

# PROPHETIC TIMES

WEEKLY WORLD NEWS UPDATE

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

DECEMBER 29 2007

## PAKISTAN'S FORMER PRIME MINISTER BENAZIR BHUTTO ASSASSINATED

*December 27, 2007* The Voice of America News reported: "Pakistan's former prime minister and opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was assassinated Thursday at a campaign rally just two weeks before parliamentary elections. Police say a suicide bomber fired gunshots at Ms. Bhutto just moments before blowing himself up, killing at least 20 others.

Ms. Bhutto died shortly after addressing a crowd of supporters in a park near Pakistan's army headquarters in Rawalpindi, outside the capital, Islamabad. She was rushed to a local hospital, but doctors were unable to save her. She was 54 years old.

The news sparked violent protests in several cities, including Karachi, and at least nine people have died in the rioting. The Pakistani army was put on red alert.

Ms. Bhutto's husband arrived in Islamabad from Dubai to see his wife's body. Her coffin is on its way to Larkana in southern Sindh province. Ms. Bhutto is to be buried next to her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

In an address to the nation, President Pervez Musharraf blamed terrorists for her assassination. He also announced three days of mourning for Ms. Bhutto and called for calm across Pakistan.

Later, the country's other opposition leader and former Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, said his party, the Pakistan Muslim League, will boycott the January 8 elections. He also demanded that President Musharraf resign immediately.

Analysts say the assassination could jeopardize the parliamentary elections."..."



**Benazir Bhutto**

## RUSSIA TO SELL ADVANCED ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILES TO IRAN

*December 27, 2007* The VOA News reported: "Iran says Russia is selling Tehran advanced anti-aircraft missiles, but did not say when they will arrive.

The S-300 air defense system has a radar that can track many targets at the same time, and missiles that can hit targets anywhere from just above the treetops to 27 kilometers in the sky. The S-300 compliments a shorter-range Russian system sold to Iran earlier.

Iran's announcement that it is upgrading its air defenses was made during a time of international tensions over Iranian nuclear programs that western nations fear could be used to make nuclear weapons.

The United States has never ruled out military action against the suspected nuclear weapons projects, but a recently published U.S. intelligence report said Iran stopped its nuclear weapons program several years ago.

## EU MARKS 'HISTORICAL' ENLARGEMENT OF BORDERLESS ZONE

*December 26, 2007* The EU Observer reported: "The EU's borderless zone expanded to nine mostly eastern European countries at midnight on Friday (21 December) in its biggest enlargement so far.

Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic - which all joined the EU in 2004 - are part of this enlargement to the so-called Schengen area. Land and sea border checks between them and the other Schengen countries are now abolished, while air borders are set to follow on 30 March 2008.

Practically it means that as of today, "people can travel hassle-free between 24 countries of the Schengen area without internal land and sea border controls- from Portugal to Poland and from Greece to Finland", EU justice commissioner Franco Frattini said in a statement.

"An area of 24 countries without internal borders is a unique and historical achievement. I feel very proud and privileged to have been involved in making it happen", he added.

Meanwhile, celebrations were held and are to be held throughout Friday on several border points to mark the occasion. However, some were more enthusiastic than others. While Slovaks were celebrating until late in the night on Friday at the country's border with 'old' member state Austria, no celebrations could be noted on the Austrian side.

A recent poll carried out in Austria showed 75% of its citizens opposed the lifting of barriers, according to the BBC."..."

## IRAN: 'BUSHEHR TO BE READY BY MARCH 2008'

*December 23, 2007* The Jerusalem Post reported: "Iran's nuclear facility at Bushehr will be operational within three months, Iranian Energy Minister Parviz Fattah said Sunday, according to a CNN report.

Russia, which is building the Bushehr plant, renewed supply of nuclear fuel to the facility a week ago as part of a compromise effort to alleviate concerns over Iran's nuclear intentions. Some analysts in western countries suggested Russia's decision to renew shipments was a result of the relatively docile tone of the recently published US National Intelligence Estimate, which concluded that Iran halted its nuclear

weapons program four years ago.

Fattah told reporters Saturday that the Bushehr nuclear power plant, which was previously expected to be completed last September, will become operational on March 21, 2008, according to Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB).

The plant will deliver 500 megawatts of electricity to the power grid by summer and 1,000 megawatts by March 2009, IRIB reported.

Atomstroieexport, Russia's nuclear power equipment and service export monopoly, completed the first stage of nuclear fuel deliveries a week ago, the Russian Federal Atomic Energy Agency said.

Israel, the United States and several EU nations, suspect Teheran has been trying to acquire nuclear weapons, but Iran denies its nuclear program is for anything but peaceful purposes.

Atomstroieexport is building the \$1 billion Bushehr plant under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], the United Nations' nuclear watchdog agency. The Russian Foreign Ministry and nuclear officials said the fuel delivery was under full IAEA safeguards.

Construction of the plant was expected to be completed in September, but was delayed because of lack of financing and delayed equipment deliveries from other countries, the official Russian news agency Interfax said."

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## EU GLOBAL IMAGE IMPROVING, US FADING

*December 13, 2007* The EU Observer reported: "The perception that the EU is a global player is increasing worldwide, while the image of the US as the world's biggest power is fading, a new survey has shown.

Citizens in major states across the globe see the EU as the fifth superpower in the world after the US, China, Russia and Japan - but by 2020, Europe is expected to move up by one place, according to a poll released on Wednesday (12 December) by the German foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung.

Respondents to the survey from within the EU are the most optimistic about the bloc's future as a global actor, with percentages ranging from 80 percent in Germany, to 70 percent (UK), and 38 percent (France).



Citizens from Russia (13 percent), Brazil (10 percent) and India (9 percent) rank Russia, the US and India top of the list, respectively.

The US will be "the great loser of the future", according to the poll. While it is now perceived as the world's number one superpower by 81 percent of the respondents, 61 percent think the US will still be top world player in 13 years time.

Almost an equal number of respondents – 57 percent – think China will be the world's most important player in 2020, 37 percent say it will be Russia and 33 – the EU and Japan.

The poll was conducted in Brazil, China, Japan, Russia, India, the US, France, Germany, and the UK.

In addition, Chinese and Russians think their countries should develop closer ties with the EU (98 and 91 percent, respectively), while 78 percent of Americans, 68 percent of Indians and 48 percent of Japanese share the same view."..."

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## CHINA, JAPAN LEADERS SEEK TO RESOLVE DISPUTES

*December 27, 2007* Reuters reported: "Japan and China, keen to improve ties plagued by wartime history, sought to resolve disputes over energy resources, territory and military build-ups at top-level talks on Friday.

Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao reviewed an honor guard before sitting down for talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

"I hope that through joint efforts we can continue to improve and push forward relations between China and Japan to achieve new development," Wen told Fukuda at the beginning of their meeting.

Fukuda said: "Japan and China are faced with a great chance and responsibility. We want to cooperate with you in creating the future of Asia and the world in the broad global perspective."..."

Fukuda is to hold separate talks with parliament chief Wu Bangguo and President Hu Jintao in the afternoon. Talks will focus on economic, environmental and energy cooperation, featuring transfers of Japan's waste-cutting, energy-saving and pollution-free technology.

Ties between the two Asian giants have warmed in the past year after a long chill under former Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi, who repeatedly visited Tokyo's Yasukuni war shrine seen by critics as a symbol of Japan's past militarism."..."

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