

# US kills UN move to monitor W Asia

AGENCIES  
UNITED NATIONS, DECEMBER 15

**T**HE US on Saturday used its veto for the second time this year to kill a UN Security Council resolution that urged international monitors in Palestinian territories riven by 15 months of deadly clashes with Israel.

The vote in the 15-member UN Security Council was 12 to 1 with 2 abstentions, Britain and Norway. The other two European Union members on the council, France and Ireland, were among the "yes" votes. The draft resolution warned of a dangerous deterioration in the region and called for an immediate halt to violence. It encouraged "all concerned to establish a monitoring mechanism" to help ease conditions in the West Bank and Gaza.

"The resolution before us fails to address the dynamic at work in the region," US Am-

bassador John Negroponte told the council in a marathon debate. "Instead, its purpose is to isolate politically one of the parties to the conflict through an attempt to throw the weight of the Council behind the other party," he said.

In March, the US vetoed a resolution that called for an observer force which Israel opposes. The resolution condemned all terrorist acts, particularly against civilians, as well as executions without trial, excessive force and wide destruction of property. But Negroponte said it was fundamentally flawed because it did not even mention "recent acts of terrorism" against Israelis or those responsible for them.

French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine described the move as "incomprehensible". "The veto of a reasonable draft resolution...which foresaw an impartial mechanism of West Asian surveillance is incomprehensible since the US accepted it at the G8 meeting" last July, Vedrine said on the



sidelines of a EU summit at Laeken, Belgium. The US also urged European countries not to invite or host Yasser Arafat in an effort to press the Palestinian leader to quell the violence, a senior US official has said. US Secretary of State Colin Powell delivered the message this week and last during a tour of nine Europe and Eurasian nations.

Early today, the Israeli army imposed a curfew in the Palestinian town of Beit Hanun, after occupying half the town in an overnight incursion, Palestinian security sources said. It is the first time Israel has imposed a curfew in a Gaza town since the Palestinian Authority was created in 1994.

Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak began talks with US West Asia envoys on Saturday. He met Anthony Zinni and US Assistant Secretary of State William Burns in Cairo. Zinni will return to Israel on Sunday. Reuters

## A WAR PSYCHOSIS IN WEST ASIA

RAISING THE STAKES in the incessant confrontation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, the Prime Minister of the Jewish state, Mr. Ariel Sharon, has now sought to redefine the war itself. Imitating the political style of the United States, Official Israel is bracing for what is being portrayed as an unexceptionable "war on terror". However, he seems to be unmindful of the attendant risk of terminating the deeply recessive "peace process" which, despite its fading prospects, continues to command international support as the only sensible option still open to both the Israelis and the Palestinians. Now, Mr. Sharon's stated aim is to force the leader of the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Yasser Arafat, to rein in as also neutralise those who masterminded a series of devastating terrorist attacks that killed and wounded an increasing number of Israelis at an alarming frequency in recent months. The most immediate serial provocations were the brutal suicide-bombings at a pedestrian shopping mall in Jerusalem and inside a bus at Haifa. However, the retaliatory methods being adopted by Israel at this time raise questions about Mr. Sharon's real intentions, however genuine or misguided these might be. The latest Israeli missile strikes against the helicopters and certain other "symbols" of Mr. Arafat's political authority indicate a measured escalation by the Jewish state in its transparent bid to undermine his position as the Palestinian leader. Mr. Sharon's demonstrative fury is directed against the perceived failure of Mr. Arafat to control the Palestinian "terrorists". Groups such as the Islamic Jihad and the Hamas seem to revel in espousing their anti-Israel agenda as part of their overall campaign for the "rights" of the Palestinian people. In a sense, Mr. Arafat does appear helpless in the face of the intransigence of these Palestinian

groups and in the context of the Israeli military might. Yet, Mr. Sharon seems reckless in disregarding the reality that Mr. Arafat is still the only pan-Palestinian leader who might be able to strike a fair peace deal with Israel.

Two aspects of the latest crisis of a new war psychosis in West Asia are of particular concern to the international community. First, Mr. Sharon's latest military action is widely regarded as an excessively disproportionate use of force that goes far beyond the requirements of any sabre-rattling that might have been designed to induce Mr. Arafat to settle for peace with Israel. It is common knowledge that the Palestinian leader launched a crackdown against some suspected terrorists at home in the wake of the latest despicable acts of murderous violence against ordinary Israeli citizens. Yet, if Mr. Sharon is not satisfied, the legitimate question from Mr. Arafat's camp is whether all the Palestinians should be imprisoned in atonement. Second, the Israeli Prime Minister's move to transform a known political-historical battle of attrition into a new-style war on terror may alter the fragile dynamics of the existing unstable equilibrium in the wider West Asian region itself.

The Israeli Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, has made no secret of his Labour Party's sense of frustration, if not also disillusionment, over the manner in which Mr. Sharon seems to have acted at this time without much internal debate. At one level in this context, Mr. Sharon may derive comfort from the statement from an old ally like the U.S. that Israel has the right to defend itself. While this has acquired the overtones of a possible American backing for Israel's own declaratory "war on terror", the fact remains that the U.S. is still willing to try and defuse tensions between the Jewish state and the Palestinians.

5 DEC 2001

# 'Pak., Iran rid of the shadow'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, NOV. 30. A new chapter appears to have opened in relations between Iran and Pakistan today with the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, announcing that with the collapse of Taliban the 'clouds' have been removed and that they have decided to work together for a broadbased government and reconstruction in Afghanistan. "The sun is shining," the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, told a joint news conference here with his Iranian counterpart Mr. Kamal Kharrazi. "Pakistan and Iran today are rid of the shadow that existed over our relations."

While maintaining that Pakistan and Iran had a major role to play in Afghanistan Mr. Kharrazi said that both the countries had decided to set up a joint commission to work on reconstruction of the war-ravaged country. To be set up in collaboration with UNDP and other international agencies, it would not only help reconciliation of various ethnic groups but work towards reconstruction.

On a two-day official visit here with a large delegation, Mr. Kharrazi said he had frank and fruitful discussions with the Pakistan Government on Afghanistan. "After years of ups and downs in our relations, now is the time for us to cooperate. Both Pakistan and Iran have suffered a lot on account of the situation in Afghanistan".

Relations between Iran and Pakistan had come under strain during the Taliban regime. While Iran perceived Pakistan to be the main patron, Pakistan suspected Tehran's role in the sectarian clashes in the country besides disliking its help for the Northern Alliance.

Both the Ministers said that while they had sorted "major differences", some minor irritants remain in the relations. And in reality they may not be minor. For example, Iran is totally opposed to the idea of presence of a multinational force in Afghanistan while Pakistan believes that such a force would help reassure the ethnic groups like the Psthuns who are not part of the Northern Alliance.

Teheran is also opposed to an active American role in Afghanistan. Mr. Kharrazi minced no words in suggesting that his country would oppose any Washington proposal to expand its agenda in the name of international terrorism beyond Afghanistan. "Attack on any other Muslim country would not be acceptable. There is no excuse for a military operation in any other Muslim country. Such an attempt would have a serious backlash", he said in response to a specific question on reports of plans by Washington to target some other countries after Afghanistan.

Mr. Sattar merely said that in the course of discussions with those who mattered in the Bush Administration Islamabad was not given any information about plans to target other countries.

THE HINDU

NOV 30 2001

# Iraq warns U.S. against attack

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, OCT. 28. Iraq has said that it fears an attack from the U.S. and Britain on the pretext of fighting terrorism, and warned of "grave" consequences if there is an attempt to overthrow the President, Mr. Saddam Hussein.

Mr. Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq and its most visible diplomatic face after Mr. Hussein, told *The Sunday Telegraph* that an attack was "just a matter of time". "We know that they are preparing for such an attack. ... We are watching what is being said and what is being done in the United States and in Britain. ...", he said shrugging off the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair's painstaking attempts in recent weeks to assure the Arab world that Iraq was not on the coalition's agenda in its current campaign against terrorism.

Mr. Aziz insisted that Britain and the U.S. were hand-in-glove against Iraq, and said he was not sure if Britain "will not follow suit with the Americans" if the latter attacked Baghdad. "The British have their own way of doing things

and saying things, but, nevertheless the British support the core of the American policy against Iraq," he said accusing Mr. Blair of doing "public relations" for the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush. "His statements to the (Arab and Muslim) population are aimed at trying to control the general Arab resistance to what is happening in Afghanistan."

Mr. Aziz, who is deemed to be Mr. Hussein's right-hand man, warned that an attack on Iraq would be a "grave mistake" as the Arab countries would "not tolerate" what would be seen as "sheer aggression". He added the Arab world would not retaliate militarily but would take "political actions" to isolate the U.S. The U.S. policy on Iraq, he said, was already isolated with only Britain continuing to support it. "No other partner or no other country in the world, especially amongst the members of the Security Council, are fully supporting the Americans in their attitude towards Iraq," he declared.

Accusing the U.S. and Britain of being "determined" to topple Mr. Saddam Hussein, he said: "When

America decides to attack Iraq it will be for their own agenda. It will be because they want to replace this Government. ... it will not be because of what is happening in the United States, although they might use that as a pretext."

According to the interviewer, Mr. Hala Jaber, Mr. Aziz "waved away" suggestions that Iraq might have been involved in the Sept. 11 outrage. He also dismissed allegations that Baghdad was behind the anthrax scare. "This is not only baseless, it is also ridiculous," he said. He acknowledged that Iraq did develop anthrax in the eighties but the programme was destroyed by the United Nations inspectors in the nineties. He strongly denied Western media reports that sometime before the Sept. 11 attacks, an Iraqi diplomat in Prague, Mr. Ahmad Samir al-Hani, had met Mohammed Atta, the alleged leader of the hijackers who crashed planes into the World Trade Center in New York. "I checked with the diplomat mentioned when I read those allegations against him and I can say categorically that they are false," he said emphatically.

40-15 23/10



# Ex-UN inspector wants leash on Iraq

JAMES BONE  
THE TIMES, LONDON

NEW YORK, Oct. 20. — With Iraq under a cloud of suspicion, the former chief arms inspector of the United Nations suggested yesterday that it was time to demand that Baghdad allow the resumption of UN inspections.

Mr Richard Butler, who led the inspections from 1997 to 1999, said the terrorist attacks could provide a window of opportunity to go after Iraq's suspected bioweapons stockpile.

The key, he said, would be whether the USA could enlist the support of its new anti-terrorism ally, President Mr Putin. The Russian leader has repeatedly protected Iraq from UN demands.

"May be this is a time to walk up to Iraq and say: 'We note that you applauded the attacks of 11 September in a way that was really awful. But we also note that you have kept your head down and want to stay out of it. Here is our list of demands. We want inspections now and Mr Putin agrees.'"

Mr Butler, who left his post as chairman of the UN Special Commission when the inspection regime collapsed and Britain and the USA bombed Iraq,

## BIO-WAR CHARGE ON SADDAM

said that Baghdad's vast supplies of germ agents made it a possible source of the anthrax being used in America. "As the police say, it's a fruitful line of inquiry," he observed.

Before they were forced out of the country, UN inspectors discovered that Iraq had a vast biological warfare programme that had actually "weaponised" anthrax into Scud missiles and bombs. Although traces of biological agents were found, Iraq thwarted UN efforts to find its suspected stockpiles.

Mr Butler says several signs point to possible Iraqi involvement in the anthrax attacks, such as the meeting between one of the hijackers and an Iraqi intelligence agent in Prague and an Egyptian intelligence report suggesting that Iraq may have supplied anthrax.

He acknowledges that there is no hard evidence. "We don't know," he said. "The point is that there is a scientific and forensic path we have to walk here. We have to find out which strain it is, what quality. That will lead to the manufacturing technology used and possibly where it was made. It may narrow the field of the source of supply," he ex-

plained. "It would be important if Iraq turned out to be one of them."

In the longer term, Mr Butler is arguing for the creation of a new Council on Weapons of Mass Destruction similar to the Security Council to halt the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

"The drum I am going to be beating in the future is we have to reach agreement in the international community that no one should have weapons of mass destruction," he said.

"We have got the nuclear, chemical and biological treaties, but what they do not have is a reliable method of enforcement. At the end of the Second World War we created the Security Council," he said.

"At the end of the Cold War we created nothing — not yet. I argue we should create the Council on Weapons of Mass Destruction. We need a new council, like the Security Council, hopefully without vetoes, that would receive reports of compliance with non-proliferation treaties," he added.

When the council received a report of non-compliance with a certain treaty, they should call that country to account, Mr Butler said.

THE STATESMAN

21 OCT 2001

# Back to the brink

Peace in West Asia is central to war against terrorism

**P**RESIDENT George W Bush has no choice but to give the topmost priority to keeping the peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The assassination of an Israeli cabinet minister, Rehavam Zeevi, by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is an extremely grave provocation that shatters the fragile Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire and could set in motion a chain of events that would be far worse than anything seen in the region during the last violent year. It puts the international coalition against terrorism in serious jeopardy. Great courage and wisdom on the part of Israeli and Palestinian leaders will be required to halt the cycle of bloody action and reaction. But the evidence of history is that neither leadership will be able to do this on its own. The Americans must act and act quickly to create a fire-break between the two sides.

Before September 11's terrorist atrocities, Bush distanced himself from West Asia in the belief that, after the failure of the intense Camp David negotiations held during President Clinton's last months in office, there was not much more Washington could do until the Israelis and Palestinians found their own way towards resuming the peace process. To many that seemed a sensible policy for a new administration. Dragged back into the West Asian maelstrom after September 11, Washington intensified pressure on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Chairman Yasser Arafat to work out a ceasefire arrangement. Until the Zeevi murder there was reason to hope that after

some false starts, Sharon and Arafat might be able to hold down the level of violence, if not actually maintain a ceasefire. Indeed 24 hours before the killing, Israel seemed confident enough to start lifting restrictions on the movement of Palestinians into Israel.

Given the kind of suspicions the Arab world is believed to harbour, it may not appear prudent for the Americans to play too conspicuous a role in West Asia while the bombardment of Afghanistan goes on and radical Islamists are preparing to bring people out into the streets in many countries. However, popular reaction can be subdued and suspicions calmed if the Palestinian leadership and regional Arab governments are seen to welcome US intervention as they must because there is no other alternative. Arafat has roundly condemned terrorism and is committed to supporting the American campaign. He must therefore somehow respond to Israeli demands to hand over the PFLP killers. At the same time, he must avoid Palestinian demonstrations of the kind witnessed in Gaza last week and challenges to his own authority from hardliners. Sharon could help Arafat do what he must to meet the ends of justice by toning down his language and holding back his tanks. Colossal effort is needed to prevent more bloodshed. There is a sense of impending doom, of a relentless slide towards a Greek tragedy. But there are enormous wellsprings of courage, moderation and sanity in Israel and the Palestinian territories. There can and must be hope of peace.

INDIAN EXPRESS

19 OCT 2001

WEST ASIA / ARAFAT REPUDIATES OSAMA'S CLAIM

# Blair backs Palestinian state

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, OCT. 15. In a major diplomatic initiative by Britain to sustain the Muslim world's backing for the military action in Afghanistan, the Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, today publicly declared support for a "viable Palestinian state" as part of a negotiated settlement, and in turn, the visiting Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat, strongly denounced Osama bin Laden's attempt to hijack the Palestinian cause for his terrorist activities.

Mr. Arafat, who was here at Mr. Blair's invitation, sharply condemned the Sept. 11 outrage and repudiated Osama's claim that the campaign against terrorism is a war against Islam. "The fight against terror is not a fight against Islam," he declared, stressing that Islam forbade killing innocent people. This was as emphatic a rejection of the "jehadi" line as Mr. Blair could expect from a leader whose name and cause have been invoked to rationalise Osama's actions. "Mr. Blair got what he wanted," said a Downing Street watcher, and Mr. Arafat got what he was looking for: the first public and televised endorsement by a Western leader of his people's demand for an independent state.

Observers recalled that only a few weeks ago, a reference to a

Palestinian state by the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw, in an Iranian newspaper article had touched off a diplomatic row with the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, refusing to meet him until Mr. Blair intervened.

They saw it as a major triumph for Mr. Arafat, who in the weeks before the current crisis, had become an isolated figure "in effect banished from London and Washington because of his unwillingness or inability to halt Palestinian attacks on Israel", as *The Times* put it.

His tough anti-terrorism stance after the Sept. 11 attacks and his administration's crackdown on pro-Osama protesters in Palestine turned him into an asset for the Western alliance at a time when Muslim opinion across the world was inflamed by the military offensive against Afghanistan, commentators said.

After an hour-long meeting at Downing Street this morning, which both Mr. Blair and Mr. Arafat described as "good" and "constructive", they said it was the "right time" for the resumption of peace process in West Asia.

Mr. Blair denied that the current efforts were a result of the post-Sept. 11 Arab backlash, but admitted that the crisis had lent a "renewed urgency" to "reinvigorate" the peace process. Now was



The Palestinian leader, Mr. Yasser Arafat (right), is met by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, on the steps of 10, Downing Street, London, on Monday. — AP

the chance, he said, to set right the "injustices" that had blighted the world and seek a just and lasting settlement of the Palestine-Israel conflict — a view strongly echoed by Mr. Arafat who called upon Israel to return to negotia-

tions and put an end to the conflict.

He reiterated his demand for an independent Palestinian state, alongside Israel, and with East Jerusalem as the capital of the new state.

Asked what kind of assurance he had sought from Mr. Blair in getting Israel to resume peace talks, a visibly pleased Mr. Arafat said: "I don't need to seek any assurance from him. We trust him that he will do it." He said Mr. Blair had a "special role" to play in pushing the peace efforts. There were indications that Mr. Blair would speak to Mr. Sharon "very shortly", and follow up his initiative with the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush.

Earlier, on his arrival, Mr. Arafat described it as a "very important" visit, his first meeting with Mr. Blair in a year. Hours before he arrived, Mr. Blair spoke of the need for constructing a "security bridge" as a prelude to the start of a substantive dialogue in West Asia. "You need to construct at least the right platform of security so that people feel they're not seeing funerals on their television screens, heightening the tension and anger and bitterness, then the violence," he said in an interview to *The Observer* on Sunday.

The invitation to Mr. Arafat followed Mr. Blair's recent visit to West Asia where the message he repeatedly got was that there was deep anger among the people over the U.S. support for Israel, and the pro-Osama opinion was a reaction to the U.S. policy on the Palestine-Israel dispute.

THE HINDU

# Suffering of the innocent

HD-17  
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HALF A million children, the eldest of whom should have been approaching adolescence, are no longer alive due to causes attributable to the war and sanctions imposed on Iraq. Three generations of Palestinians, two of Saharawis, one generation each of Lebanese, Sudanese, Algerians and Iranians have had their lives blighted. The present and future of the Kurds seems as bleak as their past. Take your focus away from the rights and wrongs of political causes, constrain the inborn tendency to make judgments on events and what you are left with is the stark reality of how terrible war is.

Ordinary people in Iraq will talk about the U.S. role in keeping the sanctions in place. They will also talk about how the sanctions are being used as a means to bring about a change in regime and not for the purpose originally intended, which was that of ridding Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction. Nowadays, they will also talk of their success in wearing down their international isolation and list the countries that are now dealing with Iraq. Some have even begun to express cautious hope for the future.

But politics surely does not occupy most of their time. It is also impossible for them to carry on with the usual routine of life. In a country where the people once enjoyed an enviable quality of life, working people have to worry every day whether they will be able to gather the extra income their families need. At the beginning of each new school year, parents have to worry how they will pay the amounts beyond that provided by the Government for school books and supplies. Items of luxury or decorations amassed over a life-time had been sold off to pay for food in the 1990s. There is a constant worry about the quality of water that is not as clean as it was before the Gulf War because treatment plants are not in very good repair. And there is constant worry about the quality of the air because no one knows the extent to which depleted uranium has polluted the atmosphere. Medical problems cause anxieties far more acute than in normal times because the availability of facilities and medicines is very chancy.



An Iraqi family in Basra heads home with its monthly rations... years of privation.

*Half a million children dead in Iraq. That is the price of war and sanctions, writes Kesava Menon.*

If the Iraqis have been experiencing a slow grinding misery over the past decade, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have been going through it for much longer. Many of those who went into refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria during the 1948 war have spent their entire lives in the camps and seen their children and grandchildren enter into the same conditions. In some of these countries, the Palestinians have no hope of getting citizenship and are cut off from various forms of employment. They

have become dependent on the U.N. and other relief agencies and under constant pressure to glean whatever supplementary income they can.

Those Palestinians who continued to live in their home territories had reason to think that the worst was behind them through much of the latter half of the 1990s. The presence of aggressive Jewish settlers on their soil was a constant irritant and the land confiscation and water appropriation which they represented were a constant reminder of their own deprivation.

However, as negotiations with Israel went ahead and one town after another was returned to full Palestinian control they could at least begin to see the end of the tunnel. Whatever the rhetoric from the various levels of the political leadership, the building boom in towns such as el Bireh seemed to belie assessments that Palestinian misery was being compounded.

Over the past year (almost to the date), that situation has been drastically and tragically reversed. Palestinians are locked into their home towns and villages as Israel has closed the roads between them. Unemployment has rocketed as Israel does not offer jobs in anywhere near the numbers once provided. Supplies get through only with difficulty to the towns and villages and indeed into the Palestinian territory as a whole as Israel has closed off the international borders.

Those going to colleges, offices or even hospitals have to spend miserable hours on the road for journeys which once took only minutes. All this without even considering the tension that must afflict people who are constantly worried about getting caught in the crossfire between Israeli soldiers and their gunmen.

In Algiers, at least the fears of a sudden terrorist strike have waned considerably. But in the countryside violence can still descend on the unsuspecting like a thunderclap. A visit to a beach or even sleeping in the courtyard of a village house can suddenly become a terrifying dance with death. In southern Sudan, it is not the possibility of sudden death alone that people have to contend with. Tens of thousands are in a constant state of displacement as success in the war between the Government and rebels shifts one way and then the other. Worse still are the reports of slavery, especially that of children.

Even when the war moves on, the people who have been afflicted are unable to resume normal life for long periods. Israel pulled out of southern Lebanon more than a year ago. But the villages still bear a beaten, defeated look; those who fled have not returned and agriculture and handicraft are yet to revive.

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# Ayatollah cautions US against Afghan attack

Tehran, Sept. 17 (Reuters): Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Monday condemned the deadly attacks in the US, but said punishing Afghanistan might cause a human catastrophe and could trigger more problems for America.

His comments indicate that it is unlikely that Iran, which is hostile to Afghan's Taliban rulers, would join an US-led international coalition in a possible attack on Afghanistan.

"Islam condemns the massacre of defenceless people, whether Muslim or Christian or others, anywhere and by any means," Khamenei said in his first public reaction to Tuesday's attacks that killed around 5,000 people in New York and Washington.

"Based on the same principle, Iran condemns a possible attack on Afghanistan which could lead to another human catastrophe," Iran's IRNA news agency quoted him as saying.

Khamenei, a staunch foe of the US, has the final say on all state matters in Iran, including foreign policy.

"If America wants to wage war on Afghanistan from bases in Pakistan and expand its influence in

the region, it will see its problems mounting," Khamenei warned.

"Is the Muslim nation of Afghanistan to suffer another war only because a few people are believed to have had a hand in the recent events?" he asked.

"The actions of a few Muslims are no authorisation to commit repression against Muslims and attack Afghanistan."

## Khatami for OIC meet

Iranian President Mohammed Khatami on Monday called for an urgent meeting of the world's largest Muslim body to discuss fighting terrorism and a possible clash of cultures.

"Given the sensitive situation, there is a need for efforts to mobilise public opinion against violence and intolerance," the moderate Khatami said in a letter to Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the leader of Qatar, which currently chairs the 55-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference.

"Unfortunately, the recent inhuman acts in the US have become an excuse for those who see their interests in clashes with the Muslim civilisation to provoke anger against Muslims," Iran's state-run

radio reported him as saying.

Iranian leaders have strongly condemned the attacks in a rare expression of sympathy for the US regarded by the Islamic republic as its arch-foe.

But Tehran has been increasingly wary of the backlash in the West against Muslims following Tuesday's attack and a possibly over-hasty response from the US.

Khatami also sent a message to UN chief Kofi Annan calling for a united international front against terrorism, IRNA said.

"Terrorism is a common problem in today's world, something that threatens freedom, spirituality, culture and peaceful coexistence," the agency quoted the President. "With wisdom and prudence, we must root out terrorism and the conditions that breed it. One cannot fight terrorism based on emotional and hasty reactions," he said.

Iran's foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi echoed the concern in his own telephone conversation with Annan on Monday. "Unfortunately, news of possible attacks have sent Afghans rushing towards Afghanistan's borders and threaten a new wave of homelessness," he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 SEP 2001

Israeli missiles strike Gaza

W. Asiri  
SF-11  
1679

# Sharon vetoes truce talks

REUTERS

JERUSALEM, Sept. 15. - Israeli Prime Minister, Mr Ariel Sharon has vetoed Sunday's proposed US and European Union-brokered truce talks with Palestinians, a senior Israeli political source said. The source added Mr Sharon believes, now is not the time to launch negotiations on implementing a ceasefire, in the aftermath of Tuesday's terror attacks in New York and Washington.

The decision came even after the US President, Mr George Bush, called Mr Sharon yesterday and urged him to support the truce talks.

"Mr Sharon told his foreign minister, Mr Peres, not to meet Mr Arafat tomorrow, because the timing of the talks would hurt Israel," the source added. He was apparently referring to the terror attacks in the USA on Tuesday and Mr Sharon's biting comments the next day about Arafat.

"He (Arafat) is like (Osama) bin Laden. He also has a coalition of terror... but the difference is that Arafat still has a choice, he can still make a switch," an Israeli government spokesman quoted Mr Sharon as telling the US secretary of state on Wednesday.

The Palestinian information minister, Mr Yasser Abed Rabbo reacted by accusing Mr Sharon of cancelling the talks, so that he could "Continue his terrorist war" against the Palestinians,

while world attention remain focused on events in the USA.

Mr Peres, speaking on Israeli television, said, "The alternative to Arafat would pose more difficulties for Israel. It's the bin Laden camp, the Iranian camp, the Hamas camp and the Islamic Jihad camp, Mr Peres said.

**Gaza violence:** Meanwhile, gun battles erupted in the Gaza Strip early today. Israeli helicopter gunships fired missiles at Palestinian security targets in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian medical workers said. The Israeli army said Palestinians had opened fire at one of its posts in the area.

Further north in the Gaza Strip, Israeli tanks pushed 300 meters (yards) into Palestinian-controlled territory and wounded five Palestinians, Palestinian security officials said, after two Israeli border policemen were injured in a grenade attack. Late yesterday, Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian, who fired at a jeep in the central Gaza Strip, the army said.

In Gaza's Nusairat refugee camp, 2,000 supporters of Hamas took part in an anti-Israel rally yesterday. Holding pictures of Mohammed Ibbeshi, the first Arab suicide bomber, they called Arafat to spurn talks with Israel and warned of further attacks. Palestinian police confiscated still photographs of the rally and television footage shot by western news agencies.

16 SEP 2001

## Iran hails ties with EU

Brussels, September 10

IRANIAN FOREIGN Minister Kamal Kharrazi hailed his country's revival of ties with the European Union on Monday after landmark talks with senior EU officials, the first in Brussels since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

"We had a very good meeting and we are very glad about the pragmatic approach of the European Union toward Iran," Kharrazi told reporters after his talks with Belgian Foreign Minister Louis Michel and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana.

The EU's efforts to engage Iran through diplomacy and commerce contrast sharply with US policy, which brands Tehran a sponsor of international terrorism.

Kharrazi said he discussed proposals for a trade and cooperation agreement with the 15-nation EU, which could mean lower tariffs or higher quotas for Iranian exports.

"We hope the agreement will be signed and ratified as quickly as possible. It paves the way for more cooperation, given the strategic location of Iran," he said.

"Iran can be a stable partner for the countries of the European Union," Kharrazi said, adding that he hoped this would be the first of more regular contacts.

"We are in favour of accelerating negotiations on a trade and cooperation agreement," Michel said. "This important visit augurs well, perhaps, for a new relationship with Iran."

Michel said he and Kharrazi had also discussed the human rights situation in Iran, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drugs, terrorism and international issues such as the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Khatami cracks whip on hawks & public flogging

Tehran, Aug. 19 (Reuters): Reformist Iranian President Mohammad Khatami today denounced tougher Islamic rules imposed on society by the hardline judiciary, including widespread public floggings.

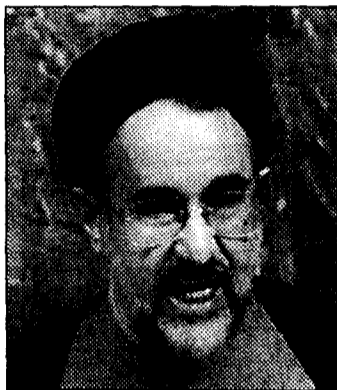
"In a society in which there is discrimination, poverty and graft, you cannot expect youngsters not to break the law and stay the right course...with tough punishments you cannot remove social corruption," Khatami said in a speech to parliament.

"Social corruption has deep roots and to remove those roots we should work together," he added.

Since Khatami's landslide reelection in June, dozens of mostly young men have been flogged in squares across the country for consuming alcohol and "harassing" women, in what reformists say is a conservative attempt to embarrass the President.

Conservatives insist that public punishments are an inseparable part of Islamic strictures and were needed to deter rising crime and breaches of Islamic teachings.

In an apparent backlash to Khatami's liberal reforms, the judiciary has ordered the police to arrest women flaunting the Islamic dress code, and shopkeepers playing loud music or showing women's underwear or naked mannequins in their windows.



Khatami

Police have raided parties, coffee shops and recreation centres and detained dozens of youngsters.

In a country where 70 per cent of the population is under 30, many young people bridle at the strict social limits imposed after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Reformist interior minister Abdolvahed Mousavi-Lari today challenged the police crackdown.

"I have asked the police chief for a detailed explanation. I am waiting to see how this issue has been coordinated between the police and the judiciary," he said, quoted by the official IRNA news agency.

The minister also denounced the public lashings, saying they may compromise Iran's image

abroad.

"They (judiciary officials) have not thought out the consequences of such punishments. We need to tune in divine teachings with our social situation to avoid hurting Iran's image," he said.

But Morteza Tehrani, a hardline cleric in the holy city of Qom, blasted reformers for challenging Islamic punishments.

"What are these clownish words, you are destroying the religion, challenging God's edicts," he said, quoted by IRNA.

"You think you can say anything just because you got the people's votes?"

Hardliners argue that public desire for change, repeatedly demonstrated in past elections, has no bearing on Islamic rules.

In Qom, a central town which houses a Shia shrine, even tigher restrictions have been imposed. Men have been barred from wearing ties and shops from selling them. Eight men were recently flogged in public for various offences.

Foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi, who spearheads Khatami's drive to improve ties with the West, said today that his ministry was measuring foreign response to the recent floggings.

"We are reviewing and gathering information on the international reaction to the public punishments," he said.

THE IRNA NEWS AGENCY



# Egypt switches to low-key diplomacy on West Asia

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), AUG. 19. There was a time when Egypt's President, Mr. Hosni Mubarak, was the most eager participant and host of the numerous summits and mini-summits held in connection with the West Asian peace process. Some of the summits or meetings held on Egyptian soil did give an impetus to the negotiations but Egypt of itself gained nothing other than creating the impression of being a regional busy-body trying to make itself relevant. Now, Egypt has switched to a quieter low-key form of diplomatic activism and even if it is not successful, it is at least more dignified.

