

Pakistan starts production of indigenous drone 'Falco'

ANI, Islamabad

Pakistan has started production of indigenous unmanned aircraft commonly known as drones from its leading aeronautical factory in Kamra in Punjab province.

The Pakistani version of drone called Falco is being produced in collaboration with an Italian company at the Kamra based Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC), the Daily Times reports.

"Falco is an advanced, tactical UAV designed by Selex Galileo Italy. It would address current and future surveillance and reconnaissance needs of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF)," a Pakistan Air Force (PAF) spokesperson said.

Islamabad has been pushing United States to provide the drone technology, if not the aircrafts, so that it could carry out operation against the Taliban and other extremist groups on its soil.

While Pakistan says the missile hits are proving counterproductive in the war on terror with more civilians being killed, America maintains that the drone strikes are proving to be very effective against the militants based in the lawless tribal regions along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Afghan polls hailed as 'success'

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's elections, a crucial landmark in the country's development under the guidance of the international community, have been hailed as a success even as voter turnout is expected to be low.

Within hours of polling centres closing praise poured in from around the world -- the United Nations, the EU, Nato and Washington, which between them maintain about 100,000 troops fighting the Afghan Taliban insurgency.

The West has pumped billions of dollars into Afghanistan since the 2001 US-led invasion and has a huge amount of political capital and resources riding on stabilising the country eight years after ejecting the Taliban from power.

But some of the estimated quarter of a million observers on the ground expressed concerns that Taliban intimidation kept people away, and could have slashed turnout to levels

that impact the credibility of final results.

Leading local monitors, the Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA), said turnout appeared to be lower than in the first presidential elections in 2004, "in particular the female turnout."

"Grenade and rocket attacks emerged as a major form of disruption in many parts of the country," FEFA said in a statement, adding that suicide bombings and gunfire at polling stations had also been reported.

The Taliban mounted a weeks-long campaign aimed at disrupting the polls and cutting turnout, which in turn could cast doubt over the significance of the final outcome.

Afghan authorities were upbeat, saying there were fewer insurgent attacks than expected while the election commission said it was hoping for turnout of around 50 percent, roughly the same as for 2005 parliamentary elections.

Asean backs Suu Kyi amnesty call

AFP, Jakarta

Senior Asian officials on Friday backed a proposal to issue an unprecedented call for amnesty for Myanmar democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi, Indonesia's foreign ministry spokesman said.

The officials from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), which includes Myanmar, discussed the "joint appeal" for Suu Kyi's release from house arrest during two days of talks in Indonesia, he said.

The officials had agreed to the petition in principle and would take the proposal back to their

capitals for consideration at ministerial level.

"The senior officials' meeting agreed to give recommendations to their ministers to convey their position to Myanmar related to the problem of Aung San Suu Kyi," spokesman Teuku Faizasyah told AFP.

"In principle it has been accepted as a joint appeal in the framework of the senior officials' meeting. This is a positive development which will be submitted to the foreign ministers."

Indonesia called for Suu Kyi's immediate release, he said.

Myanmar's junta recently extended the Nobel Peace laureate's confinement for 18 months after a trial widely seen as a sham.

