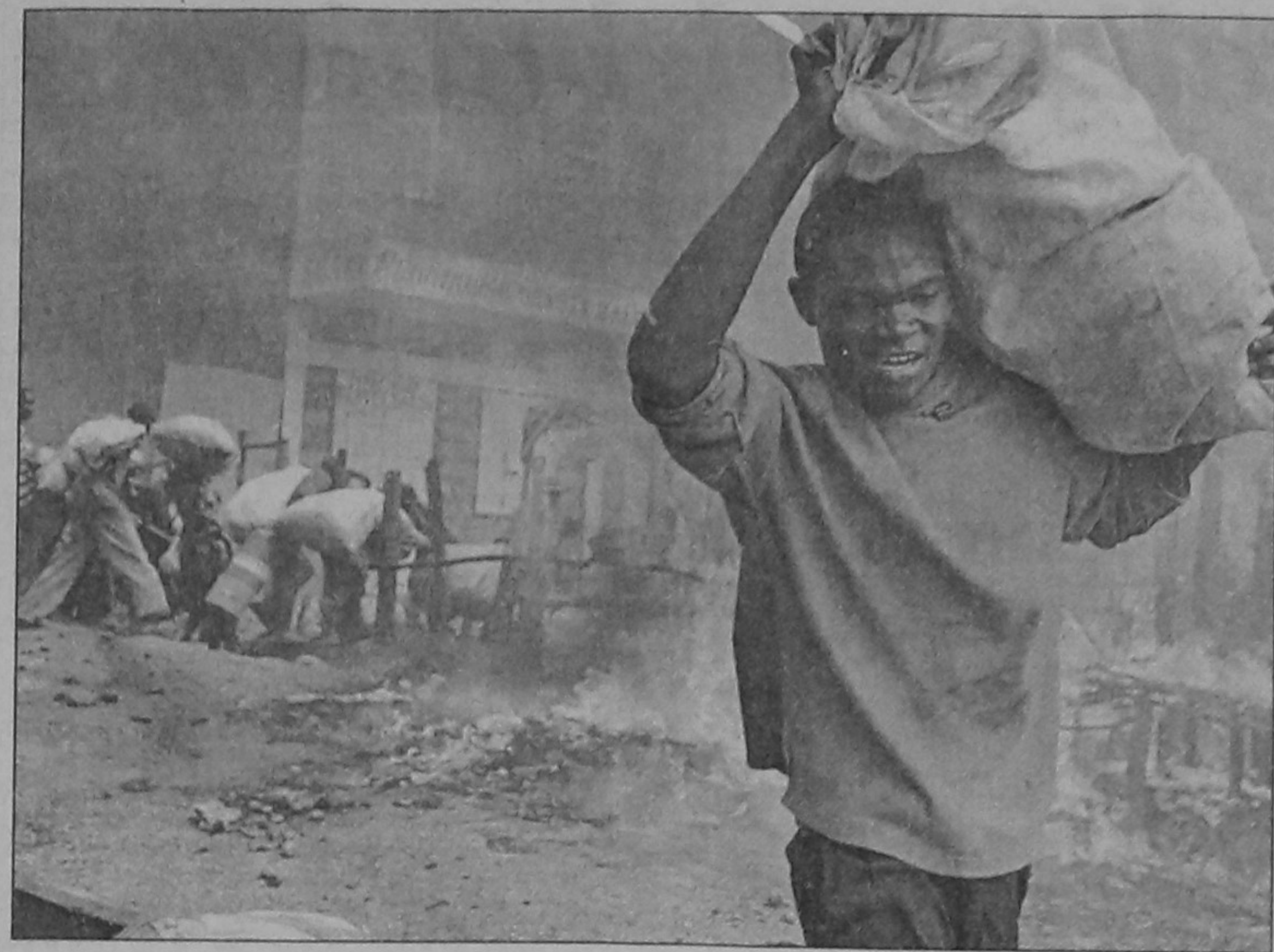


110 killed as post-election violence sweeps Kenya

AFP, Nairobi An eruption of fresh violence triggered by Kenya's disputed presidential ballot left more than 110 dead yesterday, after defeated opposition candidate Raila Odinga rejected Mwai Kibaki's re-election. Further clashes were feared as Odinga planned to hold his own alternative inauguration at a mass rally later Monday, a day after Kibaki was officially sworn in for a second term despite widespread allegations of vote-rigging. At least 64 people were killed overnight in western Kenya in fresh outbreaks of tribal violence and clashes between police, looters and opposition activists. Separate clashes in the capital Nairobi claimed a further 40 lives, police said. At least 130 people have now been killed since Thursday's elections, which have left one of Africa's more stable democracies teetering on the brink of turmoil. The government has enforced a ban on live television broadcasts related to the election in what it says is an effort to contain the violence. "We know there are skirmishes in many parts of the country. We are fully cracking down and fully responding to every situation," police spokesman Eric Kiraithe told AFP. A total of 46 bodies were brought to the morgue in Kisumu, Kenya's third largest city and an Odinga stronghold, a mortuary attendant told AFP. "These bodies were brought here overnight by police officers," he said, adding that 20 of them had multiple bullet wounds. Local police chief Grace Kaindi declined to comment on the number of dead, but acknowledged that police had opened fire on "looters" during the night. Reporters were also shown seven other bodies in Kisumu's main hospital waiting to be transferred to the morgue. Police imposed a day-time curfew in the city, with an order to shoot violators.

"We are going to deal with them (rioters) ruthlessly," said Michael Baraza, a top police commander in the region. Another seven people were killed in clashes between rival political supporters in the town of Nakuru, and four in a village near Kapsabet, police said. According to police, hundreds of houses have already been torched in the western Rift Valley province and fresh fighting broke out Monday in Kibera, Nairobi's largest slum. Opposition supporters there were trying to march towards the city centre where Odinga, a fiery 62-year-old former political prisoner, planned to hold an alternative swearing-in ceremony presenting him to the nation as "the People's President". "We