The change in the way Egypt conducts itself these days has been exemplified by Mr. Mubarak himself. When the Palestinians were clamouring for the holding of a Arab summit, Mr. Mubarak coolly pointed out that such a summit would serve little purpose. The rest of the Arab world seeking to move a resolution at the U.N. Security Council demanding that Israel allow international monitors to enter the disturbed areas. Mr. Mubarak points out while he would welcome the presence of such ob-

servers he does not think they should be posted till a relative calm has been established and both Israel and the Palestinian concur with the move.

Mr. Mubarak's has come in for criticism for his refusal to support a summit call. The Palestinian Minister for International Co-operation, Mr. Nabil Shaath, infuriated the Egyptians when he said that some of the Arab leaders were opposing the holding of a summit because they knew that they could not go as far as their masses were demanding that they go in terms of action against Israel. Mr. Mubarak's stance on the posting of international observers is also likely to attract similar Palestinian criticism. However, in the long run, it may be recognised the Egypt has made a singular contribution to the Arab cause.

Too often, the Arabs do their best to spoil their own case by adopting rhetoric that seems out of sync with modern-day sensibilities or by suggesting measures that have no chance of being implemented. If, in keeping with its traditional role as the intellectual leaders of the Arab world, Egypt is leading them to a more pragmatic and dignified manner of asserting their case they would have done

the Arabs a world of good.

In keeping with its new style diplomacy, Egypt's National Security Advisor, Mr. Ossama al Baz, is in Washington discussing certain proposals on the ways to achieve at least a truce between Israel and the Palestinians. He has met with the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, and is to meet his U.S. counterpart, Ms. Condoleezza Rice. High power meetings but unlike it has so often happened after Arab interaction with U.S. officialdom there have been no bombastic expression of huge expectations. Mr. Al Baz has merely said that Egypt has put forward some proposals, as had the U.S. and that both sides needed to study the others' proposals before they could make comments.

While Mr. Al Baz has not disclosed the details of these proposals, it is possible that it could parallel proposals being promoted by Israel's Foreign Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, whereby he suggests that Israel and the Palestinians move to enforce a cease-fire area by area. Mr. Peres has got the go-ahead from his Prime Minister, Mr. Ariel Sharon, to discuss his ideas with the Palestinian Authority President, Mr. Yasser Arafat.



Palestinians try to save the life of a man after Israeli troops opened fire on them in the West Bank city of Nablus on Sunday. — Reuters

IRAN / REFORMERS NOT HAPPY WITH CABINET LIST

# Khatami off to a shaky start

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) AUG. 15. If there was any hope that Iran's President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, would be bolder in pushing through with his reform programme in his second term than he was in the first, the Cabinet list that he has announced does not strengthen it.

Allocation of some of the portfolios, especially those pertaining to strategic affairs are not fully in the President's control.

But the reformers are disappointed with the Ministers that Mr. Khatami has chosen for the departments that look after Economic and Social Affairs.

Among those Mr. Khatami has retained in his cabinet are the Foreign Minister, Mr. Kamal Kharazmi, the Defence Minister, Admiral Ali Shamkhani, the Interior Minister, Mr. Abdolvahed Mousavi-Lari, the Intelli-

gence Minister, Mr. Ali Yunesi, the Oil Minister, Mr. Bijan Namdar Zangeneh, and Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister, Mr. Ahmed Masjed-Jameii.

While Mr. Khatami has not had any trouble from these Ministers during his first term it is surprising that he has once again chosen Admiral Shamkhani for a post in his Cabinet.

The Defence Minister had contested the Presidential election against Mr. Khatami and during the campaign had criticised Mr. Khatami for being indecisive.

Opposition has been more vocal in respect of those Mr. Khatami has chosen to head the Economic and Social Affairs Ministries.

Mr. Tahmash Mazaheri who has been newly chosen for the Ministry of Finance and Economic affairs has been singled out for criticism.

Although he had at one time managed one of the boniyads (or perhaps

because he had) critics have pointed out that he is not reputed for his skills in economic management.

Reformers also feel that Mr. Khatami has not been radical enough in his choice of other four new Ministers chosen to head the departments of Transport, Health, Labour and Co-operation.

All the other Ministers are old hands except that the former Co-operation Minister, Mr. Morteza Haji, has been shifted to the Education department. Parliament will begin voting from next Saturday on this panel of Ministers.

The whole process of confirming each of these Ministers would have taken a week in normal circumstances. But with the reform groups restive the process might take a bit longer than that and there is a chance that some on the panel may not win approval.

THE HINDU

16 AUG 2001

# A reformer's last chance

**A** RELUCTANT Syed Mohammed Khatami began his second term as President of Iran last week knowing that his reform agenda faced odds as heavy as, if not heavier than, those when it was launched four years ago. Mr. Khatami also knows that he has nothing to lose since he cannot run for President again and his pro-reform supporters are clamouring for action.

What Mr. Khatami can do will depend on his assessment of the levels of frustration with existing conditions and the desperate hopes for change among his countrymen.

Mr. Khatami can be in no doubt about the direction in which he will be pressured to go. Those in the clerical hierarchy who are entrenched in the system and enjoy its benefits are in no mood to loosen their grip. They regard Mr. Khatami's smiling countenance as a balm that will soothe the masses and they want him and the ministerial team he will put together this week to work solely on the improvement of the economic situation.

Give the masses bread, is the conservatives line, and they will not bother about the circus of democracy. But they also want Mr. Khatami to perform the impossible since they will not give up or loosen their hold on economic institutions and without a change in this area an overall change looks improbable.

Whole chunks of the nationalised industry have been parcelled off to the various boniyads or "charitable foundations," most under clerical control. Let alone the hiving off of these industries to private hands, there is little likelihood that they will cease being the burden on the national exchequer they very often have been.

A reform-dominated Parliament can pass what laws it wants as over the last four years. But these laws have to get the approval of the Council of Guardians, a body that vets legislation and candidatures for all national elections and which is completely under the control of the conservatives. As over the last four years, the Guardians are bound to do all in their powers to cut down legislation aimed at undermining clerical

*Syed Mohammed Khatami, in his second and last term as Iran's President, has the opportunity, and the need, to mark out his reform agenda in full, says Kesava Menon.*

dominance.

It is for this reason that the defeat Mr. Khatami suffered before he even began his second term in office can prove crippling. There were three vacancies in the 12-member Council of Guardians as Mr. Khatami prepared to take his oath of office. Normally the administering of the oath of office and the filling in of the vacancies in the Guardians Council should have been considered two separate affairs. More so when the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, had endorsed Mr. Khatami's election and handed over his decree confirming the office at a public function.

Some clever conservatives found a loophole. The Constitution laid down that the full Council of Guardians should be in attendance when the President took the oath in Parliament, they said. Since there were vacancies in the

Council these should be first filled before Mr. Khatami was sworn in.

The conservative-dominated Judiciary chipped in. It sent a list of four names to Parliament that the reformers found totally unpalatable. For a couple of days the matter was tossed back and forth between a Parliament, that insisted the list be changed, and a Judiciary that was just as adamant that it alone had the privilege of selecting nominees for the Guardians Council.

Then Ayatollah Khamenei stepped in and ordered that Mr. Khatami's swearing in be put off till the Expediency Council — a constitutional body that arbitrates between Parliament and the Guardians in case of dispute — decided on the matter. Since the Expediency Council too is dominated by the conservatives there was not much scope left for speculation about which side it would take.

The Expediency Council decided that Parliament would vote on all four candidates on the list submitted by the Judiciary. If any two of the candidates got more than 50 per cent of the vote in the 290-member-strong house, they would be elected to the Guardians Council. If none of them did then Parliament would vote again and the two candidates who registered the largest number of votes in their favour (there was no option of voting against) would be elected irrespective of the proportion of support they received in the full Parliament.

Of the 243 parliamentarians present in the House, 162 cast blank ballots signifying the rejection of all candidates. The remaining 81 members cast 67 votes in favour of one candidate and 62 in favour of another with the other two getting 13 and 4 votes respectively. Two candidates, whom the reformers had considered too political and too inexperienced in legal matters, thus entered the Guardians Council despite their having been chosen by less than a quarter of the members of Parliament.

With the Guardians Council completely in the hands of the conservatives, there will be very little chance for Mr. Khatami to effectuate the rule changes necessary for economic reform. That will suit the conservatives very well since the public does not look to them but to the President, his Cabinet and Parliament to transform their economic plight.

Four years from now, the conservatives can tell, or can hope to tell, the masses that the reformers have failed to make their lives any better and thus hope that the reform movement will exit the scene as Mr. Khatami vacates the Presidency. What is going for Mr. Khatami is that the masses know how the game is being played and they are very likely to back him if he provides the leadership.

As Mr. Khatami begins his second term in office he knows that he has the opportunity, and the need, to lay his cards on the table — mark out his reform agenda in full and expose before the people those who are opposing him.



**Syed Mohammed Khatami (right) with his predecessor as Iran's President, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (left), and the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.**

IRAN / KHATAMI SWORN IN

# Term begins on a note of defeat <sup>9/18</sup>

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA, AUG. 8.** The Iranian President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, began his second and last term in office today under the cloud of a fresh defeat for his reform movement. It is not certain whether Iran's pro-reform forces will be able to recover from the psychological and practical effects of this latest defeat.

Mr. Khatami's swearing-in today in Parliament had been delayed by five days due to a dispute between Parliament and the judiciary. Parliament had refused to ratify any of the persons on a list of nominees to the Guardians Council (a supra-parliamentary body that vets legislation to see whether it is in line with the constitution and its Islamic principles) that had been forwarded by the judiciary.

The deadlock persisted with Parliament insisting that the judiciary submit fresh names since those on the list were too political or too experienced but the judiciary had refused. This dispute was then referred to yet another constitutional body, the Expediency Council, that is supposed to arbitrate between Parliament and the Guardians Council.

At a meeting held on Monday night, the Expediency Council worked out a formula which Parliament implemented at a session yesterday. What the Expediency Council proposed could hardly be categorised as a formula — it was more of an order and a severe snub to the reform-dominated Parliament.

The Expediency Council ordered Parliament to vote on the four nominees who figured in the conservative-dominated judi-



**The Iranian President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, delivering a speech during his swearing-in ceremony for a second four-year term at the Parliament in Teheran on Wednesday. — AP**

ciary's list. If any of these candidates managed to obtain votes of more than 50 per cent of the 290-member House he would be deemed elected to the Council of Guardians. Such a candidate, or candidates since there were two vacancies to be filled in the Guardians Council, would be deemed to have been elected by an absolute majority.

A vast majority of the members who participated in the vote — 162 of the 243 — expressed their displeasure at the choice before them by leaving their ballot papers blank. But this did not

amount to anything more than a show of pique since the Expediency Council, under the directive of the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, had already fixed the balloting so that at least two of the persons on the judiciary's list would be elected.

As per the directive issued after their Monday night meeting, the Expediency Council had ordered that if no one was elected by an absolute majority a second round of voting would be held. Any two candidates who got the largest number of votes in this round, irrespective of whether this number

came anywhere close to half the strength of the House, would be deemed elected.

Accordingly, the 81 parliamentarians who actually voted in the first round cast ballots again. One of the persons on the judiciary's list obtained 67 votes and another 62 (the other two got 13 and 4 respectively) and have now been elected to the Council of Guardians. While the conservatives have been able to pack the Council of Guardians, the reformers have obtained nothing despite their defiance. Parliament will now face the same situation it did over the last four years where the Council of Guardians repeatedly rejected legislation it passed.

The reformers' effort to bring about changes in the Council of Guardians was doomed as soon as the matter was referred to the Expediency Council. Theoretically, they could have rejected the Expediency Council's rulings and thus come out in open defiance of the conservatives and Ayatollah Khamenei. Mr. Khatami and his supporters refrained from posing such an open challenge over the past four years, preferring to work for change within the system.

They now seem to have embarked on the same course, the idea probably being that getting Mr. Khatami into the Presidential chair is the most important objective. But this policy of working within the system produced very little in the last four years and given this defeat at the outset it does not appear that the reformers will be very much more successful in the next four years either. That said, public pressure for reform is strong and Iran will still have to try and find a way to cope with it.

THE HINDU

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## Khatami investiture today

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By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN) AUG. 7. The formal investiture ceremony in Parliament for Iran's President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, in his second and last term in office is to take place tomorrow. Mr. Khatami's investiture by Parliament had been held up pending the resolution of a dispute between the legislative body on the one hand and the judiciary and supra-legislative body, the Council of Guardians, on the other.

This dispute was reported to have been overcome through a debate in yet another constitutional body, the Expediency Council, overnight and at a session of the Parliament this morning. But with few details available it is not clear whether Mr. Khatami and his reform-minded supporters in Parliament have won, made a compromise or surrendered to their conservative opponents.

The Parliament Speaker, Mr. Mehdi

Karrubi, who made the announcement about the investiture ceremony and the result of today's Parliament vote merely said that two members had been elected to the Guardians Council. The Guardians Council, which has power to vet legislation to ensure that it adheres to the Constitution and its Islamic principles, has 12 members. Of these six are appointed by the Supreme Religious Leader and the rest are selected by Parliament from a list presented by the judiciary. In the current dispute, the Parliament had rejected the nominations forwarded by the judiciary for two vacancies in the Guardians Council on the grounds that the nominees were both too political and too inexperienced in legal affairs.

With the Parliament and the judiciary in a dead-lock, the Leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, had ordered that the dispute be settled by the Expediency Council which has been set up to

arbitrate between Parliament and the Guardians. At its meeting overnight the Expediency Council decided that the selection of candidates to the Guardians Council should be done first through an absolute majority and then by a relative majority. In today's parliamentary vote, four candidates whose names had been recommended by the judiciary were said to have been voted out by an absolute majority while two candidatures were approved by a relative majority. With no details available as to the identities of the candidates involved, or their affiliations, it is impossible to make any sense out of this procedure. All that is clear is that the last obstacle to Mr. Khatami's swearing-in appears to have been overcome. But what was more important to know is whether Mr. Khatami enters his second term from a position of strength after having defeated the conservatives' game plan.

# Khatami oath row intensifies factional war

BY AFSHIN VALIŒJAD

Tehran, Aug. 5: The political rivalry that led to the postponement of the President's inauguration intensified on Sunday when the leader of the hardline judiciary dismissed a compromise proposal from the Speaker of Parliament.

Speaker Mahdi Karrubi had proposed the creation of a bipartisan committee to resolve the dispute that provoked the postponement — a conflict over nominations to Iran's constitutional watchdog.

President Mohammed Khatami had been scheduled to be sworn in before Parliament on Sunday.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei cancelled the inauguration on Saturday, broadcasting to the nation that he had decided to do it because of a row over nominations for three seats on the Guardian Council, a 12-member body that vets all bills passed by the legislature.

The Parliament, which is dominated by reformists, had approved only one of eight nominations from the hardline judiciary.

Hours after Mr Karrubi's suggestion was reported by the official Islamic Republic news

agency on Sunday, the country's chief judge, Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahroudi, dismissed it, Iranian radio reported. "Proposals which lack administrative guarantees, or are in disagreement with the law, will not only fail to resolve any problems, they will be pointless," the radio quoted Mr Shahroudi as telling Mr Karrubi in a letter.

Mr Shahroudi added in the letter that he hoped Mr Karrubi and the legislators would make an effort to cooperate and appoint two of the nominees to the Guardian Council.

Iran's biggest reformist party, the Islamic Iran Participation

Front, has blamed

## CRISIS IN IRAN

Mr Shahroudi for the dispute. "Unfortunately, lack of cooperation on the part of head of judiciary ... Through introducing partly unknown names or candidates with strong (conservative) tendencies caused a delay on approving two of the jurists," the participation front said in a statement. The reformist newspaper *Nowruz* also blamed Mr Shahroudi in an editorial on Sunday. "The head of judiciary showed no willingness to consult the Parliament," the paper said, urging Mr Shahroudi to nominate "well known and credible candidates." (AP)

IRAN / KHATAMI'S INAUGURATION DELAYED

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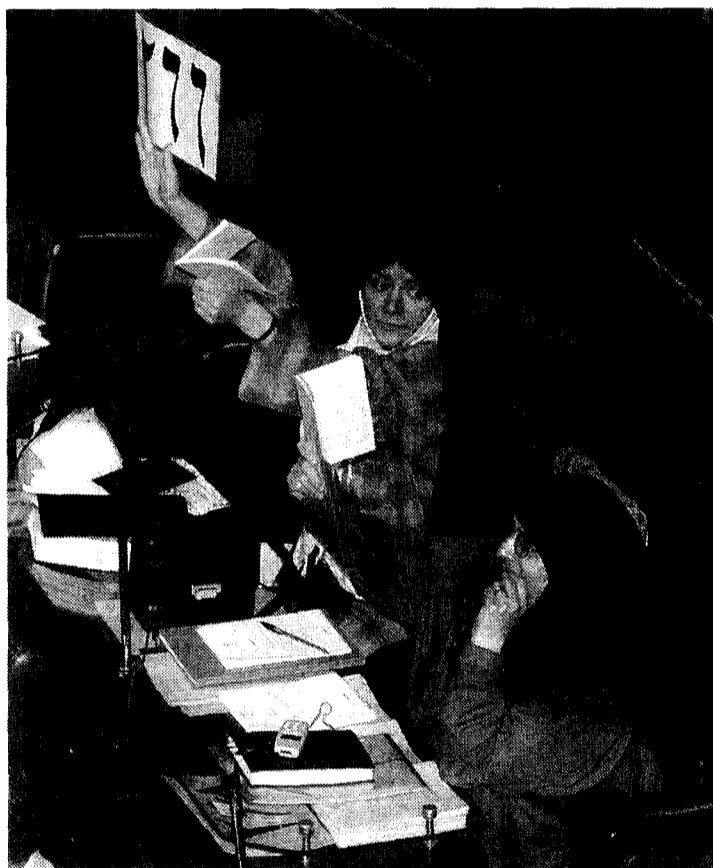
# Reformers, conservatives lock horns

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), AUG. 5. The speed at which a constitutional crisis has erupted in Iran, with the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, delaying the President, Mr. Syed Mohammed Khatami's formal inauguration till the issue is sorted out, was unexpected. Both leaders had indicated that they were on a collision course when Ayatollah Khamenei endorsed Mr. Khatami's election late last week. But that the Khatami-led reformers and the conservatives who take inspiration from Ayatollah Khamenei would lock horns so fast is something rare in Iranian politics.

After Ayatollah Khamenei had endorsed Mr. Khatami's election it should have been assumed that the formal ceremony to mark the inauguration of the latter's second and last term in office would follow as a matter of course. But Ayatollah Khamenei has ordered a delay of the ceremony till a dispute between the reform-dominated Parliament and the conservative-controlled judiciary is resolved. The dispute pertains to the election of three members to the Council of Guardians, a constitutional body that has overriding control over Parliament to see that its decrees conform to the religious order.

Under the Constitution, the membership of the Guardians' Council is so skewed that it en-



Pro-reform Parliament lawmakers hold up Iran's Constitution book and ask the Speaker for permission to speak during a session of Parliament in Teheran on Sunday. — AP

sure a conservative dominance. Half of the Guardians' 12 members are nominated by the Supreme Leader and the other six

selected from a list of legal experts drawn up by the judiciary. At present, there are three vacancies in the latter group of Guardians and

the judiciary had forwarded a short-list to Parliament. Reformers who dominate Parliament approved only one of the three names originally proposed and the judiciary thereafter put forward two fresh nominees. These nominations were also rejected.

Ayatollah Khamenei has relied on what appears a very formalistic clause of the Constitution to delay Mr. Khatami's inauguration. As per this clause, certain personalities, including a fully-formed Guardians' Council, must be present at the inauguration ceremony. Since there is no full Guardians' Council there can be no ceremony either.

Given the importance of an early inauguration of the new Presidential term (he constitutes the Cabinet) this delay is clearly not on account of a need to fulfill all technical niceties. A clear message is being sent to the reformers that their attempt to recast what has so far been a very obdurate Guardians' Council will be resisted with all the power at the clerical establishments' command.

Today, the Speaker of the Parliament, Mr. Mehdi Karrubi, proposed a compromise whereby a joint panel of parliamentarians and members of the judiciary would draw up a fresh set of nominees. The judiciary has rejected this proposal.

THE HINDU

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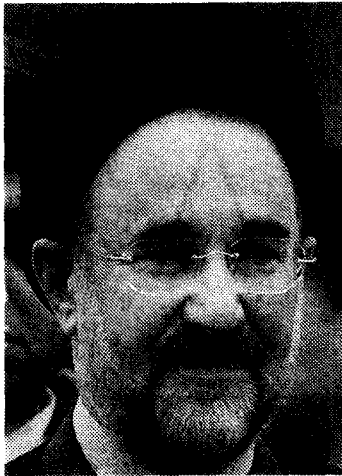
# Khatami-Khamenei rift widening?

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), AUG 3.** The Iranian President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami began his second and last term in office yesterday after the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a decree endorsing his election. The two most powerful men in Iran also simultaneously spelt out very different ideas about the country's priorities. More surprisingly, both appeared to acknowledge that their programmes could come into conflict and both of them indicated that they would each rally the forces and powers they respectively command.

Interpretations on the above lines are not palatable to the Iranian leadership. They often denounce write-ups and analyses that mention divisions within their ranks. Seldom before have the two leaders spoken even in veiled fashion of the possibility of conflict between them and rarely, if ever, have they alluded to the possibility that the forces they respectively command might be pitted against each other. While handing the decree to Mr. Khatami at a ceremony before a crowd of officials, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "I confirm the people's verdict and appoint him as President". But he went on to add, "My endorsement of the people's vote is valid as long as he continues in the path of Islam and stands against arrogant enemies."

The latter statement hardly looks like a pro forma one, especially in a context where some of the Ayatollah's staunchest sup-



**Mohammed Khatami**

porters, who also happen to be the President's most vehement critics, have often accused Mr. Khatami and his supporters of having strayed from the religious path. This statement is amenable to interpretation as a veiled threat of possible dismissal somewhere down the line.

If that was a token of the Ayatollah's toughness, Mr. Khatami was also to display a remarkable streak of defiance. "The President of the republic is certainly responsible to the Supreme Leader and the Parliament, but he is above all responsible to the people", Mr. Khatami was to say. Some of the Ayatollah's staunchest supporters would take this statement of the President as bordering on the verge of apostasy. To them, all legitimate authority flows from God whose intentions are interpreted by the

Wali Faqih (the Supreme Leader) and the people's wishes are to be given distinctly inferior treatment. In saying that the people's wishes will remain supreme, Mr. Khatami was virtually echoing the words of leading dissident clerics like the Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri.

Besides alluding to their different bases of support, the two leaders also indicated that they viewed their country's priorities in totally different, possibly conflicting manner. Ayatollah Khamenei clearly saw the country's worsening economic and social conditions as the priority that the President and his incoming cabinet must address. Political strife, he made clear, should not hinder the performance of this task. "We are in a crucial phase where one must act quickly in order to resolve the important problems such as the economic crisis and above all unemployment. Everybody should refrain from stirring political tensions and thereby allow the Government to work."

The admonition to all to quell political tensions can optimistically be interpreted as a sign of impartiality. But the import of the statement can perhaps more accurately be perceived when it is read in the context of constant criticism from the Khamenei-led conservative camp that Mr. Khatami has neglected economic issues while pursuing totally unnecessary political goals. In recent weeks, conservatives have been drawing linkages between rampant financial and moral corruption.

THE HINDU



# *Khamenei nod for Khatami*

Tehran, August 2

IRANIAN SUPREME Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei endorsed reformist Mohammad Khatami as President for a second four-year term on Thursday.

President Khatami, easily re-elected with 77 percent of the vote in June, is to formally begin his second term when he takes his oath of office in parliament on August 5.

"I confirm the people's vote and appoint him as president," said a statement by Khamenei read out at a ceremony at the

leader's residence. "My endorsement of the people's vote is valid as long as he continues on the path of Islam and stands against the arrogant enemies."

Khatami must introduce a new cabinet to parliament for a vote of confidence within two weeks of taking oath. Many of his supporters expect him to choose a more reformist cabinet to press on with his efforts to renew the Islamic Republic.

The soft-spoken, mid-ranking cleric has been locked in a sometimes bitter struggle with conservatives entrenched in the

political establishment who are opposed to his reforms.

"The president who is chosen by the people has a heavy duty toward them," Khatami said in a speech at the ceremony. "The people's right to oversee, to criticise and to protest is a fundamental and inalienable right."

"Every individual must be able to speak his mind without fear." Khatami called for greater cooperation between the sometimes feuding arms of the state, government, parliament and judiciary.

Reuters

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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# Not such a smart move

**T**HE BUSH administration thought that it would reverse the order of West Asian priorities followed by its predecessor. It sought to extricate the U.S. from its deep involvement in the Israel-Palestinian negotiations and concentrate instead on the re-building of the regional coalition against Iraq. Half a year down the road, the U.S. finds that both tasks are far more difficult than it might have earlier believed.

Both issues are interconnected. The Arabs believe the U.S., in failing to apply itself more wholeheartedly to the Israel-Palestinian situation, has given its assent to an Israeli policy of settling the on-going confrontation by resorting to its superior force. They also believe that the U.S.-enforced programme for putting Iraq in a cage has less to do with their (ie. the Gulf states) security than with outlawing the one Arab state that is prepared to take on Israel. This new twist to

*The Russians vetoed the 'smart sanctions' against Iraq in the Security Council putting paid to the U.S. gameplan, says Kesava Menon.*

the Arab perspective, carefully cultivated by Iraq no doubt, comes on top of the long-held grievance about the suffering of the Iraqi people under the sanctions regime. On both counts, the Arab alienation from the U.S. is growing by the day and the Bush administrations obvious interest lies in reversing this trend.

The Bush administration is being dragged inch by inch from its minimalist position vis-a-vis the Israel-Palestine issue. However, it made a determined effort to change its approach on Iraq. As the U.S. has been doing for quite some time now, it mounted this effort through a proxy. Ostensibly it was the U.K. that mooted the plan, but with the quick endorsement that the U.S. extended there has been little doubt that this is Washington's baby. This was a plan to change the nature of the sanctions imposed on Iraq

so as to ease the suffering of the common people while retaining the strictures against the Saddam Hussein regime.

Over the five years and more in which the oil-for-food programme has been implemented, the restriction on the exports of oil have gradually eased altogether. At present, Iraq can export as much oil as it wants. But its access to the funds so generated are still restricted since the proceeds of oil sales are put into an escrow account controlled by the U.N. Iraq's freedom to import the goods it needs are also restricted since the U.N. sanctions committee has to approve every purchase.

approval of contracts for consumer goods. The general principle was that the sanctions committee would allow Iraq to freely import goods that were clearly intended for the use of the ordinary Iraqis. A list of the goods that would thereby qualify for automatic approval was sought to be drawn up. However, Iraq was not at all sure that the "dual use" and "escrow account" pincers would be thereby removed. For instance, would refrigerating units of large capacity to be used for hotels be allowed to be imported freely when it could be said that such units could also be used for the alternate purpose of cooling

to make the Security Council change the programme unilaterally. This, however, does not appear to be the ground on which the proposed changes were proposed in the Security Council by the Russians. At first, the Russians proposed that the oil-for-food programme be extended for a shorter period when it came up for review in July. This would give the Security Council the time to consider and refine the new list of goods that could be more freely imported, the Russians suggested.

Even as late as June, the Iraqis believed that the U.S. would eventually be able to make Russia come around. The



Iraqis unload essentials received under the oil-for-food programme.

The sanctions committee, with its control of the funds and contracts, has been the real *vetal* on Iraq's back since it has the wherewithal to widely interpret the "dual purpose" clause. Under the relevant Security Council resolutions, Iraq is banned from importing goods that can be used for both military and civilian purposes. The sanctions committee has had a tendency to discern the probability of a military purpose to most of the goods that Iraq has sought to import, even the most innocuous.

What the U.S./U.K. plan proposed was a re-definition of the import list so as to eliminate the need for pre-

laboratories or storage sites for biological weapons experimentation? In such case, would the sanctions committee release funds out of the escrow account?

The U.S. and the U.K. tried to get the plan approved by the Security Council before the onset of the current six-month phase of the oil-for-food programme that began in early July. There was another incongruity here. The oil-for-food programme came into effect through agreement between the U.N. Secretary General and Iraq. Therefore, in trying to re-cast the mechanisms set up for the programme the U.S. was trying

Iraqis thought that the new scheme, dubbed the "smart sanctions" programme, would be brought into force and the effort to over-turn it would make up the next phase of their struggle for international rehabilitation.

Since the Iraqis want the removal of the sanctions altogether and are not interested in inching towards rehabilitation on proof of good intentions they did not let up on their stand that the sanctions must be removed altogether. It must have come as a surprise to the Iraqis when Russia vetoed the "smart sanctions" when they came up in the Security Council.

# Khamenei makes a small concession

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JULY 9. Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei has allowed one opening in the wall of clerical dominance by allowing space to parliament to probe one of the institutions under his control. This permission to probe the functioning of State-run radio and T.V. does not necessarily mean that Parliament will have greater say over programming. There are also no signs that Mr. Khamenei is ready to rein in the judiciary that has been the main obstacle to the reforms mooted by Parliament.

On Saturday, Mr. Khamenei authorised the Expediency Council to amend its by-laws that prohibit any interference in the institutions under his control. These institutions include the armed forces, the judiciary and the State-run radio and T.V. Parliament, which had unsuccessfully tried to slash funding for the radio and T.V. corporation, had sought a probe into its affairs. This move by Parliament was blocked by the conservative-dominated Guardians Council that has over-riding authority on legislation and other measures taken by Parliament. The Expediency Council, yet another conservative dominated body, is meant to arbitrate between Parliament and the Guardians.

Although Mr. Khamenei had signalled that he would allow a

parliamentary probe into State broadcasting, the head of the Expediency Council, Mr. Hashemi Rafsanjani had written to him saying that the by-laws did not permit such a probe. Mr. Rafsanjani had also queried whether the Expediency Council could amend the by-laws and whether the leader would give them permission to do the same. This authorisation has now been given. But that need not be the end of the story since the measure can still be bounced back and forth between the two Councils.

At present it does not appear that the probe will go into any aspects beyond the financial affairs of the radio and T.V. corporation. The reform-minded Parliament would like to get some control over the news and news features part of the programming since it is currently loaded in favour of their conservative opponents. But such control is likely to prove elusive. As for general liberalisation of programming, that can be forgotten for the foreseeable future. In this respect, the leader's authorisation represents a minor concession to the pro-reform mood in Iran that found expression yet again in the landslide electoral victory that the President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami won in June.

Meanwhile, the conservative dominated judiciary continues its merry ways. Another five Members of Parliament have been given summons to appear before a Teheran court within two days. At least one of these M.P.s has been charged for a speech he made in parliament wherein he criticised the judiciary. So much for parliamentary privilege. Two other M.P.s had been summoned by the court last week. Parliament's efforts to define "political crimes" and to provide for jury trials in such cases so as to curb the free-ranging judiciary was shot down by the Guardians soon after Mr. Khatami's electoral victory.

There are also signs that the pro-reform camp is in no hurry to confront the clerical establishment. Students who wanted to observe today the second anniversary of the riots that began on campus and spread to other parts of Teheran and then the provinces have not been given permission to hold a public rally. They instead intend to hold a rally inside the campus of the Teheran University.

# Ataturk's spirit lives on

**D**EMOCRATICALLY-MINDED people oppose political Islam (or political movements that express religious sentiments in general) for they fear such forces will use democratic means to capture power to destroy democracy itself. Turkey's Generals, who have been the main opponents of the Islamists in their country, perhaps neither suffer from this particular apprehension nor are so mindful of the higher democratic ideal. But, as yet another Islamist party was dissolved last month, the question that cropped up was whether Turkey had found a way to train religion-based political parties in the arts of pluralism.

Turkey's Constitutional Court ordered the ban of the Virtue party and unseated two of its 102

asked the court to hold its hand till either the parliamentary committee or the European Court had completed its deliberations.

