

## Karachi shut down after killing of exiled leader

BBC ONLINE

Pakistan's largest city has come to a near standstill following the killing in London of an exiled leader of the powerful Muttahida Qaumi Movement.

MQM supporters have gathered in Karachi to mourn Imran Farooq, who was stabbed outside his home Thursday afternoon.

A BBC correspondent in the city says the situation is tense, with most shops, restaurants and schools closed.

The murder investigation has meanwhile been taken over by the Metropolitan Police's counter-terrorism unit, SO15.

The BBC's home affairs correspondent, Danny Shaw, says although no-one has yet been arrested over the stabbing of Mr Farooq, the working assumption at this stage is that it was politically motivated.

There have been tensions between various political groups based in London and it is thought that Mr Farooq had been the subject of threats before, our correspondent says.

The MQM's headquarters in the capital moved several months ago as a result of security concerns. Security around other Pakistani political figures is now being reviewed.

Many in Pakistan fear that if the British police find a political link to Mr Farooq's death, serious rioting could follow.

Last month, more than 80 people were killed in clashes in the city after the assassination of another MQM politician.

The MQM has been accused by its critics of illegal activities, and of endorsing or ignoring ethnic, sectarian and political violence.

'GREAT LOSS'

Mr Farooq had been living in exile in the UK since 1999, when he claimed asylum. He had previously spent seven years on the run from Pakistani police, who accused him of involvement in several serious crimes.

In 1999, he told the BBC the charges against him were politically motivated.

The former Pakistani parliamentarian was one of the founding members of the MQM, a former opposition party which is now part of the ruling Pakistan People's Party-led alliance.

