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Karzai declared elected president of Afghanistan

KABUL (CNN) — Afghan electoral officials declared incumbent President Hamid Karzai the winner of the 2009 presidential election Monday, after canceling this weekend's second round of voting.



KARZAI

Observers say Karzai's real test will be whether he can form a government that is seen as legitimate in the eyes of the Afghan people and the international community.

The Independent Electoral Commission made the announcement after they canceled Saturday's presidential runoff following the withdrawal of opposition candidate Abdullah Abdullah.

(Contd. on P. 15)

Iran wants new nuclear fuel talks

VIENNA (Reuters) — Iran wants more talks on a UN-drafted nuclear deal because it needs guarantees it will receive reactor fuel, a senior official said Monday.

Western powers have urged Iran to accept a draft deal in which it would send most of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) abroad by the end of the year for further enrichment to turn it into fuel for a medical reactor in Tehran.

Iranian Ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh told Reuters more talks were needed "in order to ensure that our technical concerns, and especially the issue of the guarantee of the fuel supply, are taken into consideration."

Iran says its uranium enrichment program is for peaceful electricity generation only.

Senior lawmakers have voiced deep misgivings about parting with the bulk of Iran's LEU, seen as a strategic asset and a strong bargaining chip.

"We are ready for the next round of technical discussions in Vienna at the IAEA headquarters," Soltanieh said by



telephone, adding that the International Atomic Energy Agency -- the UN nuclear watchdog -- should now arrange

a suitable date.

The IAEA had no immediate comment.

Pakistan wants Iran to mediate between Islamabad and Delhi

By M.A. Saki

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi says as Islamabad has been pressing the West to engage Iran Pakistan also expects Tehran to use its good relationship with India to mediate between Pakistan and India to settle the Kashmir dispute in order to change the environment in South Asia.

"Use your good offices and tell the Indians to engage with Pakistan," Pakistan's chief diplomat said in a 40-minute interview with the Tehran Times, Iran Daily, and Sobh-e Zahedan newspapers in Islamabad last Tuesday, October 27.



QURESHI

Following is the text of the chief diplomat's introductory remarks and his answers to questions by the Iranian journalists:

Welcome you to the foreign office. Let me welcome you to Pakistan. I hope your trip to Pakistan is a productive one. I'm of the view that such interactions, such delegations help promote to create an understanding between people, between countries, and between cultures. We have had a long cultural, historic, religious affinity with each other. Pakistanis feel very strongly about Iran. We have a large Shia community in Pakistan, and they love to visit your beautiful country, and the religious shrines there. I know many many families

(Contd. on P. 15)

Suicide bomber kills 35 near Pakistan's capital

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan (AP) — A suicide bomber killed 35 people outside a bank near Pakistan's capital Monday, as the U.N. said spreading violence has forced it to start pulling out some expatriate staff and suspend long-term development work in areas along the Afghan border.

Hours after the first blast, another suicide bomber struck in the eastern city of Lahore, exploding a car at a police checkpoint as officers went to search it. At least seven policemen were injured and two were in critical condition, officials said.

"By putting their lives in danger, our men have saved the city from enormous sabotage," Lahore Police Chief Pervaiz Rathor told reporters at the scene.

Checkpoints, where cars are forced to drive slowly past police officers looking inside, have become common sights across Pakistan amid a surge in violence that has left at least 300 people dead over the past month. The violence has grown bloodier since the government launched an anti-Taliban offensive in mid-October.

Several U.N. personnel have been among those killed in the violence, and the world body's decision to curtail development work could imperil Western goals of reducing extremism by improving Pakistan's economy.

The first attack Monday came in Rawalpindi, a garrison city just a few miles (kilometers) from Islamabad. It occurred as many people waited outside the National Bank on a pay day to collect salaries.

The bank is close to the army's headquarters, and a majority of the people waiting in line was from the military, said Mohammad Mushtaq, a soldier who was wounded. Militants raided the headquarters last month, triggering a 22-hour standoff that left 23 people dead.

"I was sitting on the pavement outside to wait for my turn," said Mushtaq, who suffered a head injury. "The bomb went off with a big bang. We all ran. I saw blood and body parts everywhere."

Arab states 'disappointed' with U.S.-Israeli talks

MARRAKESH, Morocco (Reuters) — Arab states are deeply disappointed that U.S.-Israeli talks last week failed to produce greater pressure for a freeze on settlement-building, Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa said on Monday.

"I am telling you that all of us, including Saudi Arabia, including Egypt, are deeply disappointed ... with the results, with the fact that Israel can get away with

Four soldiers were killed in the attack, and nine were wounded, said the army's chief spokesman, Maj. Gen. Athar Abbas. In total, 35 people were killed, said Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira. Several dozen others were wounded.

No group claimed responsibility for the bombing, but that is not unusual in attacks that kill many civilians.

Pakistan's president, prime minister and other top officials condemned the blast but vowed to continue the offensive in South Waziristan, an impoverished and underdeveloped tribal region next to Afghanistan where al-Qaida is believed to have hide-outs.

