

Benazir Assassination



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Rituparna Goswami Pande 28 December 2007 18174 views

Strife torn Pakistan witnessed yet another blood bath when a suicide bomber detonated himself inches from Pakistan's former Prime minister Benazir Bhutto after she was leaving an election rally in Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh Park. A gunman also shot her on the neck and chest ensuring that Bhutto does not escape death for a second time. Bhutto had earlier escaped a bid on her life on October 18 at Karachi in which 140 people died.

Leaders in Pakistan it seems are either doomed to have violent deaths or are banished from their native lands. Benazir's father and former Prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was hanged in this garrison town in 1979 after a military coup. Pakistan's first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was killed in 1951 in the same park where Benazir met her end. Nawaz Sharif yet another former prime minister was similarly banished from the country he ruled.

Benazir's death has created a vacuum in Pakistan's political scenario. Benazir was a leader to reckon with an iron lady who had the capacity and nerve to control a volatile nation like Pakistan. Her death triggered an upsurge of emotions in many parts of Pakistan turning it into a battleground of sorts as soon as news of her death spread. Benazir supporters angered by the assassination of their leader are thirsty for Musharraf's blood and shouting "dog Musharaff", "Killer Musharraf" slogans.

Bhutto served twice as Pakistan's Prime Minister between 1988 and 1996. She had returned to Pakistan from an eight- year exile on October 18.

Bhutto's return to her country after years of exile and the ability of her party to contest free and fair elections had been a corner stone of Bush's policy in Pakistan as it was observing the rising authoritarianism of Musharaff with concern.

With such a twist in the tale the elections in Pakistan hangs in balance. Pakistani leaders are slated for a trial by fire before anyone emerges as a leader of a nation of dissidents.

Photo: Benazir with father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Indira Gandhi. Pix by Ibrahim Lutfy

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BY RITUPARNA GOSWAMI PANDE

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