After news emerged that he had been stabbed several times in the head and

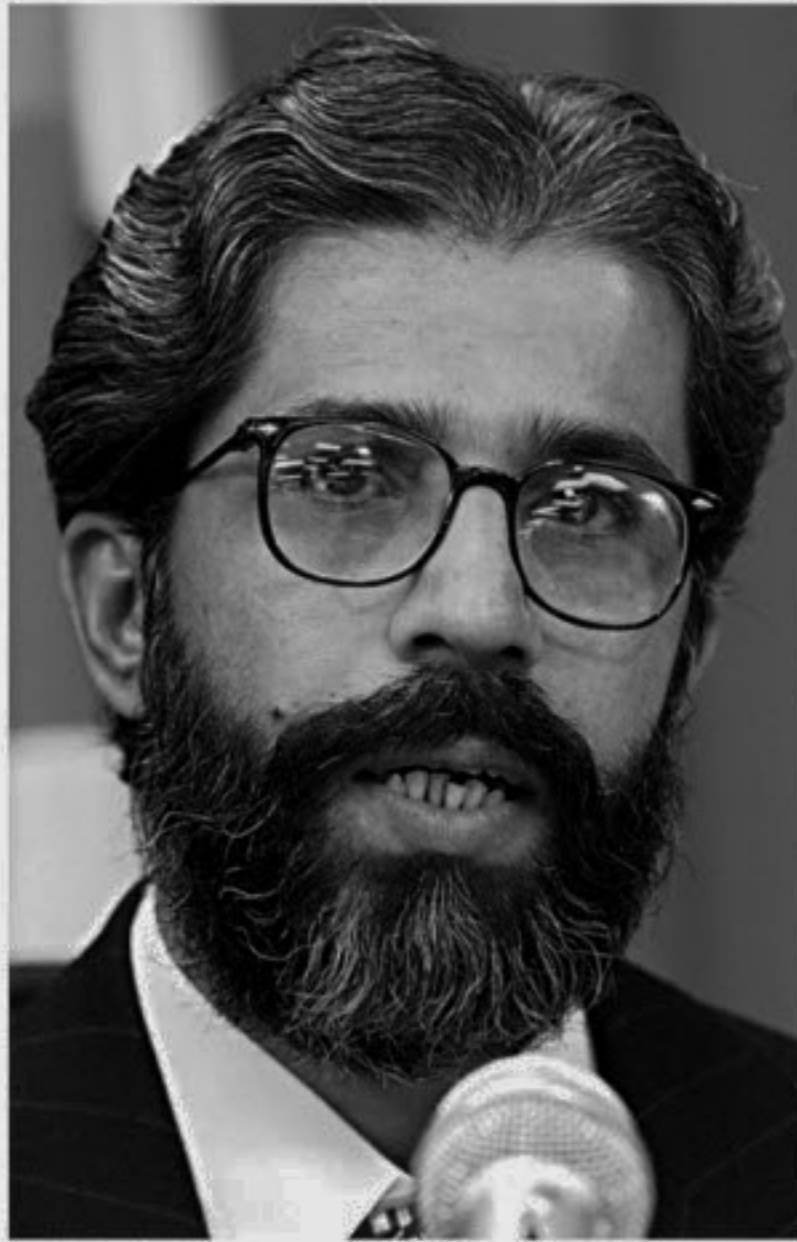


PHOTO: AFP

In this photo taken in September 9, 1999, Pakistani Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Secretary-General Imran Farooq speaks during his press conference in London, announcing his escape from Pakistan after seven years in hiding.

neck, the MQM declared a 10-day mourning period in Pakistan and in its offices across the world.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said the PPP would also suspend its activities, adding: "It was a great loss to the party and the family."

MQM leaders said they expected Mr Farooq's body to be flown back to Karachi for burial after legal formalities had been completed.

Local media in Karachi reported that some vehicles were torched and shots fired late on Thursday, but police said there had been no violence on Friday as hundreds of party activists converged on his family home.

Amid fears that the crowd could turn violent, most markets, restaurants and schools were closed and no public transport was available. Police and paramilitary troops were deployed on the city's main streets to maintain order, officials

said. The BBC's Shoaib Hasan in Karachi says MQM leaders had told him there was "a lot of grief and a lot of sorrow going around".

But, our correspondent says, the situation has remained relatively peaceful.

Mr Farooq was in essence the party's deputy leader, though he had not returned to Pakistan since claiming asylum in the UK, he adds. He had become marginalised recently, but was still powerful in Karachi.

Raza Haroon, a member of the MQM central co-ordination committee in London, told reporters: "He was a gentleman, a very, very soft spoken person with a lot of knowledge, and who was very outspoken as well."

"It's a very huge loss to the party to have lost a senior leader, in such a manner. This is an irreparable loss and a great tragedy for the MQM."

"Nobody could really have thought that this act of violence could happen in London, but at this moment we do not know what happened."

Dozens of people were killed and hundreds were wounded in several days of clashes in Karachi last month, sparked by the killing of an MQM parliamentarian, Raza Haidar. He was shot dead while attending a funeral.

Most of those killed belonged to the Pashtun community, whom MQM leaders had initially held responsible for the attack. Investigators later said the pro-Taliban militant group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, was behind it.

The MQM came to prominence as an advocate for the rights of Pakistan's "Mohajir" community - Urdu speakers who originally travelled to the country from India following partition in 1947.

The party seized power in Karachi - home to Pakistan's largest Urdu-speaking population - in the 1980s. It was accused of involvement in torture, summary killings and other abuses.

In 1992, the authorities launched Operation Clean Up, and over the next six years some 8,000 people were killed and Mr Farooq fled to London. The MQM's leader, Altaf Hussein, has lived in the capital since 1992, and runs it from an anonymous office in the suburb of Barnet.

## Israel 'will not extend settlement curbs'

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel reiterated yesterday its refusal to extend curbs on settlement building that expire this month, despite US pressure and Palestinian threats to walk out of peace talks.

Meanwhile, US envoy George Mitchell met Lebanese President Michel Sleiman as part of Washington's target of forging a comprehensive Middle East peace.

"The prime minister has not changed his position on this issue, there is no question of extending the moratorium," a senior Israeli government official told AFP, asking not to be named. The 10-month measure to curb construction of settler homes in the Israeli-occupied West Bank concludes at the end of this month.

The decision not to renew the moratorium, which does not cover annexed east Jerusalem, was taken this week by the Forum of Seven top cabinet ministers, according to the daily Israel Hayom, which is close to the government.



PHOTO: AFP

Female relatives of Iyad Shilbaya, a 38-year-old local leader of the armed wing of the Islamist movement Hamas, who was shot dead by Israeli soldiers yesterday weep during his funeral in the Nur Shams refugee camp near the northern West Bank town of Tulkarem.