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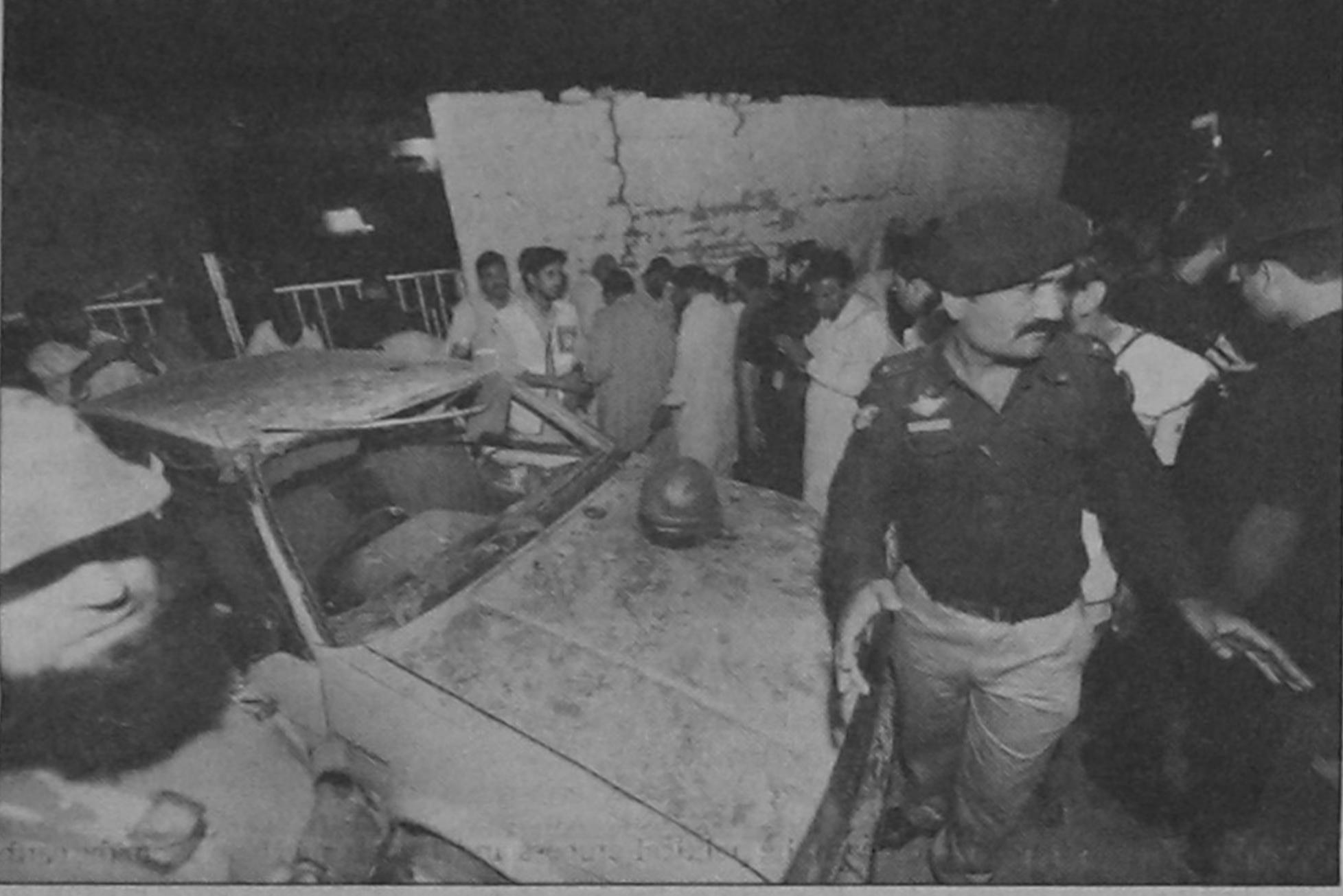


PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani police officials examine a damaged vehicle at the bomb blast site in Rawalpindi on Thursday. A bomb blast at a security checkpoint in Pakistan's garrison city Rawalpindi near the capital Islamabad injured six people on Thursday.

Trinamool wins two West Bengal seats

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Kolkata

West Bengal's main opposition party Trinamool Congress bagged both seats in this metropolis with impressive margins over the ruling Left Front in the by-polls to the assembly held Aug 18.

Trinamool nominee Swarnakamal Saha beat Communist Party of India's Prabir Deb by 21,557 votes in Sealdah.

In Bowbazar constituency, Trinamool's Sikha Mitra got 15,000 votes more than the Left Front-supported independent candidate Minati Gomes.

The by-polls became necessary after Congress legislators Sudip Bandyopadhyay and Somen Mitra were disqualified by Speaker HA Halim under the anti-defection law for crossing over to the Trinamool Congress.

'Pakistan pursuing Kashmir issue'

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistan Premier Yousuf Raza Gilani has insisted that the Kashmir issue is the "cornerstone" of the country's foreign policy and the government is vigorously pursuing it.

"Kashmir is the issue of the whole country and our total moral support is with the Kashmiri brothers," Gilani told the National Assembly or lower house of Parliament.

The government fully supported the Kashmiri people, he said adding the Kashmir issue is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy. Gilani was responding to a point of order raised yesterday by Special Committee on Kashmir chairman and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam chief Fazlur Rehman.

He directed National Assembly Deputy Speaker Faisal Karim Kundu to look into Rehman's reservations. He also said he would direct government officials and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to be available for briefings for parliament's special committee on Kashmir.

COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

Pakistan seeks Lankan help for training troops

ANI, Colombo

Pakistan has asked the Sri Lankan Army to provide training to its armed forces.

