

BENAZIR KILLING Pakistanis blame govt agencies

AP, Islamabad

Nearly half of Pakistanis suspect that government agencies or government-linked politicians killed Benazir Bhutto, an opinion poll showed, highlighting popular mistrust in the country's US-allied president ahead of elections next month.

Benazir, an opposition leader and former prime minister, was killed in a gun and suicide bomb attack on Dec. 27.

The government of President Pervez Musharraf has blamed Islamic extremists for the assassination, who had already reportedly threatened to kill her. Benazir was a secular politician popular in the United States and other Western countries for her vocal opposition to hardline Islam.

But her political party and family members have repeatedly made vague allegations that elements within Musharraf's government may have been involved. Musharraf has denied any role in the slaying.



United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan (R) and US President George W. Bush bid each other farewell Saturday at the al-Mushref palace in Abu Dhabi. Bush arrived in the United Arab Emirates Sunday for a visit in which he was set to reach out to ordinary Iranians across the Gulf in a new swipe at the Tehran government.

Bhutan to act tough on 'misbehaving' lawmakers

PTI, Thimphu

With elections to Bhutan's lower house still to be held, the Himalayan country has already issued a stern warning to its MPs-to-be, saying those found guilty of misbehaving when the National Assembly is in session will be dealt strictly with.

"Violators would be reprimanded, or sent out from the remaining or entire session of the day's business, depending on the seriousness of the violation," said National Assembly secretary Nima Tshering.

"Deliberations are expected to be intense, but we also expect MPs to be more sensible and respect the solemnity of the throne," he said.

But he hoped that the very fact that Bhutan will have qualified and experienced MPs will discourage what is unacceptable.

Bhutan's draft constitution says any citizen willing to contest the country's polls must possess a formal university degree.

On the other hand, the National Assembly hall will not see its members sit face to face.

IAEA announces new nuke accord with Iran

ElBaradei holds talks with Iranian leaders

AFP, Vienna Tehran

The UN atomic watchdog said yesterday that it had agreed with Iran a four-week deadline to clear up all remaining issues regarding Tehran's disputed nuclear activities.

However, Vienna-based diplomats expressed scepticism that Iran would really come clean about its nuclear activities, both past and present, within the new timeframe.

In a statement issued after two days of meetings between the International Atomic Energy Agency and Iran, the IAEA said both sides had agreed a four-week deadline to clear up the last outstanding questions.

IAEA director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, and Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad agreed that the so-called "work plan" should be completed in the next four weeks, the agency said.

The so-called "work plan" was a deal struck between ElBaradei and

Tehran last year to deal with unresolved questions regarding Iran's atomic drive.

The key issues were Iran's past experiments with plutonium, its use of uranium-enriching P1 and P2 centrifuges, questions about particles of arms-grade enriched uranium found by IAEA inspectors at Tehran's Technical University, and, most significantly, the possible military applications of the nuclear technology.

Originally, the work plan had envisaged resolving all issues by the end of 2007, but that deadline passed unmentioned by all sides.

In Tehran, the head of Iran's atomic energy organisation Gholam Reza Aghazadeh had told the ISNA news agency that Iran and IAEA had set a deadline for mid-February, in time before ElBaradei is scheduled to present his new report to the IAEA's board of governors in March.

"We are hoping that all the past and present questions about the dossier will be solved and that we

will return to a normal situation," Aghazadeh said.

ElBaradei, his deputy Olli Heinonen, and the agency's head of external relations, Vimos Csereny, had been in Tehran on Friday and Saturday, where they met both Khamenei and Ahmadinejad.

"Discussion took place on ways and means to accelerate implementation of safeguards in Iran, as well as additional confidence building measures," the IAEA said.

"While progress in the implementation of the work plan agreed in August 2007 was noted, an agreement was reached on the time-line for implementation of all the remaining verification issues specified in the work plan.

"According to the agreed schedule implementation of the work plan should be completed in the next four weeks," it said.

But Western diplomats were sceptical.

Iran had long been aware of which issues were worrying the UN and that it had originally agreed to

clear them up by the end of last year, they said.

"So it's about time it got on with resolving them rather than just stringing the process out," said British diplomat, on condition of anonymity.

"Fundamentally, the issue is one of confidence and only by suspending (uranium enrichment) to allow us to enter into negotiations will we be able to work out a long-term solution to provide that confidence," the diplomat said.

Indeed, the work plan was just one element among others, another Western diplomat said.

"It's one small part. Suspension of enrichment and applying the additional protocol are perhaps even more important," he said.

Enriched uranium is used to make both nuclear fuel and nuclear weapons and the West has always insisted that Iran suspend its enrichment activities to prove to the international community that its nuclear programme is peaceful, as Tehran claims.