know that the people of Kenya elected Raila Amolo Odinga as their legitimate president and they are ready to see him serve democratically in that capacity," Odinga's party said in a statement. Odinga, who has been threatened with arrest if the rally goes ahead, stressed the need for "peaceful mass action" as the violence flared. The rage boiling over in the Odinga camp was in stark contrast to the celebrations that filled the streets of pro-Kibaki towns in central Kenya on Sunday, where revellers flooded local bars. Kibaki called for a "national healing" process as he was sworn in. "I urge all of us to set aside the passions that were excited by the election process, and work together as one people with the single purpose of building a strong, united, prosperous and equitable country," he said. The European Union's team of election observers acknowledged fraud and questioned the accuracy of the ballot results. "We regret that it has not been possible to address irregularities about which... (we) have evidence," chief EU observer Alexander Graf Lambsdorff said in a statement.



A resident of Kibera runs with a sack past burning vehicles as he and thousands of other looters swept through the slum ransacking stores and setting cars and other property on fire yesterday. Fresh violence left scores dead in Kenya on Monday as defeated presidential candidate Raila Odinga prepared to declare himself head of state, after rejecting the victory of incumbent Mwai Kibaki in disputed elections.

25 police, soldiers killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul Twenty-five policemen and soldiers have been killed across insurgency-hit Afghanistan in fresh -- mainly Taliban-linked -- violence, authorities said yesterday. Sixteen policemen were killed when their post in the southern province of Kandahar -- a hotbed of Taliban activities -- was attacked by Islamic rebels on Saturday, the interior ministry said. Two other police officers were killed Monday in a roadside bomb blast in Musa Qala -- a town in southern Helmand province -- which was captured from the Taliban by Afghan and Nato forces this month, a district chief said. Taliban militants claimed credit for the latest blast. Similar bomb attacks killed five Afghan soldiers -- one of them in eastern Paktia on Monday and four others in southern Uruzgan a day earlier, the defence ministry said in a statement. Two other soldiers died in a road accident Sunday in the southern province of Zabul, which is also hit by the Taliban insurgency.

