Agence France-Presse Jerusalem, November 20

Yasser Arafat is taking a tration of candidates for a vote that analysts say is tion to select a successor to THE PALESTINIAN elecstep forward with the registechnically viable but over-

The most difficult thing is ly, we began two months ago for the spring election and "Eight weeks are enough. the electoral list. Fortunatesaid Ihab al-Bakri from the we've practically finished, electoral commission. shadowed by Israel.

vote. After that, Arafat, the only leader Palestinians ha-As of mid-October, 67 percent of the Palestinian electorate — around one million people — were registered to Under the terms of the bave ever known, died

sic law, parliamentary speak-

Fattuh immediately pledged that elections would be Authority President for 60 days until a general election Rawhi Fattuh swiftly replaced him as Palestinian held within the two-month timeframe, and the bureauthe 15,000-strong could be held on January 9.

Contenders have 12 days, beginning today, in which they are invited to submit Palestinian electoral com mission swung into action.

Palestinian mourners carry the body of Jihad Abu Layla during his funeral in Gaza City on Saturday. Layla, a policeman, was killed by Israeli tank fire on Friday.

their candidacy: the only requirements are that they be aged 35 or over, themselves registered to vote and able to cough up \$3,000 dollars.

leader of Fatah, Marwan Barghuti, currently serving jailed West Bank nave to lodge his candidacy. A poll conducted last month suggested that the charisalthough his lawyers would matic 45-year-old was the secfive life sentences in Israel for murder, could also stand $_{
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ond most popular choice for PA president behind Arafat.

But officials say that obstacles to a fair vote are far from technical Insisting that "there is the political will on the Palestinian side," MP observers in urging Israel to a bit of space to breathe and to end, before the vote, esca-Hanan Ashrawi joined other do its best to smooth the way. "We want Israel to give us lating violence, assassinations and (building the) wall,

because it is impossible to hold an election in these cir-

cumstances," she said.
Similarly, Mahdi Abdel
Hadi, director of the Palestinian Academic Society for
Study of International Affairs, said Israel should allow Palestinians living in anticipate in the ballot. "Nearly 250,000 Palestinians live in nexed east Jerusalem to pareast Jerusalem and it is legit-imate and imperative that they participate," he said.

Suha handed over Arafat

been given copies of the medical files of her late husband Yasser Arafat and then flew to Tunup the same documents SUHA ARAFAT has isia, as the late Pale stinian president's nephew was expected in the French capital to pick amid some controversy.

Qidwa, who was travel-ling to Paris, had the right to access the in-formation if he reministry spokesman Jean-Fran cois Bureau said Arafat's nephew, Nasser al-Defence quested it.

But the Paris lawyers Suha had said the dossier should only be given to "the children and the widow." It was not up to the ministry confirm or deny what the lawyers bethe right to see the file ieved but Qidwa had if he so wished

AFP, Paris

Another Iraq mosque raided, 3 shot dead

Mosul hospital held by insurgents raided

Associated Press Baghdad, November 19

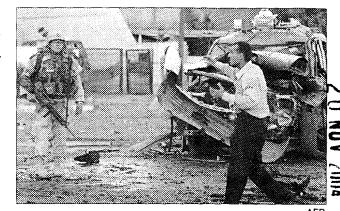
IRAQI FORCES, backed by US soldiers, stormed one of the major Sunni Muslim mosques in Baghdad after Friday prayers, opening fire and killing at least three people, witnesses said. Another raid overnight at a hospital allegedly used by insurgents in Mosul led to three arrests. the military said.

About 40 people were arrested at the Abu Hanifa mosque in the capital's Azamiyah neighbourhood, according to the witnesses, who were members of the congregation. Another five people were wounded.

It appeared the raid at Abu Hanifa mosque, long associated with anti-American activity, was part of the crackdown on Sunni clerical militants launched in parallel with military operations against the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah.

On Thursday, the Iraqi government warned that Islamic clerics who incite violence will be considered as "participating in terrorism". A number of them already have been arrested, including several members of the Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars, which spoke out against the US-led offensive against Fallujah.

"The government is determined to pursue those who incite acts of violence. A number of mosques' clerics who have publicly called for



A US soldier and an Iraqi policeman secure the scene after a car-bomb blast, which killed 3 people in Baghdad on Friday.

taking the path of violence have been arrested and will be legally tried," said Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's spokesman, Thair al-Nageeb.

US troops were seen securing the outer perimeter of the mosque area and sealing it off. Some American soldiers also were seen inside the compound.

Witnesses heard explosions coming from inside the mosque, apparently from stun grenades. Inside the office of the imam. books and a computer were found scattered on the floor. and the furniture was turned upside down.

At least 10 US armoured vehicles were parked in front of the mosque, along with two vehicles carrying about 40 Iraqi National Guards, witnesses said.

Abu Hanifa mosque has long been associated with

anti-American agitation and support for the former regime. Saddam Hussein was seen in the area as the city fell to American forces in April 2003, and US Marines fought a fierce gunbattle with Saddam loyalists around the mosque on April 10, 2003, the day after the ousted ruler's statue was hauled down in Firdous Square.

The raid on the al-Zaharawi hospital in Mosul was conducted by Iraqi commandos with the Ministry of the Interior's Special Police Force, backed by US troops.

US forces from the 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment secured the area around the hospital, while Iraqi troops raided the building, detaining three individuals suspected of terrorist activities. Pictures were taken of 23 bodies in the morgue believed to have been terrorists.

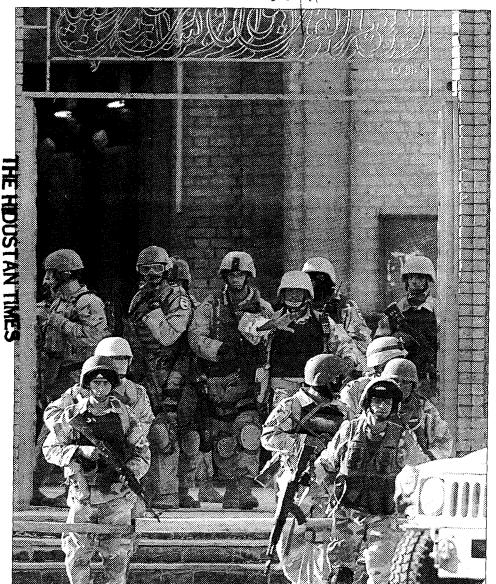
US hunt finds Zarqawi HQ in Fallujah

US TROOPS sweeping through Fallujah found what appeared to be a key command centre of terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, along with a workshop where an SUV registered in Texas was being converted into a bomb and a classroom containing flight plans and instructions on shooting down planes.

> US officials insisted the Fallujah campaign produced a treasure trove of documents and other intelligence information that would help US and Iraqi authorities hunt down insurgents. Lieutenant-General

John Sattler, a senior Marine commander in Iraq, said some documents listed names of fighters, including some from outside Iraq. But he cautioned that the insurgent posts discovered on Thursday were still being investigated. According to TV footage, the suspected al-Zargawi command centre was in an imposing house with concrete columns, with a large sign in Arabic reading "al-Qaida Organisation".

AP. Baghdad



US soldiers and Iraqi National Guardsmen rush from the al-Hanifa mosque in Baghdad on Friday.

Agence France-Presse Lahore, November 19

PAKISTANI SECURITY for es have arrested a key al-Qa da operative wanted in cor nection with attacks of Christian targets and a faile bid to kill President Perve. Musharraf, an official said.

Osama Nazir, considered an important catch, was nabbed from the industrial city of Faisalabad in central Punjab province on Tuesday. a senior security official said. "He is the most important Pakistani al-Qaida operative who was facilitating foreign al-Qaida operatives for attacks in Pakistan," the official, who asked not to be identified, said, "He is a prized catch and was a main link between foreign al-Qaida operatives and local jehadi groups.'

Nazir headed a group of 24 militants and masterminded the March 2002 attack on a church in Islamabad's high security diplomatic enclave in which five people including a US diplomat's wife and stepdaughter were killed.

He was also involved in the August 5, 2002 attack on the Murree Christian School, northeast of Islamabad, in which six Pakistani guards were killed, and August 9 attack on the Christian Hospital chapel in Taxila, west of Islamabad, Four Pakistani nurses and one of the attackers were killed, while 26 people were wounded in Taxila attack.

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

History doesn't justify either Israel or Palestine

19 10 10 Paiestine. At least not in a continuous histo-Egypt, a China or a Thailand. Without the British there would be neither a modern Israel nor Palestine

ing to their roots, unwinding the clock to Old Testament times. But if every group of ethnic kin with an ancient pedigree did this where would we be? The Indians could reclaim North and South America, the Mughals The Jews claim that they are merely return-Russia and the Hottentots South Africa.

bylonia endured until the 11th century. Other The Jews left what was relatively recently tan a new exodus to Babylonia, in modern day ny and others were dispersed by war and catanamed Palestine a long time ago. In AD 70 after the Jewish insurrection, the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem Temple and the Jews beraq. This large-scale Jewish settlement of Bastrophe to Italy, Spain, Gaul and Eastern Europe. Judaism also spread by proselytism. By the late Middle Ages, the heartland of Jewish Jews went to Egypt, the Romans enslaved ma-The Jews did not begin to settle again settlement was the Polish-Lithuanian state.

Palestine until the late 19th century. But it was it disappeared. The people of these times had only after the fall of the Ottoman Empire that the British foreign secretary Arthur Balfour, Lloyd George, a religious man who saw the strongly backed by Prime Minister David ration for a Jewish "national home", that the Zionist cause as one that must be supported by Christian charity, issued his declaration that the government "views with favour" the aspisettlement of Arab land began in earnest.

world view Balfour had made a terrible mistake. British politicians and administrators, faced with a bloody Arab revolt that they had The next generation of to mercilessly repress, felt that Lloyd George and

DNATHAN POWER

But if there are reasonable questions to ask of Palestine, one can also question the roots of about the legitimacy of the Jewish colonisation Palestinian nationalism.

and Jerusalem was not their capital. The states Before British rule there were places called Palestine in the region but they were not states that did exist were not called Palestine. The name appears first in late Roman times as the name of a province and the name survived for short while in the early Arab empire but then

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deep rooted, sometimes complex identities but being Palestinian was not one of them.

During the long Ottoman era, Jerusalem was only the capital of a district of the same name. It and other districts in the area were under the authority of larger provinces, governed from Damascus, Sidon or Beirut. It was the British who created a formal entity called Palestine with delineated boundaries and

ally strung on the horn of a dilemma. The Arabs were The British were perpetuconvinced that they had been promised a state of their own made Jerusalem its capital.

and dismember the Ottoman Empire. This is if they helped the British overthrow the Turks why the Jewish historian, Tom Segev, describes this piece of land as "twice promised". It is also ism, that what the British had ruled as "Palestine" had to be divided in two. why the UN in 1947 decided, given the reality of Jewish settlement and Palestinian national-

The Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, is trying to ride the tiger of modern day Zionism. Having himself fed the beast for most of his political life with the meat of a Jewish

return to all biblical lands, he now attempts a compromise with a withdrawal from Gaza that risks the assassin's bullet from those settlers still imbued with the Zionist dream

Yasser Arafat for most of his political life held fast to the idea that the Palestinians did not want partition. They wanted it all, as the British had promised them. Arafat later appeared to mellow, yet what he told audiences when he spoke in Arabic sometimes suggested that the compromise of partition that he envisaged was but a first step to driving the Jews one day into the sea,

Neither side will find the road to peace unless there is some modesty in their approach to the other. In the end the two sides, if they at Camp David with President Bill Clinton, and refined at the subsequent negotiations at truly want peace and development above all ous war they bring, must return to the principles of a reasonably fair division as negotiated and the sooner their leaders tell their people he sooner there might be honest discussions rather than their myths and the near continu-Sharm el-Sheik and Taba. The truth is that nei ther side has a cast iron claim to their own state on the land the British called "Palestine"

19 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

War rules broken in Falluja: Amnesty

The rules of war protecting batants have been broken by both sides in the week-long as-London, Nov. 15 (Reuters); civilians and wounded comsault on the Iragi city of Falluja, the human rights group Amnesty International said

US warplanes bombarded house, while heavy clashes diehard areas of Falluja on Monday and troops hunted rebroke out in other cities and insurgents attacked the counmaining insurgents house-totry's oil network.

The US military says it has tivity has also surged across ance remain, particularly in in ruins, devastated by the fescattered pockets of resisttaken control of Falluja, but southern parts. Large areas lie day onslaught. Insurgent acrocity of the military's seven Iraq's Sunni region.

which gave examples of what it said were breaches of the those responsible brought to The London-based group, rules by both US troops and insurgents, demanded that all violations be investigated and justice.

Not only had the attacking US and Iraqi troops failed to take the necessary steps to eninsurgents/had also abused sure that non-combatants did come under fire, but flags of truce and fired indis-

Major Tod Desgrosseiller smokes a cigar during a break in fighting in Falluja. (AFP)

criminately.

fears that civilians have been killed, in contravention of inas a result of failure by parties to the fighting to take neces-"Amnesty International ternational humanitarian law, sary precautions to protect non-combatants," Amnesty

missile hit a Falluja clinic on November 9, according to a ical staff and dozens of other civilians were killed when a doctor who survived the strike Amnesty said 20 Iragi medthough it was not known

who fired the missile

On the same day a nineyear-old boy bled to death after to hospital because of the shrapnel. Unable to take him being hit in the stomach by fighting, his parents buried him in their garden.

Elsewhere a woman and her three daughters were reported killed when their house was bombed, Amnesty said.

It also said a British television programme, Channel Four News, broadcast footage on November 11 that appeared to show an American soldier

wall and then commenting:

have an obligation to protect manitarian law the US forces fighters hors de combat. "Under international huon the US authorities to investigate this incident immedithe human rights watchdog said. It said insur-Amnesty International calls gents were also reported to have violated international humanitarian law. ately."

fragis are reported to have gents opened fire on the "In one incident, some come out of a building waving a white flag. When a Marine Marines from different direcapproached this group, insv. tions.'

A US military official in Iraq also accused insurgents storing weapons in mosques and schools. Insurgents were reported to be firing from a mosque on November 10, Amnesty said.

cluding deliberate targeting of "All violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law must be inthe killing of injuyed persons must be brought 16 justice," it ble for unlawful attacks, incivilians, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, and vestigated and those responsi-

lice c

charity' for snipers ference? Adopt a sniper A Baghdad, Nov. 15 (Reuters): Texas police Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) officer is Looking for a cause with a difrunning a charity for frontline thing from baby wipes to body Afghanistan, supplying every-Irad H snipers armour.

Arthur detective and police sniper Brian Sain, Adopt a Sniper(www.adoptasniperorg) The brainchild of Port lars in cash and gear to supplehas raised thousands of dol ment the kit of sharp shooters in up to 75 US combat platoons.

"Being aware that police snipers often face the same lotary counterparts, I assumed correctly that they were doing without things they needed to gistical problems as their mili get their jobs done," Sain said.

He contacted US military the needs of each sniper, in sniper schools and began sending supplies, tailored to walk of life are helping. Once the word got out that a group January. "People from every

Boys play with toy guns in Baghdad during the Id ul-Fitr holiday. (AFP)

of policemen was helping the military and inviting civilian assistance, it really took off," he said.

Some US soldiers deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan spend military. "Snipers need gear that is different than the average airman, marine, sailor, or "When the snipers desperatetheir own money to supple ment equipment issued by the soldier," Sain said via e-mail ly need mission specific gear

... we just try and fill that void." From the frontlines, thanks. "Your package arrived ... and was met with great fanfare," said a Marine platoon snipers are writing to say Afghanistan. commander

"The mini binos (binocu lars) will help lighten our load as we continue to spend mos of the time chasing the Tal iban between 2,100-3,050

NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Abbas survives assassination l

Mr Mahmoud Abbas

Mahmoud Abbas, who was GAZA CITY, Nov. 14. — Mr chosen as PLO chief to succeed late Yasser Arafat, today survived an assassination attempt by radical Palestinian gunmen who killed two security service personnel.

erupted today at the tent set Witnesses said gunfire up for mourners to gather in Iwo security guards were killed and five people were wounded, hospital officials nemory of Arafat, just after Mr Abbas arrived at the site.

said. The gunfire lasted sever-About five minutes after Mr Abbas, Arafat's longtime deputy, arrived in a motorcade, gunmen fired in the air and Mr Abbas' bodyguards al minutes, witnesses said also fired in the air.

Mr Suleiman Mahdi, a Palestinian Authority driver said Mr Abbas was shaking rity officers immediately surrounded Mr Abbas. "They took him to a safe place then he managed to get out of the hands with visitors when the gunfire erupted. He said secu-

tures showed a group of about 20 men entering the mourning tent where Mr Abbas, and other key Palestinian AP Television News pic-Gaza strongman Md Dahlan leaders had come to mourn for Arafat

shouted: "Abbas and Dahlan Americans." Gunfire then redeem Abu Amar (Arafat)." The gunmen, clad in green, popped through the tent. The gunmen also chanted, "With our blood and souls, we will agents

Palestinian boys dressed up as Yasser Arafat carry the veteran leader's portrait as they march in mourning through the southern Gaza town of Rafah on Sunday. -- AFP

Security officials said the gunmen belonged to the Al-Aqsa Mr Abbas' bodyguards hustled him into a corner as Martyrs Brigades.

bled over plastic chairs to flee. Mr Abbas was taken to the shooting. Earlier today, Palestinian officials pushed forward with Palestinian headquarters after

frightened mourners scram-

Arafat, meeting today to set a date for elections to replace plans for life without Yasser death this week.

their longtime leader after his Also today, the PLO leader

seen Arafat's medical file.

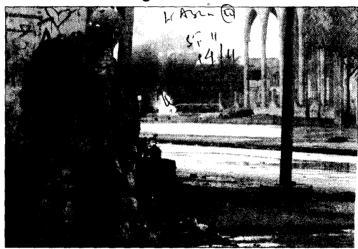
faction to run as its candidate in elections to replace Arafat Mr Mahmud Abbas was chosen by the dominant Fatah as head of the Palestinian Authority.

are a key test for the Palestinians, who hope a The presidential elections smooth transition of power will encourage renewed international involvement in West Asia peacemaking

'No suspicion of poisoning'

son to suspect Arafat was legal authorities would have intervened if medical tests France's health minister today said there was no reasaid in an interview with a poisoned because French had pointed to wrongdoing, "Nothing leads us to think "Otherwise legal authorities would have had to take the case into consideration," he said, adding that he had not a report adds from Paris PhilippeDouste-Blazy French Jewish radio station that there was poisoning,'

1,000 insurgents killed in Fallujah offensive



A photograph released on Saturday by the US Army shows Marines in action in Fallujah. — AFP

FALLUJAH, Nov. 13. — Backed by tanks and artillery fire, US troops launched a major attack today against insurgent hold-outs in southern Fallujah, hoping to finish off resistance in what had been the major rebel bastion of central Iraq. An Iraqi official estimated that about 1,000 insurgents had been killed so far in the week long offensive.

In the northern city of Mosul, a car bomb exploded as an Iraqi National Guard convoy passed by, witnesses said. In recent days, an armed uprising in sympathy with Fallujah's insurgents has killed 10 Iraqi National Guards and one American soldier, the US military said.

The region's governor blamed the uprising on "the betrayal of some police members" and said National Guard units arrived to help quell the violence. Also, a US infantry battalion was diverted from Fallujah and sent back to Mosul.

Insurgents appeared to be taking advantage of the lessening of American troop strength around Fallujah as US commanders report an increase in small-scale rebel attacks.

At least five heavy explosions rocked central Baghdad today. Earlier, insurgents armed with rocket-propelled grenades attacked the ministry of education, a witness said. Iraqi police also clashed with militants.

About 1,000 insurgents had been killed and another 200 captured during the Fallujah operation, Iraq's national security adviser Qassem Dawoud said on national television. — AP

वादित्यं उत्पान রামাল্লা, ১২ নভেম্বর: স্বাধীন প্যালেক্তাইন

याञ्च व्याप्यक्र

প্যালেন্তাইনিরা ক্ষত হাতে সাফ করে ফৈলেছেন কায়রোয় সামরিক মর্যাদায় শেষকৃত্য হওয়ার সময়ের আগেই রামাল্লার সদর দফতর মোকাতায় পর আরাফতের দেহ আনা হয় রামাল্লায়। কিন্তু প্যালেম্ভাইনি জনতার ভিড় সামলাতে না পেরে কবর দেওয়া হয় আরাফতকে। সেখানে গাছের হায়া ঘেরা একটি চত্তরে সাদা মার্বেল পাথরের বালির বক্তা, ভাঙাচোরা বাড়ির ধ্বংসাবশেষ। সমাধিতে রাখা হয় আরাফতের শববাহী

হওয়ার ইচ্ছাও অপূর্ণ রইল। গত আড়াই বছর

দেখা হল না তাঁর। জেরুজালেমে সমাহিত

জেরুজালেমের আল আকসা মসজিদের মাটি কায়রো থেকে সিনাই হয়ে কপ্টারটি রামাল্লার কংক্রিটের কফিনটি। ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া হয় হামলায় জঁড়িয়ে যাওয়া সেই বাড়ির চত্বরেই গড়ে ইজরায়েলি সেনার হাতে গৃহবন্দি অবস্থায় কার্যত রাখবেন না আরব নেতারা। অনেকটা সে কারণে মোকাতার দু'টি খুপরি ঘর। ইজরায়েলি ট্যাঙ্কের গেলেন ইয়াসের আরাফত, তা অনেক দিন মনে ইজরায়েলের দখল করা আরব ভূমিতে পা আরাফতের ঠিকানা ছিল রামাল্লার সদর দফতর শেষযাত্রায় যে সম্মান ও ভালবাসা সঙ্গে নিয়ে আবার অনেকটাই নিরাপত্তার জন্য মিশরের ভোলা হয়েছে আরাফতের অস্থায়ী সমাধি। আরাফতের শেষকৃত্য। গত আডাই বছর ক্ষমতাহীন হয়েছিলেন তিনি। তবু তাঁর রাজধানী কায়রোয় সম্পন্ন হল ইয়াসের রাখবেন বিশ্ববাসী।

প্রবেশাধিকার ছিল না। কায়রোর আল আজহার মসজিদে ধর্মীয় কত্য পালনের পর আরাফতের জেকজালেমে আরাফতকে সমা**খি দেওয়া হলে** বাধা দিয়েছেন ইজরায়েলি প্রধানমন্ত্রী অ্যারিয়েন্ড नुक्रिय मिल, त्यरे मावि त्थत्क छात्रा प्रदाद ना। আশঙ্কা করেই আরাফতের শেষ ইচ্ছা পালনে অস্থায়ী ভাবে কবর দিয়ে প্যালেস্তাইনি জনতা শ্যারন। কিন্তু কংক্রিটের কফিনে আরাফতকে কফিনটি এসে পৌঁছয় আল মাজের বিমান জেকজালেমের দাবি আরও জোরদার হবে ঘাঁটিতে। আরাফত্তের শেষকৃত্যে কোনও ষাধীন প্যালেক্তাইনের রা**জধানী হিসেবে** अधिनिधि भाठाम्नान ইজনায়েল। পূर्व

- 4301A ভারতে জাতীয় শোক: আরাফতের মৃত্যুতে করেছে। সরকারি ভবনে পতাকা অর্ধনমিত ভারত তিন দিনের জাতীয় শোক ঘোষণা ধাকছে, অনুষ্ঠানও বাতিল হয়েছে।

শেষ করা যাবে না বলে আজ রাতটা আরাফতের মৃতদেহ মিশরেই রাখতে চেয়েছিলেন পিএলও এত অল্প সময়ের মধ্যে সমাধির সব ব্যবস্থা অসম্ভুডা নিয়ে পিএলও নেতাদের সঙ্গে বিতর্কে स्ति के अपनारक निवाभखावक्षिता भूत्य নেতারা। কিন্তু নিরাপতার কারণে মিশর রাজি হয়নি। ওয়েস্ট ব্যাঙ্ক থেকে কাউকে রামাল্লায় যাওয়ার অনুমতি দেয়নি ইজরায়েল। তাতে গুলি চার্নালে আহত হন অন্তত চার জন। বিক্ষোরণে দু'জন নিহত হন। আরাফতের বিশৃঙ্খালা বেড়েছে। আরাফতের মরদেহ পৌছনোর আগেই রামাল্লায় গাড়িবোমা

मरस भूर्व त्रिष्टीय मर्यामाय जरखाष्टि मन्भन्न रहाइ কায়রোতে আজ সকালেই কড়া নিরাপত্তার জড়িয়ে পড়েছিলেন আরাফত-পত্নী সূহা। তার আরাফত্তরা এই অনুষ্ঠানে সাধারণ মানুষের জেরেই তিনি আর রামাল্লায় যাননি। নিরাপত্তারক্ষীদের। উত্তেজিত জনতা কফিনের উপর লাগানো প্যালেস্তাইনি পতাকাটি ছিড়ে মাটি ছোঁয়ার আগেই অসংখ্য শোকার্ড মানুষ সমাধিস্থলে নিয়ে যেতে হিমশিম খেতে হয় মোকাতায় ভিড় জমান। আরাফতের দেহ

13 No. 2062

ANADABAZAR PATTIKA

'Cornered' militants fight back in Falluja

Falluja, Nov. 12 (Reuters): A battle erupted near a mosque in northwest Falluja today just hours after US Marines said insurgents were now trapped in the south of the city.

Insurgents determined to show they are undeterred by the four-day-old offensive in Iraq's most rebellious city have hit back hard with attacks and bombings elsewhere, causing two days of bloody chaos in the northern city of Mosul.

Iraqi authorities struggling to contain the unrest roiling Sunni cities have imposed curfews on Baghdad, Mosul, Baiji, Ramadi and Falluja this week. A curfew has been in force in Samarra since US-led forces stormed it last month.

month.
Captain Angela Bowman described Mosul as calm overnight, with its three million residents under a dusk-to-dawn curfew, after yesterday's attacks on nine police stations.

An American soldier was killed in the Mosul fighting, the military said, and Bowman said US planes staged air strikes yesterday as US and Iraqi forces sought to restore order. "Iraqi National Guard and multinational forces are restoring security to those areas of the city where terrorists are attacking from, primarily in the southwestern area," she said.

Machinegun fire and grenade blasts echoed across northern Baghdad's Sunni Adhamiya district today as rebels fought national guards, witnesses said. The clashes subsided later.

Heavy fighting resumed in Falluja's northwestern Jolan district, where resistance had dwindled in the previous 24 hours, a Reuters correspondent with Marines in the area said. Gunmen emerged on a rooftop beside a mosque as Marine tanks headed for the area. Troops evacuated two US casualties.

Smoke rose from an ice factory on the edge of Jolan after rebels fired three rockets at US forces there, residents said. A huge explosion shook Jolan later, but its cause was not clear. The US military acknowledges that insurgent leaders and foreign militants may have fled Falluja before the attack began on Monday night, but says those who remain are bottled up.

"They can't go north because that's where we are. They can't go west because of the Euphrates river and they can't go east because we have a huge presence there. So they are cornered in the south," Sergeant Roy Meek said.

Tank crews said they had driven rebels through a "ghost town" to a southern area the Americans say is a stronghold for foreign militants led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The US military says 18 US and at least 5 Iraqi troops have been killed and 178 American soldiers wounded in Fallinja.

13 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

Chaos at Arafat's burial in Ramallah

Associated Press

Ramallah (West Bank), November 12

YASSER ARAFAT was laid to rest in a marble-and-stone grave on Friday after his flag-draped coffin was borne through a sea of emotional Palestinians who swarmed the helicopter that brought him from a state funeral in Egypt.

The police fired wildly into the air to keep back the surging crowd at the West Bank compound known as the Muqata, where Arafat spent his last years as a virtual prisoner.

After Arafat's body was lowered into the ground, Muslim clerics read Koranic verses and the late leader's bodyguards wept and embraced each other. Officials tried for 25 minutes to open the helicopter door to remove the coffin onto a jeep that had plowed through the crowd to clear a path. As the coffin was carried toward the gravesite, the police jumped on top of it, waved their arms and flashed the victory sign. People chanted, "With our blood and our soul, we will redeem you Yasser Arafat!" Stretchers carried away two people who were trampled in the melee.

Mahmoud Abbas, the new head of the PLO, and Omar Suleiman, Egypt's director of intelligence, tried to emerge from the helicopter, but were kept back by the huge, chaotic crowd.

"It's not what we expected", said Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat, who travelled in the Egyptian military helicopter with Arafat's coffin. "At the same time, we had to do the burial before sunset in Islamic tradition. ... I expected much better, more organised, but things got out of hand, unfortunately".

Television audiences watching Arafat's funeral in Cairo got a rare glimpse of his nine-year-old daughter, Zahwa, weeping and standing next to her mother as his coffin as placed on a plane. State-run Egyptian television, the only station allowed to broadcast the funeral ceremonies, took note of the emotional moment.

"Don't cry, Zahwa. Your father never cried. He was a man of patience and endurance", an unidentified announcer said. "Don't cry, Zahwa. All Arab children share with you your pride and dignity today".

But controversial wife of Arafat, Suha, did not attend his burial service on Friday, choosing instead to stay on in Cairo, Palestinian political sources said. Suha, who was at the centre of an unseemly row with four of Arafat's top lieutenants ear-



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH Leaders from across the globe follow the funeral cortege of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Cairo on Friday.

lier in the week over access to her husband's hospital bedside, did not fly back with his coffin to Ramallah after a military funeral in Cairo. "She decided to stay on to receive condolences", a source said.

The red-white-green-and-black flag was ripped off the casket as it was carried through the crowd. The failure of the police to control the pandemonium augured poorly for Palestinian hopes to maintain calm and order following Arafat's death. Earlier, people burst through the gates of the Muqata and climbed over walls to pay their final respects to the man who embodied their dreams of statehood.

As Arafat's helicopter landed, the crowd cried out, "Welcome, welcome Abu Ammar!" using his nom de guerre. "Welcome, welcome old man!"

Armed policemen had tried for several

hours to keep people back, but mourners, eager to get close to the gravesite, pushed their way through. Police scrambled to keep people off the landing pad.

In Gaza City, hundreds gathered on rooftops, streets and apartment balconies in hopes of catching a glimpse of Arafat's helicopter. Barred from attending the burial, tens of thousands of Gaza residents held rallies and symbolic funerals -

with symbolic coffins - across the strip.

A small group of masked gunmen marched into the Muqata, ignoring calls from official Palestine TV not to carry arms or mask faces, as is common in Palestinian funerals during times of crisis. However, the gunmen calmly submitted to inspection by plainclothes security personnel who ensured there were no bullets in the chambers

Jordan doctor wants autopsy

Associated Press Amman, November 12

A LEADING Jordanian neurologist, who regularly examined Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, called for an autopsy today to determine the exact cause of his death.

Dr Ashraf al-Kurdi, in an interview, refused to comment on widespread speculation that Arafat could have been poisoned by Israel. Neither doctors nor Palestinian leaders have said what caused Arafat's death after days in a coma at a Paris hospital.

Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom yesterday dismissed allegations that Israel had a hand in killing Arafat as "scandalous and false".

Al-Kurdi, who had been Arafat's personal physician for the past two decades, last saw the Palestinian leader in Ramallah two weeks ago. Arafat had fallen ill in his besieged compound and shortly after seeing al-Kurdi flew for treatment to Paris, where he died yesterday.

"It should be figured out if there were mistakes and if so, where, in Ramallah or in Paris," al-Kurdi said. "There was no diagnosis and there is suspicion about his death. Medically speaking, what happened wasn't normal and it should be investigated, there should be an autopsy to determine the exact cause."

Meanwhile, on Friday, teenage boys climbed onto the walls of the compound chanting: "Whoever poisoned Arafat, we'll drink his blood". Others cried out, 'Allahu Akbar', and 'We want to see Abu Ammar'.



Blair, Bush meet on West Asia

Associated Press Washington, November 12

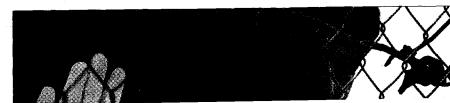
CONVINCED THAT the road to



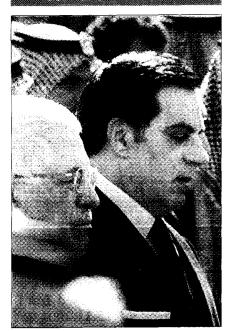
No one knows where the money is

Agencies New York, November 12

YASSER ARAFAT personally controlled billions of dollars, with which he ran the Palestinian Authority, but no one knows where the money is, Palestinian and Israeli officials said. The extent and whereabouts



A D E LA HA FA







AFP & RELITERS (From Top) PLO leader Mahmud Abbas at the funeral of Yasser Arafat in Cairo on Friday. Security guards hang a poster of Arafat at his headquarters in Gaza. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh receives a keffiyeh - the traditional Arabic headscarf - from the Palestinian envoy in New Delhi.

Blair, Bush meet on **West Asia**

Associated Press Washington, November 12

CONVINCED THAT the road to Jerusalem doesn't run through Baghdad, British Prime Minister Tony Blair is trying to turn President Bush's attention from Iraq to the stalled West Asia peace process.

Blair, who dined with Bush on Thursday and was holding formal talks with him on Friday, lost political ground at home for being Bush's steadfast comrade in the US-led war in Iraq that was unpopular in Europe. Now. Blair wants the newly re-elected Bush to push more aggressively for a settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Their Oval Office meeting, on the same day as the funeral in Egypt of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, also gives Bush a chance to show that he wants to reach out to Europe and Nato allies. Among the topic the two leaders were expected to discuss were: Trans-Atlantic relations, which were frayed by the invasion of Iraq; spreading democracy throughout West Asia; Iran's nuclear programme; conflicts and poverty in Africa; and climate change

But the long-simmering Israeli-Palestinian conflict was a top issue for Blair. Briefing reporters during the flight to Washington, Blair's spokesman said the Prime Minister was expected to call on Bush to help shore up the Palestinian Authority. Palestinians need inter-



George Bush & Tony Blair



national help to improve security, bolster their economy and strengthen civil and political structures, he said. Britain is concerned that Israel's proposed withdrawal from Gaza will create a destabilizing power vacuum if the Palestinians are not ready to assume control.

"For the Gaza pullout to work, you have to have a Palestinian Authority that can deal with it". Blair's official spokesman said. "Unless you have a Palestinian Authority capable of dealing with the consequences of the Gaza pullout, then going beyond that will be difficult".

Bush claims he's never stopped working on the US-backed plan for peace — the so-called road map, which calls for a new Palestinian state in 2005.

"The vision is two states, a Palestinian state and Israel, living side by side in peace. I think we've got a chance to do that", the President said this week.

No one knows where the money is

New York, November 12

YASSER ARAFAT personally controlled billions of dollars, with which he ran the Palestinian Authority, but no one knows where the money is. Palestinian and Israeli officials said. The extent and whereabouts of this fortune, which relied on different aides and advisers as co-signers, had been a hidden part of the disputes at his bedside, the officials were quoted by The New York Times as saying.

Arafat kept knowledge of the accounts compartmentalised, and only he knew all the details, the paper quoted well-informed Israeli officials as saying and reported that the assertions were confirmed "reluctantly" by Palestinian officials who did not want to harm his legacy.

Much about the financing of the Palestinian movement in the past four decades, it said, has been shrouded in secrecy, and its details are hard to pin down.

But Palestinians were quoted as saying that Arafat used the money to finance the Palestinian movement and administration, to pay salaries, bestow gifts, ensure loyalty, establish embassies, buy arms and pay groups ranging from charities to young fighters, like the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. Arafat, abstemious, spent very little money on himself, living like a soldier with a narrow bed and a few uniforms in his closet.

But the pattern of his revolutionary days in exile — financing the Palestine Liberation Organisation through secret contributions, the black market and extortion, and being ready to run at a moment's notice - persisted most obviously in his refusal to trust others and his desire to keep large amounts of cash available in case of emergency, the paper said.

There has been much speculation about how much money went to support the lavish living of his wife, Suha, in Paris, with reports from her enemies in the Palestinian Authority of subsidies of about \$100,000 a



A boy peeks from behind a poster of Arafat during a memorial at a Baghdad refugee camp.

month. But the daily said, the sums were relatively small compared with Arafat's total holdings

Last year, an audit of Palestinian Authority finances by the International Monetary Fund disclosed that Arafat had diverted \$900 million in public funds to a bank account he controlled from 1995 to 2002. Most of the cash, diverted from budget revenues, went to a variety of commercial ventures, the daily said.

Last February, the paper said the French government opened a tax and money-laundering investigation into the deposit of about 11.5 million euros, nearly \$15 million at today's rates, into the accounts of Suha Arafat between July 2002 and July 2003.

To try to bring some transparency and efficiency to the accounts of the Palestinian Authority, the US and European Union pressed Arafat to appoint a former official of the International Monetary Fund, Salam Favvad, as finance minister.

Fayyad has made efforts to rationalise spending and to account for international aid, and discovered about \$600 million in authority funds invested in about 79 commercial ventures for products, including Canadian bio-pharmaceuticals to Algerian cell phones. But Fayyad, who, the paper said, has not returned many calls for comment, has — in the past -- acknowledged that he knows only part of the picture.

Mr David, the Palestinian heart is here, he said

David Cornwell London, November 12

JOHN LE Carré met Arafat in 1982 while researching a novel. Here, he describes the encounter

The Palestinians had told me I would never understand them unless I met Arafat, whom they called the Old Man. So, we bounced from jeep to jeep through the hot dark of Beirut till we came to an L-shaped drawing room lined with fighting men who were managing not to smoke in the Old Man's presence. And there, in the small part of the L he sat, wearing a white keffiyeh. khaki shirt, a uniform with razor-sharp creases and a silver-handled pistol holster of plaited brown plastic.

He was signing letters on an imitation leather blotter and, for a moment,

he reminded me of Charlie Chaplin doing the same job in The Great Dictator. His body had the floppiness of unuse and the whiteness of a prisoner. I had been warned that he never slept in the same bed twice, was obsessive about hygiene, managed his own security arrangements and was abstemious in everything except his love for Palestine.

Discovering me, he rose to his feet, advanced on me and, without a word, folded me in the traditional embrace. It was hard to think of him as the perpetrator of a string of atrocities, but a lot of murderers have been famously cuddly when off-duty. The stubble on his cheeks was silky - not prickly. It smelt of Johnson's Baby Powder. I had heard that, in medieval times, executioners embraced those they were about to kill, but nobody said they wore baby powder. We separated, but he kept his hands

breast. "Mr David! It is here! It is here!" Arafat had the Palestinian face, as well. It begged you to stay and listen and care. He could light it up like a beacon, fool with it like a clown, but he could never let it go fallow, and, if I was looking for a hint of the bloody history that lay behind it, I looked in vain. He would make his eyes dance so merrily that you had to be a churl not to respond in kind. He talked in soft rushes of enthusiasm,

punctuating a standard act with inspira-

tional leaps to suit his audience. He

on my shoulders and continued to dote

on me. There was anxious questioning

erotic need to win me. "Mr David, why

studying me, eyes like a worried doctor.

"Mr Chairman, I have come to put my

hand on the Palestinian heart". He

seized my hand and pressed it to his

have you come here?" he demanded.

in the bubbly brown eyes, and an almost

could lecture you like a schoolmaster, or stare at you like a spellbound disciple while he listened to your wisdom. But the face that appeared between-times was the face of a desperate little soldier who had lost his horse, and you felt an irresistible urge to go and find it for him.

The last time I saw him, he had found it for himself. It was a pretty white Arab and he was riding it round the ring of the White Hotel outside Tunis that was his new place of exile, now that Sharon had chased him out of Lebanon. The boy who took me to him held a pistol to my head and wanted to shoot me in revenge for the massacres of Sabra and Shatila. An Israeli hit-team had assassinated half his high command, thus giving a chance to the young ones coming up. Perhaps, the boy was one of them. There will always be more boys.

Guardian News Service

Hamas leader

ISRAEL'S most-wanted man. Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal, made a rare public appearance at Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's funeral on Friday alongside US and other Western officials.

Meshaal, whose moveme nt is regarded as a terrorist organisation by Washington, rarely leaves his base in Damascus, although he was in Cairo earlier this year for Egyptian-sponsored talks ai med at agreeing a new truce by militant groups.

Khaled, who was the victim of an Israeli assassination attempt in Sept. 1997, has accused Israel of poisoning the Palestinian leader. He said Arafat's death was "A premeditated Zionist murder".

AFP, Cairo

Black day for Palestine

Associated Press

JORDAN, Nov. 11. — Palestinian refugees across the Arab world fired shots, burned tires and openly wept in a display of emotion today over the death of their leader, Yasser Arafat. Shopkeepers hung portraits of the leader in their windows and some people draped their cars in black flags of mourning.

Jordan, where roughly half of the 5.3 million population is of Palestinian origin, declared today a national day of mourning. Government offices and schools were closed.

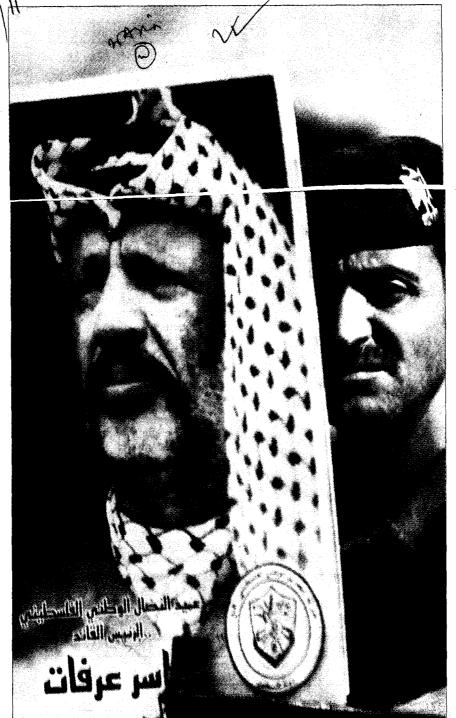
In the teeming refugee camps of Lebanon's Ein el-Hilweh and Mieh Mieh near the southern city of Sidon, burning tires spewed heavy black smoke and guerrillas fired into the air, rites of mourning that expressed frustration as well as sadness. In Ein el-Hilweh, streets, narrow alleyways and tiny houses were bedecked with Arafat's pictures and Palestinian flags, while black banners hung from balconies. The command of Arafat's mainstream Fatah movement opened its offices in both camps to receive condolences.

In Jordan, having the largest concentration of Palestinian refugees outside the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinians wept when they woke to the news of Arafat's passing. "It feels like I lost a father and a good friend", said 55year-old Mohammed Sbeiha wiping away his tears. "He was a great man, he cared for the Palestinian people and for the Palestinian cause, he tried to help refugees like me, but couldn't do much because they (Israelis) don't want us back in our homes in Palestine", he

Arafat had promised refugee Palestinians that they would one day be able to return to the homes they lost after the 1948 founding of Israel and subsequent wars, but the issue remained one of the most intractable in peace negotiations with Israel. In Amman's Wehdat camp, women were shrouded in black and Quranic verses blared from mosques and shop loudspeakers.

In Baqaa, the largest of Jordan's 13 UN-run refugee settlements housing 1.7 million Palestinians, shops were closed for a one-day general strike called by camp elders. A pro-Arafat march was scheduled after the Muslim noon prayers.

Portraits of Arafat were being hung in shop windows and in the squalid streets of Baqaa, 27 kilometers north of Amman, and cars were also draped in black flags.



A Palestinian security man cries as he holds a portrait of Yasser Arafat during a demonstration in Jenin in the West Bank on Thursday. - AFP

No love lost between **Israel & Arafat**

Press Trust of India

JERUSALEM, Nov. 11. — Israel today said, the demise of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat would be a "historic turning point" for West Asia and expressed the hope that it would lead to cessation of terrorism in the region.

Mr Sharon, who did mention Arafat by name, said: "The recent events could be a historic turning point for the Middle East. Israel is a country that seeks peace and will continue its efforts to reach a peace deal with the Palestinians without

The

Prime Minister also expressed the hope that the Palestinians would work towards "stopping terrorism' which he said was a precondition for dialogue and reaching a peace deal.

delay."

"I hope the new Palestinian leadership would come to understand that progress in our relationship and the solving of problems de-

pends first and foremost on the cessation of terrorism and a real and serious effort to curb terrorists operating in its territory", he said.

The recent events

could be a historic

turning point for

the Middle East...

Israel seeks peace

with Palestinians

Foreign minister Mr Silvan Shalom echoed Mr Sharon by calling the passing away of the Palestinian leader as heralding "a new era". "Our region, after Arafat, has turned into a different region, and in my view, will be a better region, he told Army Radio. "Arafat for years led the ideology that it is possible to achieve by the force of arms and the path of terror what might have been achieved by negotiation," he said. "This path of forty years of involvement in terrorism has yielded only victims, blood and destruction," Mr Shalom said.

Was he poisoned?

BEIRUT, Nov. 11. — A top leader of a Palestinian militant group publicly accused Israel of killing

Yasser Arafat. Neither doctors nor Palestinian leaders would say what caused Arafat's death today after days in a coma at a Paris hospital.

Rumours, that he had been poisoned by Israel had swirled for weeks. "I hold Israel responsible Hamas' ton nolitical Mashaal, told Al-Jazeera TV by telephone. He offered no evidence.

Mashaal referred to his own poisoning by Israeli agents in 1997 in Jordan. Mashaal survived only after Israel sent the antidote under pressure from the late Jordanian King Hussein.

"French, Arab or Palestinian doctors may not be able to find evidence Arafat had been poisoned," Mashaal said.

Hamas had opposed Arafat's decision to negotiate peace with Israel and been a rival for power. Mashaal said Arafat's death was "a message to the Palestinians and Arabs that this will be the fate of anyone who rejects an Israeli settlement with Israeli conditions." - AP

Death opens up peace process: Bush

Associated Press

WASHINGTON, Nov. 11. -US President George W. Bush says he hopes Yasser Arafat's death will clear the way for successful West Asia peace negotiations with new Palestinian leaders.

"The death of Yasser Arafat is a significant moment in Palestinian history", Mr Bush said after Arafat's death early today in a Paris hospital.

'We express our condolences to the Palestinian people. For the Palestinian people, we hope that the future will bring peace and the fulfillment of their aspirations for an independent, democratic Palestine that is at peace

with its neighbours". The first US President to

explicitly endorse establishment of a Palestinian state on land now held by Israel, Mr Bush renewed that pledge immediately after his re-election last week.

Mr Bush shunned Arafat from the outset of his administration, refusing to invite him to the White House. He sent secretary of state Mr Colin Powell to talk to Arafat on the West Bank, but those contacts dwindled and eventually were cut-off when the Bush administration concluded Arafat was inept and had not done enough to stop attacks on Israel.

In June 2002, Mr Bush urged the Palestinians to replace Arafat with leaders "not compromised by terror." Plans are being made

for an Arafat funeral in Cairo and burial in Ramallah, on the West Bank, where Arafat made his headquarters.

EU seeks new push for peace

The European Union said today it was contacting Israeli and Palestinian leaders in an attempt to push West Asia peace efforts forward following the death of Yasser Arafat, AP adds from Brussels.

"Contacts have started with the Palestinians and the Israelis, it is too early to see what will be the next step,' EU foreign policy chief Mr Javier Solana said: "The EU is going to work without delay to see how we can give an impulse to the peace process."

What they said

"I am saddened at the news of passing away of President Arafat, he would always be remembered as a friend and a true patriot." - Prime Minister

Ur Manmonan Singh. "President Arafat was one of those leaders who could be instantly recognised by people in any walk of life. He expressed and symbolised the national aspirations of the Palestinian people." — UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"Arafat's legacy is one of terrorism and failed leadership. Instead of building a state for the Palestinians, he focused on ways to destroy Israel." --- Mr AH Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, in New York.

Standard bearer of nationalism

Yasser Arafat was the standard-bearer of Palestinian nationalism for nearly half a century, but never saw his dream of an independent state become reality.

A career that saw him graduate from guerrilla leader to the Nobel prizewinning President of the Palestinian Authority, fizzled out amid Israeli calls for his assassination and demands from his own people for drastic reform.

But his status as the 40year symbol of the Palestinians' fight for their homeland was never challenged and he leaves a huge gap, difficult to fill.

His death at 75 also showed that time finally caught up with a man known as a survivor.

Arafat was Mohammed Abdel-Rawf Arafat al-Qudwa al-

Hussaini, on 4 August 1929. The official version of his life history records that he was born in Jerusalem. However, numerous biographers have established that he was in fact born in Cairo, where his father, from Gaza, owned a business. He spent his childhood shuttling between Cairo and Palestine. By 17, he was running guns to Palestinian groups fighting for the creation of a Jewish



A combo on the march of time. -- AFP

state as the British mandate in Palestine crumbled after the end of World War II.

He fought in the 1948 war between Israel and its neighbours. Shattered by Israel's crush-

ing victory, he returned to Egypt and Cairo University where he studied engineering and got involved in Palestinian political circles. Falling foul of Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, he left for Kuwait where he established an engineering business.

