

## Pakistan's Musharraf to "join politics"

REUTERS, Islamabad

Former Pakistani military ruler Pervez Musharraf has said he intends going home to enter politics, perhaps standing to become president or prime minister, CNN reported.

Musharraf, who seized power in a coup in 1999 and ruled until stepping down as president in 2008, has raised the possibility of re-entering politics several times over the past year although political analysts have played down the likelihood.

"I certainly am planning to go back to Pakistan and also join politics."

The question of whether I am running for president or prime minister will be seen later," Musharraf told CNN in an interview.

Musharraf left Pakistan about a year ago and spends most of his time in Britain and the United States.

Many Pakistanis welcomed the 1999 coup by the straight-talking army chief, which ended a decade of fractious rule by rival parties tainted by corruption accusations.

## TIMES SQUARE PLOT Six more detained in Pakistan

PTI, Islamabad

Pakistani authorities have taken into custody another six persons on suspicion of having links to Pakistani-American terror suspect Faisal Shahzad, arrested in the US for the botched Times Square car bombing.

The six were detained in different cities across the country, Geo News channel reported yesterday, quoting unnamed sources.

The detained persons are being probed by law enforcement agencies, the channel said, without giving details.

The Pakistan government has decided to conduct a probe against persons detained within the country in connection with the attempted bombing in New York.



Clockwise, friends console a woman looking for a relative, a "red shirt" protester who was not on the train arriving from Bangkok, at the Chiang Mai train station, 700 km north of Bangkok yesterday. An army soldier stands guard over anti-government "red shirt" supporters detained at a Buddhist temple in central Bangkok. Bullets and a picture of former Thai premier Thaksin Shinawatra are found from the encampment of the "red shirt".