Pakistanis get back to routines Mourning period ends

AFP, Karachi Millions of Pakistanis ventured out into the streets of major cities for the first time in three days yesterday, as violence eased after an official mourning period for slain political Benazir Bhutto. Many shops, banks and petrol stations reopened to allow people to get fresh supplies, while private cars, taxis and some buses took to the streets again after a weekend of paralysis in the nuclear-armed nation. "Karachi is like a normal city. It's life as usual now," resident Zafar Sheikh said of Pakistan's largest city and economic hub. "I came out and it was hustling and bustling with people," although traffic was light, dominated by taxis and rickshaws with bus services patchy, he said. But as daily life returned to normal, the country was still grappling with the fallout from the killing. Pakistan's Karachi Stock Exchange was down 4.7 percent at mid-day in one of the sharpest slides in the bourse's history. An outpouring of rage after Benazir's murder left at least 38 people dead, dozens more wounded, and Pakistan reeling from what the interior ministry said was tens of millions of dollars in damage. Demonstrators at times fought running battles with riot police and torched hundreds of banks, shops, railway stations, offices, trains and vehicles, prompting businesses to down shutters and people to return home. In Islamabad, the streets were busy with traffic again on Monday as petrol stations resumed supplies of much needed fuel and many restaurants were again open for business. "All shops are opened in our area," said Faisal Waraich, who lives in the south of the capital. In nearby Rawalpindi, where Benazir was assassinated at a campaign rally on Thursday, there were signs of steady progress. "Shops in some areas are open and traffic is back on the roads," student Habib ul Haq said. "We hope it will pick up slowly as people here are still in shock." Bazaars and shops opened in the eastern city of Lahore and traffic was moving again after petrol stations opened, residents said. Court workers also returned. In the northwestern city of Peshawar there was no disruption, with commercial plazas open and traffic heavy as normal. Huddled in small groups, people were starting to move on from Benazir's assassination to discuss whether January 8 polls would happen, as government officials said it would be postponed at least four weeks.

N Korea set to miss nuclear deadline

AP, Seoul North Korea showed no signs of meeting its deadline yesterday for declaring all of its nuclear programmes, a key component of its agreement to disarm in exchange for economic aid. The United States expressed disappointment and urged the North to meet its commitments. But there was no indication that North Korea would immediately face any sanction over the delay suggesting countries involved in negotiating the agreement were reluctant to raise tensions after a year of progress in the long-standing dispute. The communist country promised in October to disable its main nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang, and give a full accounting of its nuclear programmes by Dec. 31 in return for energy aid and political concessions. The North shut down the plutonium-producing facility in July and disablement work is under way in cooperation with US experts.

India wary but calm over Pakistan crisis

AP, New Delhi Islamic militant groups. But it refrained from mass mobilization. India's stock market dipped slightly the morning after the killing with investors concerned about instability in the region. By the afternoon, it had resumed its climb. News reports focused equally on the Indian cricket team's poor performance against Australia. It's not that India is no longer worried about Pakistan -- it is, deeply. But a decade of sustained economic growth pegged at about 9 percent this year has transformed India into a global economic player, giving it self-assurance and the cash to spend heavily on its military. "The general confidence level in India today is much higher," said C. Uday Bhaskar, a prominent New Delhi-based defence analyst. India has been content to let the United States spearhead efforts to secure Pakistan's nuclear arsenal a development made possible by New Delhi's increasingly close ties with Washington after decades of Cold War hostility. No country should have more to fear from Pakistan's slide toward instability than India. In the six decades since an independent India and Pakistan rose from the flames of the bloody partition of the subcontinent, the South Asian rivals have stared at each other across heavily armed frontiers with implacable hostility, fought three wars and engaged in tit-for-tat atomic tests. Saber-rattling brought the two countries to the brink of nuclear war in 2001 after an attack on the Indian parliament that New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-backed militants. Yet as Pakistan has stumbled in recent months from a military dictatorship to a state of emergency, to uncertainty in the wake of the assassination of Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, India's reactions have been tempered even calm. India put its troops on a higher state of alert after the emergency was declared and again after the Benazir killing, officially blamed on

