's alleged weapons buildup.

The Democrat-dominated Senate voted shortly after midnight Thursday in favour of a resolution granting Bush authority to use force, only hours after the Republican-controlled House of Representatives passed the measure.

Shortly after the vote, Bush issued a statement commending "the strong bipartisan vote."

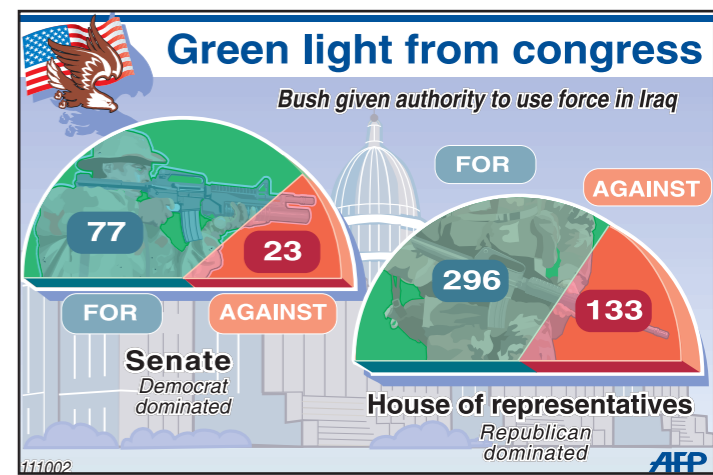
"The Congress has spoken clearly to the international community and the United Nations Security Council. (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein and his outlaw regime pose a grave threat to the region, the world, and the United States.

"Inaction is not an option, disarmament is a must," Bush said in his statement.

The resolution passed by a vote of 77 to 23 in the Senate and by 296 to 133 in the House of Representatives and capped almost three days of debate.

It authorises Bush to use force "in a manner necessary and appropriate to defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq and enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."

The vote among the Senate's 50 Democratic members was split 28 in favour, 22 against the measure, while the 49 Republicans lined up



one short of unanimity behind the measure. The only independent member of the Senate voted in favour of the measure.

Congress' strong approval of the measure gives Bush added weight in his effort to sway reluctant members of the UN Security Council including France, Russia and China to issue a new warning against Iraq.

It is this multilateral approach the Bush administration has agreed to strive for that won over many Democratic lawmakers who initially were uneasy about the outcome of a unilateral military intervention in Iraq. Democratic Senator Maria Cantwell of Washington state voted for the measure, but in the debate voiced some reserves. "If we should use military force it should be the last resort," she said, adding, "I hope our multinational efforts will be successful."

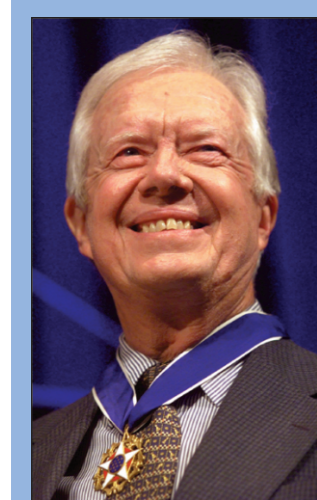
Dissenting Democrat Barbara

Mikulski of Maryland warned that "voting for unilateral action will take the international community off the hook ... it will weaken the negotiations of the president at the UN ... I am concerned about America going alone." Republican Senator Robert Smith for New Hampshire said authorising Bush to use force unilaterally was the only way to respond to what he termed as the growing threat of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction.

The task at hand, Smith said, is "too big. We cannot rely on the UN and its inspectors to take care of it."

Bush wants a single new UN resolution outlining a new tougher regime for inspection suspected weapons sites in Iraq including presidential palaces and mosques that would be coupled with the threat of military reprisals if

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## Nobel Peace Prize for Carter

AFP, Oslo

Former US president Jimmy Carter won the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize yesterday for "his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development", the Norwegian Nobel Committee said.

Carter will receive a prize sum of 10 million kronor (1.10 million euros, or 1.07 million dollars).

