

Major Pakistani parties nix vote boycott

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- A second leader of a major Pakistani political party announced the group won't boycott January parliamentary elections in Islamabad. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said his Pakistan Muslim League members would participate in the Jan. 8 vote after talks with another former prime minister and opposition leader failed to bring unity on boycotting Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's bid for re-election, Washington Post correspondents reported. Benazir Bhutto said her Pakistan People's Party members would vote and reportedly told Sharif a boycott would only serve to leave the field wide open for parties loyal to Musharraf to sweep the election, Voice of America said. Smaller opposition parties have announced a boycott, demanding Musharraf restore Supreme Court judges he ousted when he declared emergency rule on Nov. 3 and suspended the constitution. At the time, he said it was to put down violent insurgents but his opponents, including Bhutto and Sharif, claim the declaration was a bid to retain power. Both opposition leaders have said publicly they believe the January vote is being rigged by Musharraf supporters, the report said.

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