

Pak election a victory for democracy: Bush

AFP, Accra

US President George W Bush yesterday embraced Pakistan's elections as "a significant victory" for democracy and said he hoped the new government would "be friends of the United States."

"It's now time for the newly elected folks to show up and join their government. And the question then is: 'will they be friends of the United States?' and I certainly hope so," he said.

Bush declined to discuss the political fate of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, amid stepped up calls following the opposition's sweeping victory for the staunch US ally's resignation. Musharraf has refused to quit.

"We view Pakistan as an important ally. We've got common interests. We've got interests in dealing with radicals who killed Benazir Bhutto. We've got interests in help-

ing make sure there's no safe haven so those people can plot and plan attacks on the United States of America and Pakistan," said Bush.

Nawaz Sharif, the man Musharraf removed from office in a 1999 coup, and the widower of assassinated former premier Benazir Bhutto, both said they wanted to work with other opposition groups after Monday's vote.

Sharif urged Musharraf to quit, while Asif Ali Zardari said he would not work with anyone associated with the party that backed Musharraf in the last parliament, which observers said suffered a stinging defeat at the polls.

"I appreciate the fact that President Musharraf has done exactly that which he said he was going to do. He said he would hold elections, he said he would get rid of his emergency law," said Bush.

"There was a victory for the people of Pakistan, and that is,

there were elections held that have been judged as being fair. And the people have spoken. I view that as a significant victory."

"I view it as a part of the victory in the war on terror. After all, ideologues can't stand -- like these guys we're dealing with -- can't stand free societies, that's why they try to kill innocent people, that's why they tried to intimidate people during the election process," said the US president.

Asked by the Wall Street Journal whether he would resign or retire, Musharraf said: "No, not yet. We have to move forward in a way that we bring about a stable democratic government to Pakistan."

Musharraf was also quoted in the interview published on the newspaper's website as saying he would like to function "with any party and any coalition because that is in the interest of Pakistan."

Suicide bomber kills 10 in Iraq

AFP, Baquba, Iraq

Ten people were killed when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a market near the restive city of Baquba north of Baghdad yesterday, an Iraqi army officer said.

"A suicide bomber wearing an explosives belt blew himself up in the market of Muqadadiyah, killing at least 10 people and wounding 15 others," General Ragheb al-Omayri told AFP.

Muqadadiyah is about 45 kilometres (about 30 miles) northeast of Baquba, capital of Diyala province which is now considered the most dangerous area in Iraq after US and Iraqi forces chased Al-Qaeda insurgents out of their strongholds in Baghdad and surrounding areas.

The province is the focus of a massive sweep against Al-Qaeda, known as Operation Iron Harvest and part of the Phantom Phoenix assault targeting insurgents across the country launched on January 8.



Asif Ali Zardari, widower of slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto addresses supporters prior to a party meeting at his residence in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf rejected demands to quit and called for a "harmonious coalition" as victorious opposition parties mulled a grouping that could force the key US ally from power.

Musharraf ally sees fierce struggle in parliament

AFP, Islamabad

A close ally of Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday predicted a fierce struggle among election-winning parties over the formation of a new government.

Sheikh Rasheed, a stalwart of the former ruling pro-Musharraf Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) party, said he foresaw a "cat and mouse game" engulfing the incoming parliament.

"President Musharraf wants to work with the new parliament but this could be sabotaged by certain politicians," Rasheed said in an apparent reference to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who has called for Musharraf to resign.

China happy over smooth holding of Pak elections

AFP, Beijing

China said yesterday it was pleased that elections in long-time ally Pakistan went calmly and urged the nation to maintain political stability.

"China is happy about the smooth completion of Pakistan's elections," foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said in a statement posted on his ministry's website.

"Pakistan is China's friendly neighbour, and we hope Pakistan will continue to maintain stability, development, democracy and harmony after the establishment of the new government."

Democratic Pakistan set to keep up 'terror' war: analysts

AFP, Islamabad

Western allies will anxiously eye Pakistan's new political set-up for signs of backsliding in the "war on terror", but a democratic government will likely help their cause, analysts say.

The nuclear-armed nation's voters on Monday handed a massive electoral defeat to parliamentary allies of President Pervez Musharraf, Washington's trusted bulwark against al-Qaeda and Taliban rebels since 2001.

The biggest parliamentary parties are now those of slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto and ex-premier Nawaz Sharif, but they are untested when it comes to curbing Islamic militants based near the Afghan border.

"It is the only thing that concerns the West, frankly," said Najam Sethi, editor of the Daily Times newspaper.

He said that if the parties in

parliament become more sensitive to public opinion -- which says Musharraf conducted the war under the dictates of America -- then the West fears the "war on terror" could take a lower priority.

But analysts expect that whatever coalition emerges as the new government will pursue Musharraf's policies -- and say the transition to civilian democracy will encourage a political solution to extremism.

"We will have to carry on the war against terrorism because it is in our own national interest. All the political parties understand this," Jamsheed Ayaz, head of the Islamabad-based Institute of Regional Studies, told AFP.

"This is the fight for the survival of Pakistan. I am optimistic that they will join hands to fight the menace together," added Ayaz, whose institute is partially funded by the government.

Washington and other capitals will be encouraged by the fact that Benazir, who was assassinated in a December suicide attack blamed by the government on al-Qaeda, was seen as a force for moderation.

In a book published posthumously this month, she spoke of the need to tackle Islamic extremism through political means. Before her death, she often expressed her commitment to the "war on terror".

"The PPP (Benazir's Pakistan People's Party) will give the official sanction to the war on terror aspect even if Musharraf is not there," Sethi said.

"The only person who can object to this war on terror is Nawaz Sharif but Nawaz will not do that. Nawaz will probably find he is restrained," he added.

"The West is feeling much more comfortable now than they were the day after the election."

আয়মান আব্বাস আল-বিন-রিয়াজ
এক সন্ত দরদার মানুষ।

দাদা ও মায়ীরা নামের সাথেই
স্বপ্নের সাজেশ
মরিক বেছে
নামটি বেছে
যে তার উত্তর ফুঁ
"আয়মান" অঙ্কন।

দাদা/মায়ী
বেফনা, পাকি-১২, কোড-৭
সেটর-৪, উত্তর মেডেল টাউন, ঢাকা-১২০০



A French soldier serving in KFOR stretches a barbed wire at the Serbia-Kosovo border crossing in Jarinje yesterday. Nato peacekeepers yesterday sealed two Kosovo border crossings with Serbia for 24 hours after they were torched by angry Serbs on Monday.

3 killed, 25 hurt in Indonesia quake

AFP, Jakarta

A strong 7.5-magnitude quake rocked Indonesia's Aceh province yesterday, killing three people, seriously injuring 25 others and briefly sparking a tsunami alert, officials said.

The US Geological Survey said the undersea quake struck at 3:08 pm (0808 GMT) some 312 kilometres west-southwest of the North Sumatra capital Medan, at a depth of 34 kilometres.

Indonesia's meteorological agency put the initial magnitude at 6.8 but later upgraded it to 7.3. It said the quake struck 42 kilometres northwest of Sinabang, the main town on Simeulue island, off the west coast of Sumatra.

Aftershocks measuring 5.5 and 5.3 hit shortly afterwards, it said.

"Three are dead, 25 seriously injured, many buildings damaged" on Simeulue, health ministry official Rustam Pakaya said in a text message.

Kosovo proclamation 'gross violation' of law: Russia

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday described Kosovo's proclamation of independence as a "gross violation" of international law and said an EU security mission to Kosovo had no legal basis.

The proclamation "is a gross violation of international law. That doesn't even need to be proven," Lavrov told journalists in Moscow.

"The whole world knows perfectly well that the negotiations were interrupted in an artificial fashion due to external interference," Lavrov said, referring to talks between Pristina and Belgrade prior to Kosovo's independence declaration on Sunday.

He went on to criticise the

European Union's sending of a "Rule of Law Mission" intended to help stabilise Kosovo. The mission comprises some 2,000 people who will train and mentor police, judges and customs officials.

"The European Union is unilaterally sending to Kosovo a mission to uphold the law. There is a bitter irony even in its name -- a mission to uphold the law in violation of the supreme law, international law," Lavrov said.

Russia, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, vehemently opposed Kosovo's declaration of independence, supporting its ally Belgrade and opposing the United States and other Western powers on the matter.

Moscow has called on UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to state publicly his position on the Kosovo situation.

In a statement earlier, foreign ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said that the sending of the EU mission "has no kind of legal basis."

"As is known, preparations to deploy the EU mission have bypassed and are bypassing the UN Security Council," Kamynin said in a statement.

Kamynin went on to describe as "absurd" the EU's mention of UN resolution 1244 in a declaration on Monday -- the resolution being interpreted differently by Brussels and Moscow.

'Killer bus' driver offers to adopt orphaned baby

AFP, New Delhi

A bus driver yesterday offered to adopt a toddler whose father was run over and killed by his vehicle in the Indian capital and whose mother then committed suicide soon after.

The bus was speeding when it lost control and crushed migrant worker Aukhid Ali, 30, last week as the family waited at a bus stop, police said.

The victim's distraught wife, in her early 20s, hanged herself after the accident, leaving the three-month-old baby in the care of hospital staff.

"I am really sorry. I will look after the baby and will even adopt the child as I don't have any children," the bus driver, Ram Chander, told India's NDTV network.

Chander is out on bail after being accused of rash driving.

Ali and his wife had come to New Delhi from eastern India to look for work and had few acquaintances and little knowledge of the local language Hindi.