Together with Khalil al-Wazir, Faruq Khaddumi, Salah Khalaf-and Mahmud

OBITUAR

Abbas, he founded the Fatah movement in 1959 to fight against Israel. Arafat, who had taken the nom de guerre of Abu Ammar, was elected chairman of the executive committee of the PLO in February 1969 and stepped on to the world stage in his trademark Arab headdress, or keffiyeh, and green fatigues.

At the UN General Assembly in November 1974, Arafat summed up his philosophy in words still relevant three decades on.

"Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand," he said.

After securing the PLO leadership, Arafat began an odyssey that saw him wind up in Tunisia after being expelled from Jordan by King Hussein's troops in 1970 and from Lebanon by Israeli forces in 1982.

With military options running out and the eruption of the first Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in the West Bank and Gaza in 1987 he began to negotiate with Israel.

After Arafat what, asks New Delhi

Keith Flory and Nilova Roy Chaudhury

NEW DELHI, Nov. 11. — Trademark black and white 'kaffiyeh' in place, Yasser Arafat was, for decades, Palestine's face in India, Although no longer the darling of India that he was in the days when Indira Gandhi propelled the country into the vanguard of the Non-Aligned Movement, Yasser Arafat remained a focal point of India's West Asia policy. Now that policy will require to be re-focussed, which will not be easy in the absence of an accredited successor to Arafat as a leader of the Palestinian people.

Despite abandoning the previous freeze on anything to do with Israel, New Delhi had consistently tried to project a posture that warming up to Tel Aviv, a process initiated during Mr Narasimha Rao's premiership which Mr Vajpayee took to considerable heights, did not mean leaving Palestine and Arafat out in the cold.

The UPA government, particularly external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, went on record to dismiss as outrageous Israeli suggestions of not conducting

business with Arafat. That message was sought to be sent out again recently when the current minister of state for external affairs, Mr E Ahamed, visited Palestine a few months ago and made much of his reassuring Arafat and his Palestine Liberation Organisation that there had been no dilution of India's commitment to the creation of an independent state of Palestine.

While, in principle, that commitment stands, giving practical shape to it without Arafat at the helm of affairs would be a complex mission.

There is danger of the Palestinian leadership passing into more violent hands, which would raise the question - what differentiates a terrorist from a freedom fighter?

When Arafat was in power — and India never quite went along with Israel that he had ceased to be a man with whom business could be done — a certain balance could be maintained in the relationship with Tel Aviv and the compound in West Bank from where the besieged leader tried to steer his ship.

Age ends with Arafat's passing

Ravi Nessman in Ramallah

Nov. 11. — Yasser Arafat, revered as the champion of Palestinian statehood and reviled as an opportunistic terrorist, died today at the age of 75, sending spasms of grief through the Palestinians but rekindling calls for new peace talks with Israel.

His death marked the end of an era in West Asia, leaving the Palestinians without a strong leader for the first time since Arafat took charge of their national struggle four decades ago and sparking fears of a chaotic power struggle that could lead to fighting in the streets.

In a hurried effort to project Mr Mahmoud Abbas, as its new chief, virtually ensuring he will succeed Arafat as leader of the Palestinians, at least for an interim period.

The Palestinian legislature also swore in parliament Speaker Mr Rauhi Fattouh as caretaker President of the Palestinian Authority until elections can be held in 60 days, according to Palestinian law.

Arafat died at 3.30 a.m. at a French military hospital. Neither his doctors nor Palestinian leaders said what killed him. "He closed his eyes

Funeral in Cairo today

A grief-stricken man in front of Aralat's Ramaliah headquarters. — AFP

RAMALLAH. Nov. 11. — Yasser Arafat's funeral will take place in

Cairo tomorrow before he is buried on the same day at his West

Arafat's body was today taken from the Percy military hospital and transferred to a nearby military align outside Paris for a flight to Cairo. The body of the Palestinian leader later left French soil on board a French airforce aircraft after a 40-minute ceremony at the

airport led by French Prime Minister Mr Jeen-Pierre Raffarin.

Eight Republican Guard pail bearers carried the coffin past an honor guard as a military band pleyed the French and Palestinian national anthems and a funeral march by Chopin. The brief ceremony was attended by French and Palestinian officials.

The Palestinian leader will be buried at his Ramallah headquarters by the palestinian leader will be buried at his Ramallah headquarters.

in a stone coffin, not a wooden one, to allow his reinterment at a

later time in Jerusalem. He will be buried in soil taken from the Al

Agsa Mosque compound, a senior Palestinian official said. Israet has ruled out a Jerusalem burial, fearing it would undermine

its claims to sovereignty over the city. - Agencies

Bank headquarters, a top aide said today.

and his big heart stopped. He left for God but he is still continuity, the PLO elected among this great people," former Palestinian Premier, senior Arafat aide Mr Tayeb Abdelrahim said sobbing with grief.

A wave of grief quickly swept across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Thousands ran into the streets, clutching his photograph, crying and wondering how they would survive without the man who embodied their struggle for statehood. "He is our father, he is Palestine," said Ms Namia Abu-Safia (48), sobbing in the Jebaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

Black smoke from burning tyres rose across the Gaza Strip, gunmen fired into the air in grief. Palestinian flags at Arafat's headquarters here were lowered to halfmast. Sombre music played on the radio, church bells rang out, and Quranic verses were played for hours over mosque loudspeakers.

Hundreds of Palestinians threw rocks at Israeli cars and burned tyres today as demonstrators in the West Bank vented their outrage over Arafat's death, the Israeli army said. Israeli troops used rubbercoated metal bullets and fired teargas to break up the rally of about 400 people at Beit Umar, a village near the West Bank city of Hebron.

The Palestinian Cabinet declared 40 days of mourning and the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Gaza, a militant group linked to Arafat's Fatah movement, decided to change its name to the Martyr Yasser Arafat Brigades.

The Israeli military said all West Bank Palestinians would be allowed to attend the funeral at Ramallah. Only VIPs will be permitted to come from Gaza, a source said, adding that Israel had information that terror groups would use the funeral to plan an attack. - Associated Press

> Special package: page 3 Another report on page 5



outside the Percy military hospital near Paris on Thursday. — AFP

Mixed legacy of a man who lived his own

Eric Silver in Jerusalem

Nov. 11. — Yasser Arafat lived his own myth. If an interviewer was impertinent enough to ask him a challenging question, he puffed with fat." The journalist got the message, never the answer.

Arafat reigned like ther. As a national icon, the man who gave the Palestinians their identity, he divided and ruled. He refused to delegate, on either the political or the security front. No payment was made without his signature. Only the most trusted aides knew where he banked

the movement's money. His hitmen and Israelis. This week's soap opera punished anyone who dared to criticise him in public. Nabil Amr, a dissident former minister, was shot at this summer and had to have a leg ampu-

If Arafat didn't order specific teranger: "Don't you know who you're talking to? I am General Yasser Arastrategy of struggle. The bombers and the gunmen knew which would enjoy his blessing. He lied without scruple, tary, Mr Jack Straw, and other Western statesmen over the Karin A arms ship, captured by Israel in January 2002.

Lacking a son, he groomed no heir. As a result he leaves behind a danconfrontation between Arafat's estranged wife Suha and the caretaker leadership could prove a trailer for a far more sinister power struggle.

'We're looking at a potentially revolutionary situation," warns Mr Joseph Alpher, a strategic analyst and joint editor of Bitterlemons, an Israeli-Palestinian Internet journal. "It's impossible with any degree of accuray or objectivity to assess what's going to happen. There's simply no precedent for an orderly transfer of power among the Palestinians. Arafat's only the second national leader they've ever had, and between him and the first, Haj Amin al Husseini, there was gerous void — for the Palestinians a 20-year hiatus. "There are so many

potential new dynamics and new power players," Mr Alpher adds. "It can go from an orderly transfer to the elders of Fatah, which is what we are seeing right now, all the way to a Somalia-like situation and a thousand different gradations in between."

Mr Khalil Shikaki, a Palestinian political scientist, expects the shortterm transfer of power to go smoothly, if only because Arafat died in hosital and not by violence. But he believes the transitional leadership will soon face serious challenges. "The next six months will be very critical... Hamas and Islamic Jihad will not challenge the transfer of power in the immediate future. But if no date is set for elections, if there is more

division and fragmentation because the old guard fails to forge a coalition with the young guard, if the transitional leadership tries to enforce a ceasefire in the absence of an Israeli restraint on its use of force, then both Hamas and the young guard will quickly challenge its legitimacy. They will direct their force at the Israelis in order to dispirit and show as impotent the transitional leadership.'

Arafat's interim successor looks like being Mr Mahmoud Abbas (nicknamed Abu Mazen), a former Prime Minister, who currently serves as general secretary of the PLO. He has frequently denounced what he calls the militarisation of the Intifada.

"Abu Mazen's real test will lie in his

ability to impose law and order and ultimately bring about a state of calm," Mr Roni Shaked, an Israeli commentator, wrote in the Yediot Ahronot daily. "Amid the prevailing uncertainty, it is a tall order, especially for a 69-year-old without charisma or popular following.'

On the optimistic scenario, a more pragmatic Palestinian leadership could present Mr Ariel Sharon with fresh options. The Israeli Premier insists that Arafat's demise will not change the timetable of his planned evacuation of the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank. But if he had a partner after all, it could make the disengagement more orderly and less fraught with danger.

Attacks will continue, says Hamas

Ramallah: Accusing Israel of plotting Yasser Arafat's murder, Palestinian militant group Hamas on Thursday said that it has strengthened its resolve to keep up attacks on Israel, amidst renewed calls for a unified Palestinian leadership comprising all factions.

factions.

"The loss of the great leader will increase our determination and steadfastness to continue jihad and resistance against the Zionist enemy until victory and liberation is achieved," Hamas said in a statement.

Sami Abu Zuhri, Hamas's spokesman in Gaza, has called upon its members to honour the memory of its leader and maintain Palestinian unity.

"We lost by his death one of our great symbols and one of the main focus of our national struggle and identity," Abu Zuhri told local media.

The tone of the Islamic Jihad however was milder. Islamic Jihad spokesman in Gaza, Nafez Arzam, said, "with hearts full of belief in God we mourn President Yasser Arafat who was a great leader for the Palestinian people".

great leader for the Palestinian people".

"This is a time for unity, steadfastness. We are all one people fighting for our freedom and to liberate our land," Mohammad Al-Hindi, a top leader for Islamic Jihad said.

"We are looking to see a

"We are looking to see a smooth transfer of authority within fatah at this, stage and later all issues must be discussed including the formation of a unified national leadership or an emergency leadership formed up by all factions," he asserted. PTI

The Washington & Lincoln of Palestine

IF THE Palestinians ever get an independent state, it will be because of — and in spite of — Yasser Arafat. No other person has so embodied Palestinian hopes and setbacks or been so identified both with violence and negotiated efforts to achieve peace.

A survivor of Israeli assassination attempts, Arab intrigue, civil wars and even a plane crash, Arafat died early today. While alive, he achieved mythic status in West Asia and beyond. He wore combat fatigues to symbolise the militant struggle for a Palestine state and a checkered headscarf folded in the shape of Palestine before the founding of modern Israel.

But the waging of war against Israel did not equip him to govern or establish a country. "He was the George Washington and the Abraham Lincoln of the Palestinians," says Ziad Asali, the Palestinian-American president of the American Task Force on Palestine, a Washington-based advocacy group. "He was the best and the worst of us."

Arafat shared the Nobel Peace Prize with Israeli leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres for the 1993 Oslo accords that brought hope for an end to the century-long Arab-Israeli conflict. But Arafat could not or would not stop suicide bombings against Israeli civilians. And he lost the support of many Israelis who were willing to cede territory for a Palestinian state.

Yossi Alpher, a veteran Israeli political analyst and adviser to Israeli prime ministers, says Arafat will "be remembered by most Israelis as



FINAL FAREWELL Suha Arafat follows her late husband's funeral cortege in Paris on Thursday.

a non-credible, violence-prone leader who could never make the transition from terrorist to statesman and never come to terms with Israel as a Jewish state".

Arafat witnessed Arab-Muslim riots in the late 1930s, as Jews fled a growing Nazi threat in Europe and settled in British-run Palestine. A founder of the Palestinian faction called Fatah, Arafat and his associates in 1969 took control of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), a group established by Arab states in 1964 that sought the destruction of Israel.

The tactics that elements of the PLO employed made it the al-Qaida of the 1970s. PLO me-

mbers were responsible for hijackings, airport massacres, and the murders of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972 and of two US diplomats in Sudan in 1973. But the violence also dramatised Palestinian grievances, particularly the plight of 750,000 Palestinians who became refugees after Israeli in-

What finally killed Arafat?

THE FRENCH military doctors who treated Yasser Arafat up to his death refused on Thursday to say what the 75-year-old Palestinian leader died of, saying it was private information meant for his family only.

"I have no declaration to make on that subject", a spokesman for the French military's medical service, Christian Estripeau said.

The doctors who tended to Arafat at the Percy military hospital on the outskirts of Paris since October 29 have given no public diagnosis of the Palestinian Authority president's illness.

Arafat's doctor said the day before the Palestinian leader was airlifted out of his West Bank headquarters that Arafat suffered a low blood platelet count; sparking speculation that cancer, a bleeding stomach ulcer or another serious ailment was the cause.

AFP, Paris

dependence. They and their children made their homes in camps maintained by Arab states, in part to keep pressure on Israel.

Arafat's PLO first found refuge in Jordan, but the organisation's behaviour, including hijacking aircraft to Jordan, led to a civil war and expulsion of the PLO in 1970. Arafat moved to Beirut. Following an Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Arafat and the PLO were evicted again, this time to Tunisia.

A Palestinian uprising that began in the West Bank and Gaza in 1987 to protest Israel's then-20-year occupation gave the PLO new energy and provided impetus for new diplomacy. In 1988, at a meeting in Algeria of the Palestinian parliament in exile, the PLO for the first time recognised the right of two states to exist on the land from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River.

In December 1988, Arafat publicly renounced terrorism, and the US opened contacts with the PLO. But the PLO was marginalised again after he sided with Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait. Arafat rebounded after the 1991 Gulf War, when the administration of the elder George Bush organised the first comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace talks. The government of PM Rabin secretly negotiated a peace accord with the organisation in Oslo in 1993. It allowed Arafat and the PLO to establish an administration on a portion of the West Bank and Gaza in return for promising to give up violence. In 2000, he was offered the chance to have a nation when Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat 97 per cent of the West Bank and all of Gaza, according to Dennis Ross, West Asia envoy for the first Bush and Clinton administrations. He refused. Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud party, defeated Barak in elections soon after and withdrew the offer.

USA Today

LIFE & TIMES

Aug 4, 1929: Born in Cairo
Aug 1956: Attends student congress in
Prague. For first time, wears Palestinian
headdress that becomes his trademark
Jan 1, 1965: Forms Fatah guerrilla movement;
two days later attempts first attack on Israel
March 21, 1968: Israeli army attack on PLO
base at Karameh, Jordan; thousands join PLO
Feb 4, 1969: Arafat takes over as PLO
chairmanship

Sept 6, 1970: PLO faction led by Arafat aide Abu Iyad hijacks three airliners to Jordan; Jordanian government expels PLO to Lebanon Sept 5, 1972: Eleven Israelis killed when PLO faction seizes athletes at Munich Olympics, touching off secret war of assassination and terrorism between Israeli agents and PLO Nov 13, 1974: Arafat, wearing empty gun holster and holding sprig, tells UN General Assembly he bears 'an olive branch and a

freedom fighter's gun'
June 6, 1982: Israel invades Lebanon to crush
PLO, forcing Arafat and loyalists to flee Beirut
Aug 2, 1990: Iraq invades Kuwait; Arafat
supports Saddam Husseln, PLO isolated
Nov 1991: Arafat secretly marries 28-year-old
secretary, Suha Tawil, in Tunis. Their daughter
Zahwa born July 24, 1995, in Paris
Sept 13, 1993: Israel and PLO sign accord on
Palestinian autonomy in Oslo. Arafat shakes
hands with Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin

July 1, 1994: Returning from exile, a triumphant Arafat sets foot on Palestinian soil for the first time in 26 years Dec 10, 1994: Arafat wins Nobel Peace Prize, along with Rabin and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres

Jan 20, 1996: Arafat elected president of Palestinian Authority
July 11, 2000: Seeking final peace deal, US

President Bill Clinton convenes 'Camp David II' and sequesters Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Arafat for nine days. Afterward, White House declares summit failure Sept 28, 2000: Israel's then Opposition leader, Ariel Sharon, visits Jerusalem shrine, leading to clashes that escalate into second intifada Nov 11, 2004: Arafat dies at age 75

Allawi kin hostage in Falluja retaliation

Falluja, Nov. 10 (Reuters):
US-led troops battled through
"half of Falluja" today, but
Muslim militant kidnappers
threatened to behead three relatives of Iraq's interim prime
minister if he did not call off
the offensive.

Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's 75-year-old cousin Ghazi Allawi, the cousin's wife and their daughter-in-law were seized near their home in Baghdad vesterday an Allawi

spokesman said.

The previously unknown Ansar al-Jihad group said the hostages would die unless Allawi, "head of the Iraqi agents", halted the Falluja offensive and freed prisoners.

"If the agent government does not meet our demands within 48 hours, we will behead them," it said in a statement dated today and posted on an Islamist website.

"This is yet another criminal act by terrorists and will not thwart the determination of the government to combat terrorism," a brief statement from Allawi's office said.

The three were seized a day after Allawi ordered a full-blooded assault by US and Iraqi forces aimed at ridding Falluja of rebels and suspected foreign Islamist fighters to pave the way for nationwide elections planned for January.

The Iraqi military said it

'Just get out'

London, Nov. 10 (AFP): Madonna made a rare foray into politics calling for her home country to withdraw its troops from Iraq during an interview with the BBC.

"I just don't want American troops to be in Iraq, period," she said yesterday on BBC radio. "My feelings are: 'Can we just all get out?'," said the 46-year-old star, who lives mainly in London with husband Guy Ritchie.



Madonna: Material view

had found "hostage slaughterhouses" used by militant kidnappers in the city.

Insurgents hitting back elsewhere provoked running battles in the northern city of Mosul and parts of Baghdad

Mosul and parts of Baghdad.

Air strikes, artillery shelling and mortar fire shook Falluja during intense clashes interspersed with periods of relative calm, a Reuters reporter in the Sunni city said.

porter in the Sunni city said.

The military said US and Iraqi forces had "fought their way through half of the city, including the Jolan district, suspected of being the epicentre of insurgent activity".

It said those forces had met light resistance from "small pockets of fighters" on their way through the city. "We've reached the heart of Jolan," Major Clark Watson said. "It's too early to say we are controlling it ... because there will always be pockets of resistance."

Helicopters later fired missiles at targets in Jolan before Marine infantry and Iraqi troops moved back in. "There are still many snipers in buildings in Jolan," Alaa Abboud, an Iraqi soldier just back from the area, said.

The US military said 11 American troops and two Iraqis had been killed since 10,000 US soldiers and Marines and 2,000 Iraqi troops launched the offensive on Monday night.

It said the mayor's office had been captured at about 4

0100 GMT. Key bridges, civic buildings, mosques and weapons caches had also been seized in the offensive.

The firepower raining down on Falluja must have caused civilian casualties, but no clear figures have emerged.

The Red Cross said it was "very worried" about the plight of the wounded in Falluja. An ICRC spokesman said thousands of civilian fugitives from Falluja needed water, food, medical care and shelter. Local people say children have been among those killed.

As the Falluja fighting

As the Falluja fighting raged, gunmen battled Iraqi police in the northern city of Mosul, witnesses said. Authorities imposed a curfew and closed bridges to contain the trouble.

Gunmen also took to the streets in Baghdad's western district of Ghazaliya, stopping traffic and blocking a bridge. Residents said fierce clashes broke out later. A US Humvee crashed in Baghdad after a sniper shot at the driver, a Reuters cameraman said. The vehicle rolled on its side. A US military spokesman said he would check the report.

North of Baghdad, a roadside bomb killed a US soldier and wounded another, the military said. A policeman was killed and two wounded in a similar attack near Samarra. For all his successes and failures, Arafat knew what he could realistically obtain for his people

Headgeared for reality AT HAR WILL

By Chinmaya R. Gharekhan

ASSER ARAFAT and Fidel Castro have easily been the most recognisable faces of political leaders during the last quarter century. Castro, of late, has disappeared from the headlines, but Arafat continues to dominate the world media despite Israel's, and the United States', persistent attempts to marginalise him. More than any other national leader during the pre-vious century, Arafat's name has become synonymous with the freedom movement of his people. When we talk of Mahatma Gandhi as the Father of the Nation, several other names claim attention at the same - Nehru, Patel, Azad and others. But when Palestine is the subiect, only one name comes to mind.

It is a shame that the present Israeli prime minister made it his highest priority to get rid of Arafat, if not physically then certainly po-litically. Were his predecessors any less concerned about Israel's security than Sharon? They not only had no problem in shaking Arafat's hand, but they also negotiated with him matters of vital importance to Israel. Even Sharon sent his son to talk to Arafat in the beginning

It's a fact that but for Arafat, there would have been no Oslo and, consequently, no peace treaty with Jordan and no agreement with Lebanon. While Sharon was opposed to the Oslo agreement when it was concluded in 1993, he can't deny that he's the beneficiary of Oslo, which earned much legitimacy for Israel and diplomatic recognition from China, India and other countries. Whether Arafat had genuinely accepted the existence of the Israeli State is not relevant. What's signifi-cant is that under Arafat, the Palestinian National Council adopted the two-State reality in 1988. In an interview with an Israeli

newspaper in June 2004, Arafat stated unequivocally that he recognised the right of Israel to exist as a 'Jewish' State. He did not demand, much less expect, that all the nearly 4 million Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to their homes in the former undivided territory of Palestine. He made a special plea for the nearly 200,000 Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. But even in re-



spect of them, he didn't suggest that they be entitled to return to Israel. Instead, he asked for a token number to come back. His argument was that about 65 per cent of the immigrants from Russia, who went to Israel in the Eighties-Nineties, were not Jews; why then can Israel not accept a few thousand Palestinians?

Arafat was prepared to accept substantial limitations on the sover eignty of a future Palestinian State. He said in a statement in Stockholm about ten years ago that he would agree that Palestine would be a demilitarised State. He was also willing to agree to many other restrictions. All this suggests that Arafat was a pragmatic statesman. He knew what he could realistically expect to obtain for his people and what was unattainable. In other words, he could be a 'partner' for Israel in peace negotiations.

Arafat could, and should, have done more to convince Israel and that he condemned terrorism. Whether he could have put an end to all suicide bombings by himself is not clear. I personally doubt that he could have turned on and off the bombings, though sometimes Arafat himself, perhaps out of a misguided sense of ego, suggested that he had the required influence to do so. As former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said, Arafat was required to make 100 per cent effort to curb terror though he might not get 100 per cent results. Arafat failed to convince the Americans (it would be almost impossible to convince the Israelis) that he had made a good faith effort to put an end to the ter-rorist acts. He may have had his domestic reasons for not making this effort. But that can't be an excuse as far as others are concerned.

In the words of former Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban, the Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity'. Did Arafat miss his last opportunity to establish a unirecognised State in July 2000 during the Camp David negotiations under the sponsorship of Bill Clinton? The Israeli and American media would have us believe so. According to them, the then Israeli PM Ehud Barak made a most generous offer to Arafat: 96-97 per cent of the West Bank. Arafat, according to the same sources, not only turned down the proposal, he didn't put forward a counter-propos al. American members of the delegation present at Camp David have published accounts in which they have clearly said that it would be wrong to blame Arafat alone for the failure of the talks. While Barak had full and prior knowledge of the package put forward by Clinton,

Arafat was caught by surprise.

Arafat, however dictatorial he might have been in his dealings with his organisation, couldn't have given his concurrence to anything without consulting his people, the executive committee of the PLO. There was also the principle of the Palestinian State being established on territory equivalent in size to the total area of occupied West Bank. Arafat and the PLO were ready to forego those parts of West Bank on which large settlement blocks were built, illegal as they were, that were contiguous to Israel, but on condition that Palestine would get equivalent territorial compensation elsewhere, either in north Israel or in the Negev-Neither Barak nor Clinton was agreeable to that.

That takes me to Arafat's second mistake. A most courageous and imaginative initiative was taken by Israeli Left-wing leader Yossi Beillin along with a Palestinian leader close to Arafat in 2003 to elaborate a detailed blueprint to solve all outstanding issues such as the future of Jerusalem, territorial adjustments and the 'refugees question'. Among other provisions, the initiative, the Geneva Initiative, explicitly recog-nised the principle of full territori-al compensation to Palestine for any areas of West Bank that would be incorporated into Israel such as the big settlement block of Ma'ale Adumim just east of Jerusalem which is not even connected to Jerusalem.
Arafat should have embraced the

Geneva Initiative at least as an acceptable basis for negotiations. It would have enhanced his credibility with a dwindling Israeli population that regarded him as a viable negotiating partner. It certainly was a lost opportunity, not so much to solve the problem because Sharon and the Israeli Right would never have accepted it, but to re-establish his credentials with some sections of the international community.

Arafat was absolutely right not to give any credit to Sharon for his Gaza disengagement plan which, as Sharon himself has admitted, is meant to freeze the possibility of a Palestinian State for all time. In the words of a top Sharon aide: "Effectively, this whole package called the Palestinian State, with all that it entails, has been removed indefinitely from our agenda [as a result of the Gaza disengagement plan]." Arafat, however, was careful not to reject it.

The transition to post-Arafat Palestinian institutions is expected to be fairly smooth. It will certainly be non-violent, though the usual jockeying for power might take place. If Israel resists the temptation to interfere in the process by promoting its own preferred candidates to succeed Arafat, the Palestinian people have the wisdom to elect the leaders of their choice.

The writer is former Permanent Representative of India to the UN

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THE HILUSTAN TIMES



শুরাফুকুরু প্রিয়াত, বলা হল পি এল ও সত্র থেকেও

প্যানিস, ৯ নভেম্বর:
প্যানেস্তাইনের প্রেসিডেন্ট ইয়াসের
আরাফত মন্তিধ্বে রক্তক্ষরণে ম্যুর্রুপ্রের্টনের করাফানেতিক সূত্রেই জানানো হল। তবে
সরকার এবং ফরাসি হাসপাতাল সূত্রে
সরাসরি এ খবর স্বীকার করা হয়নি।
তারা শুধু জানিয়েছেন, গত কাল রাতে
মন্তিধ্বে রক্তক্ষরণ শুরু হওয়ায়
আরাফতের অবস্থা আরও সন্ধটজনক
হয়েছে। আরাফতের ঘনিষ্ঠ অস্তুত তিন
জ্ঞন পিএলও নেতা বলেছেন,
প্রেসিডেন্ট মারা গিয়েছেন। হয়তো
ঘোষণা করতে একটু দেরি হবে।

নাম প্রকাশে অনিচ্ছুক পিএলও নেতারা বলেছেন, "কালই প্রেসিডেন্ট মারা গিয়েছেন। তাঁর দেহরক্ষীরা একে অপরকে জড়িয়ে ধরে, মানসিক ভাবে শক্ত হওয়ার কথা বলছিলেন। প্রবীণ মৌলবি শেখ তায়সির আল-তামিমি এসে পৌঁছনোর অপেক্ষা করছি। উনি ইসলামি মতে কৃত্তিম শ্বাসযদ্ধ খুলে নেওয়ার বিধান দেবেন বলে আশা করছি।" অন্য দিকে, প্যালেস্তাইনের বিদেশমন্ত্রী নবিল সাথ কিন্তু এখনও বলছেন, "আমরা ইউথেনেশিয়ায় বিশ্বাসী নই। আরাফত বেঁচেই রয়েছেন। তাঁর মস্তিষ্ক, হৃদ্যন্ত্র এবং ফুসফুস কাজ করছে।" হাসপাতাল সূত্রেও বলা হয়, আরাফতের অবস্থা আরও সঙ্কটজনক হয়েছে। আর কতক্ষণ তাঁকে বাঁচিয়ে রাখা যাবে, বলা যাচ্ছে না। মার্কিন এবং ইউরোপীয় সরকারি মহল থেকে কারা তাঁর শেষকৃত্যে উপস্থিত থাকবেন, তা নিয়ে জল্পনা চলছে। রামাল্লার বাসভবন চত্ত্বরেই আরাফতকে সমাহিত করতে চায় প্যালেস্তাইন। কিন্ত रेजनारयन जानिरम्राह, गाजा ज्यख ছাড়া অন্য কোথাও তারা আরাফতের সমাধি হতে দেবে না।

স্মাধ হতে দেবে না।

এর আগে আজ ফরাসি প্রেসিডেন্ট
জাক শিরাক মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের
সঙ্গে আরাফতের অবস্থা নিয়ে ফোনে
কথা বলেন। কালই প্যারিসে এসেছেন
প্যালেস্তাইনি প্রধানমন্ত্রী আহমেদ
ক্রেই, বিদেশমন্ত্রী নবিল সাথ এবং
পিএলও সাধারণ সম্পাদক মাহমুদ
আবাস। আরাফতের অবর্তমানে এঁরা
তিন জনেই নেতৃত্বের দাবিদার। আজ
হাসপাতালে গেলেও আরাফত-পত্নী
সুহার আপত্তিতে প্রেসিডেন্টকে তাঁরা
দেখতে পাননি। উত্তরাধিকার নিয়ে
টানাপোড্নে প্রকাশ্যে এনে কালই সূহা
বলেছেন, আরাফতকে 'জীবস্ত করেন'
দেওয়ার মড্যন্ত্র হচ্ছে।

বিগত চার দশক স্বাধীন প্যালেস্তাইন রাষ্ট্রের জন্য সংগ্রাম চালিয়ে যাওয়া ৭৫ বছরের আরাফত ২৯ অক্টোবর থেকে ফরাসি সামরিক হাসপাতালে মৃত্যুর সঙ্গে লড়াই করছিলেন। তাঁর মৃত্যু সংবাদ নিয়ে এর আগেও বিভ্রাপ্তি ছড়িয়েছিল। ইজরায়েল দাবি করেছিল, আরাফত মারা গিয়েছেন। প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ শোকবার্তাও পাঠান। কিন্ত হাসপাতাল সূত্রে নিবৃতি দিয়ে বলা হয়, আরাফত কোমায়। তবে বেঁচে রয়েছেন। গেরিলা-নায়ক থেকে নোবেলজয়ী শান্তিকামী নেতা, শেষ জীবনে ক্রমবর্ধমান হিংসার পটভূমিতে অসহায় গৃহবন্দি। তবু, প্যালেস্তাইন রাজনৈতিক জীবনে আরাফতের প্রভাব শেষ দিন পর্যন্ত ছিল অপরিসীম। তাঁর মৃত্যু পশ্চিম এশিয়ার কী প্রভাব ফেলবে, তা নিয়েই আন্তর্জাতিক মহল এই মৃহুর্তে চিন্তিত। —রয়টার্স

O NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Confusion Shrouds Arafat state

Paris, Nov. 9 (Reuters): The fate of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was mired in confusion today as French doctors contradicted reports by senior Palestinian officials that the veteran leader had died at a Paris hospital.

Palestinian foreign minister Nabil Shaath, in a strenuous denial, said Arafat, 75, was "very much alive", but several political sources said he had succumbed to the mystery illness that led to his being flown to Paris on October 29.

A senior aide said Arafat, who lapsed into a coma last week, had suffered a brain haemorrhage.

Palestinian sources said leaders were waiting for a senior Muslim cleric to arrive on Wednesday to give the goahead for disconnecting lifesupport machines.

"He is dead," one Palestinian source said. "He died after bleeding in the brain began last night. His bodyguards started hugging and kissing and telling each other to be strong."

But a spokesman for French medical services said: "Mr Arafat is not dead." Shaath described Arafat as "very ill", saying his brain, heart and lungs still functioned.

The flurry of conflicting reports surfaced during a visit to Paris by a delegation of three senior Palestinian officials, all seen as potential suc-



Yasser Arafat

cessors to Arafat, to check on the Palestinian leader despite his wife's angry objections.

In four decades leading the Palestinian nationalist cause, Arafat has gone from guerrilla icon to Nobel prize-winning peacemaker to a shunned old leader facing renewed bloodshed with Israel.

Arafat has been in a coma brought on by a still-undisclosed illness, with his dream of a Palestinian state unrealised, a possible succession battle brewing and the threat of chaos in Palestinian territories looming.

He has been widely admired by Palestinians as the father of their struggle for statehood but was reviled by many Israelis as the face of terror.

Both sides have wondered whether his death might serve as the catalyst for first real peace effort in years or plunge the region into deeper crisis.



Palestinians disown 'money-minded' Suha

Guardian News Service Ramallah/Paris, November 9

ON SUHA Arafat's old street, al-Mahkakim, in Ramallah, there's not much doubt about what lies behind the unseemly tussle between the wife of the Palestinian leader and the men poised to replace him.

"The most important part of it is money," said Manel Shami, who grew up on the same block of the middle-class neighbourhood as the future Palestinian first lady and knew her well. "Suha was never interested in politics."

was never interested in politics."
Passing, a 23-year-old engineer called Shirin agreed. "Suha came here to take away the President to Paris to get the money. She never came here before, during the intifada," she said.

It is a view that rumbled across Ramallah yesterday as Palestinians who

It is a view that rumbled across Ramallah yesterday as Palestinians who grimly tolerated Suha's extravagant lifestyle in Paris, on £53,000 (Rs 45 lakh) a month from public coffers, because she was the wife of their leader, finally let loose at her.

finally let loose at her.

"All of us are Arafat's family, not just Suha," said Nahla Koura, head of the Palestinian Authority's women's affairs committee. "She's been away for four years. Why now does she remember she has a husband and his name is Arafat? She doesn't want anyone to know what is going on. She doesn't have the right to claim him. He is ours."



'Only hours to live'

Yasser Arafat has only hours to live, unnamed Palestinian officials said on Tuesday. Earlier, a Palestinian minister who visited Arafat in hospital said he was dead — a statement contradicted by the hospital. But doctors said his coma had 'deepened'

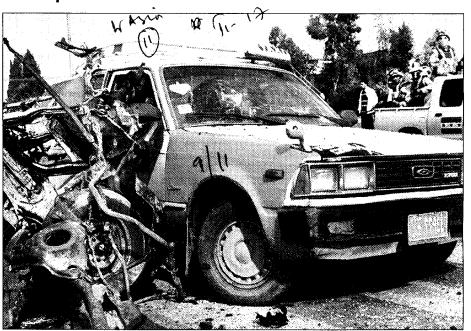
See Page 15

Money is clearly on Suha's mind, because among those she has feuded with in Paris over the past week is Mohammed Rashid, her husband's financial manager, who is one of the few men who knows where the secret bank accounts are held. Even fewer people know how much they contain, but estimates range from hundreds of millions to more than £1bn (Rs 8,400 crore).

Last year, French authorities revealed they were investigating Suha over the transfer of about £6m into her bank accounts in 2002 and 2003.

12 killed in Falluja

Troops Set For All-Out Assault On Rebels



Iraqi troops drive past after a car bomb exploded in Mosul on Monday

By Ned Parker

Falluja: The US and Iraqi troops battled to secure a hospital and two bridges in western Falluja on Monday, while marines entered the northwest of the rebel enclave.

US warplanes and artillery shells also pounded the centre of the city in the morning, leaving 12 people dead, according to an official from a local clinic.

Iraq's interim Prime Minister Iyad Allawi said he had authorised a US-led offensive to rid the Sunni Muslim city of insurgents.

A barrage of rocket, mortar and gunfire rained on Iraqi troops as they tried to raise the new Iraqi flag at Falluja's main hospital on the western edge of the city, which was seized during a pre-dawn operation with the US marines, said a reporter embedded with the military. The marines and Iraqi special forces met minimal resistance when they took control of the positions.

But that all changed within hours as the soldiers were forced to fight for the territory, using combat helicopters, planes and tanks, the reporter said.

A number of buildings, suspected of being used by insurgents, were completely destroyed and several others were on fire following five hours of clashes that still raged on, the reporter said, adding that at least five plumes of smoke were spewing into the air.

The hospital, so far, had sustained minimal damage and there were no apparent US casualties, but it was impossible to gauge how many insurgents had been killed.

In signs of the noose around the city tightening, marines pierced its northwest outskirts, entering a complex of several buildings, including two apartment blocks, a school, a mosque and a government building, said an AFP reporter embedded with the marines.

Some 230 Iraqis were found still living in the complex, some milling about in their underwear. They would be evacuated from the city, the reporter said, noting that women and children were among the inhabitants. Reuters

9 NOV 2004 To James De Morre

Wife accuses Arafat aides

Associated Press Clamart, November 8

YASSER ARAFAT'S wife on Monday accused his top lieutenants of seeking to grab control from her ailing husband, nearly torpedoing a visit by three top Palestinian officials in the first sign of an open power struggle while Arafat clings to life.

In a screaming phone call from Arafat's hospital bedside, Suha Arafat told Al-Jazeera television that Arafat's aides were conspiring to usurp her husband's four-decade-long role as Palestinian leader.

"Let it be known to the honest Palestinian people that a bunch of those who want to inherit are coming to Paris," she shouted in Arabic in her first public comments since Arafat left his West Bank compound for France.

"I tell you they are trying to bury Abu Ammar alive," she continued, using Arafat's nom de guerre. "He is all right and he is going home."

In response, Prime Minister Ahmed Korei, Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath and Mahmoud Abbas, the former prime minister and deputy chairman of Arafat's Palestine Liberation Organisation, briefly cancelled a planned trip to Paris on Monday to consult with Arafat's doctors and French officials. Shaath later said the trip was back on.

A senior aide to Arafat, Tayeb Abdel Rahim, originally said the three were angry with Arafat's wife and didn't want to travel to Paris. "What came from Suha doesn't represent our people," he said. "If the president were to hear that, he would reject it completely." He said Mrs Arafat "wanted to destroy the Palestinian leadership's decision and to be the lone decision-maker".



A 1998 photograph of Suha Arafat with her daughter Zahwa in Bethlehem.

Mrs Arafat said she was calling from Arafat's bedside at the French military hospital, where the 75-year-old leader has been in intensive care since Wednesday.

A producer from Al-Jazeera said the station was confident it was Suha Arafat on the phone. She first called the network's Ramallah office, then its headquarters in Qatar.

Her insistence that Arafat was doing fine came a day after French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier called his condition "very complex, very serious and stable right now".

Palestinians have been making contingency plans

in the event of Arafat's death.

Korei and Abbas have been working together to run Palestinian affairs in Arafat's absence and to prevent chaos and violence if the Palestinian leader dies. Korei has taken on some of Arafat's executive and security powers, while Abbas has been chairing meetings of the PLO's executive body.

Jamil Tarifi, the Palestinian minister of civil affairs, told Al-Jazeera the group was initially hesitant about going, but that the executive committee decided the trip would help "reassure" worried Palestinians.

Some Palestinians have complained Suha Arafat has gained too much power. She controls the flow of information about Arafat's condition and has taken charge of access to him.

Mrs Arafat, 41, is widely believed to have control of vast funds collected by the PLO. She has largely stayed out of Palestinian politics, although she has occasionally made comments that caused her problems. She has expressed sympathy for militant Palestinian groups, and during a 1999 meeting with then-first lady Hillary Clinton she accused Israel of using poison gas against the Palestinians.

Outspoken Suha no stranger to controversy

SUHA ARAFAT, the once estranged but loyal wife of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat who caused a storm when she accused his top lieutenants of trying to bury him alive, has long courted controversy.

During her 14-year marriage to the ailing Arafat, she has been attacked for her extravagant lifestyle abroad while Palestinians suffer at home, and for outspoken comments about Israel and suicide bombers.

Athough Suha left the Palestinian territories in early 2001 after the outbreak of the intifada, she has not left Arafat's side since he was airlifted from Ramallah to a French military hospital on October 29. Thirty-four years younger than Arafat, the French-educated daughter of a wealthy Palestinian Christian couple first met the man who was to become her husband 20 years ago when she was a student at the Sorbonne. Arafat hired her to do public relations for the PLO when he was exiled in Tunis.

She later became his economic advisor before they married secretly in 1990, only revealing their union two years later. Their only child, a daughter called Zahwa, was born in 1995 in a private hospital in Paris — but marital life quickly degenerated into de facto separation.

With her dyed-blonde hair, Suha's penchant for expensive clothes and the high-life could not be more different from the veteran leader's trademark military suit and austere obsession with politics. Suha, a convert to Islam, once complained to an Egyptian newspaper that her husband never gave her any jewels and lived like a bachelor.

"When I complain of being neglected, he offers me souvenirs and symbols of the Palestinian revolution," she said in a rare interview.

AFP, Ramallah

ভোটের জন্যু জরুরি অবস্থা অশান্ত ইরাকে

বাগদাদ, ৭ নভেম্বর: নির্বাচনের আগে জঙ্গি কাৰ্যকলাপ আয়ত্তে আনতে অবশেষে জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করতে বাধ্য হল ইরাকের অন্তর্বর্তী সরকার। আপাতত উত্তরে কুর্দিস্তান ছাড়া সমগ্র ইরাকে দু'মাসের জন্য এই আইন জারি হয়েছে। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রে জর্জ বুশ পুনর্নির্বাচিত হওয়ার পরে ফালুজায় মার্কিন সেনা হামলা তীব্র করে তুলেছিল। ইরাকের প্রধানমন্ত্রী আয়াদ আলাউয়ির অনুমোদন পেলে রামাদিতেও একই ভাবে ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়তে তৈরি ছিল মার্কিন সেনা। কিন্তু জবাবে গত দু'দিনে ইরাকে একাধিক হামলায় মোট পঞ্চাশ জনকে হত্যা করেছে জঙ্গিরা। জখম করেছে আরও বেশি লোককে। নির্বাচনের পূর্বে তারা প্রশাসনের বিরুদ্ধে যে রকম প্রতিরোধ গড়ে তুলেছে, তাতে আর ঝুঁকি নিতে রাজি নয় ইরাক সরকার।

বিশেষত ইরাকে মার্কিনদের শক্ত ঘাঁটি সামারাতেও গাড়িবোমায় কাল

নিহত ইংরাছেন ৩৪ জন। মৃতদের অধিকাংশই ইরাকি নিরাপত্তারক্ষী। আর আজ ভোরের দিকে পশ্চিম আনবার প্রদেশের হাদিথার থানায় হামলা চালিয়ে ২১ জন পুলিশকে জঞ্চিরা হত্যা করে। তা ছাড়া, নিকটবর্তী শহর হাকলানিয়া ও বাকুবাতেও ১ জন করে ইরাকি পুলিশ মারা গিয়েছেন। বাগদাদেও আজ দু'টি গাড়িবোমা বিক্ষোরণ হয়েছে। তার মধ্যে একটি হয়েছে অর্থমন্ত্রীর বাড়ির খুব কাছেই। এই হামলাগুলিতে হতাহতের সংখ্যা অবশ্য স্পষ্ট নয়।

ইরাকে চলতি নৈরাজ্যের মধ্যে সুষ্ঠু ভাবে নির্বাচন করা সম্ভব হবে না বলেই জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করা হল। জুন মাসে ক্ষমতা হস্তান্তরের পরেই এ বিষয়ে প্রয়োজনীয় আইন তৈরি করেছিল সরকার। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর এক মুখপাত্র জানিয়েছেন, জঙ্গিদের কোনও মতেই নির্বাচন প্রক্রিয়া পণ্ড করতে দেওয়া হবে না। তবে, এই আইন কী

A) miles ভাবে প্রয়োগ করা হবে সে বিষয়ে তিনি বিস্তারিত কিছু জানাননি। শুধু বলেছেন, "কাল প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজে একটি সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে এ বিষয়ে বিস্তারিত বলবেন।" জানা গিয়েছে, যে কোনও সময়ে কার্ফ্র জারি বা সন্দেহভাজনদের আটক করে জেরা করতে পারবে সরকার। তবে, ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যে তাদের আদালতে তুলতে হবে। জরুরি অবস্থা জারি করার কারণও ব্যাখ্যা করবেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। প্রথম দফায় দু'মাস অতিক্রান্ত হওয়ার পরে প্রতি মাসে এর পুনর্নবীকরণ করতে পারবে সরকার। তবে জরুরি অবস্থা দেখিয়ে আসন্ন নির্বাচন পিছিয়ে দিতে পারবেন না প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

আজ ভোরে বাগদাদের উত্তর-পশ্চিমে একটি থানায় জঙ্গিরা হামলা চালায়। প্রায় দেড় ঘণ্টা লড়াই চলে। ছ'জন পুলিশ আহত হন। ২১ জন পুলিশকে প্রথমে আটক করে জঙ্গিরা, পরে তাঁদের ধরে নিয়ে গিয়ে গুলি করে

ত্যা করা হয়। নিকটবর্তী হাকলানিয়ার ধানায় হামলায় মারা গিয়েছেন পশ্চিম ইরাকে নিরাপতার দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত ব্রিগেডিয়ার শাহের আল-জগাইফি। বাকুবাতেও এক পুলিশ অফিসারকে হত্যা করা হয়েছে। বাগদাদে বিমানবন্দরের রাস্তায় একটি মার্কিন সেনা কনভয় লক্ষ্য করে গাড়িবোমা বিস্ফোরণ ঘটায় জঙ্গিরা। আল কায়দা আবু মুসাব জারকোয়াইয়ের গোষ্ঠী এই হামলার দায় স্বীকার করেছে। যদিও সেনা সূত্রে এই ঘটনায় হতাহতের সংখ্যা জানানো হয়নি। টাইগ্রিস নদীর কাছে শহরের অভিজাত এলাকায় অর্থমন্ত্রীর বাড়ির কাছে একটি গাড়িবোমা বিস্ফোরণ ঘটে। এই ঘটনায় অস্তত ২ জন মারা গিয়েছেন। তবে সেই সময়ে অর্থমন্ত্রী আদেল আব্দুল মাহদি বাড়িতে ছিলেন কি না, তা জানা যায়নি। অন্য দিকে, সামারায় হিংসাত্মক ঘটনার পরে কার্ফু জারি রয়েছে। — রয়টার্স

Insurgents kill over 50 in Iraq

Fallujah under major assault

Agencies
Fallujah/Baghdad, Nov 7

FACING A major assault in Fallujah, insurgents struck back with coordinated attacks on police installations using suicide car bombs, mortars and rocket attacks, killing more than 50 people and wounding more than 60, including nearly two dozen Americans.

The attacks could have been aimed at relieving pressure on Fallujah, where about 10,000 American troops are massing for a major assault. Website postings claimed responsibility for several of the Saturday attacks in the name of an al-Qaida-linked group believed holed up in Fallujah.

At dawn on Sunday, rebels attacked police stations in western Anbar province, leaving 22 people dead, at least seven of them policemen, according to police and hospital officials.

Using bombs and small arms fire, insurgents hit police stations in Haditha and Haqlaniyah, 135 miles northwest of Baghdad, said Capt. Nasser Abdullah of the K3 police station in Haqlaniyah.

US jets pounded Fallujah early on Saturday in the heaviest air strikes in six months — including five 500-pound bombs dropped on insurgent targets. Residents reported US artillery fire late on Saturday in southern parts of the city. US jets pounded and destroyed five weapons caches after nightfall

pons caches after nightfall.
Early on Sunday, Marines
fired artillery at rebel positions inside Fallujah and
clashed with armed insurgents, killing at least 16.
Two US soldiers were
wounded at a checkpoint,
the US military said.

12 National Guards killed

Twelve Iraqi National Guards were abducted and executed by militants dressed as policemen while travelling home to Najaf, an official with a leading Shia party said on Sunday.

Minister attacked

Iraqi Finance Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi survived an assassination attempt on Sunday, when a large car bomb exploded in his home street in central Baghdad, killing two people.

8 NOV 2004 THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

Funeral furore over one not yet dead

Chris McGreal & Amelia Gentleman

Ramallah & Paris, November 6

EVEN before Yasser Arafat is declared dead, he is at the centre of a dispute over where he will be laid to rest, after Israel refused to allow his burial in the holy city of Jerusalem.

The Palestinian leader wish es to be interred at one of the most sacred sites in Islam, Haram as-Sharif, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, inside Jerusalem's old city. But Ariel Sharon told his Cabinet he would not permit Arafat to be buried in the old city or anywhere else in greater Jerusalem, which Israelis and Palestinians claim as their capital.

Israel's justice minister Yosef Lapid said: "Arafat won't be buried in Jerusalem, be cause Jerusalem is the city where Jewish kings are buried and not Arab terrorists"

US and French officials were attempting to defuse the row after Israel said it would prefer Arafat to be buried in the Gaza Strip. His family, backed by some Palestinian leaders, wants him interred on the edge of Je rusalem or in Ramallah, where he has lived since returning to the West Bank 10 years ago.