The Bhutto dynasty. Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto. Prime minister of Jhang district during the period of the British Empire. Nusrat Ispahani Bhutto. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Founder of PPP (Pakistan's Peoples Party). President of Pakistan (1973-1977). Prime minister (1973-1977). Overthrown by a military coup. Killed on April 4, 1979. Asif Ali Zardari. July 21, 1956. Parliamentary Minister in Bhutto's 2nd government. Dec. 30, 2007. Co-chairman of PPP with son Bilawal. Benazir Bhutto. June 21, 1953. Prime minister (1988-1990, 1993-1996). PPP leader. Assassinated Dec. 27, 2007. Murtaza Bhutto. Sept. 18, 1954. PPP's first president. Killed by police in Sept. 1995. Sanam Bhutto. Born in 1967. Shah Nawaz Bhutto. 1958-1985. Found dead on the Côte d'Azur in France. Bilawal Bhutto. Sept. 21, 1988. Dec. 30, 2007. PPP chairman. Bakhtawar. Born in 1990. Aseefa. February 3, 1993.

'Family name everything for Benazir's teenage son'

AFP, Islamabad What's in a name? For the teenage son of Benazir Bhutto, analysts say, almost everything. They say that while the family name guarantees he will have legions of supporters, it means almost as many will try to bring him down. In South Asia, political dynasties command cult-like devotion from largely feudal societies, and Benazir's son Bilawal knows he can rely on the support of millions of Pakistan's impoverished farmers and city-dwellers. The strength of the Benazir brand was made clearer than ever on Sunday, when it was announced that, after taking the reins of her Pakistan People's Party, he had added her surname -- to become Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. The bespectacled 19-year-old then invoked her in his first speech as leader -- but declaring "my mother always told me that democracy is the best revenge" betrayed the fact that vengeance and tragedy haunt his family, analysts say. "He faces the challenge of keeping the party united when he comes of age and directly assumes the responsibility of chairman, against the backdrop of the Bhutto family's history of violent deaths," analyst Hasan Askari told AFP. Apart from Benazir, his grandfather and party founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was executed under martial law, while his uncles Shah Nawaz and Murtaza died of poisoning and shooting respectively. The PPP has used their deaths -- all of them are now referred to by their followers with the title "Shaheed", or martyr -- to build devotion among the party faithful. "In parties with charismatic leaders, particularly in third-world countries, bloodlines are very, very important because they give legitimacy to succession, and that is why Bilawal changed his name," analyst Shafiqat Mahmood told AFP. "One would say in any democratic society that a 19-year-old being party chairman is strange. But it is not strange when you are dealing with charismatic, leader-led parties," said Mahmood. The sight of hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis flocking to the family mausoleum for Benazir Bhutto's funeral illustrated the immense hold the name still has on the party's followers. Most were rural folk living on the Bhutto family's extensive lands in southern Sindh province -- villagers who on election day expect to be driven to the polls by loyal local mayors, their votes in the bag. Choosing Bilawal as leader was also seen as crucial at a time when the party faces yet another tragedy, heading off succession problems and papering over cracks in the party over Benazir's dealings with President Pervez Musharraf.

US stuck with Musharraf Say White House runners

AFP, Washington Clinton's interview was taped before Benazir's 19-year-old son Bilawal was chosen Sunday to assume the mantle of her party, which said it would take part in elections on January 8 despite unrest triggered by the assassination. Clinton stressed: "This is an opportunity for President Musharraf to step up and actually fulfil many of the words and promises that he's made to me and to many others over the course of a number of years." Democratic challenger Barack Obama denied making political hay out of Benazir's murder, after arguing that Clinton's vote in 2002 for the Iraq war had stoked unrest in Pakistan by distracting US attention from Afghanistan. "What I do believe is that if we are going to take seriously the problem of Islamic terrorism, and the stability of Pakistan, then we have to look at it in a wider context," he said on NBC. Obama said the US administration's hefty financial support for its "war on terror" ally should not translate into a "blank check" for Musharraf, and urged the Pakistani leader to earn greater legitimacy through open elections. Democratic contender John Edwards told the CBS network he had spoken to Musharraf after Benazir's killing and had insisted that "democratisation in Pakistan must continue." "He assured me that it would. That has to be taken with a huge grain of salt, given his history," Edwards said. Republican hopeful John McCain, a Vietnam war hero and foreign-policy veteran, said Musharraf was "important" to Pakistan's future and echoed Clinton in asking "who will take his place?" Senator McCain said he was "disappointed" that under Musharraf, parts of northwest Pakistan had become "a safe haven for Taliban." But the president can still "play a key and pivotal role" in moving Pakistan back towards democracy, he said on ABC.



