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https://www.100test.com/kao_ti2020/556/2021_2022_Reporter_s_c84_556552.htm A crowd of supporters gather around pro-Taliban cleric Sufi Muhammad as he arrives in Mingora to negotiate with the Taliban in the battle-scarred Swat Valley , Pakistan on Tuesday, February 17, 2009. [Agencies]www.100test.com MINGORA, Pakistan Gunmen killed a Pakistani television reporter Wednesday hours after he covered a peace march led by a hard-line cleric aimed at convincing militants in the Swat Valley to lay down their weapons under a pact with the government, the victims employer said. It was unclear who shot Geo televisions Musa Khan Khel, but the incident shows that Swat remains a dangerous region despite Mondays truce agreement, which NATO has warned risks giving the Taliban a "safe haven" in the former tourist region. Reporters have often been killed or kidnapped in northwest Pakistan in circumstances that are rarely investigated. Journalists there say they face threats from both militants and members of the security forces and have to be very careful on what and how they report. Khels body was found close to the town of Matta several hours after he had left the rest of his crew without telling them where he was going, said Azhar Abbas, the managing director of Geo, Pakistans most popular news channel. He had been shot several times in his upper body, and his throat was partly slit, Abbas said, refusing to speculate on a motive for the crime. Khel had arrived in the town after filing reports on Geo about a peace march to the town by Sufi Muhammad an aging pro-Taliban

cleric who is father-in-law to Swat Taliban leader Maulana Fazlullah and hundreds of his supporters. On Monday, the regional government in Pakistans northwest struck a deal with Muhammad in which he agreed to persuade Fazlullah to give up arms in return for the pledge to introduce a system of Islamic law in the valley, where militants have routed the police, beheaded political opponents and burned scores of schools for girls. www.100test.com Muhammad has said he hopes to meet with Fazlullah soon. The march was aimed at rallying support for his efforts. Fighting between security forces and militants has killed hundreds of people in Swat over the past year, while up to a third of the valleys 1.5 million people have fled. The region lies next to Pakistans tribal regions close to the Afghan border, where Taliban and al-Qaida militants have long held sway. Pakistani officials insist the deal is not a concession, but rather that it addresses the long-standing demands of residents in Swat and surrounding areas for a more efficient justice system. They say the laws will not be implemented until the militants have disarmed. The main changes would involve already existing regulations that were never enforced, for instance, allowing religious scholars to advise judges, officials said. There are no publicized plans to ban girls from schooling or introduce other hardline measures, as some Taliban fighters would want. "We will not introduce the Taliban system here," Bashir Bilour, a senior provincial government leader, said Wednesday. "This is a system about justice. It is for producing swift justice." While Britain and NATO have said they are concerned by the deal, the United States has been muted in its criticism. When pressed by reporters at

the State Department on Tuesday spokesman Gordon Duguid said the U.S. was seeking a "fuller explanation" from Pakistan. www.100test.com "As I understand it, Islamic law is within the constitutional framework of Pakistan," he added. "So I don't know that that is particularly an issue for anyone outside of Pakistan to discuss." The U.S. response was a sign the new administration is wary about weakening an already fragile Pakistani government that Washington needs to help fight Islamic militants using Pakistan to stage attacks on US-led forces in Afghanistan. A similar deal in Swat last year collapsed in a few months and was blamed for giving insurgents time to regroup. Some 2,000 militants are believed to operate in the valley. In defiance of some 10,000 paramilitary and army troops, they have already set up their own courts, meting out punishments in line with an exceptionally harsh brand of Islamic law.

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