

Father, daughter both die for politics

BBC ONLINE

Benazir Bhutto followed her father into politics, and both of them died because of it - he was executed in 1979, she fell victim to an apparent suicide bomb attack.

Her two brothers also suffered violent deaths.

Like the Nehru-Gandhi family in India, the Bhuttos of Pakistan are one of the world's most famous political dynasties. Benazir's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was prime minister of Pakistan in the early 1970s.

His government was one of the few in the 30 years following independence that was not run by the army.

Born in 1953 in the province of Sindh and educated at Harvard and Oxford, Benazir gained credibility from her father's high profile, even though she was a reluctant convert to politics.

She was twice prime minister of Pakistan, from 1988 to 1990, and from 1993 to 1996.

Stubbornness

On both occasions she was dismissed from office by the president for alleged corruption.

The dismissals typified her

volatile political career, which was characterised by numerous peaks and troughs. At the height of her popularity - shortly after her first election - she was one of the most high-profile women leaders in the world.

Young and glamorous, she successfully portrayed herself as a refreshing contrast to the overwhelmingly male-dominated political establishment.

But after her second fall from power, her name came to be seen by some as synonymous with corruption and bad governance.

The determination and stubbornness for which Benazir was renowned was first seen after her father was imprisoned and charged with murder by Gen Zia ul-Haq in 1977, following a military coup. Two years later he was executed.

Corruption charges

During both her stints in power, the role of Benazir's husband, Asif Zardari, proved highly controversial.

He played a prominent role in both her administrations, and has been accused by various Pakistani governments of stealing millions of dollars from state coffers - charges

he denies, as did Benazir herself.

Many commentators argued that the downfall of Benazir's government was accelerated by the alleged greed of her husband.

None of about 18 corruption and criminal cases against Zardari has been proved in court after 10 years. But he served at least eight years in jail.

Benazir left Pakistan in 1999 to live abroad, but questions about her and her husband's wealth continued to dog her.

She appealed against a conviction in the Swiss courts for money-laundering. During her years outside Pakistan, Benazir lived with her three children in Dubai, where she was joined by her husband after he was freed in 2004.

Army mistrust

Benazir returned to Pakistan on 18 October 2007 after President Musharraf signed into law an ordinance granting her and others an amnesty from corruption charges.

Observers said the military regime saw her as a natural ally in its efforts to isolate religious forces, and their surrogate militants.

She declined a government offer to let her party head the national government after the 2002 elec-

tions, in which the party received the largest number of votes.

In the months before her death, she had emerged again as a strong contender for power.

Western powers saw in her a popular leader with liberal leanings who could bring much needed legitimacy to Musharraf's role in the "war against terror".

Unhappy family

Benazir Bhutto was the last remaining bearer of her late father's political legacy.

Her brother, Murtaza - who was once expected to play the role of party leader - fled to the then-communist Afghanistan after his father's fall.

From there, and various Middle Eastern capitals, he mounted a campaign against Pakistan's military government with a militant group called al-Zulfikar.

He won elections from exile in 1993 and became a provincial legislator, returning home soon afterwards, only to be shot dead under mysterious circumstances in 1996.

Benazir's other brother, Shahnawaz - also politically active but in less violent ways than Murtaza - was found dead in his French Riviera apartment in 1985.



Afghan President Hamid Karzai (R) walks with Pakistani former prime minister Benazir Bhutto after a meeting at a hotel in Islamabad yesterday. Hours later Benazir was assassinated by a suicide bomber after a rally in Rawalpindi on Thursday.

Chronology of Benazir's last months

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was killed Thursday in a suicide attack at a campaign rally, the interior ministry told AFP.

Here is a chronology of key events in Benazir's life in the run-up to the assassination:

March 26: First joint protests organised by the parties of exiled former prime ministers Benazir and Nawaz Sharif.

July 3-10: Pakistani troops besiege the pro-Taliban Red Mosque in Islamabad, then storm the building a week later. More than 100 people die during the course of the crisis.

July 20: Benazir and Musharraf hold secret meeting in Abu Dhabi on a possible power-sharing deal to sideline Sharif.

Oct 18: Benazir returns to Karachi from Dubai after eight years in self-exile. Two suicide bombers attack her homecoming parade hours later, killing 139 people.

Oct 31: Benazir says she has heard rumours Musharraf will impose a state of emergency and postpones planned trip to Dubai. She flies to Dubai the following day.

Nov 3: Musharraf imposes state of emergency, suspends the constitution and arrests key opposition figures, citing Islamic extremism and judicial interference.