Courts and state prosecutors in Turkey usually show a fair measure of independence and are not reluctant to ignore the wishes of elected Governments. But in this instance it was abundantly clear that a ban on Virtue would harm Turkey's interests as a whole. First, the act would rile the Europeans who are in any case not overtly enthusiastic about allowing Turkey to enter their community. There was also the fear that the dissolution of Virtue would disrupt the existing balance in Parliament and thereby destabilise the three-party coalition Government. A governmental

shake-up at this stage could be disastrous for Turkey as it is undertaking a painful IMF sponsored exercise in economic restructuring.

Under these circumstances, the Court's action is widely being interpreted as taken under pressure from the Generals who wield enormous power even in internal affairs. The Generals are understood to have an almost religious adherence to the secular principles enshrined in the country's constitution by Kemal Ataturk, founder of modern Turkey. Virtue was the fourth Islamist party to be banned in the last 32 years and the Generals role in the ouster of Mr. Necmettin Erbakan, the only Islamist to ever have become Turkey's Prime Minister, was too direct to be overlooked.

mainly to the National Action Party (MHP is its Turkish acronym), the second most powerful entity in the ruling coalition.

With the Court allowing the expelled duo, other than the Virtue MPs, to retain their seats the country was spared a painful and disruptive general election. But the order has not removed the threat to the Government's instability. It has on the other hand enhanced it. The MHP is very pro-army and secular but it also stands for Turkish traditions and self-identity. Since over 90 per cent of the people of Turkey are Muslims, and therefore adhere to certain codes of personal and social behaviour, there are some similarities between the lines advocated by Virtue and the MHP. Accordingly, a section of the MPs, who were formerly of the Virtue Party and have now been classified as independents, are expected to shift their loyalties to the MHP.

If just seven of these independents join the MHP it will become the largest partner in the coalition. The MHP leader, Mr. Davlet Bahceli, has said that he is not interested in replacing Mr. Ecevit as Prime Minister. But his partymen are far more impatient and Mr. Bahceli might not be able to resist their entreaties. It is not at all certain that the ruling coalition will be able to survive the transition if it does take place.

While the travails of Turkey's ruling coalition are one matter, the future of what was once the Virtue Party is another. Most analysts expect the party to split into two or more factions. Mr. Erbakan is expected to retain the support of die-hard loyalists but the bulk of the party faithful, especially those of a younger generation, are expected to set up an alternative. A party headed by the former Istanbul Governor, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, or the popular MP, Mr. Abdollah Gul, is expected to emerge.

More pertinent to the world outside Turkey is the question whether the Islamist movement in the country will re-cast its ideology even as it sets up a new vehicle for its expression. The Islamist movement in Turkey has not been as virulent as in some of the West Asian countries and the emerging leaders speak of themselves as being more centrist than Islamic. And so long as Turkey's Generals remain staunch secularists, the Islamists will have to learn to live within the laid down matrix.



Virtue Party leaders at Friday prayers in Ankara... stopped in their tracks.

members in Parliament. This though the shaky coalition Government had pleaded that it should hold its hand until two other scheduled developments took place. A multi-party parliamentary committee is drawing up guide-lines that would specify the conditions on which a party can be banned. The European Court is also considering a petition that challenges the Turkish establishment's penchant for taking action against the Islamic movements. Turkey's Prime Minister, Mr. Bulent Ecevit, had

*Another Islamist party was dissolved in Turkey last month. And, writes Kesava Menon, as long as the Generals remain staunch secularists, the Islamists will have to live within the laid down matrix.*

A few thousand people did turn up to cheer Mr. Erbakan at a rally held soon after the Court announced its decision. But Virtue has clearly been in decline ever since he was ousted from power. The results of last year's general election had shown that Virtue had lost huge chunks of its mass base in its traditional stronghold and recent opinion polls indicate that the party would be hardpressed to get the ten per cent of the vote it requires to qualify for a presence in Parliament. Its support base is understood to have shifted

**SANCTIONS / RUSSIA STYMIES U.S.-U.K. PLAN**

# U.N. extends oil-for-food programme for Iraq

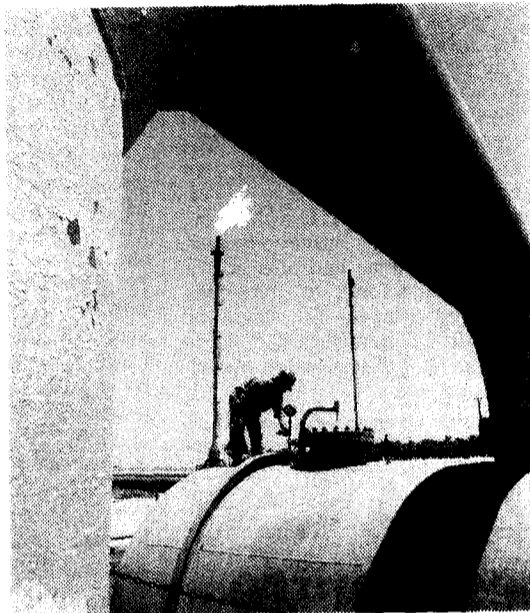
**UNITED NATIONS, JULY 4.** The Security Council voted unanimously for a five-month routine extension of the Iraq "oil-for-food" programme after Russia forced the United States and Britain to put off a plan to revamp 11-year-old sanctions against Baghdad.

Haggling continued until the last minute with Russia insisting all references to the U.S.-British proposals be deleted. In the end, the Council yesterday included one oblique reference to discussions of the proposals among a series of resolutions pertaining to the oil-for-food programme.

A vote had to be taken by midnight on Tuesday, before the expiration of the oil-for-food programme, which allows Iraq to export oil and buy civilian goods under U.N. supervision to offset the impact of the sanctions. They were imposed when Baghdad's troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990. Russia, which has commercial interests in Iraq, wants the sanctions suspended. It threatened to veto the U.S.-British plan to overhaul the embargoes as part of the oil-for-food programme, forcing a delay of at least five months and now wants no further discussions on it.

The U.S.-British "smart sanctions" would have eased civilian imports to Iraq while tightening controls on smuggling oil and prohibited weapons. One aim was to counter Iraqi claims that the sanctions were responsible for the hardship of ordinary Iraqis. Iraq stopped oil sales on June 4 to protest discussions on the U.S.-British plan. It has said it would resume shipments if the oil-for-food plan was extended without any mention of the proposed sanctions overhaul. But it is expected to follow Russia's lead. Baghdad had also threatened to stop oil flows to its neighbours, Jordan and Turkey, if they cooperated with the U.S. and Britain. Both countries criticised the "smart sanctions," which would require them to subject their trade with Iraq to some U.N. oversight.

The Russian veto threat was a setback for the new administration of the President, Mr. George W. Bush, which had given a new policy on Iraq a high priority. With a five-month delay, Iraq for now got what it



**An Iraqi engineer checks a pipeline at the Beiji Refinery, 112 km north of Baghdad, on Wednesday. — Reuters**

demand — a continuation of the status quo, which Western diplomats say allows the Iraqi President, Mr. Saddam Hussein leeway in illegal trade and kickbacks on oil sales.

The delay — perhaps indefinitely — on a revamp of the sanctions may also bolster Pentagon conservatives who prefer military rather than diplomatic options with Iraqi leaders. But the British Ambassador, Mr. Jeremy Greenstock and the U.S. Ambassador, Mr. James Cunningham both told the Council they intended to push ahead with their new sanctions plan. "There is broad support in the Council for U.S.-U.K. efforts to continue," said Mr. Cunningham. "It would have been adopted today were it not for a threat of a veto." — Reuters

## IMPASSE IN IRAQ

How to get rid of Saddam?

THE impasse in Iraq, arising out of the departure in 1998 of UN weapons inspectors, persists and nobody is sure there is an exit. What is clear from the latest Russian refusal to approve an Anglo-American draft resolution that would modify the sanctions regime to allow trade in civilian goods — bicycles and whisky are being mentioned — while maintaining a complete ban on military and related items such as computers and telecommunications equipment, is that the Security Council is divided on the question of how to proceed with Iraq and since Iraq is, legally, a UN topic, a consensus in the Security Council is imperative for any new initiative to succeed. Examine, for instance, the reactions to the last round of Anglo-American air strikes carried out in February this year. France expressed its "incomprehension and unease", while the Russians spoke categorically of a "threat to international security and the entire international community". The Chinese, for their part, are coolly laying fibre optic cables in order to upgrade Iraq's command and control systems which were the target of the February air raids. Conclusion: Russia and China can live with Saddam Hussein, especially since he provides them with a foothold in a Middle East that is otherwise overwhelmingly dominated by the Americans, while the French are very eager to exploit business opportunities in the region that the lifting of sanctions would create. The Iraqis made their position clear in February in a meeting with Kofi Annan: there was no question of allowing inspectors back into Iraq and all sanctions must go immediately. The Russians had, in January 1999, supported a French resolution which called for a renewal of arms inspections in Iraq aimed at preventing the development of new weapons in exchange for a lifting of the embargo, which fits in very nicely with the Iraqi position that it has no existing chemical, biological or nuclear arsenal.

The Iraqis have been contradicted on this count by a Pentagon report which said it was in the process of rebuilding its chemical and biological arsenal, a report which was confirmed by UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection agency which succeeded the Unscm headed by the redoubtable Richard Butler, and this can only lead to a hardening of the Anglo-American resolve to do nothing in Iraq which does not aim, ultimately, at getting rid of Saddam Hussein. The Iraqis, for their part, have suspended oil exports indefinitely which, besides creating anxiety in certain Western capitals, has put pressure on other Arab states, mainly Saudi Arabia, to increase their production in order to keep prices stable and meet demand. This is a gesture of defiance on Saddam's part: he is trying, successfully, to exploit growing Arab resentment over the perceived American inability to get Israel to keep its part of the bargain with the Palestinians. The OIC almost passed a resolution settling Iraq's territorial dispute with Kuwait while the Egyptians have signed a free-trade agreement with that country. Saddam is, now, more confident than ever and it is not certain that a new sanctions regime will succeed in dislodging him by eroding popular support. If he can steal food and medicine, from his own people, in order to fund his clandestine arms programme, he will find ways to put civilian trade to the same purpose. Short of an armed invasion, the world may have to reconcile itself to Saddam Hussein.

# Turkey's Islamist party headed for split

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JUNE 25. Turkey's Virtue party, the main vehicle of the country's Islamists, is headed for a split after the constitutional court banned it on Friday. Other political forces in the country and the secular Prime Minister, Mr. Bulent Ecevit, have expressed their dismay at the court's decision. But developments on this front might show that Turkey might have found a way to tame strong religious movements.

The court's decision to ban the party was based on its determination that the party violated the firm secular tenets of the Constitution. After the ban, the party's offices around the country have been closed and its properties confiscated. A couple of the 102 members that the party had in the 550-member strong Parliament have been expelled and the rest have been re-designated as independents. Most Turkish observers expect the remnants of Virtue to split into two major blocks with some of the MPs expected to join the ultra-nationalist National Action Party (MHP in its Turkish acronym) which is a part of the ruling coalition.

Virtue was the fourth incarnation of the political parties that Turkey's Islamist movement has sought to set up since the 1970's. The most notable success of Turkey's Islamists came in 1996-97 when its leader of the past three decades, Mr. Necmettin Erbakan, was Prime Minister. Turkey's military, which wields great

political power by virtue of its dominant position in the National Security Council, was finally successful in forcing Mr. Erbakan out of office.

The Welfare party which was Mr. Erbakan's political organisation during his days as Prime Minister, was banned and the supporters of this movement re-grouped under the banner of the Virtue Party.

This latest ban on a political organisation trying to advance the Islamist agenda comes at a period when the movement appears to be in an overall decline. Virtue's performance in the last general election was significantly worse than that of Welfare in the previous election. There was also a major shift in the voting pattern in the Turkish heartland from where the Islamist movement usually obtained the bulk of its support. The mass base had shifted away from Virtue and towards the traditionalist nationalist MHP.

Analysts believed that this shift had occurred both because of Mr. Erbakan's dismal performance while in office and because people did not want to waste their votes for a party that the military would never tolerate in office.

Now that the ban has become official, a core group of younger leaders, who have been trying to formulate a more modern version of the Islamist message, are expected to form a separate party while the die-hards would remain with Mr. Erbakan. A third group is expected to drift towards and perhaps even join MHP. Further splits are expected down the line.

If just seven of the former Virtue and now independent members of Parliament join MHP, it would become the largest party in Parliament and the biggest partner in the ruling coalition. While the MHP cadres have been pressing their leadership to be more assertive in coalition affairs, the party leader, Mr. Davlet Bahceli, has said that he would not disrupt the coalition agreement that among other matters ensures the prime ministerial post for Mr. Ecevit.

It was not just the prospect of his coalition getting disturbed that had led Mr. Ecevit to ask the Constitutional Court to delay its decision on the question of banning Virtue. A multi-party committee is currently considering legislative measures that would make it difficult for the courts to dissolve political parties and the matter is also being considered by the European Court.

As the adverse response from the European Union and the U.S. has shown, the ban on the Virtue party raises serious questions about Turkey's democratic credentials. These credentials have to be solidly established if Turkey is to qualify for E.U. membership.

While the Islamist movement in Turkey will not die down with the banning of the Virtue party, its split does hold some auguries for the future. With younger Islamist leaders opting for a more modern approach, the Turkish developments might show that it is possible to moderate staunchly religious parties through sustained pressure.

# Clergy has no greater status, says Ayatollah Sanai

HD-14

19/6

By Kesava Menon

**QOM (IRAN), JUNE. 18.** The Islamic Republic is in serious, perhaps even terminal, decline and the theocracy can only sustain itself in the long run if it can satisfactorily answer the myriad questions posed to it by an Iranian majority that is young and impatient.

From the heavy-handed methods that dominant elements in the theocracy apparently prefer, it appears that they cannot think beyond the short-term and ultimately unworkable solutions. But there are a few clerics, the President, Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami, among them, who are trying to distill the essence of Islamic precepts so as to make religion more relevant in a changing world.

Grand Ayatollah Hussain Ali Montazeri, the most well-known of the Islamic scholars who are trying to project an interpretation of Shia Islam that is more suitable to a democratic pluralistic world, is under house arrest. This feisty cleric, who was once the designated successor to Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, occasionally manages to smuggle out missives that thrill lay Iranians and sends twinges of rage through the clerical hierarchy. But Ayatollah Montazeri is for the most part kept out of the national debate and in his absence Grand Ayatollah Yosef Sanei has emerged as perhaps the important religious leader who espouses the liberal cause.

The Grand Ayatollah and Marja-e-Taqlid (source of emulation) the highest rank just below that of Imam which is rarely given

spoke to *The Hindu* in his office in Qom. Ayatollah Sanei was in an exuberant mood following the victory of Mr. Khatami in the presidential election. He was of the firm opinion that with the President having won re-election with a massive margin, all his opponents should now step aside. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic, he pointed out, vested ultimate power in the President and anyone arguing or working to the contrary was acting illegally.

From what has been seen of the functioning of the Islamic system in the past four years, it is clear that the Wali Faqih (Supreme Religious Leader) Ayatollah Syed Ali Khomeini and not the President has actually been calling the shots in Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini's supporters among the conservative clerics also claim that the religious precepts confer such powers of micro-management on the Wali Faqih.

These theories get seriously undermined when a scholar of Ayatollah Sanei's eminence asserts an alternative view. Grand Ayatollah Sanei has a higher grade in the strictly religious hierarchy than Ayatollah Khomeini and the former is also considered an accomplished scholar while the latter is not. So when Mr. Sanei says that the President does not need to consult the Leader on any matter, his opinion carries solid weight. Ayatollah Sanei also pointed out that both according to the Constitution and the law of Islamic Revolution everyone was equal, at the same level, thus demolishing the argument of the conservatives that the ordained clergy have a

greater status than the people's elected representatives.

In Grand Ayatollah Sanei's opinion, the electoral results had not just demolished the antediluvian theories propagated by the conservatives but had also vindicated the view of those, whom he described as Mr. Khatami's friends, who have been jailed over the past few years. The Grand Ayatollah had spoken out against the trials and imprisonment of prominent dissidents or reformers (even those whom he did not agree fully with). But in his conversation with this newspaper he went further to suggest that the people had shown their support for these dissidents. Despite his optimism and firm belief in the necessity of the reform process, Ayatollah Sanei was not unmindful that Mr. Khatami's task was a hard one.

He knew that conservative-dominated bodies like the Council of Guardians would try to block the reform movement but here too he had his arguments ready. Bodies like the Guardians, he said, had powers and responsibilities only to verify that laws were in conformity with Islamic principles and to seek the Leader's guidance in case of doubt.

From what he had said elsewhere it also appeared to be his opinion that even the Leader was not free to block the government's initiatives of his own volition but could do so only after consultations. In short, people like Ayatollah Sanei see the Islamic Republic as an elected democracy where the clergy have the right only to be consulted and the power only to give guidance.



# KHATAMI'S VICTORY

## Rearguard action by ayatollahs expected

IRAN is now this strange country where 80 per cent of the population votes, in a free and fair ballot, for a man who, by his own admission, can deliver only a little on what he promises, real power being vested in a spiritual leader, a guardians council backed by a religious militia. Iranians like Khatami's idea of government that he has represented and embodied more than implemented, over the last four years. The alternative, all the young men and women know, is to have the basiji run amok in the streets checking up on who is wearing lipstick or showing more leg than is warranted by their interpretation of the Koran. After the initial democratic euphoria produced by Khatami's win in 1997, the clerical backlash was ferocious: 40 newspapers were closed down and a number of intellectuals, writers and journalists serial-killed by internal security agents.

Some of his closest allies, like the former mayor of Teheran, were arrested on all kinds of dubious charges and even as late as April this year, nine members of the Iran Freedom Movement were arrested, while the deputy interior minister, responsible for organising the presidential ballot was sent to jail in March. The sum total of all that has happened during Khatami's first tenure is that an overwhelming majority of Iranians now have a clear idea of the kind of society they want to live in and believe that if they keep backing men like Khatami the goal can be achieved, insha'allah. Khatami has played his part superbly, standing up consistently for what he believed to be right. Most recently, he said that he considered the Rushdie affaire closed as far as Iran was concerned. The ayatollahs might have the machinery of repression at their command, but it is difficult to see how the clerical establishment in Iran can pretend to have the country behind them. They are fighting a battle already lost.

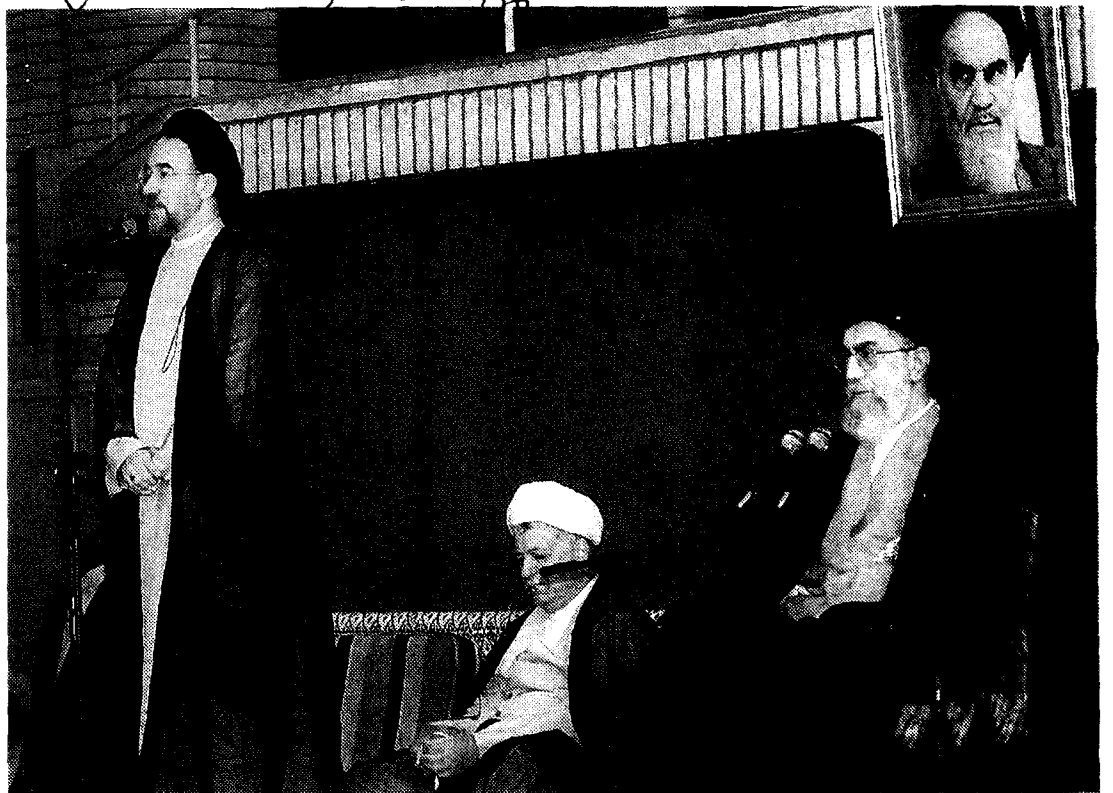
THE STRAITS TIMES

# Miles to go, promises to keep

**S**YED MOHAMMED Khatami was once asked, during an interview, as to who had the last word in his house — he or his wife. The reply was very prompt. "I have the last word always and it is, 'Yes Madam'!" It is remarks like these and the attitudes to life they reveal that endear the Iranian President to his people. In a country where men wearing clerical robes think the world owes them a living, that they are the fountainhead of all wisdom, and that the satisfaction of their ego is the most important goal in life, this 57-year-old cleric comes across as refreshingly different. His credentials as a member of the religious establishment are solid. He comes from a long line of respected religious scholars, his wife and daughters voluntarily wear the hejab and his younger brother is married to the granddaughter of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. At the same time the purity of his high Farsi, his ready smile and his ability to regard himself lightly endears him to the masses. Mr. Khatami's role is central — and he is indispensable in more senses than one — if Iran is to evolve into a country where the people are more satisfied with their lot.

No one is clear, even after Mr. Khatami has spent one four-year term as President, about the specifics he stands for. But they do know that he is well-meaning, not interested in the self-aggrandisement that is characteristic of so many others in the clerical establishment and that he is basically a humane person. When Mr. Khatami's personal traits are superimposed on what can clearly be perceived to be the most pressing needs of his countrymen it is possible to outline the measures that his people expect him to undertake during his next four years as President. Mr. Khatami won the June 8 presidential election by a landslide and should be sworn in for his second term in August provided of course the Council of Guardians, a conservative-dominated body that has power to authenticate elections, does not do something as foolhardy as over-turning the results announced by the Interior Ministry.

In his first campaign four years ago and after that, Mr. Khatami had spoken of the need to establish the 'rule of law' and thereby strengthen civil society. In Iran, establishment of the rule of law could have meant many things since the clerics who



**Mr. Mohammad Khatami speaks on Ayatollah Khomeini's birth anniversary as his predecessor as Iran's President, Mr. Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, and the country's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, look on... walking a tightrope.**

support the status quo resorted to whatever means they liked to keep control. Over four years, Mr. Khatami had managed to reduce the potency of one of these means of control or to at least reduce the frequency with which it was used.

What Mr. Khatami has thus far not succeeded in doing is to ensure that the normal rules of democracy are followed. Although his supporters are in a

into full-fledged political formations.

These factions do not agree on many of the specifics with some believing that emphasis should be on the economic front while others insist on the social and the political. In fact, the reform movement is more of a broad tendency rather than a detailed programme. If Mr. Khatami were to actively promote the formation of parties he would run the risk that the broad unity

*Mr. Khatami and his supporters know that the patience of their people is running thin, writes Kesava Menon.*

majority in the Iranian Parliament after their victory in the February 2000 elections, it is the un-elected Guardians, who can also vet legislation, who ultimately decide what the law should be.

Political parties and a free press are, of course, necessary if the laws and public policy are to be formulated after a thorough-going debate. Mr. Khatami by himself cannot of course organise the parties and given Iran's current situation it was also perhaps not necessary to organise the various factions that broadly support a reform agenda

among his followers would dissolve as they agitated over their specific agendas. At the same time, the conservatives too are not a consolidated body that is universally and uniformly opposed to all reform. There are among them people who might not necessarily oppose some of the changes. Since they do not recognise the legitimacy of political formations the hard core among the conservatives have declined to set up a party of their own.

There is little chance that Mr. Khatami will be able to set up a single consolidated and

disciplined party that will subsume the entirety of the reform tendencies. Such a disciplined formation would theoretically be better able to fight the conservatives but, given the reality of the Iranian situation, Mr. Khatami is probably better off if he leads an amorphous force against another amorphous force. The necessary versatility in the reform camp was brought out by the number of publications that sprang up during Mr. Khatami's first term. The closure of these publications was a major defeat for him and the expectation in Iran today is that the revival of a free press will be high on the list of Mr. Khatami's priorities.

For the press to be free, Mr. Khatami will have to curb a maverick Judiciary. These judges, mostly of a conservative bent, have interpreted the laws to promote their own retrograde views. A law has just been passed by Parliament (but not as yet by the Guardians) that provides a specific definition of political crimes and lays down the procedure for trial. The President and his supporters are apparently ready to pursue their reform agenda with more vigour and combativeness than they did in the past; they know that the patience of their people is running thin.

# A Princess who never got over pain of exile

H/10-10  
19/6

London

THE ENDS of princesses, as we know all too well in this country, have a way of causing even republican history to stand still. The death on Sunday in a London hotel of Leila Pahlavi, the youngest daughter of the last Shah of Iran, will no doubt come to stand for the misfortunes not only of her family but of the millions of Iranians now in exile.

The princess, who left Iran at the age of nine when the Pahlavis' half-century of rule was ended by Islamic revolutionaries in 1979, was found dead on Sunday evening in her suite at the Leonard Hotel in London's west end. Police said they were investigating her death but had found no suspicious circumstances.

Whatever the cause of death, Leila was known to have suffered for a long time from depression. In a brief statement from Washington, her brother, the former crown prince, Reza, said that Leila had suffered "a long illness".

Her mother, the last empress of Iran, Farah, said from Paris: "For the past few years, Leila has been very depressed. Time had not healed her wounds. Exiled at the age of nine, she never surmounted the death of her father. His Majesty Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi."

This depression was diagnosed by exile sources as the monarchical strain of a peculiar condition of Iranian exiles: a compound of loneliness, disorientation and home-sickness for Iran that affects many of the 3 million or more Iranians scat-



tered between the Arab Gulf states, Germany, Sweden, France, London and California. For Iranians, only Iran has any reality.

In addition, Leila's family has been unable to exploit the weaknesses of the Islamic regime. The election last week in a landslide for a second term of President Mohammed Khatami cannot disguise the stagnant living standards and cultural isolation that has been the experience of the 60m Iranians in Iran for 20 years.

Yet very few either in or outside the country expect to see the restoration of the Pahlavi family to the Peacock Throne. A majority of Iranians has been born since the revolution and has no loyalty nor animosity to the family. Leila's elder brother, Reza, has struck Iranian observers as well-meaning but diffident.

Leila Pahlavi was born on March 27 1970 at the Military Hospital, Tehran, which was promptly renamed after her. In the same year, an alteration in

the way oil was priced was to set off a chain reaction in Iran of rapid economic development, social disintegration and political oppression that was to culminate in her father's flight in January 1979 and Khomeini's triumphant return from exile.

Refused a haven by all his former allies - including Lady Thatcher's Britain, which sent a former ambassador in disguise to the Bahamas that May to break the news to the Shah in person - Mohammed Reza died of leukaemia in Cairo on July 27 1980.

Leila Pahlavi lived at first in Paris and then was educated at colleges in the US. Though she inherited her mother's good looks, she did not marry and that was considered extremely unusual.

An interview with the French edition of *Hola* to coincide with her 30th birthday in April 2000, which may have been designed to put that right, unwittingly revealed a melancholy young woman closely attached to her mother and her father's memory. Iranian exiles say she had a real passion for Iranian works of art. She divided her time between the US, France and London, but, as she told *Hola*: "I remain as Iranian as if I'd never left home."

During her exile, the Islamic republic inaugurated by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979 has been a failure in both its Islamic and republican purposes.

Islamic Iran has neither established a Muslim paradise-on-earth that will speed up the return of the Messiah nor has it brought Iranians material prosperity.

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN

## IRAN AND THE PEOPLE'S WILL

THE TRIUMPHAL MARGIN recorded by Iran's high-profile President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, in his bid for re-election on a "reform" ticket leaves him now on course for a place in the history of the Islamic republic. Yet, for the present at least, the "democratic" substance of a "reform" agenda will remain a matter of considerable dialectical interpretations within the framework of Iran's essentially theocratic political order. So, Mr. Khatami may still seek to temper his inevitable sense of triumphalism with a large dose of pragmatism about the challenges ahead. A theory doing the rounds on the international stage is that the "pro-democracy" leaders like Mr. Khatami and his associates may have actually been commissioned by Iran's paramount religious establishment to defend the Islamic revolution of 1979 and to do so as its guards armed with a "liberal" political philosophy. The scepticism inherent in this line of argument is of course rooted in the enduring reality that the supreme leadership of Iran's orthodox Shia-clergy continues to function as the final arbiter of the country's political destiny. Closely related to this external view of Iran is Mr. Khatami's mixed record of governance since 1997 — almost bordering on a failed dream of "liberalism". However, Mr. Khatami can feel encouraged by his latest electoral victory to embark on a definitive "reform" path if indeed his true inclinations point to an alternative manifesto within the Islamic political order. The crux of the ideological argument in today's Iran is that the re-elected President is an Islamic reformist in politics and not a crusading new revolutionary with a secular or non-religious zeal. To say this is not to belittle the genuine desire of a growing multitude of Iran's young voters for political liberties in a broad sense of the ideal.

Not to be debunked is also the fact of Mr. Khatami's role in rallying the Iranian youth for social and political changes. Surely, the latest presidential poll marks a new chapter in the ongo-

ing era of a religious revolution that was ushered in 22 years ago. The mystique of the poll lay entirely in Mr. Khatami's delayed decision to seek a second consecutive term in office. His initial hesitation was either a simple ploy of the psychological kind to confound his critics or indeed a matter of doubts about his continued acceptability to the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. In the event, Ayatollah Khamenei, who has by and large kept Iran within the ideological bounds of Ayatollah Khomeini's visions of statecraft, has hailed "religious democracy". The Supreme Leader blessed the latest poll even when Mr. Khatami was widely tipped to win on the polling day. These niceties, arcane by the standards of truly secular politics, seem to confer legitimacy on the twice-elected President.

An immediate puzzle is the extent to which Mr. Khatami can either claim or fashion an altogether new mandate to trim the sails of the Council of Guardians. Wielding power under the direct tutelage of the Supreme Leader, the Council and the Judiciary have already taken much wind out of the President's sails during his first four-year tenure. The result is that Mr. Khatami has not so far been able either to "liberalise" the polity or protect the freedoms of some key "dissidents" despite endearing himself to the youth by easing a few cumbersome social restrictions. The primary task before him now is to find a new way of coping with the existing constitutional checks and balances if he intends to transform Iran as an insider of its religion-inspired political system. The success of any new efforts by Iran to win friends and influence nations will be determined by Mr. Khatami's domestic policies as also by his responses to America's allegations about Teheran's complicity in "international terrorism". Iran may, therefore, look for new strategic opportunities across a Eurasian arc and seek to fine-tune its energy diplomacy.

...the situation.

MSB

## Best of Islam and modernity

IRAN UNDER President Mohammed Khatami has exemplified a model which has partly negated the myth that democracy and Islam are as incompatible as oil and water. What the reformist President has done in the past four years is to try and synthesise the best of Islam and modernism. Iran has allowed political pluralism in contrast with the autocratic rule in most of the Islamic world. President Khatami, himself a *mullah*, wants to preserve the Islamic republic. But he has used his mandate to build a more tolerant society. His task is not easy, however, for the President's position is constitutionally subordinate to that of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's spiritual leader. Even then, there is little doubt that Mr Khatami speaks for millions of Iranians impatient to see a less oppressive government.

