

Law to help Erdogan become PM passed

ANKARA (TURKEY), DEC. 27. Turkey's Parliament overturned a presidential veto on constitutional amendments on Friday, paving the way for the nation's banned, but most popular politician to become Prime Minister.

The President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, last week refused to sign the laws, saying they were designed specifically for Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the governing Justice and Development Party.

But by a 437 to 44 vote, Parliament adopted the laws a second time, overruling Mr. Sezer's veto.

Mr. Sezer now must sign the amendments or call a referendum on the laws.

Mr. Erdogan is banned from running for a seat in Parliament because of a criminal conviction for reading a poem that the courts said incited religious hatred.

The Justice party has roots in Turkey's Islamic movement but denies it seeks an Islamic agenda.

The Justice party has signalled Mr. Erdogan will run in by-elections in the southeastern province of Siirt on Feb. 9, if the constitutional changes are approved. If he is elected, he could then become Prime Minister.

The amendments change a clause in the constitution that bars those convicted of engaging in illegal "ideological and anarchic



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

activities" from running for political office. The new clause bans those convicted of terrorism.

Mr. Sezer said the amendments were drawn up for the benefit of "one individual."

The Opposition party also supported the reforms.

Though Mr. Erdogan's party holds a majority of seats in the legislature, it was not clear if the Turkish public would embrace the changes for Mr. Erdogan in a referendum. His party took around a third of the popular vote in November 3 polls.

The party's vice president, Abdullah Gul, is serving as Premier in Mr. Erdogan's absence. Mr. Erdogan, however, wields significant influence behind the scenes. — AP

28 DEC 2002

THE HINDU

3 girls killed for 'defying Jabbar dress-code'

Women
2

2/12

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Dec. 20. — Exactly a week after posters appeared in some villages in Rajouri asking women to wear veil (*burqa*), terrorists killed three young women in Haisote village in Rajouri early today.

People in the village feel the killings are the handiwork of the Lashker-e-Jabbar which came into limelight last year when it ordered Kashmiri women to adhere to the Islamic dress code. But senior police officers said the killings were not related to dress code threats. Jammu Zone I-G Mr Pitamber Lal Gupta, who visited the village today, said the incident was not related to the *burqa* diktat.

Around 3 a.m. today, three militants entered a house in Haisote village in which a marriage ceremony was taking place. "They

Mufti party MLA shot

JAMMU, Dec. 20. — People's Democratic Party MLA Abdul Aziz Mir was shot dead by militants at Gunnibal in Pulwama district today. Mir was shot when he was coming out of Jama Masjid after Friday prayers. His security guards fired back but the militants managed to escape.

The Save Kashmir Movement, a group that surfaced during the Assembly polls, has claimed responsibility for the attack. This is the first attack on any MLA after the new Assembly came into being on 17 October. The PDP said it would continue its policy of people-to-people contact despite the killing. — SNS



Body of Abdul Aziz Mir in Srinagar on Friday. — AFP

continue its policy of people-to-people contact despite the killing. — SNS

identified one girl and murdered her by slitting her throat," Mr Prithvi Raj Manhas, Rajouri Senior Superintendent of Police, said.

"They entered another house and killed a girl. They entered a third house and forcibly tried to take a girl with them. The girl's mother tried to stop them. The militants then fired at the girl."

Mr Manhas said police had recovered a handwritten poster pasted outside a mosque which said the girls were killed because they were "informers" of the security forces.

Local residents said the killings were linked to the dress code diktat issued by Lashkar-e-Jab-

bar. Posters have been appearing in schools and colleges in Rajouri over the past one month asking women and girls to wear *burqas* and strictly follow the *purdah* system. The group has asked teachers to wear *sherwani* and threatened to take action against those who disobeyed their orders.

EU firm on Turkish talks date

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Agence France Presse

COPENHAGEN, Dec. 13.

The European Union today stood firm on an accord to delay a decision on Turkey's EU membership bid despite a furious reaction from Turkish Prime Minister Mr Abdullah Gul who blasted it as "unacceptable." "There is no more to discuss. Turkey will have to wait until 2004," said Danish European Affairs minister Mr Bertel Haarder, whose country holds the EU presidency.

"This summit is not about Turkey. It is about different things," he added as the summit went down to wire in a second day of high-stakes negotiations here.

Danish Prime Minister Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen announced late yesterday that the EU would decide only at the end the progress on reforms.

The Turkish PM, who had staged a last-ditch round of lobbying to press Ankara's demand to start EU membership talks next year, blasted the decision as "unacceptable," an aide said.

"A great discrimination is being made," he was cited as saying, in an apparent reference to Turkey's Muslim population.

German foreign minister Mr Joschka Fischer also insisted that the decision to delay a date for Turkey was "fixed" — and denied that EU was a "Christian club,"

rebuffing an implicit accusation of anti-Muslim discrimination.

"It was really not easy to achieve this breakthrough and the breakthrough is the date. There is definitely a fixed date. We are not a Christian club, we are a club of shared values," he said.

Meanwhile European leaders have approved a multi-billion dollar funding package for EU's expansion to take in 10 new members in 2004, a source with EU's Danish presidency said.

The deal, which is worth 40.5 billion euros over three years or about 25 euros for every citizen of the current 15-member bloc, must still be approved by the candidates themselves.



(From left): Turkish Prime Minister Mr Abdullah Gul, Mr Recep Tayyip Erdogan, head of Turkey's ruling AKP party, German Chancellor Mr Gerhard Schröder and French President Mr Jacques Chirac at the EU summit in Copenhagen on Friday. — AFP

GAZA / HUNT FOR MILITANT

Israeli action claims 10 lives

BUREIJ CAMP (GAZA STRIP), DEC. 6. Israeli troops backed by tanks and helicopter gunships hunted a fugitive militant in a crowded refugee camp in the Gaza Strip early Friday, setting off chaotic gunbattles that killed 10 Palestinians, including two U.N. school workers.

Men called through mosque loudspeakers for people to come out and battle the Israeli soldiers, who entered the camp just after midnight. Fighters who had been celebrating the Islamic festival of Id ul-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, poured into the dark streets. Gunbattles raged for three hours in the Bureij camp.

It was unclear how many of the dead were fighters. The military said a helicopter fired a missile into a street, killing five armed men from the violent, Islamic Hamas movement. The camp's mayor, Kamal Baghdadi, originally said a tank shell had hit a building, killing seven people.

Ahmed Rabah, a doctor at the Al-Aqsa hospital in the nearby village of Deir el Balah, said nine men were killed and 11 were wounded. Rabah did not identify the casualties. An official at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City said a tenth person, a woman, died of injuries.

The U.N. agency helping Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said two of its staff members were

among the dead: Osama Hassan Tahrawi (31), who was killed along with two of his brothers by a missile, was a school attendant; and the woman who died from shrapnel injuries, Ahlam Riziq Kandil (31), was an elementary school teacher.

During the incursion, witnesses said troops surrounded the home of Jamal Ismail, a suicide bomber who blew himself up along with another man in an explosive-packed boat off the Gaza coast last month, wounding four Israeli soldiers in a nearby navy patrol.

The Israeli army called the camp "a base for hardcore terror groups" of the militant Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committee.

Brig. Gen. Israel Ziv said the operation targeted Aiman Shasniyeh, a local leader for the Popular Resistance Committee, who the military believes was behind a bomb attack on a heavily armoured Merkava-3 tank that killed three soldiers in March. Troops failed to find Shasniyeh but blew up his house. Soldiers arrested one of his brothers, along with another man wanted by Israeli intelligence, the General said.

It was Israel's second strike this week in Gaza targeting militants allegedly involved in anti-tank attacks that have killed seven Israeli soldiers this year.

— AP

Fresh wave

Israelis facing terror outside the country

Even by Israel's tough standards for facing terror, 28 November must go down as a particularly bad day. In all 22 people were killed in two suicide attacks, one in Israel and one in Kenya, and it could have been a lot worse as two surface-to-air missiles narrowly missed an Israeli aircraft taking off from Mombasa international airport loaded with tourists. Responsibility for the Kenyan attacks has been claimed by a group calling itself "Army of Palestine". Although Palestinians have denied any connection with the attack, the prime suspects are either a Palestinian group or the Al Qaida. As bin Laden has taken up the Palestinian cause one may soon be looking at a time when the efforts of Al Qaida and Palestinian factions will increasingly mesh, fighting a joint US-Israeli opponent.

The attacks took place on the same day that the Likud was electing its leader for the general elections in January. If the attacks were intended to send a message, in terms of Likud's intransigence on the Palestinian issue, they are most likely having the opposite effect, as Ariel Sharon has beaten Benjamin Netanyahu and looks strong against Labour in the upcoming elections. Thus do cycles of violence perpetuate themselves, although a Labour government would have been more propitious for peace. Netanyahu is right, though, when he warns that everyone ought to think about new terror tactics now on display: the firing of shoulder-held missiles at commercial aircraft taking off from airports. Along with this is another issue of concern — the Al Qaida may be expanding its catchment area in sub-Saharan Africa. While the areas nurse no hardline schools of Islamic theology, like Saudi Wahhabism or Pakistan's Deobandi *madrasas*, their desperate poverty and lawlessness make them an attractive hunting ground for Al Qaida recruits. Sharon has vowed to hunt down the Mombasa bombers, and may well succeed, given the Mossad's reputation for ruthless efficiency. But more recruits for further attacks may well be standing by. Any long-term strategy to counter the terror threat will need to factor in and address, apart from the festering Palestinian issue, the serious developmental problems afflicting a wide swathe of countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Israeli forces kill 10 in Gaza

Gaza City, December 6

ISRAELI TANKS rumbled into a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, sparking an intense firefight that killed 10 Palestinians early on Friday.

Some of the casualties in the Bureij camp were caused when a helicopter fired a missile at the street. It was unclear how many of the dead were fighters.

The camp's mayor, Kamal Baghdadi, had originally said a tank shell had hit a building, killing seven.

Israel's military said the dead included five armed militants from the Hamas movement who were targeted by the helicopter fire. Palestinian fighters were spurred on by calls through mosque loudspeakers urging people to come out and fight the troops. Gunbattles, which began as Israeli troops entered the camp just after midnight, raged for three hours.

Ahmed Rabah, a doctor at the Al-Aqsa hospital in the nearby village of Deir el Balah, said nine people were killed and 11 were wounded. Rabah did not identify the casualties. An official at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City said a tenth person, a woman, died of injuries.

Hassan Safi, 49, said he was 300 yards away in his home when an explosion rocked the neighbourhood. He said he thought

Osama targets Israel

OSAMA BIN Laden's al-Qaida network plans to launch suicide attacks against Israel, according to a website that US officials believe speaks for the organisation, the *Washington Post* reported in its Friday edition. Intelligence officials believe the Web site (<http://www.mojahedoon.net>) provides further proof of al-Qaida's determination to target Israel, the *Post* said.

Reuters, Washington

the blast was from a tank shell.

"I rushed with my sons to the place, which was all destroyed. I myself took out two people. The helicopter was firing with machine guns at us, making it difficult to move," Safi said.

During the incursion, witnesses said troops surrounded the home of Jamal Ismail, a suicide bomber who blew himself up along with another man in an explosive-packed boat off the Gaza coast last month.

The Israeli army called the camp "a base for hardcore terror groups" of the militant Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committee.

AP

TURKEY / MILITARY BASES FOR U.S.

**Ankara backtracks
on assurance**

ANKARA (TURKEY), DEC. 4. Turkish officials said the country might allow the United States to use its military bases for a strike against Iraq, but said the Turkish government hadn't committed to any such plan.

The Foreign Minister, Yasar Yakis, said on Tuesday that his country would allow the U.S. use of military bases in the country for a strike against Iraq that had United Nations approval, but his Ministry later clarified that he was speaking of a possibility and not committing Turkey to any agreement.

Mr. Yakis' statement came as the U.S. Deputy Defence Secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, was in Turkey lobbying for Turkish support of an Iraq operation.

"There should not be left any stone unturned before resorting to a military solution," Mr. Yakis told reporters. "But if it comes to that, then of course, we will cooperate with the United States because it's a big ally and we have excellent relations with the United States."

When asked by a reporter to define cooperation, Mr. Yakis said, "The opening of air space, first of all, and the utilisation of



A U.S. Air Force fighter jet takes off from Incirlik air base in southern Turkey in this September 13, file photo for a daily mission over the No-Fly Zone in northern Iraq to monitor Iraqi compliance with United Nations Security Council resolutions.

facilities in Turkey. The military authorities of the two countries are consulting on the assumption that such a cooperation may be necessary one day."

But several hours later, the Foreign Ministry released a statement saying that Mr. Yakis' remarks were not a commitment to allow U.S. use of bases.

"The fact that he has referred to these possibilities does not mean a commitment on the

part of Turkey because these possibilities have not been the subject of discussion with any country," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement to the press.

Turkey has been reluctant to back any U.S. action in Iraq, but it is widely assumed that it would have little choice but to support U.S. military action if Washington decides to go to war. Ankara's support is crucial to any war. — AP

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5 DEC 2002

THE HINDU

The axis of irony

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When George W. Bush assumed office in January 2001, many in his administration believed that the United States of America was a Gulliver who had given the Lilliputians the ropes to tie him down. Theirs was a new, more assertive, less consensual brand of internationalism. American foreign and defence policies would be rooted in the pre-eminence of American power and the willingness of the president to use that power to advance US interests, unfettered by international agreements or institutions.

The new team in Washington relished the chance to show that it would have nothing to do with treaties that it deemed outmoded or that cramped American freedom of action. It had little use for alliances and international bodies. Nor was the administration interested in following through diplomatic initiatives it had inherited from their predecessors in west Asia and the Korean peninsula. There was some distaste for the very enterprise of diplomacy.

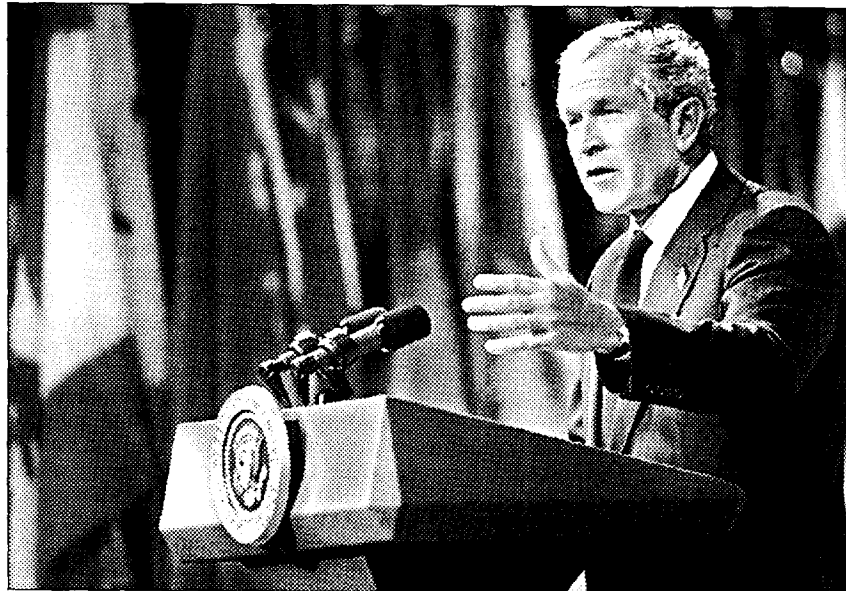
The stark horror of September 11 provided an almost ideal opportunity for the US to demonstrate what it could do to its enemies with a combination of military prowess and political will. It also heightened tolerance abroad for a robust, purposeful, and devastating exertion of American power. A combination of international sympathy, outrage and solidarity muted, for the time being, complaints that Bush was a cowboy in charge of a rogue superpower. Instead, as a number of editorials in Europe and Asia commented at the time, the president suddenly had the look of a brave and righteous sheriff, like the Gary Cooper figure in *High Noon*.

In that movie, the townspeople cower behind curtains and lock doors while the sheriff squares off against the villains on a dusty street. The war in Afghanistan, however, departed from the Hollywood script. Largely at the instigation of the secretary of state, Colin Powell — who had until then been outnumbered and outflanked by the unilateralists in the administration — the US took weeks to assemble a broad-based coalition, so that when the showdown with the Taliban and al Qaida came, the scene had more the look of a sheriff and a posse driving the bad guys out of town.

Then came the Iraq sequel. Even be-

The author is former US deputy secretary of state

The Iraq crisis may reveal a continuity in American foreign policy and thus, argues Strobe Talbott, be cause for relief for much of the world



Alone if possible, together if necessary

fore Osama bin Laden went to the top of America's Most Wanted list, Bush had his sights fixed on Saddam Hussein. That was why the administration pivoted quickly from the war it waged a year ago in Afghanistan to the war it is preparing to wage soon in Iraq. It hoped to apply the energy generated by US-induced regime change in Kabul to accomplishing the same objective in Baghdad. It had trouble, however, transferring international support for its handling of September 11 to its campaign to oust Saddam.

In the late summer, there seemed to be a growing determination, personified and articulated by Vice-President Dick Cheney, to dispense with the UN and do whatever it took, with whoever would join an *ad hoc* coalition, to bring down Saddam. President Bush kept that option open when he went to the UN on September 12. He warned the UN that it risked becoming irrelevant and going the way of the League of Nations.

But, in a strategy designed largely by Powell, Bush said he would prefer working through the security council and using a tough new resolution as the instrument for forcing Saddam to disarm or, if Saddam refuses, as the basis for military action. The tactic worked. The security council unanimously passed a

resolution with teeth.

That's the first of the ironies that critics of the administration's mindset and mode of operation must recognize: Bush's ultimatum — his threat to act independently of the UN — may actually have saved the body from precisely the irrelevance that he warned against.

But there's a second irony: having won something close to the resolution he wanted, Bush may now be all but locked in to a UN framework for dealing with Iraq. He will no doubt reiterate that the US has all the authority it needs to pull the trigger on Saddam.

Still, having brought the security council this far and having put the new inspection regime in place, Bush is likely to stay with that process. Not only is he vested in it, but to break ranks with the UN would cost him international legitimacy, the participation of many states both in the conduct of the war and the keeping of the troubled peace that will follow, and US domestic support.

So on the issue of Iraq, at least Bush has become a multilateralist, even a traditionalist in his preference for working through international bodies in dealing with the villains of this world. That leads to the third and final irony: Bush may well end up dealing with Iraq in a fash-

ion that is quite consistent with the way his predecessor, Bill Clinton, dealt with similar threats to international peace.

The past dozen years, since the end of the Cold War, reveal a pattern in the way that three American presidents have made their country's power the driving force behind interventions on behalf of the international community. The first President Bush did that in the 1991 Gulf war. He used his personal rapport with Mikhail Gorbachev to keep the Soviet Union, then in its dying days, from casting a veto in the security council.

The Clinton administration was marked by a series of conflicts, different in many respects but all with the common denominator that the US took the lead in threatening and applying force. In each of these conflicts, the UN and other global or regional bodies provided the cover of international participation in the military operation and in the nation-building that followed: the invasion of Haiti in 1994, which expelled a military junta and restored a democratically elected president; the use of air strikes against the Serbs in Bosnia in 1995, which forced them to the negotiating table; and the bombing of Serbia in 1999, which ended ethnic cleansing and established a NATO-enforced, UN-supervised protectorate in Kosovo.

Thus, the Bush administration, for all its initial determination to repudiate anything and everything Clintonian, is now poised to deal with Saddam Hussein in a similar fashion, whether dealing with him means merely disarming him or — the unmistakable preference — decapitating him.

Back in the early months of the Bush administration, it was often said that what distinguished the new president's approach to the world from his predecessor's was that those earlier occupants of the White House operated on the slogan: together if possible, alone if necessary, while with George W. Bush, it's the other way around.

Iraq may play out as a disproof of that conventional wisdom and as a reminder that there remains a high degree of continuity in American foreign policy — stretching from Bush to Clinton to Bush. If so, that will come as a relief to much of the rest of the world, and it will increase the chances that others will follow the American lead in the future.

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Political trends in Israel

By Qamar Agha

ISRAEL IS facing yet another political crisis, this time because of the Labour Party's withdrawal of support to the 19-month-old National Unity Government. The Likud Party leader and Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, has called fresh elections in January 2003, instead of forming another coalition with the help of far-right religious parties who were willing to support his Government on the condition that he shun Washington's "road map" for West Asia peace and reject the future establishment of a Palestinian state. Mr. Sharon termed their demand "political blackmail". He thinks maintaining a "special relationship" with the United States is more important than forging an alliance with the far-right nationalist parties.

Recent opinion polls indicate that Israelis are generally satisfied with Mr. Sharon's handling of the Palestinians. He has promised to continue the policy of national unity and the present an-eye-for-an-eye strategy towards the Palestinians. The Foreign Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has demanded the expulsion of Yasser Arafat, Palestinian Authority President, and insisted that Israel reject the demand for a Palestinian state. Mr. Sharon has already endorsed the eventual creation of a Palestinian state while favouring the exiling of Mr. Arafat.

Mr. Sharon believes "Arafat is the enemy of Israel" and makes no distinction between the Palestinian Authority and the extremist Islamic outfits. He feels the Palestinian problem can be tackled with the help of security forces; and that eventually Mr. Arafat and his supporters will be replaced by a more moderate leadership willing to accept Mr. Sharon's plan for a "long-term interim settlement" that would allow Israel the control of East Jerusalem.