## Scientists say it's good to think - but not too much

BBC ONLINE

People who think more about whether they are right have more cells in an area of the brain known as the frontal lobes.

UK scientists, writing in Science, looked at how brain size varied depending on how much people thought about decisions.

But a nationwide survey recently found that some people think too much about life.

These people have poorer memories, and they may also be depressed.

Stephen Fleming, a member of the University College London (UCL) team that carried out the research, said: "Imagine you're on a game show such as 'Who

Wants to Be a Millionaire' and you're uncertain of your answer. You can use that knowledge to ask the audience, ask for help."

The London group asked 32 volunteers to make difficult decisions. They had to look at two very similar black and grey pictures and say which one had a lighter spot.

They then had to say just how sure they were of their answer, on a scale of one to six. Although it was hard to tell the difference, the pictures were adjusted to make sure that no-one found the task harder than anyone else.

People who were more sure of their answer had more brain cells in the front-

most part of the brain - known as the anterior prefrontal cortex.

This part of the brain has been linked to many brain and mental disorders, including autism. Previous studies have looked at how this area functions while people make real time decisions, but not at differences between individuals.

The study is the first to show that there are physical differences between people with regards to how big this area is. These size differences relate to how much they think about their own decisions.

The researchers hope that learning more about these types of differences between people may help those with mental illness.

## Thai Red Shirts begin coup anniversary protests

AP, Bangkok

Hundreds of anti-government activists carried roses to prisons around Thailand yesterday to show their support for jailed colleagues and begin a series of protests marking the fourth anniversary of a military coup.

The "Red Shirt" supporters have been generally quiet since the army quashed large demonstrations earlier this year in Bangkok's main commercial district. About 90 people died during those protests, more than 1,400 were hurt, and most of the group's top leaders were arrested.

Bangkok remains under a state of emergency imposed in April, and the government has warned against possible violence during this week's demonstrations. Soldiers were deployed at many locations in the capital last week.

"This laying of red roses is to express our concern for our people who are detained unfairly," said Jatuporn Prompan, a Red Shirt leader who escaped detention because of his immunity as a member of Parliament.

## Sri Lanka jails ex-army chief Fonseka

AFP, Colombo

A court martial in Sri Lanka convicted former army chief Sarath Fonseka on Friday of corrupt military supply deals and sentenced him to three years in jail, a top military official told AFP.

The military court, whose decision must now be ratified by President Mahinda Rajapakse, found that Fonseka favoured an arms company run by his son-in-law, the official said, asking not to be named.

Last month, Fonseka was stripped of his rank and pension after another court found him guilty of dabbling in politics while in uniform.

Fonseka, 59, who led the military to victory over Tamil Tiger rebels in May last year, fell out with the government and unsuccessfully tried to unseat Rajapakse in January polls.

"The chairman of the court read out its decision and it must now be ratified by the president," the official said, adding that the closed-door court would make no formal announcement.

Rajapakse is expected to ratify the decision -- seen as a formality -- when he returns from the United Nations general assembly session this month.

Fonseka's lawyers had refused to make final submissions in the former army chief's defence after accusing the court of serious irregularities.

Fonseka was arrested two weeks after his defeat in the presidential elections and has remained in military custody since. He won a seat in parliamentary elections in April, however, allowing him to attend parliament.



Sarath Fonseka

## China 'moves drilling tools' into disputed waters

BBC ONLINE

Japan says China has shipped drilling equipment to a disputed gas field in the East China Sea, fuelling diplomatic tensions between the Asian giants.

China has previously refrained from unilateral drilling at Japan's request.

Both Beijing and Tokyo claim exploration rights over the area.

China scrapped scheduled talks with Japan over joint exploration of the field last week after Japan arrested the captain of a Chinese trawler near disputed islands in the East China Sea.

All have been released except the captain who remains in detention.

The Chinese fishing boat reportedly rammed Japanese coastguard patrol boats which had been trying to intercept it.

Prosecutors have until Sunday to charge or release the captain.

There are unconfirmed reports of anti-Japanese demonstrations in China including Shanghai, Nanjing and Guangzhou this weekend.