Nov 4: Police crack down on the opposition. The United States, a key Musharraf ally, voices concern.

Nov 7: Benazir announces plans for mass protests.

Nov 9: Hours before a planned rally in the city of Rawalpindi, police put Benazir under house arrest at her Islamabad home. The order is later lifted.

Nov 11: Musharraf says parliament will be dissolved on November 15 and elections should be held by early January.

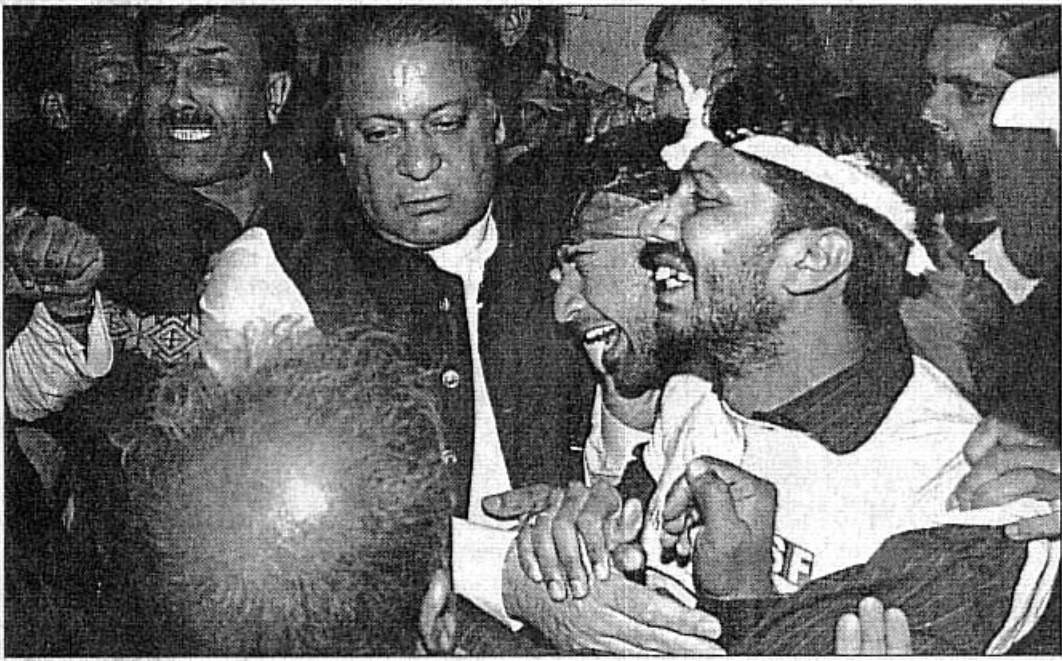
Nov 12: Benazir rules out further power-sharing talks with Musharraf. She is placed under house arrest again to prevent her leading a mass procession.

Nov 13: Benazir for the first time urges Musharraf to resign and says she will never serve under him as prime minister.

Nov 16: Musharraf swears in the interim government. Benazir is freed from house arrest. US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte arrives in Islamabad and speaks to Bhutto by telephone.

Nov 26: Benazir and Sharif file their nomination papers for the election. Musharraf's office announces he will resign from the army on November 28 and take a new oath as a civilian leader.

Dec 27: Benazir is killed in a suicide attack at a campaign rally in Rawalpindi.



FROM LEFT... Pakistani former premier Nawaz Sharif tries to comfort supporters of Benazir Bhutto at a Rawalpindi hospital after she was killed in a suicide attack yesterday; exponents of Benazir carry her coffin after her body was released from the hospital last night; this file photo dated June 28, 1972 in Simla, India shows then Pakistani president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, centre, later executed, shaking hands with then Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi, who was also assassinated later, as his daughter Benazir, second from right, and then Indian foreign affairs minister Sharan Singh, right, look on.

Thaksin faces arrest on return home

AP, Bangkok

Deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra will be arrested if he returns home from a self-imposed exile as planned, even if his victorious allies form a government following last weekend's general election, officials said yesterday.

Thaksin and members of his family face an array of corruption-related charges from the former leader's six years in office. He was overthrown in a bloodless military coup last year and has lived abroad since then, but he said Tuesday he was looking into returning in coming months.

"The court and police had already issued arrest warrants on him so once he arrives back to Thailand the authorities concerned are duty-bound by law to arrest him," Samphan Sarathana, a

senior official in the Office of the Attorney General told The Associated Press.

Samphan, a director-general in the office, said the results of the election, won by the pro-Thaksin People's Power Party or PPP, had no bearing on the legal cases against the former prime minister.

"The case is gone too far for a reversal," he said.