Mr. Sharon is a long-time advocate of expansion of Jewish settlements in the occupied Arab territories. This was one of the main reasons for his refusal to cut spending on settlements and transfer the funds to social programmes. The Labour Party's demand for shifting funds from the heavily subsidised settlement led to the collapse of the National Unity

Government. Mr. Sharon's Likud Party, in May last, voted to adopt the policy of "Greater Israel" and rejected the creation of any Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Regarding East Jerusalem, where Islam's third holiest shrine is located and which the Arabs dominate, Israel has declared that "United Jerusalem is the eternal capital of Israel forever". Besides, several leaders in the Zionist movement propagate the "Jordan is Palestine" theory. They are demanding not only the expulsion of Mr. Arafat but also

The elections in January should see Ariel Sharon retaining power, especially given the Israelis' growing security concerns.

the Palestinians from the "biblical land" to neighbouring Jordan. In the past, Mr. Sharon has backed their demands.

On the Palestine issue, there are not many differences among Israel's major political parties as they are all part of the grand Zionist movement responsible for the creation of the Jewish state in 1948. The Labour Party looks at the Palestinian problem from a secular outlook while the Likud Party does so from a religious point of view. The former started the Jewish settlement programme after capturing the Arab territories in 1967 for security reasons. The Likud Party wants to retain Arab territories saying it is the biblical land of its kings and prophets known as "Judea and Samara" where Jews have a religious right to settle.

The collapse of the National Unity Government was essentially not the result of a confrontation between the two major constituents — Labour and Likud — over the pressing issues facing the nation. It was rather a strategic decision to allow the rightist parties to achieve their common objectives — peace and security for Israel. The Labour Party withdrew support from Mr. Sharon's Government only after Israeli forces re-occupied most of the Palestinian territories; the Palestinian Authority was almost dismantled and the Oslo peace process virtually derailed. The Jewish settlement programme continued to expand.

However, the new Labour Party leader, Amram Mitzna, has called for opening peace talks with the Palestinians immediately and for withdrawing troops and settlers from the Gaza strip. Mr. Mitzna said he would join the Government only if the Likud Party supported his plan for unilateral separation from the Palestinians, if peace talks failed. Under these circumstances, he would call for "a unilateral withdrawal from part — but not all — of the West Bank". That would mean evacuating at least some

Israeli settlements. Mr. Mitzna said that if he became the Prime Minister, "Israel would withdraw from Gaza in a year". He said that to protect Israel, its forces would continue to surround the Gaza, which is fenced off. The plan is no different from the one offered by Ehud Barak during the Camp David talks in 2000 and which was rejected by the Palestinian Authority. The PA said it would not be viable to set up an independent state as it would "rob Palestinians of a state of geographical contiguity".

A recent poll predicted that if elections for Israel's 120-seat Parliament were held now, the Labour Party's strength would decline from 25 to 21, while that of the Likud Party would increase from 19 to 29. Political analysts believe that the weakened and divided Labour Party "faces an almost impossible task" in re-establishing itself "as a viable alternative to the Likud" in the coming elections. Whosoever gets the maximum votes will form the next broad-based coalition Government whose primary aim would be to strengthen security. (Israelis' fears have increased after Thursday's bomb blast at a Kenyan hotel packed with Israeli tourists.) "Only if we remove Arafat will there be an opening for peace", and a "possibility of reconciliation with our neighbours, not in a Palestinian terrorist state, but in a free self-government living besides us in peace", declared Mr. Netanyahu.

Israel wanted peace with the Arab

states but was not keen on signing a land-for-peace accord with the Palestinians. It did not think that with the end of the Cold War Western nations would ask it to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories and settle its problems with the Arabs once for all. Israel accepted the move with reluctance. But soon, the peace accord brought divisions within the Jewish community and led to the assassination of the then Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in 1995. Since then, Israel's policy has been to engage the Palestinians in long-drawn negotiations and to continue with its settlement policy. This frustrated the Palestinians. Secular Palestinians remained committed to peace with Israel and struggled to get back their land. Islamists, who were opposed to making up with Israel, exploited the situation and triggered violence against Jewish targets and Israel blamed Mr. Arafat for the failure to contain militancy.

The situation in the region has also not favoured the Palestinians. Islamists attacked U.S. embassies in East Africa and Americans were targeted in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Pakistan and other places. The growing Islamic militancy neutralised U.S. pressure on Israel to implement the Oslo accord. Later, the September 11 terrorist attacks in America completely altered the situation and provided Israel a greater role in the "war against terror". In fact, Israel was the first country to emphasise, since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, on the need to form a grand alliance of Western nations similar to the one formed against international communism.

The war against terror provides Mr. Sharon an opportunity to achieve his objectives by settling scores not only with the Palestinians but also with the Hizbollah, a Shiite Islamic movement whose militia controls southern Lebanon after forcing Israel to make a unilateral withdrawal. It is a bit early to predict how far Israel will succeed in achieving its goals. But Mr. Sharon, who is the Likud Party's choice for a second term having won the primaries, is not one to give up easily. The elections in January should see Mr. Sharon retain power, especially given the Israelis' growing security concerns.

KENYA / MOSSAD TO TRACK DOWN ATTACKERS

Al-Qaeda handiwork: Israel

MOMBASA (KENYA), NOV. 28—Israeli and Kenyan officials on Thursday said today's suicide attacks on a hotel full of Israelis in the coastal town of Mombasa in Kenya were the handiwork of the Al-Qaeda network. If the statement is correct, it would be the first direct attack on Israelis by Al-Qaeda.

Reacting to the twin attacks, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, on Thursday put the Mossad spy agency to track down the attackers.

Kenyan Police said the two attacks occurred within five minutes of each other.

Just after the hotel blasts, missiles were fired at an Israeli Arkia airliner carrying 261 passengers as it took off from Mombasa's airport. "About 2 km from the airport, two missiles were fired at the aircraft from a white Pajero by some people who are suspected to be of Arab origin. Both missiles missed the aircraft," a police spokesman said.

A Kenyan security source said it was believed the attackers had used shoulder-borne missile launchers. Israeli airlines employ elaborate security mea-

asures against attacks. Police described the hotel attackers as of Arab appearance and also driving a four-wheeled-drive Pajero they had turned into a suicide bomb.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks. Israel has at times responded fiercely to Arab and Islamic militant attacks on its citizens.

The Kenyan President, Daniel Arap Moi, said: "We had similar attacks in 1998, the world, including our friends have not helped us enough". "We will do what we can, to fight back."

Kenya's coastal area has a large Muslim population with traditional links to Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Al-Qaeda is blamed by the United States for the Sept. 11 attacks last year and for the bloody 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

In Tel Aviv, Mr. Sharon's advisor, Zalman Shoval, said the Mossad and the Defence Ministry would investigate the attacks and decide how to respond.

The Mossad has a long record of tracking terror suspects; the

agency hunted down and killed nearly all the Palestinians believed responsible for kidnapping and killing 11 Israelis during the Munich Olympics in 1972.

Kenyan police said two squads of three attackers each were involved.

The Israeli Foreign Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said he did not know whether Palestinian groups were involved, but that Palestinian militants have been trying to get shoulder-held missiles from Iran and the Lebanese guerilla group, Hezbollah.

Mr. Netanyahu said the missile attack was a "very dangerous escalation of terror."

"It means that terror organisations and the regimes behind them are able to arm themselves with weapons which can cause mass casualties anywhere and everywhere". "Today, they're firing the missiles at Israeli planes, tomorrow they'll fire missiles at American planes, British planes, every country's aircraft. Therefore, there can be no compromise with terror."

Israel sent planes with doctors to Kenya to help treat and evacuate the wounded. — AP

THE HINDU

29 NOV 2002

Israel troops take over Bethlehem

Bethlehem, November 22

ISRAELI TROOPS and armoured vehicles took over Bethlehem on Friday, one day after a Palestinian suicide bomber killed 11 people on a Jerusalem bus crowded with students and commuters.

Soldiers began arresting suspected militants and sealed off the Church of the Nativity, revered as the birthplace of Jesus, to prevent any militants taking refuge in the church compound as they did during an Israeli incursion in April.

"We are currently controlling the whole city," a local army commander said, vowing that troops would stay "as long as we have to hit the terror infrastructure in Bethlehem".

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, facing a leadership challenge from hardline Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, sent the troops into the city just south of Jerusalem following heavy pressure to hit back hard for Thursday's suicide bombing.

But his response is likely to be tempered by calls for restraint by the United States, which fears new violence and tensions in the region could undermine its efforts to achieve calm as it seeks Arab support for a possible war on Iraq.

Soldiers in Bethlehem conducted house-to-house searches for militants spearheading a two-year-old uprising for Independence. The army said it was

searching for about 30 militants in the city, some of them suspected of involvement in the bus bombing.

Troops rounded up about 20 suspects in Bethlehem and 16 people elsewhere in the West Bank, most of them members of the militant group Hamas which claimed Thursday's attack. Army radio said one was a girl accused of planning a suicide bombing.

The army blew up the home near Bethlehem of the 23-year-old bomber behind Thursday's attack and destroyed the houses of two Hamas members in the Gaza Strip, saying the demolitions sent a message that "their deeds have a price".

Troops also pursued the crackdown in Jenin where Israeli armour backed by helicopters surrounded a refugee camp which Israel calls a hotbed for Islamic militants.

UN official killed in Jenin

A senior official working for a United Nations relief agency was shot dead in a refugee camp in Jenin on Friday, Palestinian hospital officials said. A Reuters cameraman saw the body of the man, an Irish national, after a gun battle broke out in the area between Israeli forces and Palestinian gunmen. Doctors said he worked for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) in the refugee camp.

Reuters

Suicide bomber kills 11 Israelis

TIMOTHY HERITAGE
JERUSALEM, NOVEMBER 21

A SUSPECTED Palestinian suicide bomber killed at least 11 other people when he blew himself up on a crowded commuter bus during the Thursday morning rush hour in Jerusalem, police and rescue workers said.

Hospital officials said children on their way to school were among more than 49 people wounded in the first major attack since PM Ariel Sharon called elections for January

28 after his coalition with centre-Left Labour collapsed.

Rescue workers said the bomber apparently set off his explosives at the front of the bus as it headed into town.

A charred torso hung out through the hole where one of the windows used to be, as rescue workers wheeled stretchers to the door of the bus to look for more wounded.

It was the first suicide bombing since November 4, when a bomber killed two people in a shopping centre in a small town near Jerusalem, the first since June.

Earlier on Thursday, Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles backed by helicopter gunships rumbled into the southern Gaza Strip and blew up the home of a senior Palestinian militant.

Israel launched the raid near the town of Khan Younis after its housing minister told Washington that work on a Middle East peace plan should wait until after January's election, further dimming hopes of a quick end to two years of violence.

A State Department spokesman said the US would take Israel's view into account. —Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS.

22 NOV 2002

The recent victory (363 of 550 seats) of the year-old Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by Recep Erdogan in Turkey's parliamentary elections has given rise to concern by the country's secularist establishment and Western allies. Is this because of the AKP's Islamist roots? Apparently.

Some political analysts explain this sweeping victory by an Islamist party in secular Turkey as an instance of the emerging Muslim mood across the world caused by American policy aimed at Muslims in general and Iraq in particular. Others link the AKP's triumph with the global Islamic upsurge. But Erdogan has vehemently denied his party has any Islamic ambitions. His deputy, Abdullah Gul, is on record as having said that the AKP would support a "US strike on Iraq provided it has UN backing". The AKP apparently comes across as a federation of Centre/Right forces, including an Islamist minority. It also deserves mention that in the last two elections, voters gave a couple of untried parties a chance but they failed to deliver and sank under the weight of corruption and mismanagement. And the AKP cashed in on this disenchantment among voters.

It is also worth noting that despite the AKP's victory, Erdogan is currently banned from holding political office because he once recited "Jihad-like poetry". Could he then be practising "Takkiye" — through which Muslims can hide their true feelings for the good of the faith?

Whatever the answer, it isn't true that with the AKP's victory an Islamic party has won an election for the first time in Turkey's secular history. During the 1990s, the country witnessed a row between Islamists and secularists over the emergence of an Islamic leader who came to power through elections. With Neomettin Erbakan's arrival in 1997, Turkey seemed to return to political democracy of the individualistic sort with its universal equal suffrage, its representative parliaments and its ministerial responsibilities. This became evident from the then Turkish National Security Council warning Prime Minister Erbakan about his government's pro-Islamic leaning. Such warning actually undermined Turkey's political democracy through which Erbakan, a veteran Islamic leader, became Prime Minister.

True, Erbakan had Islamist ambitions, but he also had a popular mandate to rule the country. Even Bulent Ecevit at the time overstepped the bounds of decency when he asked Erbakan to either toe the official line of Kamal Ata-

Talking Turkey

With the coming to power of Recep Erdogan's party, the country may rise above the humiliation it has suffered from its Western allies, writes SK SADAR NAYEEM



ALL SMILES: Recep Erdogan waving to supporters on arrival at a party parliamentary group session. — AFP.

turk or leave. A furious Erbakan then rightly asked, "Are governments in Turkey formed in parliament or in the National Security Council? Are not laws made in parliament? Then how could the military-dominated Council warn a democratically elected Prime Minister? Not a single Western ally of Turkey then asked, 'Was it a democracy?'"

Such indeed was the process of political democracy Turkey witnessed after 1922. The ruling elite led by Mustafa Kamal Ataturk chose to operate democratically but tactically, since Ataturk believed in a political ideology whose mythic core, in its various permutations, was a form of populist ultra-nationalism.

Indeed, Turkey was rapidly nationalised under Ataturk's dictatorship. The old imperial Ottoman tradition was destroyed with the overthrow of the Sultanate and the expulsion of Mohammad VI in 1922 and Turkish institutions were pried loose from their historic Muslim settings and endowed with a purely ultra-secular and national character.

The senior commanders of the armed forces always saw themselves as the custodians of the "secular and democratic" traditions laid down by Ataturk. Turkey was made republican and democratic but nominally. A "fundamental law" of 1921 proclaimed the doctrine of popular sovereignty and vested supreme authority in a National Assembly. On the other hand, an elaborated constitution of 1925 provided for the election of the assembly by universal suffrage and for its choice, every fourth

year, of a President of the Republic. But Ataturk ensured his election to the presidency, dictated his policies and controlled the assembly as the chief of the People's Party, the only political outfit in the country, by the reason of personal prowess which attended his military successes and his continuing leadership of the army. That was the best example of nationalist dictatorship at work.

No doubt, Ataturk made Turkey proudly self-reliant. The country pursued its own interests and tolerated no external interference by tearing up the Treaty of Sevres and imposing on unwilling foreigners the Treaty of Lausanne. It succeeded in ridding itself of the political and economic tutelage of other powers. To achieve these successes, a modern nation needed to make religion a private and not a public concern. But a democratic system doesn't allow for the means Ataturk adopted to bring about the astounding change.

There are numerous instances where religions are not solely responsible for breeding fundamentalists. Fundamentalism can fuel the tactical operation of a "democratic and secularist" set-up which may go to considerable lengths to camouflage the extent of its hostility to liberalism and democracy to ultimately impose its authoritarianism.

But despite the change, the Turks continued to be Muslim. Reacting to Ataturk's oppressive ways, Muslim Kurds rose in revolt during 1924-25. This also paved the way for the re-emergence from obscu-

city of a "union and progressive" party which had guided Turkish affairs during and just before World War I. A "Republican Progressive" party was formed in opposition to the new regime. But Ataturk put down the Kurd revolt and unleashed a reign of terror against political adversaries, exiling some and executing others.

Back in 1997, when democratically elected Prime Minister Erbakan was asked to respect democracy and toe Ataturk's official "secularist" line, many secularists joined ranks with the pro-Western army which believed Erbakan did not have the mandate to raise the profile of Islam in public life. During that period anti-Erbakan demonstrations were staged by the military organisation in Istanbul's central Taksim Square. The military dominated NSC became worried about some reports that appeared in prestigious newspapers like *Sabah* and *Milliyet* that Islamist vows were being taught to children to overthrow the secularist system and wage war against Ataturk's atheism. The NSC then found the happenings evidence of a "dangerous Islamic upsurge".

There was indication enough of Islamist parties gaining ground, especially when Erbakan's Islamist Welfare Party got six Istanbul districts in local elections in 1990 and captured 40 seats in the 450-member Turkish parliament in 1991. That was the time the US-educated Premier Miss Tansu Ciller had to publicly declare, in order to garner public support, "Thank God, I

am a Muslim." The leaders of even mainstream political parties took extra care to be noticed going to mosques. Women were again being seen in ankle-length black robes and the circulation of Islamic newspapers were being increased by the day. These developments were seen by Western analysts as "a belated reaction against Ataturk's reforms 75 years ago".

Modern democratic liberals in their overreaction to the emergence of religious groups forget one vital point: that any attempt to crush right-leaning groups by enforcing a ban on them is bound to backfire. Further, Turkey has too often been snubbed by the more prosperous Nato allies whose interest it defends and whose company it craves. The European Community has always fended off its bid for membership. Such was Turkey's humiliation that even Western commentators had to admit that "for decades, large Greek and Armenian-American lobbies in the USA have frequently let grievances against the Turks going back to the days of the Ottomans get in the way of sound policy, common sense and simple fairness". Being Muslim-dominated, Turkey has never been given the respect and lasting acceptance it deserves by Western powers.

Under these circumstances, Erdogan's AKP might have learnt important lessons from history. It has already declared that its priority lies in giving a strong government that can lead Turkey out of its present economic difficulties. Further, as the editorial in *The Statesman* of 10 November said, "The AKP's victory is linked to the non-performance of an old and doddering Ecevit, who led a fractious coalition which spent its time quarrelling while the Turkish lira reached an all-time low. Another issue is religious freedom, as controls on religious expression instituted in Turkey since the days of Kamal Ataturk appear somewhat archaic and excessive in today's context... What may be happening in Turkey now with the AKP's victory is a kind of restoration of balance".

But there is a problem. Turkey, promised membership of the European Union 35 years ago, hasn't found a place on the list. In March 1997, at a European Christian Democrats get-together, a prominent member, Wilfred Martens, was quoted as saying, "The European Union is in the process of building a civilisation in which Turkey has no place." Perhaps after such humiliation, Turkey may not feel so bad being banished to the Islamic world.

(The author is a freelance writer.)



GLOBESCAN

Second round in Bahrain

DUBAI: Bahrainis went to the polls on Thursday for a second round of parliamentary elections which could give two female candidates out of 42 contestants a chance of winning. Polling stations opened at 8 a.m. local time. The first round



of parliamentary elections in Bahrain in almost a decade gave the victory last week to 19 male candidates, including 11 Islamists. Six other female candidates were knocked out of the elections. Only half of the 40 parliamentary seats were chosen on Oct. 24. A candidate, Lateefa al-Guoud (46), who is running in the southern region, won 1,204 votes in the first round of elections. Her rival, Jassen al Saidi, a preacher, was ahead of her by 163 votes. The other female candidate who has made it to the run-off, Fawzia al Ruwaie, won half her rival Yousif Zainal's votes. Ms. Al-Guoud stands a good chance of winning a seat in Parliament which will make her the first directly-elected parliamentarian in the Arab Gulf region. She is running as an independent candidate (*the picture shows a woman voter at a polling booth preparing to cast her ballot*). — DPA

W. ASIA / 12 JEWISH SETTLERS KILLED IN AMBUSH

Israel pounds Gaza in retaliatory attacks

HEBRON (WEST BANK), NOV. 16. Palestinian militants raked Israeli troops and settlers with massive gunfire late on Friday in a carefully orchestrated ambush, killing 12 Israelis and wounding 15 in Hebron, a divided city long plagued by religious tensions and flashes of furious violence.

Three of the attackers were killed during the shooting, said Maj. Gen. Moshe Kaplinski, army commander responsible for the West Bank.

Hours later, Israeli military helicopters fired missiles into Gaza City, hitting a metal workshop in a congested area, witnesses said. The army said it was used by Palestinian militants to manufacture weapons.

The Israelis were emerging from Sabbath prayers in the Tomb of the Patriarchs, the traditional burial place of the Biblical Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in downtown He-

bron, and were walking back to the nearby settlement called Kiryat Arba when Palestinians fired assault rifles and hurled grenades from a building inside a Hebron neighbourhood close by, Gen. Kaplinski said.

A nearby army post and soldiers rushing to the scene were also caught in the ambush, the sources said. "There was gunfire from left and right, from every possible angle, they were shooting at us from above," one man, who gave his name only as Arik, told Army Radio. "The group of Jews were slaughtered."

In the Shati refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, dozens of Islamic Jihad supporters rushed into the streets in celebration, some firing in the air. "This is retaliation for the daily crimes and ugly massacres committed by the Zionist occupation against our people," one armed man said over loudspeaker.

Hours later, Israeli helicopters fired missiles into Gaza City, hitting a metal workshop in the Daraj neighbourhood, the flames and black smoke visible throughout downtown Gaza City. Ambulances and fire fighting crews rushed to the scene but there were no immediate reports of injuries.

Explosive violence in Hebron can have wider implications. The city is a tinderbox of tension where politics meets religion. The Muslims here are among the most devout and the Jewish settlers among the most radical, and there are daily provocations and no neighbourly relations between the two sides. The attack comes five days after a Palestinian gunman killed five people, including two small boys, on an Israeli kibbutz, and it was sure to increase pressure on the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, to respond decisively. — AP



Palestinian youths hurl stones at an Israeli army tank releasing smoke for camouflage, as it patrols the main street of the northern West Bank town of Nablus on Saturday. — AP

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THE HINDU

Moderate named Turkish PM

ANKARA, NOV. 16. Turkey's President on Saturday designated Abdullah Gul, a pro-Western moderate in a party with Islamic roots, as Prime Minister and asked him to form the country's first majority government in more than a decade.

Mr. Gul, however, is regarded as a temporary appointment until party leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, can take power.

Mr. Erdogan is the undisputed leader of the Justice and Development Party, which swept November 3 elections. But he is barred from the top post be-



Abdullah Gul

cause of a conviction for inciting religious hatred. He is expected to dominate a new government until legislators can change the constitution to allow him to take power. The Turkish President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, named Mr. Gul two days after Parliament opened and swore in new legislators. Mr. Gul strongly hinted after his

appointment that he would step down when Mr. Erdogan is eligible to head the government. "Today, there is an abnormal situation," Mr. Gul said.