Following the Sri Lankan Army's tremendous success against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the Pakistan Government wants it to train their security personnel in counter-insurgency operations, Commander of the Sri Lankan Army, Lieutenant General Jagath Jayasuriya said.

Jayasuriya said several other countries have also sought information regarding the strategy adopted by the armed forces, which helped them to weed out the LTTE, the Dawn reports.

Former Sri Lanka Naval Chief Admiral Wasantha Karannagoda, who is currently the National Security Adviser, had recently said that the strategies and tactics adopted by the Sri Lankan navy to tackle the LTTE's naval arm could be very useful for other countries as well.

"Future conflicts would not be like facing battleships and destroyers but small and fast boats of non-state rogue navies which could be indulging in insurrections, piracies and trafficking of various kinds," Admiral Karannagoda had said.

It may be noted that Islamabad had provided help to Colombo during the war against LTTE by providing arms and ammunitions when other countries had refused.



Scientists come closer to 'synthetic life' in lab

ANI, London

A group of scientists has created a new "engineered" strain of bacteria - a development, which could be described as a step towards the creation of "synthetic life".

The team, including scientist J Craig Venter, a leading figure in the controversial field of synthetic biology, has successfully transferred the genome of one type of bacteria into a yeast cell, modified it, and then transplanted it into another bacterium.

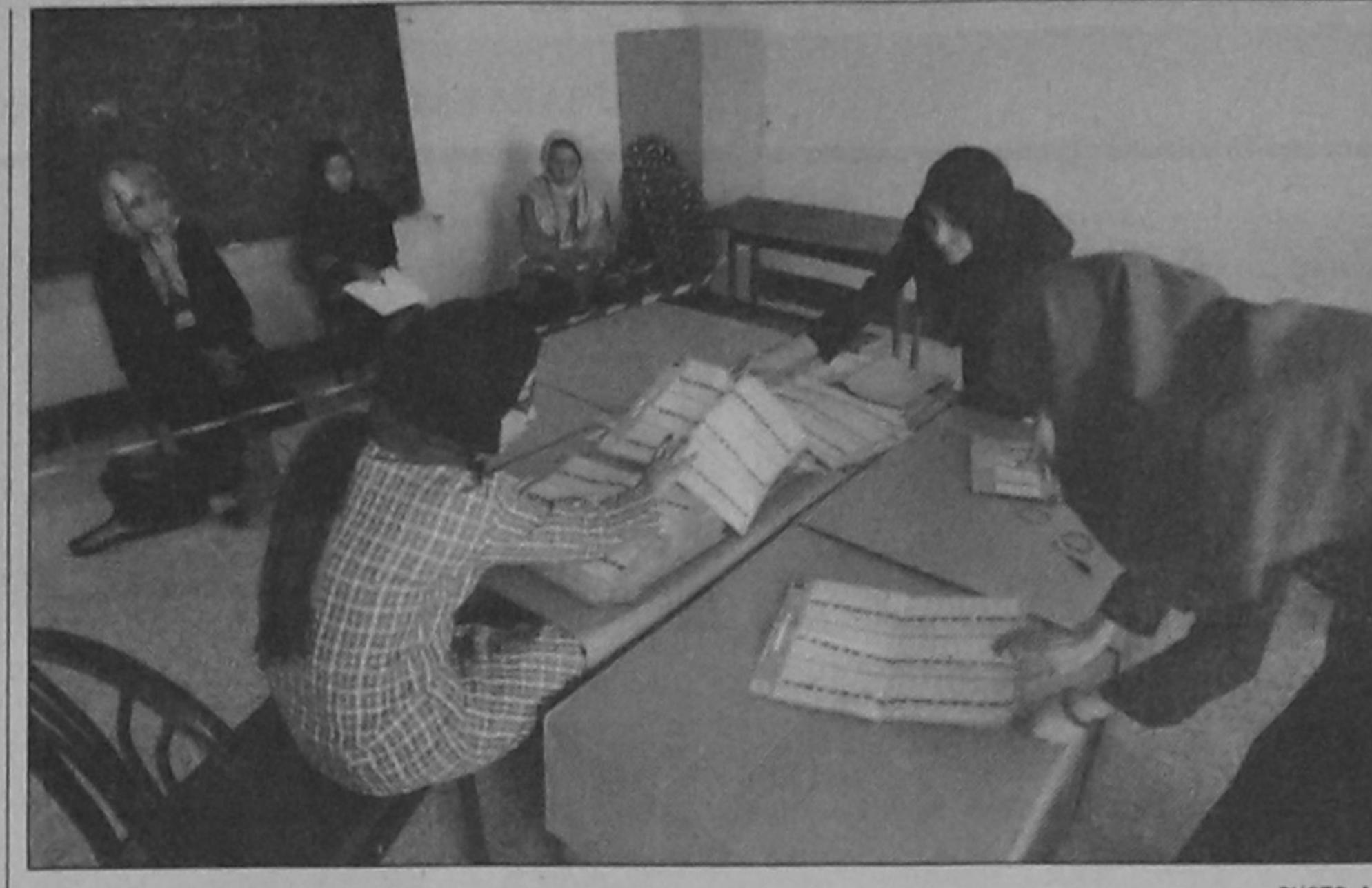
The study paves the way to the creation of a synthetic organism - inserting a human-made genome into a bacterial cell.