The row over the burial site and the need to arrange a state funeral likely to be attended by the Egyptian, Jordanian and French leaders among others has led to speculation that Arafat is being kept on life support



The cemetery of the West Bank village of Abu Dis that could be a burial site of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Leila Shahid, a Palestinian official at the French hospital where the ailing 75-year-old is being treated for an undiagnosed illness, yesterday admitted for the first time that Arafat was in a coma, but denied reports he was brain dead. "Yasser Arafat, in his state of health and at his age, is at a critical

death", she said. "I assure you he's not brain dead. He's in a coma. We're not sure what type, but it's a reversible coma'

Just after dusk in Paris, the spokesman for the Percy mili-tary hospital outside Paris emerged to issue another curt update on the Palestinian leader's health. Prefacing his statement was once again in accordance with the "discretion" demanded by Arafat's wife, Suha, he said there was no change in his health.

Israeli and Palestinian officials decline to talk in public about the dispute over the burial. But, vesterday, the top Muslim cleric in Jerusalem, the Grand Mufti, Ekrima Sa'eed

Sadri, said Arafat's wish should be granted.

"President Arafat has a will. and, in that will, he wants to be buried in Jerusalem. Under Sharia law, the righteous thing is to obey the will of Arafat. We must abide in full", he said. The Grand Mufti said he would not seek Israeli permission to bury Arafat in the old city. "We're expecting the refusal of it. They've already said so. I'm not willing to ask Sharon's permission to bury our dead. If I ask Sharon's permission, it's as if I give legitimacy to his control over our land", he said.

Israel had considered a burial site on the edge of Jerusalem in the village of Abu Dis, which was within sight of Haram as-Sharif until Israel built the eight-metre-high security wall through the city. Arafat would have been buried on the West Bank side. But Sharon told his Cabinet that Abu Dis was also unacceptable.

The Israeli government's concerns are partly political, because it fears that Arafat's burial in Jerusalem would be interpreted as recognition that Palestinians have political rights in the city.

Some Israeli security officials are concerned that if a large funeral were held on the edge of Jerusalem, or even in Ramallah, crowds of Palestinians could simply carry Arafat's body to the old city and it would be difficult for the Israeli forces to stop them. Israeli diplomats do not relish the prospect of a confrontation at a state funeral that is likely to attract highranking representatives of Arab, European and African nations. Israel would prefer Arafat to be buried alongside his father and sister in Khan Younis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, where the family has a plot of about 25 graves.

Guardian News Service

Arafat's will bestows PLO leadership on Kadoumi

Agencies

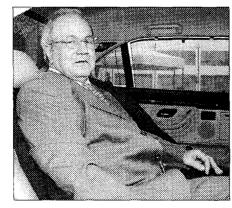
Jerusalem, November 6

Amid growing confusion over the future of Palestinian leadership in post-Arafat era, the veteran leader is said to have issued a last political will in which he suggests that the head of the PLO politburo, Farouk Kadoumi, based in Tunis, succeed him.

According to media reports quoting senior Palestinian officials, Yasser Arafat is said to have mentioned in his will that Kadoumi will accept the position of PLO chairman, but will not serve as leader of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in light of his ob-

jection to the Oslo Peace Accords.

Arafat reportedly handed over the copies of his last will to his wife Suha and his cousin, Nasser al-Kidwa, who serves as Palestinian Ambassador to the UN. A senior official close to the PA chairman is said to have strengthened claims by saying that the leader in his last moments of clarity asked to summon Kadoumi to his bed in order to tell him "something important.



Farouk Kadoumi

The officials are said to have added that if Kadoumi does accept the position, he would head the PA together with Abu Ala, while former security chiefs Mohammad Dahlan and Jibril Rajoub would be their subordi nates, which they have agreed to be.



A Palestinian girl stands outside the Percy Military Hospital on Saturday in Paris where Arafat is admitted.

7 NOV 2004

Israel adamant on Arafat burial

Anywhere in Gaza, but not Jerusalem

Press Trust of India

JERUSALEM, Nov. 5. — Israel will permit Mr Yasser Arafat to be buried in the Gaza Strip, but not in Jerusalem, an Israeli minister said, even as the Palestinian leader lay "gravely ill" at a Paris hospital.

"It is clear that he will not be buried in Jerusalem, and that he will not be buried on the Temple Mount," Israeli justice minister Mr Yosef Lapid told Israel TV's Channel Two.

Burial in Jerusalem would be seen as strengthening Palestinian claims to the traditionally Arab sector of the city as a future capital, media reports said.

Mr Lapid did not refer to a possible ban on a West Bank burial, but said: "We have no problems with Gaza, of course."

The issue can lead to a showdown with Wakf officials rejecting Israel's right to decide Mr Arafat's final resting place. "Nobody will tell us where to bury him and the final decision lies in the hands of the Palestinian people," Wakf director Mr Adnan Husseini had said soon after Mr Arafat's health deteriorated.

Mr Arafat had expressed a wish to be buried at a hotly disputed holy site in the Old City of Jerusalem. Muslims call the hilltop Haram as-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary), Islam's thirdholiest shrine, where the Al Aqsa Mosque compound is

Cleric's claims

JERUSALEM, Nov. 5. — Mr Arafat asked to be buried in Jerusalem, the city's top Muslim cleric said today, in the first official comment on the ailing Palestinian leader's burial wishes.

The cleric, Mufti Ikrema Sabri, said: "President Arafat, may he be healthy, willed to be buried in Jerusalem and from a religious perspective, we must and need to honour his will." His remarks were broadcast on Israel TV's Channel Two. Mr Arafat has told aides privately in recent years that he hoped to be buried at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem, Islam's third holiest shrine. — AP

built over the ruins of the biblical Jewish temples. Jews call the site the Temple Mount, Judaism's holiest site. Mr Arafat could be buried in the Gaza Strip, where his family owns a burial plot in Khan Yunis, officials said.

Yesterday, Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon consulted defence minister Mr Shaul Mofaz and heads of the security establishment over the Palestinian leader's funeral. They have reportedly decided that the defence minister will be in charge of security for the funeral and the PMO will handle all the diplomatic affairs. However, Palestinians have refused to begin planning for his funeral or coordinate with Israel on the movement of attending foreign dignitaries.



A Palestinian woman keeps a solemn vigil outside the Percy military hospital in Clamart on Friday. — AFP

Palestinian facti

Associated Press

GAZA, Nov. 5. — Rival Palestinian factions met in the Gaza Strip today in a show of unity, as Mr Yasser Arafat fought for his life in a Paris hospital.

Representatives of 13 Palestinian factions, including Fatah and the two Islamic militant groups, met at the parliament building to find ways to try to ensure calm during Mr Arafat's absence. "We are here today to reflect our unity," a spokesman for the Islamic Jihad said. "We are one nation fighting for its freedom and fighting for its land and we are not separate groups fighting each other."

However, the situation is delicate, par-

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A positive catalyst for pe

The Times, London

LONDON, Nov. 5. — Mr Yasser Arafat's removal from the West Asian political landscape could plunge his weakened nation into further crisis but may also have opened the way for the first real peace effort in the region for years.

Millions of Palestinians scattered across West Asia feared last night that their dream of statehood had died with the passing of the man who embodied that struggle for four decades. None of the half dozen figures being considered for the leadership can possibly hope to replace his international standing nor his u-





For President Bush and Prime Minister Sharon, a new Palestinian leader can only be an improvement compared to Mr Arafat and may allow serious talks to reopen after five years.

nique ability to represent the interests of a people living either in exile or on land controlled by Israel.

But there was also hope last night that a figure who obstructed peace efforts,

ran a corrupt and incompetent administration and led his people into a disastrous uprising had finally gone.

Mr Arafat was also regarded as an anachronism, a guerrilla leader who

refused to put down h and preferred strugg nation building. His c saw him as an obstac any hopes of a lasting p agreement in West and a figure who could did, prevent others a trying to find a settler to the 50-year conflict.

Certainly his opponparticularly Israel America, viewed the van guerrilla leader a deeply unreliable par He was accused of dera Mr Bill Clinton's attent at Camp David in 199 reach an historic land peace deal and insteaturning to violence, sident Bush and Mr A Sharon, the Israeli P Minister, refused to ne

Jostle for Palestine leadership begins

Guardian News Service Jerusalem, November 5

THE PALESTINIAN Prime Minister, Ahmed Korei, yesterday took over more of Yasser Arafat's powers at an emergency meeting to discuss a serious downturn in the Palestinian leader's health.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation hierarchy met as reports of Arafat's decline swept the occupied territories. Korei assumed additional powers to handle urgent security and financial matters within the Palestinian Authority (PA) without requiring Arafat's final approval for any decisions.

The Palestinian leader's grip on power has been slipping away since he was flown to Paris a week ago for urgent medical treatment.

Arafat is president of the PA, chairman of the PLO and leader of the dominant organisation in it, Fatah. He was supreme commander of the dozen or more Palestinian security forces. In recent days acting responsibility for those posts was dispersed among a collective leadership, including Korei who now has overall control of the Palestinian security forces.

If Arafat dies, the speaker of the Palestinian parliament, Ruhi Fatouh, will become interim head of the PA for 60 days until elections are held. But it is the former prime minister,

But it is the former prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, who has taken over the important political levers, Fatah and the PLO. All of this may only be

Possible burial sites

ISRAEL WILL permit Yasser Arafat to be buried in the Gaza Strip, but keep him out of Jerusalem, a city "where Jewish kings are buried and not Arab terrorists," an Israeli Cabinet minister said on Friday However, Palestinian leaders hope to enlist international support for an Arafat burial at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque compound, which is revered by Mus-lims and Jews. Negotiations with Israel would only begin after Arafat's death. Burial in Jerusalem would be seen as strengthening Palestinian claims to the traditionally Arab sector of the city as a future capital. It is not clear whether the Palestinian leader has left a will. However, he has told aides privately in recent years that he would like to be buried at the mosque compound, Islam's third holiest shrine

AP, Jerusalem

temporary. Abbas has a head start on some rivals in the race to take control but, when Arafat dies, he could face stiff resistance within Fatah where his close relationship with the Americans and the concessions he made at a summit with Ariel Sharon in Aqaba last year have drawn whispers of collaboration.

Arafat between life & death

adebija i

Chirac sald at an EU summit Palestinians were glued to radio and television broadin Brussels. Paris, Nov. 5 (Reuters): Yasser life and death" on Friday as senior Palestinian officials Arafat lay in a coma "between met to consider a future with-

the Palestinian president, in a French military hospital on the outskirts of Paris, was brain dead and said he was in a reversible coma. But back home, 14 Palestinian factions avoid strife in a possible France Leila Shahid denied met in a show of unity mean! envoy Palestinian

raised fears of chaos among successor and his illness has old uprising for an independ-Palestinians waging a 4-year-Arafat has not named ent state next to Israel. power vacuum

Chirac, who saw the Palestinian president in hospital yesterday, also hinted at a possible symbolised the Palestinian future beyond Arafat, who has French President Jacques struggle for decades.

"I hope that whatever the circumstances, the negotiations, the reforms, peace, establish themselves and be-

the hospital being treated for an unspecified illness, slipped who has spent the past week at into a coma early yesterday In the West Bank and Gaza,

"Today we can say that Yasser Arafat in his state of health and at his age is at a critical juncture between life and death," Shahid, the permanent Palestinian envoy to Paris, told French radio stacasts. Security has been boosted at Jewish settlements, Is-Some of Arafat's powers, over to Prime Minister Ahmed for security and financing, have already been handed

raeli television said

"I assure you that he is not

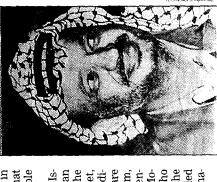
Qurie, a leading moderate.

type. But it is a reversible a coma. We are not sure what In the Gaza Strip, the 14 Is

groups which have waged the visions between them. "We are not fighting tribes," said senwho emerged from hiding for the the formation of a unified nalamic and secular Palestinian saying they wanted to avoid diior Islamic Jihad official Mo meeting. "We have demanded uprising against Israel met people looking for freedom al-Hindi, tional leadership." hammed

spokesman for the militant group Hamas, talked of "the tional unity and avoid differnecessity to strengthen naal-Masri, ences and internal struggle" Mushir

CNN quoted US officials as saying Arafat was on a life support machine, but no independent confirmation was available. The EU underlined the need to press on with peace bloc's foreign ministers discussed efforts to revive Israeli Palestinian peace talks.



YASSER ARAFA le l'Organisation de Libération résident du Camité Exécutif la Palastine



A Yasser Arafat shrine near the Percy hospital in Clamart, Paris. (AFP)

Row over burial site

on a collision course today over the choice of Yasser Arafat's burial site if the Palestinian leader dies at a French hospital Jerusalem, Nov. 5 (Reuters): Israel and the Palestinians were where he is in a coma.

Arafat loyalists are insisting on the 75-year-old president's right to a final resting place in Jerusalem, the holy city that Israelis and Palestinians claim as their capital, despite Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's vow to prevent it. Arafat has said he wants to be buried at Islam's holiest site in East Jerusalem on land captured by Israel in the 1967 West Asia war.

However, Israel wants Arafat — admired by Palestinians as their nationalist symbol but reviled by many Israelis -- to be buried in the Gaza Strip. "Jerusalem is a city where Jews bury their kings. It's not a city where we want to bury an Arab terrorist, a mass murderer," Israeli justice minister Yosef Lapid said.

Arafat in coma so



Associated Press

PARIS, Nov. 4. — A gravely-ill Mr Yasser Arafat was clinging to life today, French doctors said, refuting reports that the Palestinian leader had died. (A French medical source said Mr Arafat is "brain dead" but is being kept alive by life support machines while in an irreversible coma, adds AFP.)

Late today, Israeli troops in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were put on a state of high-alert.

The Palestinian leader was in a coma after being rushed to the intensive care unit of a military hospital outside Paris after deteriorating overnight, Palestinian officials

said, denying he had died.

"I am standing next to the President's bed... He is in grave condition," Mr Arafat's chief of staff, Mr Ramzi Khoury, said.

Dr Christian Estripeau, a hospital spokesman, told reporters: "Mr Arafat is not dead. The clinical situation of the first days following admission has become more complex... The state of health of the patient requires appropriate treatment that required his transfer to a unit adapted to his pathology. This statement has been drafted out of respect for the discretion demanded by his wife."

Palestinian Prime Minister Mr Ahmed Qureia also said there had been no change in Mr Arafat's condition today.

Earlier, Israeli TV's Channel Tocited Israeli security officials as saing they had been told by a reliab French source that Mr Arafat hadied. Luxembourg's Prime Ministe Mr Jean-Claude Juncker also has said Mr Arafat had died, but his spokesman Mr Lucien Michels later retracted the statement, calling it "a misunderstanding".

In Washington, President Bush

In Washington, President Bush reacted to the conflicting reports about Mr Arafat's death today by saying: "God bless his soul". He said "My first reaction is God bless his soul. My second reaction is that we will continue to work for a free Palestinian state that's at peace with Israel."

আরাফত কোমায়



প্রারিস, ৪ নভেম্বর (এ এফ পি)— গভীর রাত থেকে বারবার সংজ্ঞা হারিয়ে অসুস্থ প্যালেস্টাইন প্রেসিডেন্ট ইয়াসের আরাফত কোমায় চলে গেছেন। শেষ খবর, মস্তিদ্ধের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। অর্থাৎ মারাই গেছেন। ফরাসি ম্বাস্থ্য বিভাগ মাঝরাতে এই খবর জানিয়েছে। একটি মার্কিন টিভি চ্যানেলকে এ খবর দিয়েছেন আরাফতের ঘনিষ্ঠ এক প্যালেস্টাইন নেতা। প্যারিস শহরতলির ক্লামার্তে ফরাসি সামরিক হাসপাতালে আরাফতকে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়েছে ইনটেনসিভ কেয়ার ইউনিটে। এই হাসপাতালেই গত সপ্তাহে আরাফতকে ভর্তি করা হয় ওয়েস্ট ব্যাঙ্কের রামাল্লা থেকে উড়িয়ে এনে। আরাফতের আর এক

ঘনিষ্ঠ নেতা নাবিল আবু রুদেইনা কিন্তু অস্বীকার করেছেন যে, আরাফত কোমায় আক্রাস্ত। এমনকি তিনি বলেছেন, আরাফত জ্ঞান হারিয়েছেন এমন খবরও তাঁর কাছে নেই। ওদিকে ওয়েস্ট ব্যাল্পের রামাল্লায় আরাফতের সঙ্কটজনক অসুস্থতার খবর পোঁছে ই প্যালেস্টাইন নেতারা জরুরি বৈঠকে বসেছেন বলে জানিয়েছেন সাথের হাবাস প্যালেস্টাইনের শাসক ফতে মুভমেন্টের কেন্দ্রীয় কমিটির নেতা হাবাস। ইজরায়েলের সংবাদপত্রগুলি সে দেশের গোয়েন্দা সূত্রে খবর দিয়েছে, আরাফতের অঙ্গপ্রত্যঙ্গ কাজ করছে না। বারবার জ্ঞান হারাচ্ছে তিনি। কিছুকাল ধরে জুর, অসুস্থতা না কমায় আরাফতকে ওয়েস্ট ব্যাঙ্ক থেকে ফ্রান্সের হাসপাতালে ভর্তি করা হয়। ধরা পড়ে তাঁর রক্তে অনুচক্রিকার পরিমাণ অত্যঙ্গ কমে গেছে। চিকিৎসকেরা মনে করছেন, এটা রক্তের ক্যান্সার লিউকোমিয়ারই লক্ষণ।

Eyeless in Gaza

Withdrawal or strategic consolidation?

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan for Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza strip may be likened, in some respects, to General Musharraf's new plan for Kashmir. Both can be seen as good first steps unfreezing the current status quo, but if they represent a new status quo then the implications are disastrous. The Musharraf plan does away with the old shibboleth of a plebiscite under UN auspices, but the same is reintroduced through the back door — it appears that several mini-plebiscites in the mini-regions into which Jammu and Kashmir is supposed to be subdivided are now proposed, to decide whether they will be independent states, under joint Indo-Pak control or a UN mandate. Musharraf does not address the question of the viability of these small and landlocked mini-regions as independent nations, unless what he has in mind is quietly absorbing them into Pakistan once their lack of viability gets established, using "de-militarisation" as a ploy to get Indian troops out. This is too outlandish to work, and there is no reason for Delhi to accede to this. Likewise, we do not know whether Sharon's plan for withdrawal from the Gaza strip is a preamble to withdrawing Israeli settlements in the West Bank and giving Palestinians enough breathing space to form a state of their own, as envisaged by the roadmap, or whether it amounts to a strategic consolidation of Israeli settlers on occupied territories — after all, 20,000 Israeli troops are needed to ensure the safety of just 7,500 Jewish settlers in the Gaza strip. Palestinians fear that it is the latter, and Sharon's past history in promoting settlements as well as present pressures from the Likud rightwing lend weight to the idea that Tel-Aviv may push its wall deep into the West Bank and consolidate Israeli settlements behind the wall. Such a strategy, however, will be dangerous.

Palestinian deprivation, combined with President Yasser

Palestinian deprivation, combined with President Yasser Arafat's current illness, mean that the Palestinian Authority could implode, and Hamas and other extremist groups would be the main beneficiaries. If the Gaza strip falls to Hamas, they would turn it into a base to launch attacks on Israel, and it would be no safer. It would be better for Israel to withdraw within its pre-1967 borders, give or take a few adjustments, and allow Palestinians a fair chance of forming a state of their own, giving them a stake in moderation and the eschewing of terror. As added insurance Israel could build its wall, and nobody could object at that point

nobody could object at that point.

STILL TOO CLOSE TO CALL

High turnout will favour challenger

Guardian News Service Miami, November 1

THE FINAL, frenetic phase of campaigning in the US presidential election ends on Monday with the race balanced on a razor's edge, and no certainty the winner

will be clear by Wednesday. The eleventh-hour intervention of Osama bin Laden did little to break the deadlock between George Bush and John Kerry: one of the three most recent polls showed Bush moving towards a clear lead, but two had the race tied. With the chances of altering that picture diminishing ever more rapidly, the campaigns reached near-hysterical levels of activity.

In the battlegrounds of Florida, Pennsylvania and Ohio, the campaigns deluged television stations with so much political advertising that some announced they had no more space left to sell. "It's just unbelievably close. People need to understand that anybody who's being blunt and bold about the outcome of this election now is probably wrong, and if they're right, it's pure luck," said Larry Sabato, director of the centre for politics at the University of Virginia.

The Bush campaign seized on a Newsweek poll released at the weekend showing the President with a 50 per cent to 44 per cent lead, based partly on responses recorded in the first hours after the release of the bin Laden tape.

The conventional wisdom is that Kerry needs to win two of the three states of Pennsylvania. Florida and Ohio to have any serious hope of victory. That seems clearly within his grasp and he is also clinging to a lead in Michigan, a traditionally Democratic state, whose loss to the Republicans may well spell disaster.

Opinion polls are bad at predicting the influence of the millions of newly-registered voters, among whom Kerry has a 10point lead, according to a Reuters/Zogby poll released on Sunday, Only a small proportion of newly-registered voters make

IN THE SURVEYS

Bush's job-approval rating has slipped to 48 per cent, below the 50 per cent benchmark critical for incumbents

■ Terrorism was the most important issue cited by voters in the poll and in Florida and Pennsylvania But in Iowa, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, the economy was ranked first

■ In Florida, 30 per cent of registered voters said they already had cast their ballots, using early voting sites and absentee ballots. 51 per cent supported Kerry

And Ralph Nader? The independent candidate who helped swing the 2000 election to Bush isn't much of a factor this time. Among 1,573 likely voters, he was backed by 9

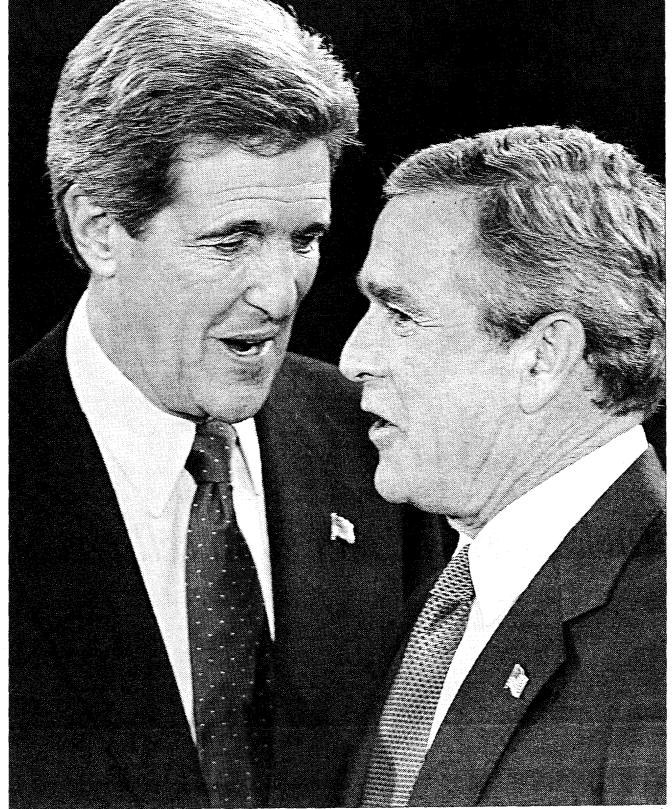
USA TODAY

it to a polling booth. But whatever happens tomorrow, history will almost certainly prove to have been a poor guide.

"For once, that old axiom, that it's all in the ground game, is true," said Sabato "But there's one exception," he said. "If turnout goes through the roof, Kerry is going to win. There's no way an incumbent can get reelected in those circumstances.'

Under the electoral college system, each state has a number of votes approximately proportional to its population, which are awarded on a winner-takesall basis in most cases.

A candidate needs 270 votes, but on the basis of the current polls, neither has anywhere near that number in the bag. And with thousands of lawyers reported to be standing by to challenge results, a close result may lead to the process being dragged out days or even weeks beyond Wednesday.



AS CLOSE AS IT GETS President George W. Bush with his challenger, Democrat John Kerry.

Prez plays Castro card in key state

HT Correspondent & AFP Miami/Washington, November 1

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush has vowed to "keep the pressure on" to rid Cuba of Fidel Castro, an appeal to the hardline Cuban-Americans Bush was counting on to win Florida and the White House. "I strongly believe the people of Cuba should be free from the tyrant," Bush told a boisterous crowd of supporters here two days before the election, winning the rally's loudest cheers and chants of "Viva Bush" long live Bush.

"Over the next four years, we will continue to press hard and ensure that the gift of freedom finally reaches the men and women of Cuba," he said. "We will not rest, we will keep the pressure on, until the Cuban people enjoy the same freedoms in Havana they received here in America." "We will not rest, we will keep the pressure on, until the Cuban people enjoy the same freedoms in Havana they received here in America."

Bush, however, dropped the Cuba comments at campaign stops in Tampa, where the Cuban population is tiny, and Gainesville, where it is non-existent.

Lawyers hired as pollsters hint tie

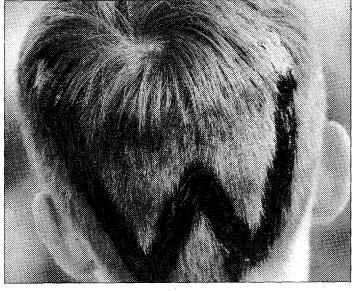
It may be deja vu all over again. With five national polls indicating a tie on the eve of Tuesday's presidential vote, Democrats and Republicans are bracing for possible legal challenges in several battleground states, notably Florida and Ohio.

Both the parties have deployed thousands of lawyers in the toss-up states and analysts say that disputes could come to the fore thick and fast in the absence of a clear verdict. They expect the challenge to arise over absentee ballots cast by Americans away from home and, more importantly, provisional votes — a new facility given to people under a 2002 law pending a final determination if they are eligible to vote.

Thoughts turned to a rerun of Florida 2000 on a larger scale as a raft of new polls reported that Bush and Kerry were "tied"



HEADSTRONG FOR BUSH Two young Bush supporters at a campaign rally in Gainesville, Florida, on Sunday.



George WBush.com Moore raises Fahrenheit with booth spycam threat

Oliver Burkeman Washington, November 1

FILMMAKER MICHAEL Moore has announced a large-scale effort to combat dirty tricks during Tuesday's US election by stationing hundreds of people with video cameras outside polling

"I'm putting those who intend to suppress the vote on notice: voter intimidation and suppression will not be tolerated," Moore said in a statement, wading into a controversy in which Democrats accuse Republicans of planning to reduce turnout, especially among ethnic minorities, by employing thousands of people to stop voters at the polls and challenge the validity of their registrations.

Moore, the director of the documentary Fahrenheit 9/11, said 1,200 professional and amateur videographers would descend on polling stations in Florida and Ohio, the two battleground states that have been the focus of the most serious allegations. The last few months have seen an unprecedented drive to register new voters, especially in black neighbourhoods of Flori-

da and throughout Ohio. But the new registrations could be deemed invalid as a result of errors made on the forms, from corner-cutting by workers to sign people up, or from delib-



REUTERS

Sen. John Kerry holds up a Boston Red Sox T-shirt at a campaign rally in Manchester, New Hampshire, on Sunday.

In Milwaukee, in the swing state of Wisconsin, Republicans produced a list of 37,000 voters whose addresses they said were questionable. They argued that all voters should be required to show identification at the polls on Tuesday, otherwise they would instruct thousands of poll workers to challenge people.

But Milwaukee's city attorney, who represents no party, said hundreds of addresses on the list had already been confirmed as valid, and local Democrats warned that voters could be disenfranchised simply for failing to include their apartment number as part of their street ad-

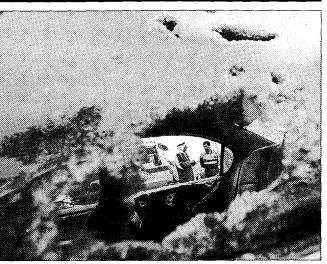
Meanwhile, continuing chaos seemed inevitable in Broward County Florida - home of the notorious "pregnant chads" of the 2000 election — where thousands of voters are likely to end up without a vote after their absentee ballots went missing.

Some replacement ballots were sent last week by courier. but 2.500 were only posted at the weekend — and by regular mail. Legally, if the voter lives in the US, the ballots must arrive back at Broward County, whether by hand or by post, by 7

pm on Tuesday. The US Postal Service told the South Florida Sun-Sentinel it was "really asking a lot" to expect the ballots to reach voters in time. "There's nothing we can do about those," countered Brenda Snipes, Broward's election su-pervisor. "Those were lastminute requests that just came in this week.

More widespread problems could result from a nationwide shortage of at least half a million poll workers, the US election assistance commission said on Sunday. It pleaded with businesses to give volunteers the day off work so that they could help operate polling stations and

Guardian News Service



The bullet riddled car of Hassan Kamel Abdel Fattah, deputy governor of Baghdad, who was shot dead in Dora on Monday.

Baghdad deputy governor shot dead

A DEPUTY governor of Baghdad, Hassam Kamel Abdel Fattah, was shot dead on Monday in the southern district of Dora, Iraq's interior ministry said. The killing was later claimed by Ansar Al-Sunna, a group linked to the al-Qaida network, in a statement on its Internet website. "He was travelling to work by car when unknown assailants gunned him down," said ministry spokesman Adnan Abdul Rahman, adding that two bodyguards were wounded in the ambush, which occurred not far from Fattah's home. The statement on the Ansar Al-Sunna website said: 'Your heroic brothers, the Mujahideen of Ansar Al-Sunna, executed the judgment of God by shooting dead the apostate Hassam Kamel Abdel Fattah, the deputy governor of Baghdad, as well as his driver and guards.

AFP, Baghdad

Bush wants to rule over the world: China

Associated Press Beijing, November 1

ON THE eve of the US presidential election, China accused President Bush of trying to "rule over the whole world", saying the invasion of Iraq destroyed the global anti-terrorism coalition and worsened religious and ethnic conflicts.

The strikingly pointed criticism from a government that Washington calls a key anti-terrorism ally was a departure from China's past refusal to comment on the US

presidential candidates. It came in a commentary in a Qian Qichen, who criticised what he called the "Bush Doctrine" as a policy of pre-emptive military attack and a Cold War relic. "It advocates the US should rule over the whole world with overwhelming force," said the lengthy commentary in the *China Daily*, an English-language newspaper

aimed at foreign readers. China has supported the USled war on terror, but is wary of Bush's intentions. Beijing worries about Washington's heightened presence in Central and South Asia, concerned that it threatens Chinese ambitions to

state newspaper by Vice-Premier be the region's dominant military power. It wasn't clear what prompted Monday's commentary. but US-Chinese relations have been strained by disputes over trade and Washington's refusal to send home Chinese Muslim detainees from the US military base in Guantanamo Bay. Cuba.

Qian, who was China's foreign minister for more than a decade in the late 1980s and early '90s. criticised Bush's decision to invade Iraq in March 2003, saying, "the world's situation in response to the war is in effect a

negative answer" Washington opened a Pandora's box, intensifying intermingled conflicts, such as ethnic and religious ones," Qian wrote.

"The Iraq war was an optional one, not a necessary one, and the pre-emptive principle should be removed from the dictionary of the US national security," he wrote. "The Iraq war has also destroyed the hard-won global antiterror coalition.'

Chinese officials have refused for weeks to comment on issues in the US presidential campaign or on the positions of Bush and his main challenger, Democratic Sen John Kerry.

The US government an-

nounced last week that it won't send home members of China's Muslim Uighur minority — who are being released from detention as possible terror suspects at Guantanamo Bay - and is instead trying to give them refuge in another country.

Beijing had appealed for the return of the Uighurs to face possible prosecution and urged Washington on Saturday to handle them in a way that wouldn't harm anti-terrorism cooperation.

Human rights groups have said the Chinese detainees could face torture or execution if sent

Afghan hostages: Rebels ready to talk

A MILITANT group threatening to kill three foreign hostages said on Monday it was ready to negotiate with a UN envoy, but warned that any rescue attempt would end in bloodshed and stuck to a demand that the world body withdraw from Afghanistan and that America release Guantanamo prisoners. A day after the UN election workers appeared pleading for freedom in an Iraq-style video, the Taliban splinter group said the three had been split up and are being held at separate locations. "That's our strategy," Ishaq Manzoor, a spokesman for the group, said. "If the government and coalition forces find one of them,

we will kill the other two.' AP, Kabul

Pak House nod to **Pervez Army post**

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT General Pervez Musharraf is all set to continue as Army Chief, which he had promised to quit by the year-end, after Parliament today approved a bill in this regard amid loud protests from opposition lawmakers. The Bill, which has already been passed by the National Assembly, was approved by the Upper House after a debate. It did not give any timeframe for Musharraf to hold the post of the Army Chief, but he may continue with it till 2007, when his term as President expires

PTI, Islamabad

Israel ready to talk to Arafat successor

Press Trust of India
Jerusalem, October 31

WITH YASSER Arafat seriously ill due to a "mystery" blood disease, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon today said he was willing to hold talks with a new Palestinian leadership after the charismatic leader's removal from the scene.

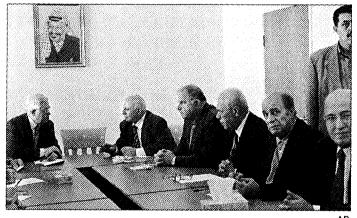
If a new Palestinian leadership emerges which is both serious and responsible and is willing to put forth a real effort to dismantle terror infrastructures, Israel would be willing to renew negotiations based on the internationally brokered 'road map' plan for peace, Sharon told a cabinet meeting here.

He said Israel will continue to move ahead with the controver-

sial "disengagement plan", calling for the evacuation of the Gaza Strip and four isolated settlements in the West Bank. "As long as there will be no partner, we will push forward with the disengagement plan that was approved by the government and the Knesset," he said.

No burial in Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on Sunday said he would block any request by Palestinian officials to bury their iconic leader Yasser Arafat in Jerusalem. "As long as I am in power, and I have no intention of leaving, he (Arafat) will not be buried in Jerusalem," the premier reportedly told Israel's weekly cabinet meeting.



A portrait of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat is seen over his empty chair during a PLO executive committee meeting in Ramallah on Sunday.

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

O 1 NOV 2004

Arafat for France, chaos spectre over Palestinians

Ramallah (West Bank) Oct. 28 (Reuters): Ailing leader Yasser Arafat, the icon of the struggle for a Palestinian state, has agreed to be flown to France tomorrow for medical treatment, Palestinian officials said.

A senior lawmaker from Arafat's Fatah movement, Abbas Zaki, said today Arafat would be flown out early in the morning. France accepted a request for him to be treated in a French hospital and will send a plane to collect him.

A thin and weak-looking Arafat, dressed in pajamas, smiled and joked with medics in the first few seconds of film footage released since his condition worsened drastically yesterday. Laughing, he clasped the hands of those around him.

Aides said Palestinian, Tunisian, Jordanian and Egyptian physicians had advised that Arafat, 75, be taken abroad, moving him from the West Bank compound where he has been penned by Israel forces for over two-and-a-half years. His wife Suha hurried

to his bedside for the first time since they were separated by Palestinian-Israeli fighting that erupted after talks foundered in 2000.

The ex-guerrilla, loved by most of his people and reviled by many Israelis, has had stomach pains since last week.

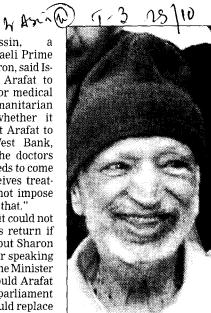
His health took a dramatic turn for the worse yesterday and officials said he had been slipping in and out of consciousness, though today he had also been able to eat, talk and say prayers. Arafat's slide into illness has raised fears of chaos among Palestinians, whose four-year-old uprising for a state has stalled.

The death of a leader Israel and its US ally see as an obstacle to peace could also shuffle the cards in the West Asian conflict as the US heads into a presidential election next Tuesday.

Arafat, short, stubblebearded and usually seen in his trademark black-and-white Arab headdress, has named no successor in the decade since emerging from exile under interim peace accords.

Raanan Gissin, a spokesman for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said Israel would allow Arafat to travel anywhere for medical treatment as a humanitarian gesture. Asked whether it would then permit Arafat to return to the West Bank, Gissin said: "If the doctors will say that he needs to come back after he receives treatment, Israel will not impose any restrictions on that."

Israel had said it could not guarantee Arafat's return if he left Ramallah, but Sharon shifted course after speaking by phone with Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie. Should Arafat die, speaker of parliament Rawhi Fattouh would replace him as Palestinian Authority president for a 60-day period during which elections would be held.



Yasser Arafat at his headquarters in Ramallah, West Bank. (Reuters)

THE TELEGRAPH 29 DCT 2004

Gaza plan ouse backs Sharon

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's day, a pivotal step towards the first evacuation of settlers Jerusalem, Oct. 27 (Reuters): Israel's parliament ratified Gaza withdrawal plan yesterfrom occupied territory Palestinians want for a state

But Sharon's hard-fought victory came at a price: he dau and a deputy minister and led a mutiny in his Rightfired cabinet minister Uzi Lan voted against the plan

His strongest rival in Likud, finance minister Bento resign along with three other cabinet ministers unless jamin Netanyahu, threatened wing Likud party.

Sharon agreed within two The loss of the ministers weeks to a national referendum on the pullout. Sharon rewould further split the party Sharon co-founded and set the scene for a challenge to his leadership or early elections jected any vote on the pullout.

"The disengagement plan has the potential of being historic and we see it as an important step in fulfilling President (George W) Bush's vision of two states living side by side in spokesman Trent Duffy said: peace and security.' White tion \government, possibly with Shimon Peres' Labour unless he forged a new coali-"(We) have decided to give the Prime minister two weeks and if not, we will not be able to see ourselves as staying in this government," Netanyahu said in parliament minutes to announce a referendum

would boost Israel's security and allow it to seal its grip on Palestinians in that on, the

long-deadlocked

US-backed plan charting the

ments in the occupied Gaza Strip and four of the 120 Israel

Under the plan, the actual uprooting of settlements, a four-stage process slated for completion in 2005, can begin only after a cabinet vote set for

March

has built in the West Bank.

with one factor — us being ab-"We've been and Gaza.

sent," said Palestinian cabinet Besides splintering his government and stoking a Likud mutiny, Sharon's landmark proposal has drawn Settlers who ringed the held placards calling Sharon a heavily guarded parliament minister Saeb Erekat. death threats. The US welcomed the House

traitor, fiery language last heard in the Israeli political arena before Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinat ed in 1995 by an ultra-national Sharon told parliament Gaza Once the settlers' champi-"disengagement" from

Sharon has in the past re-

after the vote.

fused to hold a referendum After a fierce two-day debate, legislators voted 67-45, with seven abstentions, for the removal of all 21 Jewish settle-

calling it a delaying tactic.

Such comments have fu-Sharon's real aim is to kill off peace process and deny them a viable state in the West Bank elled Palestinian fears that larger West Bank settlements.

the future of our children, the watching (them) discussing our future future of the Palestinians,

Sharon's plan, the settlers will be evacuated in return for dollars in compensation per

thousands of

hundreds of

occupied Gaza in hard-to-demillion Palestinians. Under

said a slogan daubed on a wal we will liquidate Sharon,

in Jerusalem

"We liquidated Rabin and Some 8,000 Israelis live in fend settlements among 1.3

Ariel Sharon is congratulated after the vote on his Gaza withdrawal plan in Jerusalem. (Reuters)

28 OCT 2004

Sharon launches Gaza withdrawal debate

Associated Press Jerusalem, October 25

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon asked Parliament on Monday to approve his plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank, saying it will help peace efforts, while Israeli troops raided a Gaza refugee camp to halt mortar fire, killing 14 Palestinians and wounding 72.

Opening a two-day debate, Sharon told the Knesset he was determined to press ahead with his plan despite the difficulties it will cause for the country. In a speech repeatedly interrupted by heckling, the former settler patron asked lawmakers to support his

of "unilateral disengagement" plan to help Israelis live in peace after four years of fighting with the Palestinians. "The disengagement plan does not come in place of negotiations," Sharon said. "It is a necessary step during a period in which negotiations are not possible. All is open when terror—this murderous terror—stops."

Sharon is expected to win Tuesday's vote, but will need a respectable margin of victory to silence increasingly vociferous opponents demanding a national referendum on the Gaza withdrawal. Sharon opposes a referendum, which would take months to prepare, as a stalling tactic.

Hours before the debate started, Israeli troops raided the Khan Younis refugee camp in southern Gaza to halt Palestinian mortar fire. Violence in Gaza has increased in the months since Sharon announced his plan, with Palestinian militants trying to prove they are forcing Israel out, and Israel trying to crush the militants to show it is not withdrawing under fire.

Palestinians view the plan with scepticism and worry Sharon will use the withdrawal to blunt international criticism and strengthen Israel's hold over large parts of the West Bank and east Jerusalem, lands the Palestinians claim for a state.

[srae] missile strike kills top Hamas leader

Gaza City, October 22 **Associated Press**

Thursday, killing a senior Hamas commander - who AN ISRAELI aircraft fired two missiles at a car traveling in the Gaza Strip late on tives for years. This was the among the govern ment's most-wanted fugilatest in a series of Israeli as sassinations that have weak ened the militant group. was

Hamas' military wing, was strike dealt another heavy and the No. 2 figure of killed along with a lowerranking militant. The air blow to Hamas's military Adnan al-Ghoul, a founder which is responsible for atdreds of Israelis during four tacks that have killed hun-Izzedine al-Qassam. wing,

ted by the Zionist occupation government against one of "It's a new crime commit-

the leaders of the Palestinspokesman Musher al-Masri said. "Hamas retaliation will be painful and the Zionist enemy will regret this crime'

Mixed response

to pull-out plan

Ghoul. 46, was a top bomb maker who masterminded the development of homemade Qassam rockets and ian militants frequently the rockets into offensive into Gaza aimed at Hamas officials said Al anti-tank missiles. Palestin southern Israel, and Israel recently completed a broad launch

istic. The plan includes a

pullback from four small

While

sraeli presence in the cro-

wded, Gaza Strip is unreal

Gaza has experienced an Israeli PM Ariel Sharon announced plans earlier this volatile area. Both Israel and militants want to claim win in violence since ahead of the withdrawal. pull out of stopping the attacks. npsnrge year to

week. Aides to the Prime

for a vote of approval next

Minister said on Thursday he had locked up enough su-

> Sharon is planning to present his Gaza withdrawal plan to the Israeli parliament

wing fissures within the Likud Party over the plan.

deeply concerned about gro-

The Israeli air strike took

along with hardliners in the government, accuse Sharon of caving in to Palestinian vi-Sharon has the support of But he wants to get a larganalyst up to 68 legislators in the er majority to head off acdoning his hardline supporters. Just 22 or 23 of 40 parliament. cusations that he is aban-Likud legislators plan to AP. Gaza City vote in favour of the plan. Crystal olence.Political groups 120-member Hanan

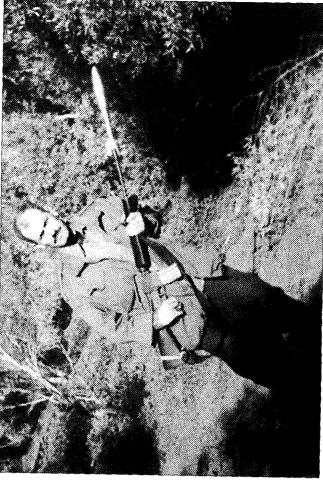
opinion polls show most Israelis support vided Sharon's hardline the plan, it has bitterly di government. Jewish set West Bank settlements.

place north of Gaza City as fugee camps, calling for revenge and chanting anti-Isdozens of people left a nearby mosque following evening oul's death, thousands of angry Hamas supporters took to the streets in several reprayers. Upon news of al-Gh pport to win that vote, but is

rael slogans. Al-Ghoul's killtary leadership solely in the hands of Mohammed Deif, its long-time chief. Both men have long topped Israel's strike aimed at a gathering of Hamas leaders in Gaza. ing leaves the Hamas mili-'wanted' list and operated from hiding for years. They escaped a September 2003 air

SHARON IS planning to

withdraw from Gaza next year. He says a continued Since then, however, Isearlier this year. A top rael has assassinated several top Hamas officials, including the groun's enimiteral ing the group's spiritual leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, Rantisi, weeks apart ascus, Syria, was killed in a and his successor, Abdel Hamas leader based in Damcar-bombing last month. Israeli officials acknowledged army issued a statement lozens of Israelis. involvement. Aziz



An undated photo of Hamas leader Adnan al-Ghoul, who was killed on Thursday.

22 OCT 2004

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

23 OCT 2004

Backlash after Hamas leader kille

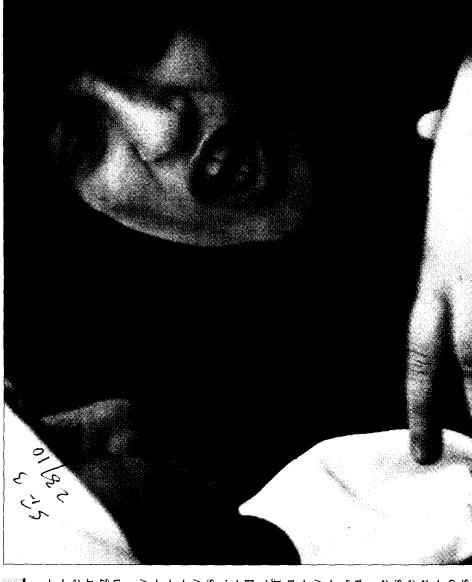
Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Oct. 22. — Defifire today, following the killing of a top Hamas bombmaker in ant Palestinian militants pounded Jewish settlements in the southern Gaza Strip with mortar an Israeli missile strike.

"Hamas is loval to the blood of ance till we achieve victory by said in a rare appearance at a Ghoul (46), a founder and deputy chief of the Hamas military wing who had been on Israel's Mourners and leaders of the Isits martyrs and will continue on defeating the Zionists," Mr Ismail Hanieh, a Hamas leader, Fens of thousands of angry Hamas supporters joined the funeral procession for Adnan allamic militant group threatened revenge attacks against Israel. the path of holy war and resistmost-wanted list since 1990

armed civilian. The army had no immediate comment. Hamas cluding those of the group's funeral procession. Witnesses said Israeli soldiers guarding the ground by Israel's relentless campaign of targeted killings, in-Neve Dekalim settlement some 300 metre away killed the unleaders have been driven underfounder and his successor this A mourner was killed at the Gaza City mosque.

Israeli analysts said the killing of al-Ghoul was a major blow to Hamas because of his expertise in making bombs, rockets and crude anti-tank missiles. Israel held al-Ghoul responsible for



Wife and daughter of the slain Hamas leader Adnan el-Ghoul break down at his funeral in Gaza City on Friday. — AFP

the deaths of dozens of Israelis, including those in the major suicide bombings in 1990s.

tar rounds were fired at Neve Al-Ghoul's assistant, Imad Ghoul's killing, around 15 mor-Dekalim and adjacent military Abbas, was also killed in Thursday's airstrike. Following al-

According to Palestinians the the army said posts, damaging four houses but

causing no casualties.

dead man was a known Hamas activist. It was not immediately eli fire or whether the mortar clear if the men were hit by Israshell exploded prematurely. Settlers reported mortar shells falling on two other south Gaza settlements, but causing no damage. One militant was killed and another gravely injured as they prepared to fire a mortar at

Later Friday, militants fired a homemade rocket at another

Neve Dekalim, Palestinians and

landed in the backyard of a Gaza settlement. The rocket house but caused no injuries, the army said.

Al-Ghoul had been in hiding ability to strike back at Israel has been severely weakened by a group's spiritual leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, and his succes-He narrowly escaped two previstring of assassinations. Early for years, avoiding public apous attempts on his life. Hamas this year, Israel killed the pearances and media interviews sor, Abdel Aziz Rantisi.

A top Hamas leader based in Damascus, Syria, was killed in a car bombing last month.

Hamas leaders in Gaza have gone Israeli security officials acknowledged involvement. Most into hiding.

Hamas military leadership solely Ghoul, is high on Israel's wanted Al-Ghoul's killing leaves the its longtime chief. Deif, like allist and has been in hiding for in the hands of Mohammed Deil

ber 2003 airstrike aimed at a gathering of Hamas leaders in Thursday's killing, which he said Gaza. Palestinian Cabinet ministhe Israeli government to continue the path of military solu-They both escaped a Septemter Mr Saeb Erekat condemned "reflects the determination of tions rather than negotiations."

helicopter fired a missile in the northern Gaza Strip, causing no injuries but destroying the home of a local militant leader, witnesses said. The army said it de-Later Thursday, an Israe!i stroyed a weapons workshop.

THE STATESMAN

23 OET 2004

killed in Egypt blasts

At least 29 people were killed and over 120 injured in three bomb explosions crowded hotel and a beach resort in Egypt's Sinai peninsula, which Israel said bear the hallmarks of that ripped through a IERUSALEM, Oct. 8.