"So, it is our absolute duty to normalise this abnormal situation."

On Saturday, it was Mr. Erdogan who announced the new government's action plan.

He promised a series of changes in laws to expand freedom of rights, religion and expression and promote a more transparent government. — AP

Libya gets \$3.5b from Iraq to shelter Saddam's family

Vijay Dutt & Agencies
London, November 16

PRESIDENT SADDAM Hussein has worked out a \$3.5 billion deal with Libya to provide political asylum to his family and leading members of his regime if a war breaks out or a coup takes place in Baghdad.

The deal, however, does not include providing refuge to Saddam or Uday, his eldest son.

"Word of Saddam's deal with Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Gaddafi emerged after General Ali Hasan al-Majid, a cousin and trusted member of Saddam's clan, visited the Libyan capital on September 8," *The Times* reported.

A month ago, Iraqi officials visiting Damascus had agreed on an overland escape route for Saddam's family and friends, said *Times*. They would travel from Tikrit, home of the Saddam clan, to the Syrian border via the Badiyat al-Sham desert, which divides Syria from Iraq.

If Saddam or Uday were to seek political asylum in Libya,

Col Gaddafi would come under intense international pressure, particularly from Washington, to hand them over for war crimes. He has no interest in being part of the tussle between Iraqi President and the US.

Western intelligence services assume that Saddam will stay "to the bitter end" if Iraq is attacked by a US-led coalition.

Analysts said that this was the first indication that Saddam Hussain is now facing up to the prospect of being toppled from power.

Quoting diplomatic sources, the *Times* report said if Saddam felt his regime was about to collapse, he would do his utmost to see that his family escaped, especially Qusay Hussein, Saddam's second and favourite son, as well as Ali, his youngest son and his grandchildren.

The senior officials to go to Libya would include Tariq Aziz, the deputy Prime Minister, Naji Sabri, the foreign minister and Izzat Ibrahim al-Duri, deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council.

Two months ago, Abbas Khalaf, Iraq's Ambassador to Moscow, denied that Saddam would ever abandon his country in time of need. This followed reports in France that Uday had gone to Moscow to seek a future refuge for him and Saddam.

While Intelligence sources claimed that the French reports were not credible, they confirmed that the evidence of a deal for Saddam's family to go to Libya fitted in with information gleaned in recent weeks.

Meanwhile, declaring spot inspections would begin on November 27, chief UN arms inspector Hans Blix has warned Saddam to disclose all his weapons of mass destruction in a report next month.

"This offers a last opportunity for Iraq to declare what they have," Blix told a news conference on the eve of his trip to Baghdad. "An omission can be very serious." He urged the US or any country with knowledge of secret Iraqi weapons programs to hand over evidence to inspectors.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 NOV 2002

Rise of the AKP in Turkey

By Arshi Khan

*Arshi Khan
Turkey
11-10-10
16/11*

THE TURKISH general elections of November 3 for the 22nd Parliament have not only wiped out four of the five major parties but have also given 363 of 550 seats to a party which is an eyesore for the secularists. The Justice and Development Party (AKP) is now in a very strong position to form a stable Government. The coalition Governments of the liberal democrats, particularly the outgoing regime, completely failed in the eyes of the voters on foreign policy, economy and finance, unemployment, Cyprus and the Kurdish issues. Though no party has made any strong commitment to bring any kind of radical shift in Turkish policies, the voters have preferred a change.

The AKP's sweep is seen as mainly due to the failure of the previous Government in the fields of employment, devaluation of currency, inflation and the European Union's rejection of Turkey's demand for accession. But the election of 550 new Deputies (only 50 were re-elected from the earlier stock) from only two parties — AKP (centre-right) and the Republican People's Party (centre-left) — sends the message that the voters want the new party, AKP, to initiate reforms more independently and strongly. A coalition of different sections, particularly the middle and lower middle class who are neither staunchly Kemalists nor religious nationalists, the AKP is a grouping of a very moderate kind of conservative democrats. Headed by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, former Istanbul Mayor who served a one-year jail sentence and was barred from contesting the elections, the AKP cannot really be called the reincarnation of the banned Virtue Party or the Welfare Party of Necmettin Erbakan and Recai Kutan. It has many disagreements with traditional centre-right parties which stressed upon the issue of identity. The AKP's main campaign focus was on economic issues and not religious matters. As a result, businessmen from the secularist club sided with it. Even the RPP (the only other party in Parliament) leader has good expectations from Mr. Erdogan.

The AKP struck a chord with the voters who were disappointed with the established parties. Leaders such

as Bulent Ecevit of the Democratic Left Party, Tansu Chiller of the True Path Party, Mesut Yilmaz of the Motherland Party and Devlet Bahcheli of the National Action Party were accused of mismanaging the country in the fields of finance, market, diplomacy and development. There are many instances where centre-right parties have aligned together to cover up for their lapses. In a

was accused in 1999 of maintaining ties with the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). The electoral board barred the existing Democratic People's Party (DEHAP) leaders, Murat Bozlak and Akin Birdal, from contesting the elections because both had served prison sentences for speeches made in the 1990s.

A majority of the Turks are victims of economic breakdown. About 60

bombers in the self-proclaimed no-fly zone in northern Iraq. This has caused worries that the Kurds in Turkey might also get ideas.

On the demand for joining the E.U., Turkey has been kept waiting. On October 7, the Turkish Platform (representing 200 NGOs) that supports joining the E.U. submitted a memorandum to the latter seeking dates for negotiations on the issue. Two days later, the E.U. approved a crucial report on 13 states recommending that 10 should join it in 2004 without any timeframe for Turkey to start negotiation talks. Moreover, the Turkish position in the European security rim is more determined by the Europeans which does not go down well with the Turkish public. The E.U.'s approach to divided Cyprus falls completely in line with the European fraternity. The Turkish approach to Cyprus has not resulted in a mutually agreed settlement of disputes.

The deployment of Turkish armed forces in Afghanistan has also been a burden. On the other hand, the Turkish honeymoon with Israel over water and defence has affected Turkey's image in the Middle East particularly on the Palestinian and Iraqi sanctions issues. All these issues appear to have had a tremendous impact on the majority of the Turks who now expect to gain a reasonable space in the domain of democratic governance within and at regional and international levels.

The AKP has already said it will conform to the IMF guidelines with some modifications and that it is eager to be a part of the E.U. It has said in its 87-page manifesto that it would "strengthen military and economical pacts" and "meet E.U. requirement" and "continue" Turkey's current position on the European Security and Defence Policy issue. It has even promised to maintain close contact with the U.S. and good relations with Russia. It also said it will "give a special importance to Turkey's relations with Islamic countries."

Survival of the AKP now depends more on the Turkish generals and the secularist club.

(The writer is Senior Lecturer, Centre for Federal Studies, Hamdard University, New Delhi.)

The main campaign focus of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was on economic issues and not religious matters... This struck a chord with the voters who were disappointed with the established parties.

1991 survey conducted by the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) on the credibility of some institutions, 41.9 per cent said they did not trust Parliament. A similar survey in 2001 by the Turkish Social and Economic Studies Foundation (TESEV) found that 63 per cent of those polled did not trust Parliament.

The secularist club is pursuing the "doctrine of pre-emption" not based on material facts but on imagination. People are also worried over the established practice of closing down parties which are formed for giving space to ethnic and religious segments. Parties formed by those Turks who want to maintain their Muslim identity in the private domain have been banned on several pretexts. Mr. Erbakan, who has been in Turkish politics as an Opposition or coalition partner since 1969, is perceived as an Islamist despite the fact that he has never challenged the establishment at the level of civic community. Some of the so-called leaders are behind the bars and some are barred from contesting elections. Several pro-Kurdish parties were banned not only under the pressure of the army but also due to the opposition from hardcore nationalists. The pro-Kurdish party, HADEP, quit the election in September fearing it would be outlawed before the vote in a case pending before the Constitution Court. It

per cent of the 68 million population is below the poverty line. Financial crises in 2001 added another two million people to the ranks of the jobless. Turkey is now unable to even pay the interests on its debts with its current tax revenues. Per capita income decreased to about \$2,000 while the debt amount per capita rose to \$3,000. The share of public debt has increased to 85 per cent of the GNP. The E.U. standard requires it not to exceed 60 per cent. The Government has to pay \$32 billion in domestic debt interests and \$7 billion as foreign debt interest in 2003 without boosting inflation and interests or offending the IMF. There are some who see debts increasing to as much as \$73 billion. The debt stock total of \$145 billion in 1990 grew to \$172 billion in 2000. This year it rose to \$207 billion. The IMF is expected to rescue the Turkish economy but it gave \$31 billion in exchange for tough measures affecting the poor and the middle class. Turkey has also lost over \$100 billion due to the U.N. sanctions against Iraq.

Coalition Governments, particularly after 1991, have been on very good terms with the U.S., the E.U. and Israel but this has not promoted the state's credibility in the eyes of the Turkish society. The U.S. has been using the Incirlik base in eastern Turkey to support Iraqi Kurds against the Iraqi Government and to fly its

IRAQ'S ACCEPTANCE DEFUSES CRISIS

IRAQ'S ACCEPTANCE OF the United Nations Security Council resolution 1441 — and thereby its acquiescence in the resumption of weapons inspections — has, at least for now, defused a potential international crisis. The letter from Iraq's Foreign Minister, Najis Sabri, to the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, through which this acceptance was conveyed, was not totally unambiguous on the critical question as to whether Baghdad would permit inspection teams to visit any and all sites that they desired to although a relatively minor condition — that at least some of the inspectors should be Arab — appears to have been dealt with *en passant*. But Baghdad has affirmed that it would cooperate with procedures which adhered to a code of conduct enunciated in an agreement between itself and the Secretary-General, that was struck just as the crisis was peaking in September and October this year and which provides for extensive inspections. Notable in this context is the fact that Baghdad appears to have implicitly indicated that it would not even block the implementation of those procedures that it believes are suspect under international law. Besides its reservations on the legality of these procedures, the only suggestion of reserve in Iraq's statement of its intention to cooperate with the inspection teams lies in its plea that the sovereignty and dignity of the country should be respected. More pertinently, Baghdad has accepted the time-table for the resumption of inspections as per which teams from the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will make their first visit to Iraq on November 18.

A clear idea of whether the crisis has indeed abated can only be formed after December 8, the date by which Baghdad has agreed that it will provide detailed information on the weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme that it carried out in the past and which it now

insists has been fully dismantled. The U. S. administration — which has not entirely shed its desire to use Iraq's non-cooperation with the inspections as the trigger for efforts directed at a regime change in Baghdad — has already stated that it would measure the disclosures to be made by Iraq against the information in its own possession. Washington could well mount a fresh effort to depict Iraq as being in material breach of its obligations to the U.N. if the details to be divulged by Iraq before December 8 fall short of the information that the U. S. claims its intelligence efforts have unearthed. While the U.S. has agreed that any finding that Iraq is in material breach of its obligations will not automatically trigger military action, it is reasonable to presume that Washington will highlight every discrepancy howsoever minor in order to establish Iraq's culpability. It was opportune in this context that Mr. Annan has pointed out that any such finding must be traceable to serious or flagrant attempts to obstruct the inspection teams. Hans Blix who heads UNMOVIC has also underlined that he did not want the Security Council to micro-manage the inspection programme even as he promised to report to it any infractions on the part of Iraq.

Iraq's sincerity in respect of its commitment to dismantle its WMD capability will be tested in the coming months. But the international community will also keenly observe whether the U.S. is willing to abide by the global consensus that the dismantling of Iraq's WMD potential is the sole, not just the main, objective of universal concern. The U. S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has stated that Washington's other objective in regard to Iraq — that of changing the nature of its regime — would be achieved if Baghdad did finally and completely give up its WMD programme. That being so, the rest of the global community must not permit any slackening of the multilateralist imperatives that are currently in operation.

WEST ASIA TURMOIL-II

Need To Move From Confrontation To Cooperation

BY GURMEET KANWAL

59-8
Nothing polarised the Arab world more than the Iran-Iraq war, which went on for over a decade. The US clearly supported Iraq. Syria and Libya supported Iran, not for sympathy with the Ayatollahs, but out of enmity towards other Arab nations. Jordan supported Iraq and, like Syria, leaned towards the USSR for some time. Saudi Arabia, Oman and the smaller Gulf states continued to follow policies of moderation in an environment largely given over to extremism. The war, which was fought largely for physical control of the controversial Shatt-al-Arab waterway (Iraq's only outlet to the Persian Gulf), followed a grotesquely seesaw course, marked by quicksilver upsurges alternating with long stretches of dreary sabre-rattling. The war left the economies of both the nations in a shambles, drastically affected oil production and endangered world shipping in the area.

Iran-Iraq war

While the erstwhile superpowers did not get directly engaged, they were covertly involved in the war. Arms supplies were canalised into the Gulf through client states in the region. There were accusations of chemical agents having been used, though hotly denied by both the sides. The war had escalated to a point where cities and civilian targets were being freely bombed. Since both Iran and Iraq had adopted rigid positions for ending the war, none of the numerous mediation bids, including one by the non-aligned nations, succeeded. The mediation bid of the UN Secretary General in September 1987 also failed to evoke a positive response. International peace initiatives can never succeed as long as warring states maintain their recalcitrant attitudes. It is perhaps due to the economic crisis faced by both the sides that this senseless war eventually ended in a stalemate.

Soon after the end of its war with Iran, Saddam Hussein's Iraq renewed its old claim to a large chunk of Kuwaiti territory and oil fields. As the international community took no note, Iraq invaded Kuwait and annexed it in 1990. This led to the consolidation of world opinion against Iraq. The UN and her allies formed a coalition to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait and eventually succeeded in doing so in just four days of fighting on land. However, the land war was preceded by a massive aerial bombardment over 38 days, which resulted in the decimation of the Iraqi war machine and industry. With economic sanctions imposed against it, Iraq's economy was shattered and its people suffered immensely.

Since 1991, the US and its allies have enforced two no-fly zones over Iraq — the southern no-fly zone below the 33rd Parallel and the northern above the 36th Parallel. No Iraqi aircraft is allowed to fly in these zones. Several times during

the last decade, Iraqi air defence assets and sites suspected of being engaged in producing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) have been bombed. For over a decade, Iraq has been under a virtual aerial siege. A stage has once again been reached where the US and the United Kingdom are convinced that Iraq is continuing to defy the international community and is engaged in manufacturing and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction. The US is demanding a regime change in Iraq and has threatened to once again launch an assault on the country — with or

12/4
Israel. The government in Tel Aviv during the mid-1990s was also more amenable to negotiating peace with the Arab nations, to solve the problems of Palestine and Jerusalem. In a welcome step forward, the Israelis had agreed to withdraw from the Gaza strip. However, the present government, led by Ariel Sharon, has once again adopted military means and appears to have stalled all efforts towards a final solution. The Arab-Israeli clock has been set back by many decades.

Instability and superpower rivalry in West Asia does not augur well for India's security. Combined with the



without the willing cooperation of the international community and the UN Security Council.

Perhaps the thorniest problem in West Asia today is the deadlock over Palestine. Though the world generally accepts the Palestinians' right to an autonomous state, the issue is still to be finally resolved due to four main reasons. Firstly, there is phenomenal disunity among the Arabs, resulting in the lack of a common platform and approach to the issue.

Palestinians

Secondly, the PLO's long-standing refusal to accept the right of Israel to exist, till it finally did so rather reluctantly in September 1993. Thirdly, there is marked factionalism within the PLO, with different groups pulling in different directions. And, finally, for four decades Israel refused to accept all offers for negotiations till the PLO accepted her sovereignty and her security against Arab adventurism was guaranteed. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's historic handshake with chairman Yasser Arafat in September 1993 changed the course of history but has so far led only to a temporary reprieve.

Though Yasser Arafat has once again regained a tenuous control over the PLO, the organisation is in a state of disarray, spread as the factions are in many countries. It was with immense effort that the PLO was finally persuaded to play what was commonly called its "last card" — that is, the recognition of

escalation of force levels in the Indian Ocean, the heightened tensions in West Asia can ultimately lead to a spillover of the intra-regional conflicts to adjacent areas, directly affecting India. India must safeguard its interest in the face of growing threats. Like the West, India too is dependent on Gulf oil to a large extent for its industry and the development of its economy. The long-drawn conflicts of the last two decades of the 20th century forced India to buy oil at far greater cost from distant markets, with no assurance of guaranteed supplies. The 1991 oil shock almost completely wrecked India's foreign exchange reserves. The present situation is even more critical. India now imports almost 70 per cent of the oil required to fuel its growing economy. Since the early 1970s, Indian companies have been winning a large number of contracts to execute many turnkey projects in West Asia. The perpetual state of conflict in the region has virtually sealed the prospects of any new contracts. Also, payments for the ongoing projects are not being made on schedule, leading to un-absorbable losses for the Indian firms involved, and a dwindling foreign exchange income from the region.

The number of Indian workers employed in the region has been growing by leaps and bounds. The Gulf War had adversely affected the sizable remittances of non-resident Indians, as well as new employment avenues for Indian workers. The downtrend in the quantum of re-

mittances was reflected in a drastic decline in India's foreign exchange reserves in 1990-91. India's developing economy can ill afford the impact of the strife-torn West Asian situation and it is in India's interest to work for a speedy resolution of the various crises. The West Asian markets offer lucrative opportunities for Indian industry and the country's large labour force. India is one of the few countries whose mediation is acceptable to almost all sides in West Asia. India has a crucial role to play in West Asia to realise its foreign policy goals.

War clouds

The West Asian crescent, comprising almost 60 per cent of the world's Muslim population, forms a complex political jigsaw puzzle — as soon as some pieces are put together through laborious, painstaking effort, some others quite unpredictably fall apart. West Asia has had more than its fair share of political and military trouble over the last four decades. Both the erstwhile superpowers had chosen this area as a testing ground for their political ideologies and their weapons and were leaning dangerously towards direct confrontation. The promotion of intra-regional conflict, the exploitation of domestic dissensions and the use of surrogate states to further their own aims and objectives, were short-sighted policies that resulted in tragic consequences. However, the machinations of the erstwhile superpowers would not have been possible without the active cooperation and support of the West Asian countries that were seeking to serve their own vested interests.

War clouds are once again hovering over West Asia — it appears to be more a question of when rather than whether. Round two of the Gulf War will have adverse geopolitical repercussions. In case the endgame is not skillfully played out, it may be the battle in the much-speculated clash of civilisations. The West Asian nations need to rise above their petty squabbles and unite in their efforts to bring back a semblance of stability to the war-ravaged region. The century of conflicts and balance of power rivalries is over. The West Asian leadership owes it to posterity to make the 21 century a century of cooperation, and not one of renewed confrontation.

In the long run, a stable and trouble free West Asia. It is imperative that the West Asian nations bury the hatchet once and for all and begin anew the rehabilitation and development of their shattered economies, to secure for all their peoples peace, prosperity and dignity. As an emerging power sharing a littoral with the region, India has an important role to play in acting as a catalyst for West Asian stability through negotiations and dialogue rather than confrontation.

(Concluded)

New Turkish leader + 10-12 8/11 non-committal on U.S. bases

ANKARA (TURKEY), NOV. 7. The leader of Turkey's winning party refused on Wednesday to commit to allowing U.S. warplanes to use Turkish bases in any war with Iraq and declined to say whether his country's close military ties with Israel would be maintained.

In an exclusive interview with the Associated Press, Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party said Turks considered Israeli policies toward Palestinians to be "terrorism," but added that Turkey would not link its close economic relations with Israel to popular anger.

Mr. Erdogan is the power broker in the Justice Party, which won a massive election victory on Sunday. He is ineligible to serve as Prime Minister, because he was convicted of reading a poem that courts deemed anti-secular. His party has been meeting throughout the week to discuss who will become Prime Minister, but Mr. Erdogan will most certainly continue to be its most influential voice.

He once belonged to a pro-Islamic party that the military forced out of from power for confronting the secular establishment. He has made it clear, however, that the Justice Party is looking to follow a moderate, pro-Western stand.

And he says that while his party opposes a war in Iraq, it would respect decisions taken by the United Nations. "The most preferred result is to resolve this issue in peace," Mr. Erdogan said. "We don't want blood, tears or death."

Turkey, which borders Iraq, was a key launching pad for U.S. aircraft during the 1991 Gulf War. The United States already has some 50 aircraft in southern Turkey at Incirlik air base and would be eager to use the sprawling NATO facility if there is a conflict with Iraq.

Mr. Erdogan spoke as the head of Turkey's military, Gen. Hilmi Zkok, was in the United States to discuss Iraq.

The military is expected to have a dominant say in crucial security or foreign policy issues, such as Iraq and Israel. Asked if the new Government would agree to a request to use Turkish bases, Mr. Erdogan said: "I don't find it appropriate to talk about indefinite results." — AP



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the Justice and Development Party or AKP (left), with the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, Robert Pearson, in Ankara on Thursday. — AP

8 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

Iraq: U.S. going for the final push

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, NOV. 7. Arguing that this is the last chance for Iraq to avoid war and stressing that the revised resolution on Iraq "deserves consensus support", the U.S. formally introduced its draft in the United Nations Security Council setting the stage for a final diplomatic push on the issue after eight weeks.

The Bush administration, in agreeing to changes proposed by other permanent members, notably France and Russia, has been credited with making major and significant concessions. Yet there are concerns of 'hidden' triggers which Washington could use at a later date to start a military strike against the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein. The U.S. hopes that

its resolution will clear the Security Council by tomorrow. It needs nine votes out of 15 members and with no veto. Among the non-permanent members, Mexico and Singapore have said that their Governments are studying the draft; and that Norway, Colombia and Bulgaria are said to have lined up behind the United States.