Carter will receive the award at a ceremony at Oslo's City Hall on December 10, the anniversary of the death of the prize's creator, Swedish industrialist and inventor Alfred Nobel, in 1896 in San Remo, Italy.

The Peace Prize is the only one of the Nobel Prizes to be announced and awarded in Oslo, with those for literature, medicine, physics, chemistry and economics all announced in Stockholm.

Former US president Jimmy Carter said yesterday he was "grateful and honoured" at winning the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize.

"The work of the Carter Centre has been a wonderful contribution to the world for the last 20 years," Carter, 78, told the CNN news network from his home in Plains, Georgia.

"I don't think there's any

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## BNP MPs not involved in wheat scam: Khaleda

'Cabinet is not that much big'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the council of ministers could be reshuffled considering performance of its members. She did not specify any time.

"Ministers are public representatives. They are not public servants. So there is always evaluation of their services to the people... According to performance, it (reshuffling) would be decided in due course of time," she told BCC last night. She was replying to questions made by members of the public on a wide range of issues relating to

governance.

To a question on having a jumbo cabinet with limited resources while giving a thrust on public expenditure reduction, Khaleda said there are logic for both a big and a small cabinet.

"I believe the cabinet is not that much big if we want to deliver prompt service to the people."

The prime minister said she was not satisfied over her government's performance in curbing criminal activities and corruption despite various steps taken in this regard.

She said her government has taken a series of steps in the last

one year to combat terrorism and corruption. She said her government did not patronise criminal activities. Rather, those were sponsored by the state during the past regime, she alleged.

"We have introduced the Speedy Trial Act, and trial of Trisha, Rubel, Shihab, Simi and Rekha murder cases have been completed promptly," she added. Moreover, 613 people have been tried under the Act.

"These steps helped to reduce terrorism but we are not satisfied. We have to take more steps and we

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PHOTO: STAR

A human hauler cruises through stagnated rainwater on the Purana Paltan Road, as sudden rain flooded many roads in the city yesterday.

## Housemaid commits suicide?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a housemaid from the flat of Almas Mia in the city's Pallabi area yesterday morning.

The landlord said Sheuli Begum, 16, daughter of Bollak Mia, might have committed suicide Thursday night.

Police found the body hanging from the ceiling of the house yesterday morning.

The body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for an autopsy. Police believe the girl was raped and suggested a medical test for confirmation.

Sheuli came to Dhaka from Shibnagpur in Sirajganj a year back. A case has been filed with the Pallabi Police Station.

## Grenade blast kills three children in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Three children of a family were killed on the spot and two others injured when an "abandoned" grenade exploded near their house at Manikchhari, a suburb of the town, yesterday morning.

The district administration ruled out any possibility of sabotage and said the explosion took place when the children, while playing, came in contact with the grenade "abandoned" in a nearby bush.

But neither the district administration nor the army could say how the grenade was left there.

The dead are Harunur Rashid, 12, Mamunur Rashid, 9, and Sheuly Akhtar, 4, -- sons and daughter of one Raja Miah. The injured are Amena Khanom, another daughter of Raja Miah and Mujibur Rahman, 8, son of his neighbour Surat Ali.

The injured were taken to Rangamati General Hospital, wherefrom Mujibur Rahman was shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

According to the victims' families, the explosion took place at about

8:30 am when the children were playing on the premises of Raja's house.

Hearing the explosion, army personnel and policemen from nearby areas rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies.

Rangamati police said the grenade was of 'URJES' model.

Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati Dr Jafar Ahmed Khan told The Daily Star that Bangladesh Army used such grenades to fight insurgency in the past.

The DC said it was an accident, not a sabotage.

Contacted over telephone, Major Khair of Military Intelligence in Rangamati said it could not be determined without investigation how the grenade exploded in the courtyard of a house.

He said both the army and the insurgents used similar types of grenades in the past.

He ruled out the possibility that the grenade might have been left there accidentally by any army personnel.

Deputy Minister for Chittagong

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 12		5-35 pm
Oct 13	5-55 am	

Prayer Timings		
Oct 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	4-42	4-48
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation