

Pak ruling coalition vows to reinstate judges

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's ruling coalition yesterday renewed its pledge to reinstate dozens of judges who were sacked by embattled President Pervez Musharraf, a minister said after a key high-level meeting.

Asif Ali Zardari, the widower of slain opposition leader Benazir Bhutto and head of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP), met with former premier Nawaz Sharif of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Islamabad.

The two parties trounced Musharraf's allies in elections in February, and then pledged at a summit in the mountain resort of Bhubar to restore the chief justice and other judges within 30 days of forming a government.

But Tuesday's meeting between Zardari and Sharif came amid local reports of divisions over the issue within the coalition, whose members were at each other's throats during their periods in government in the 1990s.

The coalition "renewed its commitment to the Bhurban declaration," Information Minister Sherry Rehman said in a statement issued after the meeting.

"The meeting was one of a series that the coalition intends to have regularly," said Rehman, Bhutto's former spokeswoman.

Musharraf sacked the country's chief justice and dozens of other judges under a state of emergency in November, when it appeared that the Supreme Court was about to overturn his re-election as president the month before.

The judges could in theory challenge Musharraf's position -- and so restoring them with their full powers would spark a major confrontation with the US-backed president.

New Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani, once a key aide to Bhutto, freed chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry from house arrest last month, but analysts say the PPP wants to avoid an overt standoff with Musharraf for now.

However, Sharif, the man ousted by Musharraf in 1999, has openly called for the president to quit and made the restoration of the outspoken Chaudhry a key plank of his policy platform.

Reports say there is even a split about when the government was

officially formed, with the PPP saying it was after provincial assemblies were sworn in and Sharif's party saying it was after the federal cabinet took office on March 31.

Sharif left Zardari's residence, where the meeting was held, without speaking to the media.

His spokesman, Siddiqul Farooq, told AFP earlier that it would be an "important meeting. The agenda is restoration of judges and revival of the constitution as it was before the October 12, 1999 coup."

Raja Pervez Ashraf, minister for water and power, told reporters that the coalition leaders "only took stock of the political situation and nothing extraordinary can be attached with this meeting."



Asif Ali Zardari (C-R), the widower of slain Pakistani former premier Benazir Bhutto and head of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) speaks with former premier Nawaz Sharif (C-L) at the Zardari residence in Islamabad yesterday. The leaders of Pakistan's ruling coalition held a crucial meeting to discuss the reinstatement of judges sacked by embattled President Pervez Musharraf.

Bilawal Bhutto more 'influential' than Bush

THE DAILY TIMES, Lahore

Pakistan People's Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari may be included in TIME magazine's 2008 list of the top 100 influential people in the world.

According to a report posted on the Hindustan Times website on Monday, Bilawal, 19, has already gained 7,875 votes and is currently at number 20, much ahead of US President George Bush and presidential hopefuls Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and John McCain.

The list presents Bilawal's positives as "announcing his intention to finish school at Christ Church before entering politics" and the fact that he "practically admitted his appointment in the wake of his mother's assassination was largely symbolic."

TIME magazine is currently inviting readers to vote for people who shape the world and deserve a spot on its annual list. The list will be published in the magazine's next issue.

Jets pound Tiger territory 7 rebels killed in ground battles

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan war planes bombed a communications centre inside rebel-held territory Tuesday after heavy ground battles left seven Tamil Tigers dead, the defence ministry said.

The target was taken on Tuesday afternoon as ground troops battled the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) along the de facto border of their mini state in the north of the island, the ministry said.

"Pilots confirm that the target was hit accurately," the ministry said without elaborating.

The air attack came as the ministry reported seven Tiger rebels had been killed in fighting since Monday.

It said two paramilitary police were also wounded in a roadside bomb attack in the north-central part of the country on Tuesday. The attack was blamed on the LTTE.

Ministry figures show that at least 2,857 rebels have been killed

by government troops since the start of the year, while 172 soldiers have lost their lives in the same period.

Verification of casualty claims is impossible as Colombo bars journalists and aid workers from travelling to embattled areas.

Tens of thousands of people have died since 1972 when the Tamil Tigers launched an armed struggle to carve out an independent homeland in the island's north and east for Tamils.

Priyanka meets Rajiv killing conspirator in prison

AFP, New Delhi

The daughter of assassinated Indian premier Rajiv Gandhi on Tuesday confirmed she had met one of the people behind her father's murder.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said meeting Nalini Sriharan at her prison helped her come to terms with the killing of her father by a suicide bomber in 1991.

"I would like to say it was a purely personal visit that I undertook completely on my own initiative," Vadra said in a rare statement to the media.

"I do not believe in anger, hatred and violence and I refuse to allow it any power over my life," the 35-year-old mother of two said.

"Meeting with Nalini Sriharan was my way of coming to peace with the violence and loss that I have experienced," she added.

The meeting, which took place on March 19 in southern Tamil Nadu state's Vellore prison, came to light after a newspaper Tuesday reported that a lawyer had sought details of it under India's right to information act.

Rajiv was assassinated on May 21, 1991, during an election rally in Tamil Nadu's Sriperumbudur town by a woman suicide bomber said by New Delhi to be a member of Sri Lanka's Tamil separatists.

Massive KL rally marks end of Anwar ban

THE STRAITS TIMES/ ANN, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's opposition held a massive rally here last night to mark the end of its leader Anwar Ibrahim's five-year ban from holding political office, with him announcing to a cheering crowd his intention to "take over the government".

From today, the former deputy prime minister can once again stand for election, bringing him significantly closer towards his long-cherished dream of becoming prime minister.

More than 10,000 people converged at a historic private Malay club in Kampung Baru last night - a reminder to the Barisan Nasional (BN) government about the resurgent opposition which made unprecedented gains in last month's general election.

"We are going to take over the government soon," Datuk Seri Anwar said during a 40-minute speech.

Myanmar detains 20 activists

AP, Yangon

Myanmar's military junta detained more than 20 activists as they walked through the northwestern city of Sittwe in a peaceful rally against the country's proposed constitution, an opposition party spokesman said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Myo Nyunt, a youth member of the opposition party and a close aide of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, was arrested at his grandmother's home near Yangon, said Nyan Win, spokesman for the National League for Democracy. He was taken from his home near Yangon on Tuesday morning.

He was given a 15-day prison sentence by a court for failing to report to authorities when he spent a night at someone else's house, Nyan Win said.

In Myanmar, the law requires that a person inform local authorities when staying overnight at a house where they are not listed as a member. But Nyan Win said Myo Nyunt was sentenced because he was an active member of the party

Maoists set to play major role in Nepal

AP, New Delhi

Two years after coming out of the bush, Nepal's Maoists are marching across the Himalayan kingdom just not in the way many thought they would.

After a decade-long fight against the government that claimed 13,000 lives, the former insurgents are defying expectations by leading in the early tallies from Thursday's election for a constitutional assembly that will shape a new Nepal.

Maoist candidates took 114 of the 207 districts where counting had been completed Tuesday, putting the movement far ahead of the traditional political parties, the centrist Nepali Congress with 31 seats and the rival Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) with 28.

It was too early to declare the Maoists the winner, however. More than half the Constituent Assembly's 601 seats will be allocated according to the parties' percentage of the total vote and a clear picture of the body's makeup is not expected until later this week or even next week.

Still, the Maoists are assured of a major role in the new assembly, which will rewrite the constitution and most likely end a royal dynasty that has reigned for 239 years.

The election was intended to cement a 2006 peace deal with the Maoists, who gave up their fight for a communist state after widespread unrest forced King Gyanendra to cede total power, which he had seized the year before.

The Maoists' strong showing at the ballot box removes what many feared was the biggest threat in the wake of the elections: disaffected former rebels renewing their armed struggle.

But it raises a host of other questions: Are the Maoists the committed, if left-leaning, capitalists they now claim to be? Can leaders accustomed to giving battlefield orders handle the give and take of a democracy?

And what of the new government's relations with India, the regional heavyweight? And the United States, which still considers the former rebel movement a terrorist organisation?

Iran would 'eliminate Israel' if attacked Says army general

AFP, Tehran

Iran would "eliminate Israel from the global arena" if it was attacked by the Jewish state, the deputy commander of the army warned yesterday, amid an intensifying war of words between the two foes.

"We are not worried by Israeli manoeuvres, but if Israel takes such action against the Islamic Republic of Iran, we will eliminate it from the global arena," Mohammad Reza Ashtiani was quoted as saying by the Mehrnews agency.

His comments came a week after Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer warned that any Iranian attack against Israel "would lead to the destruction of the Iranian nation."

Ashtiani, whose comments were also reported by the official IRNA news agency, was speaking at a news conference ahead of Iran's national army day on Thursday when a major military parade is expected in Tehran.

"As the President (Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) has said, we have a great motivation to defend the frontiers of our country," he added.

"In the case of any action by

Israel, we are ready to eliminate it from the global arena."

Israel last week held a five-day exercise codenamed "Turning Point" simulating air and missile attacks on cities, including by non-conventional weapons, the biggest drill of its kind ever carried out in the Jewish state.

The exercise sparked alarm in Israel's northern neighbour Lebanon, home to the Shia militant group Hezbollah, which is enthusiastically supported by Tehran.

Israel, the Middle East's sole if undeclared atomic arms power, accuses Iran of seeking a nuclear weapon and, along with its chief ally the United States, has never explicitly ruled out a military attack against the Islamic republic.

But Iran, which does not recognise Israel, insists that its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful and solely aimed at generating energy for a growing population.

Ahmadinejad provoked outrage by calling for Israel to be "wiped from the map" and then repeatedly predicting it is doomed to disappear. He also courted more controversy by playing down the scale of the Holocaust.