Syria is still a defiant holdout and is expected to remain that way. The thinking is that when it comes down to the final vote, there is going to be no veto cast.

But the question remains if any of the Permanent Members are going to abstain which would then automatically weaken the resolution. It is for this reason that the U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, has been calling for unity within the Council to send the proper message to Baghdad. The

Iraq: U.S. going for the final push

United States is quite aware of the concerns of countries like Russia, France and China. And today in New York the draft resolution will be discussed in great detail on the specifics and language. But Washington is not willing to go on record to say that its draft on Iraq authorises military action. All that the top American envoy to the U.N., John Negroponte, would say is that the U.S. President, George W. Bush, believes that the use of force would be a "last resort" and that Mr. Bush wanted to give the United Nations and the Security Council "a chance".

Analysts are making the point that in its own way the United States has retained the right to use force if United Nations weapons inspectors say that Baghdad is not complying with the terms of the resolution.

Netanyahu sworn in as Israeli foreign minister

US draft on Iraq ready

By Christine Hauser

Jerusalem: Former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was sworn in as Israel's new foreign minister on Wednesday, with plans to challenge Ariel Sharon as Israel's leader with a set-tough policy towards the Palestinians.

The 53-year-old right-winger, popularly known as "Bibi", took the standard parliamentary oath a day after Prime Minister Sharon called an early election in the wake of the centre-left Labour Party's defection from his coalition.

Mr Netanyahu replaces Shimon Peres, who quit along with five other Labour ministers last week in a dispute over funding for Jewish settlements on the occupied land.

By taking the foreign portfolio in the minority government, Mr Netanyahu returns to a political stage he largely abandoned after Labour's Ehud Barak ousted him as prime minister in 1999.

Before the nationwide vote, Israel's two main parties—Mr Sharon's right-wing Likud and Labour—will hold leadership elections. Mr Netanyahu said he would challenge Mr Sharon for the Likud leadership in a party primary expected within a month.

Palestinian officials and European Union diplomats voiced concern that Mr Sharon's decision to hold elections nine months ahead of schedule would stir more turmoil in the Middle East at

a time when Washington is threatening war with Iraq.

"This puts off any serious peace effort before the elections...Israeli political infighting, both between the parties and within each of the parties, will make progress impossible for now," an EU diplomat said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said he hoped Mr Netanyahu would stick to peace accords he signed with the Palestinians during his previous stints in the Israeli government.

In an attack on Wednesday, a Muslim militant from the Hamas group snuck into a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip and shot dead two settlers before a security guard killed him. The armed wing of Hamas said it struck to avenge recent Israeli killings.

Mr Netanyahu said on Tuesday he discussed with Mr Sharon a US-led peace "roadmap" calling for a Palestinian state after violence ends and the Palestinian Authority carries out reform.

"I will promise you one thing...by the end of 2003 there will not be a PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) terror state created here," Mr Netanyahu told Israel's Channel One.

"Our immediate problem today isn't the political problem with the Palestinians because there we simply need to end the process of conquering terror...Afterwards we can be free for the political issue." Reuters

United Nations: The United States plans to submit to the UN security council on Wednesday a new draft resolution on Iraqi disarmament which it says reflects the position expressed by other members but does not handcuff President George Bush from taking military action against Baghdad if it fails to cooperate with weapons inspectors, diplomats said.

France, which had earlier strongly opposed two American drafts and forced Washington to make changes, is said to be on board but its

diplomats say their final position would be known only after the draft is given to them and Paris takes a view on it.

The position of Russia and China on the new draft is not known.

A council meeting has been convened at 1030 hours (2100 IST) at which Washington is expected to distribute its draft to the members but the veto wielding permanent members are likely to be given the text earlier.

Diplomats expect a vote late tomorrow or Friday. PTI

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 NOV 2002

Autumn of the patriarch

In a revealing interview with STEPHEN FARRELL and ROBERT THOMSON, Ariel Sharon explains why, after Saddam Hussein has been dealt with, the Iranian regime must be toppled — and why he is the only man who can secure peace with the Arabs



LAST OF ISRAEL'S FOUNDING WARRIORS: Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in the Knesset before the no-confidence motion vote on Monday. — AFP

For a man in the midst of a political crisis, Ariel Sharon is eerily serene. The last of Israel's founding warriors, is explaining the fecundity of his cross-bred sheep and his frustration that a passion for classical music performances has been thwarted by a necessary security presence that makes the experience more theatrical than musical.

"I don't want to bother people," he says, with a modesty that is either absolutely genuine or political histrionics of the highest order. Mr Sharon, however, likes to convey the impression that he is the most reluctant of politicians, distracted from a career in law and a love of the land by a combination of duty and destiny, and looking forward to returning full-time to his fertile sheep who give birth three times every two years.

And yet this is the most dominant politician in the region, whose subtle (and not so subtle) changes in domestic tactics and international tack demand responses from virtually every government from Westminster to Washington. His career has tracked the rise and expansion of Israel; he has been personally involved in its military successes and blamed for acts of extreme brutality.

At 74, he is the master of his brief. He ticks every political box and makes sure that the message is not missed. The Palestinians are often "Arabs" — to describe them otherwise would imply an unintended acceptance of territorial legitimacy. He has the figures in front of him, but does the mental arithmetic anyway to explain that 646 Israelis have been killed during the violence of the past two years, which would be the equivalent of 6,460 deaths in Britain. He could have emphasised the extent of the human tragedy by citing the losses on the Palestinian side, but this is a region in which an "eye for an eye" has become "two eyes for an eye".

The state of relations in the region can be crudely described as a varying mixture of hope and fear. Rarely in recent times has there been less hope and more fear. Mr Sharon's sense of self-belief is rooted in his perceived reality of an Israel under constant threat from its enemies and unsure of the long-term loyalty of Arab neighbours with whom friendships have been formed.

"I know I have been portrayed as a general looking for war. Many other headlines speak of that. That's what people say. But I understand the importance of peace because I saw the horrors of war. That's how I see it. I lost my best friends in battles and I had to make decisions of life and death, of others and myself."

There is a strong possibility that there will be another war in the region some time soon, a war against Iraq. Mr Sharon is careful to distance himself from the planning in London and Washington: "We are not interfering in these things. We will support every decision that will be taken by President Bush and his ally, Prime Minister Blair, because we know maybe better than others the dangers of terror."

Washington is, indeed, hoping that Israel will do nothing, fearing that its involvement will undermine the tacit support of Arab allies. Mr Sharon indicates that he has agreement from the USA that taking out Iraq's missile capacity would be a priority of any military campaign. He cannot bring himself to rule out retaliation, but the strong hint is that if Iraq fired off a conventional Scud or two, Israel will sit out the conflict, but there would be an overwhelming response if there were a biological attack.

While Mr Sharon regards Iraq as "a very, very dangerous country led by an insane regime" (he then asks an aide in Hebrew if there is a stronger word than "insane"), he considers that Iran is a "centre of world terror", and that as soon as an Iraq conflict is concluded, he will push for Iran to be at the

top of the "to do" list: "Iran makes every effort to possess weapons of mass destruction on the one hand and ballistic missiles. That is a danger to the Middle East, to Israel, and a danger to Europe. They are working now on a ballistic missile [with a range] of 1,300km. They have almost reached this range already. They were talking in the past about 2,500km and even 5,000km. Later when they saw Europe was worried about that, they said they weren't going to develop the 2,500km."

He sees Iran as "behind terror all around the world" and a direct threat to Israel. He claims that it has sent rockets to Lebanon via Syria, and is a problem in Palestinian areas, where Iranian money supports extremists. His newest concern is within Israel itself, where he has fears about Iranian influence on a "small minority" of the country's one million Arabs. This is an extremely sensitive issue, given that Arabs already feel insecure in Israel, but Mr Sharon suggests that he will soon crack down on Islamic activists; a campaign that could change decisively the psychology of the country.

Apart from the lessons of war, Mr Sharon bases his political philosophy on his experience on his ranch, Sycamore Farm: "I believe that Jews and Arabs can live together. It's not an easy thing but I believe we can reach an agreement. I don't want to pretend about talking to Arabs because I meet Arabs, here and on our farm at home. I think I am one of the only ones here at the present time that will have the power and the strength to tell the citizens of Israel what they have to do and to make compromises and painful compromises, to look into their eyes and say that."

Often guarded in his words, he is not shy about suggesting that he is a man of destiny and hinting that, as only a Republican such as Richard Nixon could restore relations with China, only a proven warrior with a reputation for toughness can convince his country to do a lasting deal with the Palestinians. There are senior figures on the Left in Israel who concede that this is true, but

Palestinians argue that he has polarised opinion in the region and provided sustenance for radicals on both sides who thrive on conflict.

If it has become his destiny to deliver peace for Israel, it was not his intention to spend 28 years in the military and, until now, 28 years in politics: "If I go back to being very young I didn't think I was going to serve in the military for about 28 years and to be involved in all those problems. I started to study here at the university in Mount Scopus when I was 19 years old. I wanted to proceed as my father as an agronomist and a scientist and a farmer."

The conversation turns to sheep breeds, but, like so many incidental subjects in Jerusalem, the words are heavy with history. He talks of a 5,000-year-old sculpture of a ram's head which strongly resembles the sheep on his property. "We had the breed only in Israel, Jordan, Iraq and Syria. The only other place I saw the same kind was in Mongolia because the Mongols were in and out of this region for 200 years, and when they went back I believe they took some of them back." He is fascinated by the Mongolians' milking of mares. Has he drunk any fermented mare's milk? "I'm not going to admit to that — because once I admitted it and all the ultra orthodox attacked me. So I denied it, of course."

Twice seriously wounded in battle, Mr Sharon is fortunate to be alive, but his family has been blighted by accidental tragedy which has had no connection to the region's endless wars. His first wife, Margalit, was killed in a car accident in 1962, and his 11-year-old son Gur died in a shooting accident in 1967. The loss his second wife, Lily, Margalit's sister, to cancer three years ago clearly haunts him. Asked whether he felt the pain of the many, many families torn asunder by war, Mr Sharon appeared on the verge of weeping as he fumbled with his glasses with his right hand and averted his gaze.

"I feel the pain. I feel the pain. There are whole families who have disappeared.

Parents have lost their children and children have lost their parents."

If working at home, he uses an office whose shelves tell of his devotion to his late wife, his admiration for David Ben Gurion, the founding father of Israel, and mostly Hebrew texts. One of the few books in English is a biography of Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, which Mr Sharon has fond memories of visiting as a young man. He has particularly close relations with the country's outgoing prime minister, Bulent Ecevit, whose party was defeated in Sunday's elections.

News of that defeat was brought to Sharon during our interview. He sighed deeply, perhaps in sympathy for the defeat of an ally (at 77, Mr Ecevit is of the same generation), but also probably in realising that Israel will have to deal with a new government which has Islamic roots.

Relations with Europe as a whole are a vexed issue. Britain aside, most countries on the continent are, for him, far too sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. On the bloody war with the Palestinians, the central issue of his Prime Ministership, he offers alternately promise and threat, flexibility and rigidity, optimism and gloom. He offers general support for the principles of President Bush's road map toward peace — the White House blueprint for a provisional Palestinian state by 2003 and a full state by 2005. However, recent leaks from Mr Sharon's senior aides have cast serious doubt on the prospects for progress on key issues — notably calls for a freeze on Jewish settlements on the West Bank and in Gaza.

Settlements are an issue with which Mr Sharon is strongly identified, and when he talks of them he becomes emotional and passionate. Asked whether he still hopes to see one million Jews living on the West Bank — an ambition reportedly expressed to President Carter in 1979 — aware of the explosive implications such a quadrupling of the current number would have internationally, he responds: "I don't remember exactly what I said."

Of the settlers themselves, regarded by

much of the world and a sizeable chunk of the Israeli population as a serious obstacle to hopes of peace or a viable Palestinian state, he is proudly defensive, even fatherly, describing them as "the frontline of our defence against terror."

He is prepared, he says, to make compromises for a "permanent agreement" but is vague on the vision for such a plan. The kernel of his plan — the little he is prepared to reveal — is that the traditional international proposal for a return to the 1967 Green Line boundaries will not happen.

Of the other "painful concessions" he professes himself prepared to make, the rest is silence. "Once I say them that will be the start line of the negotiation and I don't think that should be done."

On Yasser Arafat, the man many believe Mr Sharon would prefer dead, he appears to have softened his line somewhat, with no mention of the recent White House and Israeli pronouncements that he is "irrelevant". While his wording may not appear particularly sympathetic to Mr Arafat, the Israeli leader's comments represent a significant change.

"[Mr Arafat] must be disconnected completely from the security/terror organisation and of course he should be fully disconnected from the control of the financial side because as long as he controls the financial side and the security organisation controlling terror it's very hard to expect that there will be reforms." Such reforms, he explains, are an absolute prerequisite for any form of Palestinian autonomy, which would be introduced in phases, with statehood the final destination. In order to reach the political process, there should be full cessation of terror, hostilities and incitement.

"You ask me if we are going to hold the sword all our lives. If we have to do it we will do it, but I hope that it won't be necessary. There are those among the Palestinians who understand that they will not be able to achieve anything by force. Those that are ready to speak peace, I am ready to talk and negotiate with...I am in contact with them now."

The one flicker of annoyance during the interview comes when he is asked whether he would shake hands with Mr Arafat, something he has always refused to do, having disapproved of the symbolic handshake when Mr Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin were brought together at the White House: "It's not a matter of shaking hands. This man is responsible for the murder of thousands of people. I was a soldier for many years — I know that in war civilians suffer or are even killed. But their targets are civilians. That is the problem."

Mr Sharon, too, stands accused of being responsible for civilian deaths, and is acutely aware that this reputation will survive his political passing. But he makes clear that he is not about to leave the scene anytime soon, as has been expected by even some of the canniest political analysts in Israel. As he has aged, he has become more certain that he, and he alone, can bring peace to Israel, if not the region: "I believe I will have to lead this nation still for several years to give answers and solutions to the issue of security, to the issue of the political process...I am going to run for the next elections."

Yet, if he loses the leadership of Likud or his party loses the next election to Labour, he has a romanticised vision of life as a rustic retiree. "I am 74 years old. I don't have any further political ambitions. What can one have more than to be the Prime Minister of the Jewish people?"

"I have decided to dedicate those several years [leading the nation] to try and accomplish the goals that I have elaborated, before I go back to the farm to take care of the cattle, to ride the horses, to milk the sheep, to work on a tractor in the fields."

— The Times, London

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TURKEY / LANDSLIDE FOR ISLAMIST PARTY

Pro-West accent may stay

By Atul Aneja

ANKARA, NOV. 5. The landslide victory for Turkey's pro-Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) in what is seen as a virtual electoral rebellion against the old guard on Sunday has fuelled anxieties that the country's secular credentials may be under threat.

Strategically located on the gates of Europe, Turkey, and especially its staunchly secular and powerful military, sees itself as a bulwark against the tide of extremism that may be descending from its Islamic neighbourhood to the east. Out of 550 seats, the AKP has won 363, polling 34 percent of the votes, resulting in an absolute majority in Parliament.

Since Turkey's electoral laws demand that only parties that secure 10 percent of the votes qualify to enter Parliament, only one other party, the Republican People's Party will find itself in the legislature. Reeling under an unending economic recession, and with unemployment hovering around two million, Turks in these elections have routed all the traditional parties that have ruled the country in the last decade. The ballot purge has shown the door to the political heavyweights — Bulent Ecevit, Tansu Ciller, Mesut Yilmaz and Devlet Bahçeli.

Sunday's election also shows that Turkey has begun its transition to a new generation of leaders, as the AKP's head, Recep Erdogan, is only 48 years old. Despite apprehensions about the future course that the AKP

might pursue, most analysts are of the view that the party would fall in line and will not, beyond a point, deviate from the country's already defined fundamentals — its continuation within the NATO, a look-West policy symbolised in its aspiration to enter the European Union and persistence with the economic reforms prescribed by the International Monetary Fund. In fact, in a statement that cheered the markets on Monday, Mr. Erdogan said his party would continue to follow the IMF guidelines to bail out Turkey's ailing economy. Ilnur Cevik, the chief editor of the English daily *Turkish Daily News* is convinced that the AKP, armed with an absolute majority, will look towards the West and may even try to hasten Turkey's entry into

the E.U., as the anti-E.U. nationalist parties which were partners in the earlier coalition governments will no longer hamper it.

The AKP, notwithstanding its Islamic roots, is also expected to remain well within Turkey's defined secular parameters. Respect for Turkey's "strategic" choices is expected to enhance the AKP's chances of survival. Analysts cite two additional reasons to explain why an AKP Government is expected to last for a considerable length of time.

First, the AKP is likely to reach a clear understanding with the Turkish establishment represented by the military. Second, the military, on its part, may not be too keen to rock the AKP's boat. Observers are of the view that the AKP has received too

heavy a mandate in Sunday's elections and the Generals are unlikely to act against the popular sentiment. Significantly, in a move that has fuelled wide speculation here, the military chief, Hilmi Ozkok, left for Washington on Monday where he is expected to meet top leaders.



HIGH HOPES: Supporters cheer Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of the Justice and Development Party which won the elections, in Ankara on Monday. — AP

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TURKEY / POLL MAY RESULT IN HUNG PARLIAMENT

W. Azim

Islamists poised to make gains

By Atul Aneja

4/4

ANKARA, NOV. 3. Amid expectations of a good showing by the Islamist parties, Turkey today witnessed crucial elections that could bring political uncertainty to the strategically located nation.

Turkey's Justice and Development Party (AKP) is expected to get more than 30 percent of the votes, which is nearly 10 percent above what its nearest rival, the Republican People's Party (CHP) is expected to get.

Voters are likely to return a hung Parliament, with most of the traditional parties being virtually wiped out in the polls, mainly on account of the immense hardship that the country's deep economic crisis has brought.

In fact, so active is the anti-incumbency factor that the ruling coalition led by Bulent Ecevit's DSP party is not expected to get more than 3 percent of the votes. That means it will not enter Parliament, as Turkey's electoral laws demand that parties polling less than 10 percent cannot enter the legislature.

Analysts see Sunday's vote as an expression of a clamouring demand for a political overhaul.

Not surprisingly, new parties that have not been tested before, and are therefore, relatively untainted, are expected to do well. The AKP was born only last year, though it traces its roots to the Refah and the Fazilet parties that Turkey's

staunchly secular establishment had banned.

The newly-formed Young Party, led by the youthful industrialist, Cem Uzan, may also cross the 10 percent benchmark. The CHP led by Denis Baykal, which traces its antecedents to modern Turkey's founder, Kemal Ataturk, is also expected to do well.

While AKP's absolute majority in the polls cannot be ruled out, it is likely that it will have to seek coalition partners from the rest of the 17 political parties that are contesting elections. And here lie the roots of political uncertainty.

As of now, the CHP has said that it opposes cohabiting with the AKP. That means, the AKP might have to seek support from the Young Party or the veteran politician, Tansu Ciller's True Path Party (DYP), if it crosses the 10 percent mark.

The AKP's emergence has already generated palpable tensions within Turkey's ruling establishment that includes the powerful and staunchly secular military. Analysts point out the influence of the military is particularly predominant in Turkey's National Security Council.

Apprehending a threat from the AKP, the Turkish establishment is weighing the options on banning it marginalising its leader, Recep Erdogan.

The political developments in Turkey in the next few months are likely to be determined by the establishment's



ISLAMIC ROOTS: The leader of the Justice and Development Party, Tayyip Erdogan (centre), and his wife, Emine Erdogan, greet supporters after casting the vote in Istanbul on Sunday. — AFP

assessment, and that would primarily mean the assessment of military, of whether the new government will respect the few strategic choices that Turkey has already made.

First, only a government that remains firmly committed to the principles of secularism has a chance to remain in power for long. The AKP or the coalition it forms will have to pass that test.

Second, Turkey has been looking Westwards towards integration with the European Union.

A party with Islamic roots, like the AKP, that tends to look hard Eastwards towards the Islamic world, despite stating its intent to join the E.U. would immediately come under suspicion.

Third, a ruling coalition will have to accept its status not just as an ordinary member of the NATO alliance, but also as a frontline member of the grouping. That would mean providing air bases to the United States in a possible attack against Iraq.

Islamic party leads in Turkey run-up

By Atul Aneja

110-14

ANKARA, NOV. 1. With the world watching intently, Turkey goes for crucial polls on Sunday whose significance will be felt far beyond its domestic borders. For the first time in its turbulent history, elections are likely to bring to power, a ruling coalition led by a party, which has clear Islamic roots.

Opinion polls show that the newly formed Justice and Development Party (AK), that has a discreet but definite Islamic identity, but has vowed to respect Turkey's secular constitution fully is way ahead of its rivals—the ruling Democratic Left Party (DSP) and the Republican Peoples' Party (CHP). While a recent court verdict has ruled out Recep Erdogan the leader of the AK from contesting, that, in all probability has only improved the party's chances at the hustings.

Mr. Erdogan, a former mayor of Istanbul is being barred from contesting because of a 1998 conviction for violating Turkey's secular laws. But in case the AK is returned to Parliament in sufficient numbers, it could legislate to annul the 1998 ruling, eventually paving the way for Mr. Erdogan's emergence as Prime Minister.

The rise of the AK raises several questions. With the conservatives pulling some weight in the party, how will it, in case it formed the Government, influence Turkey's disposition towards a likely U.S. led military campaign in Iraq? Turkey has all along been reluctant to back the possible use of force for "regime change" in Baghdad. Will Mr. Erdogan's party once in government further harden Ankara's

stance? Washington knows that Turkey's cooperation is vital to prise open Iraq's northern gates.