Thaksin said Tuesday in Hong Kong that he is exploring options to come back to Thailand between mid-February and April. He vowed to stay out of direct politics but said he was prepared to serve as adviser to the PPP.

The PPP won 233 of 480 seats in the lower house of Parliament in the Dec. 23 vote, while its top rival, the Democrat Party, won 165.

The PPP says it has already

gathered enough support from smaller parties to form a coalition, but analysts say that horse-trading continues and that it is too early to declare the pro-Thaksin grouping as Thailand's next government.

An arrest warrant was issued for Thaksin in August after he failed to appear in court in a case involving conflict of interest in a land deal while he was in power. His wife Pojarnarn is accused of illegally buying real estate from a government agency effectively controlled by her husband.

The military-appointed government that succeeded Thaksin launched several investigations into his alleged corruption and have frozen millions of dollars of his family's assets. Other cases against him and family members are pending.

US forces kill 11 Shia militants in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

US forces killed 11 Shia militants in an early morning raid yesterday in the town of Kut, south of Baghdad, the military told AFP.

"I can confirm that coalition forces killed an estimated 11 terrorists during operations targeting special groups criminal networks early Thursday in Al-Kut," US military spokesman Lieutenant Patrick Evans said.

The US military refers to Shia extremists who have broken away from the main Mahdi Army militia of radical cleric Moqtada al-Sadr as "special groups."

It says these groups wage acts of "terrorism" in Iraq with the financial and military backing of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards units, though Tehran denies the charge.

Lankan jets destroy LTTE naval base

AP, Colombo

Air force jets destroyed a Tamil naval base in Sri Lanka's north yesterday, a day after a fierce sea battle and a wave of infantry attacks killed at least 66 rebels and 14 government troops, the military said.

There were no immediate details on casualties from the airstrike, which came amid weeks of heavy fighting between the military and ethnic Tamil Tiger separatists in the dense jungles of northern Sri Lanka.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa said he aimed to crush the rebels, who have been fighting for a separate Tamil homeland for more than two decades, before he will enter a new round of peace talks.

"We are for a political settlement, but there is no point in talking about

a political settlement without first defeating terrorism," Rajapaksa said Wednesday, according to a government Web site.

As part of its offensive against the rebels, who control a de facto state in the north, air force fighter jets bombed and destroyed a naval training camp in the rebel stronghold of Mullaitivu early Thursday, military spokesman Brig. Udaya Nanayakkara said.

Also Thursday, a roadside bomb blast blamed on the rebels killed a police officer in the east, the site of sporadic attacks six months after the government routed the rebels there, he said.

Rebel spokesman Rasiah Ilanthirayan did not answer a phone call seeking comment on the violence. In a statement e-mailed to reporters, he said Tamil Tiger fight-

ers killed at least one soldier Thursday when they repelled a military offensive in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

Nanayakkara said he did not have details of the fighting.

The two sides often give widely divergent death tolls, exaggerating their enemies' casualties while undercounting their own.

According to the government, the sea battle Wednesday was one of the most intense in months. It began when naval patrol boats attacked a rebel flotilla transporting weapons off the coast of the northern Mannar district, said Nanayakkara.

The navy sank nine of the 16 rebel boats, killing 40 guerrillas, Nanayakkara said. The body of one officer was found, and 11 others were missing and presumed dead, he said.

UN establishes size of rebel army in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

About half of a claimed 32,250-strong Nepal rebel army is authentic, the United Nations envoy to Nepal said Thursday.

"The full total verified as members of the Maoist army is 19,602, comprising 15,576 men and 3,846 women," Ian Martin, head of the United Nations Mission in Nepal, told reporters in Kathmandu.

Martin said that of the Maoist rebels' claims it had 32,250 personnel, 8,640 did not appear for verification interviews and were "automatically disqualified," while nearly 3,000 others were not included because they were under the age of 18.

The UN was asked to count and house the rebel army under peace terms that would end a decade-long civil war that claimed thousands of lives.

N Korean N-closure to miss deadline

THE KOREA HERALD/ ANN, Seoul

North Korea is likely to miss the Dec 31 deadline to declare all of its nuclear materials, since its draft falls short of the United States' expectations, sources here said Wednesday.

The six nations participating in the nuclear negotiations agreed to disable North Korea's nuclear facilities by the end of the year and to endorse Pyongyang's list of all of its nuclear programmes and fissile materials, as per the Oct 3 accord.

"North Korea has given some kind of explanation to the United States regarding the uranium-enrichment programme suspicion, but it does not meet Washington's expectations," a government source explained, on condition of anonymity.

