

Islamabad: Governor of Pakistan's Punjab province Ch. Salman Taseer who was a senior member of the ruling party PPP, was assassinated by one of his guards because of his opposition to Pakistan's controversial blasphemy law, Interior Minister Rehman Malik said, citing initial reports.

A witness at the scene said Taseer was stepping out of his car at a shopping area when he was shot. "The governor fell down and the man who fired at him threw down his gun and raised both hands," said the witness, Ali Imran.

The shooting left blood stains on a parking area on the edge of the Kohsar shopping center, which is popular among foreigners in Islamabad.

Taseer's assassination in broad daylight will reinforce the impression that the government is nowhere near to stabilizing the country.

Taseer, a liberal and charismatic politician close to President Asif Ali Zardari, had no role in day-to-day central government but his killing will compound a sense of crisis.

He had an all-too-real India connection: he married and divorced Indian journalist Tavleen Singh and had a British-born son Aatish, who grew up in India and has authored a novel dramatizing a son's search for a father.

Salman Taseer came to India in March 1980 to promote a laudatory biography of Pakistan's leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

According to columnist Khushwant Singh, Taseer met Tavleen Singh at the Oberoi hotel where he stayed and fell in love with her. The two married briefly, but fell apart swiftly, leading to much bitterness.

Aatish Taseer, Salman Taseer's son from Tavleen Singh, has written a book 'Stranger to History: A Son's Journey through Islamic lands' that captures the anguish of a son who felt betrayed by his father for abandoning his pregnant mother.

Born in London, the 30-year-old Aatish grew up in Delhi and went to a boarding school in Kodaikanal. Graduating from Amherst College, Massachusetts, now lives in London.

Aatish Taseer's second book, *The Temple-Goers*, was published last year in which he explored the tensions around religion and class in a changing India. He satirized the feudal culture in Pakistan in a much-quoted article *Travels with the Mango King*, which was published in *Prospect* magazine.