This was the platform they voted for in 1997 and this is the platform for which they have given a bigger mandate now. Mr Khatami has received 21 million votes, some 77 per cent of the total vote, which is a million more than in 1997. This is a remarkable achievement. But since the *mullahs* still control many of Iran's levers of power, the change towards a more

relaxed society will be long in coming. Before the elections, the struggle between the President and the hardliners had often erupted into violence. The conservatives also used the clerically controlled courts to frustrate the reformers. They silenced the students' protest movement last year and muzzled the voices of dissent.

The immediate priority for Mr Khatami is to modernise the economy and rehabilitate Iran in the comity of nations. The West has virtually given up its policy to isolate Iran. The experience of the past few years suggests that Iran has now become socially much more diverse, with a rapidly growing economic weight and regional influence. Iran's foreign policy postures, particularly its denunciation of terrorism, has the clear stamp of Mr Khatami's pragmatism. He has also said that he regards the Salman Rushdie affair as over. Mr Khatami is seeking to change Iran by evolution rather than by confronting his opponents. However, Mr Khatami is no 'Ayatollah Deng Xiaoping', as one analyst has put it. So the process will be slow. But surely, it will be difficult to stop the winds of change once it starts blowing.

### THINK IT OVER...

*Men are born, have been taught to think that moderation is a sort of treason*

EDMUND BURKE

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Tough reform task ahead of Khatami

Tehran, June 10

IRANIAN PRESIDENT Mohamad Khatami has won a second landslide election victory with 77 per cent of the vote, but now faces the task of trying to overcoming hard-line resistance to his reforms.

The soft-spoken Shi'ite cleric received 21.7 million or 76.9 per cent of the total 28.2 million votes cast in Friday's polls, according to final results announced by the Interior Ministry early Sunday morning.

His nearest rival, conservative former Labour Minister Ahmad Tavakoli, came a distant second with 4.4 million votes or 15.6 per cent. Khatami's share of the vote was bigger than in his surprise 1997 landslide, when he received 69.1 per cent. It was the first time

in the Islamic Republic's 22-year history that a president had won more votes on his second election than on the first.

But the turnout was lower than in the last presidential election at 67 per cent of the 42-million strong electorate, down from 83 per cent in 1997, possibly reflecting some disenchantment at the slow pace of reform.

Thousands of youthful supporters ignored a heavy show of force by the hard-line-led police to celebrate Khatami's victory across the capital. They cruised the streets sounding car horns, waving pictures of the president and handing out flowers.

Thirty youths, who were celebrating in the northeastern city of Mashhad, were arrested. Scuffles broke out in a Tehran park between Khatami supporters and

a group of youths carrying pictures of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

In a message read on State media, Khatami said his first priority was to foster democracy, but he added that "principles should be coupled with patience, moderation and prudence."

"Now the honourable Iranian nation, as winner of this contest, is determined in its just demands and expects the Government and the system to take bigger steps to fulfill them."

"The urgent demand of today and tomorrow is to instill and deepen republicanism, give back the legitimate rights of the people in line with religion, identify priorities in the economic field and solve basic problems of society under a prudent agenda," the president said.

Reuters

## CHOPPER CARRYING BALLOTS CRASHES, NINE KILLED

AN IRANIAN helicopter carrying ballot boxes for the presidential election has crashed in a remote region in the southwest of the country, killing all nine people on board, the official IRNA news agency said on Sunday.

It said election supervisors, a deputy governor, an intelligence official, a regional police chief and a nomad woman and her son were among those killed.

Iranian authorities had sent three helicopters to ferry ballot boxes from mountain villages in the southwestern province of Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari.

Reuters, Tehran

# Khatami's huge victory stumps rivals

By Kesava Menon

TEHERAN, JUNE 10. Mr. Syed Mohammed Khatami's supporters and opponents alike have been stunned by the size and definitiveness of his landslide victory in the eighth presidential election. There is some quibble about the size of the turnout and, therefore, its implications. But by winning the support of well over half of all eligible voters, Mr. Khatami has demolished any possibility of a legal or political challenge to his continuity in office.

With all the votes counted by late Saturday night, Mr. Khatami had won well over 21 million votes with his nearest rival trailing way behind with about 4 millions. By winning the support of more than 50 per cent of Iran's 42.1 million total voters in Friday's poll, Mr. Khatami has ensured that there was no need for a run-off round. (A run-off becomes necessary if no candidate gets more than 50 per cent of the votes cast).

This margin of victory made the quibbles over the size of the turnout and its implications largely irrelevant from the legal point of view.

But the quibble over the size of the turnout is still relevant from the political point of view. A few hours after the polls closed at midnight of June 8-9, the Interior Ministry had put out that over 83 per cent of the eligible Iranians had cast their ballots. As of Sunday morning, they had revised that figure down to 67 per cent. From the outset, it was projected that Mr. Khatami was set to win over 75 per cent of the votes. But 75 per cent of a 67 per cent turnout is obviously less than a similar

proportion of an 83 per cent turnout.

This number crunching exercise is of some importance to Mr. Khatami's opponents as they must now resort to desperate measures to take the shine off his victory. First, they can point out that the 21-million-odd votes that Mr. Khatami got this time around is not significantly more than the 20-million he got in 1997. This, despite the addition of a few more million voters in the four years since the last presidential poll. A lower turnout, they can point out in the context, is evidence that Mr. Khatami no longer galvanises the masses.

There are, as mentioned, desperate measures. There are also some complaints about counting irregularities. But such desperation cannot obscure the fact that the scale and definitiveness of Mr. Khatami's victory is unprecedented in several ways. Not only has no previous Iranian President won re-election with more votes than he did the first time but in all previous cases, the victory margin had reduced considerably. Whereas in all previous elections an incumbent had obtained about 7 million votes, the margin of Mr. Khatami's victory over his nearest rival is double that figure.

While Mr. Khatami's rivals are understandably reeling under the shock, what is noteworthy is the total amazement of those who are inclined to vote for him but cannot be classified as ardent supporters. "Where did these votes come from", they ask in wonder while acknowledging that there was a lemming like surge to the polling stations in the later hours

of Friday. In asking these questions, these Iranians are by no means supporting Mr. Khatami's opponents in their insinuations about rigging. What they are trying to decipher is the political message behind this mass upsurge in favour of Mr. Khatami.

Knowledgeable Iranians point out that Mr. Khatami has not been able to do anything significant for the masses. Most Iranians, especially among the younger generation, know that Mr. Khatami's best promises will still fall short of their aspirations. They also know that he will not be able to deliver even on what little he does promise. So, from all considerations, the vast majority of Iranians seem to have voted for Mr. Khatami because they abhor the alternative.

"The masses have sent a powerful message. The problem in our country is that there are too many people who cannot or will not read these messages", said a veteran analyst who did not wish to be named. The most significant phenomenon of this election was the surge on Friday afternoon when people suddenly realised what they would have to contend with if they did not send Mr. Khatami back to the presidency.

## Khamenei endorsement

PTI reports:

Mr. Khatami won sweeping endorsement from the nation's all powerful Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, after the former's landslide victory in the elections for a second term which will strengthen his position against the conservatives and other hardliners.

## Saddam slams plan to revise sanctions

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE 11/6

BAGHDAD, June 10. - In a fresh attack by Baghdad on the plans for a revision of the sanctions regime imposed on Iraq by the UN, Mr Saddam Hussein has said his country should prepare for "a new confrontation".

"We are on the eve of a new confrontation. That is why it is our duty to be prepared for it," the Iraqi President said during a Cabinet meeting to discuss the "smart sanctions" yesterday.

Britain, with US backing, has put forward a draft that would abolish the embargo on civilian trade with Iraq, while tightening a weapons ban and controls on smuggling outside a UN oil-for-food deal.

"The main goal of the enemy is to break Iraq's national will and colonise us with new methods and under new names," Mr Hussein said, explaining "this could be through controlling Iraqi funds and by preventing Iraq from developing itself".



# Khatami gets landslide mandate

## AGENCIES

TEHERAN, June 9. - President Mohammad Khatami crushed his opponents in Iran's presidential elections by a decisive mandate to forge ahead with his controversial democratic reforms.

With 13.3 million votes counted by noon, the interior ministry said the 57-year-old President had won by nearly 80 per cent, up from the 69 per cent he received in 1997.

His nearest conservative rival, the former labour minister, Mr Ahmad Tavakoli, lay a distant second with 14.9 per cent. The defence minister, Mr Ali Shamkhani, was third with 2.5 per cent. None of the seven oth-

er rightist contenders had more than one per cent.

With polling extended by five hours to midnight yesterday due to long queues of voters, the likely high turnout from the 42-million strong electorate gave Mr Khatami a further lift.

The incumbent President even won 58 per cent of the votes in the holy city of Qom, hometown of hard-line clerics who still hold many levers of power in the Islamic republic.

Mr Tavakoli registered his best score so far in Qom with 32 per cent. Meanwhile, the conservative-dominated Guardians Council, which must validate all election results, announced late yesterday that there



**Mohammad Khatami**

had been extensive irregularities at the polls. The claim, however, was denied by the interior ministry.

"If we accept the universal principle that power and legitimacy come straight from the ballot box, then there is an enormous task ahead for the top brass," a commentator, Mr Amin Sabooni, wrote in the English-language *Iran News*.

At first reluctant to run for re-election, Mr Khatami fought a low-key but determined campaign, promising to press on with the liberal social and political reforms he began four years ago without giving any details of his plans.

After his initial success when unprecedented freedoms flourished in the press and public life, a crack-down spearheaded by the hardline judiciary led to more than 40 news-

papers being banned and prominent journalists and intellectuals jailed.

His key allies were removed from office and prosecuted and dozens of liberal dissidents rounded up and thrown into solitary confinement.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who at times has personally intervened to stymie the president's agenda and at other times displayed his unity with Mr Khatami, appealed yesterday for an end to the partisan battling.

"Today the rivalry ends," he said, seeking to cool the passions surrounding Mr Khatami's reforms, increasingly attacked by conservatives as the first step on the road to ruin for the 22-year-old Islamic clerical regime.

IRAN POLL / KHATAMI HEADS FOR A LANDSLIDE WIN

# A resounding yes to reforms

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By Kesava Menon

**TEHERAN, JUNE 9.** Mr. Syed Mohammed Khatami appeared set to create history by becoming the first Iranian President to be re-elected with more votes than he won the first time. Unofficial estimates put out by the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) indicate that Mr. Khatami could win a considerably larger number of votes in yesterday's Presidential poll than he won in 1997.

There were two targets that Mr. Khatami had to match if he were to demonstrate to his conservative opponents that support for his reform programme had not dwindled. In 1997, Mr. Khatami had won 70 per cent of the vote in a 90 per cent turn out of Iran's

roughly 42 million voters. This came to about 20 million votes. According to IRNA, exit polls and preliminary surveys showed that about 83 per cent of Iran's 42.1 million voters had cast their ballots and Mr. Khatami was likely to get about 75 per cent of the votes. So although the turn out figures appears to have slipped a bit, the overall support for Mr. Khatami has registered an increase, according to these estimates. Final results are expected by Sunday evening.

IRNA's estimate about the turnout seems to be on track. Polling got off to a very sluggish start yesterday morning and picked up only by noon. But voters continued to throng polling stations till late in the day forcing a five-hour

extension of the voting time. Potential voters were actually turned away when the polling stations finally closed at midnight. If the IRNA estimates are correct then there is definitely a drop in the percentage of Iranians who believe that their vote makes a difference. But the overall figures tend to show that it is the counter-reform camp that has lost heart. Fears that Mr. Khatami's failure to really deliver on his promises of reform had created apathy in the pro-reform camp have not been borne out.

Each of Mr. Khatami's opponents had chosen to concentrate on specific areas where Mr. Khatami's performance had been below expectations. Or they had made promises that they knew

Mr. Khatami would not try to match. Even if the campaigns of Mr. Khatami's nine rivals had not been cleverly co-ordinated by elements in the conservative establishment, the separate campaigns cumulatively amounted to a fairly comprehensive critique of Mr. Khatami's performance. Preliminary results indicate that the Iranian electorate was not willing to buy this critique.

The former Labour Minister, Mr. Ahmed Tavakoli, who is expected to finish a distant second, had concentrated on Mr. Khatami's failure to curb corruption. The Defence Minister, Vice-Admiral Ali Shamkhani had concentrated on Mr. Khatami's perceived indecisiveness and failure to carry along various segments. A third candidate had sought to dent Mr. Khatami's support among the youth by promising to drastically reduce the costs of education. Several of these rivals had tried to appeal to the widespread public desire for an end to international isolation by promising that they would improve relations with the U.S.

Unlike the campaign of 1997, Mr. Khatami fought this election with the public having a far better idea of what he stood for when he spoke of reform. The record of his effort during his first four-year term shows that he puts political reform before economic; that the main objective of reform is the democratisation of the decision-making process and that State institutions must be made accountable to the public. Measures initiated by the parliament controlled by Mr. Khatami's supporters and the points stressed in his electoral campaign further flesh out the agenda that Mr. Khatami will try to implement over the next four years. If preliminary estimates are accurate, no one will be able to say that Mr. Khatami does not have the mandate to implement this agenda.



Voters crowd around a ballot box to exercise their franchise in the Iranian presidential election in Teheran on Friday. — AFP

THE HINDU

# Size of Khatami's win only issue

By Kesava Menon

TEHERAN, JUNE 8. Iran's eighth Presidential election held today, was less about the outcome than about the size of the turnout and the margin of Mr. Mohammed Khatami's much anticipated victory. The incumbent President needed the vast majority of Iran's 42 million voters to go to the polling stations and vote for him so as to demonstrate that he retained a massive mandate for reform. As of this afternoon he seemed to be on track on both counts.

An hour or so after the polls opened this morning it did appear that Mr. Khatami would be hard-pressed to match the benchmark set up in the 1997 Presidential election — 70 per cent of the vote in a 90 per cent turnout. The kind of fervour on display in the last major Iranian election, the parliamentary poll of February 2000, also appeared to be missing. In contrast to the thin crowds at polling stations and the near deserted streets were the scenes in the hills and valleys of the city's Dorband quarter as scores of Iranians trekked to the cooler heights to enjoy an early summer holiday.

The scenes at Dorband were a bad sign for the pro-

reform camp as most of those apparently less than enthusiastic about the polls were the younger voters who have been a bulwark of support for the President. Some of them said they had already voted while others said they would be voting later in the day. But this lot at least did not display the fervour similar segments of the population showed four years ago or even a year ago.

A major problem for the reform camp is that they have been in charge of the executive and legislative branches with little to show for it. Iranian voters, of course, know that the executive and legislative branches can do only so much in the face of the entrenched power of the non-elected segments of the theocracy. The hope for quick reform which characterised the vote in 1997 and 2000 appeared to have been sapped by the realisation that change would only come through a long and grinding process.

One silver lining for the reform camp in the early morning was that voters in the 40-60 age group were turning out. There were fears that this segment might have become even more disillusioned than younger voters about the prospects for reform under the Kha-



Before voting for the presidential elections, the Iranian President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, casts his ballot for parliamentary by-elections in a mosque used as a polling station in northern Teheran on Friday. — AP

tami dispensation. Middle-aged voters appeared to lead the way in demonstrating that the need to vote was an imperative.

The bright streak widened considerably by noon. Crowds had so swelled at the city's Hussein Ershad mosque, the cradle of the Islamic Revolution, that the line of voters curled around the block. Numbers had swelled at the other polling stations as well. The usual practise in Iranian elections is to keep the polling stations open as long as there are people lining up to vote. Voting usually carries on late into the night and from what could be seen today, the pattern is not likely to be any different.

If it is any indication, the reception that the Defence Minister, Vice-Admiral Ali Shamkhani got when he turned up to vote should show how this election is going. Vice-Admiral Shamkhani has been considered as being among the two or three of Mr. Khatami's rivals who could display some strength at the polls. But when he landed up to cast his vote, presumably for himself, he had barely three people in attendance and the rest of the voters seemed totally indifferent.

## A confident Khatami takes on conservatives

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JUNE 7. With his victory assured in tomorrow's Presidential election, but needing to ensure that he gets the 70 per cent of the vote that he won four years ago, Mr. Syed Mohammed Khatami closed his campaign yesterday with a lot more fervour than he has displayed in months. The Iranian President defended his reforms as irreversible and challenged his conservative rivals to try and stop him while warning his followers that reform will be a painstaking and painful process.

In a rare press meet that he held in Teheran yesterday, Mr. Khatami outlined his priorities in the field of reform. A more accountable judiciary, more freedom for the ordinary people and opening up the country to foreign investments were the areas he dwelt on. The election has already become more of a referendum on the reform process than a real contest since even the closest of Mr. Khatami's rivals is trailing him in the opinion polls. Mr. Khatami's main worry was that he would fall significantly short of the 70 per cent that he won last time. If his margin of victory falls, the conservatives would proclaim that the reform process had lost momentum and they would then

try to block Mr. Khatami at every step.

Mr. Khatami is well aware that he needs to galvanise the voters and gather sufficient momentum to be able to implement his agenda once the formality of re-election is got out of the way. For the first time ever, Mr. Khatami used harsh language against the counter-reform camp calling them cowards and telling them that he would not surrender to extremism and violence. This is the sort of fighting talk that those who are impatient for reform have been waiting to hear. There has been a degree of disillusionment within the reform camp not only on account of Mr. Khatami's failure to implement major chunks of his agenda but also because he seemed unwilling to combat those who were blocking him. His readiness now to take the fight to the conservatives would perhaps make the doubters re-think.

At the same time Mr. Khatami warned his followers that reform will be a gradual process. "My advice to all Iranians is patience, moderation and tolerance of difficulties to reach high goals. We need to implement democracy in its full meaning. But we need moderation, moderation, moderation", he stressed.



The Iranian President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami (left), and the Iranian supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

# A decisive battle for Iranian reformists

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JUNE 6.** When Mr. Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami stood in Iranian presidential elections for the first time four years ago, the voters responded with fervour to his call for reform though they then had little idea about the changes that he would try to usher in.

Today, the Iranian people have a much better idea about Mr. Khatami's priorities and while they might be disappointed with the list, and even more about the degree to which it has been fulfilled, they have little choice but vote for the incumbent President in Friday's election if they want any progress.

During the last presidential election, Mr. Khatami kept speaking about change but in the usual style of Iranian politics, there were hardly any concrete points to enlighten the voter.

About the only point on which Mr. Khatami spoke on more specific terms, if it could be called that, was his promise to enforce the rule of law.

This message had to be decoded by applying the concept of rule of law to what was known of the Iranian scene. Through this process it was possible to discern that Mr. Khatami was promising an end to the freelance activities of the moral vigilantes — the behaviour police who attracted deviations from religious norms even though they had no mandate to do it.

Mr. Khatami has succeeded in largely stopping the activities of these vigilantes. The social atmosphere in Iran has been definitely far more free over

the last four years than it was previously.

While the demographic changes — more than half of the population is below the age of 30 — did probably have a lot to do with the change in the



**Men wave pictures of the Iranian President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, at the Jamaran mosque in north Teheran on Tuesday.** — AFP

attitude towards the moral vigilantes.

But even if the youth are more defiant than the older generation, it is not likely that they would have become so assertive if Mr. Khatami had not given

voice to the general discontent with the activities of the vigilante groups.

By liberally distributing press licences and reissuing them when a conservative-dominated judiciary cancelled the original ones, Mr. Khatami did usher in a two-year period when debate had been far more free than at any time in Iran's post-Revolution history.

This debate ranged over almost every topic that had been considered taboo till then. The high water mark of this democratic debate was reached when Mr. Abdollah Nouri, Mr. Khatami's Vice-President for a while, was put on trial and proceeded to question every single fundamental postulate of the theocratic regime.

All the counter-reformation that was launched by the conservatives after that could not alter the fact that these arguments against the theocracy had been articulated.

Even the successes that the counter-reformation has scored in the last year and more cannot obscure another significant, though not very well noticed, development.

The conservatives have had to rely on legal forms for most of the counter-reformation they had instituted. They could not as in the past rely purely on ideological fervour and let loose their vigilante gangs to still the liberal voices.

The conservatives had to go through the judicial process and show that whatever they were doing was by force of law, whether it was the closure of liberal publications or the arrest of dissenters. When they attempted to do so by a series of political assassinations,

the conservatives discovered that the country would not let them.

The problem for Mr. Khatami as he faces re-election on Friday is that the people might have come to take for granted the changes he has wrought. He has to go beyond what he has done so far even though the Iranian public knows that any one of Mr. Khatami's rivals could very well reverse the changes if they were to replace him.

It is significant in this context that Mr. Khatami has promised reform of the judiciary as the main plan of his election campaign this time around. His supporters in Parliament have passed a law that specifies what will constitute "political crimes" and enjoins that such crimes will be tried in open court before a jury. This law might yet be struck down by the conservative dominated Council of Guardians that must vet all legislation but Mr. Khatami has made clear what the next stage of his reform programme will consist of.

Mr. Khatami's opponents believe that they can hit back at him by pointing out that he has neglected the economy while concentrating on unnecessary and chimerical political changes. But most Iranians seem to understand that political changes are necessary for economic developments to take place.

The Iranian economy, the larger part of which is controlled by the Government of clergy-controlled institutions, cannot be reformed until the capacity to make laws and enforce them is taken away from the control of clerical groups.

## Khatami links US ties with lifting of curbs

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

TEHERAN, June 5. - Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said today that if he is re-elected on Friday there would be no change in relations with USA until Washington lifts unilateral sanctions against Iran.

"As long as American politicians act under the influence of certain lobbies, harming even the interests of American companies, and hinder the Iranian economy by sanctions and embargoes, there will be no change," he told a Teheran press conference.

"As I've said several times, there are no obstacles to relations between the two peoples. But as for relations between the nations, we protest and criticise the policies of the American leadership," he said.

"American leaders first must change their behaviour and their policy, and concentrate more on internal American affairs than on international problems," he said.

"These sanctions are obstacles, and we do not accept any preconditions. If anyone is to impose conditions, it should be us, who have been the victims of the oppressive policies of USA," he said.

The moderate cleric is widely expected to win: **'Rushdie case closed'**: President Khatami has said that the blasphemy case against British writer Salman Rushdie for his novel *The Satanic Verses* must be considered closed.

"We should consider the question of Salman Rushdie as finished and I hope this question which has been raised for the last couple of years will not be brought up again," the moderate President told Persian daily *Tose'eh*.

He said: "Iran has formally announced that it has no decision on the subject."

THE STATESMAN

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at his mausoleum on the outskirts of Teheran on Monday

# Iranian hawks soften stand towards U.S.

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JUNE 4. Iranian conservatives, strangely enough, have started lining up to make the radical suggestion that their country should try to restore relations with the U.S. These suggestions are being made even as the President, Mr. Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami, who was once thought of as the politician most likely to bring about this change, maintains a studied silence on the subject. It would have been tempting to think that the conservatives have changed tack purely for political purposes but there may be more to it than meets the eye if other factors are taken into account.

Conservative candidates for the June 8 Presidential election and theologians considered close to the Supreme Religious Leader, Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei, are among those who have suddenly adopted a soft line towards the U.S. Among the candidates who have spoken in favour of a review of policy towards the U.S., in terms that suggest they prefer a positive policy, are the Defence Minister, Admiral Ali Shamkhani, Mr. Abdollah Jasbi, Mr. Mansour Razavi and Mr. Mahmoud Kashani. Even Mr. Ali Fallahian — the only cleric in the fray, a man indicted by a German court in the assassination of four dissident Kurds in a Berlin restaurant and accused by Iranian journalists for the murders of political dissidents — has declared himself in favour of re-establishing ties with the U.S. Only Mr. Ahmad Tavakoli, considered to be the strongest of the nine candidates challenging Mr. Khatami, appears not to have made any pro-U.S. statements.

There could well be a very innocent explanation. All the candidates listed above bar Mr. Tavakoli have given interviews to the Western press or made the pro-U.S. remarks in the presence of Western journalists. It could well have been that these candidates had no choice but respond to pointed questions on the issue. Most of these positive statements, except those of Mr. Kashani, have been of the generalised variety and usually hedged by the conditions that Iran has traditionally wanted the U.S. to meet before they would agree for talks. Only Mr. Jasbi appears to have called for unconditional talks.

Another possible explanation is that these statements have been cast into the public discourse in order to garner votes. All the can-

didates know very well that more than half the voters have come of age after the 1979 election and that for them the old animosities towards the U.S. are not that much of an issue. Moreover, younger Iranian voters are very keen that their country end its international insularity especially, its estrangement from the West. This is not merely because they are enamoured of Western culture or because they feel that this isolation has inhibited Iran from fulfilling its potential. The younger Iranians know that without such an opening up, foreign investments, and the jobs it would add, and the opportunity to travel abroad for study and work would just not be available.

The pro-U.S. statements by the candidates could, therefore, just be a ploy to attract younger voters.

What is, however, significant is that Mr. Hojatoleslam Taha Hashemi, a theologian considered close to Ayatollah Khamenei, has also endorsed the call in recent days.

In an interview to Reuters, this cleric proposed that discrete talks could take place to pave the ground for more substantive negotiations. Incidentally, in his interview, Mr. Kashani, who has been involved in the past in arbitration negotiations with the U.S. (on damage claims that each has with the other), has hinted that Iran-U.S. exchanges have been going on much more extensively than any one has suspected.

If Iran is sending out signals at the strategic plane and not just within the context of the domestic political context it could be because they want the U.S. sanctions to be lifted when the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) comes up for renewal in the U.S. Congress in August. But that could be too paltry an aim by Iranian standards.

Other reports from Washington suggest that Iran and the U.S. are moving closer, via the medium of Russia, to work out a joint strategy to extend support to the anti-Taliban coalition in Afghanistan.

In the context, it may be mentioned that the Iranian Foreign Office has issued a strongly worded statement condemning the Taliban's plan to impose a dress code on Hindus and Sikhs in that country. All these are stray signals that have yet to fall into a pattern but there have been too many of them to be coincidental or meaningless.

# Iraq halts oil export, spares Turkey and Jordan

Baghdad, June 4

HF-11576

IRAQ FOLLOWED up on its threat to halt most oil exports, stopping the flow early on Monday to all but neighbouring Turkey and Jordan.

The indefinite halt was meant to protest a UN Security Council decision to extend by one month instead of the usual six months the programme under which Iraq can sell oil. Baghdad has chafed at UN controls over its oil exports - its sole foreign exchange earner - that stem from sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990

invasion of Kuwait.

War and sanctions have crippled the Iraqi economy, leaving many Iraqis dependent on government rations financed by the UN-supervised oil exports. Iraq has cash reserves, but it was unclear how long it could survive without further sales. It had been pumping about 3 million barrels a day.

Sources close to the Iraqi oil ministry, speaking on condition of anonymity on Monday, said pumping oil through an Iraqi-Turkish pipeline to Turkey's Mediterranean port terminal at

Ceyhan stopped at 8 a.m. local time. Exports through Iraq's southern al-Bakr oil terminal were also shut off, the sources said.

The sources said oil exports by road tankers to Turkey and Jordan were not affected. Iraqi Oil Minister Amer Mohammed Rashid had said on Sunday that exports to Iraq's neighbours would not be affected by the protest.

Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ali Naimi said on Saturday the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries was ready

to cover any shortfall in world oil production following Iraq's halt. Other OPEC nations are pumping at top capacity, but Naimi said Saudi Arabia alone is capable of covering any shortage.

A delegation headed by the Iraqi Oil Ministry's senior undersecretary, Taha Humud Musa, was dispatched to Vienna for a regular OPEC meeting that starts Tuesday. Rashid, speaking to reporters on Sunday, played down the meeting's importance, saying OPEC ministers have already agreed not to change production.

AP



2/6

# Iraq threatens to halt oil exports

By Kesava Menon

FD-19

**MANAMA (Bahrain), JUNE 3.** Iraq has warned that it will halt oil exports from June 4 in retaliation to a United Nations plan to revise the regime of sanctions.

An agreement between Iraq and India, whereby wheat is to be bartered for oil, is not likely to be affected, since Iraqi officials have said that a supply cut-off decision would only affect contracts yet to be signed. The decision is also not expected to affect world oil supplies overall, since Saudi Arabia has said that it can make up the shortfall.

On Friday, the U.N. Security Council decided to extend the oil-for-food programme by one month instead of the half year that is stipulated by agreement. The extension is a compromise between the positions of the U.S. and the U.K. on the one hand and Russia on the other. The U.S. and the U.K. had wanted a new sanctions plan, designated as a "smart sanctions" plan, to be substituted for the ongoing oil-for-food programme when the current six-month phase of the latter concludes today.

Russia wanted the Council to extend the programme by another six months to give the member-states more time to study the "smart sanctions".

Under the current oil-for-food programme, Iraq is allowed to export oil to pay for the imports of food, medicines and humanitarian goods. Each phase of the programme runs for six months and the Security Council has to approve each extension. Money raised through the sale of oil under this programme is deposited in a U.N.-controlled escrow account and payments for food, etc., are made out of this fund after the sanctions review committee approves the relevant contracts. Iraq has chafed at the need to follow the escrow fund and sanctions committee route for its trade with the world and has been pressing for the lifting of the whole sanctions regime.

Most governments in the world have come around to the view that the sanctions regime against Iraq has not only lost its utility but that it is proving extremely harmful to the Iraqi people. With support for the sanctions regime

dwindling, the U.S. and the U.K. have crafted the "smart sanctions" plan, which they say would target the Iraqi regime instead of indiscriminately hitting at the Iraqi people.

Essentially, the smart sanctions plan enables Iraq to import civilian goods freely while import contracts for all goods that can be used for both military and civilian purposes will have to be put before the sanctions committee. (The sanctions committee is of course mandated to ensure that Iraq can not import military goods).

Under the smart sanctions plan, there will be only a negative list of items Iraq cannot import while all other goods could be imported without the sanctions committee approval. The members of the Security Council have not been able to reach agreement on the items, or categories of goods, that should be put on the negative list. Friday's compromise is intended to give the Security Council members time to refine the negative list. Payments for all imports, even under the smart sanctions scheme, would still have to be made into and out of the U.N.-controlled escrow fund.

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B/S

# Caging Khatami



Mohammed Khatami... facing lightweight challengers.

**I**RANIAN CONSERVATIVES could not find one candidate of sufficiently powerful calibre to put up against the President, Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami, in the elections to be held on June 8. So they have lined up nine air pistols against him.

The conservative-dominated Council of Guardians sprang a surprise when they released the list of candidates they had approved for the June presidential poll. They did not allow a single identifiably reform-minded candidate other than Mr. Khatami to stand while they cleared as many as nine who ranged from those prepared only for marginal reforms to those who are certainly against any kind of political reform though they might pay lip service to the same. Given the interests of the conservatives, which can easily be ascertained from the record of their behaviour over the past four years, this decision at first made no sense.

For all the power that they exercise through the control of the more dominant, non-elected part of the Iranian system the conservatives know that the political momentum has been against them ever since Mr. Khatami won the presidency four years ago. The margin of their defeat in that election has been replicated in two nation-wide polls since despite their success in thwarting almost the whole of Mr. Khatami's reform agenda. It was very clear

*Iran's conservatives could not find one powerful enough candidate against Mohammed Khatami in the June 8 elections. So they have lined up nine air pistols, writes Kesava Menon.*

that the primary objective of the conservatives in the coming elections would have to be the reversal of the momentum. A very easy way of doing this would have been to allow at least a few credible reform-minded candidates to stand so that they could leech away support from Mr. Khatami. If the final result of the coming poll showed that Mr. Khatami obtained less than the 70 per cent, on a 90 per cent turnout, that he got the last time it could have been said that the President's position had slipped.