A group calling itself the Islamic Unity Brigades claimed responsibility tobombers) carried out this heroic operation... against a den of prostitution and ist website whose authenday for the blasts targeting your martyrdom-seeking (suicide ticity could not be con-Israeli tourists. "Four of corruption," said a statement posted on an Islam-Al-Qaida. brothers

The previously unknown group said the attack was Ahmed Yassin, founder of Hamas, and was "the first direct shot in the face of in revenge for Israelina-tion last March of Sheikh

Two bombs exploded one after another at the uxury Hilton Hotel, a fa-



Israeli rescue workers search for bodies amid the rubble of the Hilton hotel in the resort of Taba in Egypt's Sinai desert on Friday. — AFP

vourite holiday destination for Israelis, in the Egyptian resort town of Taba

holiday, Israel defence forces home front Maj.-Gen. commander ing at the close of a Jewish late last night, killing at least 23 people vacation-

More than 38 people are still missing. Sources said, a car laden with explosives crashed into the lobby of bringing down a ten storey structure, while a suicide bomber blew himself up seconds later near the hothe hotel and exploded Yair Nave said.

tel swimming pool.

Two other blasts also occurred about two hours towns of Ras Shitan and Nueiba, killing at least two later in nearby resor people, they said.

Egypt's interior ministry night hours after the blast, around dawn, instead of 35 that officials had said last had confirmed 12 deaths local media reported.

information, it appears to attack with the hallmarks of Al-Qaida," said Israel's deputy defence minister, "According to our first be an international terror

Adom rescue service said. elis. Two Israelis were kil-led in the blast at Ras Satan, the Magen David A senior foreign ministry official reportedly said that five of those killed in Faba appeared to be Isra-Mr Zeev Boim.

THE STATESMAN " 9 DCT 2004

PTI & AFP

Palestine plan shelved with ** **US** blessing, claims Israel

Reuters Jerusalem, October 6

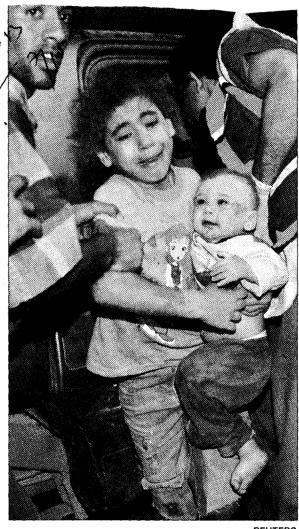
ISRAEL'S PLAN to withdraw from some occupied land aims to rule out a Palestinian state indefinitely with full US approval, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's chief of staff said on

Wednesday. Dov Weisglass's remarks on the move to give up the Gaza Strip next year while keeping large chunks of the West Bank sur-prised US diplomats, who said Washington still backed a peace "road map" to a Palestinian state.

Sharon, wary of offending Washington, said later he still supported the "road map" which Weisglass effectively dismissed.

Palestinian leaders, whose calls for road map talks have been spurned by Israel, condemned Weisglass's comments. "I believe he has revealed the true intentions of Sharon. We told the mediators eight months ago that the Gaza plan was designed to undermine their road map," said Palestinian Negotiations Minister Saeb Erekat.

Weisglass's message, coinciding with a big Israeli offensive into Gaza, could help Sharon win over far-



REUTERS

A Palestinian girl carries her toddler brother. Both were wounded in an Israeli attack in Beit Lahiya on Wednesday.

right foes opposed to Gaza "disengagement" and challenging his grip on power.

"The significance of our (unilateral) disengagement plan is the freezing of the peace process. It supplies the formaldehyde necessary so there is no political process with Palestinians," Weisglass said. "When you freeze the process, you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state ... Effectively, this whole package called a Palestinian state has been removed indefinitely from our agenda."

ddam destroyed WMDs in '91: US report

AN EXTENSIVE US investigation has found that frag destroyed virtually all its chemical and biological muniyears before ordered US based largetions in 1991, 12 President Bush troops to invade

ly on the alleged threat posed by those weapons.

The report will be pre-sented on Wednesday to a Senate committee by chief US arms inspector Charles Duelfer. It says fraqi dictator Saddam Hussein believed in the deterrent power conthe deterrent power conferred by weapons of mass ordered them destroyed in an effor

USA Today
Washington, October 6 (1) his country after the by a high-level administra-tion official who has been key findings of the report were described on Tuesday briefed on its contents.

No link between Hussein and Zargawi: CIA

ior officials in Saddam's cial said the report shows that Iraq planned to revive its banned weapons programs once United Nations dating the destruction of weapons to 1991, the regime and interrogation of sanctions were lifted. But by tensive interviews with sen-The report is based on ex the ousted dictator. The offi

telligence agencies and the Bush administration were so

far off the mark in their as-The administration offisessment of the Iraqi threat.

ich was a mix of new information and a look at some older information, did not make was delivered to the White House last week. tve conclusions. "To suggest the case is cl osed on this would not be correct." the offi about the CIA report that the network said any final judgments or come to any definit cial said in confirming an ABC News story A CIA report has found no conclusive evidence that former Iraqi President Saddam before the invasion of Iraq. "There's no co-nclusive evidence the Saddam Hussein regime had harbored Zarqawi," a US official said on Tuesday about the CIA findings. But the official stressed that the report, wh-Hussein harboured Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, which the Bush administration asserted

Reuters, Washington

no stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons and a moribund nuclear weapons The basic conclusion of development effort — strenthe report — that Iraq had gthens the preliminary find Congress before discussing the report's details with the White House wants to brief today before the Senate Armed Services Committee media. Duelfer is to testify

on his 1,500-page report.

cial spoke on condition of

because

anonymity

questions about how US in-

Duelfer report raises new

ings of Duelfer's predecessor, David Kay, and undercuts the main Bush adminisimproved missiles. But none tration argument for war. A weapons inspection team that at one point included the Scud missiles the 1,500 members conducting tions did uncover evidence that Iraq wanted to develop leged Saddam was hoarding field searches, document ex aminations and interrogaadministration has been found. of th Bush

weapons stockpiles or pro-

The search began during US troops have uncovered a handful of decaying mustard gas shells but no evidence of the US and coalition invasion in March and April 2003.

duction capability, such as pons trailers cited by Secrefailure to find proof of the war allegations has become a cuss the report in detail. But the mobile biological wea tary of State Colin Powell in a pre-war presentation to the thorny campaign issue for the Bush White House. White House spokesman Scott McClellan declined to disure of Saddam's clandestine Bush administration's prehe said on Tuesday that al though no stockpiles of ch-WMDs were found, the report paints a damning picefforts to prepare to revive his weapons programmes UN Security Council.

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

7 OCT 2004

Arafat declares emergency

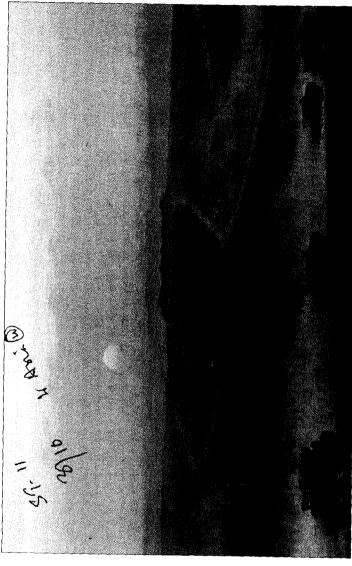
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ENCIES

JERUSALEM, Oct. 2. – A state of emergency has been declared by Palestinian Authority at the latest onslaught by Israeli defence forces that left over 50 Palesinians dead and more than 100 initials.

than 100 injured.
Four Palestinian militants from the Hamas ad Al-Aqsa Brigades, affiliated to Mr Arafat's Fatah, carrying Kalashnikov rifles were shot dead today by Israeli forces when they crossed the Israeli border with Gaza under a thick fog near the Nahal Oz area in the western Negev, the Israeli army said

PA chairman demanded an immediate end to the "mon-strous, criminal and inhubased headquarters where the mane attacks" by Israel on the people. "I call on the entire The Palestinian leadership Mr Yasser Arafat's Ramallah of the West Bank and Gaza held an emergency meeting at world to act immediately... to stop the racist and criminal (attacks)," he said Residents gy to deal with the mounting Israeli offensive. Mr Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction has Minister Mr Ahmed Qorei for mercial strike as the cabinet was busy chalking out stratecalled for the sacking of Pime taking a trip to Jordan during have declared a general com



Israeli armoured personnel carriers roll into the Gaza Strip on Saturday. — AFP

Seven Palestinians killed in Gaza

JERUSALEM, Oct. 2. — Four members of a Palestinian commando squad were shot dead this morning by troops after managing to infiltrate Israel from the Gaza Strip, the Israel military said, bringing to seven the number of Palestinians killed since the early hours.

The militants had managed to penetrate several hundred metres past the Karni cross-

tary said. They were preparing to carry out an attack on an Israeli town in the area before being spotted and killed. Only a few minutes earlier, Palestinian security sources reported that a Palestinian was killed by Israeli gunfire early today at Rafah in southern Gaza.

Two more Palestinians were killed today when a rocket fired by an Israeli helicopter slammed into their vehicle in the Gaza Strip. Seven others were wounded. — AFP

ing point between Gaza and Israel, taking advantage of the early morning fog, the mili-

the Israeli raids

Israel goes on Gaza offensive with tanks

Associated Press KNV Gaza City, October 1

ge-scale military operation - dubbed "Days of Peni-VEHICLES massed on Gaza's border on Friday after Israel's securi ty Cabinet approved a lartence" — to stop Palestinian rocket fire. ARMOURED

Mofaz had ordered troops to id, after a Hamas rocket killed two children, ages two avy fighting between troops and Palestinian gunmen in town. The Cabinet approved the offensive late on Thursthe Jebaliya refugee camp, the Palestinians' largest and Defence Minister Shaul "exact a price" from the militants, security officials saand four, in an Israeli border day, at the end of a day of he most densely populated

and 17 wounded in two mis-In bloodshed on Friday, five Palestinians were killed sile strikes in Jebaliya. The army said troops fired at one group of militants planting explosives and another set

sraeli policemen stand guard as Palestinians pray outside Jerusalem's Old City on Friday.

On Thursday, 28 Palestinians were killed and 139 wouiya. It was the highest single-day toll in fighting in 30 months. In violence elsewhnded, most of them in Jeba ting up a rocket launcher.

fire, but stopped short of officials said the operation calling up reserves. Israeli would be open-ended. ere in Gaza that day, two Isr-Sharon told the security Cabinet that he was deteraeli soldiers and a settler were killed by Palestinian fire. Prime Minister Ariel

"What can we do," a participant quoted Sharon as saying. "The Jews, too,

mined to stop the rocket

200 tanks, armored personnel carriers and bulldozers assembled along Israel's border north and east of makeshift camps, apparent-On Friday morning, some Gaza. Troops were setting up tended operation. Some offily in preparation for an exhave a right to live."

Hospital overwhelmed

cers were going over maps.

medics rushed in with more tables, as gency treatment at two Frantic doctors tended to seen since the beginning of the intefadeh," said ambulance driver Ahmed Abu Sal, one of the first to evacuate casualties after an Israeli tank shell was fired at bystanders. Many of the patients on a blood-smeared hospital floor and operated wounded and mangled bod ies. "This sight I haven" a group of gunmen near Je baliya's market, but also hit wounded were given emer small clinics in Jebaliya. cafeteria

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES 2 OCT 2004

TURKEY'S EUROPEAN ASPIRAT

WITH TURKEY UNDERTAKING reforms in several spheres in order to fulfil the criteria for admission to the European Union, the West is confronted with an intriguing problem. Membership talks could begin by the middle of 2005 if the positive report on Ankara's efforts at compliance that is likely to be presented by the European Commission next month is endorsed at the EU summit in January. However, the general feeling among the 25 countries that constitute the continental body is that the negotiations will drag on for at least a decade. A number of hurdles need to be overcome before a relatively large and backward country can be integrated into a set-up that has been the preserve of the prosperous since inception. While the Turks are aware of this reality, they also believe they have been unfairly treated all along. As a member of almost every other pan-continental body including the Council of Europe and NATO, Turkey had a claim to preferential treatment. Instead, the application that Ankara submitted in 1987 was not considered by the European Union until 1999 even as a host of other countries, including several members of the former Soviet bloc, were granted membership. The Turks complain that they are being held to a different standard since several new entrants barely qualify as marketfriendly, liberal democracies. Turkey believes, with good reason, that it is being singled out because it is a Muslim-majority country. The E.U. will have to overcome its own prejudices and recognise that a Turkish government, run by a party that has Islamist roots, has taken bold measures to promote democracy and the rule of

Turkey recently carried out an overhaul of its penal code to provide better protection for the rights of women and detenus. In the process, the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan dropped a controversial plan to make adultery a criminal offence and deleted several other provisions that discriminated against women. The new code could also create a healthier human rights environment in the country since it imposes harsh punishments on officials who torture prisoners. Apart from the revamp of the criminal laws, the Turkish Government also met some of the longstanding demands of the Kurd minority. Ankara annulled regulations that prohibited the Kurds from imparting education in their own language, and state-run television now runs programmes in Kurdish. The Constitution was amended to bring the once-dominant military under the control of civilian authorities but, given Turkey's history, this still appears to be work in progress. After decades of instability the political system appears to have settled down. Elections are held with regularity; political parties have ceased to resort to extra-constitutional measures when they lose power; parliamentary debates are lively; and, the press is free. With the Erdogan Government also accepting the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund, the European Union has little cause to complain that Turkey is not making the required effort.

In the current international context, Turkey's entry into the E.U. can be posited as a necessity. European countries claim, with more plausibility than the United States, that the worldwide campaign against terror is not directed against any religious community but is intended to protect liberal societies from the forces of fundamentalist authoritarianism. This claim will be belied if the E.U. were to deny or unduly delay the grant of membership to a Muslim-majority country that is actively trying to liberalise. The Europeans have the right to insist that Turkey must crack down on the incipient fundamentalist movement within its borders. However, that movement will only gather strength if the E.U. is perceived to be holding back on its promises.

Israeli troops enter West Bank hospital Associated Press Jenin, September 27 Gaza air strike kills militant

ISRAELI TROOPS hunting militants raided a West Bank hospital on Monday, searching rooms and calling on fugitives over loudspeakers to surrender, but they left without making any arrests, witnesses said.

In the Gaza Strip, three Palestinians were killed by army fire, including two militants and a civilian who stood at the gate of a school when he was hit.

Dozens of Israeli armoured vehicles raided the West Bank town of Jenin before dawn on Monday. Troops took over buildings, including a school and a government office, and exchanged fire with gunmen. Eight Palestinians were wounded, hospital officials said.

After dawn, troops entered the private Al Arazi Hospital, the army said, confirming Palestinian witness reports. Yehiyeh Alan, who lives near the hospital, said he saw a fire-

AN ISRAELI helicopter fired a missile at a vehicle travelling in the southern Gaza Strip on Monday, killing a Palestinian militant and wounding three other people, Palestinian medical officials said. Mohammed Abu Nasira, a local militant leader and the target of the attack, was rushed to a hospital in critical condition, the

officials said. A second militant, Ali Al Shaer, 26, was killed, hospital officials said. Abu Nasira is the local commander of the Popular Resistance Committees, an umbrella group of militant organisations that has claimed responsibility for two bombing attacks on Israeli tanks. Al Shaer also belonged to the group.

AP. Gaza City

fight outside the hospital.

Hospital director Talal Khamad said soldiers ran through hallways and searched rooms for fugitives, damaging equipment and cabinets. Soldiers left without finding fugitives, witnesses said.

In other operations, the army imposed curfews on two refugee camps adjacent to the West Bank city of Nablus and sealed off all ex-

its, witnesses said. In the Gaza Strip, Israeli soldiers fired machine guns toward the Khan Younis refugee camp, Palestinian security officials said. A 55-year-old civilian was killed as he stood at the gate of a local school, the officials said. Israeli military officials said the army was investigating the incident, but said the only shooting in the area was at a Palestinian who appeared to be planting a bomb.

In the nearby Rafah refugee camp, five Palestinians, including four children ages 9-15, were injured by Israeli army fire, hospital officials said.

Also in Gaza, troops killed two armed Palestinians near the Jebaliya refugee camp, the army said. The militants, who were carrying explosives, were crawling in a no-go zone near the border fence with Israel when soldiers opened fire, the army said.

Palestinian militants fired several rockets at the Israeli border town of Sderot, and one hit a house, paramedics said.



A Palestinian woman throws sand at an Israeli soldier near the West Bank village of Beit Awwa on Monday.

By Batuk Gathani Western The Prime There are no more obstater of Turkey, Recep Tay-cles on the table now," the clude several conditions that posed criminalisation of a ground in the background of a controversy about the part of Turkey and the passed criminalisation of a clude and the posed criminalisation of a clude and the clude and the posed criminalisation of a clude and the clude

BRUSSELS, SEPT. 23. The Prime

Minister of Turkey, Recep Tay-yip Erdogan, was today en-gaged in a "public relations and damage limitation" exer-On October 6, the European Commission will give a ruling on the pace and scope of recise, as he met several officials of the European Commission to address European reservations regarding his country's entry into the European Union. forms initiated by Turkey to meet the criteria for admission to the E.U.

Guarantees given

Turkey gave human rights nould begin membership guarantees that set the stage or a recommendation that it ks with the E.U., the top E.U.

Turkey would have to meet on wide-ranging issues covering human rights and economic

today in the Wall Street Jour-nal, the Prime Minister of A contentious issue liberalisation. Turkey must fulfill to enable E.U. Enlargement Commissioner, Guenter Verheugen, said after a one-hour meeting the European Commission to with Mr. Erdogan. "There are no further conditions that tion" about when to begin the make a clear recommenda-

its predominantly Muslim population, should be admitted to the E.U., asking: "Do we the riverbed of secularism?" The issue of Turkey's admittance to the E.U. is a highly emotional one that has divid-France, Jean Pierre Raftering, wonders whether Turkey, with want the river of Islam to enter ed the member states. The criteria are based on a prospective member state's record of initiating and consolidating multi-party democracy, governance by rule of law and economic prosperity based on principles of free market economy. The 25 E.U. countries are to vote in December on Turkey's entry, on the recommenda

sion in the background of the vage Turkey's hope of admiscontroversy about the proposed criminalisation of adul-Parliament.

has demanded a revised penal Though the legislation has now been shelved, the issue has split Mr. Erdogan's cabicode and has suggested the The European Commission scrapping of the controversia bill which would make "adulnet, rattled Turkish financial markets and raised questions tery a criminal offence.' about the Premier's political In an interview published

doubts about the secular cre-The issue has also raised which remains deeply divided over ethical and religious isdentials of the Turkish society, and ethical judgment.

Erdogan hopes to sal-

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THE HINDU 2 A SEP 200A

AND SE Gual guilt, unequal treatment

NO persuade Iran to forgo nuclear wea-pons is a laudable ar matches are lying ar-ound, the more the chanby being stolen or sold to objective. The more nuclethe black market. But for ces of them being used either through political ineptitude in a crisis or more likely by accident or the USA, Britain and France to insist on it is, to say the least, hypocritical.

heart of one of the most neighbourhoods. Why shouldn't it these western powers have Iran is situated in the have a deterrent too, since argued so convincingly for decades that nuclear deterrence keeps the peace and themselves maintain nuclear armouries long afded? Double standards neter the Cold War has enver got anyone anywhere. dangerous

And where is the source years, feel so nervous that clear road? If Saddam clear ambitions used to be of the threat that makes Iran, a country that has never started a war in 200 must now take the nu-Hussein's Iraq with its nuone reason the other is certainly Israel, the country that hard liners in the USA are encouraging to launch pre-emptive

against Iran's nuclear industry before bombs are made.

The USA refuses to acknowledge formally that Israel has nuclear weaficials will tell you privately pons, even though top ofworld view

it has 200. Until this is openly acknowledged the rance are probably wasting their time trying to persuade Iran to forgo USA, Britain and for the goose is nuclear weapons sauce that is good good for the gandevelopment. The

an even more dangerous It is a beleaguered nation neighbourhood than Iran. under constant threat of combined muscle of its being eliminated by The supposition is that Israel lives in Arab opponents.

But this argument simply doesn't stand up. There is states have invested the no evidence that the Arab necessary to human and resources financial

t. But, as Professor Zeev has argued in University's countries keep to their treaty obligations. Egypt did not violate its peace treaty with Israel when the latter launched an unprovoked attack on Syria and Lebanon in 1982. Šyria did disengagement agreement with Israel even when its their treaty commitments when the al-Aqsa intifada not violate the May 1974 Jordan and Syria violate broke out in September forces were under Israel attack. Nor did Egypt Harvard Maoz

of its GNP in 1974 to a Egypt has reduced its defence spending from 22 per cent per cent to 6.7 per cent. The combined defence mere 2.75 per cent in 2002, Syria's has fallen from 26 Syria, Jordan and Lebanon expenditures of Egypt, amount to only 58 per cent of Israel's. Indeed the shoe is on the other foot - it treaty with Israel, i the North Vietnamese knew during the Vietnam nuclear their supposed deterrence effect. The Arabs knew, as would not dare to use its ganda always raises the War, that their opponent argument of the need to be Israeli pro bomb propa

worried by Israel's might. able and and Syria, sensing Israel's nuclear armed in case one guard is down, revert to day an opportunistic Egypı

hostility and participate in a joint Arab attack against International Security, these 2000

Since its 1979 peace the Arabs who should be Israel's nuclear weapons are both politically unusmilitarily irrele-

vant, given the real threats very effective in allowing countries as diverse as Argentina, North Korea it faces. But they have been India, Pakistan, Libya South Africa, Brazil and now Iran to think they too have good reason to build a nuclear deterrent Africa, South

nuclear weapons factories that four of these countries means that nuclear policies have now dismantled their way to go with Iran is to add This may require a grand are not cast in stone. The nothing to its security, just as they don't to Israel's. bargain, which would mean the USA offering a mutual Monetary Fund and allowing American investment in Iran, particularly in its mean too the USA coming armoury and engaging in a prove to its leadership than non-aggression pact, ending its embargo over access clean about Israel's nuclear vigorous effort to persuade International petroleum sector. It would Israel to forgo its nuclear nuclear weapons will deterrent.

If the Western powers want to grasp the nettle of nuclear proliferation, they need to take hold of the whole plant, not just one



And the corollary of this is fight a war that would be there is not one bit of eviweapons have deterred the Arabs from more limited catastrophic for Israel dence that Israel's nuclear wars or from the local Palestinian intifadas and

nuclear weapons.

suicide bombers. Nor have towards making they influenced Arab attipeace. In fact, in both the tudes

However, the very fact

their old stance of total

planes strike Hamas camp, 14 massacre

Gaza, September 7

ISRAELI TANKS, helicopters and warplanes have pounded a Hamas training camp, killing 14 militants in the deadliest attack in Gaza for nearly four months, as Israel strikes back after a double suicide bombing.

A barrage of tank shells and missiles on Tuesday struck a militant training base in the town of Shijaia, a stronghold of Hamas, the Palestinian faction behind nearly simultaneous blasts that killed 16 people on two Israeli buses in Beersheba

in the strike were being trained by Hamas' military wing in guerrilla-tactics at a soccer field used at night as training base for mili-Fhe 14 Palestinians killed a training base tants, locals said.

many of them militants in ering their faces. More than Gaza's main hospital was overwhelmed by casualties, camouflage with masks cov-20 people, including severa bystanders, were injured medical officials said.

"This ugly Israeli crime ... will flot pass unpunishted," Hamas spokesman Mushir al-Masri said. "It is an open war between the Zionwill not pass unpunish ists and us.

attacks in the Jewish state in nearly six months. were members of the militant group which is sworn to Israel's destruction.

The growing spiral of violence could further compli-Hamas said all 14 dead

Tanks stationed at the Nahal Oz border crossing between Israel and Gaza opened fire on Shijaia, a submidnight and warplanes urb of Gaza City, just after helicopters launched missiles, witnesses said. and draw troops and settlers from the occupied Gaza Strcate Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to with ip by the end of 2005. Militants are determined

death toll in the coastal en

The Israeli military said rgeted a training field during in a statement that it had "taists". It said Hamas members had been learning to make training of Hamas terror suicide belts, plant explosi ves, launch rockets, infiltrate Jewish settlements and kidnap soldiers and civilians. to claim any Israeli pullout as a victory, but the army factions first. Israeli leaders have pledged harsh reprisals, including the resumpsinate Hamas leaders, in rehas vowed to smash armed tion of a campaign to assas

Hamas wherever we can find it," Raanan Gissin, a The Israeli strike inflict ed the highest single-day spokesman for Sharon said

in raids in Gaza City and Crowding the bloodied tal, hundreds of Islamic *lahu Akhbar*" (God is greatmilitants carried their dead halls of Gaza's Shifa Hospi comrades aloft crying "Al the southern Gaza Strip.

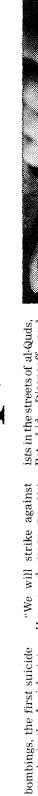
"The enemy will pay for its crimes with a heavy price of blood and bodies of Zionest) and vowing revenge

store calm

Bet Lid, Dizengoff and Hadera," the Islamic Jihad past suicide bombings. Angry militants in Gaza referring to the targets of group said in a statement,

Jewish settlements in the coastal strip. One man was slightly hurt when a rocket landed in Israel. Palestinian Gaza a "terrorist attack by Israeli occupation forces," and accusing Israel of try-ing to thwart efforts to refired crude rockets and mortar shells into Israel and Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath issued a statement branding the Israeli attack in clave since May 12, when troops killed 15 Palestinians





THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

Israel to speed up barrier after blasts

Agence France-Presse Beersheva, September 1

ISRAEL VOWED a global pursuit of Hamas leaders and to accelerate construction of its West Bank barrier after the deadliest Palestinian attack in nearly a year.

As soldiers demolished the family home of one of the two Hamas bombers, a senior government source said that its battle against the Islamist group and its leadership would not be constrained by geographical borders.

The source said that Tuesday's bombings, which left 16 people dead as well as the two bombers in the southern desert city of Beersheva, bore the fingerprints of Hamas' Damascus-based leaders. "There will be a continuation of our targeted operations against the heads of Hamas," the source said.

"There will be no geographical barrier in



REUTERS

A woman on Wednesday mourns her daughter who was killed during Tuesday's twin bus blasts in Beersheba

pursuing the terrorists and their leadership. Any place they are, there will be no immuni-ty." "It's Damascus that's calling the shots,

the orders are coming from there." The attacks in Beersheva were the deadliest since a suicide bombing in a restaurant in the northern port city of Haifa last October, which left 21 people and the female bomber dead. Israel responded to that attack, carried out by smaller Islamic Jihad organisation, with an air strike on an alleged Palestinian militant training camp deep inside Syria.

Hamas has said that the Beersheva bombings, carried out by two members of its armed wing from the southern West Bank city of Hebron, were in response to the assassination of two of its leaders earlier this year. Since the death of the movement's spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and his successor Abdelaziz Rantissi, who were both killed in Israeli air strikes in Gaza City, the movement's Damascus-based politburo chief Khaled Meshaal has emerged as the undisputed leader.

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

P GOA

Israel on red alert after blast Echoing Palestinian anger, Korei condemns Arafat's Fatah rebels

Agence France-Presse Jerusalem, August 12

ISRAELI SECURITY forces remained on a heightened state of alert and sealed off the northern West Bank town of Jenin on Thursday, following a botched Palestinian bombing at a checkpoint close to Jerusalem. We're maintaining the state of alert because of the risk of an attack and as we continue our search to track down all the terrorists", Jerusalem police chief Ilan Franco told reporters.

Police reinforced roadblocks around the disputed holy city and were preventing all Palestinians from travelling beyond the Ar-Ram checkpoint at the northern entrance to annexed east Jerusalem.

Two Palestinian civilians were killed and 18 people were wounded, including six Israeli border guards, in Wednesday's attack at a temporary roadblock near the Palestinian refugee camp of Qalandiya. The roadblock had been erected following intelligence that militants were planning an attack in the heart of Jerusalem.
Al-Aqsa Martyrs Briga-

des, an armed offshoot of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for the attack, which was criticised on Thursday by Palestinian premier Ahmed Korei. "This kind of operation runs counter to the inter-



The body of a victim of Wednesday's car bomb blast in Jerusalem being carried by relatives in front of the golden Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem's Old City during his funeral on Thursday.

ests of the Palestinian people", Korei told reporters at his West Bank offices after a meeting with a five US Congressmen.

But Korei also said Israel must take a share of responsibility for the attack for its continued "incursions and assassinations" which prompted militants to take their revenge.

It is thought that the blast was triggered by remote

control when the bomber, noticing the increased police presence, left it on the side of the road and fled. One suspect from the northern West Bank has been ar-

Military radio reported that the army had sur-rounded the northern West Bank town of Jenin, the stronghold of the Al-Aqsa Brigades. Six of the injured were border policemen,

three of whom were said to be still in a critical condition in hospital. The blast went off in an area where Israel's West Bank barrier is due to be built, but construction has been temporarily suspended after an Israeli court order.

Meanwhile, an Israeli soldier was critically wounded on Thursday in an opera-tion in the southern Gaza Strip in which army bulldozers demolished 15 houses. Dozens of Palestinians, some of them armed, on Thursday occupied the local government offices in a Gaza refugee camp, de-manding assistance following a series of home demolitions by the Israeli army. The seizure was the latest sign of growing lawlessness in the Gaza Strip ahead of Israel's planned withdrawal from the area next year.

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES 13 4111. 2000

Israel reroutes wall closer to cease-fire line

JERUSALEM, JULY 28. Israel's Defence Ministry has mapped out a new route for the separation wall in the West Bank that obeys a Supreme Court order to reduce hardships for Palestinians and runs closer to the Israel's 1967 border, officials said.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, insisted he would go ahead with his plan to pull soldiers and settlers out of the Gaza Strip, despite a huge demonstration against the plan on Sunday, Mr. Sharon's office said in a statement.

"I decided to proceed with the disengagement plan because it is clear that Israel cannot remain in the Gaza Strip forever," Mr. Sharon said. His plan calls for evacuating the

JERUSALEM, JULY 28. Israel's Defence Ministry has mapped out a new route for the separation his own Likud Party oppose.

8,000 settlers from Gaza next year, which many members of his own Likud Party oppose.

A senior American envoy, Elliot Abrams, is to visit Israel next week to discuss Mr. Sharon's "unilateral disengagement" plan, U.S. officials said.

Sharon to approve plan

Elements of the new route for the barrier will be presented this week to Mr. Sharon and the Defence Minister, Shaul Mofaz, for their approval, security officials said. Details of the new map were not available, but the officials said it would run much closer to the internationally-recognised cease-fire line of 1967 than originally planned.

The decision to redraw the Mr. Erekat said. — AP

route was in line with an order by the Israeli Supreme Court last month to make the barrier less disruptive to Palestinians. But it ignored a ruling by the International Court of Justice—the U.N.'s highest judicial body—that the barrier was illegal and must be completely torn down.

'Changes inadequate'

The Palestinian Cabinet Minister, Saeb Erekat, said the new changes were inadequate. The barrier should adhere to the 1967 border, allowing Palestinians control over east Jerusalem, he said.

"In Jerusalem, Israel should put the wall on the Green Line," Mr. Erekat said. — AP

2 9 11 mm

THE HINDU

Raids continue, but Arafat denies crisis

Associated Press Gaza, July 25

MILITANTS RAIDED a Palestinian police station and a local government office, as unrest in the Gaza Strip went into a second week despite efforts by Yasser Arafat to defuse mounting discontent with his grip on power. Arafat, in his first public appearance since the outbreak of demonstrations against his regime, on Saturday denied he is facing a crisis and renewed his pledge to give more authority to his prime minister.

But the continuing violence in Gaza signaled skepticism over Arafat's promise of reforms, and there was no indication that his standoff with Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia and the Palestinian Cabinet was coming to an end.

'No, no, there is no crisis," said Arafat, facing a bank of microphones after meeting Arab diplomats in his headquarters. "There is no problem over the interior minister. There is a proposal by the Palestinian Legislative Council to carry out some changes within the Cabinet, and we gave our approval for such changes,' he said. In the northern Gaza Strip. Israeli troops entered the centre of the town of Beit Hanoun at dawn on Sunday, apparently widening an operation begun last month to stop rocket fire into nearby Israeli areas, witnesses said.

Israeli attack helicopters shot machine gun fire to cover the troops, witnesses said. One Palestinian was shot in the chest and seriously injured but the army would not let an



Israeli soldiers atop an armoured vehicle leave the Palestinian town of Beit Hanuon after an army operation on Sunday.

Israeli missile strike adds to Gaza tension

AN ISRAELI helicopter fired missiles at the home of a suspected militant in Gaza on Sunday, wounding at least four people and adding to tension in the territory.

A helicopter fired at least two missiles into a building in Gaza City's Zeitoun neighbourhood that residents said was the home of a militant from the Islamic Hamas group. The apparent target, Abu Malik Jindiah, escaped unhurt. But four bystanders were wounded, medics said. The explosions tore apart the building.

AP, Gaza

ambulance evacuate him to a hospital, paramedics said. The army did not immediately comment on the incident.

The troops took over high-rise buildings and set snipers up on their rooftops. Armoured bulldozers cleared roads between the centre and the outlying farming areas. The expansion of the operation meant most of the town of 32,000 Palestinians had been taken over by the army.

The army did not immediately comment on the widening of the operation. Troops have been searching for militants responsible for rocket fire into Israeli towns bordering the Gaza Strip since late last month.

The barrages have increased in recent weeks, although few Israelis have been injured.

Meanwhile, an Israeli Cabinet minister had on Saturday warned that Jewish extremists opposed to an Israeli plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank could attack the revered Al-Aqsa mosque complex in Jerusalem, in a bid to provoke an Islamic backlash that would torpedo the pullout program.

"We feel that the level of the threat to the Temple Mount, in the sense of an attack by extremist Jewish fanatics in order to reshuffle the cards, to be a catalyst for change to the whole political process, has risen in recent months, or weeks, higher than it has ever been in the past," Public Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi told Israel's Channel Two television.

The Al-Aqsa compound stands on what Jews know as Temple Mount, the site of the biblical Temple, which is Judaism's most sacred shrine. Some Jews believe that destroying the mosques and rebuilding the ruined Temple will bring about the coming of the messiah.

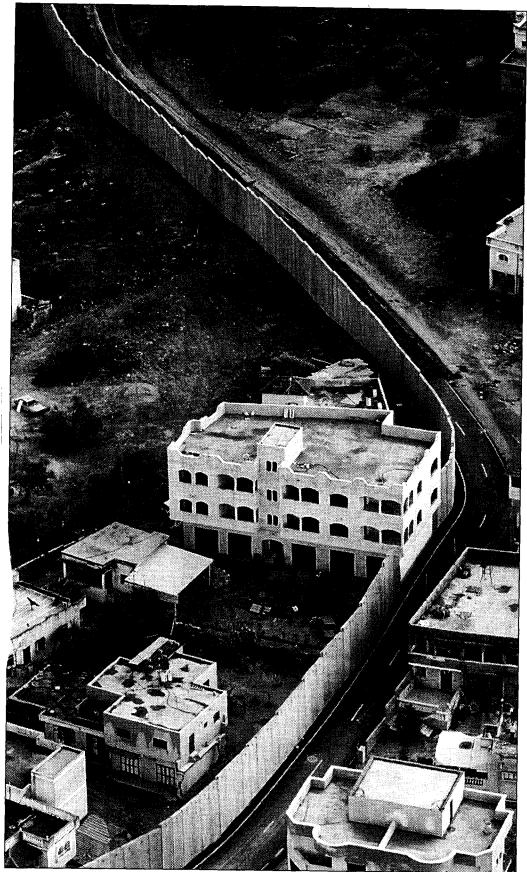
Hanegbi said that although he had no knowledge of any specific plot to attack the Al-Aqsa compound — the third holiest shrine in Islam — intelligence assessments said the danger of such an action was growing.

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THE MALE STATE OF

27 29 2004

Palestinian cement for Israel barrier



An aerial view of the concrete wall, part of Israel's controversial security barrier, which separates the West Bank from Israel, in Baqa el Gharbiya. (Reuters)

INIGO GILMORE

Jerusalem, July 25: Palestinian businessmen have made millions of pounds supplying cement for Israel's "security barrier" in the full knowledge of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader and one of the wall's most vocal critics.

A damning report by Palestinian legislators, which has been seen by *The Daily Telegraph*, concludes that Arafat did nothing to stop the deals although he publicly condemned the structure as a "crime against humanity".

The report claims that the cement was sold with the knowledge of senior officials at the Palestinian ministry of national economy, and close advisers to Arafat. It concludes that officials were bribed to issue import licences for the cement to importers and businessmen working for Israelis.

One of the report's three authors, Hassan Khreishe — an independent legislator and long-term critic of Arafat — last night called for the Palestinian cabinet to resign.

"Wealthy Palestinians with connections at the highest levels have been making millions helping Israel build this wall while Arafat and the Palestinian Authority have been urging people to fight against it," said Khreishe, a council member from the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

"Why Arafat did nothing about it, we just don't know. These people are traitors who have brought shame on us, and they should be punished."

An official in Arafat's office said: "We will not comment because this file has been closed and it is now in the hands of the attorney general."

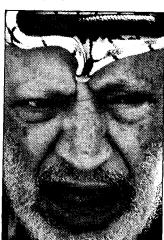
Growing resistance to corruption in the Palestinian Authority is posing the most serious internal challenge to Arafat's leadership. Last week, gunmen staged a number of kidnappings and attacks on security buildings in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Thousands of Palestinians demonstrated about high-level corruption and the appointment of Arafat's cousin, Moussa Arafat, as security chief in the Gaza Strip.

The report reveals that the cement originally came from

Egyptian companies which supplied it at a huge discount of \$22 stindillow a tonne to help rebuild dilapidated Palestinian houses or buildings bulldozed by the Israelis.

Between September 2003 and March this year, 420,000 tonnes of cement were allegedly sent to three big Palestinian companies. According to the report, however, only 33,000 tonnes were sold in the Palestinian market. The vast bulk was transported to Israel on trucks owned by the three firms. According to Khreishe, the cement was then sold with a mark-up of at least \$15 a tonne — and possibly as high as \$100 — making profits of well over \$6 million (£3.4 million) for company executives.



Yasser Arafat: Wall of woe

The Legislative Council launched an investigation after Egyptian journalists stumbled upon business links between a German Jewish businessman and the Palestinian companies.

According to the report, on November 9 last year a letter was sent to Arafat by the Palestinian Authority comptroller, revealing that open-ended import licences for the cement had been signed by Maher al-Masri, the economy minister.

The Palestinian Authority comptroller asserted in the letter that the cement was destined for the wall. The letter was allegedly received and seen by Arafat on the same day that he urged people to demonstrate on the first international "Day against the Wall". According to Khreishe, Arafat took no action to stop further imports, which continued for another five months.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

W. BANK BARRIER / U.N. RESOLUTION

An inalienable right, says

JERUSALEM, JULY 21. Israel today vowed that it would go ahead with building the West Bank separation fence, disregarding the U.N. General Assembly's overwhelming adoption of a resolution condemning the construction of the barrier. "The building of the fence will go on" said a senior adviser to the Prime Minister, Ariel Sha-

"Israel will not stop building it or abdicate its inalienable right to self-defence," he said.

Israeli officials said that as far as Tel Aviv was concerned, France played a devastating role in rallying support for the draft among E.U. nations. Britain and Italy, however, objected to the draft and demanded changes.

The resolution demands that Israel comply with the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and bring down the fence constructed on Palestinian land and pay compensation to those whose life was affected by the move.

The Assembly's vote, like The Hague ruling, is not legally binding, but carries symbolic weight and can be diplomatically debitating. "Thank God that the late of Israel and of the Jewish people is not decided in this hall," said the Israeli Ambassador to U.N., Dan Gillerman, after the vote. "This resolution cannot but embolden those

who are the true enemies of the Israeli and Palestinian people," he said. Calling the resolution "one-sided and totally counterproductive," Mr. Gillerman said the construction of the barrier would continue in compliance with international law as decided by Israel's Supreme Court, local media reported.

"It is simply outrageous to respond with such vigour to a measure that saves lives and respond with such casual indifference and apathy to the ongoing campaign of Palestinian terrorism that takes lives. This is not justice but a perversion of justice," he was quoted as saying.

The Deputy Chief of Israel's U.N. mission, Arye Mekel, said Israel was very sorry that the E.U. nations surrendered to the Palestinian dictate. It would be difficult to see how the Europeans could fulfil any part in the peace process after yesterday's vote, he said.

The Palestinian U.N. observer, Nasser al-Kidwa, welcomed the vote as "a historic development. This indeed could be the most important resolution of the General Assembly since the adoption of Resolution 181 of 1947," he was quoted as saying.

The 1947 resolution had called for the partition of British administered Palestine into independent Jewish and Arab states. — PTI

THE HINDU

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Palestinian PM to stay on

Associated Press Ramallah (West Bank), July 20

PRIME MINISTER Ahmed Korei withdrew his resignation at Yasser Arafat's insistence on Tuesday, a Cabinet minister said, ending a political crisis in the Palestinian government. Korei told his Cabinet he had agreed to stay on the job, but he was clearly angry at the Cabinet's limited authority and said he saw himself only as a caretaker Prime Minister.
Korei "told Arafat that his gov-

ernment must have real authority, especially over the security branches in order for it to be effective", said Qadoura Fares, a minister without portfolio.

The Prime Minister left the meeting from a back door of Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah to avoid speaking to reporters. Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, attended the meeting but made no comment afterwards.

The Cabinet crisis exploded after a series of kidnappings and violent demonstrations in Gaza last week, followed by Arafat's reshuffle of top security posts. He appointed his widely disliked cousin, Moussa Arafat, to the top security job in Gaza.

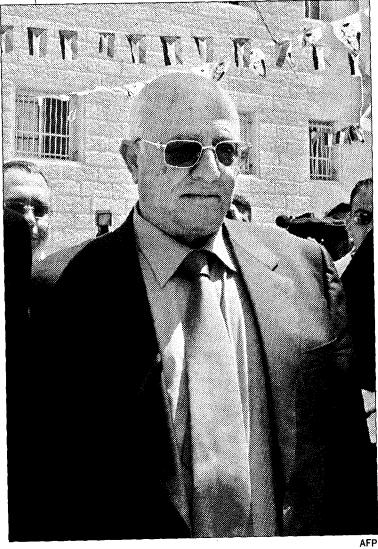
The Prime Minister submitted resignation on Saturday, protesting against the upheaval in Gaza and the disorder in the Pales tinian security services. On Monday, Arafat reinstated the officer his relative replaced Razek al Majaide — but retained Moussa Arafat in a powerful position, satisfying some of his critics but infuriating others.

As the Palestinian leader tried to defuse the tension, Israeli missiles struck a Gaza militants' safe house, wounding five, a spok-esman for a Palestinian group said. The two air strikes, one on Monday afternoon and the second after midnight, targeted the same house in the Shati refugee camp next to Gaza City on the Mediterranean beach, said witnesses and a spokesman for the Popular Resistance Committee.

Spokesman Abu Abir said the house was used by Abed Quka, the group's leader in northern Gaza. He was wounded in the first attack.

The Israeli military declined to comment on either air strike. Dur ing four years of conflict, Israeli helicopters have targeted dozens of Palestinian buildings and vehicles in Gaza, aiming for militants.

The Popular Resistance Com-



BACK TO WORK: Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Korei arrives for the Cabinet meeting in Ramallah, West Bank, on Tuesday.

Israel, Lebanon ultras exchange fire

THE ISRAELI forces and Lebanese Hizbollah guerrillas traded fire on the border on Tuesday, a day after a Hizbollah official was killed in a bomb blast in Beirut that the group blamed on Israel. The Israeli army said the incident began when snipers at a Hizbollah base near the border opened fire at an Israeli military position in the western Galilee, causing no casualties. An army spokeswoman said troops returned fire and hit the Hizbollah base. An Israeli military source said helicopter gunships also fired at the Hizbollah position.

In Beirut, Lebanese security sources and Hizbollah's al-Manar tele-In Beirut, Lebanese security sources and Hizbolian's ai-Manar felevision reported that Israeli aircraft fired on the border town of Eita al-Shaab and also into southern Lebanon. Hizbollah played a key role in forcing Israel to end its 22-year occupation of southern Lebanon in May 2000. Hizbollah guerrillas took up positions on the border after the Israeli withdrawal and fighting has flared sporadically since then.

Reuters, Jerusalem

mittee is an umbrella group of militants who left other Palestinian factions. Its militants do not answer to outside authorities and often carry out attacks against their wishes.

Some believe the group was responsible for killing of three

American security guards in a diplomatic convoy in the northern Gaza Strip last October. No arrests have been made in the bombing, and the US government has expressed dissatisfaction with the Palestinian investigation.

Tension in Gaza has also been heightened by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to pull Israeli forces and settlers out of the seaside territory by end-2005 — a 'unilateral disengagement" plan that has rival Palestinian groups jockeying for position.

However, Sharon is having his own problems over the pullout plan. He lost his parliamentary majority because of opposition in his own government to the proposal. Now he is approaching Opposition parties to join his coalition, to

restore stability.

In a second day of talks with Sharon's team, Labour Party representatives said on Monday they want Parliament to quickly approve compensation for settlers who are evacuated — a sign that Sharon is serious about implementing the plan. Labour favours giving up all or most of the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for peace with Palestinians tion opposed by many members of Sharon's own Likud Party.

On Monday, a gunman shot and killed a district court judge in a Tel-Aviv suburb, the police said. Israel's justice minister said it was the first such killing in Israel's history. The 49-year-old judge, identified as Adi Azar, was in his car near his home in Ramat Hasharon when he was shot from close range by a man on a motorcycle, witnesses said. The assailant escaped. The motive for the killing was unclear. The Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the West Bank claimed responsibility, but Lapid said there was nothing to support the claim.



Yasser Arafat

Sharon orders barrier work to continue

Jerusdalem/Bangkok,

spite a World Court ruling consultations some 48 hours dict, a statement from the SRAELI PRIME Minister continue on the West Bank separation barrier dehat it was illegal. The order national Court of Justice delivered its non-binding ver-Ariel Sharon on Sunday or dered that construction wo intra-ministerial after the Hague-based Inter-Prime Minister's office said followed

"Prime Minister Sharon directed that construction of the separation fence continin accordance with the guidelines determined in the high court of justices dethe ICJ's opinion as soon as cision on June 30 and that the struggle against the opiby all diplomatic and legal "Prime Minister Sharon asked Attorney-General Mazuz and Justice Ministry him with a legal analysis of nion of the ICJ be continued representatives to present means", the statement said. possible, as well as recom-

mendations regarding what court ruled late last month the political leadership mi Judges at Israel's highest steps — including legal

"The ruling totally ignores the reason behind the construction of the security barrier which is Palestinian terrorism", he told his min-

The Hamas activist was passing by in a motorbike when the blast took place.

north of Jerusalem because

it infringed the rights of so-

me 35,000 Palestinian inhab tants. But the supreme cou

Annan's plea

build the barrier on security

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that part of the barrier - a

montage of electric fencing, barbed wire and concrete

be rerouted

rt also confirmed in effect government's right to

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Sunday urged Israal to roonant international he had no intention of paying heed to the IC,I derision Sharon had earlier told the weekly Cabinet session

of Justice ruling, declaring a security barrier in the world body make Israel acthe decision of the court is cept an International Court West Bank illegal. "I think clear. Whilst we all accept has a responsibility, and, inthe government of

told reporters. He is in has to be in conformity with international law", Annan Bangkok to attend the opening ceremony of the 15th International AIDS Conference on Sunday law amid demands that the

The world court, based in The Hague, ruled on Friday parrier, which dips deep that the Israeli-constructed into the West Bank in some

> deed, the duty to protect its citizens, any action it takes

to respect the interests of lives of thousands of Palestled. Annan said Israel had tinians, should be disman the Palestinians"

would have to be given to the UN General Assembly and we'll see where it goes from there. I don't want to pre-He said the IJC report The court decision is nonudge what they decide"

Israel said the ICJ had no right to make such a deci binding.

Bomb blast

MILITANTS DETONAT ED a bomb near a Tel Aviv bus stop early Sunday, killing a woman and wounding more than 20 Israeli media said. The explosion shattered a period of relative quiet inside Israel. The Al-Agsa estinian militant group loosely linked to Yasser other people, police and Arafat's Fatah faction, claimed responsibility, saying the attack was in Bank city of Nablus, Israel recently killed the group's top commander in the city "This says we can reach every place, even Martyrs' Brigades, a Pal revenge for Israeli army operations in the West al-Aqsa spokesman said. Palestinian militants of the Popular Resistance Committees at a protest march in Gaza on Sunday during the funeral of three of their comrades and a Hamas militant. The three were killed when their car blew up near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

Rule of law

Israeli court ruling creates new dynamics

The ruling by the Israeli Supreme Court, which held that building a security barrier that cuts across Palestinian farmlands and villages is illegal, is a victory for the rule of law in an area where it is seldom upheld. The barrier that the Israeli army is building separates farmers from their fields, children from schools and patients from hospitals. The Supreme Court's ruling affects only an 18 mile stretch of the wall, affected by litigation from affected Palestinian farmers. A knock-on effect may be expected now. Also, builders of the barrier are likely to take note of the ruling as they construct further stretches. The International Court of Justice at The Hague is also considering the legality of the barrier and may soon come out with a ruling on it. But Israel does not recognise that the international court has jurisdiction, to them the ruling of its own Supreme Court will have more teeth.