## White House, France quash Michelle Obama 'hell' claim

AFP, Washington

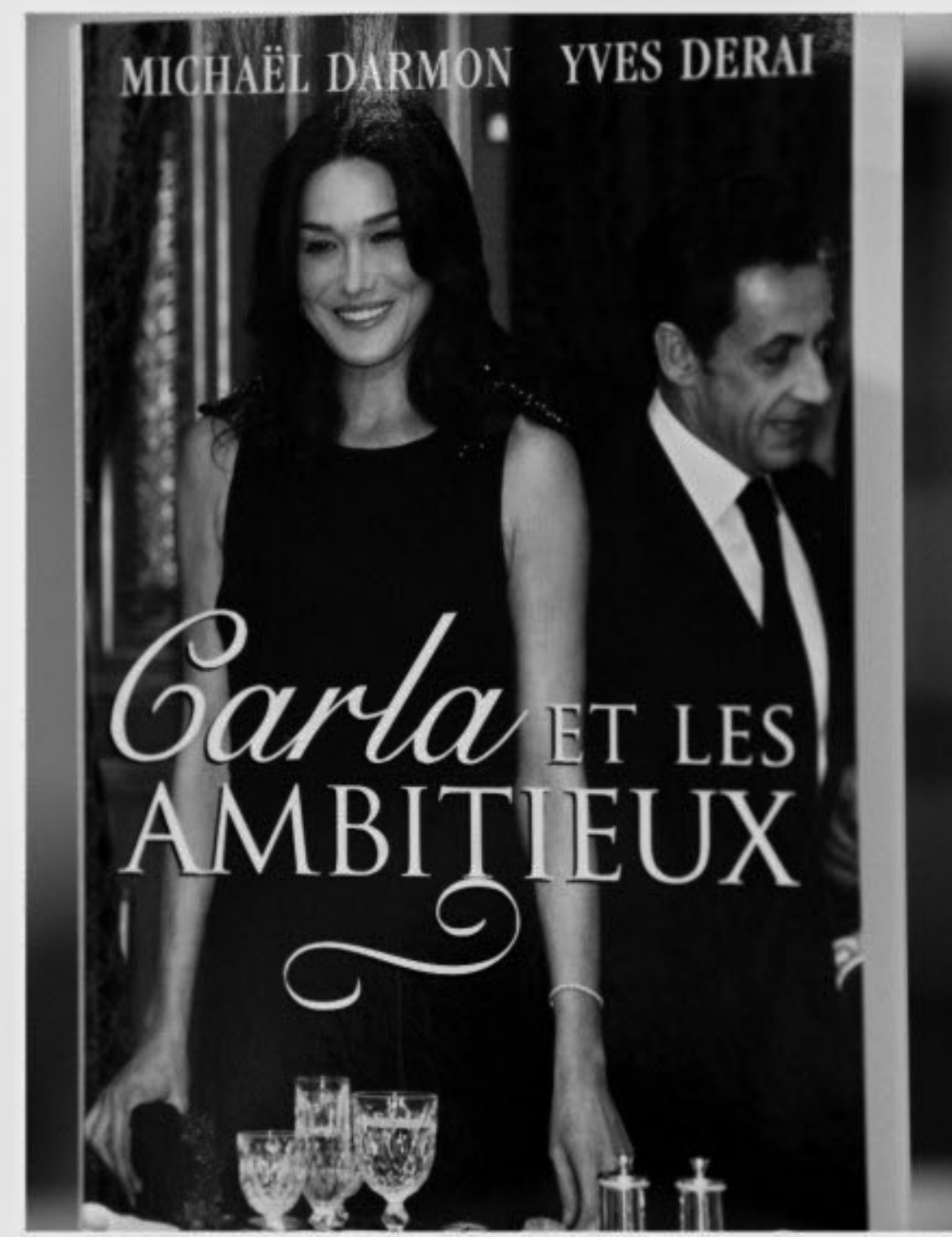


PHOTO: AFP

A picture taken on September 15, 2010 in Paris shows the book intitled "Carla et les ambitieux" (Carla and the Ambitious) by French journalists Michael Darmon and Yves Derai.

