

## Suicide blast kills 128 in Pak election rally

Candidate of Balochistan Awami Party among dead; more than 150 wounded; IS claims responsibility

AFP, Quetta

A suicide bomber blew himself up inside a political rally in southwest Pakistan yesterday killing 128 people, in one of the deadliest attacks in the country's history.

The blast -- which was claimed by the Islamic State group -- ripped through the crowd in the town of Mastung near the Balochistan provincial capital Quetta.

It was the latest in a string of attacks that have spurred fears of violence ahead of nationwide polls on July 25, and underscored the fragility of Pakistan's dramatic gains in security.

"The death toll has risen to 128," Balochistan home minister Agha Umar Bungal said. A senior provincial government official also confirmed the figure, adding that 150 others were injured.

Emergency workers shuttled victims to nearby vehicles from the bombed-out compound as bystanders sobbed in the darkness due to the lack of electricity in the impoverished area.

Victims in blood-smeared clothes were taken to hospitals in Mastung and nearby Quetta, where they were greeted by tense crowds of mourners, an AFP reporter said. The deceased could be seen covered in shrouds.

"Human remains and red bloody pieces of flesh were littered everywhere in the compound. Injured people were crying in pain and fear," said local journalist Attah Ullah.

According to senior provincial official Saeed Jamali, the bomber detonated in the middle of a compound where a political meeting was taking place. Another senior official, Qaim Lashari, also

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Pilgrims arrive at Hajj Camp in the capital's Ashkona yesterday. This year's first hajj flight carrying Bangladeshi pilgrims will depart from Dhaka for Jeddah today.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



## Fifa gains in game of losers

SYED ASHFAQUL HAQUE

Here comes a game that no one wants to be involved in. What glory can two losers achieve from a third-place deciding game? For teams, nothing but the World Cup matters. It's just cruel to ask one of the

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Croatia captain Luka Modric takes a breather during training.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Could the new star be Croatia's?

AL-AMIN from Moscow

Can Croatia cross one final hurdle come Sunday night and become the ninth nation to win the World Cup? Standing in their way are France, whose sole ambition will be to claim that coveted piece of glory for the second

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## Nawaz Sharif arrested upon return home

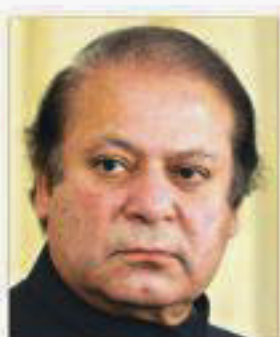
REUTERS, Lahore

Ousted Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam were arrested yesterday after flying back to the country to face lengthy prison sentences, in a high-stakes gamble to galvanise their beleaguered party ahead of a July 25 election.

Uniformed men escorted the Sharifs, who were sentenced in absentia on corruption charges last week, from their airplane after it touched down in the central city of Lahore at around 8:45pm (1645 GMT), a Reuters reporter on board said.

A spokesman for Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party confirmed they were arrested soon afterwards.

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## HAJJ FLIGHT OPERATIONS FROM TODAY

## Biman's regular flights face disruption

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman's regular flights on all its 15 international routes are set to face disruptions as the airline will use four of its Boeing planes for hajj flights starting this morning.

Out of its small fleet of 13 aircraft, Biman Bangladesh Airlines operates two planes on its domestic and regional routes. The airlines would not be able to maintain flight schedule on the international routes with the remaining seven aircraft, said its insiders.

Besides, the national flag carrier is not allowed to fly newly-leased aircraft to Saudi Arabia as per a ban from the country.

Biman has already stopped selling tickets to Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam -- its most commercially viable destinations -- for the next two months, said the insiders, adding that the airline made the move fearing the



Biman to carry **63,599** pilgrims in **187** flights

It will use **4** aircraft in hajj operations

Regular flights on **15** int'l routes face disruption

Ticket sale stopped for some routes for next 2 months

flights would not run on schedule.

During hajj every year, Biman operates flights with leased aircraft and also suspends its operation on different international routes to ensure smooth flights for a large number of pilgrims from Bangladesh.

Still, the airline faces flight disruptions because of a shortage of aircraft.

Biman passengers travelling to different countries suffer due to irregular flight schedule. Every day, flights are usually delayed by 30 minutes to 2 hours.

The situation would get worse this time due to the Saudi ban, said the Biman insiders.

Recently, the Saudi authorities have said it will not allow Biman to fly any aircraft, taken on lease after June, to the oil-rich country. The Saudi authorities made the move

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## Rooppur- Foundation Work of the Second Nuclear Reactor begins Shah Cement is Proud to be the Chosen Brand, Again...



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