The route of the barrier is not only a humanitarian issue, it has deep political implications as the territory falling outside of it is likely to belong to the future Palestinian state. Since President Clinton failed to broker a deal between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and President Arafat, one of the options available to Israel has been to impose a solution unilaterally by building such a barrier. It then becomes all important where it is placed — if it is within 1967 borders it will be accepted by the international community and the Palestinians. But if it annexes large swathes of the West Bank peace is not likely to come. President Bush has muddied the waters further by declaring that Israel has a right to parts of the West Bank. But it is important to note that Prime Minister Sharon, hardliner though he is, has shifted the discourse within Israel by saying that Jewish settlers in the Gaza strip will have to be moved from their settlements, by force if need be. This is a first for any Israeli government. If it cannot have an agreement with Palestinians, the best thing is to apply the same solution to West Bank settlers by moving them within Israel's pre-1967 borders, then build an unbreachable barrier between itself and Palestinian territory.

Israel court orders wall shift

Agencies Jerusalem, June 30

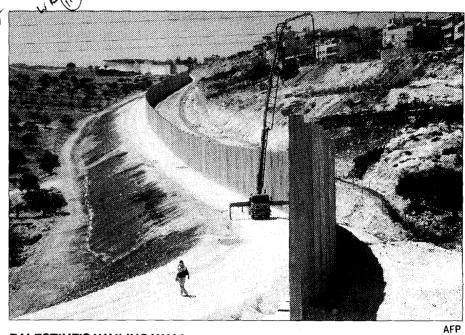
IN A landmark judgement Israel's High Court has ordered changes to the route of the West Bank barrier, saying it is hurting Palestinians. The court said the route around Jerusalem must be changed to reduce hardships, even if that meant less security for Israel. The High Court of Justice ruling affects a 30 km section of the barrier to the northwest of Jerusalem.

The ruling will set a precedent for other legal disputes about the barrier.

Israel says the barrier is necessary to keep out suicide bombers; Palestinians call it a land grab that divides people from their families, jobs and schools.

The decision comes before a non-binding ruling by
the UN's top court on the legality of the controversial
network of fences and walls,
planned to extend for 640 km
through occupied territory.
The International Court of
Justice was asked to examine the issue last December
amid mounting international concern and has said it
will release its findings on 9
July.
The ruling affects a 30 km

The ruling affects a 30 km section of the barrier to the north-west of Jerusalem. The case was launched by Palestinian residents, who said the barrier would disrupt the lives of 45,000 people in 10 villages by cutting them off from farms, schools and jobs.



PALESTINE'S WAILING WALL A Palestinian worker walks past a section of the controversial West Bank concrete barrier in the village of Abu Dis on Wednesday.

The three-judge panel of Israel's highest court decided the government had the right to build the barrier and that construction was permissible on occupied land but that an alternative route was possible.

"The route disrupts the delicate balance between the obligation of the military commander to preserve security and his obligation to provide for the needs of the local inhabitants," said the ruling from Chief Justice Aharon Barak and Justices Mishael Heshin and Eliyahu Matza.

"The route that the military commander establis-

hed for the security fence... injures the local inhabitants in a severe and acute way while violating their rights under humanitarian and international law."

The decision sets a precedent for cases in more than 20 other petitions against sections of the barrier, which have either been built or are planned.

Mohammed Dahla, a lawyer representing the Palestinians hailed what he called a "courageous and very important" decision. "This decision is more important than the one at The Hague because this one will be followed." he said outside

the court.

"It says what we said from the beginning, that the building of the wall as it is being built is illegal and that there is another way to build it that will give security to Israel but won't violate Palestinian rights."

Israel's defence ministry said the ruling would be complied with in full and a new route would be drawn up. Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Korei insisted that the whole barrier should be torn down. "It's a racist separation wall and therefore it should fall. There is no other alternative," he said.

Bush woos Turkey with eye on Iraq

Associated Press

ISTANBUL, June 27. — Hoping to smooth his plans for post-sovereign Iraq with the vital Muslim ally Turkey, Mr George W Bush today sought to bolster ties with the country. The US President's courtship of Turkey, however, is complicated by terrorists' threats to decapitate three Turks unless the country's companies stop aiding US forces in Iraq.

Mr Bush hoped to use a Nato summit here to nail down details of the alliance's tentative plan to assist with the training of Iraqi security forces. But he also was getting a reminder of widespread opposition in Turkey to the war in Iraq, its southern neighbour. More than 40,000 demonstrators, some chanting "USA get out of West Asia" gathered in Istanbul to protest his visit.

Pledging to fight for Turkey's membership in the EU, Mr Bush held out Turkey as a model for West Asia as he met with Prime Minister Mr Recep



Anti-war protesters demonstrate against President Bush's visit to Turkey in Istanbul on Sunday. — AFP

Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara.

"I appreciate so very much the example your country has set on how to be a Muslim country and at the same time a country which embraces democracy and rule of law and freedom," Mr Bush said as he met Mr Erdogan. "I believe you ought to be given a date by the European Union for your

'No compromise with kidnappers'

ANKARA, June 27. - Turkey today refused to negotiate with Iraqi militants threatening to behead three Turkish hostages amid heightened tensions before this week's handover of power. "Turkey will not bow to pressure from terrorists," Turkey's defense minister Mr Vecdi Gonul said in interviews with the private CNN-Turk and TV8 television stations. Al-Jazeera aired a video of the Turkish hostages issued by the kidnappers, showing the three Turks kneeling on the ground in front of two masked gunmen dressed in black and a black banner emblazoned with the name of Al-Zargawi's organization. - AP

eventual acceptance into the bloc," Mr Bush said.

The US President then flew to a meeting with religious leaders in Istanbul. Following the meeting, Mr Bush said: "They (the religious leaders) represent the very best of Turkey, which is a country that is secular in its politics and strong in its faith."

5 6 20 May

Israeli Cabinet nod to Gaza pullout Prime Minister battles to keep coalition afloat

Agencies Jerusalem/Gaza Strip,

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon was facing a battle on Monday to keep his coalition from fracturing and to maintain his majority in Parliament after winning qualified Cabinet approval for his Gaza pullout plan.

In Cairo, meanwhile, preparations ahead of the with-drawal were going ahead with Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom seeking to secure Egypt's cooperation to ensure security once the

evacuation is completed. The Israeli Cabinet voted 14-7 late on Sunday for a revised version of the Prime Minister's so-called disengagement plan that envisages a phased evacuation of all 21 Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip and four others in the northern West Bank. But, under the terms of a compromise solution, no withdrawals will take



REUTERS

Palestinians on Monday carry the body of a wheelchair-bound man, killed by Israeli troops in Ramallah on Sunday

place until March next year at the earliest, while each phase will be subject to separate votes in Cabinet.

Sharon declared after the vote that "the disengagement process has begun" and underlined his intention to

"relocate" the settlements by the end of next year. But the Prime Minister's victory has come at a price. After sacking two members of the hard-Right National Union, he now enjoys the theoretical support of just 62 MPs in

And another coalition partner, the National Religious Party (NRP), could also bolt the government after expressing its fury at Sunday's decision. "The NRP will not put its hand to this programme nor to any government which accepts such a terrible decision. The terrible vision that means the Gaza Strip will be clean of Jews ... will not happen", said hous-ing minister Effi Eitam.

Army radio reported that party leaders held talks on Monday about whether to remain in the government but did not reach a firm decision. Some deputies are also furious that Sharon is pushing ahead with the Gaza plan after it was overwhelmingly rejected in a ballot of party members five weeks ago. But, while their loyalty in parlia-ment can no longer be taken for granted, any attempt to unseat Sharon looks likely to be hampered by a failure to agree on an alternative.

PM, CABINET HAWKS COMPROMISE ON DISMANTLING SETTLEMENTS Sharon's Gaza plan passed

Associated Press

JERUSALEM, June 6. — Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon's government today approved an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in principle, but a lastminute compromise with Cabinet hardliners diluted a historic decision and shrouded the fate of 21 Israeli settlements in Gaza in uncertainty.

The wording of the decision was vague enough to allow both Mr Sharon and rebellious ministers from his Likud Party to claim victory. It deferred a political crisis, but did not resolve the deep divisions within Mr Sharon's centre-right coalition over the dismantling of settle-

In today's Cabinet meeting, ministers were asked to approve a revised version of Mr Sharon's US-backed "disengagement plan", which calls for the gradual

BARGHOUTI SENTENCED

TEL AVIV, June 6. — An Israeli court today sentenced Palestinian uprising leader Marwan Barghouti to five consecutive life terms and 40 vears for his role in attacks that killed four Israelis and a Greek monk — the maximum possible sentence. A defiant Barghouti, seen as a possible successor to Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat, was greeted by applause from his supporters as he walked into the courtroom, dressed in a brown prison uniform. He reiterated that he does not

dismantling of all Gaza settlements and four in the West Bank by the end of 2005. A majority of Israelis backs a withdrawal.

recognize the court's authority.

"The Israeli courts are a

The plan authorises the government to begin preparations for the dismantling of settlements. However,



Marwan Barghouti partner to the Israeli occupation," Barghouti said before the reading of the verdict. "The judges are just like pilots who fly planes and drop bombs." — AP

Likud hardliners attached a disclaimer, insisting that the vote did not amount to approval for removing settlements. However, Mr Sharon said after the meeting that "disengagement has begun".

'The government decided

today that by the end of 2005, Israel will leave Gaza and four settlements in the West Bank," Mr Sharon told a large crowd of Jewish teens visiting Israel.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mr Ahmed Qorei said Palestinians "welcome any Israeli withdrawal from any part of our Palestinian land ... if the withdrawal is tota and comprehensive, which includes dismantling all the settlements.

Other Palestinian officials responded with skepticism "If approving this fragmented plan took the Israeli government this long, I wonder how much time it will take to implement it." said Palestinian Cabinet minister Mr Saeb Erckat.

An Israeli hardliner, housing minister Mr Effie Eitam, who voted against the Prime Minister's plan said that despite the confusing formulations, the vote meant Gaza settlements would be dismantled.

'NO AUTHORITY TO HEAR CASE'

Turkey court scuttles terror trial

Associated Press

ISTANBUL, May 31. — The trial of 69 suspected members of a Turkish Al-Qaida cell charged in a string of suicide bombings opened today, but the court quickly ruled that it did not have the authority to hear the case and that any judgment would have to come from another court.

In May, parliament abolished state security courts like the one hearing this trial, but that order does not come into force for about another month. The reform was approved as part of Turkey's bid to join the European Union.

In a written ruling, the court today said due to the changes it no longer had the authority to hear the case. All 69 defendants, however, must still appear before the court this week on procedural grounds. But the court will not hear their testimony.

Turkish authorities are expected to set up new tribunals in the coming months that will deal with terrorism and other cases.

Today's trial was the first connected with the November suicide bombings in Istanbul that killed 61 people and wounded more than 600. The attackers targeted two synagogues, the British Consulate and the local headquarters of the London-based HSBC bank.

Five of the suspects face life in prison if convicted of direct involvement. Seven others standing trial today and another 57 awaiting trial face sentences ranging from four to 22 years if convicted.

Legal loophole

N May, parliament abolished state security courts like the one hearing this trial, but that order does not come into force for about another month. The reform was approved as part of Turkey's bid to join the European Union. Defence lawyers argued that the defendants should not testify because the court hearing the case would eventually be phased out as part of recent legal reforms. They said the defendants should instead testify before new tribunals that will be set up in the coming months.

Several alleged ringleaders also remain at large.

Prosecutors say Osama bin Laden suggested targets for an attack in Turkey and his Al-Qaida network later provided \$150,000 to the Turkish Islamic militants who carried out the attacks.

Defence lawyers argued that the defendants should not testify because the court hearing the case would eventually be phased out as part of recent legal reforms. They said the defendants should instead testify before new tribunals that will be set up in the coming months.

According to the indictment, Habib Akdas, the suspected leader of the cell, and two alleged cell members, Baki Yigit and Adnan Ersoz, met on several occasions with Abu Hafs al-Masri, a former top lieutenant of Osama. Al-Masri is believed to have arranged for Akdas and Yigit to meet with Osama in 2001 Afghanistan.

IRAQ / WIDESPREAD FALL-OUT FEARED

Minor damage to Najaf shrine

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, MAY 25. Clashes be-tween U.S. forces and militiamen loyal to a Shia cleric have caused minor damage to the Imam Ali shrine in Najaf, considered one of the holiest sites by Shias across the globe, sparking fears that the fall-out of the incident will be widespread.

Al-Jazeera television showed a torn veil covering the gate, and damage on the wall around it. Several injured people were shown lying on the floor of the mosque compound, surrounded by an angry crowd of more than 100 people. Imam Ali was Prophet Mohammad's cousin and son-in-law and is the most revered figure among Shia Muslims.

The Shia cleric, Moqtada Al Sadr, reportedly visited the shrine after the attack, along with his supporters. His loyalists accused the Americans of firing mortars at the mausoleum and claimed that 12 people were injured in the attack. Eyewitnesses said a missile also landed outside the shrine, a fare. Explosions and gunfire

outer wall. Three militiamen were injured in that attack, Mr. Al-Sadr's office said.

The U.S. military command in Baghdad said it was investigating reports of damage. Fighting in Najaf and other shrine cities south of Baghdad has alarmed Shias throughout the world who fear damage to the sacred sites. Angry demonstrations against the U.S. intrusion into Najaf and Karbala have already been held in Iran, Lebanon and Bahrain. Iran has issued a "formal warning" to the U.S. against its presence in the Shia holy cities in Iraq, and communicated it through the Swiss embassy in Teheran, which represents U.S. interests.

In overnight fighting in Najaf, eight people were killed and 18 injured, while in neighbouring Kufa, two people died and 14 were injured. Most of the intense battles have been fought in Najaf's vast cemetery, where a plethora of paths and tombstones provide an ideal setting for the conduct of guerilla war-

short distance away from its could also be heard from around the city's Revolution of 1920 Square, symbolising the failed Shia revolt against British

occupation in that year.
Coinciding with battles in Najaf, a car bomb exploded close to the Australian embassy in Baghdad. The attack occurred about 50 metres from the Karma Hotel, where foreign journalists and U.N. weapons inspectors used to stay before the U.S. invasion. The attack injured five Iraqis, including a 10year-old boy who was critically hurt. Iraqi police said that the car bomb might have targeted the Australian embassy, but detonated prematurely. The Australian Government said its troops in Iraq were investigating the incident.

Elsewhere in Iraq, a pipeline that carries crude oil from the northern Kirkuk oilfields to Turkey has been bombed and extensively damaged. A security official of Iraq's Northern Oil Company, Juma Ahmad, was quoted as saying that an explosive device badly damaged the

pipe on Monday.

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Video film contradicts U.S. claim

MANAMA, MAY 24. Fresh video footage of revelry at a wedding in a desert village in Iraq has raised new doubts about the U.S. version of an air strike last

week in which 40 people were killed. The U.S. military command has said that it had bombed a staging post, close to the Syrian border, used by foreign fighters before they launched guerilla attacks.

According to the U.S. version, it had attacked what appeared to be a dormitory, which was packed with bedding and clothing that could be used by fighters. Besides, it claimed to have recovered fake identity cards and machines to make them, binoculars and large quantities of medical equipment. But contradicting the U.S. perception, the video obtained by Associated Press Television and broadcast over Arab television stations, showed elaborate scenes of a wedding celebration.

The film showed gleaming pick-up trucks — some decorated with ribbons — speeding through the desert apparently heading for the wedding. The celebrations themselves featured the traditional firing of salutes from guns and singing as well as men dancing to the music of a popular wedding singer. The wedding footage also showed a man playing electric organ, who can be later seen among the corpses filmed after the U.S. attack. The timing of the video release is likely to



An Iraqi child gets a kiss during a wedding ceremony shortly before U.S. helicopters fired on the party, in the remote desert area near Mogr-al-Deeb, Iraq, in this video obtained by the Associated Press.

have a negative fall-out on U.S. effors to seek U.N. approval on Monday, for its continued military presence in Iraq, following a handover of formal authority to an interim government on June 30.

It is also unlikely to help the U.S. President, George W. Bush, who, prior to the November elections, is battling growing domestic disenchantment towards his haddling of the situation in Iraq. The U.S. bombing in the Mogr-I-Deeb village has also been criicised by international humar rights groups.

A U.N. Human Rights official, Bertrand Ramcharan, said, even if some of those at the house in Mogr al-Deeb were involved in criminal activity, that was no excuse for the 'carnage.'

Attack near Green Zone

Iraqi guerillas today attacked a white armoured plated vehicle, close to entrance of the high security "Green Zone" in Baghdad, killing four unidentified people. U.S. soldiers, Iraqi police and fire-fighters doused the burned-out vehicle with water, sending clouds of steam and smoke into the air. The busy road, which has shops on both side, and leads to the Green Zone, was sealed off.

Zone, was sealed off.

Meanwhile, two Americans were killed in an attack on a military convoy near the restive Sunni stronghold of Fallujah on Sunday.

Also on the same day, around 600 U.S. troops backed by 20 tanks raided a mosque in Kufa, close to the holy city of Najaf.

close to the holy city of Najaf.
At least 32 militiamen, loyal to the Shia cleric, Moqtada Al Sadr, were killed in the predawn raid.

25 MAY 2004

Iraqi minister injured in blast

ASSOCIATED PRESS

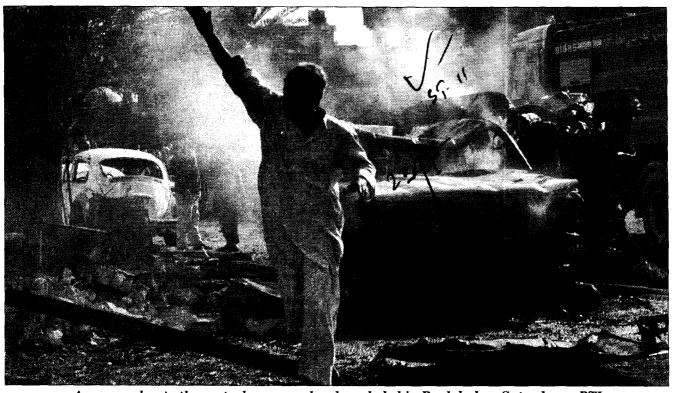
BAGHDAD, May 22. - A car bomb exploded today in front of the home of an Iraqi deputy interior minister, injuring him and killing at least five people, including four policemen.

Mr Abdul-Jabbar Youssef al-Sheikhli, the deputy minister in charge of security, was slightly injured in the forehead and right arm, said Mr Hassan Hadi, a health ministry official. "I expect he will leave the hospital in a short time," he said.

Mr Al-Sheikhli is a member of the Shi'ite Muslim Dawa party. The blast outside his house occurred about 200 metres from the headquarters of the former Iraqi general security service in the Baghdad district of Baladivat. Police and US military officers at the scene said the dead included four Iraqi policemen and a female neighbour.

US Army Capt. Brian O'Malley of the 1st Cavalry Division, the unit in charge of security in Baghdad, said the blast which occurred at about 8.05 a.m. was caused by a "vehicleborne improvised explosive device.

Interior minister Mr



A man rushes to the spot where a car bomb exploded in Baghdad on Saturday. - PTI

Samir Shaker Mahmoud al-Sumeidi visited the site and was mobbed by distraught neighbours.

Minutes before Mr Al-Sumeidi arrived, scuffles broke out between police and a crowd that gathered outside the deputy minister's house. Police fired shots to disperse the

More than an hour after the blast, smoke rose from several wrecked cars, and debris was scattered in the street.

The blast hurled two cars through a wall and onto the garden of the deputy minister's house. There were bloodstains in the two-story house and on the street, as well as outside the second-story windows of nearby hous-

Police said at least five were killed. Al-Jazeera television put the toll at six dead and about 20 injured.

Police were uncertain whether the bomb was detonated by a suicide attacker.

Ad urges sacking Rumsfeld

A black shroud covers the statue of Liberty in a new TV ad that criticises defence secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld for the Iraq prison abuse scandal and asks Why hasn't George Bush fired this man?", adds AP from Washington. "They said we went to Iraq to bring American values; take human rights and torture democracy, liberty. But some-seriously."

Custody death probe

WASHINGTON, May 22. - The USA has begun a criminal probe into at least 37 deaths of prisoners in American custody in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Several of the cases being investigated have been found to have occurred before or at probe sessions. Six unresolved cases happened in Iraq, including two at Abu Ghraib, and three in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, in Kabul, the US military today named a brigadier general to review Afghan prisons. Brig. Gen. CH Jacoby, deputy operational commander at the main base at Bagram, north of Kabul, will carry out the "top to bottom" review and deliver a report by mid-June, spokesman Lt Col Tucker Mansager said.

Brig. Gen. Jacoby is to visit all American detention centres, around the country "to ensure internationally accepted standards of handling detainees are being met," Mansager said. — PTI/AP

thing has gone terribly wrong," the 30-second ad by MoveOn.org says. "Now it's been reported that Donald Rumsfeld initiated the plan that encouraged the physical coercion and sexual humiliation of prisoners." Mr Peter Schurman, executive director, MoveOn said, "We've got to fire Rumsfeld to show the world we

Israelis begin to withdraw

Associated Press

stairs in his home Wednesday, but couldn't get medical help.

RAFAH, May 21. — Israeli troops pulled back from two neighbourhoods in this Palestinian refugee camp today, leaving behind dozens of demolished and damaged homes, torn up roads and flattened cars.

Israel said its four-day military offensive, in search of arms-smuggling tunnels and militants, will continue — even though security officials said only one tunnel was uncovered and it is believed many fugitives fled the camp before the army moved in.

Municipal officials said at least 43 homes were demolished and dozens more damaged in the camp since offensive began Tuesday. Forty Palestinians were killed since then, including gunmen and eight demonstrators hit by a tank shell.

In the Brazil neighbourhood, 25 houses were razed and streets were torn up, local officials said. In many cases, the facades of houses caved in or were shorn off, apparently damaged from wide armoured vehicles moving through the narrow alleys.

Residents rummaged through the rubble, retrieving mattresses, photo albums, shoes and clothing. A preschool boy, oblivious to his surroundings, sat on the ground, scooping up sand with a broken toy bulldozer.

Israeli troops left behind leaflets in Arabic, urging residents not to give shelter to armed men "who are using your homes and are hiding inside like rats". Mr Yacoub Othman (55), a resident of the Brazil neighbourhood, said he was hit by random fire in the leg as he walked down the

Arabs optimistic

Arab diplomats today said they were encouraged by a US decision to allow passage of a UN resolution criticising Israel, saying they hoped it signaled a tougher line against Israeli Prime Minister.

Arab League secretary-general Mr Amr Moussa said the vote was a positive signal but that the USA needs to go further to be perceived as a "honest broker" in peace efforts.



NO PRAYING IN PEACE: Israeli soldiers watch over Palestinian worshippers in a Jerusalem mosque on Friday.— AFP

Israel defies global fury over Gaza Rafah (Gaza Strip), May 20 sign wholesale blame to Pales-

Rafah (Gaza Strip), May 20 (Reuters): Defying international fury and a rare US rebuke, Israel expanded its bloodiest Gaza Strip raid in years today after killing 41 Palestinians in three days of fighting in the Rafah refugee camp.

Tensions rose further after a Tel Aviv court convicted Palestinian uprising leader Marwan Barghouthi of murder, drawing vows of defiance from a firebrand widely seen among Palestinians as a possible successor to President Yasser Arafat.

"So long as occupation continues, the Intifada (uprising) will not stop," Barghouthi, 44, said after the verdict in a case Palestinians condemned as a show trial. "As long as Palestinian mothers are weeping, Israeli mothers will also weep."

The UN Security Council urged an end to violence after Israeli forces killed 10 Palestinians at a peaceful protest yesterday. The Council convened at the behest of Arabs incensed at what they branded a "war crime".

Reflecting its displeasure, the US, Israel's chief ally, allowed adoption of the UN resolution by abstaining rather than using its veto. President George W. Bush urged restraint from the Jewish state.

Senior US officials kept up pressure by making phone calls to their Israeli counterparts urging them to wrap up the threeday-old raid as quickly as possible, an Israeli political source said.

But the army, which stormed the Rafah camp after losing 13 soldiers in Gaza ambushes last week, forged ahead today.

Troops pushed into Rafah districts on the border with Egypt, where the army says it is searching for tunnels used to



Sisters of Ragab Barhum, who was killed during clashes with Israeli forces, mourn during his funeral in the southern Gaza town of Rafah. (AFP)

smuggle weapons for a Palestinian revolt since 2000.

Residents said troops knocked down a small zoo, a rare place of amusement for refugee children. Palestinian boys were seen chasing a bewildered-looking ostrich through the streets.

The army, which has demolished dozens of Rafah homes during the raid, denied flattening the zoo.

Yesterday, the army killed eight Palestinians, several of them militants.

International outrage reached a new pitch after Israeli tanks and helicopters fired toward protesters marching to demand humanitarian aid. The youngest of the dead was nine years old. Medics said more than

50 people were wounded. Troops said they did not aim to hit the rally.

Several hundred Israeli peace activists demonstrated outside the defence ministry to protest against the Rafah operation, holding signs calling for an immediate withdrawal from Gaza and a stop to the killing.

Violence in Gaza has risen since Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon proposed evacuating troops and Jewish settlers in a plan backed by most Israelis and the US, but rejected by his Right-wing Likud party in a referendum this month.

Militants want to claim as a victory any Israeli pullout from Gaza, but the army is determined to smash them first.

In the West Bank, Israeli troops killed a senior Hamas militant in an exchange of fire in the town of Qalqilya.

A Tel Aviv court found Barghouthi, second in popularity only to Arafat among Palestinians, guilty of masterminding the killings of five people. But it cleared him of involvement in attacks in which more than 20 other people were killed.

Prosecutors asked for five life sentences for Barghouthi, a West Bank leader who had maintained his innocence since his 2002 arrest but expressed pride in resistance to Israeli occupation. The court reconvenes for sentencing on June 6.

Legal experts said the verdict was a blow to Israel's bid to as-

sign wholesale blame to Palestinian leaders for attacks carried out by militants alleged to be under their command.

But that did not stop the judges from pointing the finger at Arafat. Their written ruling charged that Barghouthi's orders for attacks were sometimes "based on instructions" from Arafat.

Justice minister Yosef Lapid issued a threat that Israel might put Arafat on trial one day. Arafat aide Nabil Abu Rdainah called the allegations "unfounded and baseless". Israel accuses Arafat of having fomented suicide bombings and ambush attacks. He has denied the allegations.

Supporters said the verdict would bolster Barghouthi among Palestinians for whom he is second in popularity only to Arafat.

Legal experts called the acquittals a blow to Israel's attempt to assign wholesale blame to Palestinian leaders for violence by militants alleged to be under their control.

"The court ruled you can't attribute criminal responsibility to political leaders of organisations for acts committed by those organisations unless (the leaders) were directly involved in those acts," said Israeli legal commentator Moshe Negbi.

But others said the trial, which drew intense international interest, demonstrated due process of law in the Jewish state. "The fact that the judges acquitted him on several counts shows that they discussed the case thoroughly as they would any other," Israeli justice minister Yosef Lapid said.

Prosecutors asked the court to hand down five life sentences when it reconvenes on June 6.

Israel forces fire on Gaza marchers, 10 killed

Rafah (Gaza Strip), May 19 (Reuters): Israeli tanks and helicopters fired on protesters in a refugee camp today, killing 10 Palestinians and raising a twoday death toll to 33 in Israel's bloodiest Gaza raid in years, witnesses said.

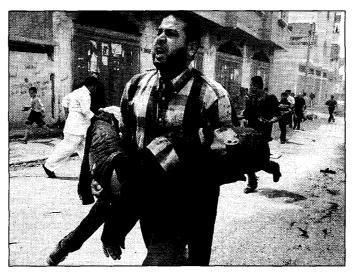
Medics said more than 50 people were wounded in the besieged Rafah camp in the southern Gaza Strip and that the casualties included children and teenagers dismembered by the blasts.

The barrage of Israeli fire sent a marching crowd fleeing in terror, some dragging bloodied comrades and others carrying wounded children in their arms. One witness described a "sea of blood with body parts flying all over".

Expressing "deep sorrow over the loss of civilian lives", the army said it did not fire deliberately at the procession but that tank fire designed to drive back the protesters may have caused casualties.

It said gunmen were among the crowd.

"It was horrifying," said Mahmoud Abu Hashem, 35. "There was one person with his intestines coming out. Another had blood covering his face and



A Palestinian man carries an injured child after an Israeli missile strike in the Rafah refugee camp, southern Gaza Strip. (AP)

you couldn't even make out his features." In a rare but gently worded rebuke to a key ally, US President George W. Bush told reporters: "I continue to urge restraint. It is essential that people respect innocent life in order for us to achieve peace."

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat called the strike a "war crime" against peaceful demonstrators, demanded punishment for those responsible and appealed for international intervention.

The bloodshed also brought renewed international pressure on Israel to end its assault, which began yesterday with the stated goal of rooting out militants and uncovering tunnels used to smuggle weapons across the border from Egypt.

A UN human rights envoy accused Israel of war crimes and a violation of humanitarian law, and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said he was "deeply distressed" by the high civilian casualties in Gaza.

Bodies carried on piling up in a flower freezer converted into a makeshift morgue after staff at the refugee camp's main hospital strained to cope with the dead along with dozens of wounded in two days of Israeli military assaults. The firing began as marchers surged toward the Tel Sultan neighbourhood, focal point of Israel's sweep into Rafah, to demand that humanitarian aid be allowed in.

Brigadier Ruth Yaron, Israel's chief military spokeswoman, said a helicopter fired a missile into an open area trying to scare away the demonstrators and then shelled an abandoned building when they kept moving toward Israeli forces.

"It is possible that the casualties were the result of the tank fire on the abandoned structure. The details of the incident continue to be investigated," the statement said. Palestinians said the incident evoked bitter memories of the army's 2002 assault on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, where forces flattened an entire neighbourhood during battles with militants.

Jordan King tells Arafat to consolid marketie whether to see aside in the interview publish more forward, "and recipied to see aside in the interview publish more forward," and he suggested Palesti." ANNAN (JORDAN), MAY 18. The Palestinian hashly criticised the Palestinian leader in ship with the United States with rising Ara recent days. Gen. Powell said Mr. Arafat frustration over U.S. policies toward Israe and Iraq. Pressed in the interview about whethe move forward," and he suggested Palesti. he agreed with Gen. Powell's criticism o

er to step aside in the interest of his people, Jordan's King said in an interview published on Tuesday, providing a rare indication of Arab frustration with the Palestinian leader.

conducted on Monday, King Abdullah II al-In an interview with The New York Times so said Iraq's next ruler should be a "tough

guy" with a military background capable of holding the shattered country together. Israel and the United States often have pushed for Mr. Arafat to step aside, and the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, has

he agreed with Gen. Powell's criticism o Mr. Arafat as an obstacle to peace, King Abdullah was quoted as saying: "I think Arafat needs to have a long look in the mirror to be able to see whether his position is

> suade him to make way for a more flexible However, even though Arab leaders have

successor.

nian and other Arab leaders should per-

of the World Economic Forum in Jordan that Palestinian leaders "need to get their act together" so others can help them. — AP helping the Palestinian cause or not." Earlier on Monday, King Abdullah had told reporters on the sidelines of final day been frustrated by Mr. Arafat many times over the decades, they rarely discuss who

should be in charge in a fellow Arab nation. Palestinian-Israeli crisis, also is in a delicate situation: more than half its population is Jordan, a key regional mediator in the

Palestinian and it must balance a friend-

MAY 700

20 PALESTINIANS KILLED IN RAFAH CAMP RAID

Israel launches biggest attack

Associated Press

RAFAH (Gaza), May 18. — Israeli helicopters pounded this refugee camp with missiles and machine gun fire today, killing at least 20 Palestinians, including two teenagers, as troops searched houses in the biggest offensive in Gaza in years.

The death toll in Rafah was expected to rise, with doctors saying they knew of two more bodies they were unable to collect



DEATH ON THE STREETS: Children watch mourners carrying the body of a Palestinian man killed in the Israeli raid on Tuesday. — AFP

because of heavy shooting. In the West Bank, two Palestinians were killed by army fire.

Trapped Rafah residents said they huddled in the innermost rooms of their homes as bullets rained outside. Others tried to flee to safer ground. At least 34 Palestinians were wounded, including eight who were in critical condition.

The Israeli army said the aim of "Operation Rainbow" was to destroy weapons-smuggling tunnels and arrest Palestinian militants.

At the beginning of the raid, a missile fired from a helicopter hit a group of gunmen outside a mosque in Tel Sultan, killing three. Two more missiles were fired, killing three more people who rushed to help. The mosque caught fire. In another air strike, four Palestinians were killed, all civilians, according to hospital officials.

The military said both strikes were aimed at gunmen. Troops also demolished four houses in Tel Sultan, witnesses said. In all, more than 11,000 Palestinians in Rafah have been made homeless by Israeli demolitions.

SC rejects residents' plea

Israel's Supreme Court today rejected an appeal by 45 Palestinians against the destruction of their homes in Rafah, court officials said. The appeal was turned town after the military gave assurances it had no intention of razing houses, except those damaged during fighting and those used as a cover by Palestinian militants, a court source said, AFP adds from Jerusalem.

According to the army, troops have no intention of enlarging the so-called Philadelphi route, a buffer zone which runs along Gaza's southern border with Egypt, because the government would have to take such a decision.

'HIV medics' on death row

Benghazi (Libya), May 6 (Reuters): A Libyan court sentenced five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor today to death by firing squad after convicting them of deliberately infecting hundreds of Libyan children with the deadly HIV virus.

Bulgaria condemned the verdicts announced by court officials as "unfair and absurd" and was joined in outrage by its western partners — the European Union and the US.

The issue is a major hurdle to Libya joining an EU economic partnership with Mediterranean region countries.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, who is seeking closer ties with the West after more than a decade of international isolation, had promised to swiftly resolve the dispute during a ground-breaking visit to the EU headquarters in Brussels last week.

The condemned, detained in February 1999, were convicted of infecting 426 Libyan children at a Benghazi hospital with blood products contaminated with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

They had pleaded not guilty, insisting the epidemic Tripoli says has killed more than 40 children since 1999 started before they began work at the hospital.

Prosecutors charged them

Prosecutors charged them with "uncontrollable murder aimed at destabilising the country, deliberately starting an epidemic... and conspiring to intentionally infect children with the AIDS virus".

In 2001, Gaddafi had said the children were infected as part of an experiment ordered by the US or Israeli secret services.

EU aspirant Bulgaria has slammed the trial as unfair, saying there is no hard evidence except for confessions from two nurses who were held without council for a year before being indicted. Nine Libyans have been on trial for torturing the confessions out of them.

Defence lawyers said they would appeal the sentences.



Two of the Bulgarian medics in the court in Libya. (AFP)

Zdravko Georgiev, a Bulgarian doctor and the husband of one of the nurses, was sentenced to four years in jail but was released today on time served.

"I'm not happy at the moment. I cannot feel free because I left behind six innocent people," Georgiev told Bulgarian TV after his release.

Scores of dancing and chanting relatives of the HIV-infected children took to the streets near the court in the Mediterranean port city after the verdicts were announced.

"The verdict is fair. What they did is a crime against humanity. They planted a bomb inside our children," said Ramdane Ali Mohamed, whose younger sister Hiba died of AIDS.

In Sofia, several hundred sombre demonstrators staged a candle-light vigil for the condemned, aghast at the ruling.

"We are totally convinced they did not conspire to cause the epidemic. It's not possible for a normal person, let alone a nurse, to do such a thing," said pensioner Nina Taneva, 57.

Where roads don't connect but divide By Praful Bidwai

JERUSALEM! How long does it take to travel from Jerusalem to Ramallah, barely 20 km away as the crow flies?

Answers an Israeli friend: "About 30 minutes if you are Israeli and take the special "Jewish" motorway. If you are Palestinian, it could be one-and-a-half hours — if you are lucky at the checkpoints. If there's a special check (frequent), or the guard doesn't like your face, it could be three hours, six hours, even till tomorrow ...

The drive-through road between Jerusalem, which both Israelis and Palestinians claim is their capital, and Ramallah, occupied West Bank's biggest city, is not for or-dinary people. Only Jewish settlers, diplomats or Palestinian Authority VIPs can take it. There is no public transporta-tion. So you must have a car.

Most Palestinians take ramshackle buses or shared "Arab-taxis", alighting at each checkpoint to show their papers to soldiers, satisfying them they are no security risk, and then taking yet another bus/taxi.

- there are over 750 of Checkpoints them in relatively tiny West Bank/Gaza— are inseparable from Palestinian daily life. It is hard to escape them. "Flying checkpoints" materialise out of nowhere

A whole infrastructure of tea/coffee-vending and grocery shops, has emerged at because nobody knows how checkpoints long they would have to wait. Fifty-two women-in-labour have given birth at checkpoints, having been denied ambulance transport.

The Israeli military can descend upon any PA-controlled city, surround an area, impose curfew and establish checkpoints", says a United Nations official.

The checkpoints are a daily humiliation for Palestinians — a reminder that a 20-year-old guard who treats them with infinite disdain controls their life and determines if they will or won't earn a wage

"Coming from a village near Ramallah is an extremely unpleasant, traumatising and insulting experience," says Khaled Abu-Akel, who works 12-hour shifts in a small East Jerusalem restaurant. "I have to miss work or partially lose wages about two to three days a week because of delays. Sometimes, I don't go back home for days because I won't be able to return. My family

Checkpoints ensure Palestinians have no control over their livelihoods. They are part of a complex system of organising and perpetuating the occupation through concrete roadblocks (usually one-metre-high), barbed-wire fences, earth mounds and trenches (to obstruct vehicles) and metal

INSIDE PALESTINE-ISRAEL

barrier-gates.

Then, there is the Wall.

This 700-km-long wall-cum-electric fence-cum-barbed wire-barrier will dissect and encircle Palestinian territory. It is being built on confiscated West Bank land. In places, it is 30-150 metres wide. It will include electrified fencing, sniper-towers, trenches, roads for patrol vehicles, electronic sensors, thermal-imaging, video cameras and aerial drones, besides razor-

It will be almost five times longer than the Berlin Wall and cut up to 6 km deep into Palestinian territory

A visit to the Wall at Abu Dis, east of Jerusalem, was revealing. Jamal Juma showed us the market in Sawahre, which the wall cuts into two. The village school will be on one side; the traditional cemetery on the other. Children must make a detour of 8-

to-15 km to get to school — or drop out. "Some 6,000 people have been uprooted here," says Mr. Jamal. "Some were removed because they had not paid 'dues' which they know nothing of like 'TV tax', 'ground tax', 'car tax', nor received bills for. Some 100,000 Palestinians will soon be uprooted."

The Apartheid Wall will eventually isolate 200,000 Palestinians, cut off the West Bank from East Jerusalem, and act as a shield

around numerous illegal settlements.

The Wall will divide communities and the clans/extended families around which Palestinian society is organised, and disrupt hospital and emergency healthcare services. (At least 84 deaths have occurred at barriers, including of 27 children). It will also block provision of food and medical supplies (1.7 million Palestinians are dependent on U.N. food aid), besides causing economic havoc

All this violates Israel's obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention relating to protection of the civilian population in times of war and occupation, as well as recent U.N. resolutions.

Supplementing the enclosure-and-segregation policy are state-sponsored closures across the Israel-Palestine border. Permanent closures, which started with Oslo, severely restrict the number of Palestinians who can enter Israel for work. This amounts to collective economic punishment, banned under international law.

Closures have made the planning of individual life impossible. They have badly shredded the social fabric, disrupted patterns of residential, marital and family life, and created artificial, mutually un-integrated islands.

The occupation's heightened brutality since the Second Intifidah (September 2000) have aggravated the Palestinian crisis. Personal misery and widespread collective experience of social dislocation, grave injustice and humiliation today mark one of the most socially, educationally and culturally advanced peoples of West Asia.

I 5 MAY 353: THE HINDU

Gaza: pullout or consolidation? | Marks a turning engagement" is to avoid and bypass proval by Mr. Bush, itself linked to pitulation" to Israeli pressur

a Palestinian state. HIS WEEK marks a turning it occupies - a ments in the Palestinian terproposals that eventually strengthen turbulent, unhappy land. Will Israel 'disengage" from the Gaza Strip in Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and antine politics kill even conservative point for Israel and its settlecardinal issue in this crisis-ridden, keeping with a plan drawn up by the backed by the United States President, George W. Bush? Or will its Byzritories

he dice seem loaded against the The referendum held on Sunday within Mr. Sharon's Right-wing Likud Party will provide a first, tentative answer. Going by opinion polls, pullout. But whatever the verdict, and however Mr. Sharon acts on it, the Palestinian crisis will worsen the occupation?

(who, however, control 40 per cent of its land and water, while 1.5 million Other parts of Palestine have 400,000 Gaza has only 7,500 Israeli settlers Palestinians have to do with the rest).

ments and its troops, Gaza will not be style "paramountcy." Israel will control Gaza's airspace, seacoast and Even if Israel evacuates the settlefree of Israel's suzeraincy or colonialland approaches.

On April 14, President Bush gave the taining the settlements — under the guise of "realism." deed, the Finance Minister, Binyaervation of most of the 120 pump tens of millions of dollars into green light to the principle of mainengagement" for the indefinite pressettlements in the West Bank. Inmin Netanyahu, says Israel will these, signalling their perpetuation.

One of the mainol ectives of "dis-

a political process or negotiated settlement of the Palestinian question. As Mr. Sharon himself put it, the Palestinians" and end their dream of withdrawal would "severely harm

country will cease to be a Jewish Writes the Israeli scholar, Meron ment is to improve the demographic situation by removing 1 & 1/8 million thereby reducing the danger that the Palestinians from Israeli control and Benvenisti: "[T]he goal of disengage-

"After disengagement, Gaza will

refugees displaced during Israel's creation in 1948 cannot return to to a (future) Palestine state. More their homes. Instead, they should go balestinians live outside the borders of their country than within.

lem. "This is a fundamental right of "It's outrageous that Bush and says Johnny Odeh, a young Westerneducated sound engineer in Jerusaindividuals under international law. No one, not even Mr. Yasser Arafat, Sharon cancel our right of return,

he declaration that the Palestinian

can annul or abridge it on our behalf

The absurdity, the obscenity, is that any Jew living anywhere can 'return' to Israel as a citizen, but Pal-

ington was to assassinate the Hamas The Sharon-Bush declaration has deeply offended the Palestinians and strengthened far-Right forces in the Government, Israel's first major act after Mr. Sharon's return from Washleader, Abdel Aziz Rantisi.

threat to eliminate the Palestinian Arafat, and declared he is no longer bound by the undertaking given to Arafat's expulsion of 21 members of Mr. Sharon has since renewed his the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade from Authority (PA) Chairperson, Yasser Mr. Bush three years ago not to harm him. The threat came despite Mr. the Muqaata, the devastated compound in Ramallah, which is his headquarters. The expulsion provoked charges of "betrayal" and "ca-

I Bidwai HO 10 5 5 pitulation" to Israeli pressure from militant Palestinians.

This hardline policy goes hand in hand with tightening controls on the agreements of 1994-95, Israel has pursued strategies to reconfigure the entire territory of Palestine and make encirclement. Indeed, since the Oslo a genuine two-state solution virtually movement of Palestinians and their impossible. These include:

fragmenting their territory into little enclaves or cantons, but keeping pockets (Area 'A' under the PA's full them out of the fully Israeli-con-Confining Palestinians to small control, and Area 'B' under "joint Palestinian-Israeli security), rolled 'C' Area of Palestine.

 Imposing permanent closures over the occupied territories to prevent physical movement.

long "Separation Barrier" or Wall (almost five times longer than the Berlin Wall), and in places eight metres * Frecting an enormous 700-km

bypass roads that integrate them. Says Jeff Halper, coordinator of the legal settlement blocs and building a * Expanding and consolidating il-63-billion system of highways and

sraeli Committee Against House by all Israeli governments over 36 years and by Sharon himself since Demolitions: "Disengagement from Gaza concludes the process, pursued 1977, of creating a cantonised Pal estinian entity.

its sovereignty extended over 85-90 while leaving Israel firmly in control. is set to emerge is a mini-state without sovereignty or contiguous terri-He holds that disengagement wil get the Palestinians "off our hands

The Israeli plan is to trade "disengagement" for the indefinite preservation of most of the 120 settlements in the West Bank.

become a prison republic or a mini-Bantustan," says Azmi Bishara, a distinguished Israeli-Palestinian philos-'This won't be a step towards a resolution of the Palestinian question based upon ending Israel's occupation and creating a sovereign, viable opher and social scientist, and Bush will tom-tom it as 'progress' Member of the Knesset (Parliament). Palestinian state. Yet, Sharon and and a 'historic' breakthrough..."

The Israeli plan is to trade "dis-

Ultra-conservative Israelis see "disengagement" as "betrayal" and a retreat from the Zionist ideal of annexing Jewish territories mentioned in the scriptures to create a "Greater best response to pressure to give up occupied territories is to further ex-Israel". They see it as violating Mr. Sharon's established strategy: the

By contrast, most Palestinians are livid at the plan and its uncritical appand the settlements!

THE HINDU

Sharon to push ahead with modified pullout plan

spokesman said. The motion was presented by the left-wing Meretz parties against the government's Ariel Sharon, following his Likud JERUSALEM, May 3. — Israel's parliament today voted down a no-confidence call against Mr political, social and economic party's rejection of his Gaza oullout plan, a parliamentary and parliament's three Arab effort to salvage the propos-Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon today said he will tinker with his plan for West Bank settlements in an pulling out of Gaza and four al following its resounding defeat in a ruling party ref-

IERUSALEM, May 3.

another plan that I will come up with," he said. "I will come up with a plan that will policies. It was defeated by a 62-Likud members get wider support." 46 margin. — AFP I want to say in the clearhis new plan to the government and parliament for est fashion there will be Mr Sharon told a meeting of lawmakers from his Likud Party that he would submit approval, officials said.

voted

Trust vote Cy down his Maisengagement day, leaving the proposal's future in doubt and the Premier scrambling for an alternative. With a turnout of members, 60 per cent voted only half the 193,000 Likud plan" in a referendum yesteragainst the plan.

Mr Sharon today said he respects" the outcome of the He had defended his plan as peace moves. He also said it for greater concessions to vote, but said he would not the best way to get security for Israelis in the absence of national pressure on Israel was needed to diffuse interdrop the idea of a withdrawal.



Mourners attend the funeral of Jewish settler Tall Khotel (34) and her four daughters, aged two to 11, southern Israel town of Ashkelon. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

Associated Press

MAY

FADEL BADRAN

FALLUJA, APRIL 28

US AIRBORNE gunship pounded Falluja overnight in a display of firepower against insurgents battling Marines on the outskirts of the town. As the UN envoy on Iraq was telling the UN of bloody consequences should talks fail in Falluja, an AC-130 poured down fire in what Marines said on Wednesday was a precision response to an attack.

Local residents said only one person was injured as the 10 destroyed homes were empty. A new US bombardment struck the same area of Falluja on Wednesday, residents said. "There are explosions in Golan district. It seems to be shelling. There is also heavy machinegun fire coming from the US positions," a witness said. Meanwhile, a Ukrainian soldier was killed and two injured when their patrol was attacked near Kut. The patrol came under attack from grenades and high-calibre machine guns.

A year after the fall of Saddam Hussein, who was spending his 67th birthday in a secret jail in US custody, US forces are trying to quell twin threats from Sunni Muslim guerrillas in Falluja to Shi'ite fighters in the south before they hand sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30.

The local police chief said he would renew talks with the Marines about launching joint patrols in the town. US officials, aware that such a move could spark new guerrilla attacks on their troops, have said they will begin joint patrols in the coming days.

Many people in Falluja, where civic leaders concluded a truce with the Marines two weeks ago, were enraged by the overnight attack from the sky.

"This attack shows the frustration in the ranks of US soldiers in Iraq and the American political defeat," said Ali Abdullah. "We have uncovered the treachery and barbarity of the US. The more they es-

Falluja pounded





Former ling! president Saddam Husseln, who was arrested by US troops on December 14, 2003, marked his 67th birthday in a secret US prisen in Iraq on Wednesday. He was visited by International Red Cross officials yesterday. Reuters

calate the situation, the more violent the reaction on Iraqi streets."