কনসালটেন্ট নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

দেশের অন্যতম ভোগ্যপণ্য উৎপাদন ও সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান মেঘনা গ্রুপ অব ইন্ডাস্ট্রিজ-এর আওতাধীন ২৩টি শিল্প-প্রতিষ্ঠান সমন্বয়ে শিল্প পার্ক মেঘনাঘাট, সোনারগাঁও, নারায়নগঞ্জ-এ অবস্থিত।

উক্ত শিল্প-প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহ গ্রুপের নিজস্ব পাওয়ার প্লান্ট দ্বারা উৎপাদিত বিদ্যুতের সাহায্যে পরিচালিত হচ্ছে। উল্লেখিত শিল্প পার্কের লাইটিং সিস্টেম পূর্ণবিন্যাস ও সশ্রয়ী তথা পর্যাপ্ত আলোকিত করার জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজে অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন কনসালটেন্ট/কনসালটেন্টসী ফার্ম নিয়োগ করা হবে।

এ প্রেক্ষিতে সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজে অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন আগ্রহী কনসালটেন্ট/কনসালটেন্টসী ফার্মসমূহকে এই বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের ১০ (দশ) দিনের মধ্যে (ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত) প্রতিদিন সকাল ৯.০০টা থেকে বিকেল ৫.০০টা পর্যন্ত লেং কর্ণেল (অবঃ) কাদেকরজামান (জি.এম. এডমিন. ফ্যাক্টরী কমপ্লেক্স) সোনারগাঁও, নারায়নগঞ্জ-এর সাথে যোগাযোগ করে সরজমিন পরিদর্শন শেষে দরপত্র প্রদান করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে।



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Iraqi Shia and Sunni MPs sign 'unity' pact

AFP, Baghdad

Parliamentary blocs representing Sunnis, Shias and independents on Sunday signed on to a common platform stressing the need for Iraqi national unity and central control over oil reserves.

The blocs, should they come together as is expected in a new political alliance, would be a dominant force in the 275-member parliament, with a total of more than 100 seats.

Among those who signed the statement of common understanding are the movement of radical Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, the secular Iraqi National List of former prime minister Iyad Allawi and Sunni leader Salah al-Mutlak's National Dialogue Front, a joint settlement said.

The statement said the pact was signed "for the sake of the higher

national interest, to maintain a united Iraq free of sectarian divisions ... and to support national reconciliation."

The parties demanded that oil and gas "and other natural resources should remain Iraqi treasures" and not be allowed to be signed away by regional authorities.

The statement expressed "deep concern at individual acts without reference to central government, such as the signing of contracts with foreign companies" -- an allusion to Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, which has signed 15 crude oil contracts with 20 foreign concerns since August.

The parties also came out in support of a political agreement over the future of northern oil city of Kirkuk, rather than a promised referendum that had been due to be held last year.



Pakistani lawyers stand in a cage as they demonstrate against the house detention of sacked judges and lawyers in Peshawar yesterday. Lawyers and judges have been at the centre of months of political turmoil in Pakistan since President Pervez Musharraf suspended the Supreme Court's then chief justice, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, in March, setting off nationwide protests.

Kenya under pressure for political deal

AFP, Nairobi

The death toll from violence in the wake of disputed elections in Kenya has passed 700, police said Sunday, as rival political leaders remained under international pressure to drop all preconditions for talks.

"The country wide death toll is more than 700 dead," a top police commander told AFP after another senior officer reported 89 more bodies had been recovered in the Rift Valley and western provinces.

Four new deaths were reported in the Rift Valley overnight.

An official from the Kenya Red Cross Society confirmed the new recorded deaths, and revised its official toll from 486 to 575 dead. A tally by AFP now stands at 693.

The toll rose after UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga -- who claims he was robbed of the presidency in the December 27 elections -- that failure to negotiate a solution to the deadlock would be disastrous.

121 American war veterans linked to killings

AP, New York

At least 121 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans have committed a killing or been charged in one in the United States after returning from combat, The New York Times reported yesterday.

The newspaper said it also logged 349 homicides involving all active-duty military personnel and new veterans in the six years since military action began in Afghanistan, and later Iraq. That represents an 89-percent increase over the previous six-year period, the newspaper said.

About three-quarters of those homicides involved Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, the newspaper said. The report did not illuminate the exact relationship between those cases and the 121 killings also mentioned in the report.

The newspaper said its research involved searching local news reports, examining police, court and military records and interviewing defendants, their lawyers and families, victims' families and military and law enforcement officials.

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