It has been described in the journal *Science*.

According to boffins, the advancement overcomes the obstacle of making a new inserted genome work inside a recipient cell.

The resulting cell Sanjay Vashee, one of the authors, and his team created went on to undertake multiple rounds of cell division, to produce a new strain of the modified bacteria.

Vashee is a researcher at the J. Craig Venter Institute in Rockville, Maryland, in the US. He explained to BBC News: "Bacteria have immune systems that protect them from foreign DNA such as those from viruses."



Taliban ambush Afghan ballot paper truck

AFP, Mazar-i-Sharif

Taliban militants ambushed a truck carrying ballot papers counted after Afghanistan's elections, setting fire to the vehicle and killing an election worker, police said yesterday.

The attack happened just outside Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of northern Afghanistan, considered relatively peaceful compared with parts of the south, late Thursday in the hours after the country's second presidential poll.

"A jeep and a truck were on their way from Siagird village after counting finished and were carrying ballot boxes to Mazar-i-Sharif," said Abdul Raouf Ta, deputy police chief for northern Balkh province.

PHOTO: AFP

Afghan election workers count the provincial elections ballots at a polling station in Herat yesterday. Contenders in the race to become Afghanistan's next president claimed to be heading for victory in polls acclaimed by the West but undermined by complaints of ballot-stuffing and low turnout.

Afghans swayed by beauty, not brains

AFP, Kabul

Faced with a sea of unknown faces, many Afghans confessed yesterday they saw little option but pluck for the pretty girl, the TV star or the good Muslim in a turban when voting for provincial councillors.

About 3,400 people ranging from elderly tribal chiefs to young students -- almost a tenth of them women -- ran for provincial council seats in elections held simultaneously with presidential polls on Thursday.

In capital Kabul, a bustling city with a teeming population of four million, 524

men and women were in the race for 29 seats, their names, pictures and electoral symbols sprawled across a giant, confusing five-page ballot paper.

Councillors have no legislative power and are meant instead to voice the needs and concerns of local communities to national parliament and help mediate disputes at the local level, also working on issues such as development.

Candidates must be Afghan, without a criminal record, linked to no armed group and aged at least 18. There were 420 seats available in 34 provincial council elections

and a quarter were reserved for women.

"I can't remember who I voted for," said Abdul Bashir, a 21-year-old guard, when asked about his choice for Kabul council representative. "I just opened the page and picked a name," he smiled.

But 18-year-old Ajmal allowed himself to get lost, trawling page after page until he locked eyes with the picture of a young woman.

"I voted for a girl," the high school student told AFP a day after the election was conducted under a sweeping security clampdown to guard against attacks and Taliban threats to derail the process.

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)

PKSF Bhaban, E-4/B, Agargaon Administrative Area

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Website: <http://www.pksf-bd.org>

Vacancy Announcement

Are you creative? We need you!

Applications are invited for the following posts for a DFID funded project titled "Promoting Financial Services for Poverty Reduction (PROSPER)" programme, which is being implemented by PKSF. The project duration is up to December 2013. The project has two components: viz "Learning and Innovation Fund to Test New Ideas (LIFT)" and "Programmed Initiatives for Monga Eradication (PRIME)".