Apart from the Incirlik base in South, it has also requested use of Turkish air bases in Diyarbakir—a stronghold of ethnic Kurds and Malatya, where Islamic parties are expected to do well. Will the AK's emergence dilute Turkey's drive to integrate itself in the European Union? In other words, instead of looking West, will Turkey begin to turn towards the Islamic heartland to the East? And will the emergence of the AK see the beginning of a transition of staunchly secular Turkey to a theocratic State? In all likelihood, the answer to all these questions, is no.

Sensitive to the deep inroads of western culture in Turkey, the AK has worked hard to project a palatable public image. In fact, the party has gone to great lengths to distance itself from stereotype Islamic symbols.

The party insignia bears a light bulb. A high profile campaign has in fact ensured that posters of the light bulb with Mr. Erdogan's picture are on the walls all over Ankara.

Mr. Erdogan dresses up immaculately in western style suits and his party office is anything but an extremist hideout.

Plush and well furnished, it resembles, instead, a modern corporate office. Mr. Erdogan has repeatedly stressed that even if given a choice, he would oppose the imposition of Sharia law in Turkey.

While firmly opposed to the formation of a theocracy, the AK however wants that religious faith should be respected.

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THE HINDU

THREAT TO IRAQ-II

516211 A Limited Choice For Countries Like India

By DIPAK BASU

Relationship of Islamic terrorists throughout the world and the Saudi Arabian business community is now well known. The USA now wants to reduce the financial power of Saudi Arabia by reducing the price of oil, so that the ability of Saudi Arabia to project its power and the financial support towards the Islamic terrorists will be reduced.

The consequences for Russia will be severe. After the destruction of Russian industries through privatisation and economic reforms prescribed by the IMF and the World Bank, Russia survives on export earnings of petroleum, diamond, and gold.

Threat from Putin

Reserves of these are so vast that export earnings alone, if properly distributed, can give 150 million Russian people a very comfortable standard of living for the next few centuries. However, that depends on the acceptable price of oil in the international market. If oil price will fall below that, it will not be viable for any company to produce oil in Russia.

According to Mikhail Khodorkovsky, president of the Yukos oil company in Russia, \$14 per barrel is the lower limit for any Russian company to survive. The Russian minister of energy Igor Tusufov recently said that for the Russian government, the price of oil should be within the limit of \$20 to \$25 per barrel. Otherwise, Russia will fall in the debt trap of the Western countries to such an extent that her economic policy will be dictated by them.

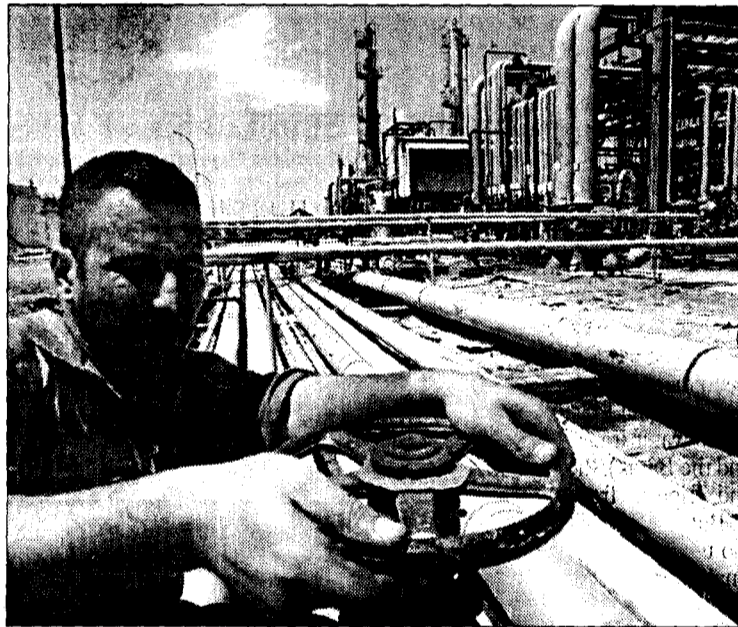
Why is it so important for the US to undermine the economic survival of Russia, which is no longer a superpower as the Soviet Union used to be? The answer is the re-emerging power of Russia under the new President Putin. The previous President of Russia, Yeltsin, who used to be a small-town municipal chairman in Ekaterinburg in eastern Siberia until Gorbachov picked him up in

1985, was ignorant about the international scene. He was dazzled by the sudden limelight and surrendered completely to the West. His economic advisers faithfully implemented every advice given by the IMF and the World Bank to destroy the economy and the industrial power.

Putin, the former KGB chief in East Germany, is highly educated, an accomplished person with great knowledge on international affa-

price. Given the current world oil price, within 10 years Russia can easily rebuild its economy and pose a real threat to the sole-super-power status of the United States.

Colin Powell, the US secretary of states, said very clearly that in the current US doctrine, no other country would be allowed to approach the status of a superpower except the USA. As the USA cannot invade Russia, which is equally



irs. He has no illusions about the West and its advice.

Effective weapon

Under him, Russia has started reasserting itself, started rebuilding the economy with the help of the export revenues of its vast petroleum reserves. The Soviet Union used to supply petroleum at a highly subsidised price to her republics outside Russia — now independent countries, her East European allies and some friendly countries like Cuba, Vietnam, Cambodia and India. Russia has no such idealistic obligations; it is exporting oil at the international

strong with nuclear weapons, the oil price is the very effective weapon by which it can eliminate the ability of Russia to reconstruct its military-industrial muscle.

Russia will also lose more than \$26 billion it has invested in the development of Iraq's oil field. Anglo-American oil companies may not pay any compensation to Russia. India and China will lose similarly. India will lose in another way. India's ONGC has invested heavily in the Russian oil field in the Sakhalin island off Japan. If the oil price drops to a very low level, all these investments will be unviable.

Invasion of Iraq has a number of aims; elimination of the weapons of mass destruction is the most unimportant of all.

The real purpose is to make sure that the status of the United States as the sole superpower cannot be challenged by any religious fanatics financed by the Middle East oil producers or by a resurgent Russia.

Receiving end

The USA is less worried about China, which depends on the Western markets for her exports. If the USA and her Western allies close their doors on Chinese exports, the economy of China will collapse. China may threaten other Asian countries but it does not threaten any Western interests yet. It is still a poor developing country, thus unable to be a superpower for a very long time. Thus, it is outside the threat perceptions of the United States.

The choice for countries like India is very limited. Given the imperial ambitions of the United States, if India submits to the new American Empire its position would be that of Armenia within the Roman Empire, far away and ignored. If India wants to maintain its independent status, it has to collaborate with other like-minded nations who also want to maintain their sovereignty. It is unfortunate at this crucial point of world history India has no effective foreign policy.

After the Anglo-American invasion of Yugoslavia, Prime Minister Vajpayee had commented, "Kosovo has opened our eyes". However, now on the eve of the invasion of Iraq his eyes are closed. The foreign policy of both the BJP and the Congress are controlled by ex-officers, who are good at making statements on hindsight but who have no strategic vision. As a result, India will be at the receiving end of the impending disaster which is unfolding in Iraq.

(Concluded)

Sharon woos Netanyahu

Gr A
2/11

Jerusalem, Nov. 1 (Reuters): Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met his rival in the right-wing Likud party, Benjamin Netanyahu, today and offered him the post of foreign minister, an Israeli diplomatic source said.

The source said that during the talks at Sharon's ranch in southern Israel Netanyahu had asked for a follow-up meeting on Sunday.

Netanyahu, a former Prime Minister who has accused Sharon of not employing tough enough tactics against a Palestinian uprising, was being considered for the post after the Labour Party pulled out of Sharon's government earlier this week.

"The talks lasted for 90 minutes and it was an excellent meeting," the Israeli source said.

Sharon asked Netanyahu to join the government "on the basis of the guidelines of the current government and to work together on the challenges facing Israel", the source said.

The guidelines of the government were hammered out by Sharon and centre-left Labour when the right-wing Prime Minister took office in March, 2001, and included a pledge not to build new Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sharon has been trying to cobble together a narrow majority for his government, which was left with 55 out of Parliament's 120 seats after Labour's

departure. He was expected to court other right-wing and ultranationalist parties to fill the gap.

Netanyahu, 53, popularly known as "Bibi", has said he will challenge Sharon in the yet to be scheduled Likud leadership election, a goal that could stop him accepting the foreign ministry post.

He might accept Sharon's offer, but only on condition that they reach a deal on Netanyahu's next move in domestic politics.

Palestinians have already expressed alarm at Sharon's offer of the defence portfolio to former army chief Shaul Mofaz, who has advocated expelling Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

Netanyahu has also called for Arafat's ouster and if they both join the government, Sharon would probably be caught between their hawkish views and fierce US opposition to such a move.

Cabinet minister Danny Naveh said Sharon would begin formal talks on Sunday with prospective partners in a narrow government following the collapse of his broad coalition on Wednesday, when the Labour Party quit over funding for Jewish settlements.

Ultrationalists who oppose trading occupied land for peace and support unlimited Jewish settlement on territory Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war are among those Sharon will be courting.

ISRAELI CRISIS / NO-TRUST VOTE ON MONDAY

Sharon courts far right party

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¹¹¹
^{in Mr. M}
JERUSALEM, OCT. 31. The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, on Thursday tried to rebuild his Government left in shambles by the departure of the centre-left Labor Party, and was expected to court ultranationalists opposed to a peace deal with the Palestinians.

The political instability in Israel bodes ill for a new U.S.-backed peace plan, and Palestinian officials say they fear a Government stacked with hardliners will adopt even tougher policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

After Labor quit on Wednesday because of a dispute over funding for Jewish settlements in the 2003 state budget, Mr. Sharon was left with a minority Government that controls only 55 seats in the 120-member Parliament.

The Opposition might not muster 61 legislators needed to topple the Government, but it will become increasingly difficult for Mr. Sharon to govern. "Sharon will now learn what coalition hell looks like, with all the demands, the blackmail and the threats," wrote the commentator, Shalom Yerushalmi in the *Yediot Ahronot* daily.

The main target of Mr. Sharon's efforts is National Union-Israel Beitenu, a far-right grouping of seven legislators who

oppose any negotiations with the Palestinians and advocate settlement expansion in the West Bank and Gaza. The *Maariv* daily reported that Mr. Sharon has offered the faction's leader, Avigdor Lieberman, the post of Foreign or Finance Minister. However, the report could not be confirmed independently. Mr. Sharon offered the Defence portfolio vacated by the Labor leader, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, to former army chief,

Shaul Mofaz, who led large-scale offensives against Palestinian militants and advocated the ouster of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. Gen. Mofaz left the army in July when his four-year term was up. A Sharon aide said on Thursday that Gen. Mofaz has accepted the Defence post.

Mr. Sharon's next test will come on Monday when Parliament votes on a number of no-confidence motions. — AP



IN HIS DEFENCE: The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon (right), with the former Army chief, Gen. Shaul Mofaz, who has agreed to become the Defence Minister, in this recent file photo.

1 NOV 2002

Islamists, secularists gain in Bahrain poll

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), OCT. 25. Results from Bahrain's first Legislative elections in nearly 30 years showed a mix of secularist and Islamic candidates winning seats, with two women securing places in run-off polls, officials said on Friday.

The election was a milestone for women as it marked the first time they had been empowered to vote and run for national office in a Gulf Arab nation.

It was also a defeat for a boycott campaign that had argued the political reform process did not go far enough.

The Justice Ministry said that 19 candidates had been elected to the 40-seat Parliament, including three who ran unopposed. The remaining 21 seats will be decided in run-off elections scheduled for Oct. 31.

No woman won outright in Thursday's polls, but two women are among the 42 candidates who will contest the run-offs.

The elections themselves were celebrated as a major step toward democracy in Bahrain, a tiny island kingdom in a region dominated by traditional rulers. Hundreds of Bahrainis drove around the capital in the dark hours of Friday morning after Information Minister Nabil al-Hamer said the turnout was 53.2 per cent.

The turnout was a slight improvement on the 51 per cent recorded in the municipal elections in May.

Sheik Ali Salman, the leader of the Shiite Muslim group that spearheaded the boycott call, Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, conceded on Friday that the elections were "fair overall." "I congratulate the king on this democratic initiative," Mr. Salman said, speaking to The Associated Press on the phone from neighbouring Qatar, where he flew on Friday morning for a television broadcast.

People took to the streets of Manama blaring car horns and waving national flags and posters of the king, Sheik Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. — AP

RECEIVED

25 OCT 2002

Iraq urges UN to stand up to US

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HT-13
Baghdad/United Nations,
October 24

IRAQ SAYS the United Nations must stand up to Washington and stop its attempt to push through a Security Council resolution which Baghdad has likened to a declaration of war.

The United States introduced its draft resolution on Iraqi disarmament to the full 15-member UN Security Council on Wednesday, aiming to put it to a vote as early as next week.

Russia immediately opposed the US text, which has been toned down from earlier versions, and France raised strong reservations but Britain said it would be a co-sponsor.

China reserved judgement on the new draft on Thursday, the day before Chinese President Jiang Zemin's meeting with US President George Bush at his ranch in Texas. Bush is expected to seek China's acquiescence for possible military action against Iraq.

The draft resolution, aimed at ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, still opens the way to war. Iraq denies having weapons of mass destruction.

Wednesday's revised text drops explicit authorisation for military action if Iraq does not comply with UN arms inspec-

tions but declares Iraq in "material breach" of UN resolutions and threatens "serious consequences".

Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri said the US draft resolution was akin to a declaration of war on both Baghdad and the United Nations.

"The United States wants to create justifications for attacking Iraq with a new resolution and this draft resolution presented by the United States, which it amended for the worse, is an insult to the United Nations and the international community," he told Qatar's al-Jazeera television.

"This draft resolution is a flagrant violation of the United Nations and akin to war against the United Nations. For when the will and decisions of the United Nations are twisted...what is meant is an attack on the venerability of the UN."

In Baghdad, the Iraqi foreign ministry said there was no need for the Security Council to adopt a new resolution because all mechanisms were already in place to start weapons inspections.

"The United States does not want the inspectors to return because they will expose its lies and allegations against Iraq," the statement said.

Reuters

New US draft on Iraq faces opposition

United Nations: Even as three key UN security council members—Russia, China and France—opposed the new US draft resolution on disarming Iraq, Washington has made it clear there is no use in having a “pointless resolution” which could make Baghdad “sit back and smile” fearing no “consequences.”



Colin Powell made Baghdad “sit back and smile” fearing no “consequences.”

The three permanent members of the security council were opposed to the draft as they think it contained language which Washington could use to attack Iraq without seeking explicit authorisation from the council.

Sounding tough, US secretary of state Colin Powell said that Washington was still ready to listen to reservations of other members of the council which meets tomorrow but Iraq cannot be al-

lowed to “sit back and smile” if it fails in its obligations of dismantling all weapons of mass destruction.

“When they get back together on Friday, members will come forward with ideas and we will listen to those ideas,” Mr Powell told reporters on Wednesday in Cabo San Lucas (Mexico) on the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum meeting. “but we cannot walk away from basic principles, it cannot just be another pointless resolution that Iraq can sit back and smile at in the knowledge that there will be no consequences, that is unacceptable and the US will not accept that,” he said.

“We want to give (weapons) inspectors what they need to do the job, and that job has to be the disarmament of Iraq,” Mr Powell said.

The US dropped its initial demand for explicit authorisation of war if weapons inspectors are obstructed. But

the draft finds Iraq in “material breach” of the council resolutions and threatens it with “serious consequences” if it fails to cooperate with inspectors.

This, according to Russia, is the hidden trigger which the United States could use to start military action.

Moscow, Paris and Beijing want the council to adopt a second resolution giving explicit authorisation for military action if Iraq fails to cooperate.

American UN ambassador John Negroponte expressed the hope that the council would move quickly to vote but diplomats said it could not happen before next week. The council will hear the views of chief weapons inspector Hans Blix tomorrow which might influence the decision the members take.

Britain co-sponsored the draft that was introduced rather suddenly even as negotiations were on between five permanent veto-wielding members. PTI

25 OCT 2002

Israeli police storm mosque

JERUSALEM, OCT. 4. Israeli police stormed the main mosque compound in the heart of Jerusalem on Friday and fired stun grenades after Muslim worshippers threw rocks at Jews praying at the Western Wall below, police said.

About 50 police officers stormed the compound, the most hotly contested site in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The officers later withdrew, Israel Radio said.

Police said there were no reports of injuries or damage.

Police said they acted after several dozen youths began throwing rocks at police officers at an entrance to the mosque compound and some rocks fell on Jewish worshippers below.

Islamic authorities calmed the crowd and moved them away from the area above the Western Wall. Muslim worshippers later began to leave the area.

The Western Wall below the mosques is a last remaining structure of the ancient Jewish Temple, and is widely considered the most important site for Jewish worship.

The Haram as-Sharif above includes the Al Aqsa and Dome of the Rock mosques and is considered the third holiest site of Islam. The compound is revered by Muslims as the Haram as-Sharif, or Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount and both sides have acted with relative restraint at the area in



Israeli policemen take position in the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's old town on Friday. — Reuters

recent months, despite a two-year uprising by Palestinians against Israel. The uprising began on Sept. 28, 2000, with Arab protests over a visit to the Haram as-Sharif by now-Prime

Minister Ariel Sharon, who was trying to emphasise Israel's claim of sovereignty to the area. Police also entered the mosque compound on March 29 to halt stone-throwing. — AP

INDU

5 OCT 2002

US abstains in UN Israel vote

United Nations, Sept 24

THE UNITED States abstained in a UN Security Council resolution on Tuesday demanding that Israel stop its siege of Yasser Arafat's compound, thereby allowing the measure to go into force.

The resolution, approved by the other 14 council members after 11 hours of negotiations, also called on the Palestinian Authority to ensure that those responsible for terrorist acts were brought to justice.

The US has killed similar measures in the past by using its veto power in the council. But diplomats said Washington decided against doing so in order not to alienate Arab opinion during its campaign against Iraq.

"The resolution that we've adopted this evening was flawed in our view in that it failed to explicitly condemn the terrorist groups and those who provide them with political cover, support and safe haven in perpetuating conflict in West Asia," US representative James Cunningham said.

The US refused to vote for the new resolution because it did not name the Syrian-based Islamic Jihad and Hamas groups as responsible for bombings in Israel last week. Those demands were contained in a draft resolution Washington proposed on Monday.

The text was negotiated by Britain and France, which sponsored it along with Bulgaria, Ireland and Norway. It "demands that Israel immediately cease measures in and around Ramallah, including the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure".

It also demands the "expeditious withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces" from Palestinian cities toward positions held prior to September 2000, the date of a Palestinian uprising that has cost more than 2,000 lives. Israeli forces wrecked Arafat's headquarters complex in Ramallah last Thursday after two suicide bombings killed seven people in Israel in the past week and shattered a six-week lull in such attacks.

Reuters



Relatives mourn at the funeral of two men who were killed on Tuesday morning with seven other Palestinians when Israeli tanks raided Gaza.

REUTERS

Troops raid Gaza, kill 9 Palestinians

Gaza City, September 24

ISRAELI TROOPS armed with tanks and helicopters stormed into Gaza City early this morning, sparking violent clashes with Palestinian gunmen that left nine Palestinians dead and 24 injured, officials said.

The incursion, which reached as far as one kilometre into Gaza City, was one of the most violent since Israeli forces began a series of operations in the city in April, witnesses said. The soldiers also blew up a metals factory in the city.

The army confirmed that a military operation was underway in Gaza and said no soldiers had been injured, but declined to comment

further. "Nine people have been killed and more than 24 injured due to the ongoing, attacks today against two residential neighbourhoods by the occupation army that used machine guns from helicopters and tank shells," Dr Moawia Hassanein at Gaza City's Shifa Hospital said.

One of the nine men killed was Mohammed Kishkho, a local leader of the al-Aqsa martyrs brigades militia. Kishkho died of wounds suffered from tank shell explosion. The incursion into the Shejia neighbourhood was an effort to enter the homes of several Palestinian militants killed by Israeli troops earlier this year.

AP

ISRAEL'S RELENTLESS DRIVE

ISRAEL'S CONTINUING SIEGE of the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, in his office in Ramallah is a matter of grave concern. With the demolition of other buildings in Mr. Arafat's headquarters compound having been suspended, the danger that the Palestinian leader could be grievously hurt if the building in which he is encircled suddenly collapses has abated somewhat. While the life of Mr. Arafat might not be currently under threat, Israel still bears responsibility for pushing the confrontation to a point where it could have run totally out of control. As it is, the Palestinian people have taken to the streets, in numbers not seen for the past few months and in defiance of the Israeli forces which are occupying the territories, to protest against the threat to their leader and the fifty or so officials who are trapped with him. In the past, Israel has not demonstrated any measure of restraint in its methods of dealing with street protests and if its response in the current phase follows the usual pattern, all conditions would be set in place for yet another escalation of the unending spiral of violence. The decision to impose a siege on Mr. Arafat was implemented after a Palestinian suicide bomber killed six people in Tel Aviv last week but there are reasons to believe that it was taken earlier. Israel's leadership has not bothered to conceal its intention to intensify the pressure on Mr. Arafat till he feels he has no choice but leave the territories. The ongoing siege is now apparently being considered as a means to accomplish this purpose. While Israel has demanded that Mr. Arafat surrender a dozen men who are on its list of terrorist suspects (these men are currently entrapped in the Ramallah building), it is probable that the fulfilment of this demand will not induce Israel to abandon its plans to oust the Palestinian lead-

er. Mr. Arafat has declared that he would not hand over the wanted men. Neither does the Israeli demand appear very logical since these men are members of Fatah while Hamas has claimed responsibility for last week's suicide attack. Israel's decision to direct its anti-terrorism drive against Fatah — which has still not rejected the possibility of a negotiated settlement — while apparently ignoring Hamas (which denies Israel's right to exist) is difficult to understand in the best of circumstances. It is all the more difficult to understand after Fatah had, just a few days ago, given a firm commitment to refrain from attacks on Israeli civilians. While Israel's Government does have the duty to save its people from the threat of terrorism, many of the measures it has taken so far, and which it continues to take, are more likely to produce the opposite effect. Last week's attack was the first major terrorist strike in over a month and this relative lull was attributable as much to a change of mood amongst the Palestinian people as to an enhanced efficiency on the part of Israel's security forces. This change of mood was signified by the fact that Palestinian opinion-makers had begun to rigorously examine the efficacy of the violent methods used by the militant groups. It was also reflected in the gathering momentum for democratic reform which was displayed in the Palestinian legislature's decision to not approve Mr. Arafat's hand-picked Cabinet. Israel could have creatively exploited these developments so as to provide space for a Palestinian leadership that still declares its readiness to participate in negotiations that will lead to a final settlement. Instead, even during the period of relative quiet, Israel has persisted with its policy of suppressing the Palestinian people and their leaders.