"Unless this standoff is brought to a resolution through peaceful means, there is great risk of a confrontation," envoy Lakhdar Brahimi told the UN. An intense firefight took place overnight in Khaldiya and US patrols appeared to have been stepped up in the Sunni triangle. A delicate dilemma faces them in Najaf, where Moqtada Al-Sadr has taken refuge. An aide to Sadr was quick to echo local accusations that many civilians died in Monday night's US attack outside the city. the heaviest in a three-week standoffwith Sadr

US commanders stress they aim to avoid holy sites, though they have said they will attack them if they are being used for combat. "Our goal is to continue to pressure Sadr to understand that we are not going away," said Colonel Brad May, Commander of the 2nd Armoured Cavalry Regiment outside Najaf.

"It is in his best interest to go ahead and lay down arms and not see any further loss of life," he said.

—Reuters

New Iraq leaders by May, says Brahimi

EVELYN LEOPOLD

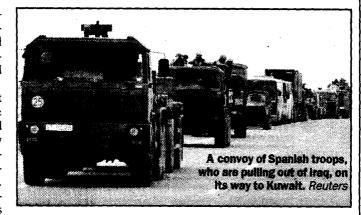
UNITED NATIONS, APRIL 28

UNITED Nations envoy Lakhdar Brahimi said on Tuesday that an interim Iraqi government could be chosen by May end despite the security situation in Falluja and elsewhere. Brahimi presented to the UN Security Council plans for a new government due to take power on June 30.

"Though it will not be easy, we believe it to be possible to identify by May end a group of people respected and acceptable to Iraqis, to form a caretaker government," Brahimi said. However, Brahimi warned about the "increase in violence across the country," especially in Falluja. He said the US-led coalition knew "well that the consequences of such bloodshed could be dramatic and long-lasting".

Brahimi made it clear that there were many powers that the new, interim government would not have until elections in January 2005. He said it should reach "crystal clear understandings" on sovereignty with the US before June 30. "You want 150,000 soldiers to disappear on June 30? Those soldiers are going to be there," he said.

Washington's ambassador to the UN, John Negroponte, who is



expected to be the new US Ambassador in Iraq after June 30, said foreign forces had to control security because a transitional government would not be capable of doing so immediately. —*Reuters*

INDIAN EXPRESS

29 APR 2004

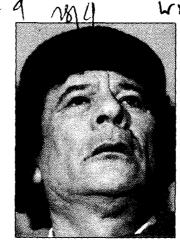
EU embraces Gaddafi

Brussels, April 27 (Reuters): Cheered on by African drummers and dancing supporters, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi took another big step towards international respectability today when he visited European Union headquarters.

European Commission President Romano Prodi broke with protocol to welcome Gaddafi personally at Brussels' Zaventem airport, where the Libyan leader, dressed in a red fez hat and greygreen sweeping robe, descended the gangway followed by female guards in dappled blue camouflage uniforms.

Waving portraits of Gaddafi, more than 200 singing, dancing supporters organised by an obscure Arab-African Immigrant Child Support Committee, staged a colourful pro-Libyan demonstration outside the European Commission building as the two leaders arrived in a white stretch Mercedes limousine.

One over-enthusiastic Gaddafi supporter, dressed as a security man, caused a scare when he tried to present a letter as the Libyan leader and Prodi shook hands for the cameras in-



Muammar Gaddafi in Brussels. (AFP)

side the building. Belgian security guards hustled him away. A smaller group of about 50 Libyan exiles staged a human rights protest outside EU head-quarters, chanting: "Gaddafi terrorist" and holding a banner proclaiming: "Gaddafi is a wolf in sheep's clothing".

The landmark trip — Gaddafi's first to Europe for 15 years — was a reward for Libya's agreement to pay compensation for the Lockerbie and UTA air-

line bombings and its spectacular renunciation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Libyan leader was expected to submit an application to join the EU's Euro-Mediterranean partnership, a trade, aid and culture pact linking the wealthy European bloc with 11 southern and eastern Mediterranean neighbours, including Israel.

Gaddafi was to hold talks and have lunch with Prodi and several members of the EU executive in a ground-breaking visit that follows his rapprochement with the US and Britain after more than a decade of international isolation.

He and Prodi were to make statements to the press but not take questions, a Commission spokesperson said. Gaddafi will stay the night in a black Bedouin tent, complete with satellite dish, pitched in the grounds of a Belgian state residence. His turbulent arrival at EU headquarters, replete with flashes of the old militant waving a defiant fist to cheering supporters in the street, illustrated the ambivalent political theatre surrounding the event.

Europe welcomes back Gaddafi

Assessed Prose

BRUSSELS, April 27. — Libyan leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi came in from the cold today with his first trip to Europe in 15 years, seeking to improve ties despite lingering disputes over a 1986 bombing and fresh charges of human rights abuses.

The landmark trip resulted from what the EU termed Libya's "remarkable progress" in shedding its rogue nation status, including abandoning its nuclear weapons programme and settling the Pan Am and UTA airliner bombing cases.

The 1988 bombing of the Pan Am jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, killed 270 people; the French UTA airliner bombing over the Niger desert killed 170 people in 1989.

Col. Gaddafi pulled up in a white limo at the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, accompanied by his foreign and trade ministers. Dressed in a brown cloak and black cap, he waved and gave a clenched fist salute to about 200 cheering supporters before entering the building.

As he paused to shake hands with EC President Mr Romano Prodi, a man rushed forward trying to hand him a letter and was hustled away by a male bodyguard. A couple of Col. Gaddafi's trademark female bodyguards, dressed in blue camouflage fatigues, then rushed to his side.

Police assigned a spot blocks away, in front of the European Parliament, for an anti-Gaddafi demonstration planned later.

The USA last week lifted most of its commercial sanctions on Libya but trade restrictions with Europe remain.

Col. Gaddafi seeks "full normalisation" of relations and entry to the aid and trade program the EU runs with countries around the Mediterranean, including Israel.

In an interview with German business daily Handelsblatt, Libya's economics and trade minister, Mr Abdel Qader Khair, said Libya has "fulfilled most of the conditions" for resuming normal trade relations. "We would have expected this step from Europe much sooner," he said. "More important to us than the arms embargo is being able to import advanced technology (such as aircraft or replacement parts for the oil industry) once again... Col. Gaddafi has made clear that we must fight underdevelopment. To do that, we need partners, not weapons."

German foreign minister Mr Joschka Fischer welcomed Libya's rapprochement yesterday but noted "obstacles" remained, including his government's demand for compensation from Libya for victims of the 1986 bombing at a West Berlin disco known as a hangout for US troops.

ROGUE STATE BEHAVIOUR

ISRAEL'S PRIME MINISTER Ariel Sharon appears determined to perpetuate chaos in West Asia. When the Israeli hardliner informed the U.S. President, George W. Bush, that he no longer felt constrained by a commitment not to target Yasser Arafat for assassination, he played the opening gambit of a manoeuvre he has used to deadly effect in the past. On several occasions, Mr. Sharon has at first announced an intent to commit an outrageously irresponsible act, then waited for the shock to wear off, and finally followed through when conditions became more opportune. For instance, few people in the world believed he would carry out a threat to kill Palestinian leaders until his forces carried out a cold-blooded murder of the wheelchair-bound spiritual guide of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The international community had barely got over its revulsion before the Israelis killed another political leader of Hamas, Abdul Aziz Rantisi. There can be no doubt that Mr. Arafat is in real danger of losing his life since Mr. Sharon has often displayed a taste for psychopathic behaviour. The Israeli Prime Minister's terror tactics are directed not solely at militants or politicians but at the Palestinian people as a whole. His objective is to deprive the Palestinians of the capacity to form and operate political organisations as they struggle to secure rights that are both inalienable and internationally recognised.

The international community can take no comfort from the U.S. pronouncement that it will hold Israel to a three-year-old promise not to harm Mr. Arafat. Mr. Sharon has no reason to fear that he will lose American support. Washington has consistently refused to use the considerable leverage at its command, such as the threat of an aid cut-off, to restrain its main West Asian ally from committing atrocities. It has re-

peatedly exercised its veto power to strike down resolutions condemning the Zionist state's rogue behaviour that were moved by other member-countries of the United Nations. Mr. Sharon brushed aside the mild protests of the Bush administration as he built a boundary fence that cuts deep into the West Bank, creating enclaves isolated from one another. The U.S. President also endorsed an Israeli plan to keep large Jewish settlements in its possession and agreed that Palestinian refugees had no right to return to their ancestral homes. It is inconceivable that any section of the American political leadership will risk the wrath of the pro-Israel lobby in the midst of a tight presidential election campaign. The Bush administration is also likely to be accused of hypocrisy if it criticises the Sharon Government's methods at this juncture since the occupation forces under its command have adopted similar tactics to suppress the national resistance movement in Iraq. The forces in colonial occupation of the Palestinian territories and Iraq are bent on the pacification of the people subjected to their power and are not in the least interested in achieving peace.

True to his doughty character, Chairman Arafat has dared Israel to do its worst. Enemies, near and distant, might have thought that the disintegration of the Palestinian Authority had deprived its President of the institutions through which he could exercise leadership. Israel has confined Mr. Arafat to a headquarters complex in Ramallah for over three years and tried its best to erode his standing among his people. These measures have completely failed to overawe the Palestinian liberation movement. Chairman Arafat continues to be a powerful iconic figure and the actions of his enemies have only strengthened the bonds between him and his people.

26 APR 2004

THE HINDU

Don't harm Arafat, U.S. warns Sharon

"The President made it clear Yakovenko, Foreign Ministry Palestinian Authority... are that he would be a separately and the separate of the president made it clear that the separate of the separate of

WASHINGTON, APRIL 24. The
United States has sharply
warned the Israeli Prime
Minister, Ariel Sharon, to keep
his promise not to harm the
Palestinian leader, Yasser
Arafat.

Mr. Sharon had said in an interview with Israeli public television on Friday that he believed he was no longer under any obligation to abide by his pledge to the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and that Mr. Arafat "no longer has immunity" from an Israeli attack.

"I promised President George W. Bush three years ago not to attack Mr. Arafat, but I am no longer bound by that promise, and [Arafat] no longer has immunity," Mr. Sharon said.

The comment, however, drew a sharp rebuke immediately from the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, who made it clear that he was speaking on behalf of the President.

"The President made it clear that he would oppose any such attempts against Mr. Arafat, and the President firmly believes that he has a commitment from Prime Minister Sharon that no such attempt will be made," Gen. Powell said, appearing on ABC's "Nightline" programme.

A senior administration official said earlier in the day that the White House considered "a pledge, a pledge."

"We have made it entirely clear to the Israeli Government that we would oppose any such action and have done so again in the wake of these remarks" by Mr. Sharon, the official said.

— AFP

An AP report from London said that Britain urged Mr. Sharon to stand by the promise not to harm Mr. Arafat. "We fully expect Israel, and Prime Minister Sharon, to stand by its pledge not to harm Yasser Arafat and would strongly oppose any action taken against him," the Foreign Office said.

AFP reported from Moscow that Russia was deeply concerned over threats by Mr. Sharon. "Moscow has with deep concern learned of the April 23 declaration by Mr. Sharon that he is no longer bound by his earlier promises not to physically harm Yasser Arafat," said Alexander

Yakovenko, Foreign Ministry spokesman. "We would like to underline Russia's definitive stance that such threats toward a legally-elected head of the

Palestinian Authority... are not acceptable," Mr. Yakovenko said.

Sharon's threat: Page 14

'We're martyrs-in-waiting'

JERUSALEM, APRIL 24. Dismissing threats from the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sha-



Yasser Arafat — AP ron, to his life, the Palestinian Authority Chairman, Yasser Arafat, today claimed that all those fighting for the cause of Palestine were "martyrs-in-waiting." "I want to tell Mr. Sharon and his gang that the mountain cannot be shaken by the wind," he told a gathering of

about 4,000 supporters flashing the V-sign at his headquarters in Ramallah,

"All of us are martyrs-inwaiting," he said. The people gathered there avowed their allegiance to the leader shouting that they would sacrifice their "blood and souls" for him.

In Gaza City, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades threatened today to launch waves of attacks "without mercy" if Israel harmed Mr. Arafat.

"Any attack against our leader will transform the Arab land into a volcano, and we will kill Zionists everywhere," a statement said.

The Brigades, an armed offshoot of Mr. Arafat's Fatah group, warned that any attack on Mr. Arafat would provoke a serious escalation in violence. "We would ask all our militants to respond without mercy by striking all Zionists, soldiers and civilians everywhere indiscriminately, to respond to this occupation crime," it said. — PTI, AFP

Sharon issues covert threat to Arafat's life

JERUSALEM, APRIL 24. Ariel Sharon issued an ominous warning last night that Yasser Arafat could be the next Palestinian leader to fall under Israel's line of fire, when he reneged on a promise not to harm his old

adversary.

In dramatic remarks certain to aggravate regional hysteria over Israel's targeted killings of Palestinian militant leaders, the Israeli Prime Minister said he had told the U.S. President, George W Bush, that he was no longer prepared to exempt Mr. Arafat from physical harm.

"I told the President the following: In our first meeting about three years ago, I accepted your request not to harm Arafat physically. I told him I understand the problems surrounding the situation, but I am released from that pledge.

Mr. Sharon declined to elaborate and would not say how Mr. Bush responded. Last night, officials in the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair's office responded with surprise to the a time of the Israeli Prime Minannouncement, and said they had no further comment.

But the remarks amounted to the strongest signal yet that Israel could follow up its recent assassinations in Gaza with the decapitation of the Palestinian leadership. Mr. Arafat, chairman of the Palestinian Authority, has been confined by Israeli security forces to his headquarters in Ramallah for two years.

Palestinians called on Mr. Bush to explain how he had responded to Mr. Sharon's declaration. The State Department said only that it stood by its opposition to the killing of Mr. Arafat.

Following last week's talks in Washington, Mr. Bush detailed how he supports Israel's unilateral disengagement plan, to the dismay of the Palestinian side, but has made no mention of Mr.

Last year, Mr. Sharon's cabinet voted to "remove" Mr. Arafat as an "obstacle to peace" at

ister's choosing.

Some Cabinet Ministers said that assassination would be the means, but it was never overtly endorsed by Mr. Sharon as the international community, including Washington, expressed displeasure.

But after recent strikes that killed Hamas leaders Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi, Israel has widened the net and indicated that it would go after Hamas leaders

abroad.

Its targeted killings have already included members of Mr. Arafat's organisation Fatah, which includes the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, responsible for many of the suicide bombings against Israel.

Palestinian officials have expressed concern that Israel might attack Mr. Arafat. Last night, officials condemned what they called Mr. Sharon's "dangerous statements". - @Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

2 5 APR 2004

THE HINDU

STEVEN R. WEISMAN

Washington, April 20: King Abdullah of Jordan dealt a rebuff to President Bush yesterday, abruptly putting off his visit to Washington scheduled for later this week.

Jordanian officials said the visit had become impossible in light of Bush's recent support for Israel's territorial claims in the West Bank.

A statement from Jordan said the king, who was in California yesterday and went home rather than to Washington, would not meet Bush this week as planned.

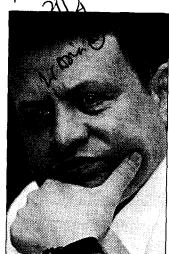
It said the meeting would wait "until discussions and deliberations are concluded with officials in the American administration to clarify the American position on the peace process and the final situation in the Palestinian territories, especially in light of the latest statements by officials in the American administration."

A Jordanian official said the statement, in deliberately cool tones, was meant to send a message of displeasure.

For their part, administration officials said that the visit

Abdullah rebuffs Bush over

\alpha Israel



King Abdullah

had to be put off because of "developments in the region" and that it would be rescheduled for May.

Jordanian officials made clear that King Abdullah, who was in California meeting with technology and entertainment industry figures, had been irked by Bush's declarations in his meeting last week with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and would therefore bypass Washington.

After his meeting with Sharon a week ago, Bush broke with American policy and supported Israel's ultimate retention of some settlements in the West Bank and also rejected the longtime Palestinian demand for a right of return to family homes abandoned in 1948 in what is now Israel.

The Jordanian statement followed by a week a protest by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. The problems with Egypt and Jordan came as the administration faced another round of difficulties in its plans for Iraq, especially after the abrupt announcement by Spain that it would quickly withdraw its forces there in the face of a deteriorating security situation.

Honduras announced last night that it would withdraw its 370 troops, which have been operating in Iraq as part of the Spanish contingent. Administration officials also said that Poland faced a decision on whether to renew its commitment to keep troops in Iraq, and that it was far from clear whether it would renew its pledge. The Polish commitment is to expire in September. Poland has 2,460 troops in Iraq.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian issue, an Egyptian official said that Mubarak and his aides had been talking with American officials for several weeks about the possibility of an American endorsement of Israeli aspirations, and that each time the Egyptians had made their opposition clear.

Mubarak described himself as shocked by Bush's statements in his meeting with Sharon, although Egyptian officials said he had been apprised of the statements when he met Bush in Texas before the Sharon visit.

Administration officials said that despite their difficulties with Egypt and Jordan, they still expected both nations to try to help with security in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, from which Israeli forces and settlers are to be withdrawn under Sharon's plan.

A Jordanian statement said King Abdullah "is looking towards a common plan with the international community to support the Palestinians," but offered no further details.

But an Egyptian official said whatever Egypt hoped to do in the Gaza Strip would now be "much more difficult" in light of Bush's statements last week.

The Jordanian foreign minister, Marwan Muasher, was due to confer with administration officials to try to clarify the situation.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

Israel's 'atomic 'spy' released

Ashkelom (Israel), April 21 (Reuters): Israeli nuclear whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu emerged defiant after 18 years in prison today, saying he was proud of revealing secrets that exposed the Jewish state as

an atomic power.

Vanunu flashed victory signs and waved as he walked through the gates of Ashkelon's Shikma Prison, where supporters cheered him as a "peace hero" and counter-demonstrators booed him with chants of "Shut up, atomic spy". "I am proud and happy to do what I did," the greyhaired, former nuclear technician said standing before a bank of television cameras.

Vanunu's 1986 revelations to a British newspaper about the top-secret Dimona reactor led analysts to conclude Israel had amassed an arsenal of 100 to 200 nuclear warheads, one of the world's largest stockpiles.

Vanunu, 49, complained bitterly of "cruel and barbaric treatment" at the hands of Israel's security services but insisted he had no more state secrets to divulge after serving his full term on a conviction for treason and espionage.

Fearing he could reveal more classified information, Israel put him under close police surveillance and slapped restrictions on his movements, including a one-year ban on travel abroad.

Vanunu refused to answer questions in Hebrew during an impromptu news conference broadcast live on state television, saying he was protesting Israel's prohibition on his contacts with foreigners. Most Israelis revile him as a traitor.

"Israel doesn't need nuclear arms, especially now that all West Asia is free of nuclear arms," he said. "My message ...to all the world is open the Dimona

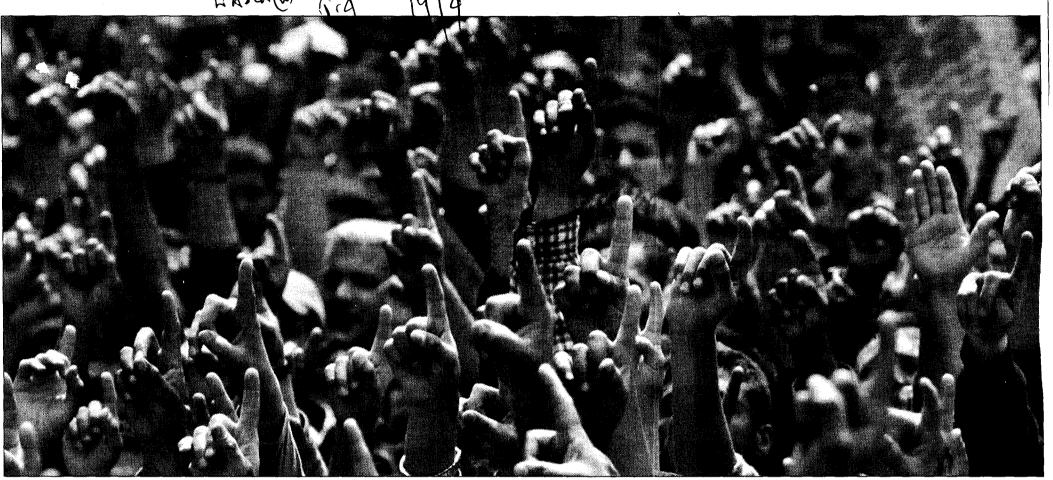


Mordechai Vanunu at Ashkelon's Shikma prison, Israel. (AFP)

reactor for inspections."

Israeli troops killed seven Palestinians, the youngest 13-years-old, in a raid into Gaza today to stop reprisal rocket attacks for the assassination of a top Hamas leader.

Roar for 100 retaliations rises



Supporters chant anti-Israeli slogans during the funeral of Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi in Gaza City on Sunday. (Reuters)

Gaza, April 18 (Reuters): Hundreds of thousands of Palestinian mourners cried for vengeance today for Hamas leader Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi, slain by Israeli missiles even as the Jewish state plans to quit the group's Gaza stronghold.

In secret, Hamas named a new official to replace 56-year-old Rantissi — the second leader of the militant Muslim group to be assassinated by Israel in less than a month. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin died in a previous missile attack on March 22.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon praised the army for yesterday's helicopter strike on the firebrand Rantissi, Hamas' political leader in Gaza, and pledged his country would continue to "fight terror".

Sharon told his cabinet the killing was part of a dual strategy to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza, occupied by Israel since

the 1967 war, while striking mili-

Rantissi's body was carried aloft on a stretcher draped in a green Hamas flag. Mourners kissed his shrapnel-sliced face and others tossed flower petals onto the body. Fists shook at the sky in anger as four Israeli warplanes roared overhead.

"The blood of Yassin and Rantissi will not be wasted. Their blood will force the eruption of new volcanoes," one militant cried. Thousands took up the refrain of revenge, chanting: "We will sacrifice our souls and blood for Rantissi."

Rantissi, an Egyptiantrained paediatrician who was outspoken in support of violence against Israel, died when two missiles slammed into his car hours after a suicide bomber killed an Israeli soldier at northern Gaza's Erez crossing

Rantissi was buried today in

Gaza's Martyrs' Cemetery.

Hamas has so far failed to carry out the kind of massive attack it had promised to avenge Yassin's death.

Faced with an Israeli threat to wipe out all its leaders, Hamas said it had named Rantissi's successor but would keep his identi-



Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Jerusalem on Sunday. (AFP)

ty secret. Palestinian sources speculated the new leader was either Mahmoud al-Zahar or Ismail Haniyah. Zahar said reaction for Rantissi and Yassin would come. "The Israelis are hiding, they are keeping off the streets. We will retaliate when the time is right," he said.

Support for plan

Jerusalem, April 18 (Reuters): Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon won vital support for his plan to pull out of the Gaza Strip today when two key cabinet ministers from his Right-wing Likud party swung behind it.

Both finance minister Benjamin Netanyahu and education minister Limor Livnat, each commanding a considerable Likud power base, pledged support. Rantissi's killing stoked Palestinian anger already high over President George W. Bush's statement last week backing Sharon's pullout plan — which would also let Israel keep some West Bank land Palestinians want for an eventual state.

Protests against Rantissi's assassination erupted across the West Bank in scenes that recalled the start of an uprising more than three-and-a-half years ago. Israeli troops used teargas and rubber bullets to drive back stone-throwers.

"It is no doubt a crime," Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie said. "Unfortunately the Israelis feel they are supported by the US administration."

Qurie wrote to world leaders today urging them to restart West Asia peace talks, accusing the US of breaking international law by making "concessions" in the name of the Palestinians.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan criticised Rantissi's killing, saying it could lead to more violence in West Asia. The European Union and Russia also condemned it. The UN, the EU, Russia and the US form a "quartet" of brokers who have charted a "road map" to peace in West Asia. But some European officials feel Bush's statement last week sidelined the other group members.

The US denied giving Israel the green light to go after Rantissi but refrained from condemning the assassination.

Israel killed Rantissi three days after Sharon won Bush's backing at the White House for his plan to withdraw from Gaza and four Jewish settlements in the West Bank by the end of 2005.

Sharon presented his "disengagement plan" to his cabinet today

Hamas vows 100 retaliations for murder



Jordanian women hold portraits of Sheik Ahmad Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi at a demonstration in Amman on Sunday. (Below) A spokesman for a radical Palestinian group calls for killing of a U.S. soldier taken hostage in Iraq recently, in retaliation, while speaking at a refugee camp in southern Lebanon on Sunday.



PLEDGING 100 retaliations, Hamas appointed a secret leader on Sunday to replace Abdel-Aziz whose assassination by Israel dealt a blow to the militant group ahead of a planned US-backed pullout

Rantissi, a 56-year-old firebrand, was the second Hamas leader to be assassinated by Israel in less than a month. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin died in a missile attack on March 22.

rom Gaza.

Faced with an Israeli threat to wipe out all Hamas leaders, the movement said it would keep the identity of Rantissi's successor secret.

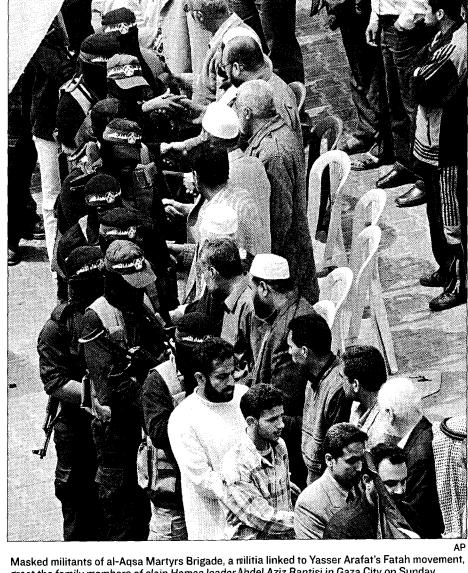
Hamas sources confirmed a new leader had been appointed to replace Abdel Aziz Rantisi, but refused to identify him.

Israel's Army Radio reported Mahmoud Zahar, second in command to Rantisi, had been appointed to oversee the group in Gaza, but Hamas officials refused to confirm the report. Hamas' Damascus-based leader Khaled Mashaal reportedly instructed the Gaza leadership to keep the identity of the new appointee secret.

"Compensation for Rantissi and Yassin can only come when hundreds of Zionists are killed," one Palestinian said in Gaza. Hundreds of mourners set fire to tyres and prepared for a mass funeral for Rantissi.

Rantissi's assassination stoked Palestinian anger already high over U.S. President George W. Bush's statement this week that Israel could retain land Palestinians want for a state in any peace deal.

Sharon told his cabinet the assassination was part of a dual strategy to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza while striking at Palestinian mili-



greet the family members of slain Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi in Gaza City on Sunday.

"The policy is an effort on rael's destruαion. the one hand to progress on the diplomatic process and on the other to harm the terror organisations and those who lead them," Sharon said in his first public comments on the killing. Rantissi was viewed as particularly hardline in a militant Islamic group that has killed hundreds of Israelis in suicide bombings and is sworn to Is-

Zahar, onepossible successor, is also a hardliner who escaped an assassination attempt last year. The other candidate is the more pragmatic Haniyah, Yassin's former right-hand man.

The United States denied giving Israel the green light to go after Rantissi but refrained from condemning the assassination.

In Gaza, troops killed a Palestinian gunman near a Jewish settlement, thwarting an attempted attack, the army said.

Israel killed Rantissi three days after Sharon won Bush's backing at the White House for his plan to withdraw from Gaza and four Jewish settlements in the West Bank by the end of

'Killing will lead to more violence'

Agencies UNHQ, April 18

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Kofi Annan condemned Israel's killing of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi on Saturday, saying the assassination could lead to more violence in the Middleeast. "The Secretary-General condemns Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantissi," a spokesman for Annan said in a statement. "He reiterates that extra-judicial killings are violations of international law and calls on the government of Israel to immediately end this practice.'

"He (Annan) is apprehensive that such an action would lead to further deterioration of an already distressing and fragile situation," the spokesman said.

France, Greece, Iran, Japan, China and Turkey were among governments that condemned Israel's killing of Rantisi.

Sharon praises army

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has praised Israel's armed forces for assassinating Hamas leader Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, Army Radio said on Sunday. Sharon was quoted as saying that he would push ahead with a plan to pull out of the Gaza Strip. "He sent his congratulations for the successful operation and said the policy of disengagement on the one hand and fighting terrorism on the other will continue," the radio said.

Chanting, rallies mark funeral

Associated Press Gaza City, April 18

HUNDREDS OF thousands of Palestinians calling for revenge thronged the streets of Gaza City on Sunday during the funeral for slain Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi.

"Yesterday they said that they killed Rantisi to weaken Hamas. They are dreaming. Every time a martyr falls, Hamas is strengthened," Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader, told more than 70,000 mourners.

"Hamas might have a crisis at hand after losing its leaders, but it will not be defeated."

Hamas supporters chanting "God is great" and "revenge, revenge" threw flowers at the three men's stretchers as they were carried through the streets in a funeral procession. The number of mourners approached several hundred thousand.

'You can see (the future of) the movement in the sea of people here today," said Mahmoud Zahar, who had been Rantisi's second in command.

During the funeral procession, Rantisi was covered in a green Hamas flag with his face exposed and a green Hamas headband around his forehead

His bodyguards, who were badly mangled in the explosion, were completely covered by green flags.

About 200 armed Hamas militants lined both sides of the road and gave the bodies a salute as they approached Rantisi's house. "You got what you've always dreamed of Abu Mohammed, you won," read graffiti on a wall referring to Rantisi by his nick-



Two girls hold a portrait of Abdel Aziz Rantisi at a protest in Sidon, southern Lebanon, on Sunday.

1 9 APR 2004

fired missiles at the car he was trav-Mr. Rantisi was one of the four leaders who founded Hamas in 1987.

elling in, killing three.

By Prafted Bidwai the holy Haram al-Sharif site in the "What pains us most," says Haya Vowing that it would continue with Cabinet consider

the holy Haram al-Sharif site in the Old City here in Sept 2000.

Since then, some 3,000 Palestinians ments, sometimes from warplanes. As have been killed by the IDF in repressive actions and firings and bombardmany as 49,000 were injured. people went into shock and mourning tion' of the Hamas leader, Abdul Aziz IERUSALEM, APRIL 18. The Palestinian Rantisi, by an Israeli aircraft which ast night at the 'targeted assassina-

century Europe, resulting in the gassday is supposed to be a period of reflection about the tribulations of the Ironically, the assassination comes ances of the Holocaust Remembrance and Heroes' Day began today. This Jews since their expulsion from the just a day before elaborate observ-Holy Land and particularly in 20th ing of six millions by Hitler. A paediatrician, he was considered a strategist of the militant group, and was named Hamas's successor in the

major intellectual guide and political

and its supporters, but also by the The assassination has been condemned widely - not just by Hamas PLO — and independent sources such as the former negotiator Hanan Ashrawi or the highly regarded secular lead er Mustafa Bargouti. Gaza Strip to Sheikh Ahmed Yaseen, the quadriplegic old leader killed by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) on tisi's killing, seen here unanimously as A pall of gloom and despondency over East Jerusalem as well as a criminal act of "extrajudicial execu-

But no signs of regret are visible in the The small but articulate Israeli peace and reconciliation movement too has condemned it unambiguously. Israeli mainstream media

nisations have called for one- to three-Several Palestinian different orgaday "general strikes" or bandhs in Gaza and the West Bank.

the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sha-

ries, including withdrawal from Gaza,

Bank setttlemnts.

ritories, as well as into Israel, are The Israeli authorities have justified the assassination and threatened to rorism'. They have also imposed harsh closures at the numerous checkpoints nians across pockets of their own terwhere the entry and exit of Palesticontinue that policy to eliminate 'tercontrolled.

> hire a taxi here without ordinary Palabout their 'pulverisation' and 'humiliation' at the hands of the IDF, and

Such closures immensely hurt the Palestinians and are a form of collective egonomic punishment banned by international law and international Jumanitarian law. Half of Gaza went without electricity last night. the Second Intifadati was triggered by Mr. Rantisi was the 370th person to have been assassinated by Israel since Mr. Sharon's provocative march on ron's right-wing Likud Party-led condemning the policies of Mr. Sha-

killing was unprovoked. Hamas's expected 'retaliation' for Yaseen's killing Mubarak, a young social worker in East Jerusalem, "is that Rantisi's brutal never materialised. Worse, it comes throated endorsement for the Israeli right of return and Israel's annexation of large swathes if West Bank territoon top of President's Bush's fulldenial of the Palestinian refugees ries occupied since the 1967 war."

As many as 400,000 settlers live in these territories — illegally.

On April 14, Mr. Bush declared as 'unrealistic' the demand, endorsed by many United Nations Security Council Zionist demand for the near-permaresolutions, that Israel vacate the occupied territories. In effect, the U.S. has backed the most extreme Likudist nent annexation of Palestinian land

ership, in conjunction with Mr. Bush's marks the end of the peace process completely excluded from any negotiation about their own fate. This is a major cause of the sense of frustration and returns the Palestinians to the pre-1991 situation when they were The targeting of the Hamas leadtotal support for Mr. Sharon's policy, that prevails in Palestine.

Hamas threatens revenge

Atul Aneja reports:

has set up a mourners' tent at his mourning in the Palestinian territories headquarters in Ramallah. A three-day ession to bury Mr. Rantisi. Mr. Ārafat nians today joined the funeral proc Tens of thousands of angry Palesti been declared.

Mr. Rantisi's successor has already been appointed, following instructions from the head of Hamas, Khaled Meshal, who is based in Damascus. His name, however, has not been disclosed due to security considerations.

Vowing that it would continue with targeted assassinations of the top Hamas leadership, an Israeli Cabinet Minister said Mr. Meshal also would also not be spared.

is the fate of (Mr.) Rantisi. The minute Gideon Ezra, a Cabinet Minister without portfolio was quoted as saying we have the operational opportunity that "the fate of (Mr.) Khaled Meshal we will do this.

si as a "ticking bomb" and held him responsible for personally ordering Israeli officials described Mr. Rantisuicide bombings in Israel.

Israeli agents in 1997 also tried to kill Mr. Meshal by injecting him with ooison when he was stationed in ordan.

The killing of Mr. Rantisi has triggered a wave of fury and calls for

Piqued by the killing, Palestinian ries. Ismail Haniya, a senior Hamas leader, said in Gaza City that Mr. Ranrevenge in the Palestinian territotisi's blood "will not flow in vain."

encouraged Israel to carry out its campaign of assassinations. The Palestinian Prime Minister, Ahmed Qurei, pointed out that, "the Palestiniar leaders have said that the U.S. has

Cabinet considers this terrorist Israeli ican encouragement and the complete bias of the American administration campaign is a direct result of Amertowards the Israeli Government.

Nabil Shaath, said: "Israel commits ican President. When it commits state The Palestinian Foreign Minister crimes and is rewarded by the Amer-Hanan Ashrawi, a well known Pal terrorism, it gets promises."

has been given a free hand by the United States to continue its policy of estinian parliamentarian said, "Israel oţ assassination." destruction,

Mr. Rantisi knew that he was a day. Nothing will change. If by Apache marked man. In an interview, soon after Sheikh Yassin's assassination, he had remarked: "We will all die one (helicopter) or by cardiac arrest, I prefer Apache.

Hossam Zaki, described the attack as "state terrorism." The British Foreign Minister, Jack Straw, said the Israeli A spokesman for the Arab League were, "unlawful, unjustified and coun-"targeted assassinations, ter-productive." policy of

Editorial on Page 10

White House defends Israel

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

Abdel Aziz Rantisi, the Bush administration has once again defended Israel's WASHINGTON, APRIL 18. Reacting to the assassination of the leader of Hamas "right to defend itself from terrorist attacks." And Washington is asking "al parties" to exercise "maximum restraint" at this time.

The White House issued a statement on Saturday on the killing of the Hamas leader, and while giving support to the Jewish state's policy of "target ed assassination," cautioned Israel to "consider carefully the consequences"

"As we have repeatedly made clear, Israel has the right to defend itself from terrorist attacks...," the statement of the Press Secretary said. of its actions.

0

the West Bank and Gaza over Mr. Ran-

March 22. hangs Beneath the gloom is seething anger and fury at the "continuing injustice" of the Israeli occupation, as well as the body blow to the peace process re-cently delivered by the U.S. President, Gorge W Bush's uncritical support for ron's plans for the occupied territobut retention of the much larger West One can barely walk into a shop or estinians expressing strong sentiments

tion," in violation of international law.

Israel kills Hamas top leader

Associated Press Gaza City, April 17

AN ISRAELI missile strike killed Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi as he rode in his car Saturday evening, hospital officials said. Rantisi's son Mohammed and a bodyguard were also killed in the attack, hospital officials said. The militant Hamas leader was one of Israel's top targets after it had assassinated Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin in an airstrike last month.

Rantisi's car was hit with missiles Saturday evening on the road outside his home, leaving only the burned, destroyed vehicle. After the explosion, Israeli helicopters were heard in the area. Rantisi was taken to the hospital in critical condition, his body pocked with bloody wounds and blood streaming from his head and neck, and rushed into emergency surgery, but he died five minutes after arriving at the hospital.

Witnesses said there were three people in the car at the time of the explosion. Five pedestrians were also wounded, hospital officials said.

The dead included Akram Nassar, 35, Rantisi's personal bodyguard and his son Mohammed, 27, hospital officials said. Rantisi's wife was in the car, but her condition and location was not known, hospital sources said.

About 2,000 angry Palestinians marched through the streets carrying pieces of Rantisi's car shouting, "revenge, revenge." Shooting was heard in the center of Gaza City and people were chanting Rantisi's name.

"This blood will not be wasted," said Ismail Haniyeh, a Hamas leader at the hospital. "We are not going to give up." Rantisi is Hamas' top leader in Gaza and one of the most hard-line members of the militant movement who rejects all compromise with Israel and calls for the destruction of the Jewish state.

Israel had previously tried to kill Rantisi June 10 when three Apache helicopters fired at least seven missiles toward Rantisi's car in a crowded Gaza thoroughfare, reducing his vehicle to a scorched heap of metal. Rantisi escaped with a wound to the right leg. Two Palestinian bystanders were killed.

In a retaliatory attack the next days 16 Israelis were killed in a Hamas sucide bombing in Jerusalem.

Palestinian officials lashed the Isrreli strike. "We condemn in stronger possible terms this Israeli crime of assassinating Dr. Rantisi. This is state terror, and the Israeli government is fully responsible for the consequences of this action," Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat said. Israeli officials justified the attack as part of the ongoing battle against militants who have killed more than 900 Israelis in attacks over the past 3 1/2 years of violence.

"We have to continue this war, every time and every place. And this story with Rantisi shows how the army can get everywhere. We have to continue, we have no other choice," Cabinet Minister Gideon Ezra told Israel Radio.

Israel has stepped up strikes on Hamas in advance of a proposed unilateral pullout from Gaza. Israeli officials have said they hope a string of military successes to show that the militant group was not driving it out of the coastal strip.

The explosion happened Saturday evening a block from Rantisi's house in the Sheik Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City, about 100 yards (meters) from where Hamas founder Sheik Ahmed Yassin was buried after Israel assassinated him last month.

Since then, Israel has vowed to kill the entire leadership of the Islamic militant organization. Israeli sources said Saturday they

Israeli sources said Saturday they struck at Rantisi at the first available opportunity and said he was planning a large attack on Israel to solidify his leadership of Hamas and to retaliate for Yassin's killing.

Israel has been on high alert for a

Israel has been on high alert for a suicide bombing since Yassin's March 22 killing. After Rantisi was killed, Israeli prisons holding Palestinian prisoners went on high-alert after the attack, fearing possible riots.

ush, EU divided over W Asia

Tullamore, April 16 Reuters

peace with the Palestinians rather than its friends in THE EUROPEAN Union stepped up criticism of President Bush's West Asia shift on Friday, telling Israel it must make

"To achieve lasting peace to reach agreement with the Palestinian people," said Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen, whose counand security, Israel still has try currently holds the presidency of the bloc. Washington.

"It remains the case that Israel has to make peace friends. Israel and the United States are not in conflict," he said before a meeting with counterparts from the EU's 25 current and fuwith its enemies, not its There was widespread ure member states.

dismay in European capitals this week after Buen bac-

rael from the Gaza Strip as a of a unilateral pullout by Isbund peace process. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking in Washington being out Bush's endorsement fore talks with Bush, denied Palestinian accusations that chance to revive the mori

of Palestinian refugees to

ked Israeli plans to keep parts of the occupied West Bank and dismissed the right return to what is now Israel. But, anxious to avoid another transatlantic clash, the bloc strained to put a positive spin on developments, singl-

powers in 2002.

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said the Quartet was likely to meet

Asked about Washington's backing for Israel's claim to parts of the West Bawork for reaching a final settlement. Diplomats said French President Jacques en he branded Bush's supthinking on Thursday whport for the Israeli plan to and nk, he said the "road map" remained the basic frame Chirac had voiced what many across Europe were keep parts of the West Ba nk an "unfortunate

Palestinian supporters of Islamic Jihad burn American and

Israeli flags in Beit Lahia, Gaza Strip, on Friday.

pled the "road map" peace the US policy shift had cripplan put forward by major

the The plan crafted by the EU, Russia and the United Nations, laid out steps toward an independent Palestinian state and a final set-"Quartet" of the US, tlement by next year.

in Berlin around April 28.

dangerous precedent."

IT SEEMS too good to be true. Those who hope to cut down on their drinking may be able to turn to a patch for help, as many smokers have

line for a resolve-bolstering aid that is simple, cheap and can be hidden under clothing. The team at Duke Upil versity, US, includes Jed Rose, a co-inventor of the Researchers in the US are habits at the same time. If they succeed, non-smoking drinkers could be the next in nicotine patch, who believes their recent work helps exworking on ways to kill both New patches could contain both nicotine, which replainteraction between alcohol and nicotine. rettes as smokers try to wean themselves off the weed, and mecamyline, a chemical that ces the active parts of ciga reduces a person's desire for drink and smoke. learned to do. plain

The Guardian, London

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

17 APR 2004

Bush backs Sharon's scheme

Home for the Jewith people." The expression itself was carefully chosen; the purpose being, as Max Nordau had occasion to clarify, "to deceive our real aim." The objective then, as now, remains true to the vision of Vladimir Jabotinsky: "a colonizing adventure" that "stands or falls by the question of armed force." In the by mildness" until such time as "there was no need to dissimulate past 55 years therefore, and partic-HE PRIME Minister of Israel, Home single single-minded. He initially vations. These were intended to negate the road map. Last week, he again played poker with the Amerraised one hundred objeclayed it by over six months, and finally accepted it (under some U.S. pressure) in May 2003 with 14 resericans and refused to go to Washing-ton unless he got full satisfaction on tions to the Quartet Road Map, de-

ularly since the time of President John Kennedy, the American com-

and withdraw certain military installations and settlements in the West Bank," accepts that this involves certain risks for Israel and therefore gives the assurance that the U.S. "is strongly committed to Israel's securi-ty and well-being as a Jewish state."

'in the light of the new realities on ment with the Palestinians must give Israel secure and recognised borders the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers." Hence a return to the pre-1967 bor-It stresses that a final peace settle-

cords that were so bitterly, and so successfully, opposed by Mr. Sharon. the first place and was continued for the same purpose after the Oslo Acwhen he described the road map not as a plan for peace as much as a plan for pacification and as a way of putting an end to Palestine as a problem.

tended to do away with a negotiated settlement. Its clear objective is to to retain Israeli settlements on the ther weaken and eventually undo the leadership, to create the illusion of a tial attributes of statehood, and to refugees irrespective of the justice of their cause and of their numbers. Its The Disengagement Plan is inimpose a settlement on Israeli terms, pest parts of the West Bank, to fur-Palestinian Authority in its present Palestinian state devoid of the essenbury the problem of the Palestinian acceptance by the U.S. is an inten

dent, who wanted to use Iraq to create a favourable climate for resolving in West Asia, and for democratising follies in Iraq by complicating still further that older problem that has of Palestinians as a people "tainted It is ironic that an American Presithe principal and the oldest problem and modernising the region, is today wishing to divert attention from his cast its shadow over the whole region

(M.H. Ansari is a distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Founda tion, New Delhi.

d0 away with a negotiated settlement on Palestine. Sharon's Disengagement Plan is intended to

mess in Iraq. Beleaguered as both leaders are in domestic controver-Persian proverb goes, "I will call you wherever it exists," Mr. Sharon wrote adding that "your vision is the only way to achieve peace and security in This was sweet music to ears that have heard nothing but trenchant criticism of the handling of pre-9/11 intelligence as also of the current sies, an exercise in mutual sustenance is understandable. As the the Middle East.

In terms of its historical memory, the State of Israel attaches particular importance to letters written by the high and the mighty. It was a 10-line letter by Lord Balfour in 1917 that process of a "National Haji if you will call me Haji"! initiated

ders is not possible. It also asserts that the question of the Palestinian exchanges of such executive commitments. The three full pages of the Bush letter not only continue this mitments to Israel have been increthrough process but carry it to a higher pitch. enhanced

sponsibility of the Palestinian lead-ership in the matter, welcomes the Sharon Plan for unilateral disengagement under which "Israel would The Bush letter is to be read with U.S. President made on April 14 in the presence of Mr. Sharon. The letter barely mentions the Quartet road iterates the now familiar rhetoric on fight against terrorism and the rean even longer statement that the map, refers to the Bush Middle East Vision statement of June 24, 2002, rewithdraw certain military installa-

independent") and absolves Israel of any responsibility in the matter. The two leaders of course had less since 1967 — an occupation whose tling them in the future Palestinian room for the fortitude of the Palestinians, formally under occupation continuation is possible only and exclusively because the U.S. does not state (to be — for the sake of form refugees has to be resolved by set-"viable, contiguous, sovereign and

create "new realities on the ground." This was the logic of occupation in concessions from the Palestinians and the time thus gained is used to wish otherwise. As a result, every effort to resolve the problem ends up as an exercise in extracting more tions and all settlements from Gaza,

THE HINDU

APR 2004

the text of a formal exchange of let-George W. Bush obliged and in return received fulsome compliments from his guest: "I have never met a

ters with the United States President.

and the need to confront terrorism

leader as committed as you, Mr. President, to the struggle for freedom

Historic, US shift on West Bank

Washington, April 14 (Reuters): President George W. Bush implicitly recognised Israel's claim to some West Bank settlements today and backed a Gaza Strip pullout plan in a historic US policy shift that drew immediate condemnation from the Palestinians.

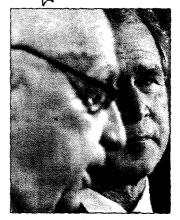
Bush's support for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will go down well with conservative and Jewish voters in the US presidential election but was likely to inflame the Arab world and further complicate efforts to stabilise Iraq.

"In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centres, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949," Bush said during a news conference with Sharon.

The announcement marked a shift from the decades-old US policy of viewing the Jewish settlements as an obstacle to peace and was greeted with anger by Palestinian officials.

"Bush is the first US President to give legitimacy to Jewish settlements on Palestinian land. We reject this. We will not accept it," Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurie said at his West Bank home.

The statement and letters Bush and Sharon exchanged could go a long way toward help-



President George W. Bush (right) and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in the White House on Wednesday. (AFP)

ing the Israeli leader push his plan to scrap 21 Jewish settlements in Gaza and four in the West Bank through a binding vote in his right-wing Likud party on May 2.

The President also appeared to negate any right of return of Palestinian refugees to what is now Israel, saying they should be resettled in a future Palestinian state instead.

Any US endorsement of a cementing of Israel's hold on land Palestinians want for a state was likely to tap Arab anger and complicate peacemaking efforts in the region, including Iraq, where US forces are under daily attack

S ready to strike, Sadr offers truce 1 Marin

grip around one FORCES tightened their of Iraq's holiest cities on Wednesday, and the rebel Shi'ite cleric they have neted him to convey peace vowed to kill or capture offered peace terms to spare Naiaf a bloodbath. An envoy appointed by Moqtada Al-Sadr said the wanted cleric had proposals to the Americans.

2,500-strong 3rd Spanish and Polish troops, set viet states to escape a hostage Brigade Task Force, along with up what US officers called an Russia said it would airlift out more than 800 of its nationals and citizens of ex-Sofrac-for-all and worsening vioence sweeping Iraq. å

exclusion zone around Najaf and sent out reconnaissance patrols from Forward Operatng Base Duke, 20 km west of The Najaf buildup was proceeding hours after US vowed to stay the course in fraq and said a June 30 handover to Iraqi sovereignty President George W. Bush

has US Military would go ahead

fired on looters raiding a mili-



A youth flashes victory sign near a burning US Army truck in Baghdad. Reuters

branded Sadr an outlaw and oledged to kill or capture the sacred to the world's Shi'ite cleric, who has taken refuge near Najaf's Imam Ali shrine, Muslims.

jaf, Iraqi mediators said they Falluja for 48 hours from 9 am But violence flared in had extended a shaky truce in the embattled Sunni town of on Wednesday.