The disablement work on the three facilities in Yongbyon, in the meantime, is likely to finish as scheduled, except for few technical touch-ups, sources said.

It is both a political and security-related goal of Washington to persuade North Korea to come clean on its suspected uranium-enrichment programme, which was a source of the second nuclear crisis in 2002, and led Washington to take a harder line against the communist regime. The Bush administration, in its second term in office, was ultimately compelled to become more flexible after North Korea's nuclear test last October.

But the latest delay over the

declaration list is unlikely to cause any immediate setbacks for the six-party talks' framework, which has been managing the nuclear crisis since 2003, observers say.

Washington has repeatedly said that, while it "hopes" for the declaration to be completed by the year's end, it is more important to have a "full and complete" list.

"We don't want to see a declaration in which everyone can immediately see what is missing. We want to make sure this declaration is as complete and correct as possible," top US negotiator Christopher Hill said earlier in the month.

North Korea has reportedly given samples of imported aluminium tubes to the United States, in an attempt to prove its innocence concerning the suspicion that they were used to make centrifuges for the UEP.

The attempt, however, backfired, as US scientists reportedly found traces of enriched uranium in the tubes. No confirmation of the news report was given by the Washington or Seoul government. Some sources suggest that the tubes could have been contaminated before being exported to North Korea.

A new three-day round of trilateral talks among the two Koreas and China opened in Pyongyang on Tuesday, but the meeting is mostly focusing on how to provide the energy assistance that has been promised in return for the North's denuclearisation, officials said.

Commandos called in to free Lanka minister

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka sent a crack commando unit to the state-run television station yesterday to rescue a government minister seized by journalists for allegedly assaulting a colleague, officials told AFP.

An anti-hijacking and hostage rescue squad of army commandos deployed at the Rupavahini state television network to free Labour Minister Mervyn Silva who had allegedly stormed the studios with body guards and attacked journalists, officials said.

Un-edited footage broadcast

over the state television showed army officers and police escorting Silva out of the usually tightly-guarded building located within a high security zone of the capital.

Police anti-riot squads were moved to the station while heavily armed commandos dressed in body armour and wearing hard hats moved in to the premises while unarmed officers rescued the minister amid jeering by rebellious staff.

"The minister is being held in an office by the staff," the television said earlier in a statement broadcast while interrupting regular programming.



Battered and bruised Sri Lanka's Labour Minister Mervyn Silva (R) tries to close the door of his vehicle, while a policeman puts his arm around him protectively, outside the state-run Rupavahini television network in Colombo yesterday.

Expelled diplomats leave Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

The second most senior European Union official in Afghanistan and a top UN political advisor left the country Thursday after being expelled by the government for posing a threat to national security.

The governor of the southern province of Helmand insisted meanwhile that the EU official, a deputy head of mission, had made contact with the Taliban during a recent visit.

The claim was dismissed by the United Nations and by the insurgents themselves who accused Kabul of creating "a drama" and trying to show it was independent of its international backers.

The men - Irish national Michael Semple with the EU and Briton Mervyn Patterson - flew out of Kabul early Thursday after being declared persona non grata on Tuesday and given 48 hours to leave.

An unknown number of their Afghan colleagues were being questioned by authorities, Afghan officials said, refusing to give details.

The United Nations said the affair was a "misunderstanding" that arose after the men visited the Helmand town of Musa Qala to find ways to bring stability after it was taken back from Taliban occupiers this month.

"Our discussions and negotiations are ongoing with the government of Afghanistan so we can see the return of these vital members of staff," spokesman Aleem Siddique told AFP.

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

A large well-reputed business company wishes to recruit a high caliber **MANAGER, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS**. He/she is expected to be a self-starter and meaningfully contribute to the efforts to reach the company's goal.

The incumbent will be responsible for developing communication strategies, implementing the plans including budget, documentation and website management. He/she will also be responsible to manage the company's outreach film media and external agencies.

Qualification and Experience:

- Masters in Marketing/Communications preferred. But any related subject from any recognized university is also acceptable.
- Should have worked at least 5 - 6 years in corporate communications or a related field.
- Excellent in English and Bangla language skills.
- Should be familiar with Windows Operating Systems and Microsoft Office Application Suite.

Attractive compensation packages will be offered to the really deserving candidate.

Prospective candidate may apply in strict confidence with detailed CV and two copies of recent passport size color photographs by **January 11, 2008** to "The Advertiser" c/o, The Daily Star, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka, Box No. A-177.

Please mark the position applied for, on the top of the envelope.

* We are an equal opportunity employer.