Abbas said the army had captured the town of Kaniguram, one of the Taliban's bases, and killed 12 more militants in the past 24 hours of the offensive, which began in mid-October. The U.S. supports the operation because it believes South Waziristan is a safe haven for Islamist extremists involved in attacks on Western troops in Afghanistan.

The top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, met with Pakistani army chief Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani on Monday at the army headquarters in Rawalpindi. The U.S. Embassy declined to say if he was there at the time of the attack.

Washington has stepped up its efforts to use development aid in a broader battle against spreading militancy. The U.S. government recently approved \$7.5 billion in aid over five years to improve Pakistan's economy, education and other nonmilitary sectors.

But the U.N. decision to suspend long-term development work in Pakistan's tribal areas and its North West Frontier Province could frustrate Washington's goals.

The U.N. made its decision after losing 11 of its personnel in attacks in Pakistan this year, including last month's bombing of the World Food Program's office in Islamabad that killed five people.



Clinton chats with her Moroccan counterpart Fassi Fihri.

The world body will reduce the level of international staff in the country and confine its work to emergency, humanitarian relief, and security operations, and "any other essential operations as advised by the secretary-general," the organization said in a statement.

The U.N. has been deeply involved in helping Pakistan deal with refugee crises resulting from army offensives against militants in the northwest.

U.N. spokeswoman Amena Kamaal told The Associated Press that the organization is still determining which programs will be suspended and how many staffers will be withdrawn from the country. She said "long-term development" applied to programs with a five-year or longer timeframe. The staff that remain in the country will be assigned additional security, she said.

"We have had 11 of our colleagues killed because of the security situation," Kamaal said. "All of the decisions are being made in light of that."

The U.N. has deemed 12 other countries or parts of countries so dangerous that it has suspended long-term development work, but that does not include Afghanistan, said Ian Miller, a U.N. official in Islamabad.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Abdul Basit said Pakistan understood the U.N.'s reasoning, but that he hoped the organization would resume its development work after the military completes its operation in South Waziristan.

Pakistan's shaky, U.S.-allied government also came under pressure Monday when a faction of the ruling coalition said it would oppose a measure being debated by Parliament that grants President Asif Ali Zardari and other lawmakers amnesty from corruption charges.

Such a rift within the ruling coalition could lead to distractions just as the U.S. wants Pakistan to focus on fighting militants.

Zardari denies the corruption allegations and has already spent years in prison fighting them.

anything without any firm stand that this cannot be done," Moussa told reporters on the sidelines of a conference in Morocco.

Asked if U.S. President Barack Obama's drive to restart the Israeli-Palestinian peace process had failed, he said, "I am really afraid that we are about to see a failure but I still wait until we have our meetings and decide what we are going to do. But failure is in the atmosphere all over."

Goldstone tells Moyers: Israel guilty of war crimes

Highly respected Judge Richard Goldstone, who is both a Jew and a Zionist, rightfully condemns Israel's policy of collective punishment of a people under effective occupation, destroying their means to live a dignified life as well as the trauma caused by the kind of military intervention the Israeli government called Operation Cast Lead:

The highly anticipated Goldstone human rights report has exposed Judge Goldstone to both universal acclaim as well as some strident and bitter criticism ~ mainly from the Israeli far right ~ however, late last week, the UN's Human Rights Council officially endorsed his findings.

With that in mind Bill Moyers had a classic 20 minute must see interview with Dr Goldstone last week which was fair, impartial and most revealing ~ because Goldstone comes across as extremely fair in his analysis as well as honest and meticulous in his findings.

His report accused both the Israel Defense Forces and Hamas of war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity. While condemning Palestinian rocket attacks, the report's harshest language was rightfully reserved for Israel's treatment of civilians in Gaza.

This interview took place at the same time the United Nations is calling on Israel to immediately halt forced evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes in East Beit-ul-Moqaddas, warning that as many as 60,000 people there may be at risk of forced evictions, demolitions and displacement.

(Source: thepeoplesvoice.org)

Iraq parliament speaker calls for death penalty suspension

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's parliament speaker on Sunday called for a suspension of executions until after elections set for January, to ensure that political parties do not use them as issues during the election campaign.

Iyad al-Samarrai put the request in to the justice ministry after receiving a letter from the head of parliament's legal committee, Baha Hussein al-Araji, who was concerned that Iraq's ruling parties may seek to bolster their support by claiming to have executed various criminals.

"Mr. Samarrai addressed this request to the justice ministry after a request from the chair of the legal committee," a parliamentary official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Araji is a member of the parliamentary bloc loyal to radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr.

According to the letter, a copy of which was obtained by AFP, Araji called on Samarrai to "direct the justice ministry to suspend executions which have already been approved (by the presidential council) so that they cannot be used politically by the parties in power."

The presidential council is made up of President Jalal Talabani and his two deputies, who must jointly approve every execution.

At a meeting on Sunday with families of people either killed or imprisoned by Saddam's Baath Party, Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki urged the council to continue to allow executions.