Tension was also running high in Najat's sister city of Katyusha rocket, aimed at a police station, hit a civilian area, police and hospital officials said. Baghdad, where US soldiers

Pak mulling request ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said on Wednesday it was considering a US request Meanwhie

take 553 Russians and 263 nationals of former Soviet states Russia's Emergencies Ministry said seven flights from Kuwait and Baghdad would out of Iraq later this week, despite the safe release of three Russian and five Ukrainian

spokesman Masood Khan

protect the UN in Iraq. to contribute troops to

Foreign Ministry

said Islamabad received

the request last week.

at around \$1 billion.

lect John D. Negroponte, a

veteran diplomat and cur-

rent US envoy to the UN

dent Bush is expected to se-

WASHINGTON: Presi

Negroponte as envoy?

The US Military took no talks, but Ahmed Hardan, of cil, said it had been agreed that Iraqi police would return direct part in Tuesday's truce the Iraqi Islamic Party, which is represented on Iraq's USto duty in Falluja within 48 hours, after which US forces appointed Governing Coun--- Reuters would withdraw.

latest to join four Italian pri- Bush will stake vate security guards, three lapanese civilians, three Czech journalists, two Arab aid workers and a US contractor on the list of reported

hostages on Tuesday

panies involved appeared undecided over whether to withput at risk contracts estimated At least some of the comdraw altogether, which would

insurgents in Falluja overnight killed, but negotiators ex-US Marines fought Sunni and witnesses said four civilians and two fighters were tended a truce for 48 hours.

streets were empty amid fears

bushed on the airport road. A

Reuters photographer said he saw several Iraqis lying motionless and bleeding after the Four people were killed

shooting.

As tension mounted in Na

ern city of Mosul when a

and six wounded in the north-

tary truck previously am-

Karbala, where residents said

-Agencies

on June 30.

as ambassador to Iraq after

after granting sovereignty

of clashes between Sadr's mili-

tia and US-led forces.

Bulgaria said its troops in derfire during the night. They base, the Defence Ministry in the shrine city had come unpews conference, Bush called took no casualties in the attacks on a patrol and on their At a rare White House A French journalist was the on Sadr to disband his militia.

Sofia said

re-election over iraq, terror wai

STEVE HOLLAND WASHINGTON, APRIL 14

W. Bush said he would stake outcome in Iraq at a rare prime-time news conference Americans from the White his re-election on a successful on Tuesday night. Bush appeared before millions of rising public concerns over his US PRESIDENT George House East Room to answer fraq policy with April emerging as the deadliest month for the United States in Irag, with more than 80 soldiers killed. The highest in one year.

Bush acknowledged there have been "tough weeks" in fraq and said voters "may deand "that's democracy", but that he did not think they would. Fellow Republicans cide to change" in November fear spiralling violence could cost Bush the election.

iob. I plan on telling the American people that I've got a plan to win the war on terror and I believe they'll stay with "I don't plan on losing my me," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

APR 2004

HANDOVER ON 30 JUNE # NEW UN RESOLUTION FOR RECONSTRUCTION * 'IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG WAR

Iraq: Call it by any other name but 'Nam, says Bush

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, April 14. — Rejecting that Iraq was becoming another Vietnam, US President George W Bush has said American forces will stay the course in the country till terror is defeated but insisted Washington was determined to hand over power to the people on 30 lune

power to the people on 30 June.
"I think the analogy (Iraq another Vietnam) is false. I also happen to think that analogy sends the wrong message to our troops and sends the wrong message to the enemy," Mr Bush said at a televised White House news conference last night.

enemy." Mr Bush said at a televised White House news conference last night.

"We are in a long war," Mr Bush said.

"The war on terror is not going to end immediately. The war on terror is a war against people who have no guilt in killing innocent people." The American President acknowledged that the USA had suffered a series of "tough weeks in Iraq" but added he intended to send additional forces.

Bejecting that eignty to Iraqis on 30 June.

Stephy to fraque on 30 June.

That date, he said, is firm. "We will not step back from our pledge." He said he was sending Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to the Middle East to discuss how they can help an independent trad

they can help an independent Iraq.
"It is important that we meet the deadline.
As a proud, independent people. Iraqis do not support an indefinite occupation and neither does America," he said. Mr Bush said he wants a new UN Security Council resolution to try to convince more nations to send troops to aid USA-led efforts in Iraq.

"Failure in Iraq would be unthinkable. In this conflict there is no alternative to resolute action" and that it would be a signal of US "weakness and decadence" and help terrorists "to recruit a new generation of killers," he said in a 17-minute statement at the outset of the prime time news conference called to defend his policy on Iraq.



Mr George Bush during his speech. — AFP

Striving to appear confident about Iraq, Mr Bush said the weapons of mass destruction could still be found in Iraq.

US Democratic presidential hopeful John

Sadr ready to face murder trial at steps he was going to take under "legitimate" Iraqi govt Iraqi govt

ed no specific plan whatsoev-

er," Mr Kerry said, adds AFP

Britain and USA at odds

BAGHDAD, April 14. — Radical cleric Moqtada Sadr is willing to appear before a court in connection with the murder of a rival cleric, but only under a future "legitimate and democratic" government in Iraq, an aide said today. "Sayyed Moqtada has agreed to appear before court after the formation of a legitimate and democratic government," Haidar Aziz said.

Moqtada is wanted for three charges, including two murder counts. One of the cases involves the stabbing to death of Abdel Majid al-Khoie, son of widely venerated Grand Ayatollah Abul Qassem al-Khoie, following the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime last April. Meanwhile, an Iranian foreign ministry delegation today arrived in Iraq to help settle a standoff between the USA-led coalition and Shitte Muslim radical leader Moqtada Sadr, a close aide of the

Kerry slammed President George W. Bush for over how realistic was the pursuit of democfailing to offer a plan for stabilizing Iraq during his televised speech and press conference. Pentagon 10 days ago after returning from "Tonight, the president had the opportunity to Iraq, told *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper.

Britain and the United States murder counts, are divided on much of their Abdel Majid alloassem alloassem alloassem alloassem alloassem alloassem alloady arrived in British newspaper today, adds AFP from London. "The USA and British were working at cross purposes basically because of disputes over how realistic was the pursuit of democracy." Michael Rubin, who resigned from the Pentagon 10 days ago after returning from Iraq, told *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper.

15 APR 2004

US troops make partial pullback Agence France Press Fallujah, April 12 In Fallujah, the ceasefire seemed to be still holding Hand over Iran

Agence France Press Fallujah, April 12

US TROOPS made a partial pullback on Tuesday from this Sunni Muslim bastion as a goodwill gesture, an Ira-qi mediator said, even as a 2,500-strong US force, backed by tanks and artillery, pushed to the outskirts of Najaf on Tuesday for a showdown with a radical cleric. Near Fallujah, a US military helicopter crashed, and an insurgent said he hit the craft with a rocket-propelled grenade.

There was no immediate word on casualties from the crash of the helicopter, which a reporter saw burning 12 miles east of Fallujah in the village of Zawbaa. US troops trying to reach the downed aircraft, initially reported to be an Apache, were attacked by gunmen, the reporter said. Witnesses said four US soldiers were shot by insurgents. One of about a dozen insurgents near the site said he had shot the chopper down with a rocket-propelled grenade, although he and the others could not get close enough to the wreckage to

search for victims.

Meanwhile, Fuad Rawi, senior member of the Iraqi Islamic Party, which is leading mediation efforts, said. There's been a partial pullback of troops, coalition troops, from the city as a good-will gesture". Rawi added, "I can't give more details about when or where the partial pullback happened, or how many troops it involved". But Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy coalition director of military opera-tions, said: "I'm not aware of any partial pullback"

A Fallujah ceasefire, which began at 10.00 am (11.30 IST) on Monday, was extended until Monday night. US



A masked Iraqi insurgent holds up a grenade launcher near a burning US Humvee in Fallujah on Tuesday.

marines are taking part in a week-long operation, codenamed "Vigilant Resolve", aimed at flushing out insurgents blamed for the brutal murder of four US contractors here March 31, as well as for other anti-coalition attacks.

There are still negotiations ongoing this evening, but we're very optimistic. The two parties have been respecting the ceasefire, although there have been a few minor breaches. So, we re-main optimistic", Rawi said.

Monday at nightfall, except for a 10-minute clash at around 5:15 pm (18.45 GMT). Rebel leaders had given US marine snipers a 4:00 pm (1730 IST) ultimatum to leave the besieged Sunni town or face a renewed all-out offen-sive, a journalist who attended a meeting of insurgents said. Citing hospital sources in the town, Iraqi mediators said the civilian death toll from the weeklong US offensive in the Fallujah stronghold topped 600 with 1,250

wounded in Fallujah.
But Kimmitt said that there were no reliable figures on civilian casualties. He put coalition combat fatalities since April 1 at 70, while those of insurgents at 10 times that number.

Iraqi national security adviser Muaffaq al-Rubaie urged Fallujah residents to hand over those suspected of the brutal murders of four US contractors there last month to pre-empt any renewed US offensive.

In Crawford, Texas, US President George W. Bush said the situation in Iraq had improved, while acknowledging again that the past week had been difficult for US-led forces. "The situation in Iraq has improved. But you're right, it was a tough week because there was lawlessness and gangs that were trying to take the law into their own hands". he told reporters after meeting Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Bush announced that he would hold a White House Press confer-

ence late on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, two delegations of mediators brokering a truce between the US forces and insurgents re-turned from Fallujah on

Hand over Iraq to UN: Kerry

WITH PRESIDENT George W. Bush neck-deep in trouble over his Iraq policy, Democratic presidential front-runner John F. Kerry has urged him to "bolster UN representative Lakhdar Brahimi to develop a formula for an interim Iraqi government" that Iraqis can accept. "It's vital that Brahimi

accomplish this mission, but the odds are long, be-cause tensions have been allowed to build and distrust among the various Iragi groups runs deep". Kerry told the Washington Post. "The US can bolster Brahimi's limited leverage by saying in advance that we will support any plan he proposes that gains the support of the Iraqi leaders."

PTI, Washington



John Kerry



Sheikh Hazem al-Araji

Shia cleric aide held. freed

A TOP aide of Shia Mus-lim radical leader Muqta-da al-Sadr was released by the US forces outside a Baghdad hotel on Tuesday after a brief detention and said he would hold a Press conference. Sheikh Hazem al-Araji was arrested on Tuesday soon after giving an interview to the Italian Press. He was taken away in an armoured US miliin an armoured US mili-tary vehicle, witnesses said. An Iraqi policeman said al-Araji, a cleric and aide to Sadr for a northern Baghdad district, was led out of a service entrance of the Palestine Hotel and into a waiting vehicle be-fore being driven off. Upon his release, he said he had his release, he said he had been held for five hours, was not questioned and received apologies from the US troops.

AFP, Baghdad

Tuesday, a US officer said. The head of the US-led coalition ground forces in Iraq, Lieutenant-General Ricardo Sanchez, said the Fallujah ceasefire appeared to be holding this afternoon, though US troops were still

coming under attack. "It's tenuous", Sanchez said. "I must add that these are just initial discussions. We're not negotiating at this point until we achieve some confidence-building and a period of stability", said Sanchez.

Nothing warned of 9/11: US Prez Associated Press Month of In his first assuments since Setup

PRESIDENT BUSH said on Sunday he was satisfied before September 11, 2001, that federal agents were on top of the terrorist threat when he read a briefing memo on Osama bin Laden's intention to strike inside the US.

"I wanted to know whether there was anything, any actionable intelligence", Bush said, and when he read the memo of August 6, 2001, "I was satisfied that some of the matters were



George Bush

first comments since Saturday's release of the presi-dential daily brief, Bush said the document contained "nothing about an attack on America". Bush said if there had been any specific intelligence pointing to threats of attacks on New York and Washington, "I would have moved mountains" to prevent it.

Bush was told more than a month before the September 11 attacks that the al-Qaida had reached America's shores, had a support system in place for its operatives and that the FBI had detected suspicious activity that might involve a hijacking plot. Since 1998, the FBI had observed "patterns of suspicious activity in this country consistent with preparations for hijackings or other types of attacks", according to the memo prepared for Bush and declassi-fied Saturday.

IRAQI OPERATIONS / TWO GOVERNING COUNCIL MEMBERS QUIT IN PROTEST

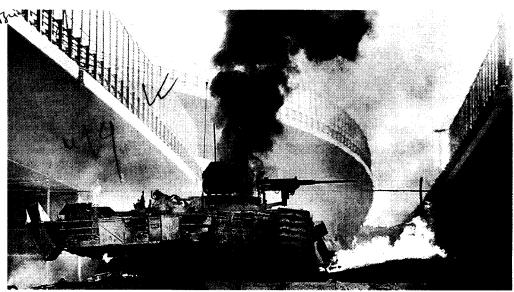
U.S. offers truce to Fallujah fighters

MANAMA, APRIL 10. Faced with fierce resistance, mounting casualties and desertions from an Iraqi civil administration that it has appointed, U.S. authorities have called for a formal ceasefire in the restive Sunni bastion of Fallujah.

Addressing a press conference this morning, a military spokesman announced the U.S. wanted to reach a ceasefire in Fallujah. "What we are seeking is a bilateral ceasefire on the battlefield so we can allow for discussions," Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmit said. A delegation headed by two members of the U.S.-appointed Governing Council for Iraq subsequently entered Fallujah and ceasefire talks were likely to be held in a mosque. Hakim al-Hosni, deputy head of the Iraqi Islamic Party, and Ghazi al-Yawar, a Sunni member of the 25-member Council are leading the delegation.

The U.S. call for a ceasefire comes after at least 42 American soldiers were killed in the last one week of fighting in Iraq. U.S. forces, which are in the midst of an offensive in Fallujah, are also battling a nationwide uprising in Iraq, led by a young Shia cleric, Moqtada Al Sadr.

Analysts point out that there are at least two other factors that have reinforced the U.S. intent to seek a ceasefire. First,



A U.S army tank burns after it was attacked on a Baghdad highway on Saturday. — AP

the deaths of hundreds of Iraqi civilians has triggered a national outcry and driven cracks in the U.S.-appointed Iraqi civil administration.

Two members of the Governing Council have already resigned in the aftermath of Fallujah operations and a third is threatening to pull out.

is threatening to pull out.

Thousands of Iraqis, especially women and children, are now streaming out of Fallujah in the wake of the fighting, and their teeming presence along the highways is reinforcing anti-

American sentiments.
Second, U.S. troops were not

making much headway in Falujah as they were still stranded on the fringes of the city.

After warding off a U.S. offensive in the Shia-stronghold of Sadr City, fighters from the Mehdi Army, loyal to Mr. Al Sadr today attacked American troops in northwest Baghdad. Heavy fighting has been reported from this area.

Meanwhile, the Mehdi army announced a unilateral truce in Karbala in deference to the Shia festival of Arbain, which is being observed over the weekend.

After six days of clashes, there has been no let-up in the kid-

napping of foreigners, belonging to countries that have sided with the U.S. occupation o Iraq. In footage aired by an Aral TV station on Saturday, a group describing itself as the "Brigades of the Hero Martyr Sheikl Ahmed Yassin," said it was holding 30 foreigners as hostage. It threatened to decapitate them unless the U.S. lifted its blockade over Fallujah. Italy has not officially confirmed that its nationals have been abducted, but the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, arrived on Saturday at Al Nassiriyah, where Italians have a military base.

USA calls for ceasefire in Falluial

ASSOCIATED PRESS N

negotiators entered Fallujah today as Marines reinforced their encirclement of the city. Fierce battles raged in central Iraq, including Baghdad. Forty Iraqis were killed, an American civilian was captured and a Red Crescent official and his wife gunned FALLUJAH, April 10. Government

Several members of the Iraqi Governing Council met people who killed and mutiated four American civilians council member Mahmoud with Fallujah city leaders, trying to win the handover of ast week. They also want the insurgents to give up foreign militants in the city Othman said down.

Mark Kimmitt called on Fallujah's totalling 1,200 troops and a battalions, battalion of Iraqi security insurgents to join a bilateral ceasefire. But he said a third battalion of Marines had moved in around the city forces already in place. Gen. two Brig. oining

Kimmitt warned that if the council's talks do not pro-duce results, the military

A Palestinia boy leans against a carpet with the image of Saddam Hussein dring a demonstration in Jenin on Saturday — AFP

uld well have been that we

yesterday, but said gunmen rounds on coalition headquarcontinued to fire on troops, are in the southern city of "Were we not at this point of offensive operations ... it cowill consider renewg its Kimmitt said Marines ere in offensive operations calk respecting a unilateral 11. observing suspension who were responding.

ty by this point," he told reporters in Baghdad. would have had the entire cifired mortar Insurgents

-sra overnight without caing casualties, a coalition office said A rocket-prooffice grenade was also

gents attacked at least two

Iraqi military base now used Baghdad and Fallujah, a key supply route and entrance to lobbed at a nearby former by the British troops who con-On the road between the capital, where masked gunmen have been running rampant for two days, insurtrol the city, the official said.

Committee of the Red Cross the head of the Iraqi Red Crescent's Irbil office, Barzan today in their car in the city In the north of the country Umer Mantik, and his wife were attacked and killed of Mosul, the International said. Two US service members and several contract employees were still unaccounted for from attacks yesterday, a Pentagon spokesman said today. In the apparent kidnapping at Abu who spoke briefly with its Ghraib, Australia's ABC tele cameraman, identifying him vision filmed the American self as Thomas Hamill

the end of the mourning period for a 7th-century martyred Shiite saint. thousands of pilgrims are in Karbala and other Shiite cities to mark al-Arbaeen, Ceremonies are to be held Pilgrims: Hundreds until Sunday night.

GERMANS MISSING

In Baqouba, north-east of latest in a rash of kidnap

pings of foreigners.

ed government buildings and police stations, fighting the capital, gunmen attack-US troops in battles that killed around 40 Iraqis and wo unded several Americans. German government securiistry said today, confirming ing in Iraq for several days, the German foreign minsion in Baghdad have been ty workers have been miss-BERLIN, April 10. - Two Fallujah, west of Baghdad Sunni insurgents. - AFP evidence to suggest it is a hostage-taking." German woman said. "There is no "Two civil servants workdays," a ministry spokesearlier television reports. public television network missing near the town of ing for the German mismissing for the past few today engaged in a sixth German men had gone ŽDF reported that two day of combat against where US forces were

destroying tanker trucks that burned, sending a pall of black smoke. Nearby, guerrillas hit a US tank with fuel convoys at Abu Ghraib an RPG, setting it afire. Footage aired

showed gunmen driving off today apparently an American civilian — in their car the with a captured foreigner

Y April 2nd President George W Bush is driven was not that solid was merely childish. Grown men in good conscience will betray themhave done with the intelligence package he had used to prepare Powell's defence that he was not hardened into something unattractive like President Bush. On to wonder aloud what he should selves like this, unless they are Friday, I had to listen to his to pushing his respected the intelligence chief was a poor as best she might, without support before a full Congressional Secretary of State, Colin Powel his case for action against Iraq and unnecessary give-away, and his conclusion that the material National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, defend herself Committee concerned over the

front, instead of coaxing his. Bush's performance before the field to defend his President as hides nothing of his biases, his that President Bush, who took the leading part in settling this please explain how it comes to pass that he is in cowardly silence while Powell takes the Rice with her President's speech the ground declared for going to then it stands to reason fairy tale, should come out in senior colleagues to venture Colin Powell spoke to the Security Council months after General Assembly of the United Clearly Bush's speech controlled best he can. Ditto, Condoleezza the General Assembly which prejudices, his hatreds and his lies. If the Administration has Weapons of Mass Destruction, forth and accept responsibility Nations, on 12 September 2002 events. Will America's President answer over the mythical same issue.

Culpable Homicide

Bush said in his UN speech. Although heavily loaded with references to Weapons of Mass vation, mutilation, and rape. Wives are tortured in front in their husbands, children in the presence of their parents — and It is time to consider what Saddam Hussein seems largely world by the apparatus of a totalitarian state. Tear-jerking certainly but that is all. Then a Destruction, the charge against rhetorical. Listen to this - Tens execution, and torture by beating string of loud accusations of havbreaking promises to stop develoring meanons of mass destruction and showing it to the world. Accusations of falsifynents and ordinary citizens have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, summary of thousands of political oppoand burning, electric shock, starall of these concealed from the ing supported and sheltered terrorist organisations within Iraq ing the promise are without sub

Iraq - both invasions account for illegalities over invading Kuwait even as he is coy over Saddam Hussein to his own invasion of Bush... does ask seriously illegal

existed. Bush says Saddam admitted to a crash nuclear weapons programme prior to the stance as the weapons never

Nations.

If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will release or account for all Gulf War personnel whose erty, accept liability for losses resulting from the invasion of Kuwait, and fully cooperate with international efforts to resolve these issues, as required by Security Council resolutions. return the remains of any who fate is still unknown. It will are deceased, return stolen prop-Gulf War his father fought. He knows that if it were not for that war Iraq would likely have possessed a nuclear weapon no later walk away from Iraq

reduce his forces in

Iraq... are in ruins. His willingness to

Bush's attempts to

tions totally. He does ask Saddam Hussein to account for You cannot fault Bush for Kuwait even as he is coy over his ignoring international obligainvading own invasion of Iraq -- both invasions seriously illegal. illegalities over

has lasted well over a year and there is no end in sight. Kuwait venture, which ended as it began; while a year after inva-Iraq was occupied in the teeth ening to spiral out of control. Hans Blix, highly respected former chief weapons inspector said on Friday that the terror tions are in ruins. His will-ingness to walk away from Iraq by June if he is not spotted in of international opposition — his speech to the UN was in September 2002 and he moved in, in April 2003. The occupation Hussein. Bush's attempts to dated by Congressional resolusion four Iraqi cities are threat war was scarier than Saddam reduce his forces in Iraq as manwas a simple and sure misad defeat, is no longer an option.

ous. Wasn't oil the common reason for invading Kuwait and Iraq! Now pay for the damage to Is it easy to compare Bush with Iraq that you have caused, Mr President, as you rightly ask Saddam over Kuwait. Saddam! Comparisons are obvi-

spotted in defeat, is by June if he is not no longer an option.

destroy, all weapons of mass destruction, long-range missiles, and all related material. He specifically adds that Saddam Hussein continues to in 2003 because Iraq might have develop weapons of mass destruction. I do not know where Saddam is held. His two sons were murdered by Bush, to than 1993. So Bush goes to war Bush goes on to say that if Iraq desires peace, it will immediateincommunicado with no access to international organisations. Bush continues to flout his international obligations in Guantanamo Bay violating known principles accepted elsewhere and then takes refuge in stupid hope. He is detained ease pressure on his own forces ly and unconditionally forswear had a nuclear weapon in 1993! disclose, and remove

Talking of Guantanamo Bay I am minded of Bush's conduct in international law. Listen to his same speech to the United ing obligations in respect of ignoring all obligations includ-

THE STATESMAN 71 APE 2004

A year on, America in shock in Iraq

Bloody turmoil

- Chaos reigns in Iraq on first anniversary of Saddam Hussein's fall. The week's toll rises to 450
- Fierce fighting that has convulsed the Sunni cities of Falluja and Ramadi reaches the western outskirts of Baghdad
- Insurgents seize four Italians and two Americans. Teenagers lurk with rocket-propelled grenades
- Nine die in attack on US convoy carrying fuel. Reuters picture below shows an Iraqi beating to pulp a foreigner lying on road



- American forces suspend military operations in Falluja to facilitate humanitarian access and talks with insurgents
- US-led troops regain control of Kut
- Loud explosion rocks Baghdad's Sheraton Hotel as mortar round lands close by, but no casualties
- Three Japanese remain in captivity but Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi tells Japan he has no plans to pull troops from Iraq despite threats by kidnappers to kill the trio
- Palestinian President Yasser Arafat intervenes to seek the release of two abducted
 Palestinians
- Reports on Page 3



An Iraqi celebrates in front of a burning US tanker which was part of a military convoy attacked on Friday in Abu Gharib. (AFP)

JOHN DANISZEWSKI

Baghdad, April 9: One year ago, I walked down an empty stretch of Sadoun Street towards the pointed gun barrels of US Marines who had just reached the centre of Baghdad. Perhaps it was dangerous, but I felt only relief and elation. The arrival of the Marines meant the 21-day war was over, and Iraq would have the possibility of a better, peaceful future.

On that day, I was soon surrounded as happy Iraqis came pouring into the streets.

Today, I can no longer walk down Sadoun Street. As an American, it is not safe for me to do so.

A year after the fall of Baghdad — after the deaths of more than 600 Americans, the wounding of 8,000 others and the allocation of untold billions of dollars — the hopes of April 9, 2003, seem farther than ever from reach.

The seeds of today's problems were planted even before the war was really over. The Marines moved in on the eastern side of the Tigris in Baghdad.

The army was on the western side, mopping up pockets of resistance. But neither had the

means, or any evident mandate, to enforce law and order.

As US troops stood by and did nothing, a paroxysm of looting erupted. By the time it was over, the country was left far more shattered than it had been during the war. But everyone believed US forces would swiftly take care of whatever was needed.

It was nine days after the fall of Baghdad before the US defence department finally let the US civilian authority, led by retired Gen. Jay Garner, into Baghdad. For reasons of security, Garner and his makeshift team set up shop in Saddam's Republican Palace and began to construct what came to be known as the "green zone".

In those days, a few guards and some mild strands of concertina wire were deemed enough to block the gates.

Now the green zone barrier is hundreds of yards of reinforced concrete — a Berlin Wall in the middle of Baghdad.

The replacement of Garner with L. Paul Bremer III in mid-May brought another series of shocks to the Iraqi population. Bremer said it was too early for any grand council or turnover of meaningful power to Iraqis. He abolished the Iraqi army. That pen stroke left about 500,000 men

desperate for work, creating a reservoir of anger that would come back to haunt the US leadership.

The months of May, June and July were marked by the beginnings of the anti-US insurgency.

As summer heated up, the lack of electricity made the discomfort even more acute. Complaints from ordinary Iraqis about the inefficiency of the occupation grew louder.

The seating of the Iraqi Governing Council in July had done little to satisfy public demands for an end to occupation, and the council itself soon proved feckless and disorganised. The killing of Saddam's sons, Udai and Qusay, at a safe house in Mosul soon after briefly lifted spirits and set off volleys of celebratory gunfire. But as the long, hot summer simmered into a sultry autumn, attacks mounted. In November, 110 coalition members died, roughly the same as during the "active" phase of the war.

The capture of Saddam in a "spider hole" close to his home village in December seemed at first as if it might deflate the former Bathists and intelligence officers who seemed to be the backbone of the resistance, but in some ways it liberated them. No longer encumbered by the

crimes of their former leader, they could style themselves as patriots for Iraq.

Another girder of American hopes seemed to collapse this month when at least one segment of the unhappy but generally quiescent Shia population turned to open revolt, led by the firebrand cleric Moqtada al-Sadr

Today, US forces are losing lives on two fronts — against Sunni insurgents mixed with religious extremists, and against the newly awakened Shias.

For Iraqis, the suffering has been enormous. They are disappointed, disillusioned and — in many cases — blindly furious and eager and willing to lash out at the foreigners in their midst.

On my last day in Iraq last month, I visited a young second cousin of mine from Texas who, as a reservist, has been sent to Balad in the Sunni Triangle.

Seeing her bright, shining face in the sea of desert camouflage uniforms, a young woman eager to do a good job and please her commanders, but also to stay safe and please her worried mother back home, I wondered how we Americans and Iraqis found ourselves in this predicament.

LOS ANGELES TIMES-WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE

Iraqi Crossfire

Washington must bring Teheran on board to resolve the crisis

Almost a year after the US declared victory in the war against Saddam Hussein, Iraq is no closer to peace or stability, let alone democracy. If anything, the events of the last few days suggest that the security situation on the ground is rapidly slipping out of coalition control. The reported shifting of the detained former Iraqi dictator from the theatre of conflict to a secure military base in Qatar is the surest sign of the panic that has gripped the Americans. The armed rebellion against the occupation forces, which was earlier confined to the so-called 'Sunny' triangle in the north of the country, has now spread to engulf practically the whole of Iraq. If the initial attacks against the US forces came from Ba'athist elements, mainly Sunnis — with some help from foreign-based mercenaries — the latest uprising has the widespread support of the majority Shia community. The immediate cause of the dramatic escalation is the US decision to arrest a popular Shia cleric Moqtada al Sadr, who is accused of being involved in the murder of a fellow religious leader in the early phase of the war last year. Shia fighters close to the cleric, calling themselves the Mehdi army, have since taken control of three major Iraqi towns and engaged the US-led occupation forces in fierce fights across the country. The pattern of recent violence also suggests a measure of coordination between Sunni and Shia guerilla fighters, who had thus far been seen as being on the opposite side of the great religious divide in the Iraqi society.

divide in the Iraqi society.

The depth of popular anger and resentment against the US has many roots. But it is, in part, a reflection of the marginalisation of important Shia factions in the US-brokered power-sharing arrangement. So what can the US do? For one, president Bush must decisively put on hold his June 30 deadline for handing over 'sovereignty' back to the Iraqis. Bush is no doubt eager, for domestic political reasons, to extricate himself from the mess that is Iraq but he must realise that he was the one who created it in the first place. For another, he must utilise Teheran's historical influence over key Shia leaders in Iraq — including grand ayatollah Ali Sistani — to work out a more equitable sharing of political office between different Shia factions. So far, Bush and his advisors have pursued an isolationist hardline policy against Iran, particularly on the issue of its N-programme. It's time for a rethink. Because, without Teheran's active involvement, the gathering crisis in Iraq can only get worse.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7'9 APR 2004

US wants India as part of new lrag force Washington: The US has

Washington: The US has asked over a dozen countries, including India, Pakistan and France, to join a new international military force to protect the United Nations in Iraq, according to American and European officials.

The proposal is critical to persuading the UN to return to Iraq after two massive suicide attacks against its Baghdad headquarters last year in which its top official there was killed, they were quoted as saying by Washington Post.

The US has approached France, which led opposition to the war in Iraq, as well as India, Pakistan and other nations which were reluctant to join the US-led coalition that invaded Iraq, the officials said on condition of anonymity.

The list includes a "good global mix," said a state department official familiar with the proposed force. However, no Arab country or neighbours of Iraq are on the list. Turkey is also notably absent. The Kurds in the north strongly object to Turkish troops entering Iraq.

The new force, said the Post, is considered essential to the fragile political transition. The Bush administration is relying on the UN to return to Iraq to organise the elections as well as the polls by year end in places where even the current coalition is not deployed, US officials said.

"Potentially there could be a lot more places that forces would have to go," said a senior state department official on condition of anonymty because of the sensitivity of the subject. Agencies

Iraq cities | Committee | Comm

Associated Press Fallujah, April 8

US Marines fought insurgents for the second day around a mosque in the Sunni Muslim MILITIAMEN LOYAL to an anti-US Shia cleric controlled large swaths of three Iraqi cities on Thursday after clashes with coalition forces, while

"You can be certain that, if

they want more troops, we will

sign deployment orders so that they'll have the troops they ne-ed", Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said at a Pentagon

news conference on Wednesday,

Marines' siege against insurgents in Fallujah, west of Baghdad, began early on Monday said Taher Al-Issawi, the director of the city's hospital.

At a time when the US forces had planned to try to hand more security duties over to the Iraqi Americans and at least 459 Iraqis dead. This includes more than 280 Iraqis killed since the stronghold of Fallujah. Fighting this week has left 35

surgents were again using as a base despite a six-hour battle the day before to uproot them.

> one security forces, the intensified violence on two fronts

mosque's minaret, and an F-16 dropped a laser-guided bomb at the wall, allowing Marines to move in and seize the site, Lt. Col. Brennan Byrne said.

Military commanders in Iraq said a large number of insurgents were killed in the battle. Iraqi witnesses said about 40

there was a large casualty toll taken by the enemy", said Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, deputy chief of military operations in Iraq He said US Marines did not people gathering for prayers were killed in the air strike on the mosque compound, but US of civilians killed. "I understand attack the mosque until it became clear enemy fighters were inside and using it to cover their attacks — nullifying the holy site's protections under the Geneva Conventions. Marines control 25 per cent of Fallujah, a city officials said they had no report Helicopters were deployed to support the Marines, he said. Capping Wednesday's battle, a US Cobra helicopter fired a missile at the base of the though he insisted fighting was not spinning out of control.
In Fallujah, Marines battled again around the Abdel-Aziz al-Samarrai mosque, which Marine Capt. James Edge said in-

of 200,000 people, Byrne said. Heavy fighting was heard on Thursday in several neighbour-

plies to its residents, under night-time curfew and surrounded by US forces since early Monday morning. A Sunni clerics committee organised the macolouring "Sons of the great Fallujah, we're with you on the road of jihad (holy war) and hoods, and US Marines grabbed rooftops of buildings, firing on gunmen in the streets. Thousands of Iraqis marched the 30 miles from Baghdad to Fallujah to deliver food and medical suptrance to the city. Answering a carrying victory" — came upon the Marine cordon on the western en call by Muslim groups for a peaceful march to Fallujah, they chanted: "No Sunnis, no Shias, yes for Islamic unity." -came upon the Ma rch. Marchers -

Aumsfeld: Troons may stay longer

MORE US troops could be sent to Iraq and other US forces could stay longer than planned to deal with the latest surge in violence. Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said. While Rumsfeld insisted on Wednesday that the fighting was not spinning out of control. His remarks were the clearest signal yet that US officials were likely to increase the overall number of troops in Iraq nearly a year after President Bush. declared major combat in he country completed

AP, Washington

THE HOUSTAN TIMES 9 APR 7004

স্বখাত সলিলে ১৯৯৯ ৯ ১৯

🕇 মেরিকা এবং ব্রিটেন কি এই মুহূর্তে সংকটাপন্ন? অদূরেই ইরাক যুদ্ধের দুই পরাক্রান্ত নেতা মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ ডব্লিউ বুশ এবং ব্রিটিশ প্রধানমন্ত্রী টনি ব্লেয়ারের তডিঘডি দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক। কিন্তু এখনও পর্যন্ত সরকারি মহল হইতে সমানেই বলা হইতেছে যে, না, এই বৈঠক কোনও জরুরি ভিত্তিতে আহুত নয়, সঙ্কট মোকাবিলার জন্য নয়, নেতারা এমনিতেই মিলিত হইবার বাসনা প্রকাশ কবিয়াছেন। বিশেষজ্ঞ মহলে অবশ্য ঘোর সন্দেহ, ইহা বড় জোর অর্ধসত্য। প্রাথমিক ভাবে তেমন পরিকল্পনা থাকিলেও এই মুহূর্তে ইরাক পরিস্থিতি লইয়া বুশ ও ব্লেয়ার এতখানিই বির্পস্ত যে তাঁহাদের বৈঠক এখন 'সঙ্কটকালীন', 'জরুরি'-ভিত্তিকই বটে। না হইলে বোঝা মুশকিল, কেন আমেরিকায় বুশ-বিরোধী ডেমোক্র্যাট নেতা এডওয়ার্ড কেনেডির কটুক্তি অনুসরণে আপাতত ইরাক-কে 'বুশের ভিয়েতনাম' বলে অভিহিত করা হইতেছে, কেনই বা তাহাতে তেলে-বেগুনে জুলিয়া উঠিয়া মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব কলিন পাওয়েল কেনেডিকে ধিকার জানাইয়াছেন যে, জাতির পক্ষে যাহা যুদ্ধকালীন পরিস্থিতি তাহা লইয়া শস্তা মন্তব্য করা নিম্নরুচির পরিচায়ক। এই মৃহর্তে যদি সঙ্কটাবস্থা না-ই হয়, তবে কেন পেন্টাগন ইরাকে আবার নৃতন সৈন্যবাহিনী প্রেরণ করিবার কথা ঘোষণা করিয়াছে, কেনই বা মার্কিন প্রতিক্রিক বিজ্ঞানিক বিরোধিতা ক্রিকেন্দ্রক্রিকার ক্রিকোর্কিকা ক্রিকেন্দ্রক্রিকার ক্রিকার ক্রু মৃতন সেনা পাঠাইবার কোনও নাই। ভোলা যাইবে না যে, ইব্লাকে বহু মার্কিন সেনা-ক্ষয়ের খবর টেক্সাসে প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশের কাছে পৌছাইলে তিনি পত্রপাঠ যুদ্ধকালীন নাটকীয়তায় ঘোষণা করেন, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র সর্বার্থে ঠিক পথে চলিতেছে, পথভ্রম্ভ হইবার কোনও কারণ নাই, সুতরাং জাতি জয়তু ইত্যাদি।

লভ্য ইঙ্গিতগুলি একত্র, করিলে একটিই সিদ্ধাত্তে **উপনীত হওৱা** যায়। সম্মুখে যতই অস্বীকার ও সাহসিকতা, প্রদর্শন চলক না কেন, স্কিতরে ভিতরে হোয়াইট হাউস বিপন্ন, এবং পুনরায় যুদ্ধকালীন ব্যবস্থাপনায় ব্যতিব্যস্ত। নতুবা বৃশ, পাওয়েল, প্রচারমাধ্যম অধিকঠানের জাতির উদ্দেশে এই শোনঃপূনিক আশ্বাসরাণী এবং নৃতন সেনা-প্রেরণ বিত্রেই আর কোনও অর্থ খুঁজিয়া পাওয়া দুঙ্কর। এই সংকট-বোধ আশ্চর্ম কুম্মার বিষয়েক দিন যাবং ইরাকে যুগ্ধ-পর্বতা সময়ের সর্বাপেক্ষা রক্তাক্ত সংখ্যস্থিতি ঘটিতে দেখা গিয়াছে এক দিকে মাসিরিয়ায়, যেখানে শিয়া-বাহিনী, এই মুহুর্তে হতাশা ও প্রতিশোধস্পহায় রক্তগ্রাসী,

এবর্থ অন্য দিকে তিকরিজ, রামাদি ও ফালুজা সম্বলিত বিখ্যাত 'সৃদ্ধি ত্রিভুজ' অঞ্চলে, যেখানে সাদ্দাম-বিতাড়নের প্রতিক্রিয়ায় সঞ্জাত ক্রোধ-বহ্নি এখন লেলিহান শিখায় দীপামান। মার্কিন ও জোট সেনারা যে এই বিদ্রোহাগ্নির সামনে সাক্ষাৎ প্রাণ হারাইতেছেন, ইহা হোয়াইট হাউসের পক্ষে মানিয়া লওয়া অত্যন্ত কঠিন। গত তিন দিন যাবৎ সংঘর্ষে এক এক দিনে প্রায় গোটা কুড়ি পশ্চিমী প্রাণের মূল্য ধরিয়া দিতে হইতেছে, ইহার পরে যদি বৃশ ও ব্লেয়ার তড়িঘড়ি বৈঠক ও আলোচনার জন্য প্রস্তুত হন, তবে সঙ্কট-দীর্ণতার প্রশ্নটাই ওঠা খুব অস্বাভাবিক কি?

আলোচনা ও বৈঠক একান্তই দরকারি হইয়া পড়িতেছে অন্য একটি কারণেও। সামনের তিন মাসের মধ্যে ইরাকে 'বৈপ্লবিক' অভিযানের শেষ পদক্ষেপটি লইবার পরিকল্পনা হোয়াইট হাউসের, অর্থাৎ, ৩০ জুনের মধ্যে যে কোনও ভাবে ইরাকি অন্তবর্তী প্রশাসন নির্মাণ করিয়া তাহার হাতে ক্ষমতা হস্তান্তর করিবার কথা। কিন্তু এই মুহুর্তে রক্তবন্যা যে-রকম প্রবল আকার ধারণ করিয়াছে, তাহাতে সেই সব পরিকল্পনাই বানচাল হইবার সম্ভাবনা দেখা দিয়াছে। ন্যুনতম নিরাপত্তা প্রতিষ্ঠিত না হইলে কোন মুখেই বা বুশ সরিয়া যাইবার মুখবন্ধ করেন, প্রস্তাবিত হস্তান্তরই বা কী উপায়ে সাধিত হয়! তাহা ছাড়া, এই প্রশ্নও উঠিতেছে বইকী যে এই কঠিন পরিস্থিতিতে বুশ-বাহিনী যে বৃত্তের হাতে ক্ষমতা অর্পণ করিবে, তাহা তো আসলে কেবলই নাম-কা-ওয়ান্তে 'ইরাকি', মার্কিন তাঁবেদার ছাডা আর কিছুই নয়। ইতিমধ্যেই ওয়াশিংটন বলিতে শুরু করিয়াছে যে 'হয়তো' প্রতিরক্ষা ও অর্থনীতি সংক্রান্ত দায়িত্ব মার্কিন তত্ত্বাবধানেই রাখিতে হইবে। অন্তর্বর্তী সরকারের যিনি প্রধানমন্ত্রী হইবেন, সেই প্রতিনিধিকে মার্কিন সমর্থন-ধন্য হইতে হইবে। এক জন মার্কিন 'চার তারা' সামরিক জেনারেলের জ্বীনে থাকিবে সুমস্ত ইরাকি এবং বিদেশি সৈন্য। অধীনতিক পুনর্নির্মাণের দায়িত্ব প্রধানত নাত থাকিবে বাগদাদের নব-প্রস্তাবিত মার্কিন দুতাবাসের উপর। সন্দেহ নাই যে, আগামী কিছু কালের মধ্যেই আবার পুরাতন তর্ক মুঠন ভাবে সন্ধট তৈরি করিতে চালিয়াহছ কেন এই দায়িত্বভার ঞ্চাকিবে মার্কিন হস্তে, কেন রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ এ দায়িত্ব লাইবে না। মোট ক্থা, ইরাকের বর্তমান ও ভবিষ্যৎ লইয়া এই মুহুর্তে যে পরিমাণ সংঘ্রবার কালো ছায়া ঘনিয়া আসিয়াছে, তাহাতে প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশ আপাতত আক্রান্ত, সঙ্কটাপন্ন। যতই অস্বীকার করুন, এই স্বথাত-সলিল সূর্যালোকের মতো সত্য, এবং সেই স্বখাত-সলিল হইতে তাঁহার উদ্ধার খুব সহজসাধ্য নয়।

Fighting on, coalition loses control of Najaf, Kut

ALISTAIR LYON BAGHDAD, APRIL 8

S TROOPS fought Sunni and Shi'ite rebels in Falluia and Karbala on Thursday as hospital officials reported hundreds of casualties in the heaviest fighting since Saddam Hussein's fall a vear ago.

Meanwhile, Arabic TV station Al-Jazeera aired a video showing three Japanese, including a woman, who it said were taken hostage by an Iraqi group vowing to kill them if Japan did not pull its troops out of Iraq.

The top US General in Iraq acknowledged that Najaf and Kut were in the hands of a radical Shi'ite militia but vowed they would be retaken and the militia would be destroyed. "We have got Falluja under siege," Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez said. He denied that US forces were depriving its people of humanitarian supplies.

Up to 300 Iraqis have been killed and at least 400 hurt in the Sunni town in the four days since US Marines began a crackdown on guerrillas, hospital director Rafi Havad said. The Marines launched "Operation Iron Resolve" after the killing and mutilation of four US private security guards last week. South of Baghdad, Polish and Bulgarian troops battled followers of the radical Shi'ite cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr in Karbala.

Sanchez said Sadr's Mehdi Army militia controlled Najaf and Kut, along with police stations and public buildings, while coalition troops held bases outside the towns. Asked if US troops would be sent to fight the Mehdi Army, he said: "We will do whatever is necessary to defeat Mogtada Sadr's forces, wherever they are on the battlefield."

Al Jazeera TV said a statement it had received from a hitherto unknown Iraqi group, Saraya Al-Mujahideen, had given Japan three days from the airing of the video to withdraw its troops from ered outside Baghdad's Um Al-Qura Iraq before three Japanese hostages mosque, chanting slogans in support of were killed. Separately, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said an unnamed people in Falluja and Karbala. Similar rallies took place in Mosul and Baquba. Iraqi group was holding seven Korean church ministers.



in connection with the murder of a rival cleric last year, to arrange his surrender to Iraqi Justice, Adnan Pachachi, a member of the Governing Council said on Thursdin

There are discussions with Sadr to arrange an end to his rebellion and his agreement to turn himself over to Justice," Pachachi told Al-Jezeera television. "We pledge to respect his honour and his security," he added.

An Iraqi judge has issued an arrest warrant for Sadr, who is accused of incitement to murder in connection with the April 2003 slaying of cleric Abdel Maiid Al-khoei. a crime for which several of his aides have alady been detained.

Sunnis and Shi'ites to proclaim solidarity, but it is not clear if this has translated into any coordination among their militias. "We will carry our swords and strike the Americans on their heads," a Sunni cleric yelled. Trucks with food and other Insurgents walk past a blazing US vehicle after it was destroyed in Baghdad on Thursday and (left) volunteers load supplies on a truck bound for areas under siege by US forces in Failuja. Reuters

goods then left Baghdad for Falluja.

Heavy fighting broke out in the Abu Ghraib area on Baghdad's western outskirts. Witnesses said had guerrillas attacked a US Military convoy on the highway and were also battling Iraqi police in the nearby township.

* The US said it might keep combathardened troops in Iraq longer than planned to help tackle the insurgencies, rather than rotating them.

Sadr's Mehdi Army swept onto the streets of Shi'ite cities across Iraq this week, clashing frequently with coalition troops. Meanwhile, Polish and Bulgarian soldiers traded fire with the militia in Karbala overnight and a health official said four Iragis had been killed and 16 wounded. More clashes erupted during the day. ---Reuters

A Marines' town waits for news of who died

From

Los Angeles Times

DEBORAH SCHOCH & MONTE MORIN

OCEANSIDE, APRIL 8

ATA local beauty salon on Wednesday, the wives of two soldiers bolted from their chairs and rushed home after hearing that officials would soon announce the names of several Marines from Camp Pendleton killed in Iraq.

Throughout the day, military officials released the names of 10 Pendleton Marines killed since this weekend. While it remained unclear how many of those Marines had died in a battle on Tuesday in Ramadi, Pendleton officials said all 12 casualties there were assigned to the I Marine Expeditionary Force, headquartered at Camp Pendleton.

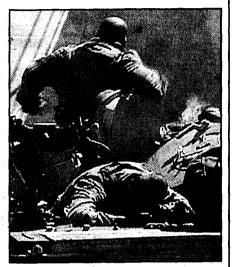
In a city that has lived side by side with Marines since WW II and where business owners and residents proudly display Marine Corps flags and vellow ribbons, a grim silence fell over inhabitants. "When Marines die from Pendleton, it's close," said Damara Brew, 26, a former Pendleton Marine. "It's going to be someone I know. If I don't know them personally, someone I know will know them."

Brew, like many others, kept her cell phone within reach to keep in touch with friends and relatives. Elsewhere, two young women waited for e-mails from Iraq, hoping for good news

about their friends. "I emailed a couple of them," said Melissa England, 24, of Rancho Santa Margarita. Her friend, Safya Bellachia,

25, also of Rancho Santa Margarita, could relax a little. Her fiance came back from Iraq on March 7. But she too was waiting to hear from friends in Iraq.

Her computer is set up so that whenever a news article mentions the First Battalion of the First Marine Division, she gets an e-mail alert. In the hours before officials began notifying relatives of combat fatalities, Marine Maj. Mary Bradford said that a "blanket of quiet" had fallen over the base. Bradford said that, very shortly, teams of two Marines and a chaplain



An injured US Marine lies on top of a burning tank after an attack in Failula on Thursday, Reuters

would begin visiting the families of the dead Marines. "Some family members don't open the door," Bradford said. "Others say, What's next?" The reaction is always different."

The dead aren't just Marines, residents say, they are friends, relatives and customers. "It breaks my heart to think of them over there."

said Eva Valenti, manager of the Cut-Rite barbershop. On an average day before the war, the 10 red barber chairs in Valenti's shop

would have been filled with Marines. On Wednesday, the shop was deserted and Valenti spent her time cleaning a collection of electric shears. "It's not so much the business — these are our friends," Valenti said. "They say Tve got to go,' and you give them a kiss and a hug."

Bradford, the major who oversees all family counselling and service operations for the base, said Wednesday was difficult for Marines and their families, because nobody had known who the dead from the Ramadi battle were, and all -LAT-WP they could do was wait.

Sunni and Shi'ite protesters gath-

The clashes have prompted some

Missiles hit mosque in Fallujah

Troops to be increased in Iraq: Rumsfeld

The Times, London

WASHINGTON, April 7. - Mr Donald Rumsfeld, the US Defence Secretary, has said American military commanders will get additional troops if they are needed to fight the growing chaos in Iraq.