Iran's conservatives have displayed far more cleverness than most analysts credited them with. They probably realised that it did not really matter if the pro-reform vote was scattered among Mr. Khatami and candidates of the same mould. So long as the 70-30 gap remained between the reform and conservative camps they could not really claim to have

made up any ground. One alternative that they had was to reduce the size of the turnout so that even if Mr. Khatami retained the same margin of victory it could still be made out that he drew support from a lesser number of Iranians than he did four years ago. A campaign carried out in circumstances where Mr. Khatami's victory was certain and in which there was no other candidate who could fire the imagination would certainly have been lacklustre and could have conceivably caused a low turnout. But a low turnout would also indicate that Iranians were losing interest in the system as a whole and Iran's dominant clergy have always taken pride in the size of the electoral turnout which they take as a sign of the system's legitimacy.

If the conservatives could not risk the turnout slipping far below the healthy standards of previous elections, neither could they risk a repeat of 1997. Four years ago, they had set up the Speaker of the Parliament, surely a high profile candidate, against a Khatami who had been much less in the public eye till the start of the election campaign. If they once again united behind a single candidate there was every chance that all reform-minded voters, no matter the doubts and misgivings they might have developed about Mr. Khatami in the four years, would rally behind the President. It is possible that nine candidates of a

largely conservative bent are in the fray because the many factions that are broadly in line with this tendency could not sort out their differences in time.

But going by the profile of the candidates, it would appear that the Guardians have worked out an alternative strategy by design and not by accident. Each of the nine, while basically conservative in orientation, has the capacity to draw support from segments of society that have been crucial elements of the broad pro-reform movement that Mr. Khatami has created and has been able to retain despite his inability to lead them anywhere. These candidates have also pecked away at specific aspects of Mr. Khatami's failure and each has promoted himself as the person who can rectify that particular drawback.

According to most observers of the Iranian scene, the former Labour Minister, Mr. Ahmed Tavakoli, can put up the toughest fight. The evidence in support of this proposition is that he defeated the then popular President, Mr. Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, in one province when they faced off in the 1993 poll. Mr. Tavakoli has put on the line his standing as a non-clerical former Minister and has latched on to the main conservative slogan that economic development and the fight against corruption are the real issues and that political reform is a diversion.

Then there is the 44-year-old Defence Minister, Admiral Ali Shamkhani, who strikes at Mr. Khatami's reputation for vacillation and weakness by promoting himself as a man who can act decisively. The head of the Open University has thrown himself into the fray hoping to leech support from the academics and students who have been Mr. Khatami's foremost backers. There is also the head of the union of doctors who can hope to draw support from the professionals and urbanites who have stood staunchly by Mr. Khatami so far. Each of them seems certain to make inroads into Khatami territory, thereby ensuring that he cannot approach the 70 per cent mark this time around.

Meanwhile, the conservatives have pulled all the stops out in their denunciation of reform. Despite the reform movement having captured the rest of the world's imagination there is a hard core in Iran which reveres the clergy and will vote conservative irrespective of the circumstances.

# The heir, apparently

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Qusay Saddam Hussein... next in line?

*His election to the Baath Party's Revolutionary Command has sparked speculation that Qusay Saddam Hussein will succeed his father as Iraq's leader. Kesava Menon reports.*

**Q**USAY, YOUNGER son of Iraq's President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, was last week elected to the Revolutionary Command of his country's ruling Baath Party. Predictably enough this sparked off speculation about Qusay being his father's designated successor as well as derogatory commentary about the Arab world's propensity for dynastic succession. It is perhaps inevitable that Qusay will succeed his father but people should know the rules of a game before they proceed to denigrate it.

When the Arab world is described as tribalistic the comment usually carries a whiff of ridicule. Intellectuals in one of the countries that borders the Arab world, and a Muslim country at that, often dismiss the whole lot as "tribes with flags". But the Arabs themselves are proud of the strength and longevity of their tribal bonds and consider it an element of their culture that they should be proud of. From this perspective, a nation-state is primarily a conglomeration of tribes with their clans and sub-clans to which ethnic or religious minorities also give their allegiance.

Such a hierarchical network provides for stability.

From this perspective, Iraq can be seen as a network of major and not-so-major tribes in which the Tikriti clansmen of the Hussein family form the innermost core. In this system, Mr. Saddam Hussein is the person currently at the epicentre. But the next ring is formed by his family, then his clan, his tribe and so on. Each broader layer would appear to leave questions such as the right line of succession to the autonomous layer that is just narrower. So other tribes will have to accept what each tribe decides, clans within a tribe accept what one clan decides and families within a clan accept what one family decides. A notable example of how this system operates was provided by Mr. Saddam Hussein himself in dealing with his errant sons-in-law.

Mr. Kemal Hussein and his brother staged a foolhardy attempt to overthrow their father-in-law's regime a few years ago. They slipped out to Jordan and then tried to convince the U.S. that they could form a viable opposition force to Mr. Saddam Hussein and that they

should therefore be supported. After pumping the brothers for what they were worth the CIA decided that their utility level was negligible and dropped whatever plans it might have initially conceived. With no where else to go, the brothers listened to the assurances of their Government and returned to Iraq.

Observers in Baghdad say that Mr. Saddam Hussein remained true to his word. He merely pointed out to the Al Majed clan to which the brothers belonged that the two had committed treason against the state and that the clan should deal with them as it thought fit. The rest of the clansmen tried to persuade the brothers to submit themselves for trial and when the brothers could not be persuaded their clansmen killed them.

If in a sense Qusay has been anointed the successor the question that immediately rises is how his elder brother, Uday, will respond. At the middle of the week, photographs were published showing Uday and Qusay sitting next to each other and enjoying a light moment in obvious harmony. Uday has always been treated as the wild one both by the western media and the gossip on the Arab street and there are a lot of stories doing the rounds about his proclivity for self-centredness and violence. These stories might be a part of the general effort to play up the thuggish reputation of Mr. Saddam Hussein and his closest associates but other than being a member of parliament, publisher of a newspaper and president of his country's soccer federation, Uday does not seem to have any official position. Qusay on the other hand has reputedly been functioning as the head of the Republican Guard for some time now.

Where many of the other Arab countries use the charisma of monarchy to cement the network of tribal bonds, Iraq uses the cement of the Baath ideology. The Baathists have a consolidated grip on their country at various levels and at the apex. Within the Revolutionary Command, the apex cell of the Baath party, Mr. Saddam Hussein is of course currently numero uno. Nominally, however, the number two is Mr. Izzat Ibrahim and he is nowadays the most visible of the Baath's top leadership. But is any kind of a succession very imminent? Rumours about Mr. Saddam Hussein's ill-health regularly do the rounds. But people who have met the President just a few months ago said that he appeared to be in good health and that he, by the vigour of his handshake, appeared eager to prove that he was robust.

Iraq's enemies love to portray the country as one that is ruled by fear alone. There are of course independent records of the regime having acted brutally when it had a mind to. But inside Iraq there are people, who do not appear feeble-minded or terrorised, who speak more of other reasons why they stand by their President. They speak of the manner in which the pre-1990 oil wealth was spread far more evenly in Iraq than it was in any of the other countries of the Arab world and of how Mr. Saddam Hussein would roam the land like a modern day Haroun al Rashid to look into the welfare of his people. Hagiography induced by fear that is in turn induced by terror. May be so. But then why do foreigners who resided in Iraq prior to 1990, including the large number of Indians who worked there, also have memories of a regime that while autocratic did keep an eye on public welfare.

HD-14

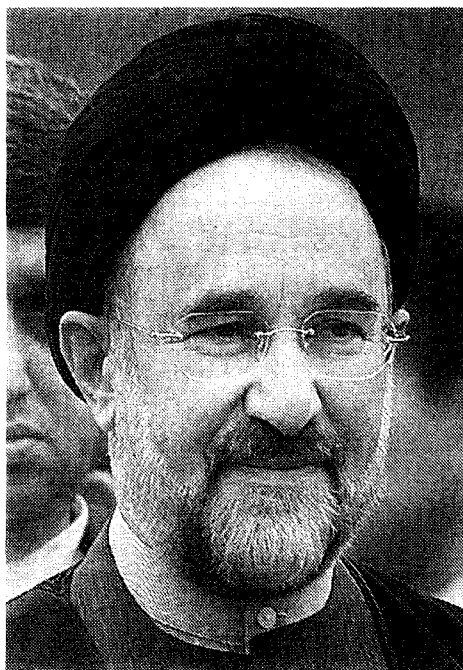
## It's advantage Khatami

By Kesava Menon *MS*

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), MAY 21.** Iran's moderate President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, is to face nine challengers, all of them representative of the broad conservative tendency in the clerical regime, in his bid to seek another four-year term in the elections to be held on June 8. In simplistic theory, the decision by the Council of Guardians, the conservative-dominated body that vets candidates for elections, should have been considered an advantage conferred on Mr. Khatami. But such is the opprobrium and suspicion that the Guardians provoke within the country and outside that their decision is being freely interpreted as a conspiracy to undermine the President's standing even though it will not damage his chances of re-election.

Over 800 candidates had filed their nominations by the deadline earlier this month. After checking the candidates for their commitment to the Islamic regime, and other credentials, the Guardians have finally cleared ten of them. Even since Mr. Khatami settled the doubts whether he would re-contest by filing his nomination papers, it was clear that he would easily win the polls. There is simply no one else who can come anywhere close to matching the President's popularity. However, it was also amply clear that the conservatives, who have strained every muscle to undermine the President throughout his first four-year term, would do something to damage Mr. Khatami in some manner.

The consensus amongst analysts was that the conservatives would do something to drastically reduce the margin of Mr. Khatami's near-certain victory. Mr. Khatami won nearly 70 per cent of the vote in an over 90 per cent turn in the elections held four years ago. If either the size of the turnout or the margin of Mr. Khatami's victory turned out to be less than it was four years ago, the conservatives could point out that the President's standing had eroded and could then



wage an even more severe crackdown on Mr. Khatami's moderate camp than they have done till now.

Among those who filed their nomination papers was a "Young Turk" of the moderate camp, Mr. Ibrahim Azgharzadeh. If the Guardians had allowed him to run, this relatively more militant reformer could have cut into Mr. Khatami's votes. There is a strong trend within the moderate/reform that is frustrated at the slow pace of change that Mr. Khatami has opted for and at his refusal to confront the conservatives head-on. However, the very clearing of Mr. Azgharzadeh's candidature appears to have been more than the conservatives on the Council of Guard-

ians could stomach. Neither Mr. Azgharzadeh nor any other moderate was allowed to challenge Mr. Khatami.

On the other hand, the conservatives on the Council appear, on the face of it, to have shot themselves in the foot by putting up nine candidates who represent various strands within their own camp. However, their overall objective is still attainable. As a reform member of parliament pointed out, the election campaign would have been a hot and serious affair if the conservatives had put up a united front and backed a single candidate from their side. Now the campaign will be a lacklustre affair and the expected low turnout will come as a fulfilment of the conservative plans.

Iranian politicians do not fit neatly into the moderate/hardliner, reform/conservative categories. Each individual displays variations in approach, especially in the absence of fully formed party politics. There are three leading candidates, all nominally conservative, support for each of whom could come from different segments of society. Again, it would suit the conservative clerics, broadly so-called, if these candidates can draw support from segments of society that might be otherwise more reform-minded or moderate in approach.

The former Labour Minister, Mr. Ahmad Tavakoli and Admiral Ali Shamkhani, who was Defence Minister till he resigned to contest the polls, are two nominal conservatives who could draw support from segments of moderate voters. Ayatollah Syed Ali Fallahian, a hard conservative, could, on the other hand, cut into Mr. Khatami's support among villagers who look up to him because the President too is a "Syed", a person in direct line of descent from the Prophet. There is, however, the possibility that the Guardians have allowed so many candidates from their own side simply because they are so divided that they could not agree on a single challenger to Mr. Khatami.

THE HINDU

May 22, 2001

# Colossal human tragedy unfolding in Iraq

By Kesava Menon

**BAGHDAD, MAY 18.** If Iraq's current problem was that it lagged behind globalised consumerist standards, the world's conscience need not have been troubled.

However, what is taking place in Iraq under a super-power scheme to make life abnormal is something infinitely worse.

It is not a situation that immediately impacts on the senses but in this case, at least statistics are a more reliable guide.

More than a million Iraqis, including over 500,000 children, have died due to causes directly attributable to the sanctions and the structure that produces these consequences has neither been fully reformed nor is there much prospect of it being removed.

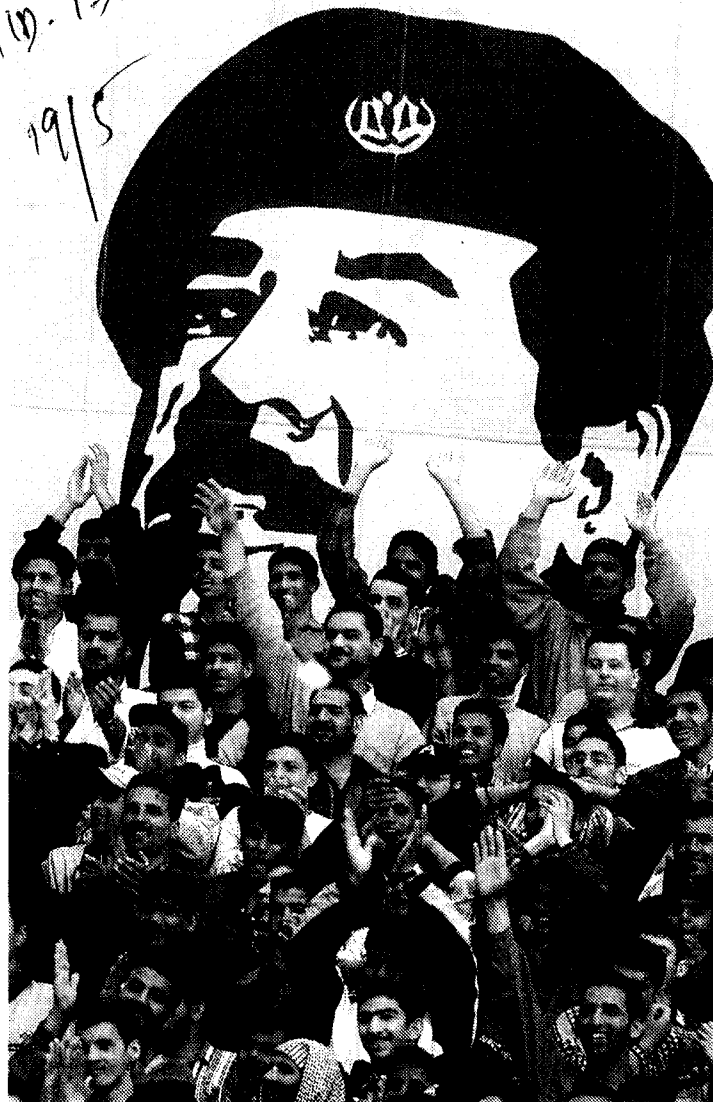
"Dual use and the escrow fund are the two prongs of the strategy being used to squeeze Iraq", an analyst put it succinctly.

Under the oil-for-food programme, Iraq can sell the oil needed to pay for the imported foodstuff, medicine and other "humanitarian" goods that it requires. However, it is not permitted to indulge in straightforward commerce.

The money it gets from its oil sales have to be put into an escrow fund controlled by the U.N. and the U.N. decides whether money can be released from this fund for the imports that Iraq has contracted for.

Iraq is not represented on the relevant committees. What has been created is an utterly chaotic situation.

"The sanctions committee, after much deliberation, might approve the import of some medicine that has to be administered intravenously. But they will not simultaneously approve the import of the catheters or needles or whatever through which this medicine has to be injected into the patient. By the time approval for the import of catheters or needles is given the expiry date



**Iraqis cheer in front of a portrait of the President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, as the famous Egyptian singer, Mr. Ihab Toufic, performs at a Baghdad stadium on February 26 in this file photo. Toufic is part of a growing number of Egyptian artists who have recently come to Iraq to help alleviate the suffering that the Iraqi people face under foreign sanctions.**

for the medicines might have passed".

This might be an illustrative way of describing the situation rather than a report on a specific instance but such examples abound.

Permits to import parts for refrigerator units are so delayed that blood banks cannot func-

tion, ambulances cannot be freely imported to replace vehicles that have run down, radiotherapy equipment cannot readily be imported because they are susceptible to weapons use as well as medical.

As the U.N. has itself noted the problem is one of providing immediate relief as say, in an area

struck by natural disasters.

Iraq's problems are that of rebuilding its infrastructure so that the people can avail themselves of the welfare that the country's wealth can provide for them.

Four years after the launch of the "oil-for-food" programme, the availability of foodstuff is apparently not as much a problem as it was in the earlier years of the sanctions.

But the water supply and sanitation systems are still in disrepair and diseases abound. The medical system cannot deliver anything more than basic services on a sustainable basis, availability of power is so erratic that neither factories nor hospitals can function normally.

The list goes on and on. Iraq finds it difficult to import goods that would be considered normal in most conceivable circumstances because the U.N. (read the U.S.) has determined that the Government of Iraq is so bent on developing weapons of mass destruction that it would apply the graphite in pencils, or the paper for text-books or parts for factories manufacturing cattle-feed or medicines to military rather than civil uses.

About \$3 billion worth of imports that Iraq has contracted for are currently held up by the sanctions committee.

The comment on U.S. policy towards Iraq by Messrs Naom Chomsky, Edward Said and others has been quoted before but it still bears repetition.

"This is not a foreign policy, it is sanctioned mass murder that is nearing holocaust proportions. If we remain silent we are condoning a genocide that is being perpetrated in the name of peace in the Middle East, a mass slaughter that is being perpetrated in our name. We are past the point where silence is passive consent. When a crime reached these proportions, silence is complicity".

THE HINDU

19 MAY 20

# UK, US for end to Iraq sanctions

London, May 17

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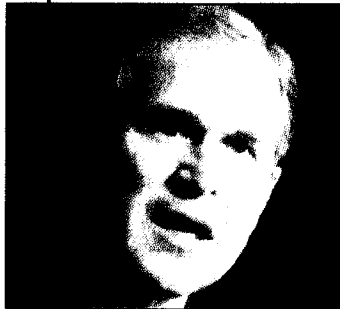
BRITAIN, BACKED by the US, yesterday proposed the end of all sanctions on exports to Iraq, with the exception of weapons related materials.

A British-drafted UN Security Council resolution, to be tabled next week, is the first concrete plan to emerge after President George Bush's administration indicated earlier this year that it wanted a new policy towards Iraq.

"In essence we are ending sanctions on ordinary imports to Iraq, but replacing them with a tightly focused set of controls on military and 'dual use' goods," a British official said. "Iraq will be free to meet all of its civilian needs without impediment."

However, the new resolution will maintain existing financial controls on Iraq and still compel exporters to be paid from an UN-controlled account which contains Baghdad's oil revenues.

The International Institute for



TONY BLAIR

Strategic Studies yesterday urged UN to drop sanctions on all commercial exports to Iraq, abandon restrictions on civil flights to and from Baghdad, and for Britain and the US to suspend their air patrols over the no-fly zone in southern Iraq.

In its latest annual strategic survey, the London-based think-tank - known for its cautious approach - called for a new policy towards Iraq, including extra foreign investment in its oil industry.



GEORGE W BUSH

The report says that the UN should shift from a "presumption to deny" to a "presumption to permit" exports of dual-use goods to Iraq - products with a civilian and potential military use.

The report coincides with new attempts at the UN by Britain and the US to redefine their policy amid growing opposition to sanctions, most notably among Iraq's neighbours. The measures would include relaxing controls

on exports of civilian goods.

Though the institute says that most commercial contracts submitted to the UN sanctions committee are approved automatically, trade restrictions when applied "spur the black market, which increases the price of commodities to the further detriment of an already impoverished the Iraqi middle class".

The report says the policy also contributes to perceptions that the Iraqi are the real target of sanctions, and says increased civilian trade would provide a much-needed economic boost for Jordan and Turkey.

"It is true that some money will pay for cigars and champagne for Saddam and his cronies", the report says, "but this is a trivial reason to maintain a sanctions policy that undermines the regional public support required to sustain long-term containment of Iraq's ambitions."

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 MAY 2001



# How Saddam keeps Iraq in his grip

By Kesava Menon

**BAGHDAD, MAY 16.** The likeness of Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque and other images culled from the seven-month-long violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians figure quiet prominently in the portraiture scattered about the Iraqi capital. But they are far outnumbered by different portraits of Iraq's President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, in uniform, sporting a fedora, with a kaffiyeh and in Arab dress and Mr. Hussein wearing a shooting cap.

This juxtapositioning of the first set of images with the second is not a trivial matter because large sections of the Arab public believe that Mr. Hussein is one leader who is serious about the Palestinian cause.

Mr. Hussein's willingness to stand up to the U.S., especially at a time when other Arab leaders appear helpless as Israel goes about doing whatever it likes with the Palestinians, has definitely had its impact on the Arab imagination. Since the Palestinian uprising began in late September last year, the Iraqi leadership has also made a deliberate bid to become the foremost champions of the Palestinian cause.

The esteem that Mr. Hussein has gained in the process is most certainly not the only factor that keeps him in power. But it is also certainly an important element in the relationship between Mr. Hussein and the masses of his country. Those who portray Mr. Hussein as a brutal autocrat who retains power solely through strong-arm methods oversimplify the nature of Mr. Hussein's power base.

Those who make much out of Mr. Hussein's strong-arm methods conveniently overlook the fact that every other Arab leader, whether secular or of a religious bent, royal or non-royal, pro-Western or otherwise, relies on similar methods to almost as great a degree as Mr. Hussein does. The Muqabarat (the intelligence cum strong-arm services) are ubiquitous in the Arab world. In fact, there is far less of an open display of naked force in Iraqi towns than there is in Algiers, Cairo or Beirut.

Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon have, of course, suffered from internal turmoil of the kind that perhaps renders such displays necessary but the display of force in Iraqi towns is even marginally less than it is in Amman or the cities of the Arabian peninsula.



**A Palestinian child holds a picture of Mr. Saddam Hussein during a demonstration in Baghdad on Tuesday to mark the 53rd anniversary of the "Nakba" or "catastrophe" which befell the Palestinians with the creation of Israel in 1948. — AFP**

Iraq is also no different from the rest of the Arab countries in its habit of putting up the leaders' portrait at each street corner or in leading off each news broadcast with the great man's latest sayings or doings.

Some idea of the nature of power wielded by Mr. Hussein was available at a rally in his home town of Tikrit on April 28. From early in the morning hordes of buses could be seen heading for the parade ground where a commemorative rally was held. The crowd at the rally was respectably large and, most importantly, did not at all convey the impression that it was a hired crowd. They did not need to be cajoled or forced into marching in their respective village or professional groups and there was a great deal of enthusiasm in the displays they

put up before the dais. Tents were put up at most of the junctions on the way to Tikrit and goats were roasted on the barbecue pits beside the tents to feed those who had attended the rally. But the barbecue was more like a present to people who were tired after the

rally rather than the pay-off that made them attend.

The scenes witnessed in Tikrit would probably not be replicated in same scale and style elsewhere in the country. The hard-core of Mr. Hussein's regime is drawn from Tikrit, Mosul and the north-eastern corner of Iraq above the Tigris river. But the regime also maintains itself through a complex web of relations with tribes and clans scattered all over the country. In this respect as well the Iraqi Government is no different from other Arab regimes.

For instance, the Bedouin tribes that live in the Syrian desert between Iraq and its western neighbours do not necessarily recognise international boundaries. They could as well give their allegiance to the Hashemites in Jordan, the Al Saud in Saudi Arabia or the Baathists in Damascus and Baghdad. But the allegiance of the separate tribes have been won over by the different Governments though complex sets of accommodations. In binding these tribesmen to themselves, the Iraqi Government, like the others, cannot rely solely on force.

Where the Iraqi Government scores over the others is in its use of ideology to bind the people to it. Loyalty to the Baath ideology and party is the primary criterion for recruitment into Government service and advancement and the party has ensured that the military is subservient to it. Besides, it is obvious from the infrastructure that survived the bombings of 1991 or was reconstructed later that the great wealth that Iraq obtained from its oil was distributed with a fair measure of even-handedness. If the Iraqis have stayed loyal to Mr. Hussein despite a decade-long economic embargo it is not solely on account of the brutality of his regime. Those drawing up plans to topple Mr. Hussein seem to live in a world of make-believe.

THE HINDU

37 MAY 2001

ON 4 May, the Mitchell Commission at last handed over its report to the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. A US-sponsored, fact-finding commission investigating the violence that broke out in West Asia last September, and which continues till today, was set up last October at a summit in Sharm al Sheikh, Egypt.

The summit was intended to achieve a ceasefire between the Israelis and Palestinians after the outbreak of the al Aqsa Intifada; the ceasefire failed almost immediately but the commission was nonetheless set up.

It was proposed by then President Bill Clinton as a compromise between the Palestinians' demand for a full-scale inquiry into the violence under its aegis and Israel's opposition to it on the grounds that such an inquiry would "internationalise" the dispute and bypass American mediation.

The US-financed commission was led by George J Mitchell, a former member and majority leader in the US Senate, who had helped broker peace in Northern Ireland.

Other members included Warren B Rudman, another former Senator; Suleyman Demiral, former President of Turkey; Javier Solana, the European Union's security director and Thorbjørn Jagland, Norway's Foreign Minister - all distinguished diplomats, whose recommendations, though lacking legal authority, cannot be taken lightly.

Israel, under then Prime Minister Ehud Barak had agreed to the commission, but soon changed its mind. Mr Barak tried to persuade first the Clinton and then the Bush administrations to suspend the group's work, fearing that its work would focus on Israeli use of force rather than what Israel says were deliberate Palestinian provocation and continuation of violence.

Later, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, too, was critical of the group, saying it was a "historic mistake" and that no one "has the right" "to put Israel on trial before the world." Another reason for Israel's objection to the commission's work has been, not without logic - the contention that since the October ceasefire agreement was not implemented, the commission's original assignment was, therefore, no longer valid. However, in the greater interest of pursuing peace and finding a way out of the current cycle of violence, the commission was urged to continue its work under the Clinton and the Bush administrations.

The commission was instructed that its task was not to pass judgment on "guilt or innocence" but rather "to determine what happened and how to avoid it recurring in the future".

The commission, was therefore, according to Mr Mitchell "not a tribunal" and did "not believe that anyone was on trial", thus trying to allay Israel's concerns.

In March, the five-member group travelled through Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, meeting Palestinian community representatives, Israeli Intelligence analysts, doctors and peace negotiators, politicians and statisticians.

The group was restrained from gathering information independently, restricting itself to materials presented by the two sides.

On 4 May, the committee presented its report to Israeli and Palestinian leaders. The report is said to be unbiased, and while not apportioning blame on any side in particular, it lays responsibility for months of violence on both sides.

The report finds that the Sharon visit to

# Implement suggestions

ADITI BHADURI studies a report prepared by the US-sponsored Mitchell Commission, set up not to pass judgment on guilt or innocence vis-a-vis the unending conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians but rather to determine what happened and how to avoid recurrence



Israeli soldiers and policemen carry one of the bodies of the two 14-year-old boys found dead in a cave near the West Bank settlement of Tekoa on Wednesday. Kobi Mandel and Yossi Ishran were bludgeoned to death with rocks. - AP/PTI

the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem was nothing "other than an internal political act" and did not cause the "al Aqsa Intifada", "but it was poorly timed and the provocative effect should have been foreseen; indeed it was foreseen by those (US and Palestinian officials) who urged that the visit be prohibited."

It also says there is no evidence "the Palestinian Authority planned the uprising, or that it had a deliberate plan "to initiate a campaign of violence". Similarly, the report notes that while there is no evidence to conclude "that there was a deliberate plan by the Government of Israel to respond with lethal force".

It thus refutes both Palestinian and Israeli allegations - the Palestinians contend that it was the visit of the then leader of the Opposition in the Knesset, Mr Sharon, to the Temple Mount - escorted by 1,000 armed Israeli police officers - that had triggered the current chain of violence.

The Israelis, on the other hand, contended that the Palestinian violence had been planned by the Palestinian Authority leadership.

Rather, the report suggests that neither side took any measures to rein in the violence once it began, noting that the Palestinian Authority made no "consistent effort to contain the demonstrations and control the violence once it began". There was also no evidence that the "Government of Israel made a consistent effort to use non-lethal means to control demonstrations of unarmed Palestinians."

The report says the terrorism is "reprehensible and unacceptable" and that the "PA has a responsibility to help rebuild confidence" by making a "100 per cent effort to prevent terrorist operations and to punish perpetrators", and "apprehend and incarcerate terrorist operation within the PA's jurisdiction".

This point has been welcomed by Israel, which has charged the Palestinian Authority of supporting terrorism by

releasing terrorists and Islamist militants from PA prisons, of allowing PA security personnel to abet, and of not making any real effort to prevent, anti-Israeli terrorism. The Palestinian Authority denies these charges and accuses Israel of using excessive force against the Palestinians in the uprising.

Here the commission's report notes that "Israel's characterisation of the conflict as "armed conflict short of war," does not adequately describe the variety of incidents reported since late September 2000.

Moreover, by thus defining the conflict, the Israeli defence force has suspended its policy of mandating investigations by the department of military police investigations whenever a Palestinian in the territories dies at the hands of an Israeli soldier in an incident not involving terrorism.

The Palestinians have alleged that Israel has been indulging in "extra judicial" executions of Palestinians. At the same time, the report notes that for the first three months of the current uprising (when the death toll was the highest) most incidents did not involve Palestinian use of firearms and explosives and that of the nearly 500 people killed and over 10,000 injured till now, the "overwhelming majority in both categories were Palestinians".

The Mitchell commission's report has asked Israel to lift closures on the Palestinian territories, "transfer to the PA all tax revenues owed and permit Palestinians who have been employed in Israel to return to their jobs," while the PA "should resume cooperation with Israeli security agencies to ensure that the Palestinian workers employed within Israel are fully vetted and free of connections to terrorist organisations."

One of the points most in favour of the Palestinians has been the commission's finding on the issue of settlements. The report suggests that "a cessation of

Palestinian-Israeli violence will be particularly hard to sustain unless the Government of Israel freezes all settlement construction activities".

The report recommends that "the Government of Israel should freeze all settlement activity, including the "natural growth" of existing settlements.

The kind of security cooperation desired by the Government of Israel cannot for long co-exist with settlement activity...".

The issue of settlements has been a particularly sticky point in Israeli-Palestinian relations. One Palestinian official described the settlements as being "time bombs".

Israel says its policy is not to build new settlements but it reserves the right to expand existing ones to accommodate "natural growth".

The Palestinians assert there is no difference between "new" and "expanded" settlements and that the settlers, many of whom are aggressively inclined, along with Israeli defence force personnel posted there for their security, represent a particular point of friction with their Palestinian neighbours.

The greatest relief for Israel has been the commission's rejection of the Palestinian demand to deploy an international force for the Palestinians in the Palestinian areas. Israel has vehemently opposed the deployment of such a force.

All in all, the report recommends an immediate halt to the violence, measures for rebuilding confidence and resumption of negotiations.

Both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides have till 15 May to submit to the commission their responses to its report, after which the commission would hand over the report, including the response of both sides, to President George W Bush. Mr Bush would then in consultation with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will formally release the report.

The Palestinians, though disappointed



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The Palestinians, though disappointed

that the report did not comply with their request for an international protection force, are on the whole, said to be satisfied with the report. They have called for a summit to discuss its recommendation.

Israel's reaction is mixed. While it is pleased that the commission places the responsibility to curb terror on the Palestinians, and rejects the latter's demand for an international protection force in the territories; it has rejected the call to freeze settlement activities.