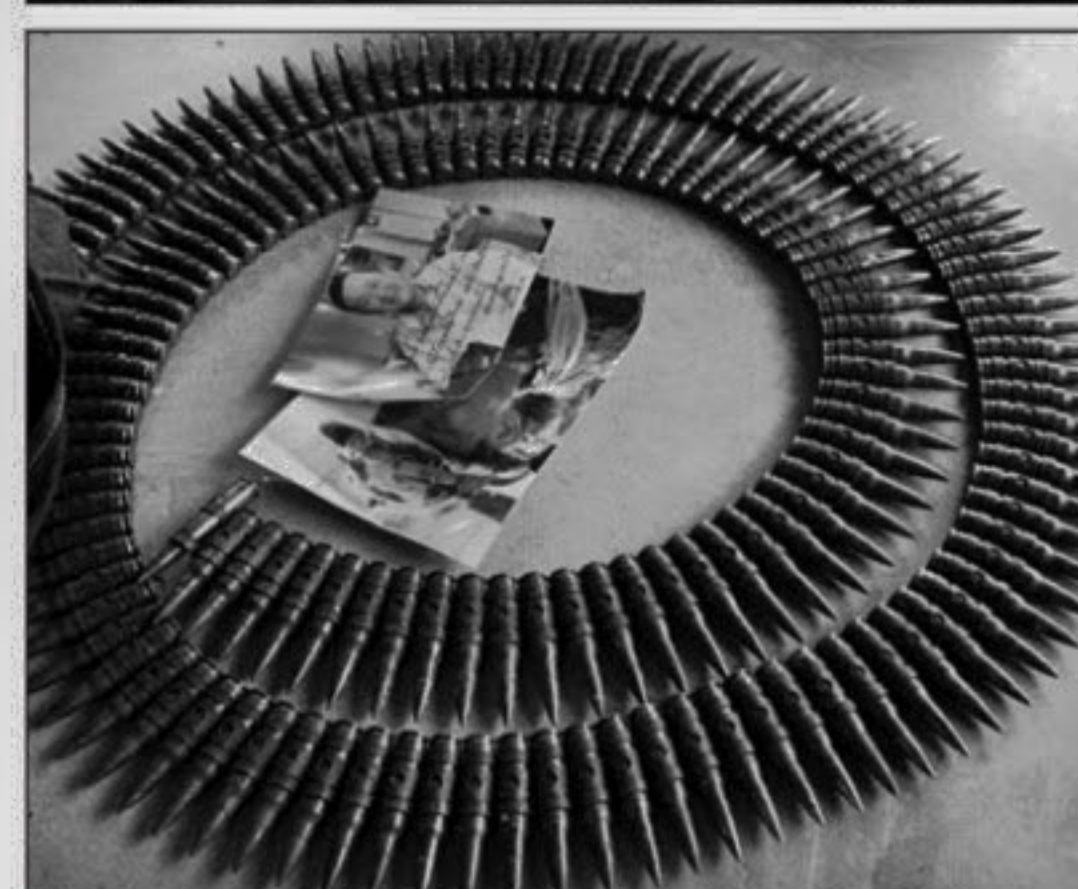


PHOTO: REUTERS

## Peace, stability in Thailand crucial to Asean

AFP, Hanoi

Peace and stability in Thailand are crucial to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), the bloc said yesterday, in a rare statement about the internal affairs of a member state.

Asean members "underscore that peace, stability and development in Thailand is crucial to the advancement of the goal of (an) Asean Community by 2015," said the statement released on behalf of the bloc by Vietnam, its current chair.

Asean's statement expressed concern over the violence in Thailand and said member states support the Thai people and government "in finding a peaceful resolution to the ongoing challenge in the country through dialogue and in full respect of democratic principles and rule of law."

The statement on behalf of the bloc follows individual expressions of concern during the crisis from Vietnam, Singapore, Laos, and the group's Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan.

# Cyclone Laila weakens, death toll 26 in India

AFP, Hyderabad

Cyclone Laila weakened yesterday after battering India's southeastern coast with several days of torrential rain and high winds that claimed 26 lives, officials said.

The storm, which formed over the Bay of Bengal, drenched the southern state of Tamil Nadu before making landfall further north Thursday in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, where it uprooted trees, electricity poles and destroyed communication lines.

Andhra Pradesh disaster management commissioner T Radha said more than 70,000 people evacuated ahead of the storm had been told to stay in shelters until yesterday evening.

Radha told AFP that at least 17 people had died in storm-related accidents across the state.

Television footage showed cars smashed by fallen trees, huts missing their thatched roofs, people clearing debris left by the wind and rains, flooded roads and marooned villages.

The heavy rains and strong winds damaged mango, banana and lime crops, with conservative estimates putting the losses at two billion rupees (41 million dollars).

In Tamil Nadu where the storm was blamed for nine deaths, officials said life had begun to return to normal as floodwaters in low-lying areas receded.

Cyclone Laila was still hovering off the Andhra Pradesh coast Friday, but its force had weakened with wind speeds down to 75 kilometres an hour, compared to 125kmh at its peak.

"We think it will weaken further and move in a northerly direction. But there

will be more rains," said V Prasad Rao, director of the cyclone warning centre in Visakhapatnam city.

Another weather office advisory warned fishermen to stay ashore due to "rough" sea conditions and predicted widespread rains for Orissa state, north of Andhra Pradesh.

India and Bangladesh are hit regularly by cyclones that develop in the Bay of Bengal between April and November, causing widespread damage to homes and fields.

Last May, Cyclone Aila tore through southern Bangladesh killing 300 people and destroyed 4,000 kilometres of roads and river embankments, leading to major flooding. About 200,000 people were made homeless and many remain in temporary shelters.

## Turkish PM urges Obama not to dismiss Iran nuclear deal

AFP, Ankara

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged US President Barack Obama not to dismiss a nuclear fuel swap deal sealed with Iran and to give diplomacy a chance, his press office said yesterday.

Erdogan's call came after Washington submitted a UN resolution calling for a new round of sanctions against Iran, describing the fuel swap deal as insufficient.