A Pakistani soldier stands guard as a bus passes by in the streets of Karachi yesterday. Millions of Pakistanis have ventured out into the streets of major cities for the first time in three days, as violence eased after the end of an official mourning period for slain political Benazir Bhutto.



Bhutanese citizens register with officials to cast their votes in general elections at Pashaka polling station in Jaigaon, some 45kms from the Indo-Bhutanese border yesterday. The Himalayan outpost of Bhutan is staging its first parliamentary polls this week as the kingdom steers away from royal rule, but officials worry many voters will stay away.

Sri Lanka vows victory against Tigers in '08

AFP, Colombo More than 60,000 people have been killed in the conflict. Karannagoda said the guerrillas were starved of supplies after the navy sank their fleet of gun-running ships in 2007, but the rebels continued to receive some items from neighbouring India. "The arms and ammunition they receive at present come only across the Palk Straits from Tamil Nadu" in southern India, the paper quoted Karannagoda as saying. Government forces wrested control over the east of the island in July, and have since focused attention on dismantling the mini-state in the northern Wanni region. "The Tri-Forces commanders yesterday expressed confidence that 2008 would be a decisive year in their effort of eliminating terrorism... they were already on course towards accomplishing this task," the Daily News said. On Sunday, the state-run Sunday Observer said the military planned to "eliminate" the Tamil Tigers -- and their estimated 3,000-strong army -- in the next six months.

Hillary to win polls, Musharraf to go: FT

AFP, London Hillary Clinton will win the US presidency in 2008 while the world's biggest economy will avoid falling into a full-blown recession, the Financial Times forecast yesterday. In other New Year's tips for the coming year, the Britain-based daily also predicted that China will not revalue its currency, while Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf has a greater than 50 percent risk of losing his job. In the United States, the FT said that Clinton will "most likely" win the November presidential election. "Barring a remarkable upset, the Democratic nominee will win the election, so great is the unpopularity of this (Bush) administration, and Mrs Clinton will be the nominee," it said. While noting the surge in favour of her rival Barack Obama, it concluded that "her lead among Democrats is big and well-entrenched. Overturning it is likely to be beyond even Mr Obama."

Pro-Thaksin party claims enough seats to form govt

AFP, Bangkok The political party aligned with ousted Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra said Monday it had enough seats to form a government after three minor parties joined its coalition. "The four parties have agreed to cooperate in forming the government and we are confident we can absolutely form the government," said Samak Sundaravej, leader of the Thaksin-linked People Power Party (PPP). "It will be 254 government seats," he added. PPP won 233 of the 480 seats in the lower house in elections on December 23, just short of the majority needed to govern alone. Its victory dealt a blow to the generals who tried to purge Thailand of Thaksin's influence after ousting him in a bloodless coup in September 2006. The Democrat Party came second in the poll -- the first since the coup -- with 165 seats, but refused to join a PPP-led government, forcing Thaksin's allies to woo the five small parties who shared the remaining seats. PPP's coalition partners Rum Jai Thai Chart Pattana, Matchima Party and Pracharaj party won 21 seats between them in the election, giving the group led by the PPP a narrow majority of 254 seats. PPP will likely see its share of seats shrink to 230, however, after the Election Commission on Sunday said it was moving to disqualify three of the party's winning candidates over allegations of vote buying. By-elections will be held within 30 days, after a government legal body approves the commission's decision. Samak, who has proclaimed himself Thailand's next prime minister, said that even if the three candidates' victories were overturned, it would not affect their coalition. "Even if we are down to 251 seats, we still can set up the government," he told reporters, adding that he expected his government to be formed by the end of January, when parliament convenes.