25 SEP 2001

THE HINDU

Israel tightens siege on Arafat

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), SEPT. 22. Violent Street protests in support of the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, swept through key Palestinian strongholds as the stand-off between Mr. Arafat and Israeli authorities continued unabated. Israeli forces have tightened Mr. Arafat's encirclement in his Ramallah office compound, in which all buildings, except one, in which the 73-year-old Palestinian leader has been besieged have been destroyed.

Israeli defence forces on Sunday tore down a Governor's office and meeting hall next to the Palestinian leader's office bloc. Israel says it laid siege to Mr. Arafat's compound in order to seek the surrender of 19 militants, which it alleges have been involved in acts of terrorism and are at this time holed up with Mr. Arafat.

Israel mounted pressure on Mr. Arafat after a suicide bombing killed six Israelis in a bus earlier this week. Israeli has maintained that it will not harm Mr. Arafat, but will continue to enforce the siege till the 19 alleged terrorists out of the 50 who are with Mr. Arafat in his compound are in its custody.

According to one view, Israel is deliberately mounting pres-



The Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, in his besieged office in Ramallah in this picture handed out by his office on Sunday. — Reuters

sure on Mr. Arafat in order to force him to leave the Palestinian territories without taking the provocative step of deporting him on its own. Israeli defence officials said on Sunday that they had no intention of holding negotiations for the release of the 50 individuals who have been encircled.

Mr. Arafat, on his part, has

been defiant to the Israeli moves. "I hope God will grant me the honour of martyrdom. No one will be handed over to Israel," Ahmed Tibi, an Arab member of Israel's Parliament, quoted Mr. Arafat, citing a telephone conversation with him. In a written statement released by the Palestinian news agency Wafa, Mr. Arafat said: "We are ready for peace but not for capitulation and we will not give up Jerusalem or a grain of

our soil which are guaranteed to us by international law." Thousands, meanwhile, defying Israeli curfew restrictions, took to demonstrations in support of Mr. Arafat across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Palestinian hospital officials said two Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces during a rally in Ramallah, one of them a Voice of Pal-

estine radio journalist. Elsewhere in the West Bank, two demonstrators were killed and 15 others were wounded in the West Bank and Gaza by Israeli forces. Israeli military sources said the army shot and killed two Palestinian gunmen during street protests near Nablus.

The demonstrations began shortly after the Israeli army gave Mr. Arafat's bureau an ultimatum to come out with their hands up as the army planned to blow up the building, next to the leader's office. Israeli troops on Sunday re-imposed curfew in all West Bank cities except Bethlehem.

Mr. Arafat also called for international intervention and telephoned the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah and Malaysia's Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohammad.

The European Union Foreign Policy Chief, Javier Solana, said he conveyed to Israel his "greatest concerns about the situation and particularly the siege of the Palestinian leadership."

The White House called on Israel to consider the fall-out of its actions but also said it had a right to defend itself against suicide bombings.

Israel so far has defied all international pressure that has been mounted on it.

23 SEP 2002

Arafat firm, Palestine rises in protest

ST-3 289

Associated Press

RAMALLAH, Sept. 22. — Thousands of Palestinians, many defying military curfews, poured into West Bank and Gaza streets today to protest Israel's assault on Mr Yasser Arafat's headquarters, and four demonstrators were killed by army fire. Later, a Palestinian teenager was killed in Nablus, residents said.

Mr Arafat has appealed to militants to halt attacks on Israel, but refused to hand over members of his entourage wanted by Israel. He said he still wants peace, but won't capitulate.

In the battered compound, Israeli threatened several times over loudspeakers to blow up the building where Mr Arafat is holed up, the only one left standing unless wanted men inside surrendered, witnesses said. Israel initially called for the surrender of 19 Palestinian officials, including members of the Intelligence service and the Force 17 bodyguard unit.

Israel has said it doesn't intend to harm Mr Arafat, and the army later said it had no plans to blow up the building.

Israel's deputy defence minister, Mr Weizman Siiri, said Mr Arafat was free to leave the country but would not be allowed to return. "We'll give him a one-way ticket



NO SHALOM FOR ISRAEL: Protests in Gaza City on Sunday against the Israeli action at Ramallah. — AFP

in a dignified way," Mr Shiri told army radio today. Some Cabinet ministers called for Mr Arafat's expulsion. Mr Shiri didn't say which country could be a likely destination. Israel, preparing for a long standoff, planted an Israeli flag on top of

Early today, Mr Arafat's Fatah move-

ment led protest marches in the West Bank and Gaza towns, some defying Israeli military curfews.

In Gaza City, thousands marched in front of the Palestinian parliament building, protesting against the Israeli operation.

In Ramallah, a few kilometres from Mr Arafat's compound, troops fired tear gas and bullets to disperse hundreds of men, women and children chanting "Long live Arafat, long live Palestine." Two protesters were killed by army fire, hospital officials said.

Two more people were killed in Tulkarem and the Balata refugee camp next to Nablus. In Tulkarem, gunmen walking in a crowd of about 1,200 people traded fire with Israeli troops, witnesses said. In the town of Rafah in the Gaza Strip, about 5,000 people joined the protests, some firing submachine guns into the air and holding up Arafat pictures.

Arafat keeps morale high
Mr Arafat remains in good spirits despite a three-day Israeli siege of his West Bank headquarters which has flattened every building bar his office, a leading rejectionist leader said here today.

Hamas call: Hamas today called for an intensification of the Palestinian uprising since the Wei River pact in response to the Israeli Army's encirclement of Mr Arafat in his West Bank hub. AFP adds from Gaza City.

Israel flattens Arafat offices

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), SEPT. 21. Explosions rocked the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat's besieged headquarters and showered the frail leader with debris on Saturday, as Israeli troops flattened every main building around him with explosives, tanks and bulldozers.

Mr. Arafat, a few aides and about 20 men wanted by Israel were pinned to a few rooms in a wing of the office building — the only main structure left standing in the once sprawling complex.

As bulldozers and tanks pulverised much of his command centre, Mr. Arafat issued a new appeal to Palestinian militants to stop attacks in Israel; the assault on his compound came in retaliation for a Tel Aviv bus attack that killed six people.

Mr. Arafat accused the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, of using the attacks as a pretext for extracting concessions from the Palestinians by force. "We are ready for peace, not for capitulation and we will not give up Jerusalem or a grain of our soil from our homeland, Palestine," Mr. Arafat said.

The White House and the European Union have urged Israel not to go too far in its reprisal.

Israel's Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, said on Friday he wanted to isolate Mr. Arafat, but not harm or expel him. He reiterated the message on Saturday in a phone call with Mr. Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli media reports said.

Ghassan Khatib, the Palestinian Labour Minister, confirmed that Palestinian officials were in contact with Israel, the U.S. and the European Union in hopes of ending the stand-off. Mr. Khatib said he did not believe Israel would relent. "We believe that Israel is moving ahead in a systematic way in achieving its objectives of dismantling the Palestinian Authority," he said.

Israel has said troops would

with Mr. Arafat have surrendered. "The compound continues to be the nerve centre of Palestinian terrorism," Arieh Mekel, an official in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, said on Saturday. "The people who are there continue to disseminate orders and to send terrorists to attack Israeli citizens."

Leading Israel's list of wanted men believed to be in the compound is Tawfik Tirawi, the Palestinian intelligence chief in the West Bank. Israel says Mr. Tirawi was involved in shooting attacks that killed at least six Israelis and has also funnelled money to militiamen.

Israeli TV reports said the objective of the assault goes beyond flushing out the wanted men. Israel TV's Channel Two, citing Defence officials, said the goal was to confine Mr. Arafat to a tiny area in difficult conditions and prompt him to seek exile. Mr. Arafat has said he would never leave the Palestinian lands.

Israel's security establishment is divided over whether to expel Mr. Arafat. Mr. Sharon favours the idea, but for now has deferred to Mr. Ben-Eliezer and his security chiefs, who argue that ousting the Palestinian leader will only boost his standing.

Mr. Arafat's aides said he has been in danger during the Israeli assault, which was launched on Thursday evening, just hours after the Tel Aviv bus bombing.

On Saturday, five explosions rocked the compound, and aides said there was concern the building to which Mr. Arafat is confined might collapse. A photographer holed up alongside Mr. Arafat said a tank shell slammed into the floor above them early on Saturday, showering Mr. Arafat with dust and debris but not wounding him.

"President Arafat and those with him are in danger," a key aide, Nabil Abu Rdeneh, said on Saturday, appealing for immediate international intervention. — AP

2 2 SEP 2003

Arafat under siege at HQ

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE

RAMALLAH, Sept. 21. — Fears were growing today for the safety of Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat, pinned down in his West Bank headquarters here while Israeli forces destroyed all surrounding buildings in the compound in retaliation to recent suicide bombings.

Troops assaulted the compound late on Thursday, following the second suicide bombing in Israel in two days, tanks and bulldozers continued to demolish what was left of the building there late into the evening.

Earlier, witnesses reported hearing five huge explosions in the vicinity, with some suggesting they had come from tank fire.

And an overhead passageway linking the building housing Mr Arafat's personal quarters to another containing a reception room was destroyed, totally cutting Mr Arafat off, the sources said.

Israeli forces arrested some 20 Palestinians who surrendered from the battered compound, a Palestinian security source said. The men, who included Palestinian security officials, were in the dining hall of the main compound. The dining hall was razed to the ground.

Mr Arafat was holed up with a few aides and 20 men wanted by Israel in a wing of the main office building. The structure is the on-



GOING UP IN SMOKE: Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah on Saturday. Every building barring his office was destroyed. — AFP

ly one that stands in the premise. Details of what was happening were difficult to obtain because the army had declared the compound a closed military zone.

Earlier in the day, a policeman in Mr Arafat's office building was shot dead by a sniper, and four other Palestinians, including a woman and two teenagers, were killed during Israeli raids in the Gaza Strip.

In other incidents of violence

in the Gaza Strip, five Israeli soldiers and at least 10 Palestinians were wounded.

The White House and the European Union yesterday urged Israel not to go too far in its reprisal for a Tel-Aviv bus bombing that killed six people.

Israel's defence minister said he wanted to isolate Mr Arafat but not harm him. He said troops would stay until the surrender of the wanted men, in-

cluding the West Bank intelligence chief. However, Israel TV's Channel Two, citing defence officials, said the ultimate objective of the assault was to confine Mr Arafat to a tiny area in difficult conditions and prompt him to seek exile.

Mr Arafat's advisers said they feared the office building might collapse and that he was in the line of fire of snipers.

—President Arafat and those

'Israel vows not to harm PSRA chief'

DOHA, Sept. 21. — Israel has promised not to harm Mr Yasser Arafat despite its siege of his West Bank headquarters, the Qatar foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jasssem bin Jabr al-Thani, said today.

"The Israelis have pledged that Mr Yasser Arafat will not be harmed," Mr Sheikh Hamad told the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera satellite television.

Mr Hamad said he made contact with the Israeli authorities after receiving a telephone call from Mr Arafat on Friday apprising him of the situation the Palestinian leader was in. The Qatar foreign minister added that the siege "should stop" immediately. — AFP

with him are in danger" a key aide, Mr Nabil Abu Rdeneh, said today, appealing for immediate international intervention.

The UN Security Council will meet in an emergency session on Monday to discuss the newest crisis in West Asia.

The council, which met last night, took the decision at the request of Syria, the only Arab member of the council.

Baghdad not to accept new Security Council resolution

Iraq to stand by Annan pact

HASSAN HAFIDH

Washington 6.5 2/9
Baghdad, Sept. 21 (Reuters): Iraq said today it would not accept any new UN Security Council resolution that runs contrary to an agreement reached with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"Iraq announces that it will not cooperate with a new resolution which is different from what has been agreed upon with the (UN) Secretary-General," said a statement issued following a meeting of top Iraqi leaders chaired by President Saddam Hussein.

The statement carried by state-run Baghdad radio gave no details of the agreement Iraq had reached with Annan.

The US and Britain have stepped up pressure on the Security Council to adopt a tough new Iraq resolution before any resumption of UN arms inspections to search for weapons of mass destruction.

British UN ambassador Sir Jeremy Greenstock met the 10

non-permanent members of the 15-nation Security Council yesterday to lobby for a new resolution demanding unfettered access for the arms experts and spelling out the consequences if Baghdad failed to cooperate with the inspection teams.

Washington has threatened

Baghdad with military action if it does not allow the unconditional return of the inspectors.

The Iraqi statement said the Iraqi move was in reaction to attempts by "American officials who are trying to issue bad resolutions through the UN Security Council". Iraq agreed this week

to the unconditional return of the UN arms inspectors, who left in December 1998, just before a US-British bombing blitz to punish Baghdad for its alleged failure to cooperate with them.

Russia and France, both permanent members of the UN Security Council with veto powers, have expressed doubt about the need for a new resolution, complicating US President George W. Bush's desire for quick action against Baghdad.

Baghdad radio said today's meeting was attended by Iraqi officials including Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan, deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, Revolutionary Command Council member Ali Hassan al-Majeed and foreign minister Naji Sabri.

It said Sabri briefed the others on his participation at the UN General Assembly meetings.

Sabri delivered a speech by Saddam to the Assembly in which he declared Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction and accused the US of fabricating excuses to attack his country.

We are prepared: Franks

Kuwait, Sept. 21 (Reuters): The top US officer in the region said today his troops were prepared for action against Iraq if President George W. Bush decided to go to war.

"We are prepared to undertake whatever activities we might be directed to take by our nation," US army Gen. Tommy Franks told a news conference in Kuwait. When asked if Central Command forces needed more time to prepare for a war against Iraq or if they were ready for immediate action, the four-star commander said: "We are prepared to do whatever we are asked to do."

Franks insisted the President had not taken a final decision on launching a campaign against Iraq but stressed Washington would not accept a continuation of the status quo on Iraq. "The only course of action that is not available to us is to continue the course of action that we have seen over the last 11 years" since the 1991 Gulf War ended Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait, Franks said.

He headed a meeting in Kuwait of Central Command top officers, who are in charge of operations in a region which includes Iraq.

2 ? SEP 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

W. Asia
W

WEST ASIA / ARAFAT'S BODYGUARD SHOT DEAD

19-14 21/9

Israeli troops blow up PA buildings

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), SEPT. 20. Israeli soldiers blew up three buildings in the compound of the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, on Friday, rocking the office where he was holed up and sending huge clouds of grey smoke into the air. Israeli snipers also killed a bodyguard of Mr. Arafat.

The assault with tanks and bulldozers came in retaliation for a Tel Aviv bus bombing that killed six people on Thursday.

Israel's Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, said he wanted to isolate the Palestinian leader, but not harm or expel him. Bulldozers began digging a deep trench near Mr. Arafat's office building, one of the last structures to remain standing in the sprawling complex.

Throughout the night, troops using loudspeakers called on wanted men in the compound to surrender. In all, 20 men gave themselves up throughout the night, walking in single file with their arms raised, and were taken into custody. However, several senior Palestinian officials sought by Israel, including the intelligence chief in the West Bank, were not among them.

Mr. Ben-Eliezer said troops would not leave until all the wanted men had surrendered, but would not use force to arrest them. "In terms of the Chairman," Mr. Ben-Eliezer said, referring to Mr. Arafat, "we have no intention of expelling him or firing at him. We want to isolate him."

Yet Mr. Arafat's aides said he was in grave danger, noting that his office shook badly with one of the explosions. "They (soldiers) continue blowing up buildings around us," said an adviser, Nabil Abu Rdeneh.

Despite the Israeli assault, the third since March, Mr. Arafat was in relatively good spirits, those around him said. He was kept awake at night by the sound of shooting and bulldozers toppling walls, but perform-



The Israeli army blows up a building in the Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat's Ramallah compound on Friday. — Reuters

ed the Friday prayer — the highlight of the Muslim week — in his office before taking an afternoon nap. Water and electricity had not been cut, unlike in earlier raids.

Throughout the day, Mr. Arafat spoke to several Arab leaders, who told him they would seek an emergency session of the U.N. Security Council to discuss a demand for an immediate Israeli withdrawal, said Mr. Rdeneh. In the Gaza Strip, Israeli tanks backed by helicopter gunships raided a Gaza City neighbourhood and blew up several metal workshops the army said were used for making weapons. A 25-year-old woman

was killed by helicopter fire as she stood on her balcony, and a 35-year-old man was killed by tank fire while he walked near his house, witnesses said. The man was mentally handicapped, his family said.

The latest incursions came after a rare emergency session of the Israeli Cabinet late on Thursday. Ministers put the blame for the Tel Aviv bombing on Mr. Arafat, saying he established a "coalition of terror."

The Islamic militant group, Hamas, claimed responsibility for the bombing in a leaflet sent to the Arab satellite TV station *Al Jazeera*. — AP

Sharon rejects truce

HO-12 1919 N. Am. ①
JERUSALEM, SEPT. 18. Israel turned down a Palestinian offer to halt attacks on civilians as the first stage of a gradual truce, and the Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, said on Wednesday he would settle for nothing less than a "total cessation" of violence.

In new attacks blamed on Palestinians, an Israeli motorist was killed in a West Bank shooting and the burned body of a Jewish settler was found in a West Bank garbage dump. It marked the first time since Aug. 5 that Israeli civilians were killed.

Also on Wednesday, an armed Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli troops in the West Bank, and the body of a suspected Palestinian informer was found in an olive grove.

In the Gaza Strip, the army closed a road between Gaza City and a smaller town, saying it was trying to prevent attacks on Jewish settlement from the area.

The dispute over the terms of a truce came as the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, and the Palestinian Planning Minister, Nabil Shaath, met on Tuesday senior West Asia mediators, on the sidelines of

the U.N. General Assembly in New York. The so-called Quartet of mediators — consisting of officials from the U.S., the United Nations, the European Union and Russia — expressed support for a roadmap to Palestinian statehood within three years, but did not agree on a detailed plan.

The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, said he hoped there would be an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian areas so reforms can be implemented.

Suicide attack

Meanwhile, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a bus stop in northern Israel, killing himself and injuring at least three people, police and TV reports said.

The blast went off during afternoon rush hour near the Israeli Arab town of Umm el-Fahm. A witness said he was sitting in a restaurant near the bus stop when the blast went off. "Suddenly, we heard a huge explosion. We saw a police car which had been damaged from the rear. The body of the terrorist was simply cut in two," he told Israel Radio. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. — AP

THE HINDU

19 SEP 2002

Iraq agrees to unconditional weapons inspections

Handwritten: Aziz
Handwritten: 18/9

UNITED NATIONS, SEPT. 17. Under the threat of military action by the United States and pressure from the Arab states, Iraq has agreed to admit United Nations weapons inspectors without conditions. But the U.S. has expressed scepticism about Baghdad's willingness to allow a real search for weapons of mass destruction.

Other nations on Tuesday cautiously welcomed the Iraqi about-face. Russia and China, who hold veto power in the U.N. Security Council, said it was a victory for concerted international efforts. "Now our

main task is to ensure that the inspectors can get to Iraq as soon as possible and start their work," the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, said.

In Baghdad, the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, said the weapons inspectors should complete their work "within a reasonable time" to facilitate the lifting of sanctions. He said the U.S. may still be looking for a reason to attack Iraq.

"If the inspectors come and act honestly, professionally... they can reach the truth within a reasonable time. But if the Americans are using this as a

pretext, they might use some other way in order to commit an aggression against Iraq."

Earlier, Mr. Aziz said Washington's sole goal was to dominate oil in the Persian Gulf region. He called upon the U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan to monitor inspectors closely to ensure that they did not overstep their mission. He said Iraq hoped that the return of the inspectors "will lead as soon as possible to the lifting of sanctions and normalising the situation." — AP

Not enough, says U.S.: Page 14

Arafat's poll ploy fails, his men force out Cabinet

TRACY WILKINSON
JERUSALEM, SEPTEMBER 12

IN A rare mutiny against the power of Yasser Arafat, Palestinian legislators on Wednesday forced his newly appointed Cabinet to resign — the latest sign of his crumbling authority. Arafat also announced that presidential and parliamentary elections will be held on January 20. Arafat had hoped that at least fixing a date would stave off the challenge to his Cabinet, but the manoeuvre failed.

"Today we proved we can bite," Qadoura Faris announced outside the offices of the Palestinian Legislative Council in Ramallah. Faris is a member of the council from Arafat's Fatah movement. "Our

aim was to topple the government, and the government now is toppled," declared Jamal Shobaki, another Fatah lawmaker. "Our next step is to enforce the rule of law."

Since its election six years ago, the Palestinian Legislature has been viewed as little more than a rubber-stamp to Arafat's will. The Palestinian Authority president routinely ignored the laws it passed. But on Wednesday, members served notice. Their resistance reflected a growing wave of unhappiness with the way the Palestinian Authority is run and the direction of the Palestinians' nearly two-year-old conflict with Israel.