In a letter to Obama, Erdogan said the agreement did not solve the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, "but presented an important opportunity to solve the issue through diplomatic means," a brief statement said.

## South Korea vows caution over ship, North sees war

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea said after a rare emergency security meeting yesterday it would respond prudently to the sinking of one of its naval ships by the North, but Pyongyang warned the peninsula was being driven to war.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Washington strongly condemned North Korea's action and called for an international response.

The South announced on Thursday that it had overwhelming evidence a North Korean submarine had entered its waters in March and attacked the Cheonan corvette, killing 46 sailors in what President Lee Myung-bak called a "military provocation."

North Korea denied the accusation and said it was ready to tear up all agreements with the South, with whom it remains technically at war under a truce that ended fighting in the 1950-53 Korean War.

"It was a military provocation and violation of the UN Charter and the truce agreement," Lee, whose 2-year in office have seen relations with the North turn increasingly frosty, said in a statement.

## Darjeeling tense after Gorkha leader killed

IANS, Darjeeling

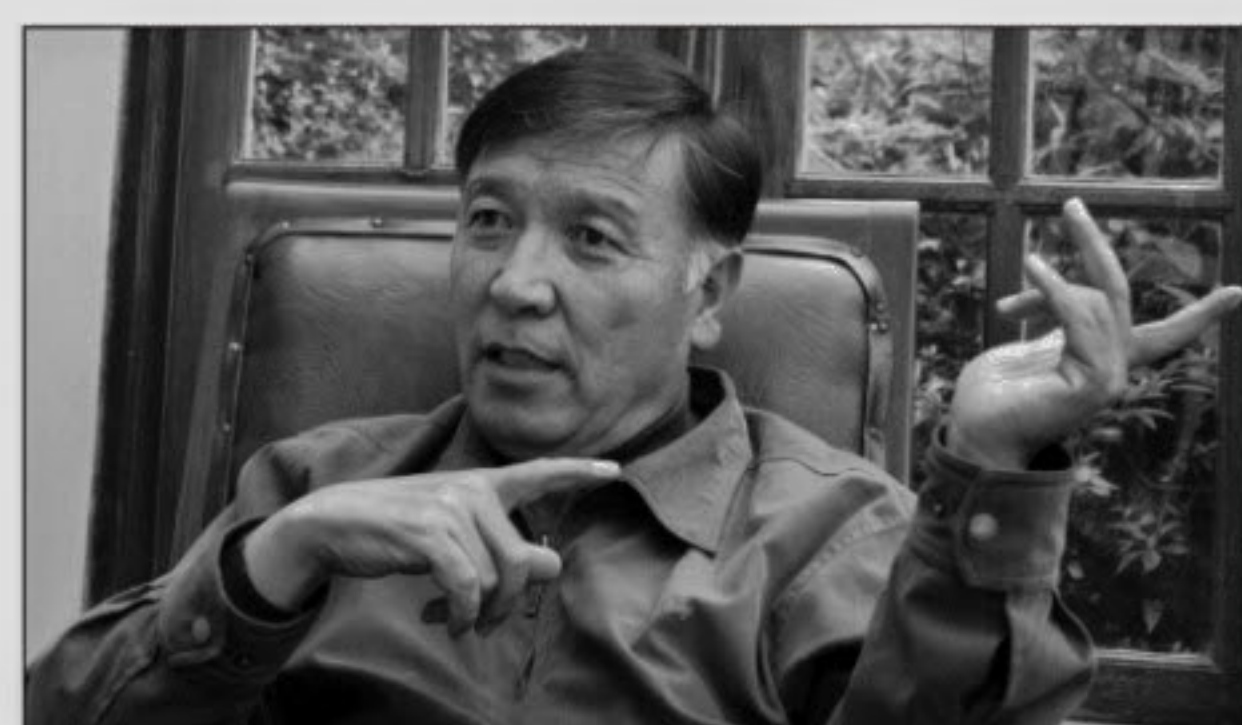
Gorkha leader Madan Tamang, president of the Akhil Bharatiya Gorkha League (ABGL), was stabbed to death yesterday allegedly by Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM) supporters in this West Bengal town, police said.