Israel contends that the settlements are a subject to be discussed under final status negotiations and cannot be a condition for the cessation of current hostilities.

On 6 May, after the report was presented to both sides, Israeli daily *Haaretz* reported that Mr Sharon was planning to allocate New Israeli Shekel 1.5 billion (almost \$400 million) as state support for the settlements.

It would be interesting to know the Bush administration's reaction. After all, both the earlier Bush administration and that of Ronald Reagan had been firmly opposed to the settlements movement. In fact, not many Israelis oppose the settlements' freeze.

The Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* in its editorial of 7 May said, "according to updated polls, most Israelis — in contrast to their elderly military leader — support a settlement freeze."

Mr Sharon, it would then seem, would do well to accept the commission's recommendation. Also on 4 May, Danish Foreign Minister Mogens Lykketoft said he would ask the European Union to ban agricultural imports from Israeli settlements.

Since the settlements are not part of the Israel recognised by International Law, their products cannot be exported under the trade agreement that exists between the European Union and Israel.

If the international community toughens its stand against the settlements, Israel would find itself in a difficult position. For their part, the Palestinians ought to rein in terrorists and militants and curb terrorism aimed at Israel.

After all, in the seven-month-old vicious cycle of conflict more Palestinian lives have been lost and more Palestinian property destroyed.

Quite a number of Palestinians, if quietly, are questioning the wisdom of the prolonged violence.

If, in spite of internal politics, the Palestinian Authority does toughen its stand on violence and terror aimed at Israelis, which in turn, endangers Palestinian lives, it would look more favourable in the eyes of the Americans.

It must be remembered that President Yasser Arafat has yet not been invited to the White House by the Bush administration.

On the other hand, there is the joint Egyptian-Jordanian regional peace proposal that has been presented to Israel and the Palestinian Authority for resumption of negotiations.

This proposal, too, calls for confidence building measures, which, amongst other things, includes Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territory that has been reoccupied and building restrictions in the settlement.

It seems there are many positive and interesting — if not difficult — proposals to end the violence and impasse in Israeli-Palestinian relations and to resume negotiations. What actually happens, however, remains to be seen.

(The author is a freelance writer.)

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10-12

# Iraq hopes 'smart sanctions' will fall through

By Kesava Menon

**BAGHDAD, MAY 9.** For the world outside Iraq, informed as it is by the Western media, the story in respect of that country over the last decade has been that of a ferocious regime trying to break free of the very necessary restraints that have been placed upon it. The perspective is, of course, different from inside the country and the story from this angle is that of a proud nation fighting valiantly against neo-colonialism. Where the two narratives do meet is in the common understanding that this struggle is going to be a long and grim one.

If there is any feeling that the 1990 invasion of Kuwait was a terrible miscalculation it is difficult to find. There does seem to be a barely articulated suspicion that Iraq was sucked into an action, the consequences of which it could not fully control. But as far as the "rightness" of the effort to incorporate Kuwait into the boundaries of Iraq is concerned there seems to be little doubt in the Iraqi mind. Time and again, references are made to the map to point out how the "natural" boundary line should show Kuwait as part of

Iraq. The old grievance, that the oil-rich province of Kuwait was carved out first as a watering station and then as a captive oil field by the old imperial power, the United Kingdom and is now being sustained by the new imperial power, the U.S., is barely kept in check.

However, for all the U.S.-inspired talk of an Iraq that would pounce on its neighbours once the restraints are removed, such an adventure seems far from the collective Iraqi mind at this juncture. This nation has been too battered, the society too tired to even entertain such ambitious projects for the moment. "Our strategy right now is focussed on survival," says the highly articulate editor of *Baghdad Observer*, Ms. Narsa el Sadoun. The entire Iraqi national effort is focussed on working out the ways and means by which the economic sanctions that have been imposed on the country can be thwarted so that they eventually become meaningless and hence disappear. Iraq's original sins, analysts here believe, were its maintenance of an independent oil policy and its advocacy of Arab nationalism, especially the Pales-

tinian cause. So long as Iraq abides by these principles, the U.S. and Israel will do their utmost to ensure that all possible constraints are kept in place. While there is a realistic appraisal of the odds against them, what inserts the necessary element of hope into the Iraqi strategy is the history they have lived for the past decade. As the Iraqis see it, this history is one of sustained if agonisingly grinding progress towards their goal of being able to resume normal commerce with the rest of the world. At the beginning of this period, the embargo on Iraqi trade was total. Then when the world realised that the embargo was having horrendous consequences for the ordinary Iraqis, it produced the oil-for-food programme.

At the beginning of this programme, the goods that Iraq was allowed to bring in were those intended for immediate relief. Now a stage has been reached where the world has come to realise that penalising the ordinary Iraqis is iniquitous and the focus is shifting to smart sanctions, i.e., restrictions on the import of materiel that can help sustain the regime while al-

lowing ordinary citizens to import what they need.

If this history records a steady erosion of the sanctions the Iraqis are also aware that the U.S. has also constantly adjusted its approach so as to sustain its essential objectives while allowing what it hoped would be cosmetic changes. The U.S. has ensured that the basic crimps on the Iraqi economy are kept in place through the mechanisms of the "dual use" clauses in the relevant U.N. resolutions and the requirement that the proceeds from Iraqi oil sales are paid into a U.N. controlled escrow account. These mechanisms are most certainly going to be retained even under the scheme for "smart sanctions" that the U.S. is drawing up.

The Iraqis, however, believe that the "smart sanctions" scheme is likely to be attractive enough on the surface for Russia, China and France — the three members of the P-5 who have usually been more sympathetic to Iraq — to go along with it initially. The Iraqi hope is that the world outside of the U.S. will eventually see through the "smart sanctions" scheme.

THE HINDU

10 MAY 2001

40-17  
895

## Syrians air grievances before Pope

**QUNEITRA (SYRIA), MAY 7.** Pope John Paul II offered a prayer for peace and forgiveness on Monday in the rubble of a town Syrians say was destroyed by Israel, as the papal visit became an opportunity for Arabs to tell the world about their bitterness.

Applause broke out as the Pope entered a Greek Orthodox church that was, like the rest of Quneitra, in ruins. The Syrian Government and many international observers say Israeli forces sacked the city before handing it back to Syria in 1974. Israel, which still holds most of the rest of the Golan, says Quneitra was damaged in fighting.

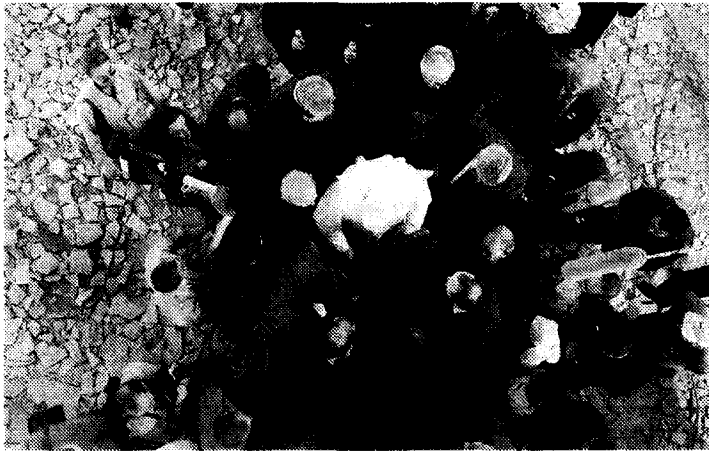
Several children approached the Pope inside the church to be kissed and blessed. Then aides helped the ailing, 80-year-old Pope kneel on a wooden stand erected on the broken stone floor.

After a few moments of silent prayer, the Pope raised his head and, speaking into microphones, prayed aloud.

"We pray to you for the peoples of the Middle East. Help them to break down walls of hostility and division and to build together a world of justice and solidarity. May all believers find the courage to forgive one another so that the wounds of the past may be healed and not be a pretext for further suffering in the present," he added.

Vatican officials said that in his prepared text, the Pope mentioned "the sad news of conflict and even death" from the latest Israeli-Palestinian clashes.

After his prayer, the pontiff emerged from the church to water a small olive tree — a symbol of



**Surrounded by clerics, Pope John Paul II walks on the debris-covered floor of St John's Church in the city of Quneitra in the Golan Heights on Monday. Tradition has it that St. Paul passed through Quneitra on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus. — AP**

peace. After a short tour of the battered town, he returned to Damascus.

Syria refuses to rebuild Quneitra or let most of its residents return, saying it should stand as a monument to Israeli "crimes" until the entire Golan, seized by Israel in the 1967 war, is back in Syrian hands. Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations have stalled.

The Syrian Government bused in thousands of former Quneitra residents for the day on Monday, putting them before the cameras and reporters from around the world who have recorded the Pope's four-day trip to Syria.

Quneitra was once home to about 50,000 people. Now only a few families live here — some making a living providing food and other services for U.N. peacekeepers who patrol the frontier

dividing the Golan. A U.N. contingent stood under its blue flag outside the church during the Pope's prayer.

A banner in English and Arabic strung over the rubble of one Quneitra home read: "Our house was in this place. The Israelis demolished the house and the garden with all its flowers and trees is still thirsty." "Quneitra had four mosques and three churches," read another banner. "The calls from the minarets and the tolling of the church bells are no longer heard and the worshippers were driven out."

Vatican and Syrian flags fluttered and dust swirled in a brisk wind. Israeli radar installations were visible just a few kilometers away, across the coils of barbed wire marking the cease-fire line.

"The Pope is very important.

When he says something, a lot of people listen," said Bishop Saba Esber of the Greek Orthodox Church of the region that includes Quneitra. He was among a contingent of Syrian clergy in Quneitra to greet the Pope.

The pontiff has called during his Syrian trip for peace and mutual understanding in the region. He has persisted despite Arab bitterness reflected in the comments of the Syrian President, Mr. Bashar Assad, who likened Israelis to betrayers of Jesus.

The West Asian political passions and religious drama stirred up by the Pope's visit to Syria often have seemed to obscure what he has stressed is the reason for his pilgrimage.

At least briefly on Monday, the focus was on St. Paul the Apostle, the first century Christian martyr. The Pope paid his respects on Monday at a Damascus shrine to St. Paul before starting the one-hour drive to Quneitra. — AP

THE HINDU

8 MAY 2001

# Khatami sets doubts at rest, enters race

**TEHRAN (IRAN), MAY 4.** The Iranian President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, leader of Iran's reform movement, registered on Friday to run in the June presidential election and promised to continue social and political reforms if elected for another four-year term. The hugely popular Mr. Khatami is widely expected to soundly defeat any hardline opponent. There had been some doubts about whether he would run for re-election, and he had been silent about his intentions before Friday.

Mr. Khatami (58), arrived at the Interior Ministry registration office in Tehran at 11.30 a.m. to fill out an application form. "I have come to run and I have been faithful to my commitment and to my people and my principles," Mr. Khatami said, calling democracy, "the most important desire and demand of our nation." "In the way of reforms, we have had great achievements, although facing difficulties," he said. "Of course, we could have been more successful and we could have



**The Iranian President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami (right), laughs with a candidate, Mr. Mohammad Ali Mousavi, as they fill in the forms to register for Iran's presidential election in Tehran on Friday.** — Reuters

gained more and we could have paid less price, but we are determined to go ahead," an emotional Mr. Khatami said, interrupting his speech to wipe away tears.

At least 140 people have registered for the June 8 election, in-

cluded at least two women. The registration ends on Sunday. To qualify, candidates must be involved in politics or religion, of Iranian origin, Muslim and "faithful to the cause of the Islamic Republic." All candidates are vetted

by the Guardian Council, a hardline body that is expected to disqualify many of the leading reformists. The poll is shaping up as a contest between reformists and hardliners, who lost control of Parliament in last year's elections. During the past year, hardliners in the judiciary have closed down more than 30 pro-democracy newspapers and detained or sentenced to jail a number of journalists, writers and political activists. Some 42 million of Iran's 62 million people are eligible to vote.

Mr. Khatami's program of relaxing Iran's strict social code and promoting political freedom is hugely popular. However, hardliners oppose it as betraying the principles of the 1979 Islamic revolution. "I hope the people will choose the one they want in a free atmosphere to consider and review all the candidates," Mr. Khatami said. "I am totally hopeful in the favour of God and I respect the will of the nation. I am sure this nation as usual will defend its basic rights." — AP

Iran's first woman  
for presidency  
since '79

TEHERAN, May 2. - Ms Farah



Ms Farah Khosravi

Khosravi, close to Iran's conservative camp, registered today to run for President in next month's elections, the first woman to do so since the 1979 Islamic

revolution here.

Ms Khosravi filed her papers at the interior ministry to stand for the 8 June polls. Candidates must register no later than Sunday.

It remains unclear if her candidacy will be allowed by the oversight guardians' council, which vets hopefuls for elective office. The wording of the constitution is somewhat vague on whether a woman can be president.

Under the law governing presidential elections in Iran, any candidate must be "a political or religious figure, of Iranian origin, of the official state religion (Islam), faithful to the cause of the Islamic Republic" - AFP

THE STATESMAN

2 MAY 2001

112-12  
27/4

# Turk hostage drama ends peacefully

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), APRIL 23.** Over 600 guests and staff who were held hostage by a pro-Chechen group in an Istanbul hotel in the early hours of this morning were released unarmed. The hostage-takers surrendered to Turk authorities after talks with the Interior Minister, Mr. Sadettin Tantan. This is the second such incident with a Turkish connection since the beginning of the year and raised troubling questions in the context of a struggling economy.

Thirteen gunmen stormed the Swissotel in Istanbul after mid-night local time firing in the air. They held the hotel staff and guests hostage for several hours into the morning before releasing them after the Minister's intervention. It is not certain whether they had made any specific demands that were conceded or whether they had merely carried out the act to highlight the Chechen cause. The leader of the hostage-takers is believed to be the same person who hijacked a Black Sea ferry in 1996. On that occasion as well he had released the hostages unarmed and had claimed that he had conducted the operation only to highlight the Chechen cause. In March this year, another group of Chechens had hijacked a Russian plane from Istanbul airport and diverted it to Saudi Arabia. It ended in casualties when Saudi Arabian security services stormed the plane and released the hostages.

There are believed to be about 25,000 Chechens living in Istanbul and about 5 million Turkish citizens also trace their origins to the Caucasus. Within the wider Muslim world as well there is much sympathy for the plight of the Turks. All this makes Turkey fertile ground



**Hostages released from the Swissotel in Istanbul on Monday. — AP**

for those who would like to mount operations in support of the Chechens. On the other hand, Turkey can ill-afford a reputation as a place where such operations can be staged with impunity. Currently undergoing one of the most severe of the economic crises that periodically grip the country, Turkey is extremely dependent on its tourism industry. A lot of interest will now be focussed on the manner in which the Turkish authorities deal with the hostage-takers.

Those who had hijacked the ship in 1996 were taken into custody but several, including the leader, had managed to escape in short order. That fuelled speculation that the Turkish authorities had been lenient and in response to this criticism some of the escapees were detained again. However, most of them were released in a later general amnesty.

THE HINDU

24 APR 2001

# Conservatives issue veiled warning to Khatami

10 April  
110-16  
By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), APRIL 9.** Even as Iranian liberals and reformers have come in for a fresh round of hammering, a leading conservative has issued a direct, if veiled, warning to the President, Mr. Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami.

As is usual in Iranian politics, the language is elliptical but read between the lines, the message is that Iran will undergo an upheaval if Mr. Khatami contests the June 8 presidential election with the programme he has sought to implement over the past four years.

Mr. Mohsen Rezai, Secretary of the powerful Expediency Council and thereby an associate of the former President, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, said in a statement to the official news agency IRNA, "If Mr. Khatami is able to move a step forward and address the most basic questions of the society, especially the ones in the field of economy and culture, it would be better for him to come to the scene again". This is a strange message from Mr. Rezai who is known to have urged Mr. Khatami not to run for a second term. It is also not wholly understandable unless the necessary negative words are read into the message. If interpreted in this manner, the message is that unless Mr. Khatami is "able to move a step forward etc", it would be better for

him *not* to come to the scene again.

That such an interpretation is the accurate one is clear enough from another part of the statement made by Mr. Rezai. "If Mr. Khatami is willing to run for the next election and gain success in the next four years, he should give priority to another motto and program". Taken together, the message is that Mr. Khatami should jettison his Khordad-2 programme for expanding political, civil, intellectual and cultural rights. In promoting his programme for political and cultural liberalisation, Mr. Khatami has argued that reforms in these sectors are necessary adjuncts to, or even antecedents, for the economic reforms that Iran desperately needs.

Cultural and political liberalisation threatens the vested interests of the conservative wing in the clerical regime. But since they cannot directly challenge the liberalisation programme, that a succession of elections have shown is supported by 70 per cent of the people, the conservatives have challenged Mr. Khatami indirectly. Their argument is that Mr. Khatami has failed to address the dire economic situation while pursuing an unnecessary programme. This argument is hypocritical since the conservatives have done what they could to derail the economic reforms the reform-minded Parliament has sought to implement. But the only hope that

the conservatives have of winning back public support is if they can convince the public that Mr. Khatami is responsible for their economic situation.

In Iran's convoluted constitutional scheme, the Expediency Council is a body that mediates between the conservative-dominated Council of Guardians and the reform-dominated Parliament. The Guardians Council has the authority to vet legislation to ensure that it abides by Islamic principles and also vets candidates for all elections to ensure that they are all committed to the ideals of the Revolution. The Expediency Council, which is also largely dominated by conservatives, had mediated between these two other bodies even on disputes concerning elections. In the context it was not clear whether Mr. Rezai was warning Mr. Khatami that the Guardians might not clear his candidacy for the presidential election if he did not change his programme.

More ominous was Mr. Rezai's warning in the statement that Iranian society was "on the verge of economic, cultural and administrative upheaval" in the lead-up to the election. Mr. Rezai did not elaborate on the kind of upheaval he expected and it was not certain whether he meant that something more than the several waves of arrests of liberals was on the cards.

THE HINDU

10 APR 2001

# Iran Intelligence chief hauled up over crackdown

Teheran, April 9

IRAN'S REFORMIST Parliament has summoned the country's intelligence chief to explain why dozens of liberal political activists have been arrested, the official IRNA news agency reported on Monday.

Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi will meet behind closed doors on Tuesday with members of Parliament's National Security and Foreign Affairs committee, it said.

Agents of the hard-line Revolutionary Court raided the homes of leading liberal Islamists in Teheran and the provinces on Saturday and arrested 2 prominent Opposition figures associated with the banned Iran Freedom Movement.

It was the second mass roundup of dissidents in less than a month, as part of a conservative crackdown on President Mohammad Khatami's campaign on political and cultural openness. The Revolutionary Court has accused them of trying to overthrow the Islamic system.

Khatami, who does not control the courts, on Sunday, deplored the arrests and mass closure of newspapers, saying the clampdown hampered his drive to create a modern Islamic State.

"I do not see such measures as benefiting the system and people... Our nation desires nothing more than freedom, progress and guaranteed rights," he said.

Yunesi, a member of Khatami's cabinet, will be asked by MPs who was behind the arrests and whether his intelligence ministry had a role in it. "They want to know if it is true that those arrested sought to overthrow the system or were acting against national interests," it said.

The semi-official Iran newspaper said Defence Minister Ali Shamkhani was also due to testify in Parliament this week.



Mohammad Khatami

Some MPs have voiced concern about the detention of activists in a secret location run by the Revolutionary Guards, east of the capital Tehran.

The prisoners, some of whom kept there for about a month, are held incommunicado without access to lawyers and contact with their relatives.

The Health Ministry has been asked to submit a report to Parliament on prisoners' health condition, the daily said.

Parliament, dominated by Khatami's allies, has been unable to prevent reformers from going to jail. Some of the more outspoken parliamentarians have been summoned to court and face prison themselves.

Ali Mobasher, the hard-line head of Tehran's revolutionary court, said on Sunday more people could be rounded up, including politicians from legal political groups who have criticised the arrests.

The Freedom Movement, Iran's leading dissident movement, has been under pressure for its secular pro-Western views.

Many of those rounded up in Saturday's raids are former Government officials, who served in an interim Government after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Reuters



# Crackdown on Opp members in Iran

Teheran, April 8

HF 11 9/4  
MORE THAN 30 members of Iran's liberal Opposition have been arrested in the capital, Teheran, and in several other cities, sources close to the Opposition said today.

Former Teheran Mayor Mohammad Tavassoli was among those taken into custody yesterday, the sources said.

Among those arrested are former Interior Minister Hashemi Sabaghian and Khosro Mansurian, a key figure in the Iran Freedom Movement (IFM).

Sabaghian served in Iran's provisional

Government following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Also arrested were 84-year-old Ahmad Sadr, a former seal guard for post-revolution Premier and IFM founder Mehdi Bazargan, after authorities searched his home for several hours, sources close to Sadr said.

Sadr served as a lawyer for secular opposition leader Dariush Foruhar and his wife Parvaneh, who were slain in 1998 in a series of murders of dissidents blamed on rogue intelligence agents. He later served as a lawyer for the couple's daughter.

The arrests of Sabaghian and Mansurian

were announced by unofficial sources late yesterday. The IFM's offices also were shut down, the sources added.

Tehran's revolutionary tribunal said yesterday that it had arrested members of the Opposition, but did not say how many people had been arrested or release their identities. "These people, accused of attempts to overthrow the regime, have been arrested in Teheran and the provinces and additional information will be released in the coming days," said a court statement read on a state owned Radio.

AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 9 APR 2001

# Prudence up against escalation

Even if the Israeli Prime Minister tempts Yasser Arafat back to the negotiating table, it will take years to rebuild the minimum public confidence necessary to make a deal work. The Intifada has changed the way Israelis think and live. ERIC SILVER reports

THERE were more police than customers in Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda market last Friday morning, when Jewish families stock up for the weekend. Downtown, the strolling, shopping and coffee-bar crowds had deserted the Ben-Yehuda pedestrian mall for the fashionable German Colony. Six months after the outbreak of the Intifada, Israelis are quietly making adjustments.

Palestinian suicide bombers have targeted the market and the mall before and could target them again. Why, people ask themselves, take the risk?

If they can afford to use private cars or taxis, they avoid travelling by bus, another prime target. There is no hysteria, but the same prudence shows elsewhere.

The highway from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem is jammed as never before during the morning and evening rush hours. Drivers have stopped using the alternative route that runs from Modi'in, south of Ben-Gurion international airport, and enters the capital through the north-eastern suburb of Ramot. This road strays into Israeli-controlled areas of the West Bank, though it was built to bypass the few Arab villages along its way.

The army maintains checkpoints and patrols, but there have been isolated shootings — motorists killed or wounded. Again, why take the chance?

Despite an air of business as usual, the Intifada has changed the way Israelis live and the way Israelis think.

The only difference between doves and hawks now is that the doves mourn the death of the Oslo peace process, the hawks dance on its grave.

Even if Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon eventually tempts Yasser Arafat back to the negotiating table, it will take years to rebuild the minimum public confidence necessary to make a deal work.

An opinion poll published last weekend in the mass-circulation daily *Yediot Aharonot* logged the depth and the range of the disenchantment. Half the sample said the uprising had reduced their belief in the chances of making peace.

Fifty-eight per cent of Israelis said their opinion of the Palestinians had changed for the worse during the Intifada. Even more, 66 per cent, had lost faith in Mr Arafat.

Asked whether their political positions had changed, 37 per cent said they were more hawkish. In reply to separate questions, more than 70 per cent supported the assassination of Palestinian leaders who were linked to terrorism and the imposition of economic sanctions on the Palestinian population.

The Left, which hoped for more, is in despair. The same *Yediot* poll found 36 per cent of Left-liberal Meretz party voters taking a worse view of the Palestinians and 59 per cent disappointed in Mr Arafat.

Assassinations and sanctions drew 31 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively, among Meretz voters, who would have taken to the streets against such policies six months ago.

Meretz leader Yossi Sarid, a pillar of the peace camp, has publicly warned Mr Arafat that he is playing with fire. "He would do well," the former education minister said, "to stop flitting from country to country and to stay in Gaza and

Ramallah to begin making order. This anarchy is bringing both his people and ours to a terrible disaster. Mr Arafat should beware of arousing the suspicion that he is more interested in an armed struggle to establish the Palestinian state than he is in the Palestinian state itself."

Disabusing the Palestinian leader of any illusion that Meretz would buck the consensus and champion his cause, Mr Sarid said: "As a group that has displayed understanding and solidarity for the Palestinian people, and that has demanded an end to the oppressive occupation, it is important for us to make clear to Mr Arafat that we live among our people, that our people's suffering is our suffering, and that we do not intend to accept this blind terror."

So far, all the signs are that Mr Arafat is not impressed. After a brief interlude of "peaceful" marches on Israeli army check points, the Palestinians have reverted to shooting and bombing. Snipers have become more lethal and more accurate, killing not only a 10-month-old baby in Hebron, but soldiers near Nablus and Bethlehem. The sharpshooters are not "rogue elements".

They acquired their weapons and learned their skills in the mainstream militias, or in Mr Arafat's security services. Some are still in uniform. In response, Mr Sharon's national unity government is abandoning its policy of relative restraint (which is not, of course, how it looked to the Palestinians) and renewing the rocket attacks and assassinations pursued by Ehud Barak before the February election.

Monday's helicopter liquidation of an Islamic Jihad bomber in the Gaza Strip was the 15th in the series.

Israel is no longer putting up a smoke screen of deniability. Gloomy commentators are predicting a long, uncertain haul.

Escalation is the watchword, a

war of attrition the prospect, on both sides.

It looks like being a while before the shoppers go back to the Mahane Yehuda market.

(The author is *The Statesman's* Jerusalem-based correspondent.)

THE STATESMAN

5 APR 2001

# Iraq not to patch up with Kuwait

Amman, March 20

IRAQI FOREIGN Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf said on Tuesday there would be no reconciliation with Kuwait at next week's Arab summit in Amman.

"The issue of reconciliation with whoever is not on the table," Sahaf told reporters after talks with Jordanian Prime Minister Ali Abu al-Ragheb. "What is on the table is an agenda and specific points and we discussed these points."

He reiterated Baghdad's demand that the March 27-28 summit call for the lifting of U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. "We have stressed Iraq's position that if the summit is to discuss the issue seriously, (it should) call for lifting the sanctions," Sahaf said. He said no final decision had been taken on whether Iraqi President Saddam Hussein would attend the summit, but he said it was highly likely that Iraq's representation would be at the same level as that of the previous Arab summit. Vice-Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council Izzat Ibrahim headed Iraq's delegation to Cairo's summit last October. Saddam has not ventured out of Iraq since the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Sahaf, who will later meet King Abdullah to hand over a letter from Saddam, was speaking only hours before Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah was due in Amman for talks on the summit. Sahaf said he had no plans to meet with Sabah in Amman.

The Kuwaiti minister, who is on an Arab tour, said in Cairo on Monday that there was no question of turning the page with Iraq until Baghdad apologises for its 1990 invasion, releases prisoners of war Kuwait says it holds and returns "stolen property".

Reuters

**A** FEW days ago, President Khatami of Iran was in Russia on a visit of considerable long-term significance. These two countries have developed their relations very substantially, as demonstrated in the cordial meetings between Presidents Mohammad Khatami and Vladimir Putin, and, more emphatically, in the important agreements that came out of the visit.

Iran contracted to buy large quantities of Russian military hardware: there is no ready word on the items to be purchased, the quantities, or the value, though reports suggest a major transaction in the multi millions if not billions of dollars.

No less striking is the reported agreement on continued Russian support for Iran's major nuclear power project, again a very large and even more sensitive arrangement. The two sides were reported to have set aside for the moment their opposing claims in the Caspian where vast reserves of oil and gas are being eyed by the several littoral countries: present lack of agreement on this issue has not been permitted to hold up the other major deals.

The USA has been swift to voice its unhappiness. Not for the first time, it has expressed its concern about the possibility of the Russia-Iran contract on a nuclear power plant serving to encourage proliferation in yet another country.

Its own view of the Iranian regime, with which it has been at bitter odds from the start, remains hostile. The American ban on trade and investment in Iran has been in effect for the last six years and has been

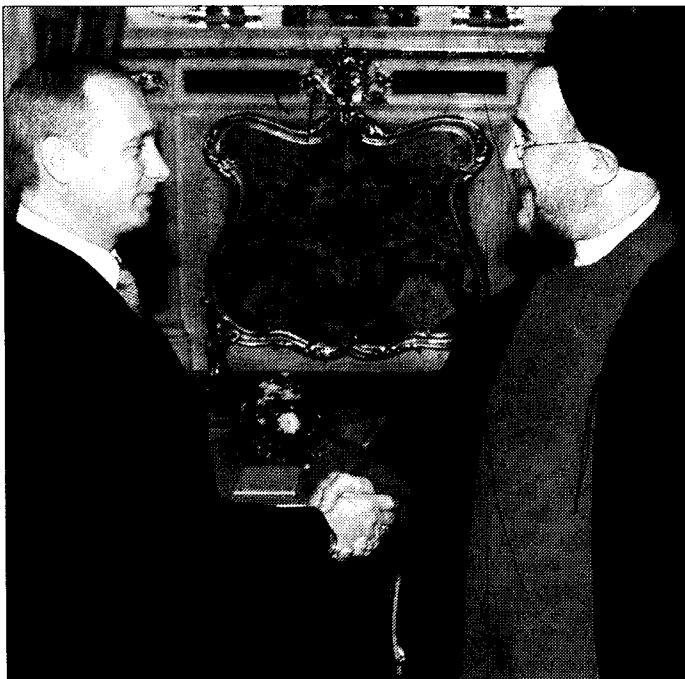
# Iran's President in Russia

renewed within the last few days. There is no sign of any easing of the American grip on Iran, no relenting from the policy of stringent containment.

Yet Iran is wriggling out of this straitjacket. It has succeeded in enlarging its co-operation with many important countries, notwithstanding American disapproval. The new agreements with Russia are helpful. So, too, is the revived relationship with France, the traditional European friend of Iran. A few months ago, President Khatami paid a successful visit to France, in the wake of which several French companies, including petroleum companies, rushed in to re-establish themselves in Iran.

Other European firms have followed and Europe shows impatience to move towards normal commerce with Iran. Mr Khatami's struggle with hardliners in his country, and his determined pursuit of policies of moderation, make it easier for him to garner support from outside his country.

**WIDE ANGLE**  
**SALMAN HAIDAR**



**OUT OF THE STRAITJACKET: Vladimir Putin with Mohammad Khatami at the Kremlin, Moscow, on Monday. The Presidents of Russia and Iran pledged to increase trade in conventional weapons and nuclear energy cooperation. — AP/PTI**

reserve of weaponry. There is no sign of any such ties today.

Differences between the two countries are obvious, especially on Afghanistan. Pakistan continues to recognise and support the Taliban regime, being virtually the only foreign country to do so, while Iran has long been an adamant opponent. Within Pakistan, the sectarian Shia-Sunni divide and the all-too-frequent clashes between the two have an adverse effect.

More important from India's point of view, Iran has developed more balanced relationships in South Asia, with the result that today it is not to be seen as an ally and potential partner in any enterprise against India. To that extent, India's problems of defence have been simplified and the scope for a significant enlargement of its ties with Iran has improved.

The expanding relationship between Russia and Iran has features that are relevant to the region as a whole. Russia has

shown readiness to maintain its role as armourer to its friends, despite objections from some quarters. It has also held firm to its commitment to supply nuclear technology to some selected partners, even though on this subject the objections are much louder.

Recently, President Putin paid a successful visit to India, in the course of which New Delhi and Moscow agreed on a package that is remarkably similar to that now agreed between Russia and Iran. Defence hardware and nuclear technology are at the core of both.

Russian initiative in this respect and American opposition may seem to provide a faint echo of past antagonisms between them. But in reality there is no revival of old rivalries. The supplier's motivation for the present deals, and the earlier ones involving India, is essentially commercial. The purchasers have their own urgent needs which cannot be met from any other source.