Fed up with the 73-year-old Arafat's autocratic rule and what they see as his refusal to introduce

serious reforms into a corrupt and inept government, legislators let it be known they would not ratify the Palestinian leader's recently reshuffled Cabinet. Several conditioned their approval on his appointment of a prime minister, something he refuses to do because it would take away some of his power.

Arafat lobbied legislators all day long. He summoned key Fatah leaders to his Ramallah headquarters and agreed to the Jan. 20 date for elections, apparently thinking that would win approval for the Cabinet. But when it became clear that his government was headed for a no-confidence vote that he likely would lose, Arafat accepted the resignations of his ministers.

The political drama came on

the third day of the Palestinian Legislature's first full session in nearly two years. A video link allowed members who live in the Gaza Strip to participate. Israel had barred 14 Gazan legislators from travelling to the West Bank because of allegations they were involved in attacks on Israelis.

Arafat revamped his Cabinet in June under US and European pressure, adding five new members. The lawmakers are opposed to the longer-serving Cabinet members, Arafat cronies who are blamed for many of the regime's failings, mismanagement and abuse. Legislators were nearly giddy with what they viewed as their newfound power. "Congratulations are in order at the Palestinian

Legislative Council, and condolences" at Arafat's headquarters, Ziad Abu Amr, one of the Gazan lawmakers, said with a broad grin. "This was a challenge to Arafat and his one-man rule," said Hassan Khreishieh, an opposition legislator from Tulkarm. "Arafat must learn from this. We are beginning to show that elected members can have power."

Wednesday's developments may not change things substantially within the Palestinian Authority. Arafat has 14 days to appoint another Cabinet, and the current one will continue to serve till then. Still, the fact that much of the 86-member body rebelled was a significant barometer of discontent and a willingness to speak out. —LATWP

Arafat sets Jan 20 for Palestinian poll

179
Ramallah



Y. Arafat

(West Bank):
Palestinian
President
Yasser Arafat
on Wednesday
called presiden-
tial and legisla-
tive
elections for
January 20 un-
der interna-
tional and domestic pressure
to reform his government.

The move, announced by the parliamentary speaker, turned Arafat's administration into a transitional government and some Palestinian officials said it would avert a parliamentary vote of confidence in his cabinet planned for later in the day.

Legislators had predicted an uphill battle for approval of the cabinet by the Palestinian Legislative Council, where Mr Arafat criticism for not doing enough to overhaul the government.

"The Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jerusalem are invited to free and direct general elections, to elect the head of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and members of the Legislative Council on Monday, 20th January, 2003," Mr Arafat said in the decree, read

in parliament by the assembly's speaker, Ahmed Korei.

It was not clear when or if parliament would be dissolved. Mr Arafat has been under intense US and Israeli pressure to reform his Palestinian Authority, which is in charge of areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip under interim peace deals with Israel.

President George W. Bush called in June for a new Palestinian leadership uncompromised by "terrorism", making the creation of an independent Palestinian state conditional on sweeping democratic and other reforms and an end to violence.

Palestinians last held elections in 1996. Under the decree, Palestinians will be able to declare their candidacy for the presidency and legislature during a nine-day period starting from December 11.

Mr Arafat had already vowed to hold elections between January 10 and 20, but had not set a date. He has also said holding polls will be hard if Israeli forces continue to occupy or blockade Palestinian towns and villages—measures the army says are needed to halt attacks in an almost two-year-old uprising against Israeli occupation. Reuters

■ ISRAELI TANKS MOVE INTO GAZA ■ NEW PALESTINIAN TEAM IN 2 WEEKS

Arafat Cabinet resigns ^{17/19}

xxAssociated Press

RAMALLAH, Sept. 11. — The Palestinian Cabinet resigned today following a showdown between Mr Yasser Arafat and Parliament — the most serious challenge to the Palestinian leader since he returned from exile in 1994.

Earlier in the day, Mr Arafat had set 20 January as a date for presidential and parliamentary elections in an attempt to defuse the confrontation with disgruntled legislators who accused him of making only half-hearted reform efforts.

However, the gambit failed, and legislators insisted on going ahead with a vote on the 21-member Cabinet.

"There is a crisis of confidence," said lawmaker Salah Taameri, a veteran member of Mr Arafat's Fatah movement. Mr Arafat now has two weeks to present a new Cabinet to the parliament.

The day began with Mr Arafat summoning Fatah legislators, who dominate the 88-seat parliament, to his office to try to persuade them to back the Cabinet.

He had reshuffled portfolios in June, dismissing some ministers and naming five new ones as part of

what he said would be major internal reforms. However, legislators complained the changes were largely cosmetic, and that many ministers considered incompetent or tainted by suspicion of corruption had been allowed to stay on.

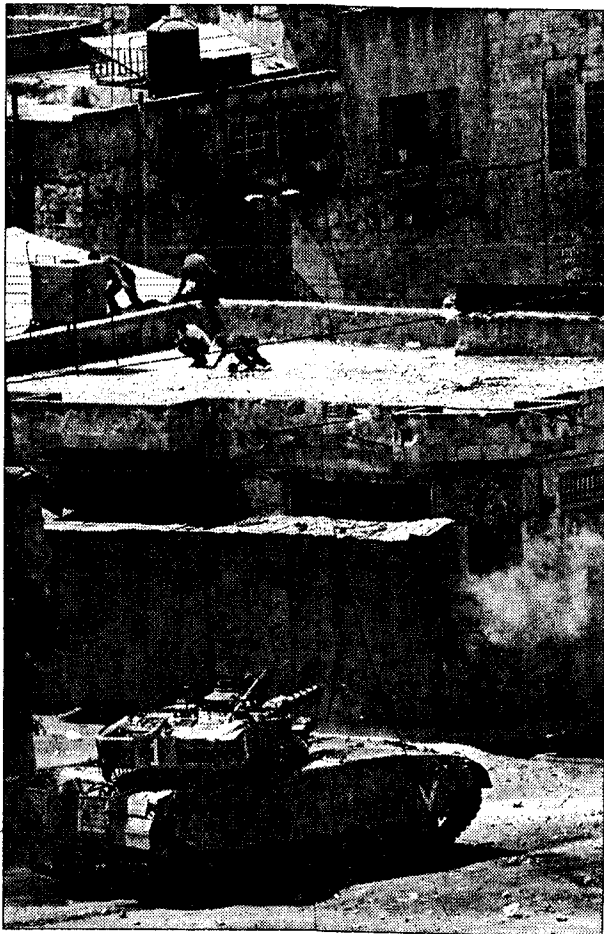
In today's meeting, many of the Fatah legislators told Mr Arafat they would not back the Cabinet.

After the meeting, Mr Arafat issued a decree setting 20 January as the date for presidential and parliamentary elections, a move expected to displease the USA, which had sought a delay that might help sideline the Palestinian leader.

Palestinian officials said setting an election date was part of a compromise floated at the meeting. Mr Arafat would set a date for elections, rendering the current Cabinet a temporary one. In this case, the legislators said, they would be willing to hold a vote only on the five new ministers appointed in June, who are seen as honest and hard-working and enjoy wide support.

Mr Arafat, apparently fearing defeat, accepted the deal, the officials said.

However, Parliament's legal committee decided later that the entire Cabinet must be presented for approval, and not only the five new ministers. Observers said legislators apparently didn't believe Mr Arafat was sincere in setting a date for



COUNTER-ATTACK?: An Israeli tank patrols a street in Nablus on the West Bank as Palestinians hurl stones at it from rooftops. — AFP

an election, and feared he might revoke the decree later.

Israel bristles again

Israel flexed its muscles again, sending troops and armoured vehicles into northern Gaza early today. The forces took control of one town and part of another, residents said.

The tanks rolled in after

midnight, encircled Beit Lahya and took over parts of nearby Beit Hanoun, they said. The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

Residents said bulldozers accompanied the troops, indicating the Israelis planned to destroy structures. There was some gun fire, but no casualties were reported.

At the Jabaliya refugee camp, near Gaza City, some Palestinians were seen leaving their homes, while gunmen took up positions in the streets in case the Israelis decided to invade. Early on Monday, Israelis moved into the central part of the Gaza Strip, encircling three refugee camps and blowing up the house of a militant fugitive before withdrawing.

Fatah declaration

The Fatah movement yesterday declared a "unilateral and unconditional end" to attacks on Israeli civilians, adds *The Times* from Ramallah. But the declaration stops short of a full ceasefire, insisting that Palestinians had the right to continue their resistance against Israel's 35-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. This means that Fatah activists would continue their attacks on soldiers and armed Jewish settlers in both areas.

The declaration, drawn up after weeks of European Union talks, is an initiative of Fatah only. The announcement took Fatah leaders by "surprise" and caused anger among many. The officials, while confirming "broad internal agreement" on the principles, said the leaked draft had not been cleared by all those involved.

Many believed that it had been leaked by the Palestinian leadership or by the international community to give the initiative momentum.

'Iraq a step away from N-bomb'

Agencies

LONDON, Sept. 10. — In the most elaborate assessment of Mr Saddam Hussein's arsenal, the International Institute for Strategic Studies has warned that Iraq may be one step away from building a nuclear bomb.

Its findings have been described by *Jane's Defence Weekly* as the best document available, though it contains no new "killer fact". The report, titled *Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction: Net Assessment*, states little is known on Saddam's clandestine programme since UN weapons inspectors left Baghdad in 1998.

"The extent to which Iraq has taken advantage of the absence of inspectors to begin reconstituting its programmes and the extent to which these efforts have succeeded or failed, is not known," the report says.

In a related development, former chief UN weapons inspector Mr Richard Butler today said Iraq could produce a nuclear bomb within six months if it acquired core materials from the Russian black market, adds AFP from Sydney.

Mr Butler, who headed the UN inspection team expelled from Iraq in 1998, said it was known that the Iraqi President had links with terrorist groups.

"The man is a plague upon us all, and the world would be a better place without him. But the kind of threat that's being talked about now is something we need to look at carefully before people take the horrible step of going to war," the New York-based former Australian diplomat told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio.

Mr Butler said Iraq had the knowledge but not the necessary core material such as highly-enriched uranium or plutonium to produce a nuclear bomb.

1 1 SEP 200

WEST ASIA / ELECTIONS IN JAN.

WJA HD-14 Mr. Arafat

Arafat condemns terror attacks

RAMALLAH (WEST BANK), SEPT. 9. The Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, told Parliament on Monday he condemned terror attacks on Israeli civilians, confirmed that elections would be held in early January and offered — apparently in jest — to give up executive powers.

The rambling speech was Mr. Arafat's first to Parliament in 18 months.

His lower lip quivering, Mr. Arafat repeatedly fumbled with the microphones and strayed from the text, launching into asides that were sometimes incomprehensible.

The speech, which came just hours after 60 Israeli tanks encircled three Gaza refugee camps and blew up the home of a suspected militant, was both conciliatory and packed with accusations against Israel. Mr. Arafat skipped over some passages of an earlier draft, including one that called on Parliament to ban suicide attacks.

Israeli banned 12 legislators from making the trip from Gaza to Ramallah, saying they were involved in attacks on Israelis. In solidarity, other Gazan lawmakers stayed behind and participated by video conference.

Several Palestinian legislators complained that Mr. Arafat had failed to present his new Cabinet — the result of a June reshuffle — to Parliament for approval, and that he had not set a specific election date, as legislators had demanded.

When Mr. Arafat mentioned that elections would be held in January, one of the legislators shouted: "What is needed is a



The Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, addressing Parliament in Ramallah on Monday. — Reuters

presidential decree with a specific date." The vote on the Cabinet was to have been an important test of Mr. Arafat's standing, and it was not clear whether he commands a majority in the 88-seat legislature. Several lawmakers have said they would withhold approval.

The legislature will reconvene on Tuesday.

The Palestinian leader has been weakened in recent months, with the United States shunning him and Israel trying to sideline him.

Since a major Israeli military offensive that began in March, he has been largely confined to his headquarters in Ramallah.

Raanan Gissin, an adviser to Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, said the speech was meaningless and that Palestinian reform would not work with Mr. Arafat in power. "Peace and reforms can only happen when Arafat is not there," Mr. Gissin said.

Paul Patin, a spokesman for the U.S. embassy in Tel Aviv, said Mr. Arafat would be judged by his actions, not his words.

— AP

Israel allows session of Palestinian House

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JERUSALEM, SEPT. 3. Israel today authorised the Palestinian Parliament to hold a special session in the West Bank town of Ramallah, but said it would ban any deputies involved in "terrorism," a senior Israeli official told AFP.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, authorised the meeting at the request of the Israeli Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben Eliezer, said the official, who asked not to be named. The Palestinian parliament is set to meet on September 9 to officially approve the new cabinet unveiled by Yasser Arafat in June as part of reforms to the Palestinian Authority, which has been branded by Washington and Israel as corrupt.

The official said the Israeli co-ordinator of activities in the Palestinian territories, Gen. Amos Gilad, "has been tasked with making sure that any members of the Legislative Council involved in terrorist activities will not be able to join the session. "The co-ordinator is the Israeli government repre-

sentative to the Palestinians and is the only one who can give the necessary authorisation" to travel within the West Bank, re-occupied by Israeli forces for 10 weeks, or from the southern territory of the Gaza Strip, the official said. Israel's policy of checkpoints and closures makes it virtually impossible for Palestinian deputies to travel to Ramallah from across the West Bank, while the Gaza Strip is sealed off by checkpoints and an electric fence.

Mr. Sharon had stated his opposition to allowing the gathering at his weekly cabinet meeting on Sunday, saying it would serve as a "platform" for Mr. Arafat and warning it would be a "grave error".

Meanwhile, Israel's Supreme Court ruled today that Israel can expel relatives of Palestinian terror suspects from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, but only if it proves they pose a security threat. A special nine-judge panel made the unanimous ruling in a case that pitted Israel's security concerns against human rights claims. — AFP, AP

Israel braces to face Iraqi attack

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), SEPT. 3. Apprehending a U.S. attack on Iraq after November 1, Israel is completing its own contingency military preparations by then.

According to an agency report, the U.S. has not informed Israel that it was getting ready to attack Iraq around November. But Israel assumes that November is a "reasonable deadline" and has, consequently, asked its security and emergency services to complete their preparations by then. Israel is apprehending that Iraq might attack it after a U.S. military strike on Baghdad begins.

Iraq, Israeli security planners feel, could attack with chemical or biological weapons delivered by its missiles.

Israeli intelligence is of the view that Iraq could also target Israel by sending in remotely piloted planes that are stuffed with chemical or biological weapons. Israel is of the view that Iraq is modifying a MiG-21 plane that can be flown by remote control for this purpose. Israeli fears of missile attack from Iraq have been awakened also on account of its past experience with the regime of Saddam Hussein.

During the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq fired 39 Soviet origin Scud missiles at Israel. Iraq subsequently has also been developing the El Hussein rockets as delivery platforms for mass destruction warheads. Refusing to be caught off-guard, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, held a meeting with his top security officials on Tuesday to complete its contingency plans to ward off an Iraqi attack by November 1, the Israeli daily *Maariv* said.

Israeli officials declined to confirm the Tuesday meeting, but acknowledged that a series of meetings had been held to discuss the situation in Iraq in the recent past.

Given the nature of the threat from Iraq that could involve the use of missiles, the Israelis are deploying anti-missile batteries at key locations. Israel has especially beefed up the defence of its nuclear reactors that it anticipates could be on the Iraqi hit list.

WEST ASIA / FIVE MORE PALESTINIANS KILLED

PA lambasts world's inaction

HEBRON (WEST BANK) SEPT. 1. Israeli forces killed five Palestinians on Sunday, a day after five others died in a messy "targeted killing," prompting Palestinian Authority (PA) officials to hit out at the international community, especially the United States, for its silence in the face of the slaughter.

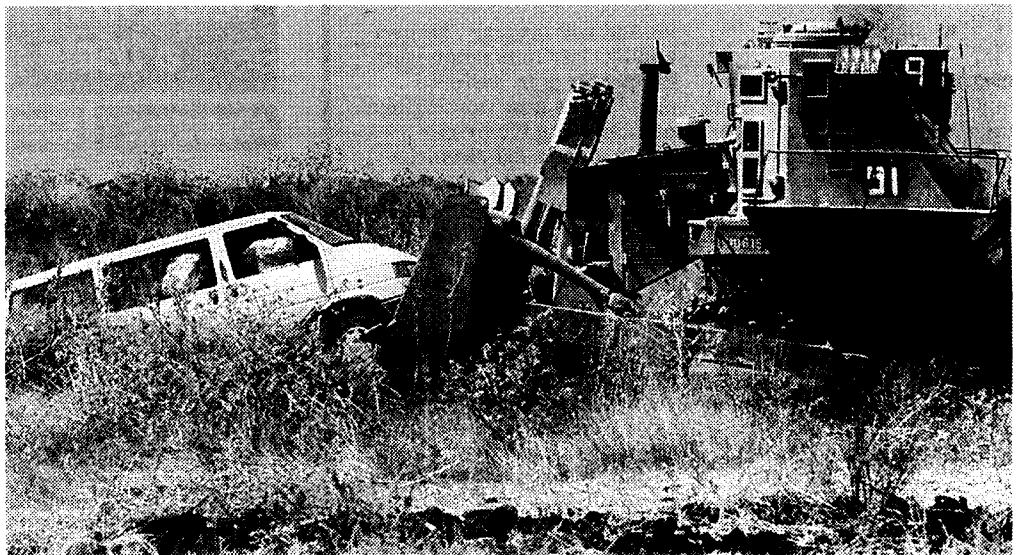
Witnesses insisted at least four of those killed on Sunday were civilian workers, sparking Palestinian charges Israel was practising "state terrorism" after two children aged six and 10 died in the helicopter strike late on Saturday. Four Palestinian men in their 20s, including two brothers, were shot dead early on Sunday in an army ambush which the military said had thwarted a planned strike on the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba, near the flashpoint West Bank city of Hebron.

The army said "sabotage" equipment was found on the bodies of the dead.

But Palestinian witnesses insisted the four were simply workers from the village of Shuyukh who were returning late from their jobs at a nearby quarry.

In the northern West Bank, a Palestinian militant was hot dead during an intense firefight in the refugee camp of Jenin.

Abdel Karim Bassam Sadi



An Israeli army bulldozer pushes back a van that belongs to Palestinians after his driver attempted to sneak into Tulkarem through a dirt road on the outskirts of this West Bank town on Saturday. After a spate of Palestinian suicide bombings in June, Israel has sealed off much of the Palestinian territories. — AP

(18), son of the local chief of the Al-Quds Martyrs Brigades, the armed wing of the radical group Islamic Jihad, was fatally shot in the chest. Senior Palestinian officials described Israel's latest killings of Palestinians as "state terrorism" and slammed the world community, and in particular Washington, for remaining silent on the issue.

"We call on the international

community to stop this bloodshed, this killing in cold blood, this state terrorism. We don't hear the U.S. administration or any other state speaking out about the killing of Palestinian children," said Saeb Erakat, a senior negotiator.

Nabil Abu Rudeina, top advisor to the Palestinian Authority President, Yasser Arafat, called on the West Asian Quar-

ter, made up of the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and Russia, to break off contact with Israel. "This is the third crime in 48 hours, and a dangerous escalation," he said, adding that the Palestinian leadership intended to press for an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council to discuss measures against Israel. — AFP

W. ASIA / FIRST STEP IN ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL

Palestinians take control of Bethlehem

W. ASIA
11/14

BETHLEHEM (WEST BANK), AUG. 20. Palestinian police took control of Bethlehem early today as Israeli forces pulled back from the West Bank town in a first step to ease the conflict, while an Israeli was shot dead by militants in Gaza, where the withdrawal is set to continue.

Under the "Gaza, Bethlehem First" plan agreed on Sunday, Israeli forces moved out of the autonomous town, which had been re-occupied in mid-June along with almost all of the West Bank after a spate of suicide bombings. Both sides say the move is a first step in a gradual withdrawal aimed at easing tensions, alleviating the plight of the Palestinian population at large and eventually reviving the comatose peace process after almost two years of fighting.

The plan is the most significant security measure in almost a year, and foresees a progressive Israeli withdrawal from land it has re-occupied during the *intifada*, or uprising, if the reformed Palestinian security forces can ensure an end to attacks. The withdrawal started despite sharp clashes earlier yesterday and was completed as the killing continued in Gaza

and in the northern West Bank town of Tulkarem, where a Palestinian militant was killed this morning.

"The Israeli army withdrew from Bethlehem and has redeployed around the town. This redeployment aims to allow the Palestinians to act against terrorism and restore a normal life to the population," the army spokesman said in a statement. The army said troops would remain in positions around the town or at nearby roadblocks. Israel fears that a single suicide bomber slipping through a roadblock to Jerusalem, just a few miles to the north would leave this initiative, like all its predecessors, in tatters.

Palestinian officials told AFP that about 100 Palestinian police had arrived in a convoy of about a dozen jeeps from nearby Jericho, the only main West Bank town not reoccupied by Israel. They deployed around the headquarters of Bethlehem's governor, where officials from Palestinian security services, including West Bank security chief, Haj Ismail, were meeting over the withdrawal plan, the sources said.

The plan was thrashed out

during talks on Sunday night between the Israeli Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben Eliezer and the Palestinian Interior Minister, Abdel Razaq al-Yahya. Mr. Ben Eliezer described it as a confidence-building move that could open the way for future political and security talks.

"The steps are essential as a starting point for the future political and security process," he said.

If the plan works, it would be extended to other areas, but militant groups have vowed to thwart it amid an overall lull in the violence that has claimed more than 2,400 lives since September 2000. In the Gaza Strip, where the pullout is set to be implemented next, an Israeli was shot dead early today by the armed wing of the radical Islamic group

Hamas, which led the charge in condemning the withdrawal plan. Hamas gunmen claimed an ambush on the victim's car as he was driving near the settlement of Neve Dekalim.