News of the death led to a spontaneous shutdown in the region.

Tamang, who led the anti-GJM front in the Darjeeling hills, was hit with a kukri (long knife used by Nepalis) at around 9:30am, an official said. "He was critically injured in the attack and died in the Darjeeling District Hospital," Darjeeling police station inspector-in-charge Indrajit Thapaliya said.

State municipal affairs minister Ashok Bhattacharya said in Kolkata that GJM supporters had carried out the attack on Tamang.

"The GJM's goons have committed the murder. GJM is a fascist party, which does not want any opposition in the



Madan Tamang

hills. They are opposed to a democratic atmosphere prevailing in the hills," he said.

"We are deeply concerned. The hills are very tense," said Bhattacharya, who hails from Siliguri in Darjeeling district.

As news of Tamang's killing spread, a spontaneous shutdown began in the three Darjeeling hill sub-divisions of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong.

Vehicles in Darjeeling went off the roads, while shops and markets were closed.

On hearing about the attack on Tamang, chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee convened an emergency meeting at the state secretariat Writers' Buildings here and directed police and administrative officials to take all measures to keep the situation under control.

Tamang, a vocal opponent of the GJM, had earlier levelled corruption charges against its chief Bimal Gurung. The GJM had then threatened to banish him from the hills.

## US cartoonist apologises over Facebook row

BBC ONLINE

A cartoonist whose work inspired an internet campaign inviting people to draw images of the Prophet Muhammad has apologised for her role in the row.

Writing on her blog, Molly Norris said her satirical cartoon was "hijacked" and that the campaign was "offensive to Muslims".

Other people set up a page on the social networking site Facebook backing an Everybody Draw Muhammad Day.

It sparked outrage in Pakistan, where a court ordered Facebook to be blocked.

On Thursday the video-sharing website YouTube was also blocked in Pakistan. Reports say more protests against the Facebook campaign are planned for Friday.

Molly Norris drew a cartoon in April to protest against the decision by a US television channel to cancel an episode of the popular show South Park because of a contentious depiction of the Prophet Muhammad.

# Group presents new evidence on abuses in Sri Lanka

AP, COLOMBO, Sri Lanka

An international rights group said yesterday it has new evidence that wartime abuses were perpetrated against civilians during the final phase of Sri Lanka's long and bloody civil war against Tamil Tiger rebels.

New York-based Human Rights Watch called on UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon "to promptly establish an international investigation to examine allegations of wartime abuse by both sides to the conflict," it said in a statement.

Sri Lanka's civil war ended in May 2009 after the military crushed the Tamil Tiger rebels in their stronghold in the country's north. According to UN documents, more than 7,000 civilians were killed in the last five months of the war.

An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 people died during a quarter-century of fighting.

Government troops were accused of shelling a small strip of land where hundreds of thousands of people were boxed-in during the last stages of the conflict.

The rebels were accused of killing noncombatants trying to leave the area they controlled and firing artillery from civilian-populated

regions that led to retaliatory military fire.

Human Rights Watch said it interviewed witnesses and examined 200 photographs taken by a Sri Lankan soldier on the front lines early last year.

"The new accounts by witnesses described indiscriminate shelling of large gatherings of civilians during the last weeks of fighting, apparently by government forces," the group said.

It also accused the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam of abusing the civilian population. "The witnesses also described LTTE recruitment of children and LTTE attacks on civilians attempting to escape the war zone," it said.

Among the photographs was a series of five shots showing a man identified as a Tamil political activist in the custody of army soldiers, then later lying on the ground, apparently dead.

"While Human Rights Watch cannot conclusively determine that the man was summarily executed in custody, the available evidence indicates that a full investigation is warranted," it said.

