

Musharraf assures free, fair polls

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has assured a European election observer team the Feb. 18 parliamentary elections would be free and fair, it was reported. The president, speaking to the EU visitors, also rejected allegations of any "prepoll rigging" or "ghost polling stations," the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan reported Thursday. Musharraf also said there would be no further postponements of the elections. The polls were originally set for Jan. 8 but were delayed in the rioting that followed the assassination of former premier Benazir Bhutto. Separately, Dawn reported visiting U.S. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, warning of serious consequences if the polls are not seen as being fair and free. "While there will be further division in Pakistan, there will be certain action against Pakistan by Congress if polls are not held in a transparent and fair manner," the Connecticut lawmaker was quoted as telling reporters in Islamabad. "In fact there will be serious consequences for both countries if elections are rigged as is being alleged by some political parties." The Voice of America reported Lieberman's visit comes at a time of growing speculation the government may again put off the elections.

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