Radicals say the truce-for-withdrawal plan aims to sap their resistance to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. — AFP

21 AUG 2002

Iraq plans to lure USA from desert to street fights

W. Asia
5-3
10/8
Roland Watson,
The Times, London

WASHINGTON, Aug 9. - Iraq plans to avoid desert battlefields and instead lure invading US troops into the hazards of urban warfare, US intelligence officials said. The strategy would place millions of Iraqi civilians in the way of an aerial bombardment from US aircraft while threatening to maximise casualties among US ground troops.

This interpretation raises the spectre of US forces struggling through the streets of Baghdad in chemical weapons suits, while Iraqi forces snipe at them using a warren of underground tunnels and bunkers to escape.

It also plays on American fears of streetfighting against an unpredictable foe. The 1993 debacle on the streets of Mogadishu, when 18 US soldiers were killed by Somali rebels, the subject of the film *Black Hawk Down*, affected US foreign policy for the rest of the Clinton Administra-

tion. The urban scenario is based on the accounts of Iraqi defectors and an assessment by the Pentagon war planners. *The Los Angeles Times* reported that President Saddam Hussein has told his officials to be prepared for urban fighting. His ploy derives in part from the lessons of the 1991 Gulf War, when Iraqi tanks and forces were easy prey for the coalition's air superiority.

Pentagon officials have already begun to try and factor the risks of street-fighting into their war plans. One of the strategies leaked in recent weeks envisaged an "inside-out" assault on Iraq, which aimed to cripple Saddam's command by striking Baghdad first, as opposed to a ground invasion from the north, south, and possibly west.

Such a strike could be launched swiftly, with as much surprise as remains possible for an attack that, although months away, has been so heavily telegraphed. It would require around 70,000 US troops, either in the region or within striking distance.

Although the eventual number of US troops to be amassed in the Gulf would be far greater, an "inside-out" attack could be launched while forces were still arriving. Mr Michael O'Hanlon, a military analyst with the Brookings Institution, said that street-fighting, and all the additional dangers to Iraqi civilians and US forces involved, was a "foregone conclusion" if the USA invaded.

"Saddam won't fight out in the desert," he said. "We'd win decisively. "But it's a tough kind of war. I'm not sure President Bush has fully signed up to that kind of war." US military chiefs believe their high-tech weaponry is precise enough to hit targets in cities. The technology that produced cruise missiles that could turn the corners of Baghdad streets in the Gulf War has improved dramatically.

In Operation Desert Storm, less than 8 per cent of the munitions dropped over Iraq were precision guided. The figure rose to 35 per cent in the 1998 Kosovo conflict and to 56 per cent in Afghanistan.

Guerrilla legend Abu Nidal found shot

Ramallah, August 19 *AP*

PALESTINIAN GUERRILLA commander Abu Nidal, one of the world's most wanted men, was found dead from gunshot wounds in his Baghdad home, Palestinian sources said Monday.

A senior Palestinian official said Abu Nidal, 65, died under "mysterious conditions" and it was unclear whether he was killed or committed suicide. The account could not be independently verified.

Abu Nidal, a sworn enemy of Yasser Arafat and any Palestinian leader who sought accommodation with Israel, led a disident Palestinian militant organization high on Washington's list of groups it considered terrorist.

His Fatah-Revolutionary Council group was blamed for attacks in 20 countries in which hundreds of people were killed or wounded, mostly during the 1970s and 1980s.

Abu Nidal was accused of masterminding gun and grenade attacks on Israeli and

US airline check-in desks, killing 19 people and injuring more than 100 in Rome and Vienna in December 1985. In his absence, an Italian court later sentenced him to life in prison for the Rome attack.

His group was held responsible for an attack in June 1982 on Israel's ambassador in London, Shlomo Argov. The attack, which seriously wounded Argov, prompted Israel's invasion of Lebanon days later to root out Palestinian guerrilla groups.

Senior Palestinian sources said their contacts in Iraq had confirmed a report in the Palestinian Al-Ayyam newspaper which said on Monday that Abu Nidal's body had been found with gunshot wounds and that he died three days ago.

Abu Nidal's brother, Mohammed al-Bana, said he knew nothing of his condition or whereabouts — but he had not spoken to Abu Nidal for about four decades.

"We heard the news (about his death) from the media. I



Abu Nidal

haven't talked to him for a long time, 40 years or so. I spoke to friends and relatives in Arab countries to check this out, they didn't know he was in Baghdad," Mohammed al-Bana told Qatari satellite television station al-Jazeera.

Arab diplomatic sources had said two years ago that Abu Nidal, suffering from an uniden-

typed type of cancer, had moved to Baghdad for treatment. Iraq has never commented on whether the guerrilla leader was in Baghdad.

Abu Nidal, meaning "Father of the Struggle," was the nom de guerre of Sabri al-Bana, the head of the Fatah-Revolutionary Council, which broke with the Palestine Liberation Organisation in 1974, saying it was too moderate.

"In the 1970s and 1980s, Abu Nidal was considered something of a bin Laden, a man of terror who had his hand in everything," veteran Israeli commentator Yossi Melman told Israeli Army radio.

Melman said Abu Nidal was believed to have worked "at the behest of many governments — and intelligence agencies — Iraq, Syrian, Libyan — and was especially active against the PLO and Arafat's senior entourage. He even tried to assassinate Arafat."

Assassinations in which he was involved included a Jordanian diplomat in Ankara,

the British cultural attache in Athens and the British Deputy High Commissioner in Mumbai.

Israeli pullout deal rejected Palestinian militant groups on Monday rejected a new deal to ease Israel's military clampdown in the Gaza Strip and a West Bank city in return for a reduction of violence, dimming hopes for a lasting ceasefire.

The agreement was sealed in a meeting on Sunday between Israeli Defence Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer and a Palestinian delegation headed by Interior Minister Abdel Razzak al-Yahya and President Yasser Arafat's security adviser, Mohammed Dahlan.

The deal, which would call for an Israeli pullout from Bethlehem and parts of Gaza, yielded the first significant progress in months toward staunching nearly two years of bloodshed in which at least 1,503 Palestinians and 588 Israelis have died.

Reuters

Gaddafi with Britain in fighting terror

^{SIP}
Michael Binyon *The Times*, London 9/8

SIRTE (Libya), Aug. 8. — In a nondescript brown Bedouin tent on the sandy shore of the Mediterranean, the first British minister to hold talks with Colonel Gaddafi was yesterday assured that Libya would settle the Lockerbie case as soon as possible, accept responsibility and pay compensation.

In almost three hours of talks in the surreal setting of the Libyan leader's desert retreat, Mr Michael O'Brien, the minister responsible for West Asia, was told that Libya had no time, money or interest in building weapons of mass destruction and was ready to sign further international agreements to demonstrate its good faith in fighting terrorism. Col Gaddafi said that Al-Qaida was a greater threat to his plans for a free, equal society than it was to the West.

The meeting took place in the hot afternoon sun with a fleet of shiny black Mercedes parked outside the tent, armed guards that surrounded the beach and two vast caravans pulled up nearby. It looked for all the world like a circus.

Inside, looking remarkably robust, relaxed and healthy, the Libyan leader dressed casually in chinos, linen shirt, dark glasses and a quaint Tyrolean hat, ranged over all the past unhappy history between Britain and Libya. He insisted that he was ready to start a new chapter of relations and settle Lockerbie, the issue of the murder of police constable Yvonne Fletcher and all other unresolved matters.

The meeting took place after five hours of talks between Mr O'Brien and Libyan ministers, including Mr Saad Mujber, deputy foreign minister, at a hotel. Mr Mujber had given a strong commitment to supporting the US-led fight against Al-Qaida.

Mr O'Brien defended his presence in Libya. He said: "Col Gaddafi was indeed involved in the past in terrorism but the evidence is that now that he has not been involved in terrorism for some years. He is not threatening his neighbours. Libya is moving away from being an outlaw pariah state towards engagement with the West".

THE STATESMAN

9 AUG 2002

UN seeks end to Israeli incursions in West Bank

(11-11)
AS
Arabs (w)
United Nations: In a major victory for the Palestinians and Arabs, UN general assembly has condemned attacks against Israeli and Palestinian civilians and demanded an end to Israeli incursions in the West Bank and all acts of violence.

After a day-long debate on the situation in West Asia, which heard constant condemnation of Israeli military action against Palestinian civilians, the 189-member assembly adopted a resolution, jointly drafted by the Arabs and the European Union, by 114 votes to four with 11 abstentions. Besides demanding an end to Israeli incursions and violence in West Asia, the resolution, approved on Monday night, called for a free access to all areas by medical and human-

itarian organisations.

The debate itself was on expected lines with the Arabs and Islamic nations strongly attacking Israel, the United States strongly defending it and attacking Islamic fundamentalist groups, and others trying to strike a balance between the two.

The resolution was a major victory for the Palestinians and Arabs who had failed to get any such resolution passed by the UN security council where the US had threatened to veto any draft which did not condemn Islamic fundamentalist outfits, including Hamas.

But the assembly resolutions, unlike those of the council, are not enforceable or legally binding and have little value beyond showing what the world at large feels. PTI

7 AUG 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 AUG 2002

10 die in Israel as suicide bomber blows up bus

Jerusalem: An apparent suicide bomber blew up a bus in northern Israel during rush hour on Sunday, killing at least 10 people, wounding dozens and scattering charred remains across the highway, Israeli witnesses and officials said.

About three hours later, a Palestinian attacker opened fire just outside the walls of Jerusalem's old city, sparking off a gun battle that left three persons dead, including the gunman, who was shot by police.

An Israeli security guard was fatally shot after being pulled out of a truck belonging to a communications company, and an Arab bystander was killed in the crossfire, said Israeli government spokesman Danny Seaman. Several people were also hurt.

The bus was packed with Israelis on their way to work and a number of soldiers returning to their base at the beginning of the work week in Israel. It exploded at the Meron junction between the towns of Acre and Tsfat, about 60 km northwest of the West Bank.

Militant group Hamas claimed responsibility for the bus attack in a statement received in Lebanon by Hezbollah's television station, Al-Manar. Hamas said a suicide bomber had detonated the bomb as a second retaliatory attack for the death of Hamas' military leader, Salah Shehadeh, killed along with 14 other people in an Israeli bombing of Gaza last month.

A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said 10 people were confirmed dead, including a number of soldiers. At least 37 people were injured, two critically,



An Israeli policeman jumps over a covered body as search for survivors continues amidst the wreckage of a bus which was destroyed by an explosion in Mount Meron on Sunday.

said David Peretz, head of the emergency ambulance service Magen David Adom in northern Israel. "I picked up four dead myself," Haim Ben-Shimon, a civilian, who was nearby at the time of the blast, said. "The bus is simply crushed. It looks as if the explosion happened in the centre of the bus."

The Palestinian authority blames Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon for today's bomb attack on the bus, an aide to Yasser Arafat said. "Ariel Sharon's government bears the responsibility for this violence because it continues its aggression against the Palestinian people and refuses to return to the negotiating table," Nabil Abu Rudeina said. AP

5 APR 2002

Four die as Israeli Army storms Nablus

Jerusalem, August 2

AT LEAST four Palestinians were killed and five houses destroyed by the Israeli Army today during overnight clashes and operations in the West Bank city of Nablus and elsewhere.

The Israeli army said it was trying to eliminate terrorist networks, with an incursion into Nablus following the bombing earlier this week of a university cafeteria in Jerusalem which killed seven people including four Americans and wounded more than 80.

The American deaths seemed certain to complicate US attempts to calm a conflict raging for more than 22 months. Hamas said Wednesday's bombing was part of its revenge for a Gaza air raid last week that killed its military commander, his lieutenant and 13 other Palestinians, including nine children.

After vowing harsh retaliation against Hamas, Israel sent columns of tanks deep into the heart of Palestinian-ruled Nablus, which had been surrounded and under curfew for weeks. Also today, Israeli officials approved orders to expel relatives of two suspected terrorists from the West Bank to Gaza, measures the Israelis hope will deter potential attackers.

Israeli troops entered the narrow alleyways of the Old City of Nablus early this morning, residents said, after about 150 armoured vehicles moved into the West Bank city. Two Palestinian gunmen were killed during the incursion.

The Israeli military said soldiers surrounded the Old City and conducted searches and arrests. "Nablus serves as a focus of activity of terror groups, led by Hamas and Fatah," a statement by the military said.

In the nearby village of Salem, Israeli soldiers surrounded the house of a Hamas activist, Amjad

Jubur, 28, and shot him dead after they had handcuffed his hands behind his back, a neighbour claimed. The military said he was shot while trying to escape.

In Hebron, Israeli forces blew up a three-story house belonging to the family of a Palestinian who had carried out an attack in Jerusalem last November, the military said, and in Tulkarem, soldiers destroyed the house of a Hamas gunman who had opened fire in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya in March 2001, killing three.

In the Gaza Strip, one Palestinian was killed and two wounded in exchanges of fire after midnight, when Israeli troops destroyed three structures along the Gaza border with Egypt, residents said. The military said soldiers destroyed an abandoned building used by Palestinians to fire anti-tank missiles.

Late on Thursday, soldiers guarding a Jewish settlement in the central Gaza Strip shot dead a nine-year-old Palestinian girl, Palestinian security sources said. The army said troops in the area shot back after Palestinians fired on them. The Nablus operation followed Bush's condemnation of Wednesday's bombing in Jerusalem.

"I'm just as angry as Israel is right now," Bush told reporters in Washington on Thursday. "I'm furious that innocent life was lost. However, through my fury, even though I am mad, I still believe peace is possible."

Friends and relatives of the American victims stood sobbing on the tarmac at Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion airport before the two caskets were loaded aboard a flight to New York.

The plane carried the bodies of Janis Coulter, 36, a New York-based administrator for Hebrew University, and Benjamin Blustein, 25, a student from Pennsylvania.

Agencies

3 AUG 2002

Another step back in West Asia peace process

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA (BAHRAIN), AUG. 1. A day after the bombing at the Hebrew University cafeteria in Jerusalem, Israel has decided to retaliate against the perpetrators of the attack that left seven persons dead and 97 wounded.

The Israeli Defence Minister, Benjamin Ben Eliezer, has approved a plan targeting extremists, the implementation of which could stall efforts to ease the hardship of the Palestinian people. The Israeli cabinet had on Wednesday morning, prior to the cafeteria attack, approved a proposal for a step-by-step pullout of Israeli forces from the Gaza

Strip in co-ordination with the Palestinian security establishment.

The first stage involved a halt in violence in the Gaza that was to be achieved through a combination of dialogue between the Palestinian security forces and leaders of extremist groups like the Hamas and the Islamic Jihad and use of calibrated force.

The Palestinian forces, observers say, may have to take recourse to arming and disarming terrorists in order to achieve calm.

Israeli forces, in return, will undertake a phased withdrawal from Gaza. Co-ordination between the Palestinian security and the Israeli forces is vital

and the two are expected to consult and review the steps as and when they are adopted. No timeline has been fixed, but in case the experiment proves successful, it is likely to be repeated in the other Palestinian cities of Jericho, Hebron and Bethlehem.

The Israeli Defence Minister is expected to discuss this move with the newly appointed Palestinian Interior Minister, Abed Razeq Yahya. But this meeting may now be delayed due to Wednesday's attack.

The Palestinian Authority has roundly condemned the incident, but there were street celebrations among supporters of the Hamas which carried

out the attack. The Hamas has called the attack an expression of retaliation to the recent Israeli air raid on the Gaza that killed the extremist group's military chief, Salah Shehadeh, and several civilians.

On another note, the Palestinian Finance Minister, Salim Fayad, had on Tuesday received an instalment of \$15 million from Israel.

The amount is part of hundreds of millions of dollars of Palestinian taxpayers' money that Israel had collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority. It had, however, frozen the funds in the wake of the wave of suicide attacks against its citizens.

The Palestinian Authority, meanwhile, is set to receive considerable amount of funds from other sources as well. Saudi Arabia earlier this week transferred one instalment of \$15.4 million to an Arab League account that was created after the organisation's summit in Beirut in March.

With this transfer, Saudi Arabia has paid \$46.2 million to the Palestinians through this account.

The Beirut summit had decided to contribute \$55 million a month for six months to the PA in order to enable it to face the Israeli blockade of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

A lesson to Israelis: Hamas

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, JULY 31. At least seven persons were killed and another 80 injured when a bomb exploded in a crowded cafeteria in Jerusalem's Hebrew University campus. Around 14 of the wounded are reportedly in a serious condition.

The extremist Hamas organisation has claimed responsibility for the attack, which it said was carried out in retaliation to the Israeli slaying of its military commander, Salah Shehade, in an air raid recently.

The attack is the biggest after the twin suicide bombings in June in which 26 Israelis were killed. This incident could delay the revival of the stalled peace process between Israelis and the Palestinians. After a gap of several months, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, is

118
scheduled to meet senior Palestinian leaders in Washington next week. The military wing of the Hamas, Izz -el-Deen-Qassam, said in a statement that the blast was part of a series of responses that will take a long time and teach all Israelis (a lesson). Hamas has also claimed that the explosion in the university which is close to the dividing line of the predominately Palestinian East Jerusalem and West Jerusalem was not carried out by a suicide bomber.

An official of the Fatah organisation said the situation would worsen if Israel persisted with its present policy in the Palestinian territories.

The toll was particularly heavy because a lot of students, including foreigners, were taking exams. Though classes were not in session, many students who were registering for admissions were present near the site of the blast.

Seven dead and eighty injured in cafeteria bombing

Blast in Hebrew varsity

FROM DAN WILLIAMS

Jerusalem, July 31 (Reuters): Palestinian militants detonated a bomb in a crowded cafeteria at Jerusalem's Hebrew University as Israeli, Arab and foreign students ate lunch today, killing seven people and wounding more than 80.

The military wing of the Islamic militant group Hamas said it carried out the attack — which did not appear to be a suicide bombing — in revenge for an Israeli air strike in Gaza last week that killed its military commander and 14 other Palestinians, including nine children.

A US embassy spokesman in Tel Aviv said an American woman was among the dead and at least three US citizens were hurt. The nationalities of the other victims were not immediately known.

"There was a boom, everything went up in the air," Lee Seung Jae, a Korean student, said. The cafeteria's windows were blown out and a thick cloud of smoke and the stench of charred human flesh met medics who rushed to the scene.

The blast, condemned by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, followed a suicide bombing that wounded four people in Jerusalem yesterday. It raised fears of a widening cycle of



An emergency services worker helps an injured woman following the blast at the cafeteria. (Reuters)

death and retribution and cast further doubt on prospects for ending 22 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Police said it appeared a bomb was planted in the cafeteria in the Frank Sinatra International Students Centre, on the university's Mount Scopus campus near Arab East Jerusalem, a departure from militants' usual pattern of suicide attacks.

They said the bomb may have

been left in a bag and that at least seven people were killed and more than 80 wounded.

The centre — named after the late American singer Frank Sinatra, a financial donor — was a popular gathering place hailed by students as an example of ethnic and racial harmony despite the 22-month-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"It is a real shame. These students — Jews and Arabs, as well

as others, mixing together — were trying to learn and define their lives," said Brazilian student Amanda Green, 20.

Yossi Halfon, who was dining with friends, said: "The cafeteria was pretty crowded and the blast was in the middle of the room. I didn't see anybody suspicious."

Some of the injured, their faces streaked with blood, wandered around dazed. One woman sat trembling, her skin charred black and dress shredded into strips, as paramedics treated her.

Students ripped off their T-shirts and used them to staunch victims' wounds.

The university was not in regular session, but many foreign students were taking summer classes.

The United States, Israel's key ally, condemned the attack and said President George W. Bush would not stop trying to bring peace to West Asia.

"The President condemns the attack this morning in Jerusalem in the strongest terms," said White House spokesman Ari Fleischer. "This is a horrific act of terror."

US civil rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson cancelled talks in the Gaza Strip with Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin as a mark of respect for the victims and their families.

1 AUG 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

W. Arif
199-1A

Prisoner transfer plan in place

2/5

RAMALLAH, MAY 1. Palestinian officials have agreed to a plan for transferring six wanted men from the Palestinian Authority leader, Yasser Arafat's compound to a West Bank prison, paving the way for Mr. Arafat's release from Israeli confinement, possibly by nightfall, a Palestinian official said on Wednesday.

An adviser to Mr. Arafat, Mohammed Rashid, said that the six prisoners were expected to be moved from Mr. Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah to the town of Jericho in several hours. At the prison, they would be guarded by American and British wardens.

Immediately after the prisoners left Ramallah, Israeli tanks would pull out of the city, including Mr. Arafat's headquarters, Mr. Rashid said. "Ramallah will be freed of tanks immediately after the prisoners leave the compound," he said. In Je-

rusalem, Israeli and Palestinian officials met to finalise the deal.

The six men have been holed-up with Mr. Arafat and about 300 other people since Israel's invasion on March 29.

In a rapid trial at the compound, with police acting as judges, four were convicted of the killing of the Israeli Cabinet Minister, Rehavam Zeevi, last October.

The other two are the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) faction that carried out the assassination, Ahmed Saadat, and the alleged mastermind of a Palestinian arms shipment intercepted by the Israeli navy in January, Fuad Shobaki.

Meanwhile in Bethlehem, two Palestinian policemen emerged from the Church of the Nativity on Wednesday, a day after 26 civilians and members of the security forces walked out of the besieged compound.



The Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat (centre), meets the British envoy, Jeffrey Geoffrey (second right) and the U.S. envoy, Ronald Schlicher (fourth right), at his besieged headquarters in Ramallah on Wednesday. — Reuters

Nearly 200 others, including two-dozen Palestinians wanted by Israel, remain holed-up in the church, and there were no signs that the month-long

standoff was ending. Israel insists that they either surrender or accept exile; the Palestinians propose that they be taken to Gaza.

2 MAY 1992

THE HINDU