Neither is trying to re-draw the larger strategic picture. At the same time, all the parties involved have insisted on exercising independent judgment in the inherently sensitive fields of defence and nuclear power, and have proceeded according to their own evaluation of what they require.

In the Iran-Russia arrangements, the incentives for each side are strong enough for them to put aside other differences so that the deal can be concluded speedily.

These developments have a considerable regional significance. The progressive unshackling of Iran will enable that important country to play a bigger part in regional affairs. Perhaps, some of the projects between Iran and India that have been explored in the past years and have languished, essentially because of external factors, will now be able to get off the ground.

Iran is and will remain a vital source of energy for India's economic development, and the greater its freedom of action in projects of co-operation with India, the greater the potential benefit to both the countries.

*(The author is a former Foreign*

## 100 YEARS AGO TODAY

### FAREWELL ADDRESS TO NAWAB SYED AMEER HOSSEIN

MARCH 18, 1901

**T**HE members of the Legal profession practising in the Calcutta Police Court, yesterday presented a valedictory address to Nawab Syed Ameer Hossein, the Northern Division Magistrate, on his retirement from Government service. Mr Cranenburgh, Secretary of the Pleaders' Library, read the address which, while expressing regret at the Nawab's retirement, said that during the time he had presided over the Northern Division Court he had displayed great ability, tact, judgment and

patience in dealing with the cases which had come before him for trial. The address thanked him for his uniform courtesy and indulgence, and hoped he would pass his retirement in health, happiness and prosperity. The address was supplemented with complimentary speeches by Messrs Cranenburgh and Amarendra Nath Chatterjee, Nawab Syed Ameer Hossein, who spoke with evident emotion, replied as follows:—  
Gentlemen, I am much obliged to you for your

very kind address to me on the eve of my retirement. In Presidency towns as in all English countries the success of a Judge or Magistrate solely depends upon public opinion, and I am glad to find that for the past seventeen years I have enjoyed your confidence throughout. I have to express to you my warmest thanks for the courtesy and assistance I have invariably received in this Court from the bar — a bar which any Court may well be proud of. You have always been friendly disposed towards me and I hope you will always remember me and entertain the same kindly feelings towards me as you have always done.

THE STATESMAN

18 MAR 2001

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1873

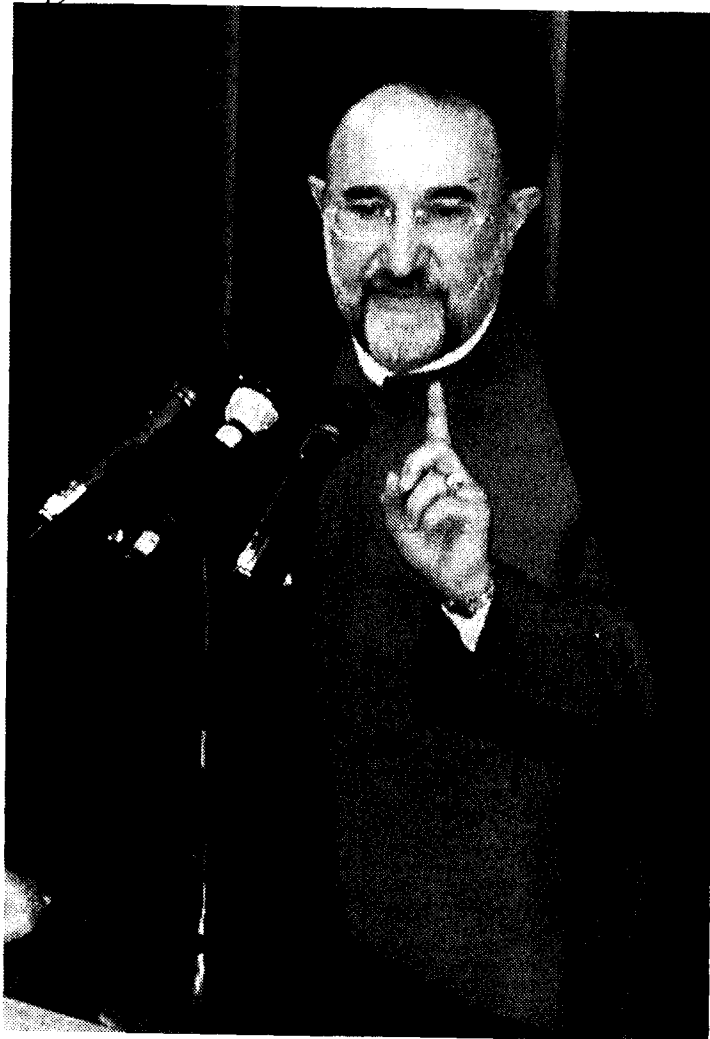
# Crunch time

**I**T SAYS something about the state of Iran's Kordad-2 (pro-reform) revolution that the main question being asked today is not whether the reform movement will succeed but whether its flag-bearer President, Hojatoleslam Syed Mohammed Khatami, will seek a second term when Iranians vote in Presidential elections on June 8. Few believe any longer that a new era of liberalism will be peacefully ushered in any time in the near future.

All that Iranians can hope for is that the flame of reform will be kept alive with Mr. Khatami in office for another four years.

When Mr. Khatami was elected to the Presidency in 1997, defeating his conservative opponents and heavy odds, there was reason to hope that he would be able to usher in widespread political and cultural

**Mohammed Khatami has to make a choice. Either he has to lead the Iranians towards change or he has to step aside and let the conservatives face the pressures building up, says KESAVA MENON.**



**Mohammed Khatami... can he aid a peaceful changeover in Iran?**

reform.

These hopes were periodically nourished when pro-reform groups captured local bodies and Parliament with massive margins of victory.

The conservatives who control most of the institutions with real power had fought back bitterly but there did seem reason to think that they would finally see the writing on the wall.

Even if they were not ready to surrender their vested privileges they would surely make the compromises necessary to prevent popular revulsion from sweeping them out of power. These hopes were utterly belied.

Right from the beginning there were analysts who cautioned that Mr. Khatami would not move precipitately. They had warned that this cleric might be more broad-minded than his peers but that he was after all still a mullah. He would interpret his mandate as one that enjoined him to reform the theocratic hierarchy so that it could continue in power and

not as one that enjoined him to overthrow the theocracy.

But even within the parameters that he had, according to the view of these analysts, set for himself there was ample scope for effecting real change.

At the end of nearly four years in power, Mr. Khatami, it would appear, has on the whole been a disappointment.

While he did usher in a period of intellectual and cultural liberalism he failed to mount any sort of a defence when these forces of reform came under conservative attack.

As Iran prepares for the next phase of its political calendar, Mr. Khatami's political personality has once more been thrust into centre stage.

Despite all that his apologists have said, the overall impression formed from his record in office so far is that he has functioned as the theocracy's liberal mask — the benign face that has served to keep popular frustrations in check.

But this policy seems to have run its course. A benign facade could only have been maintained if the conservative elements in the theocracy had allowed Mr. Khatami and his associates some play, if they had allowed him to user in reform in non-threatening areas while retaining the hard core of power. However, the conservatives have become ossified unable to distinguish between aspects of social and political life in respect of which they can relax their grip from aspects of real political control.

Now that he has been pushed to the wall, Mr. Khatami has to make a choice. Either he has to once and for all acknowledge and declare that the few changes he has so far proposed are unavoidable and that he will lead the people so that they can achieve those changes.

Or he has to step aside and let the conservatives cope as they will with the frustrations that are building up. But then Mr. Khatami has several times

before been in a situation where such a choice seemed unavoidable and thus far he has managed to wriggle out without making the choice. Matters do not appear to be very different now either.

Last Sunday, Mr. Khatami made a fighting speech in Parliament in which he declared that Iran could not but proceed on the path of democratic reform.

This was the kind of speech that his followers had been waiting to hear. But then as is his wont Mr. Khatami refrained from marking out his line with absolute clarity.

While the conservatives were the main targets of his criticism, Mr. Khatami also felt it necessary to criticise liberal forces who in his opinion had been low radical.

There is no doubt that some of the liberal forces had been realistic in their assessment of the distribution of power in the Iranian system. They had also been tactically inept in charting out their reform programme. But this is a moment when the battle is about to be closed and hence it is the time to rally the troops. Mr. Khatami did do himself any favours in resorting to his habit of being "balanced" in his criticism.

For better or worse, the vast majority of Iranians who are tired of the control that the conservatives exercise on their lives are still prepared to vent their frustration by voting for Mr. Khatami and thus reinforcing the message that they have repeatedly sent to the conservatives.

But for how much longer can this fragile quietude continue. The anti-clerical sentiment has yet to cohere around an alternate idea or to be mobilised by a strong enough alternative organisation.

But the frustrations are being vented through numerous social bonfires lit all over the place. For instance, the conservatives have always tried to block people from celebrating the Iranian New Year (*Nauroz*) in the old Zoroastrian manner. Yet every year the number of people who celebrate the festival of fire appears to be growing.

This year some of the celebrants got drunk and clashed with the police. Institutionally the conservatives are in as firm control as they ever were. Informally however, the Iranian masses have begun to shrug off their grip.

# Turkey looks at religion in quest for identity

By Kesava Menon

**ANKARA, MARCH 1.** Did you know that the modern State of Pakistan is Turkic in origin? This claim, which may surprise Pakistanis even though it would undoubtedly please them, is contained in a compilation prepared by the Turkish News Agency on behalf of the Directorate-General of Press and Information in the Prime Minister's office. Too much need not be read into this official paean of praise for Turkic glories but it nevertheless does reveal a facet of the Turkish world view.

The reference to the Turkic connection with the origin of Pakistan is contained in the chapter on history in the compilation "Facts About Turkey". It notes that the Ghaznavid dynasty was one of the most powerful of the Turkic States of the medieval period, that Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna invaded India and that the areas he brought under Turkish rule were Islamised. In Islamising these areas, the compilation concludes, the Ghaznavids laid the foundation for today's State of Pakistan. Some of the basic facts cannot, of course, be disputed. Mahmud of Ghazna did conquer parts of the Indian sub-continent and the Muslim dynasties that fol-

lowed did introduce and spread the religion of Islam and cultures affiliated with it. But to conclude from this that Mahmud Ghazna brought the seeds of the idea of Pakistan requires a stretch of the imagination. It is almost as fantastic a claim as the one in Pakistani historiography that their country was born when the Arab Mohammed bin Qasim landed on the shores of Sindh.

It is curious that the Turks should consider their role in the spread of Islam through military conquest such an important element in the narrative of their national history. The post-Ataturk Turkish establishment has taken it as an article of faith that religiosity should be a strictly private affair.

Indeed, they have responded with grim determination whenever religion sought to intrude too pronouncedly into the political domain. Most educated Turks also take pride in the fact that their countrymen profess a moderate, non-political version of their religion.

What is more, points out Mr. Seyfi Tashan, Director of the Foreign Policy Institute in Bilkent University (a government think-tank), Islam has never been the determin-

ing factor in Turkish nationalism. The Arabs, he points out, have always considered Islam and their nationalism as intertwined and on this basis, distinguish between themselves and other ethnicities who profess the same faith.

The Turks, who professed Shamanism and Buddhism in pre-Islamic days, did not convert to the new religion easily. When they did they soon became the sword arm of Islam. Still this development did not completely suffuse their national identity with a religious spirit.

This dilemma about how to fixate the relationship between their religion and their national identity does not appear to have been resolved in the seven decades and more since the revolution of Kemal Ataturk.

In the official compilation mentioned at the beginning, the role of Turkish dynasties in spreading Islam comes up at points but the narrative begins not just with Attila the Hun (5th century AD) but with the first settled Turkish societies of the 7th century BC. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from a reading of even this bare narrative is that the Turks believe they have a cohesive identity that stands apart

from their identity as Muslims. This sense of separate identity manifests today in the basically cautious and distant, though friendly on the surface, equation that Turkey maintains with the other great Islamic nations of West Asia — the Iranians and the Arabs.

The quest to define a separate Turkish identity has acquired urgency these days as Turkey faces the challenges and the opportunities that await them in Central Asia. There is a strong and widespread feeling here that Turkey has a leading role to play in helping the fragile States of Central Asia to fit into the modern world.

Turkey, it is believed here, can only fulfil its potential for greatness if it builds abiding ties with the Turkic republics of Central Asia. There is also a recognition that for all its inherent strengths Turkey is in rivalry with Russia, Iran and others for the affections of the Central Asian States and that time will not await any nation.

Given the current trends in geo-politics, especially in the vicinity of Central Asia the role that is being played by religion cannot be ignored. Turkey's dilemma is what to do about it.

# Iraq will not allow arms inspectors

RESS TRUST OF INDIA

UNHQ, Feb. 27. - Iraq has asserted that UN arms inspectors will never be allowed back into the country as efforts to open a negotiating channel between the Security Council and Baghdad got off to a shaky start.

The foreign minister, Mr Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, ruled out the return of the inspectors, who left Iraq in 1998, even if sanctions were totally lifted as the country destroyed all weapons of mass destruction in compliance with the UN demand.

Mr Al-Sahaf, who adopted the tough line on the return of

arms inspectors outside the discussions which began yesterday, said if they wished to come, they must first visit Israel.

However, at the end of the first day's talks, he said he expected further discussions, a statement which was interpreted by diplomats to mean that Iraq considered the discussions to be the beginning of the process rather than the end itself.

"After this round, I think we will have a series of rounds at dates yet to be decided," he said.

Echoing similar sentiments, the UN secretary-general, Mr

Kofi Annan, said, "I don't think we will be able to resolve all issues in two days, so I will not exclude the fact that we may have to come back together." Referring to reports on US' plans to review sanctions on Iraq, he said he hoped it would help break the impasse.

Western diplomats, however, cautioned that an absence of consensus among the Security Council members over policy towards Iraq could scuttle Annan's efforts.

The two sessions in the first round of talks yesterday were devoted to disarmament and the humanitarian situation.

THE STATESMAN

28 FEB 2001

# Allies ready to ease Baghdad sanctions

Richard Norton-Taylor and Jon Henley  
Paris, February 20

BRITAIN AND the US have agreed to rethink their policy towards Iraq in the face of mounting hostility from the Arab world inflamed by last Friday's air strikes, Whitehall officials said yesterday.

Growing opposition among Nato allies, including France and Germany, to the existing attempts by Washington and London to contain Saddam Hussein has persuaded the British Government that a different approach may be needed. Doubts at home have also contributed to a reassessment of the hardline policy. To try to turn foreign and domestic opinion around, ministers are actively considering a dual track strategy. They are looking at plans for "smart" sanctions combined with a new propaganda drive highlighting the repression carried out by the Iraqi regime and insisting that its people's suffering, including infant deaths, is of the dictatorship's making. Even so, the Government went on strongly defending Friday's airstrikes against Iraqi radar installations, and the no-fly zones imposed on Iraq by Britain and the US after the 1990-91 Gulf War. These, officials still say, will be abandoned only if President Saddam allows in UN weapons inspectors. Whitehall officials say the issue of the zones could be part of an overall agreement in which Baghdad made concessions on inspections.

The framework of a new sanctions policy was discussed by the foreign secretary, Robin Cook, during talks in Washington last week with the US secretary of state, Colin Powell. Yesterday Cook held a special meeting about Iraq with his Foreign Office ministers and their senior advisers.

General Powell is about to embark on a tour of West Asian countries, including Syria, which recently opened a new oil pipeline with Iraq. Sanctions against Iraq are increasingly being flouted, and smuggling of goods and petroleum is rife.

The plans for "smart" sanctions would concentrate on arms control—specifically Saddam Hussein's nuclear, chemical, and biological, weapons

programme—and the finances and freedom of movement of leading members of his regime. Imports for rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure and oil industry would be allowed.

Such measures, London and Washington believe, would not be opposed by Iraq's Arab neighbours or by members of the UN security council.

The British Government is also planning to "refocus the public debate", as one official put it yesterday, pointing to the executions and other brutal practices used by Baghdad against critics and opponents. This repression, it argues, would be worse without the no-fly zones.

Foreign Office spokesmen yesterday issued a sort of balance sheet yesterday noting that since sanctions were imposed Iraq had not used chemical weapons or invaded its neighbours. Blaming sanctions for the sufferings of the Iraqi people was "not credible", the paper declared. Iraq was exporting food and medicine to other countries.

UN weapons inspectors were unable to account for 4,000 tonnes of chemicals used to make weapons, and 31,000 chemical weapons munitions. The air strikes on Iraqi air defence installations were a "proportionate response in self defence", the defence minister, Baroness Symons, told the Lords yesterday. Ministers had "no choice but to act to protect" allied aircrew.

The bombings were in response to increasing attempts by Iraq to shoot down British and US aircraft, she said. Since January 1999, there had been over 1,200 attempts to attack them with surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery. Last month had seen more of these than the whole of 2000. She said the no-fly zones had served a "vital humanitarian purpose" in limiting Saddam Hussein's ability to repress the Shias in the south and the Kurds in the north. Though the zones and the bombings are not specifically sanctioned by any UN security council resolutions, she described the patrols as "justified in international law as a legitimate response to prevent a grave humanitarian crisis".

The Guardian

THE HINDU

21 FEB 2002



# Iraq spits fire on Riyadh, Kuwait

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, FEB. 20. Iraq appears intent on drawing the maximum diplomatic mileage that it can from Friday's air raid on Baghdad and the international rumpus it has caused. After putting the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on notice that he will have a rough time when he arrives soon for a comprehensive dialogue with the Iraqi leadership, Baghdad has now mounted pressure on Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Besides threatening its two Arab neighbours with military action, Iraq has also called on the people of these two countries to rise up against the U.S. policy.

Iraq has said that it was justified in contemplating military action against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait since they provided the bases from which the U.S. and British planes carry out their sorties. These two Arab neighbours were complicit in the attacks that have resulted in the destruction of Iraqi life and property and are illegal since they are not endorsed by relevant Security Council resolutions, Iraq has said.

True to character, the Saudis have taken their time about responding to the Iraqi statements but Kuwait has officially shrugged off the Iraqi threat. The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah Ahmed al Sabah, said that while Iraq could say whatever it wanted Kuwait was well protected by its people, its Arab brethren and its allies.

While the Iraqi threats could feed U.S. propaganda that the

Baghdad regime still poses a threat to its neighbours there is hardly a trace of fear of intensified conflict. The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell's assessment that the Iraqi armed forces are less than half the size they were at the time of the Kuwait invasion and the calculation that Iraq's conventional military capabilities must have been seriously eroded after 10 years of sanctions tend to reduce the fear. In any case, the Iraqi threat can hardly be deemed very potent when the U.S. maintains a powerful military presence in the region. Moreover, in the 10 years since the end of the Kuwait occupation the regional countries have substantially improved their own armed forces and equipped them with state-of-the-art weaponry.

While regional governments can be relatively relaxed, they might feel more threatened by Baghdad's call to the Arab masses to rise against the U.S. and their own governments if they support Washington.

Resentment in the Arab world is rising at the U.S. policy of isolating Iraq, even in the face of the mounting hardship of its people and despite clear evidence that this policy will not weaken the Iraqi government. Iraq has specifically asked the masses in Arab countries to hold protest demonstrations when Gen. Powell will visit the region this month. Demonstrations in support of Iraq are common in some of the Arab countries but they have been relatively rare within those that are more closely aligned with the U.S.

THE HINDU

21 FEB 2001

# Attack on Iraq creates fissures in E.U.

By **Batuk Gathani**

**BRUSSELS, FEB. 20** While France has taken the lead in expressing dissent against the British-American air strikes against military targets in Baghdad, the German Government has so far maintained a "tacit silence" over the issue, amid growing conviction in many European quarters that Iraq is now central to the long-term stability of the West Asian region.

In view of the growing sufferings of the Iraqi masses, European public opinion is slowly but surely changing, and more sections of the European media are calling for an end to the U.N. sanctions on Iraq.

Last week's air strikes on Baghdad have exposed the deep strains within the Western alliance. Except for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, no country in the Arab world has

supported the action against Iraq. Even Saudi Arabia has yet to openly endorse the air strikes.

In major European capitals, there is concern that the U.S. offensive against the Saddam regime would fall short on the objective. In Arab cities masses have come out in support of Mr. Saddam Hussein, whose country is seen as being exposed to "Anglo-American aggression".

Iraq today called on Arabs to stage protests to coincide with the visit of the new U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, to West Asian capitals on Saturday. Gen. Powell will later travel to Brussels to meet officials at the NATO headquarters.

On Monday, France said the U.S. had "no legal basis for this kind of bombardment" and asked the Bush administration to "change its approach" if it wanted to forge

a Western consensus on the strategy to contain crises in West Asia. The other day, the U.S. Secretary of Defence told Europeans that the U.S. response to various challenges to its security rested on four pillars: defence, deterrence, diplomacy and intelligence. An American commentator concludes:

"The U.S. has developed some serious deficiencies in at least two of these areas — defence and intelligence. It has no missile defence and its foreign-intelligence operations have proved to be deficient in the kind of on-the-ground snooping that only field agents can provide."

The Europeans are obviously concerned and a European official has been quoted as saying that though American officials had talked of a "policy re-think", they had suddenly delivered a heavily symbolic military

strike. Apart from the strategic aspects of the Euro-American relationship, the 15-nation European Union is one of the largest market for U.S. goods and services, symbolised by \$ 130-billion exports to Western Europe.

It is even proposed that the "trans-Atlantic agenda" could be the launching pad for creating a North Atlantic Free Trade Area (NAFTA), which would bring together three of the world's largest customers for U.S. goods and services — the E.U., Canada and Mexico. These markets would create a massive free trade area with a combined gross domestic product of \$ 10 trillion.

The traditional relationship between a dominant U.S. and the E.U. is fast fading into history as the latter attempts to evolve "common European foreign and defence policies".

21 FEB 2001

THE HINDU

# 29 ✓ Iraq wants its pound of flesh

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA, FEB. 19.** The bomb attack on Baghdad by the U.S. and the U.K. last Friday has presented the Iraqi government with an opportunity to apply pressure on the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, ahead of comprehensive discussions to be held next month. Iraq's Foreign Minister, Mr. Mohammed Saeed al Sahaf, has sent a letter to Mr. Annan demanding that the Security Council condemn the aggression and take steps to prevent such attacks in future.

"This aggression comes at a time when Iraq is preparing for a comprehensive dialogue with the U.N. Secretary-General, a factor which gives the Security Council additional responsibility to condemn this aggression," said Mr. al Sahaf in his letter. It is of course unlikely that the Security Council will issue any condemnatory statement despite the strong opposition to the raids expressed by Russia, China and France. Under these circumstances, Mr. Annan will find himself pushed on to the back foot as soon as he lands in Baghdad since he would have no explanation for the fact that the U.S. and the U.K. were allowed to carry out illegal actions without a hint of disapproval by the world body.

Iraq's aim in entering into a comprehensive dialogue with Mr. Annan is to have all traces of the sanctions regime erased. Mr. Annan's brief is to try and persuade Iraq to allow weapons inspections to resume and for this he can at best offer a suspension of sanctions. Iraq, which insists that it no longer has weapons of mass destruction capacity or the missiles to deliver the war-heads, maintains that the inspections-cum-sanction regime is an unjustified punishment. They are adamant about not letting the inspectors return and insist that the only subject fit for a dialogue with the U.N. is the speed and methods for dismantling the sanctions regime.

If Mr. Annan had some hope of being able to persuade the Iraqi government to allow the inspectors to return, these hopes have considerably dimmed after Friday's raids. Though the sanctions regime is in tatters diplomatically speaking with ever more countries lining up to do business with Iraq, the U.N.'s control over Iraqi

imports is still intrusive and irksome. In many respects, the U.N. controls on Iraqi imports can hardly be justified since the U.S. and the U.K., which are represented on the imports monitoring committee, put even the most innocuous imports on hold. These are just as irksome to the countries trying to send the goods into Iraq and there is much sympathy for the view that these restrictions must be relaxed. While it would be difficult for Mr. Annan to promise a lifting of sanctions there is scope for concessions in respect of the holding back of approved contracts. But after the bombing raids, Iraq is on the high moral ground and the price they ask for co-operation with the U.N. will not be light.

## Iraq threatens Saudi, Kuwait

AFP reports from Baghdad:

Iraq's ruling Baath party today threatened military retaliation against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait if they keep providing bases for the U.S. and the U.K.

"Doesn't Iraq have the right to adopt military measures against aggressors and those who grant them facilities if the aggression is renewed?" the party mouthpiece *at-Thawra* asked. "Is Iraq obliged to pardon the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for their role in the aggression?" *at-Thawra* said the Saudi and Kuwaiti leaderships should be "ashamed to put forward pretexts" for the strikes.

## Labour MP

By Hasan Suroor

**LONDON, FEB. 19.** The Labour Government was today faced with the embarrassing spectacle of a senior party MP, Mr. George Galloway, landing in Baghdad and comparing the joint U.K.-U.S. bombing of the Iraqi capital over the weekend to "Hitler marching into Czechoslovakia in 1939." And here at home, there was a demand that Parliament be called back from recess to discuss the issue with prominent Labour members questioning Britain's decision to participate in the U.S.-led air strikes.

Mr. Galloway, a persistent critic of the sanctions against Iraq and the no-fly zone, was in Jordan when he heard of the attack and drove to Baghdad where he met the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tariq Aziz. He denounced the air strikes as "reckless, lawless and murderous" and said far from hurting the President, Mr. Saddam Hussein,

THE HINDU

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# The Statesman

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## TEN YEARS AFTER

*5/16* Things have changed for Iraq *WV*

THE last Allied — American and British — air strikes against Iraq took place in August last year, since when there has been considerable movement on the diplomatic front, especially as far as the sanctions regime is concerned. The Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, made the extraordinary complaint to the UN Sanctions Commission that his country was losing \$ 30 billion over trade with Iraq and, along with France, “asked for more time” to examine Kuwait’s application for a \$16 billion compensation for losses in oil production. International contacts began multiplying after the French sent an aircraft into Baghdad without taking prior permission from the sanctions committee. In such a scenario, enforcing the two no-fly zones, one in the Kurdish north and the other in the Shia south, looks quixotic, because there is widespread acknowledgment, that despite Saddam’s unrepentant behaviour, humanitarian distress in his country is real. In fact, there were protests in the south over the last Anglo-American sortie which killed five civilians.

There is no indication that the no-fly zones are working wonders for internal dissent. The Kurds have a history of rebellion, but ever since Abdullah Ocalan’s arrest, they have been unusually quiet. The Shias are Arabs and share the distress that is prevalent in the rest of the country. In fact, the no-fly zones may have taken the sting out of their bitter memories of the past and mellowed their attitude towards Saddam, one can never tell. The Americans have just given \$4 million to the Iraqi National Congress, an opposition group, but only for gathering information on Saddam’s crimes against humanity, but Secretary of State Colin Powell also said he was doubtful about the wisdom of this initiative taken in the dying moments of the Clinton presidency. The Bush Administration may have tougher postures in mind when it comes to Saddam, very naturally.

This is the other aspect of the unfolding situation. The Iraqis have started pitching their rhetoric at a tougher level. Saddam’s son, Uday, asked for Kuwait to be included in the map of Iraq placed in the Iraqi parliament, while Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz said Kuwait deserved what it got. This may have been a risky posture to adopt a few years ago, but not any longer. Iraq is using the unofficial recognition of its position that sanctions and inspections have exhausted their utility — enough is enough — by several Arab states and at least two out of five Security Council members who are looking at their own balance sheets, to adopt a more aggressive posture towards the Anglo-American postulates that determine whatever is left of the conflict. And also send a signal to Bush junior that things have changed a lot since his father started the war against them.

THE STATESMAN

20 FEB 2001

# Iraqi media tells Arabs to wake up, act

**Baghdad, Feb. 18:** The Baghdad press on Sunday called for "effective" world and Arab action against Washington after the Western air attack on Baghdad on Friday, saying that condemnation and criticism were not enough.

The government newspaper the *Al-Jumhouriya* demanded retaliation for the attack, the first major raid against Iraq ordered by new US President George W. Bush.

"The Arab League, Russia, China and Arab and world countries have condemned the aggression, but what is needed is an effective Arab and world action to confront the US hegemony and its continuous aggression on Iraq," said the ruling Baath party newspaper the *Al-*

*Thawra*.

The official newspaper the *Al-Qadisiya* said Baghdad had been attacked because of Iraq's support for the Palestinian *Intifada* (uprising) against Israel which started in September.

The *Thawra* said Iraq would not be intimidated by the western strike and would continue to support the Palestinians in their clashes with Israeli soldiers. "The American aggression and terrorism will not scare Iraq," it added.

The *Qadisiya* also attacked Mr Bush and his secretary of state Colin Powell and defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Russia and China led a chorus of international concern over Friday's raids, seen as threatening

West Asia stability.

Criticism also came from within Nato, the western military alliance, whose members were not consulted about the raids.

France, a member of the Gulf War coalition that ended Iraq's 1990-91 occupation of Kuwait, said it wanted an explanation for the first western air strike near Baghdad in over two years, adding such assaults hindered efforts to solve the Iraq problem.

Turkey, from which US-led warplanes take off to patrol a no-fly zone over northern Iraq, rebuked Washington for failing to inform it before the assault was launched. It said it hoped the raids would not be repeated. (Reuters)

# Iraqis bombard Bush, call for jihad

**Farouk Choukri**  
 Baghdad, February 18

**I**RAQ BOMBARDED US President George W. Bush with insults on Sunday for ordering air strikes that stirred international condemnation, as thousands of Baghdadis staged angry protests for a second day.

The demonstrations were matched by a pro-Iraqi mass rally in Gaza, reviving Iraq's efforts during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis to forge a link between its confrontation with the West and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"This criminal will fare no better against Iraq than his father, George Bush, who as President waged the 1991 Gulf War that expelled Iraqi occupation forces from Kuwait," said the Babel newspaper run by President Saddam Hussein's elder son Uday. "The new dwarf in the 'Black House' will not be capable of doing

any better than his father, who suffered a stinging defeat," it said, referring to the survival of Saddam's rule.

Babel said the US and British air strikes on Friday against radar and command centres, in which two people were officially killed and more than 20 wounded, were the latest in a list of "US and Zionist crimes against Iraq and its people."

Another official daily, the ruling Baath party's *Ath-Thawra*, said Bush had "failed to grasp the extent of the changes that have taken place on the Arab and international scenes" since the Gulf conflict.

The air strikes, which sparked international condemnation, were "proof of his stupidity and his arrogance," it charged.

On the streets of a rainy Baghdad, around 3,000 demonstrators in a southern suburb chanted slogans of 'yes to jihad, no to submission', taking up Saddam's

battle cry of holy war against Israel to 'liberate Palestine'.

Another 5,000 protesters rallied in the centre of the capital, an AFP correspondent reported.

"Despite Bush and (Saudi King) Fahd, Saddam is forever our president," they shouted, carrying Iraqi and Palestinian flags. "We are all soldiers for liberation."

In Gaza City, shouting 'Saddam Saddam, strike Tel Aviv', around 1,000 Palestinians joined a mass rally to protest at the US-led raids.

They held aloft pictures of Saddam and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as well as the Iraqi and Palestinian colours and those of the Lebanese Hezbollah guerrilla movement.

In support of the Palestinian uprising, Saddam has threatened to bombard the Jewish state on a daily basis for six months. During the Gulf War, Iraq launched 39 Scud missiles at Israel.

On the regional scene, Egyptian

## Strong fresh tremors rattle El Salvador

A NEW strong earth tremor shook El Salvador again late Saturday, scaring local residents but leaving no victims, authorities announced.

The national committee on emergencies retracted its earlier report that two people had been killed by the tremor in the northern village of Apopa, saying instead there were no dead or wounded this time.

But the tremor, which was felt in Salvadoran capital at 0200 IST, caused panic among local residents, who have lived through two major earthquakes since the beginning of the year. As the ground began shaking, people rushed out of restaurants and stores fearing for their lives.