7 die in South Korean army helicopter crash

AFP, Seoul

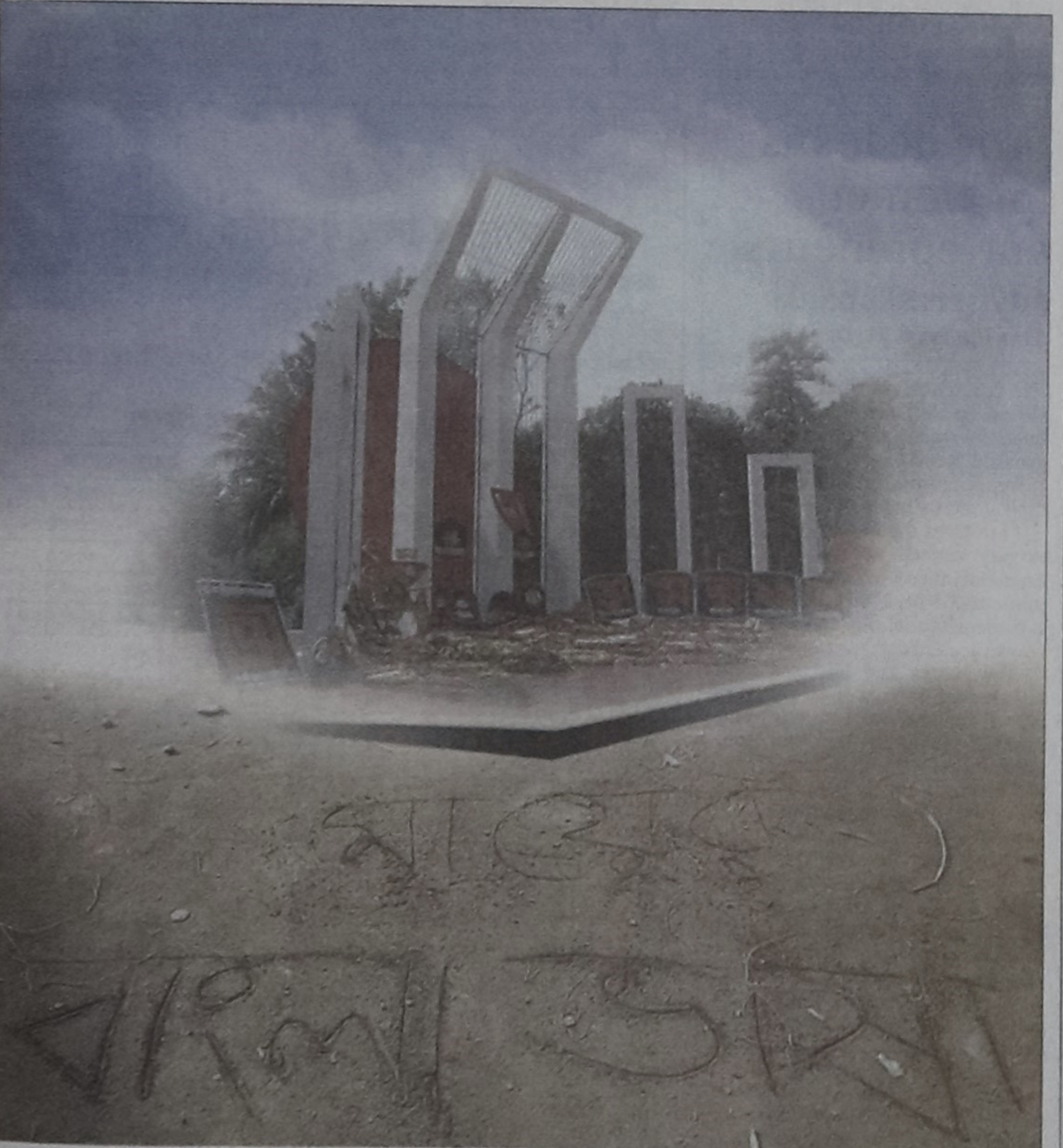
South Korea's army grounded a fleet of ageing helicopters after one of them crashed early yesterday during a medical mission, killing all seven people on board, defence officials said.

Army Chief of Staff, General Park Heung-Ryul, ordered around 120 UH-1H helicopters be grounded as investigators checked whether mechanical failure led to the crash in Yangpyeong County, 50 kilometres east of Seoul.

The UH-1H "Huey" helicopter went down at around 1:40 am on a hillside while returning to base after making an emergency flight to take a patient to a military hospital near the capital.

"All the seven soldiers on board were found dead," a defence ministry spokesman told AFP, adding their bodies were lying in state at a military hospital morgue.

An army doctor aged 33 who had been married only four months, and a nurse named Sun Hyo-Sun who had just returned from maternity leave, were among the dead. Two pilots and three army conscripts also died.



আমার ভাইয়ের রক্তে রাঙানো

২১শে ফেব্রুয়ারী, আমি কি ভুলিতে পারি



সোস্যাল ইনভেস্টমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড

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আগামী ২১শে ফেব্রুয়ারী

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