Project Coordinator for LIFT Programme (1)

Responsibilities: LIFT Coordinator will report to the PKSF project Team Leader and support Project Management Cell in implementing the programme. Specific responsibilities for the position are:

- Coordinate the overall activities of LIFT programme and provide inputs and feedback to the implementing organizations related to the progress and other aspects of the programme;
- Prepare Annual Action Plan to achieve LIFT targets;
- Promote and market the project with a view to enhancing demand for this fund through innovative techniques;
- Pro-actively engage with potential applicants to orient them about the programme and provide guidance in completing applications;
- Brief, advise, assist and guide potential applicants in organizing ideas and articulating these in the required formats, consistent with the LIFT policy and procedures;
- Oversee the processing of applications, project formulation, administration and secretarial services related to operation and management of the fund;
- Monitor, supervise and evaluate funded enterprises/ projects;
- Mentor, support, coach and assist the funded enterprises during the implementation period so that the projects meet the targets, objectives and time line;
- Prepare budgets and undertake financial and progress reporting exercises for PKSF management, PROSPER Coordination Unit and DFID;
- Maintain relationship with PROSPER Coordination Unit, DFID and other partners in the PROSPER programme as may be required;
- Organize briefing, orientation and training sessions for aspirants and implementers;
- Undertake any other activities as may be required for the fund operation or as assigned by the Team Leader.

Qualification & Experience: Post-graduate degree in a relevant subject, from a reputed university with excellent academic credentials (minimum three first classes). Candidates must be creative and able to continuously bring new ideas and innovation in the LIFT implementation process, including dissemination of information and marketing. An ideal candidate for this position should be one with extraordinary human relations skills and capacity to mentor and support external parties. The candidates must have adequate knowledge and skills on computer operation, preferably with knowledge on Excel, PowerPoint and some desktop publishing softwares. The candidates must have 12 years experience in similar capacities, ideally with grants programme, challenge funds or other similar programmes related to microfinance, marketing, social marketing, sustainable livelihood, financial services and other related fields.

Salary: Tk. 70,000/- consolidated (negotiable for exceptional candidate).

Age: Below 45 years.

Publication and Communication Specialist (1)

Responsibilities: Publication and Communication Specialist will report to the PKSF project Team Leader. Specific responsibilities for the position are:

- Prepare drafts and finalize reports, articles and other write-ups for periodicals, monologues, booklets, newsletters and other occasional publications through editorial works;
- Deal with media, ensure media coverage of project components and prepare Press Release and other materials for media coverage;
- Develop an overall strategic plan for the project related publications and communication related issues;
- Act as the focal point for all media, communication and publication related matters;
- Maintain contact with the PROSPER Coordination Unit in relation to PROSPER publications, such as newsletter, promotional materials and website updates;
- Conceptualize, design and prepare proposals for media programmes in relation to promotional campaigns, advocacy and knowledge dissemination initiatives;
- Organize events such as workshops, media conference etc., and assist partner organizations with appropriate and timely advise on event management;
- Conceptualize and design any material in print ready format that may be initiated by the project;
- Maintain a database of publications of PKSF and other sources;
- Prepare Work plan on media activities and communication materials;
- Undertake any other tasks and responsibilities assigned by the Team Leader.

Qualification & Experience: Relevant post-graduate degree in any subject from a reputed university with minimum three first classes. Background in journalism, public relations, media will be preferred. Candidates must have good communication skills in English and Bengali. The candidates must have at least seven years experience in publications and communications. The candidates must have demonstrated skills in computer softwares, including Microsoft Word, Power point, Excel and special tools for desktop publications (Illustrator, Photoshop etc).

Salary: Tk. 35,000/- Tk. 40,000/- consolidated (negotiable for outstanding candidate).

Age: Below 40 years.

Work Station: Dhaka, with frequent travels to other parts of the country to promote, collect and develop PRIME and LIFT programmes related documents.

Women are especially encouraged to apply for both the positions. The appointment would be on a contract basis for an initial period of one year and extendable, subject to satisfactory performance and requirement of PKSF. For exceptional candidates, conditions may be relaxed. Interested persons are requested to send their CV capturing detailed working experience related to the position together with all copies of the certificates and two copies of recent passport size photographs to the undersigned on or before September 07, 2009. Please write the name of the post applied for on the top of the envelope.

Any persuasion will disqualify the candidature. Only short listed candidates would be called for participating in the selection process.

This vacancy announcement can also be seen on the web site of PKSF (www.pksf-bd.org) and PROSPER website (www.prosperprogram.org).

Assistant General Manager (Admin.)