EML EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Eastern Maritime Limited, A renowned joint Venture Shipping Company Representing one of the largest Container Carriers is inviting Applications for the posts of "Sales Executive" for immediate appointment. Applicants having good command over English language and at least five years experience in Sales are encouraged to apply before 30th April, 2008.

To Managing Director
Eastern Maritime Ltd.
Ispahani Building (3rd Floor), Agrabad
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Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM)
Plot No. 4, Main Road No. 1, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216. Tel: 9003031-35.

FACULTY SEARCH

BIBM, which imparts training to bank executives and also runs an MBM degree program, invites applications for filling some posts of Lecturer in the pay scale of Tk. 12,200-350×4-13,600-400×6-16,000. House rent allowance @ 60% of pay, Medical allowance @ 10% of pay & Conveyance allowance Tk.1500 per month and other benefits as per BIBM Employees' Service Regulations would also be admissible. Candidates having outstanding qualifications may be given advance increment(s) or offered appointment as Assistant Professor in the pay scale of Tk. 15,200-500×4-17,200-550×4-19,400. The recruitment would be restricted to the following disciplines in the subject specialisation indicated against each:

Discipline	Subject Specialisation
Economics	Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, International Trade, Quantitative Economics, Money & Banking.
Finance & Banking	Corporate Finance, Financial Institutions Management, Commercial Banking, Investment Banking.
Accounting	Management Accounting, Cost Accounting and Auditing.

Requirements: (i) Master's degree in/with 'major' in the appropriate discipline along with Honours/ 4 years Bachelor's degree in/with 'major' in the appropriate discipline (one of which must be First Class) from a reputed university; (ii) Very good academic background with no 3rd class/ division at any public examination; (iii) Preference will be given to persons having prior teaching/ training/ research experience and having publications in reputed journals; (iv) Age-upto 30 years on May 08, 2008 (relaxable for candidates having excellent qualifications).

Application showing the personal profile inclusive of details of academic qualifications, work/ training experience, publications with attested copies of educational certificates, mark sheets, a character certificate from a Class 1 Officer of the Government, other certificates and two passport size recent photographs duly attested along with Bank Draft/ Pay Order for Taka 200 (non-refundable) in favor of BIBM should reach the Director General, BIBM by May 08, 2008. Only short listed candidates will receive further communication.



International Finance Corporation- SouthAsia Enterprise Development Facility (IFC-SEDF)

Survey on the Financial Institution's Exposure to Environmental Risks in Lending
REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (REOI)

The South Asia Enterprise Development Facility of the International Finance Corporation (IFC-SEDF) is a multi-donor funded facility to support the establishment and growth of private small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Northeast India, Sri Lanka and Maldives. IFC-SEDF is managed by the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank Group. IFC-SEDF started its operations in October 2002 and since then has completed numerous projects aimed at SME development.

With a view to assisting the financial sector of Bangladesh in developing an Environmental Risk Management Guideline for the Financial Institutions (FIs), IFC-SEDF is willing to conduct a sector wide baseline survey of the loan disbursement portfolio related to environmental risks.

Scope of Work: An indicative, but not exhaustive list of Scope of Work is as follows:

1. Conduct baseline survey on Environmental and Social risk management and opportunities for Financial Institutions. Collect data from a representative sample- 50% of each of the three types of Financial Institutions (Private commercial banks, nationalized commercial banks and specialized commercial bank).
 - a. Categorizing the sectors that receive the most amount of loans from the FIs;
 - b. Categorizing the sectors according to their exposure to environmental regulations (future or actual);
2. Identify the risk measurement criteria followed by the FIs
3. Identify and prepare case studies where the FIs have been exposed to credit risks due to the project's environmental impacts (e.g. government's regulations on ETP or ban on polythene); or has mitigated environmental or social risks efficiently.

The Deliverables for this Project include a project proposal detailing:

1. A comprehensive survey report with data set and analysis.
2. Produce at least three case studies

Time schedule: 4 weeks, from 25th May to 25th June, 2008

Minimum Qualification Criteria and Eligibility of Consultancy Firm for this assignment:

1. Experience in conducting similar surveys;
2. Experience in working with the local FIs;
3. Experience in FI management systems and FI business operations, Environmental Audits/EIA, Social & Environmental laws and regulations of Bangladesh's Sustainability issues and investment
4. Availability of experienced and qualified manpower for conducting the assignment.

IFC-SEDF now invites eligible consultancy firms to indicate their interest in providing their services. Interested consultancy firms must provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures, description of similar assignments, experience in similar conditions, availability of appropriate skills among staff, etc). Consultancy firms may associate with other consultancy firms to enhance their qualifications.

Expressions of interests must be delivered (preferably by email) to the address below by April 23rd, 2008. The submission should be labeled as 'Survey on the Financial Institution's Exposure to Environmental Risks in Lending'. Only short listed firms would be contacted.

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