According to the panel, the tremor was 5.3 on the Richter scale. Its epicentre was located south of the capital.

AFP, San Salvador

19/1/3

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 2001

W. D. M. (1) **RAIDS ON IRAQ / NO TAKERS FOR U.S. POSITION** HD-169/2

# Arabs rally behind Saddam Hussein

By Kesava Menon

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 18.** A rash of protests broke out in Iraq today against Friday's bomb attacks on Baghdad by the U.S. and British planes. Iraq has claimed that two civilians were killed and twenty injured in the attacks which are considered totally unjustified not just in Iraq and the Arab world, but also in the world at large beyond the powers that launched it. The Iraqi Government has begun to specifically draw a linkage between the attack and the on-going conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians, thus drawing up a theme of a U.S.-Zionist conspiracy against the Arab world. It is a theme that will at once highlight the emergence of the Iraqi President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, as the champion of the Palestinian cause and expose moderate Arab regimes as being in thrall to the U.S.

The raid has further strengthened the hold Mr. Hussein has on the Arab street and it will be very difficult for Arab Governments not to join the efforts for a lifting of the sanctions. When the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, travels to Iraq at the end of this month to discuss this issue, his interlocutors will face him with great confidence in the support they have for their position.

Very few in the Arab world are prepared to buy the U.S. and British explanation that the air raids were carried out because Iraqi defences had so improved as to



**Iraqis participating in a massive demonstration in Baghdad on Sunday to show resentment against U.S.-British strikes. — AP**

threaten the aircraft enforcing the "no fly" zones. Iraq's claim that two persons died and 20 were injured has been accepted without reservation and there seem to be few in the region who doubt that the attacks were only intended to

punish Iraq for its defiance. There are hardly any takers for the U.S. position that Iraq still threatens its neighbours and that its "containment" is a dire necessity. Attacks on Iraq in which civilians are killed indiscriminately stand

out in stark contrast to the U.S. protestations about the deaths of Israelis in clashes with the Palestinians.

Even the Government of Kuwait, which has always expressed its support for similar U.S. actions, has deemed it prudent to keep aloof this time around. It has said that it was and is the internal affair of Iraq or at the most, an affair between Iraq and the U.S. and it has no further comment. The Saudis have not issued any statement either but Friday's attack, which came out of the blue as it were, will certainly move the Saudis further along on the course of distancing themselves from the sanctions regime.

Saudi diplomacy is always discreet and its moves are revealed only slowly so there might not be any quick decision to stop the U.S. and British war-planes from using its bases. But there can be little doubt as to the direction in which the attacks have pushed Saudi Arabia.

If nothing else, Arab leaders, whom the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. (ret.) Colin Powell, will meet during his tour at the end of this month, are bound to be more insistent in asking the U.S. to elaborate on its intentions towards Iraq. The messages coming from Washington have not been unmixing and the Arab Governments cannot live in perpetual uncertainty about what the U.S. intends to do about Iraq and Mr. Hussein.

THE HINDU

19 FEB 2001

## Not a heroic act <sup>WAVE</sup>

THE SURVIVAL of an apparently hale and hearty Saddam Hussain a decade after the Gulf war is something which the Americans evidently cannot stomach. It must seem almost obscene to them, and especially to W, as their new President is called, that while W's father has faded into the background to wash dishes, as he complained, his inveterate foe continues to live and rule — if not thrive. The Desert Storm was supposed to act as a long-delayed antidote to the so-called Vietnam syndrome which had undermined American confidence about fulfilling their destiny of ruling the world. The traumatic effect of the defeat at the hands of underfed, diminutive Asians was expected to be exorcised by victory over an archetypal Oriental despot.

But it wasn't to be. The initial American hope presumably was that there would be an uprising in Iraq against Saddam. It is conventional wisdom that a defeated ruler cannot survive his humiliation. Like Pakistan's Yahya Khan in the Seventies and Slobodan Milosevic more recently, it was expected that Saddam, too, would be toppled. But virtually the only people who rose in revolt in Iraq were the long-oppressed Kurds. If the US couldn't do much for them, it was because the Kurds also dwell in other countries of the region, like Turkey, which is an American ally. Support for Kurdish aspirations, therefore, had to be of a limited nature. All that the US was able to do, along with its ever faithful partner, Great Britain, was to draw lines on the map to keep out the Iraqis.

It is the need to preserve the sanctity of these zones which has prompted the latest US and British air strikes in 'self-defence' against the Iraqi military installations near Baghdad. The world will never know how true or false these charges are. Nor is there much sympathy for the 'thief' of Baghdad who tried to steal Kuwaiti territory. His tyrannical rule evokes no admiration. In fact, the sooner he goes the better, although his successors will probably be no less oppressive. But the point is something else. It is that there will be little endorsement for the kind of unilateral punitive action taken by an overwhelming powerful country against a puny, though widely disliked, opponent. What is worse, the target is really the leader, although it is the ordinary people who have to bear the brunt of such offensives, which include the continuing sanctions. It is a seeming replay of the David vs Goliath legend, except that there are no heroes in this conflict.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 FEB 2001



# Bombing had Blair's personal approval

By Hasan Suroor *W. D. Suroor*

**LONDON, FEB. 17.** Britain has justified the bombing of Baghdad in which six British Tornados took part saying it was provoked by Iraq. Britain also warned that any threat to the lives of pilots patrolling the no-fly zone would not be tolerated. The Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, was reported to have "personally approved" the bombing suggested by Washington.

The Defence Secretary Mr. Geoff Hoon, said the attack was a "proportionate response" to what he described as an increase in the threat to the U.S. and British aircraft in the area. "Saddam Hussein should be clear that we will not tolerate continued attempts to endanger the lives of our aircrew," he warned. The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Robin Cook, demanded that Iraq "stop targeting our aircraft" and surrender its "weapons of mass destruction".

## An act of 'bonding'

The bombing comes on the eve of Mr. Blair's summit with the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, later this month and is seen as an act of "bonding" which, as one commentator put it, is likely to "steady" the nerves on both sides given the uneasy relationship between the new White House occupant and 10 Downing Street. "For a centre-left European Prime Minister heading towards Washington for his first awkward encounter with a right-wing Republican newcomer in the White House, last night's decision to bomb Iraqi anti-aircraft batteries must have felt like an act of cruel but lucky timing," *The Guardian* commented.

In a perverse fashion, the joint military adventure was seen as a good augury for the sort of "special relationship" which London was seeking with the Republican Washington. Joint muscle-flexing against common "enemies" could, in time to come, make up for the lack of personal chemistry between Mr. Bush and Mr. Blair. Observers were also tempted to conclude that the bombing signalled that fears of an "isolationist" foreign policy under Mr. Bush were exaggerated, though there was also the view that his intervention in Baghdad was more of a "personal" crusade — "the son claims vengeance for father", as *The Times* put it — than a road-map of his foreign policy.

The sense in non-official circles

was that by endorsing the bombing Mr. Blair appeared to be ingratiating himself with Washington, a week before he is to meet Mr. Bush and declare his "loyalty" to the Anglo-U.S. alliance irrespective of continental Europe's reservations about the U.S. administration. Noted left-wing Labour leader, Mr. Tony Benn, reacted sharply and demanded an end to the bombing and one commentator noted that some MPs "in all parties... will agree with him that Blair's Britain is over-eager to prove itself as macho and as loyal to Washington as Margaret Thatcher."

Analysts said that the bombing was not the answer to the Iraqi "problem" and far from hastening the fall of Mr. Hussein it could, in fact, end up buying him some international sympathy at a time when more and more countries were becoming weary of sanctions against and it. "The most convincing strategy for undermining the dictator has long been one of combining economic engagement, military containment and cleverer management of Arab opinion. Last night's attacks simply repeat the mistakes of the past," said *The Independent* even as it noted that Mr. Bush's maiden military adventure helped to "lay to rest the worrying rhetoric of isolationism of his election campaign."

## China condemns attacks

**BEIJING, FEB. 17.** China today condemned the latest strikes on Iraq by the U.S. and Britain and urged the two countries to respect Baghdad's sovereignty and territorial integrity by halting the attacks immediately. "We condemn the air attacks launched by the U.S. and Britain against Iraq, and express deep regret over deaths and injuries of innocent civilians resulting from the action," a Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mr. Zhu Bangzao, said. "China has always maintained that Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence should be respected," the official Xinhua news agency quoted Mr. Zhu as saying.

The bombing of Iraqi air defence installations must be immediately halted to create a favourable atmosphere for the upcoming dialogue between Iraq and U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, he said. — PTI

THE HINDU

18 FEB 2001

# Iraq may benefit from Arab resentment

By Kesava Menon HD-9

MANAMA (Bahrain), FEB. 17. Iraq today began assessing the damage from yesterday's bomb attack on Baghdad by U.S. and British planes, in which eight persons were injured. The attack on the Iraqi capital, first since 1998, was launched beyond the limits of the "no-fly" zone unilaterally imposed by the U.S. and Britain.

The Iraqi Government is expected to reap the benefits from the resentment caused in the Arab world.

The air strikes occurred after a period of relatively low activity over Iraqi skies and after the British had, for the first time, indicated that they were reviewing the policy of enforcing the zones.

The British had apparently become aware that Saudi Arabia, which provides the bases from which some of the zone-enforcing planes operate, was growing increasingly resentful.

It is not clear whether the U.K.'s participation in the air raids was on account of operational considerations pending this review or whether it had been briefed on any change in Washington's policy towards Iraq.

The new U.S. administration has spoken aloud about the need to make the sanctions against Iraq more regime-specific instead of country-specific as it has been so far. If yesterday's strikes were intended to hit the regime, and the evidence proves to the contrary, they

might have met with a different kind of Arab response.

## Call for new U.S. policy

While the Iraqi President, Mr. Saddam Hussein, is the hero on the streets in Arab nations, especially on account of his staunch support for the Palestinians in their on-going *intifada* (armed struggle), most Arab governments would probably breathe a lot easier if he, his family and his close retainers were removed from the scene.

Almost all Arab governments, under pressure from their public, have taken steps to improve relations with Iraq but are still extremely reluctant to rehabilitate the core of the Iraqi leadership.

A change in U.S. policy, that would relax the country-specific sanctions and thus ease the suffering of the Iraqi people while intensifying regime-specific sanctions so as to bring about a regime change, would dovetail with the wishes of the Arab governments.

If there is a clear evidence that the U.S. is shifting to regime-specific sanctions, the Arab governments would slow down in cosying up to Iraq. They would be interested in the details of the U.S. thinking on Iraq when the Secretary of State, Mr. Colin Powell, visits the area at the month-end.

Arab governments are under some pressure to know which way the U.S. is moving in respect of Iraq, since demands for Baghdad's full rehabilitation in the

Arab world are bound to be strongly pressed at the Arab summit in Amman at the end of March. Regional governments which have watched Iraqi contracts being given to powers outside the region are impatient to get into the game themselves and Egypt and Syria have been the latest to sign major trade agreements with Iraq.

## Symbol of defiance

Stronger than the economic need to reintegrate Iraq into the Arab world is the pressure from the Arab masses.

Besides being incensed at the suffering the decade-old sanctions have inflicted on the Iraqis, the Arab masses are increasingly proud of Mr. Saddam Hussein for standing up to the world powers.

In a context where they see the sole superpower firmly aligned with the non-Arab regional powers, Israel and Turkey, and apparently interested only in exploiting the Arab world's oil wealth, Mr. Hussein stands as the lone symbol of defiance.

In particular, his staunch defence of the Palestinians and his offer to fight alongside them against Israel has stood out in contrast to the softer approach of other Arab leaders. Moderate Arab regimes, which have had to combat extremism for quite some time, are probably capable of ensuring that anti-U.S. sentiment does not boil over. However, actions such as Friday's air strikes, increase the pool of resentment and thereby increase the pool of potential recruits to the extremist cause.

THE HINDU

18 FEB 2001

# Beginning of holy war: Iraq

HO-1  
By Kesava Menon 1872

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 17. The Iraqi Government today said yesterday's air attacks by U.S. and British planes on Baghdad would not go unpunished and that the incident signalled the beginning of a holy war. The Government linked the attack with the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and said it showed the Arabs were the victims of U.S. Israeli aggression.

Ordinary Iraqis are particularly incensed over the fact that the attack was carried out on Friday, day of prayer. This linkage with religion is bound to further inflame sentiments in the Arab world.

## Bush warned

AFP reports from Baghdad:

The Iraqi armed forces' newspaper *Al-Qadisiya* warned that "this new crime will not go without dissuasive punishment for the American aggressors." It said Baghdad was determined to teach the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, "son of the viper (former President) George Bush, a lesson which he will never forget."

Another official daily *Al-Jumhuriya* said, "the latest aggression on Baghdad was a continuation of the attacks on our people and towns in northern and southern Iraq," referring to the exclusion zones enforced by U.S. and British warplanes.

## Routine mission: Bush

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 17. The air strikes over the no-fly zone in Iraq on Friday were "routine", the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, today said and warned his Iraqi counterpart, Mr. Saddam Hussein, on weapons of mass destruction. "We are going to watch very carefully as to whether or not he develops weapons of mass destruction and if we catch him doing so, we'll take appropriate action," Mr. Bush said during a trip to Mexico.

At a press conference after talks with his Mexican counterpart, Mr. Vicente Fox, the President, referring to the air raids in which British planes also participated, said, "I want to assure those who don't

understand U.S. policy that this is a routine mission."

The White House said new radar facilities in the no-fly zone threatened allied planes. The President's permission was required in this instance because U.S. aircraft may have had to leave the no-fly zone in southern Iraq to hit the targets. But, no plane crossed the Northern Edge during the strike, the Pentagon said.

Mr. Bush said Washington would be strict in enforcing its policies over Iraq. "It is part of a strategy, and until that strategy is changed, it doesn't change at all. We will continue to enforce the no-fly zone... Saddam Hussein has got to understand that we expect him to conform to the agreement he signed after Desert Storm.

We will enforce the no-fly zone, both South and North. Our intention is to make sure the world is as peaceful as possible."

For the first time since December 1998, U.S. and British warplanes went after targets outside the southern no-fly zone; and the strikes came at a time when the Bush administration was letting the world know it would hang tough on Baghdad which would include active support for the Iraqi opposition.

In fact, the Iraqi Opposition leaders were meeting a State Department Official when the attack took place. The Bush administration has released millions of dollars to the anti-Saddam forces.

The Pentagon said the raids continued for two hours and that the planes flew from various positions in the Persian Gulf including aircraft carriers in the area. As many as 24 aircraft took part in the strikes and all of them returned to their bases.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister is due at the United Nations for talks with the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and members of the Security Council.

Although no Security Council member has asked for a debate on the attack, there is very little support for Washington's position on Iraq, either in an overall context or with respect to sanctions. In spite of the sanctions regime being in tatters and Washington having little or no support for its Iraq policy, the Bush administration is hopeful of cobbling together an anti-Iraq coalition.

More reports on Page 9

THE HINDU

18 FEB 2001

# India slams strikes, Iraq swears revenge

REUTERS, AFP

BAGHDAD, Feb. 17. - Iraq today threatened to retaliate against yesterday's US and British air strikes on Baghdad that killed 9 civilians and wounded more than 20.

The official *Qadissiya* newspaper said: "The Americans' and Britons' new savage crime will not pass unpunished and without decisive retaliation... We will teach the new American administration and the Zionist entity (Israel) lessons on jihad and steadfastness."

Iraqi television broadcast an official statement saying "we will fight them in the air, on land and sea and their aggression will achieve nothing but failure." The

statement was issued after a meeting of Iraqi leaders chaired by President Saddam Hussein. The statement also blamed Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for providing bases for coalition forces.

India, Russia and China today condemned the attacks. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said in Mumbai that the air strikes were "unacceptable" and violative of UN Security Council resolutions. The Prime Minister said in a statement that India had consistently opposed the unilateral imposition of no-fly zones on Iraq. New Delhi believed that the air strikes caused "unnecessary and avoidable suffering" to innocent men, women and children.

Lifting of sanctions was the only way to bring Iraq back to the mainstream of regional and international affairs, the statement said..

A senior Kremlin official said in Moscow that Russia would denounce any military action by Washington not backed by the U.N. Security Council. The comment by Mr Sergei Prikhodko, deputy head of the Kremlin administration, followed expressions of concern by Russia's foreign ministry.

China urged the USA and Britain to respect Baghdad's sovereignty and territorial integrity by halting attacks. "We condemn the air attacks launched by the US and Britain against Iraq..." foreign ministry spokesman

Mr Zhu Bangzao said.

President George W Bush said Washington would take "appropriate action" if Saddam Hussein produced weapons of mass destruction.

Britain's defence secretary Mr Geoff Hoon said the attack was a "proportionate response" to the threat to US and British aircraft patrolling a no-fly zone in southern Iraq. He said British aircrews were entitled to defend themselves.

Iran led the West Asia's condemnation of the US bombing as "signs of adventurism" by the new US president, but Gulf states maintained an embarrassed silence. The Cairo-based Arab League also weighed in, with its chief saying the attack had "no justification."

THE STATESMAN

18 FEB 2001

# Khatami camp spoiling for a fight

By Kesava Menon <sup>132</sup> MD-16

**MANAMA (BAHRAIN), FEB. 12.** An unusually strong criticism of his conservative opponents by Iran's President, Mr. Mohammed Khatami, and an unprecedented public protest against the Islamic regime indicate that unrest in the country is growing furiously. It seems likely that the unrest will grow rather than subside ahead of the Presidential election scheduled for early June.

In a speech marking the 22nd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Mr. Khatami unleashed the sort of attack on conservatives that his reform supporters have been waiting for. "Those who claim a monopoly on Islam and the Revolution, those with narrow views, are setting themselves against the people," Mr. Khatami has been quoted by the agencies as saying. Though he did not specify the conservatives, he seemed to have let no doubt remain about whom he was referring to when he said, "They are putting religious values against the wishes of the people, religion against freedom and disregarding the rights of the people. They seek to suppress views that are not in agreement with their narrow views".

Mr. Khatami said the banning of publications and the jailing of reformers portrayed an ugly image

where bullying leaders imposed their wishes on the people and answered criticism with torture and jail. It means that the country revolves around the people, that elections determine who should govern. It means that rulers must be open to criticism.

These statements make for the kind of fighting talk that Mr. Khatami's supporters have been waiting for him to make. However, it is not clear from the reports whether these statements were buried under platitudes intended to soothe conservative ears as has often been the case.

By inclination, Mr. Khatami is not a confrontationist and he has never taken an unequivocal position even when the conservatives have launched unfair attacks on the reformers. It is also possible that the agency reports could be dubbed as misleading as has also happened in the past. Incidentally, the agency reports that appear on an Iranian website are substantially more equivocal.

What was more surprising, even shocking, than this speech was the fact that Iranian dissidents actually carried out a public protest in the streets of Teheran carrying banners in which they proclaimed that they were opposed to the Islamic regime. They were reportedly set upon by the police and a conservative-controlled militia.



**Iranian youths hold pictures of the President, Mr. Mohammad Khatami, and chat with his brother, Mr. Mohammad Reza Khatami (left), parliament Deputy, during a gathering of hundreds of thousands of people at Teheran's Freedom Square last weekend to mark the 22nd anniversary of the revolution that brought Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's Islamic regime to power. — AP**

of democratic system before the international community and disappointed the people at home. "Let us have faith in our people and acknowledge their central role in running their political affairs. Let us pave the way for them to express their views in a free and safe atmosphere".

The President also tried to re-

assert that the reform movement he has symbolised sprang from the basic values of the Revolution and was not deviant from it. "In the Islamic Republic, people should have the right to rule over their destiny and experience individual and political freedom after a long history of oppression. The Islamic Republic means an end to the era

THE HINDU

# Iran Parliament approves five for Khatami Cabinet

BY JON HEMMING

Tehran, Jan. 14: Iran's Parliament on Sunday gave overwhelming backing to five new ministers in a move seen as strengthening the hand of conservatives in the cabinet of moderate President Mohammad Khatami.

Conservative Ahmad Masjed-Jamei took over at the culture ministry from Mr Khatami's key reform ally Ataollah Mohajerani who was forced out under pressure from Islamic hardliners.

Mr Mohajerani was seen as the man behind the freeing of Iran's press and a brief cultural blossoming particularly in film. But he offended many in the conservative establishment and supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei led calls for him to resign.

Mr Khatami finally accepted Mr Mohajerani's resignation in December.

More than 30 pro-reform newspapers and journals have been banned by the conservative-dominated courts since Mr Khamenei denounced them as "bases of the enemy" last April.

After the newspapers went, Mr Mohajerani was the next logical casualty. The appointment of a known conservative in his place was thus not a popular choice for many reformist MPs.

Deputies must give new ministers a vote of confidence before they can take up their posts.

Mr Khatami, who has not made clear whether he will stand again when his term as president expires in June, said the work of the ministers was key to the success of his government and the 21-year-old Islamic Republic. "If the public's demands are not met, then the situation might become such that is not to the benefit of the nation or the revolution," he told the Parliament. (Reuters)

## LTTE and Army gear up for war

BY CHRISTINE JAYASINGHE

Colombo, Jan. 14: Sri Lanka's military and Tamil Tiger separatists are arming themselves for battle even as a Norwegian peace envoy failed to break the deadlock over the timing of a truce between the two warring sides. The security forces have plumped up their air strike capability with more MiG 27 ground attack aircraft while the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam is trying to swell its numbers by stepping up recruitment in the embattled north, press reports said. The Navy is also reported to be gearing up to expand its attack and surveillance operations with the recent acquisition of the Indian-made offshore patrol vessel which is to be the anchor for a new naval air wing.

Norway's special emissary Erik Solheim left Colombo on Friday after a three-day visit, apparently failing to break a deadlock between the government and Tamil separatists over the timing of a truce.

He is expected to meet senior LTTE members in London on the heels of his Colombo trip during which he had discussions with President Chandrika Kumaratunga and others in the government and opposition. (IANS)

THE ASIAN AGE

15 JAN 2001

# Ten years on, curbs on Iraq under scrutiny

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), JAN. 18. A decade has passed since the day on which the U.S.-led coalition began its six-week long bombardment of Iraq in the Gulf War and while much has changed Iraq's complete rehabilitation in the international community remains as distant as ever. Neither the doubts about Iraq's intentions that led to the war nor the doubts about its capabilities that cause its current quarantined status have been fully erased. At the same time, the viability and utility of the sanctions regime on Iraq are being increasingly questioned.

40-17  
Within just a few days of the 10th anniversary of the war several of the architects of the coalition against Iraq and the conductors of the bombardment and four-day ground action will return to the helm of the U.S. administration. The incoming U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. (retd.) Colin Powell has signalled that he will be re-entering office determined to re-energise the sanctions that had been imposed on Iraq at the end of the war.

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The main aim of these sanctions was to force Iraq to dismantle its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) capability. While U.N. inspectors, who worked on this task till December 1998, are understood to have dismantled much of Iraq's ability to produce chemical, biological and nuclear warheads and the missiles to deliver them, there is no certainty that all of the capability was eradicated.

No inspections have been held since Iraq

ordered the inspection teams to leave in December 1998 just before a four-day aerial blitz by the U.S. Statements have been issued from certain quarters to the effect that Iraq may have re-built its WMD capability in this time but these statements emanate from people or governments who are implacably hostile to the current Iraqi regime. The Iraqi regime, of course, continues and presumably so does its interest in a WMD capability and its attitudes towards its neighbours but the circumstances of West Asia today are very different from what they were 10 years ago.

It is widely believed that Iraq still retains a formidable conventional military force but it might be a mistake to go by the numbers since Iraq has not been allowed to procure new equipment or even spare parts in the open market. Although Iraq has built up its hard currency holdings through the clandestine sale of oil, it is improbable that it could have re-built its forces to the same quality they were in before the war.

Its air force in particular had been badly affected. Besides that, Iraq has been cut off from the advances made in military technology and this is not a negligible consideration given the huge purchases in modern arms that has been made by Iraq's neighbours in the Arabian peninsula. Lastly, and most importantly, unlike in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait, the U.S. has a formidable military presence in the region and committed forces elsewhere which can be swiftly transported in.

It could be argued that the mismatch in

conventional arms, which heavily favours Iraq's adversaries, adds to Baghdad's incentive to acquire or retain non-conventional weapons. But Iraq did not use or threaten to use non-conventional weapons either during the 1991 war or during the 1998 bombardment. Neither is Iraq explicitly threatening its neighbours though it has serious differences with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait on oil policy and it has recognised Kuwait's sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Recently, Mr. Uday Hussein, the son of the Iraqi President, Mr. Saddam Hussein asked Parliament to change the map on its emblem so as to show Kuwait as part of Iraq but the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tariq Aziz dismissed this as the younger Hussein's personal view).

It has been clear from quite some time that the U.S. objective is the replacement of Mr. Hussein's regime by a more pliant one. However, no domestic substitute is in sight and the few Iraqi groups in exile that the U.S. has been trying to use against Mr. Hussein's regime have neither any credibility nor any following. At the same time, the sanctions regime is collapsing as more and more countries line up to do business with Iraq. The incoming U.S. administration's policy of re-energising the sanctions regime, the methods it will use to this purpose and the viability of this project will be in focus next month when Iraq and the U.N. Security Council are to begin discussions on a 1999 Security Council resolution that promises a suspension of the sanctions if Iraq allows the weapons inspections to resume.

THE HINDU

19 JAN 2001

# Saddam lives on

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14/1

**I**N A recent instalment of his programme, the U.S. satirical talk-show host, Mr. Jay Leno, pretending to be alluding to reports that Iraq's President, Mr. Saddam Hussein was about to hand over office to his son Uday, said, "What sort of a country is it where the son follows his father into the Presidency." Well! Mr. Saddam Hussein is not going anywhere and he will take on incoming the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, with as much panache as he did Dubya's father.

When the knights of the Bush table — especially Sir Dick Cheney and Sir Colin Powell — re-enter Camelot they will do so with the exasperated realisation that the one dragon they tried so desperately to exterminate is still out there. And smoking! He chases Mr. Fidel Castro's record for the most number of U.S. Presidencies that have been seen off during his watch. (To add to this particular nightmare of U.S. history, Venezuela's Mr. Hugo Chavez might soon join the Fidel-Saddam contest).

The Bush-Cheney-Powell team must have fervently wished that recent reports that Mr. Saddam Hussein was suffering from cancer were true. As expected, there was a prompt denial from the Iraqi Government. No outsider knows the exact status of the Iraqi high command and there are so many myths and legends mixed in with the probably very true reports about Mr. Saddam Hussein's cunning and cruelty that is difficult for anyone to know what is true and what false. As an old West Asian hand pointed out it is very possible that Mr. Saddam Hussein himself floated rumours about his ill-health in an attempt to smoke out those among his cohorts who might be getting restive. But for all intents and purposes the world will probably have to accept the veracity of recent photographs in which he was shown in a natty suit and cap-firing a rifle as though it was only a slightly awkward pistol.

Mr. Uday Hussein has if anything been even more demonised than his father and perhaps with good reason. However, the incoming U.S. administration would probably have been much happier dealing with him because, even if he has his father's ruthlessness, he surely does not possess his experience. So, the men who first put together the "get Saddam" policy will have to pick up the task yet again. Mr. Cheney, who was Defence



*There are so many myths and legends about Saddam Hussein that it is difficult for anyone to know what is true and what is false, says*  
**KESAVA MENON.**

Secretary when the policy was drafted, is apparently going to be more gung-ho about the project but Gen. Powell, who was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the same time, seems to be approaching the task with more caution.

Compounding the difficulty of the "get Saddam" policy is the fact that the mechanisms that Mr. Cheney and Gen. Powell put together under the direction of the elder Bush have fallen apart. The U.S. and the U.K. have been reduced to a minority among the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council in respect of the policy of enforcing the economic embargo on Iraq till it spits out Mr. Saddam Hussein

and his associates. Russia and China are barely disguising the fact that they are doing business with Mr. Saddam Hussein and France, which is doing likewise, has set an example which most of the European Union is only too happy to follow.

Turkey and the countries of the Arab world which quite willingly served on the frontline of the coalition to oust Mr. Saddam Hussein in the early 1990s are now more busy wriggling out of their bondage to the U.S./British policy. Many of the Arab states, including Egypt, have entered into the practice of despatching political-cum-business delegations to Iraq disguised as humanitarian missionaries. Syria has opened its land communications and is working on repairing a pipeline to convey Iraqi oil. Only Kuwait holds out among the Arabs because even Saudi Arabia is clearly getting restive at the continuance of a scheme which makes ordinary Iraqis suffer while it does nothing to remove the Iraqi regime.

There was even a report this week that the British Government was thinking of asking the incoming U.S. administration to get rid of the

programme whereby they jointly impose a "no fly zone" over southern Iraq. According to this report, the British felt that the banning of flights over southern Iraq was no longer necessary since the ban had been imposed in order to prevent Iraq from using its military aircraft to oppress the Shia majority there and the people of southern Iraq were no longer under such a threat. This report was instantly denied by the British Government. But if this is another case where Governments initially deny something they will eventually admit is true, then the slayers of the Saddam dragon will be entering the joust with their grooms in a sulk.

If the incoming Bush Administration is able to shake off its hubris and its desire for revenge it will be able to perceive the one undeniable achievement of the "get Saddam" policy. Ten years ago even many Arabs might have been inclined to look on Mr. Saddam Hussein as a crazy man. Today, he is the foremost hero for the Arab street. For the ordinary Arab, it is Mr. Saddam Hussein not the Bushies who is the dragon-slayer.



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## CONSERVATIVE BACKLASH

Iran heading for civil strife

IT would be easy to be swayed by the confession of Mostafa Kazemi, former head of internal security, that he had, indeed, "masterminded the killings of writers and intellectuals", and conclude that this is a victory for human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Iran. Kazemi and 18 others are on trial for the murder of four liberal dissidents in 1998, but as pointed out by the affected families, they are not the only ones to have been "eliminated". The trial, in camera, before a judiciary that is by and large conservative, may be a token to satisfy international opinion and give a semblance of order to the factional confrontation between moderates and hardliners by providing legal theatre. The truth is that what has been called the reformist agenda is in retreat everywhere in Iran. The Supreme Revolutionary Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei squashed an attempt by the moderate parliament to amend a conservative press law, pitching his authority clearly in favour of the conservatives. The press courts, dominated, like the normal judiciary, by hardliners, can go about their business of arresting and prosecuting troublesome pro-reform journalists and ordering the closure of their newspapers. In any case, liberals have no public voice anymore, their media is almost entirely liquidated.

Moreover, the chief of the judiciary has warned Khatami against setting up a constitutional court that might have overridden the jurisdiction of the clergy-dominated judiciary and possibly opted for a liberal interpretation of the law. So Khatami is back to square one, six months short of the next presidential elections announced for June this year and this despite having a majority in the Majlis. As the Speaker pointed out during the debate on the new press law, the "constitution has the elements of the absolute rule of the supreme clerical leader" and the deputies "had no choice but to submit to his will".

This hardly settles the question: what do you do about the 70 per cent which voted for Khatami and then gave him a majority in the Majlis? What do the mullahs do about young people, students and women who do not want a return to the old chador-clad order because they have had a taste of real freedom? The conservatives will give the usual answers to these questions, which is tantamount to saying that brute force will serve for answers — at least for some time. But, experience teaches us that unless repression is accompanied by positive material benefits such as a more prosperous lifestyle — as in China — it is an ambivalent political instrument. If liberals or the moderates who now have a clear majority in the country cannot be accommodated within the Iranian Revolution, then they will, sooner or later, start thinking of an alternative political system. A question mark hangs over the June presidential election as well, in view of the determination shown by conservatives in stamping out liberal opinion and activities over the last two years. Will elections be free and fair? The world will be watching.

THE STATESMAN

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