Sri Lankan officials have denied in the past committing war crimes and refused calls to establish an international tribunal, saying it would conduct its own probe of the military's conduct during the war.

## Outrage over Gulf oil spill grows

AP, Grand Isle, La

Thick, sticky oil crept deeper into delicate marshes of the Mississippi Delta, an arrival dreaded for a month since the crude started spewing into the Gulf, as anger and frustration mounted over efforts to plug the gusher from a blown-out well and contain the spill.

Up to now, only tar balls and a sheen of oil had come ashore. But chocolate brown and vivid orange globs and sheets of foul-smelling oil the consistency of latex paint have begun coating the reeds and grasses of Louisiana's wetlands, home to rare birds, mammals and a rich variety of marine life.

With each passing day, outrage grows. State and local officials say the federal government isn't doing enough. President Barack Obama faults the agency that oversees offshore drilling, Republicans say the Coast Guard and the administration should have done more.

A deep, stagnant ooze sat in the middle of a particularly devastated marsh off the Louisiana coast.

## Gaza gunmen infiltrate Israel, die in firefight

AP, Jerusalem

Two Palestinian militants infiltrated Israel yesterday from the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip but were killed in a firefight with Israeli troops, the Israeli military said.

The exchange of fire took place across the border from the southern Gaza Strip. Security forces sealed off the entrances to the four Israeli communities in the area, where thousands of people live, until the gun battle was over.

The military said it was not aware of any other gunmen having eluded troops.

Hamas security officials confirmed two militants had been sent on an operation to attack Israel and clashed with soldiers near the Israel-Gaza border. The radio station of the Islamic Jihad militant group said its fighters had been sent on an unspecified mission.

Hamas security officials said Israeli tanks crossed into Gaza after the infiltration and fired three shells.

## Afghan police find bodies at plane crash site

REUTERS, Kabul

Afghan authorities have recovered several bodies from the wreckage of a passenger plane that crashed earlier this week with 48 people aboard, including six foreigners, the interior ministry said yesterday.

The wreckage of the Afghan Pamir Airways plane was found in the Ghorband mountains in Parwan province, northeast of Kabul, after three days of searching by Afghan authorities and troops linked to the U.S.-led foreign force in the country.

"There are no survivors unfortunately ... police are still searching for bodies but the first of the bodies will arrive in Kabul in the military hospital by helicopter," said Zemarai Bashary, spokesman for the interior ministry.

It was not clear how many bodies had been found so far. Three Britons and an American were on the flight, Bashary said.

The Antonov civilian plane was en route from the northern city of Kunduz to Kabul when it crashed in the mountainous Hindu Kush area, about three hours' drive from the capital.

Pamir is one of three private Afghan airlines operating mostly domestic routes.

The last major crash involving a passenger aircraft in Afghanistan was in February 2005 when a Boeing 737 operated by private Afghan carrier Kam Air crashed in a snow storm near Kabul, killing 104 passengers and crew.



PHOTO: AFP

Indonesian activists march toward the parliament carrying skulls as a symbol of Suharto's tyranny marking the anniversary of the downfall of the military strongman in Jakarta on yesterday. Twelve years after the dawn of Indonesia's "Reformasi" movement with the resignation of military strongman Suharto, there are fears the country of 240 million people is on a slippery slope backwards.

## Moms again reunite with 3 Americans held in Iran

AP, Tehran, Iran

Three Americans jailed in Iran for 10 months met with their mothers a second time yesterday as Iranian authorities used their visit to underline their complaints about their own citizens detained by the United States.

The mothers are on a visit to Iran in hopes of securing the release of their children -- Sarah Shourd, 31; her boyfriend, Shane Bauer, 27; and their friend Josh Fattal, 27, who were arrested in July along the Iran-Iraq border and have been accused of espionage.

Iranian authorities have given no indication that Shourd, Bauer and Fattal could be freed, or that their mothers would even be allowed to make a face-to-face appeal to top Iranian leaders like President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.