The White House and the French embassy in Washington moved quickly Thursday to shoot down claims that Michelle Obama told her French counterpart Carla Bruni that life was "hell" as first lady.

The allegations were contained in the book "Carla et les Ambitieux" ("Carla and the Ambitious"), by two French authors who detail the life of Bruni, the ex-supermodel wife of French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

According to the book, Bruni asked during a private conversation at the White House in March how Michelle Obama was enjoying life.

"Don't ask, it's hell, I can't stand it," the book's authors claimed the American replied.

But the White House and the French embassy acted quickly to defuse controversy over the alleged remarks, saying Michelle Obama said nothing of the sort.

"The words attributed to the first lady of the United States were never said," French embassy spokesman Emmanuel Lenain said, adding that "Mrs Sarkozy distances herself completely" from the content of the book.

White House spokesman Robert Gibbs relayed the contents of Lenain's statement on his Twitter feed and Michelle Obama's office also weighed in.

"The first lady never said that," said her spokeswoman Katie McCormick Lelyveld.

President Barack Obama and his wife hosted Sarkozy and Bruni at a private White House dinner after talks here in March, an event meant to scotch reports of tension between the two leaders.



PHOTO: AFP

A man carrying a baby demonstrates outside St Mary's University College in south-west London, yesterday, as Pope Benedict XVI prepares to address a Celebration of Catholic Education at the college. Meanwhile, five men have been arrested by the Metropolitan Police in London in relation to a potential threat to the Pope's visit.

## MI5 head warns of serious risk of UK terrorist attack

BBC ONLINE

The UK faces a continuing serious risk of a lethal terrorist attack taking place, the head of MI5 has warned.

Jonathan Evans raised concerns over the number of soon-to-be-free inmates who are "committed extremists and likely to return to terrorist activities".

He also said Somalia and Yemen were important concerns for MI5, as a source of serious plots against the UK.

And, he said, the security service had not expected dissident republicanism to grow as it had in Northern Ireland.

Mr Evans, who made the rare public remarks to the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals in London, said dealing with international terrorism remained the main focus of MI5's efforts.

"DIVERSIFYING THREAT" "Counter-terrorist capabilities have improved in recent years but there remains a serious risk of a lethal attack taking place. I see no reason to believe that the position will significantly improve in the immediate future," he said.

He said hundreds of officers were involved in an "intense struggle", largely out of sight of the public.

Every month, hundreds of new leads come into MI5 headquarters at Thames House from various sources, with only sufficient resources to

investigate those that appeared to be high priority, Mr Evans said.

"At any one time we have a handful of investigations that we believe involve the real possibility of a terrorist attack being planned against the UK," he said.

One concern is that a number of individuals, convicted of offences in the years after the 9/11 attacks, are now coming out of prison having served their terms.

"We know that some of these prisoners are still committed extremists who are likely to return to their terrorist activities," Mr Evans said, adding that they would be added to the cases that needed to be monitored.

He said another change in recent years was the source of the most serious plots.

In previous years, officials have said that 75% of priority plots had links to Pakistan. That figure has now dropped to 50%.

This was partly because of pressure on al-Qaeda leadership operating in Pakistan's tribal areas, but it was also a sign of a diversifying threat, he said.

Mr Evans said in Somalia there were a "significant number of UK residents training in Al Shabaab camps" to fight in the country.

"I am concerned that it is only a matter of time before we see terrorism on our streets inspired by those who are today fighting alongside Al Shabaab," he warned.

## Japanese PM announces cabinet reshuffle

BBC ONLINE

Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan has announced a new cabinet, three days after being re-elected as leader of the governing Democratic Party of Japan.

Analysts say the reshuffle is aimed at boosting public support for the government.

Yoshihiko Noda remains the key post of finance minister.

The new economics minister is Banri Kaieda, who backed Mr Kan's rival for the party leadership - veteran MP Ichiro Ozawa.

Nearly half of Japan's lawmakers voted for Mr Ozawa in the leadership contest and Mr Kaieda's appointment is seen as an attempt to unify his fractured party.

Seiji Maehara is the new foreign minister. He takes over amid a row with China over the arrest of the skipper of a Chinese fishing boat which collided with Japanese patrol boats near disputed islands.