As the Pentagon confirmed that options for deploying more US troops are being studied, signs emerged that voters are increasingly unhappy at President Bush's handling

ed that there are enough American troops in Iraq. His comments yesterday represent a significant change in tone and a reflection that events on the ground may be a critical turning point for the occupation, as well as for Mr Bush's prospects of reelection. "They (the military commanders) will decide what they need and they will get what they need," Mr Rumsfeld said.

announced its intention to reduce US troop numbers in Iraq from the current 135,000 to about 100,000 by the summer. The clearest sign of how rapidly the situation has deteriorated was a decision by the Pentagon yesterday to suspend the return home of 24,000 US troops.

Deploying additional troops would be a political even worse.'

embarrassment for Mr Bush. It risks sending the message in the run-up to the election in November that US progress in Iraq is floundering and would bolster allegations that postwar planning was poor.

Mr Bush is spending this week on the campaign trail, but the news from Iraq has brought an unwelcome reminder that he is a hostage to events largely out of his control.

A new Pew Research poll said that Mr Bush's job approval figure, the of postwar Iraq. most important rating for Mr Rumsfeld has insist- an incumbent President, most important rating for had fallen to a new and dangerously low 43 per cent. Although 57 per cent thought that invading Iraq was the right thing to do, the same number now plan to resolve the situation in Iraq.

echoed comments by Democrats and some senior Republicans that were the June 30 date for trans-The Pentagon had ferring sovereignty in Iraq was flawed because Mr we're turning over sovereignty to".

One White House official summed up Mr Bush's dilemma: "The last thing we want in the months before the election is escalation," before adding, "but seeing Iraq descend into civil war would be





A member of Shiite radical leader Muqtada al-Sadr's Mehdi militia brandishes his Kalashnikov in Baghdad on Wednesday. (Right) US Marines from the1st Marine Expeditionary Force move into Fallujah. — AFP

Associated Press

FALLUJAH, April 7. think that he had no clear US Marines in a fierce battle for this Sunni stronghold fired rockets Mr John Kerry, Mr that hit a mosque com-Bush's election opponent, pound filled with worshippers today, and witnesses said as many as 40 people killed. Shi'iteinspired violence spread to nearly all of Iraq.
The fighting in Fallujah

Bush does not know "who and neighbouring Ramadi, where commanders confirmed 12 Marines were killed late yesterday, was part of an intensified uprising involving both Sunni and Shi'ites that now stretched from Kirkuk in the north to the far south. It was the heaviest fighting since Baghdad fell a year ago this week.

In Fallujah, witnesses

said a helicopter fired three missiles into the Abdul-Aziz al-Samarrai mosque compound, destroying part of a wall surrounding the mosque but not damaging the main building.

The strike came as worshippers had gathered for afternoon prayers, witnesses said. Temporary hospitals were set up in private homes to treat the wounded and prepare the dead for burial.

Until the mosque attack, reports had at least 30 Americans and more than 150 Iraqis dead in fighting for the Sunni Triangle cities of Ramadi and Fallujah.

American soldiers clashed with militiamen of fiery anti-US Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose forces have been responsible for much of the vio-

UN intervene, pleads Arab body

CAIRO, April 7. — The Arab League today urged the UN to intervene immediately to stop the fighting that has raged between US-led coalition troops and Iraqis in many cities over the past four days.

"The Arab League is asking the UN to intervene immediately to save the situation on the humanitarian level," said Mr Hossam Zaki, the spokesman of Arab League Secretary General Mr Amr Mussa.

"Mr Mussa calls for stopping the operations of violence in Iraq, to lift the siege imposed on cities and stop provocation against civilians," said Mr Zaki, quoted by the Egypt's staterun news agency MENA. — AFP

lence other than in the streets of Fallujah. Ramadi and Fallujah.

A US helicopter was forced down after being hit by small arms fire in Baqouba, 45 km north of Baghdad.

Scores of Iraqis also have been wounded, as mosques called for a holy war against Americans and women carried guns in 1st Marine Division com- ing the night. "There were

US Marines have vowed to pacify the violent towns of Ramadi and Fallujah that had been a center of the guerrilla insurgency seeking to oust the US-led occupation force. The 12 Marines were killed yesterday in Ramadi, where Maj. Gen. James Mattis, tion with mortar fire dur-

mander, said his forces still were fighting insurgents that included Syrian mercenaries. Sixteen children and

eight women were reported killed when warplanes struck four houses late yesterday, said Hatem Samir, a Fallujah Hospital official. Ukrainian-led forces

and Al-Sadr's Al-Mahdi Army militia clashed in the city of Kut, southeast of Baghdad, overnight, and at least 12 Iraqis were reported killed and 20 wounded.

Witnesses reported the gunmen killed a British civilian working for a foreign security company.

The Ukrainian Defence Ministry said its troops were forced to evacuate Kut early Wednesday after al-Sadr forces hit the posino Ukrainian casualties, but several dozen militants were killed," said Defense Ministry spokesman Lt. Col. Andriy Lysenko.

In a significant expansion of the fighting, Iraqis protesting in solidarity with Fallujah residents clashed with U.S. troops in the northern town of Hawijah, near Kirkuk. Eight Iraqis were killed, and 10 Iraqis and four Americans were wounded.

In Baghdad, a top US general said the USA would press the offensive. "The coalition and Iraqi security forces will continue deliberate, precise and powerful offensive operations to destroy the Al-Mahdi Army throughout Iraq," Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, the US military's deputy head of operations, told reporters in Baghead.

Rising unrest tests the allies' resolve

Associated Press

THE STATESMAN

BRUSSELS, April 7. — Fighting between coalition forces and Shiite militiamen across a wide swath south of Baghdad presents a major test of the resolve of America's partners to stay the course in Iraq.

The mounting unrest, triggered by the U.S. crackdown on firebrand Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al Sadr, will also test the American strategy of avoiding traditional alliances and international institutions in favor of "coalitions of the willing" in a military conflict.

Washington's inability to bring along its major partners in the Nato alliance into the Iraq conflict means the USA has no ready pool of well-trained reinforcements — apart from its own troops — in case the Pentagon decides more forces are necessary to maintain order.



Iraqi children peer through a bullet riddled door in Nasiriyah on Wednesday. — AFP

tions, Washington must rely on troops home. arm-twisting and powers of perpartners, some of whom face Baghdad, coalition soldiers from

Instead of binding treaty obliga- domestic pressure to send their

Since violence erupted on suasion to hold on to its coalition Sunday in Shi'ite areas south of

Europe and Latin America have come under armed attack after months in which the Americans have born the brunt of the fighting — and the casualties.

But the uprising by al-Sadr's supporters has put the allies squarely on the front lines. In Kiev, the Ukrainian Defence Ministry said its troops evacuated about 20 coalition representatives Americans, Britons, Poles and others — from the Kut city hall after Shiite fighters launched mortar and infantry attacks overnight. The civilians and Ukrainian forces moved to a camp outside of town.

Elsewhere, Polish troops killed an al-Sadr aide, Muntadhir al-Mussawi, in a shootout today in Karbala, Shiite officials said. Later, mourners carried away Al-Mussawi's body, chanting: "Today we will free Karbala from the Jews.

Saddam being held in Qatar'

LONDON, April 7. — Saddam Hussein is being

held at a US military base in Qatar, rather than in Iraq, a British newspaper said today. Following his capture by US forces in December last year, Saddam was first moved to a US aircraft carrier in the Gulf for interrogation, the Independent reported. He was then — at a time not specified by the report transferred to Qatar under great secrecy, with even the state's royal lamily not informed of his presence. Major violence in Iraq over recent days which has seen more than 100 Iraqis killed, meant Qatar was now seen as a far safer place to keep the ousted leader, the paper added. — AP

American dilemma Iraq increasingly looks like another Vietnam

The chickens are coming home to roost for the Americans in Iraq, where things are unravelling quite rapidly even before the planned transfer of power on 30 June. First there was the slaying of American security contractors at Fallujah and the desecration of their bodies by an exulting public, captured in television images. Fallujah is at the core of the so-called Sunni triangle where resistance to American occupation was at its highest. To compound matters the uprising has now spread to Iraq's majority Shias, which must be Washington's worst nightmare coming true. A coordinated uprising in Baghdad, Kufa, Najaf, and Amara, led by the radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, now challenges the US-led occupation. The influence of the Mahdi army, al-Sadr's outfit, has been growing rapidly among Shias, but the prime influence among Iraqi Shias still remains Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who has called for direct democratic elections

leading to a transfer of power.

The Bush administration faces a dilemma now that will be hard to resolve. If it sticks with the June 30 date for the transfer of power, it will look as if it is running away from Iraq after facing stiff resistance, as it did from Somalia after bodies of American servicemen were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. If it does not transfer power it will have gone back on its word once again; besides, photo opportunities comparable to the desecration of American bodies in Fallujah may mount precisely when President Bush is trying to get re-elected in November. The original plan had been to keep some American troops stationed in Iraq even after transfer of power to an Iraqi administration, but to do so now will make the Iraqi government in place look like American puppets, hence targets for an Iraqi insurgency whose morale will be high. Iraq could do for American neo-conservatives what Vietnam had once done for militarists in the Johnson and Nixon administrations. New Delhi has acted with foresight in keeping out of this mess notwithstanding American pressure, and deserves to be commended.

Shiite area in Baghdad

Radicals Take Over Governor's Office In Basra

Baghdad: US helicopters blasted targets in Baghdad on Monday as a showdown intensified with radical Shiite militiamen challenging America's postwar blueprint for Iraq.

Journalists said they saw two Apache helicopters in the Shiite Shuala district in the north-west of the city, where a US vehicle was in flames.

Iraq's US administrator Paul Bremer vowed to crack down on firebrand Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, a day after battles in Baghdad and near the shrine city of Najaf killed 52 Iraqis, eight American soldiers and one Salvadoran soldier.

In another development, followers of the radical Iraqi Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr took over the governor's office in the British-controlled port city of Basra on Monday morning, sources said.

Dozens of armed Mehdi army militiamen stormed the governor's office in the southern city at

dawn, raising a green flag on the roof of the building, an eyewitness said.

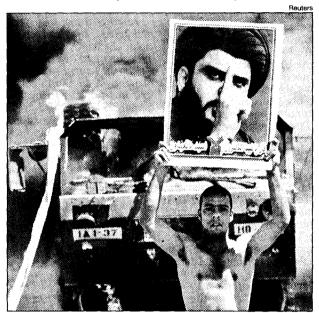
Mehdi army militiamen were seen deployed inside and on the rooftop of the governor's office alongside policemen who had been inside the building when it was overtaken.

Four hours later there were no British troops in the area.

Meanwhile, the top US administrator

in Iraq declared Sadr an "outlaw" on after his supporters rioted in Baghdad and four other cities in fighting that killed at least 52 Iraqis, eight US troops and a Salvadoran soldier. In other violence, the US army said a

In other violence, the US army said a Marine was killed west of Baghdad on Monday, an American soldier was killed by a car bomb in the city of Kirkuk on



An Iraqi Shiite supporter of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr celebrates near a burning US Army truck in the Shuala neighbourhood of Baghdad on Monday

Sunday, and another soldier was killed in a roadside bomb attack in Mosul the same day A US Marine also died on Sunday from wounds sustained in an attack the previous day. Overall, 12 US troops have been killed in combat over the past 24 hours.

Since the start of the war, 422 US soldiers and thousands of Iraqis have been killed. Agencies

THE TIMES OF INDIA

* 6 APR 2004

Arafat unfazed by Israeli threats

Agence France Press Jerusalem, April 3

A PALESTINIAN gunman broke into an Israeli settlement early Saturday, killing an Israeli man and wounding his 12-year-old daughter in their

home, the army said.
In Saturday's attack, the gunman broke into a home and opened fire, slightly injuring a 12-year-old girl, the army said. When the girl's father emerged, armed with a pistol, the attacker shot him to death. Troops searching the settlement found the gunman and killed him, the army

Amid the bloodshed. Arafat said he was unconcerned over veiled threats Friday by Sharon that he might be the target of an assassination attempt.
The violence came after Prime Min-

ister Ariel Sharon revealed the scope of his withdrawal plan, saying Israel will pull out from all of Gaza and evict several hundred Jewish settlers from the West Bank enclaves of Ganim, Sanur. Homesh and Kadim within a year. The deaths bring the overall toll since the start of the Palestinian intifada, or uprising, in September 2000 to 3,892, including 2,925 Palestinians and 898 Israelis.

Nevertheless, a hardline Israeli minister backed veiled threats from Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to assassinate Arafat and dismissed as hypocritical US warnings not to harm

"I don't care of it" Arafat said in English, speaking to journalists after a meeting with the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Monsignor Michel Sabbah, in the West Bank city of Ramal-

"I care for my people, your children, our women, our students, and the holy places for Muslims and Christians," he added.

The hawkish Israeli premier had been asked by the liberal daily Haaretz whether Arafat and the head of the Lebanese fundamentalist militia Hezbollah, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, might be on Israel's list of leaders to assassinate.

"I wouldn't suggest either of them feels immune... Anyone who kills a Jew or harms an Israeli citizen, or sends people to kill Jews, is a marked man, period," said the Israeli premier, in one of his most threatening remarks to date.

Washington swiftly repeated its opposition to any new Israeli move against Arafat, who has been confined to his battered headquarters in Ra-



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat works at his headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah

mallah since December 2001.

"Our position on such questions — the exile or assassination of Yasser Arafat -- is very well known," Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said on Friday.

We're opposed and we've made that very clear to the government of Israel," he said. The European Union warned it would be "unwise" to kill Arafat, while London reiterated its opposition to Israel's policy of extrajudicial executions.

In other developments, at least 23 Palestinians were arrested by Israeli troops during an overnight raid into the northern West Bank town of Nablus. Palestinian security services said 30 people were detained, but Israeli military sources gave the lower

On Friday, at least 20 Palestinians were wounded in Jerusalem in clashes with Israeli police who stormed one of Islam's holiest sites — the Al Agsa mosque compound — to tackle stonethrowing demonstrators.

Sharon also said in interviews published Friday that Arafat and Lebanese guerrilla chief Hassan Nasrallah were not immune, when asked whether Israel would try to kill them. It was not immediately clear if Sharon's remarks meant he would no longer honor assurances to U.S. officials that Israel would not harm

Arafat responded in remarks to reporters at his West Bank headquarters in the town of the West Bank city of Ramallah, where he has been confined to his headquarters for more than two years.

Arafat's aides said on Friday they were taking new Israeli threats against the Palestinian leader's life seriously.

In the lead-up to a withdrawal from Gaza, Sharon also said he would order a freeze on construction in the coastal strip's 21 Jewish settlements, all of which would be removed under the

Initially, Sharon considered holding onto three of the enclaves in northern Gaza

Sharon said the withdrawal from Gaza would get under way within a year and that the only land Israel would continue to hold there would be a patrol road along the territory's border with Egypt that the military says is crucial for combating weapons smuggling. The Israeli leader's Likud Party is to make a final decision on the proposal.

Minister justifies threats

Israel's hardline internal security minister on Saturday stood by premier Ariel Sharon's veiled threats to assassinate Yasser Arafat, dismissing US warnings against killing the Palestinian leader

"It is important that those who send suicide bombers know that they no longer benefit from the least immunity as the prime minister said." Tzahi Hanegbi told public radio.

"If we have information at our disposal about (Palestinian) officials who either directly or indirectly encourage suicide attacks, they are not be-yond harm," he said. Hanegbi also criticised Washing-

ton's swift rebuke against any plot to assassinate Arafat.

"The Americans cannot tell us not to launch targeted operations, while they themselves do so in Iraq and Afghanistan, sometimes against officials who have not touched a hair of an American soldier," he said.
"The two sons of Saddam Hussein

were killed in a targeted operation. when it would have been enough to capture them," he added, referring to the elder sons of the former Iraqi leader shot dead in a gun battle with US troops last year.

Jordan not to allow naming after slain Hamas leader

JORDAN HAS refused a father's permission to name his newborn son Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. to honour the Hamas spiritual leader who was assassinated by Israel last week, the *Al-Dustour* daily reported on Saturday. Ziad al-Nabulsiyeh went to the civil affairs office in Rosseifeh, 20 kms northeast of Amman, to register his newborn son as Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, but was turned away, the newspaper

Department official Maryam Rahahleh told Al-Dustour that registering formal titles on birth certificates was illegal. She said many people, often carried away by emotion, want to give their children names they later regret and subsequently want to change by deed-poll.

AFP. Amman



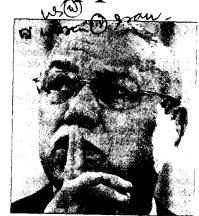
Powell for Iraq probe

WASHINGTON, April 3.—Gen. Colin Powell has called for a probe into the intelligence he was given for use in a presentation to the UN Security Council to justify the Iraq invasion, including claims that Iraq had mobile biological weapon laboratories.

While the state department has not yet released the text of Con-

While the state department has not yet released the text of Gen. Powell's statements, the US secretary of state told reporters that he had urged the White House panel probing alleged intelligence failures to "look into these matters to see whether or not the intelligence agency had a basis for the confidence that they placed in the intelligence at that time."

Gen. Powell said that while he believed that whatever claims he had made regarding Iraqi WMDs were believed to be brought out with the help of "the best intelligence we had, now it appears not to be the case, that it was that solid. But at the time I was preparing that presentation it was



Gen. Colin Powell

presented to me as being solid."

He was briefing journalists about the meetings at the Nato headquarters in Brussels yesterday. "I'm not the intelligence community... it was presented to me in the preparation of that as the best intelligence and information that we had. I made sure, as I said in my presentation, these were multi-sourced," he said. — PTI

Arafat not immune: Sharon

Resociated Press CAN NE Arran

Police storm Al aqsa mosque

JERUSALEM, April 2. — Mr Sharon has warned that Mr Yasser Arafat and Hizbullah chief Hassan Nasrallah are not immune to targeted assassinations. "Anyone who harms an Israeli citizen is a marked man. I wouldn't suggest either of them feels immune...," Mr Sharon told told Ha'aretz daily in an interview published today, when asked if Mr Arafat and Nasrallah were targets for assassination.

He also said once the separation fence is completed, the government will act vigorously to expel Palestinians living illegally within Israeli Arab communities.

Following last week's assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Chief of Staff Mr Moshe Ya'alon had also said that the responses of Mr Arafat and Nasrallah showed that "they understand that this is approaching them".

Israeli riot police stormed a disputed holy site here today, firing tear gas, stun grenades and plastic bullets to disperse hundreds of Muslim worshippers who threw stones and shoes at them.

It was the most violent confrontation at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound since deadly clashes there in September 2000 escalated into the widespread Palestinian riots and led to the current round of Israeli-Palestinian fighting.

Thousands of Palestinians barricaded themselves in two mosques in the walled compound for about two hours, before police agreed to let them leave. Police did not enter the mosques themselves, but were deployed across the compound.

The confrontations at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, site of their biblical temples, began after Muslim noon prayers.

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Jewish settlers move into Arab area, clashes follow

Associated Press Jerusalem, April 1

JEWISH SETTLERS with their shoulders moved into Palestinians, who claim east Jerusalem as the capital of a future state, said the incident showed Israel assault rifles slung over Arab neighborhood of Jerting off clashes between Israeli troops and Arab resiwas more interested in expanding settlements than in two buildings in a crowded usalem on Wednesday, set dents.

Jewish presence in the The settlers said they wanted to re-establish neighbourhood. making peace.

linquish the sector of the city it captured from Jordan Israel says it will never re-



REUTERS sraeli border policemen argue with Palestinians as they start to destroy a house in the West Bank village of Kharbata near Ramallah on Thursday.

In recent years, hawkish Jewish groups, with the backing of hardline governments and foreign investors, in the 1967 Mideast war.

have bought several proper-ties in east Jerusalem to strengthen Israel's hold there.

At daybreak on Wednes-

day, a group of ultra-Orthodox Jews lugged boxes, chairs, tables and potted plants into buildings in the Silwan neighborhood of

tors. Troops also entered four Palestinian homes, selves on rooftops and firing pulling young men out. Police beat one Palestintear gas at the demonstra A van packed with sofas

ian man with a baton and handcuffed six others, dragging them away.

Settlers said eight fami-

Shmulik Ben Ruby said. At least three Palestinians Nine Palestinians were arrested for stone-throwing, and six police officers were hurt, police spokesman

mittee for the Renewal of The settlers said they the Yemenite Village in Shiloah — Shiloah is Hebrew for Silwan — and that their aim was to re-establish a Jewish presence in the were members of the Comwere seen bleeding. morning, clashes erupted in gan throwing stones from mandeered three nearby two buildings Wednesday Palestinian residents be-Police and soldiers com-

neighborhood.

buildings, stationing them-

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

Insurgents attack US convoy in Iraq

Fallujah: Insurgents attacked a US military convoy near Fallujah on Thursday, a day after the grisly killing and mutilation of four American contractors in the city. The top US administrator in Iraq said their deaths would not go unpunished.

It was not clear if there were any casualties in Thursday's assault. Associated Press TV news footage showed smoke pouring from the vehicle that had been abandoned on a roadside just outside the city. Witnesses said a Humvee was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. The US officials said they could not confirm the attack.

Also on Thursday, two explosions near a US-escorted fuel convoy wounded at least one Iraqi in northern Baghdad, witnesses said. In Fallujah, meanwhile, Iraqi police manned roadside checkpoints in and around the city, but no US troops could be seen inside the city. Shops and schools were open. Some residents vowed to repel US forces if they raid the city.

"We will not let any foreigner enter Fallujah," said Sameer Sami. "Yesterday's attack is proof of how much we hate the Americans." Another resident, Ahmed al-Dulaimi, said, "We wish that they (US forces) would try to enter Fallujah so we'd let hell break lose." Iraqi police officer Lt. Salah Abdullah said police retrieved the remains of the four slain Americans on Wednesday night at the request of the Americans, wrapped them in blankets and gave them to US forces.

"We were shocked because our Islamic beliefs reject such behavior," he said referring to the abuse of the bodies. The top US administrator in Iraq, L. Paul Bremer, on Thursday, condemned the killings and said "their deaths would not go unpunished." "Yesterday's events in Fallujah are dramatic examples of the ongoing struggle between human dignity and barbarism," he said at a

graduation ceremony for police cadets.

"The acts we have seen were despicable and inexcusable... They violate the tenets of all religions including Islam as one of the foundations of civilized society." Iraqi Interior Minister Nori al Badran vowed to send forces into Fallujah "to bring killers to justice." "Forces will be sent to Fallujah ... from the army, the police and from the civil defense (force)," he said.

He did not say when the troops would enter the city. There was no sign of a military build-up near Fallujah by midafternoon Thursday. At a U.S. base about 3 km east of the city, 1st Lt. Wade



A member of the Iraq Civil Defence Corps mans a roadblock at the entrance to Fallujah on Thursday

Zirkle, when asked whether US forces would enter the city, said, "It is our job to go there and maintain security in the city and we are making sure that something like that will not happen again."

He said Wednesday's attack was carried out by a "few bandits and terrorists ... who are terrorising the city."

Jubilant mobs on Wednesday dragged the burned, mutilated bodies of the four American contractors through the streets and strung two of them up from a bridge after rebels ambushed their vehicles Party backs Sharon on Gaza pullout plan withdrawal through nego struct of India April 4. Anti-Jew' sculptor to receive Israel Prize adds PTI. "In principle, we adds PTI. "In principle, we a

who has dressed pigs in religious garb, called Moroccan Jews monkeys and condoned . others. Many feel the prize, awarded on Independence Day to Israelis who have excelled most of the country, treading on the sensitivities of religious Jews, women and a host of JERUSALEM, March 31. — The decision to award Israel's highest prize to a sculptor award to sculptor Yigal Tumarkin, a gruff, outspoken artist who has managed to offend The row enveloped the country after the Israel Prize committee decided to give the in their fields, should be given to someone with whom everyone can identify. — AP the Holocaust has caused a public outcry that has reached the Supreme Court. Press Trust of India

applause and catcalls, Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon's proposal to hold a party referendum on his

plan to unilaterally disengage from Gaza Strip was approved by the ruling

Likud party convention.

TEL AVIV, March 31. - Amidst

plan goes to the Cabinet for approval. Mr Sharon's calculations hinges on the belief that based on internal party polls, some 200,000 Likud functionaries are leaning towards the political centre, thus granting majority support for a withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Mr Sharon would not have been able

committee of the party dominated by to garner a majority within the central extreme elements.

Palestinian PM cautious: In Jerucomed Mr Sharon's disengagement salem, Palestinian Prime Minister Mr plan, while emphasising the need for Ahmed Qorei today cautiously wel-

withdrawal through negotiations, adds PTI. "In principle, we welcome lawmakers adding. "But for any withdrawal to have meaning for us ... it Palestinian land," he told Palestinian tion of the peace process and be folshould open the way for the resump lowed by a complete Israeli withdraw the Israeli withdrawal from our al from the West Bank, too."

Mr Ahmed Qorei will undergo tests on Monday and will have further tests today, AFP adds from Ramallah. "He underwent tests in a Jerusalem hospital tomorrow for the second time this week after he suffered a mild stroke on Monday, parliamentary sources said Qorei to undergo medical tests

tomorrow," a source said

charges against him and did not go at length in detailing his plans but asserted that it will be binding if supported The vote is likely to be held after the Prime Minister returns from a visit to Washington, scheduled for the ately avoided mention of the bribery middle of next month, and before the In his speech, Mr Sharon deliberby majority of the party members.

THE STATESMAN

APR 2004

Arab summit postponed

Tunis: Tunisia decided to postpone
an Arab summit due to open here on
Monday after Arab foreign ministers failed to agree on proposals it

decreased exception for political reing reforms development and mod-

ters failed to agree on proposals it deemed essential for political reform in West Asia, a senior Tunisian official announced.

Tunisia's secretary of state for foreign affairs Hatef Ben Salem expressed his government's regrets over the decision to postpone the two-day symmit indefinitely in a more day summit indefinitely, in a move that stunned Arab foreign ministers.

ing reforms, development and modernisation of our Arab world," Ben Salem told journalists on Saturday.

talks on Saturday that his country was postponing the summit. Agencies

Arc of resistance where

As Western-backed occupations fuel terror across West Asia, the struggle of the Palestinians in particular has become the focus of global Muslim grievance, says Seumas Milne

ARIEL SHARON'S decision to incinerate a 67-year-old blind cleric outside his local mosque will certainly go down as one of the most spectacularly counter-productive acts of violence in the history of the Israel-

Palestine conflict.

Quite apart from the morality of assassinating Sheikh Yassin, it is the Israeli people themselves who will suffer from certain retaliation. Israel has the right to defend itself, President Bush declares, while apparently denying the Palestinians the same luxury. But the killing can have no military value at all. Whatever his authority as the founder and figurehead of Hamas, the idea that Yassin was involved in planning armed attacks is pre-posterous. When Israel posterous. When Israel rocketed the apartment block he was visiting last September, the ailing sheikh was reported not to have even realised that an attack had taken place. And regardless of the domestic political calculations of the Israeli government, such attempts to destroy a popular movement by decapitation are doomed to failure.

From Algeria to Vietnam, the past century is littered with evidence that such strategies invariably come to nought. Where resistance has deep roots — as Hamas's undoubtedly has in the occupied territories — it will always re-emerge, however savage the repression. Yassin has been succeeded by Abd al-Aziz Rantissi, and if the Israelis incinerate him, another will take his place. What the killing has done is simply widen the range of targets on each side, expanding the arena of terror.

The chances of a lasting settlement should in reality be higher than ever before. For the first time, every significant political and armed Palestinian group — including Hamas and Islamic Ji-

had — is prepared to accept a *de facto* end to conflict in return for an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza — just 22 per cent of historic Palestine.

Rantissi is widely regarded as more hardline than Yassin. But, as he told me in Gaza a couple of months back, Hamas is ready to call a ceasefire that "should be seen in terms of years" in exchange for full Israeli withdrawal from the territories it has occupied for 37 years. On another occasion, referring to the Hamas dream of Islamist rule throughout Palestine, he said, "We can accept a truce... live side by side and refer all the issues to the coming generations." The organisation's new number two in Gaza, Mahmoud Zahar, confirmed its commitment to a West Bank/Gaza state speaking Guardian. to

But instead of seizing the opportunity for peace, the Sharon government is deliberately undermining the basis for a two-state solution by carving up the occupied territories with its electrified fences, closed zones and ever-expanding settlements. At the same time, it is planning a partial withdrawal from the most heavily populated areas, while effectively annexing other areas of the West Bank and confining Palestinians to walled bantustans that can never form the basis of a viable state.

Such a rearrangement will clearly not resolve the conflict. And considering that the US arms and funds Israel to a greater degree than any other state on the planet, such leverage might be seen as an ideal opportunity for the much-vaunted project of Western humanitarian intervention. But instead of applying pressure to achieve a just settlement, the US and its friends refuse to talk to the elected Palestinian leadership.

After September 11, 2001, Prime Minister Tony Blair promised hope to the slums of Gaza and convinced his supporters that he would deliver American commitment to a West Asia peace deal in exchange for backing the invasion of Iraq. Now his main contribution appears to be extra funding for Palestinian police and prisons to provide security to the occupying force.

None of this, of course, justifies the targeting of civilians by Hamas and others—defended by Rantissi as a "deterrent" to the killing of Palestinian civilians. If deterrence is the intention, it appears to be a failure, as Palestinian civilian and military deaths outstrip the Israeli toll by more than three to one (and five to one when it comes to children).

The killing of Yassin, along with the wider bloodletting in the occupied territories, will further heighten the Arab and Muslim anger that is fuelling Islamist terror attacks. Justice for the Palestinians should self-evidently be pursued on its own merits. But given the extent to which Palestine has become a focus of global Muslim grievance, it has also become a necessity for international security.

The most dangerous delusion of our time must surely be the notion that Islamist terror is motivated by hostility to freedom and the Western way of life. As anyone who

is familiar with the Arab and Muslim world, or even bothered to read successive statements by al-Qaida leaders, it is in fact overwhelmingly driven by hostility to foreign, and especially Western, domination and occupation of Arab and Muslim countries. Of course, there are other factors in play. But from the start of his campaign in the 1990s, bin Laden's call to arms focused above all on US foreign policy in West Asia: its troops in Saudi Arabia; backing for prowestern dictatorships like Egypt; sanctions against Iraq; and support for Israel against the Palestinians. Since September 11, US interference in the region has gone much further, with the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The result is an arc of foreign occupation across West Asia.

That has in turn spawned an arc of resistance. Muslims now find themselves in conflict with the world's military powers. There is also the danger that the boundaries between nationally based resistance movements and socially disconnected terror networks of the al-Qaida type may become blurred. But to address the swelling grievances that underlie both is now a global imperative. Unless and until the occupying powers — notably the US, Britain and Israel — do that, they will be fuelling, not fighting, terror.

The Guardian

Pressure mounts on Sharon to quit

Jerusalem: Israeli opposition leaders demanded on Sunday that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon step down, following media reports that the state attorney is recommending that the prime minister be indicted for bribe-taking.

However, the final decision on whether to indict him is up to the attorney general, not the state attor-

ney. Sharon's aides and the state attorney's office had no comment. Legal analysts said state attorney Edna Arbel's reported recommendation carried great weight, but that there was no legal

but that there was no legal reason for Sharon to step down before an indictment was handed down.

Some analysts said that, while under a cloud of indictment, Sharon could try to speed up his plan to withdraw from parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The proposed pullback is widely supported by the Israeli public. Israeli media report-

ed on Saturday that Arbel had written a draft of her opinion regarding an indictment and was planning to hand it to attorney general Meni Mazuz in a day or two. Mazuz, the reports said, will make his decision in the coming month

in the coming month.

"In the end, the attorney general won't be able to ig-

onore, the state attorney's opinion," Ofir Pines-Paz, a leading lawmaker from the opposition Labor Party, told Israel army radio.
"The government attorney general cannot ignore the

state prosecutor's recommendation," Ophir said adding, "if there is an indictment, Sharon will have to resign immediately."

Knesset member Ran Cohen of Yahad party called on Sharon "to save whatever dignity remains in Israel's democracy" and resign before a recommendation is submitted calling for his indictment. Agencies

Global mission or machinations? MERICAN NEO-CONSER METICAN NEO-CONSER

MERICAN NEO-CONSER-VATIVES continue to act as if they have the perfect solu-Ltion for the multi-faceted problems of West Asia. Iraq will be converted into a model democracy that will inspire the Arabs to follow the true path to peace, freedom and prosperity. In reality they only succeeded in reducing Iraq to a near dysfunctional nation even as they allowed Israel to destroy whatever state structures had been painstakingly built up in the Palestinian terri-

It would be difficult for anyone to argue that the Palestinians had set up and followed a democratic order after they signed the Oslo Accords. The Palestinian Authority's mode of functioning was marked by a strong streak of authoritarianism with the security services making for a disproportionately large part of the Government. Its President, Yasser Arafat, never felt bound by the legislative wing and he allowed leeway to the secular opposition only when he needed to convince the international community of his liberal credentials. He also kept a tight grip on the Authority's financial resources. For all that, Mr. Arafat was able to keep in closer touch with the needs of his people than most other leaders of

In its official structure and mode of functioning, the Palestinian Authority resembled the one-party dominated republics such as Tunisia and Egypt. However, the institutions of civil society were in better shape in the Palestinian territories than elsewhere in the Arab world. A number of political formations had been thrown up in the course of the struggle against the Israeli occupation and at least some of these, such as the Islamic Resistance Movement or Hamas, had a mass following

Organisations representing students and professionals were able to influence public affairs and the younger leaders of the mainstream Fatah, Marwan Barghouti being the prime example, felt free to campaign against official apathy and corrup-

These trends could have been nurtured and there was a phase in the middle of the 1990s when it was possible to glimpse a future in which Palestinian citizens would be able to take control of their destinies. That promise could have been fulfilled only if the Palestinians had been able to secure their liberty. While the peace camp in Israel had recognised that both sides would benefit if the Palestinians were allowed to set up a state on the territories occupied after the 1967 war, it was unable to summon the will to withdraw from those areas. As demonstrated by an informal agreement drafted a few months ago by Israeli and Palestinian private citizens, there are people on both sides who understand that compromises will have to be made for a just and feasible settlement.

That prospect is as distant as it has ever been. It appears very unlikely that the cycle of death and destruction will end any time soon. It will most certainly not end so long as Ariel Sharon, or someone like him, continues to be Prime Minister of Israel. Mr. Sharon did not just set off the violence that has afflicted Palestinians and Israelis for the past four years with his arrogant march through the Al Aqsa complex in September 2000. He has repeatedly initiated fresh rounds of violence by

American action in\one case and inaction in the other have only atomised two Arab societies. Kesava Menon on the situation in Iraq and Palestine.

ordering his security forces to undertake provocative action just as the situation appeared to cool down. While Hamas and other extremist Palestinian groups have been rightly condemned for using terror tactics against Israeli civilians the record shows that they were rarely the first to break the intermittent truces observed over this period.

The United States is the only power that can rein in Mr. Sharon. But, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and his administration have shown a singular lack of interest in doing anything to get negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians back on track. Mr. Bush did announce with great fanfare a road map for peace almost a year ago. It did not appear very probable that the parties concerned would be able to stick to the convoluted process that Mr. Bush outlined. but the Palestinians did try to take the first steps they were asked to.

Mr. Arafat withdrew from any direct role in the negotiations and the Palestinian security forces moved to control the militant groups. However, Palestinians can only do so much given the conditions in which they operate and can only deliver more if Israel also makes concessions. Mr. Bush and his officials have not bothered to pressure Mr. Sharon.

Today the Palestinian Authority is in tatters. Armed groups of local enforcers, even criminals, are reported to have taken control of pockets in a few Palestinian towns. Hamas rather than the Authority's security forces wield greater clout in the Gaza Strip. The voices of secular and liberalminded Palestinians have been silenced and there is no more talk of a democratic system being established n the territories

If the American neo-conservatives have virtually overseen the destruction of a fledgling Palestinian democracy, they have not succeeded in take nower once the nrinciple of majority-rule is adopted. Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani belongs to the quietist school of Shia theocracy, which believes that the clergy should not be directly involved in politics and gov-

That belief and pressure from the American proconsul, Paul Bremer, have led the Shias to agree that the Shariah will not be main source of law under the constitutional scheme scheduled to come into force at the beginning of July. However, the Shia majority can amend the Constitution later on and there is no guarantee that some Iraqi Ayatollahs will not be tempted to follow the example set by their counterparts in Iran.

The U.S. has conveniently overlooked that possibility for the moment. Mr. Bremer and his men are handed over power to the Iraqis be- | tute 30 per cent of the population)

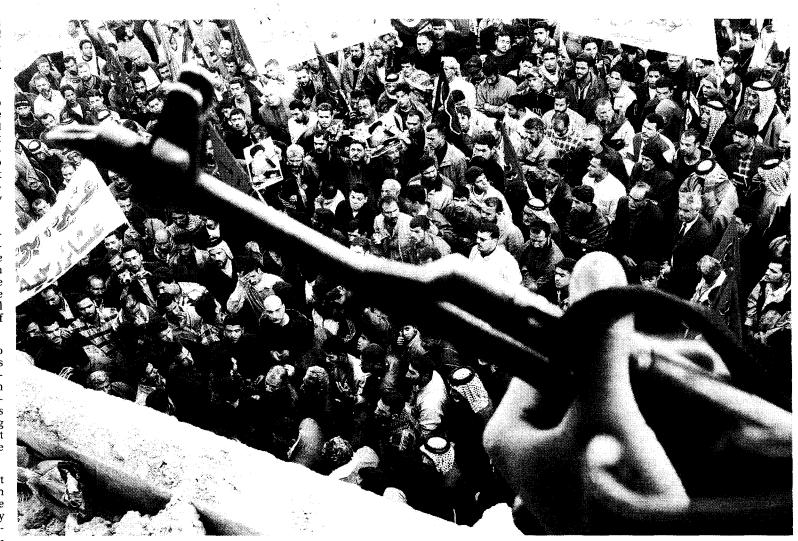
fore the campaign for the American presidential elections enters the final phase. They are prepared at the moment to cut short-term deals that can lead to undesired consequences later

However, there are limitations to this short-term deal making. While the occupying powers want to hand over power to an Iraqi government that they can describe as representative, they are unable or unwilling to hold elections. Any government that enters office under such circumstances will not be considered truly

Iraqi Sunnis form the main component of the forces waging a guercampaign against occupation of their country. Even those Sunnis who might not have been active militarily have become restive at the prospect that they will have to live under the authority of

Now the Kurds too have begun to worry about the future after the Shias indicated that they will amend provisions in the draft constitution, which confer autonomy on the Kurdish areas. Each of these communities is armed to the teeth and the fledgling Iraqi national army is so weak that it is likely to melt away if internecine warfare breaks out.

This then has been the end result of the project for the new American century. Far from remaking the countries of West Asia so that they become models of liberalism, American action in one case and its inaction in the other have only atomised two Arab societies.



A show of support for the Iraqi Shia leader, Ayatollah Ali Sistani, in Najaf.

A year under the yoke

The Iraqis remain deeply suspicious of the occupiers and their motives, says Atul Aneja.

YEAR after the occupation of Iraq, Shias and Sunnis are Lagreed on one thing: the Americans must leave. Faced with a determined Iraqi resistance, the United States is planning to hand over internal security duties to a handpicked regime and a hastily-raised local police force, while holding on to power. But the American efforts are unlikely to pay off. Violence and instability look set to continue in Iraq.

Vast sections of Iragis believe the U.S. invaded their country to control their oil but that this was not the only reason. Many in the Iraqi intelligennourishing such an order in Iraq eitsia believe the U.S. is in Iraq to carve ther. First of all, it is not even certain out and control a new strategic corrithat the U.S. administration and its | dor in the heart of West Asia. With henchmen want to establish a demo- neighbouring Jordan already a faithcratic order in Iraq. The Shias will ful ally, they believe the American ocan to dominate a vit stretch of territory that begins from Israel and ends at Iraq's borders with Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey along a geographically contiguous zone. If America consolidates power, they fear, it would be well positioned to influence events in the neighbouring countries as a possible stage two of redefining the political order in the

The Iraqis, who value their independence, find these imperial aspirations unacceptable. This goes for both the Shia community and the minority Sunnis. Despite being in a majority — about 62 per cent — the Shias have been denied the opportunity to rule Baghdad for 400 years. For many of them, Saddam Hussein was an impediment to the fulfilment of their aspirations. Though some Shias held high positions in the Saddesperate to show that they have dam regime, the Sunnis (who consti-

Tikritis and Shamars. With the exit of Saddam Hussein, a key hurdle to Shia political dominance disappeared. But it brought in another obstacle — the U.S., which has been seeking to entrench itself in the country.

The Shias have adopted a threepronged approach to achieve their goals over the year. Hoping to see the back of the Americans through peaceful means, they have participated in the attempt to resurrect a Washington-friendly political dispensation. Not surprisingly, the constitution. Council and are partners in negotiations on Iraq's post-war future. While engaging the Americans, they have nevertheless kept their firepower intact. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), a key Shia organisation, has the Badr Corps a well-armed militia that keeps a low profile. Besides, Muqtada Sadr, a firebrand Shia cleric, has a militia of his own.

The Shias also wish to ward off a civil war, where the well-armed Sunnis would be their adversaries. Consequently, they have been networking with Sunni leaders such as Ahmad Al Qubasy, a former professor of Islamic Studies at Baghdad University.

Shias look to the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the reclusive cleric who resides in the holy city of Najaf, for guidance. He is hence considered

American exit, he has been advocating that the United Nations, and not the Americans, play a central role in ushering in Iraq's transition to selfrule. He has also voiced his opposition to a clause in the Iraqi interim constitution, which seeks to impose limitations on the Shias' powers. Disregarding the majority Shia opinion, the clause, when taken to its logical conclusion, will allow the Kurds or Sunnis to veto a permanent

on the U.S.-appointed Governing ful of the American presence. One of transitional government. The resist- ession marking the Shia religious the biggest blunders committed by ance has been especially severe on the American occupiers was the illconceived purge of suspected Americans as they are seen as collab-Baa'thists from Iraqi institutions. The army was disbanded, thousands of trained fighters lost their jobs and became potential recruits for the Iraqi resistance. Many more, such as Americans out of Iraq. Iran for examemployees and technocrats of the Iraqi oil industry, were sacked overnight, swelling the ranks of a growing army of the unemployed and the dispossessed. Many of these oil workers troops pouring into Iraq, along its subsequently became advisers to the Iraqi guerrillas who were undertaking missions to damage oil pipelines. Despite feverish efforts by the Americans, the Iraqi oil industry is yet to revive to its pre-war level.

While the Iraqi resistance has been most intense in places such as Baghdad, Fallujah, Baquba and Tikrit, it nearly 21 years, before returning to the Sunnis bottled in a separate, rehas spread beyond what is called the Najaf. Kazim al-Husseini al-Hairi, sourceless enclave of central Iraq.

dominated, especially tribes such as one of the most powerful men in Sunni triangle of Central Iraq. Mosul Iraq. Ayatollah Sistani has so far in the north has become a major played his cards skilfully. Keen on an flashpoint of guerrilla warfare and the oil city of Kirkuk has also seen frequent attacks on American forces. The capture of Saddam Hussein in December, despite all its propaganda lives. And it has become a major

> Iraqi policemen recruited by the orators. So far 350 policemen have been killed.

Besides the Iraqis, there are powerful external forces that want the ple. With U.S. forces already present in Afghanistan to its east and in most countries of the Persian Gulf, Iran was dismayed to see American western borders. Consequently, it has emerged as a prominent player in Iraq's domestic scene and has operated mainly through the Shia community. Iran's links with the SCIRI and the Badr Corps are well known. The SCIRI leader, Mohammad Baqr Al Hakim, was in exile in Iran for

the cleric who is known to have considerable influence over Muqtada Sadr, resides in Qom, the centre of Shia learning in Iran.

Even Ayatollah Sistani is of Iranian descent, though few believe that the Iranians exercise any tangible influence over him. In Sadr, a Shia suburb in the Baghdad, there are posters that support the Hizbollah — the powerful Lebanese Shia militia that is supported by Iran and Syria. But there is mileage, has done little to stem the no confirmation of the Hizbollah unabated Iraqi resistance, which has having made inroads into Iraq. A year so far claimed nearly 600 American of U.S. occupation has seen the Al-Qaeda network acquire prominence player in influencing the course of in Iraq. There was a double suicide the presidential elections in the U.S. bombing in Kurdish city of Irbil on The Iraqi resistance has so far February 1, in which 109 people were thwarted American attempts to build killed. An estimated 181 people died institutions that would allow them to when a series of bombs exploded ceremony of Ashura in Karbala and outside a mosque packed with worshippers in Baghdad earlier this month. The Americans have attributed these bombings to Abu Musab al Zarqawi, an Al-Qaeda operative of Jordanian origin. Some Iraqis do believe that the Karbala bombings were the handiwork of the "Wahabbis," a highly conservative militant Sunni sect that is well represented in Al-Qaeda. But most Iraqis hold the Americans responsible for the latest series of attacks.

In the Baghdad street, the dominant view is that the Americans and the Israelis have a hidden agenda of fomenting a civil war among the Sunnis, the Shias and the Kurds which will result in the trifurcation of Iraq into a oil rich north and south, with

Palestine says US veto gives Israel licence to kill

NIDAL AL-MUGHRABI

GAZA, MARCH 26

PALESTINIANS accused the US on Friday of granting Israel a licence to kill by vetoing a UN condemnation of its assassination of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Israeli forces killed two Hamas frogmen who came ashore overnight near a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, after the Islamic militant group said it would launch "earthquakelike" attacks to avenge Yassin.

At the UN, the US late on Thursday vetoed a Security Council resolution by Arab nations to censure Israel for assassinating Hamas' founder in a missile strike on Monday.

Washington, alone among major powers in not condemning Monday's assassination as an extrajudicial killing, rejected the resolution because it did not also denounce Hamas for suicide bombings in Israel. The vote was 11 in favour, three abstentions, and the US veto that killed the measure.

"Israel's action has escalated tensions in Gaza and the region, and could set back our effort to resume progress towards peace," US Ambassador John Negroponte said. But he added: "This Security Council does nothing to contribute to a peaceful settlement when it condemns one party's actions and turns a blind eye to everything else in the region." Palestinians denounced the US ac-



US Ambassador John Negroponte raises his hand at the UN Security Council to veto a resolution on Thursday. Reuters

Arafat not on our hit list, says Israel

■ MEXICO: Israel's Internal Security Minister said on Thursday that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat would not be targeted for assassination like the leader of the Islamist militant group Hamas. "We don't consider Aralat as a target. We are frustrated by the fact that he is still in power, but we are not going to intervene in the creation of a new political leadership in the Palestinian Authority" minister Tsahi Hanegbi said while on a visit to Mexico. --- Reuters

tion and demonstrated against Yassin's killing.

Calling the US the "chairman of the axis of evil in the world", Hamas leader Mohammad Ghazal said the veto was "Israel's green light to carry out assaults and crimes".

In the Security Council, Britain, Germany and Romania abstained after Algeria, negotiating for Arab nations, rejected an amendment they wanted that would have condemned "atrocities" against Israelis. The Algerian draft condemned "the most recent execution committed by Israel" and "all attacks against any civilians as well as all acts of violence and destruction".

The measure was backed by China, Russia, Algeria, Pakistan, Angola, Benin, Brazil, Chile, France, Spain and the Philippines.

Meshaal, speaking from Damascus in a telephone hookup piped through loudseakers, told a crowd of 5,000 Hamas supporters in Ramallah: "We will keep... sacrificing our dearest until the occupation leaves our land."

—Reuters

Yassin's assassination

No long-term gains for Israel

[srael scored a short-reach victory by dealing a body blow

Israel'scored a short-reach victory by dealing a body blow to its arch foe Hamas chief, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, but in the long term they have opened another round of reprisal suicide-bombings and a derailment of the peace process. The assassination has been unequivocally condemned, except by the USA, Israel's steadfast ally. Britain and the EU's revulsion stems from the fear that it will anger other Muslim militants and increase terror attacks. Hamas was founded by Yassin at the start of the first Palestinian uprising in 1987 but its popularity gained with the second intifida in September 2000. The wheel-chair bound Yassin was its most charismatic and distinctive voice, and the organisation's standing grew more in the impoverished regions of the Gaza Strip which bears the brunt of Israel's terror. These Palestinians are grateful to the Hamas for what security they enjoy. They are also recipients of its charitable network through which it provides food, schooling, medicines and other social service to a people under siege. After Arafat's Fateh movement, Hamas is the second most popular party among Palestinians.

The assassination is a huge mistake as it has made Palestinians, who do not trust Israel's peace initiatives anyway, even more wary of both Tel Aviv and Washington. Israel has tried to destroy Hamas in the past but each time the movement has become stronger. If Israel repeats the mistake of assassinating Arafat, as they have indirectly threatened, they can forget about peace in the region. Peace cannot be won from the barrel of a gun, it has to be negotiated. Movements like Hamas, which is fighting for its people, cannot be eliminated by wiping out leaders, because their will always be others, sometimes more radical, waiting to take their place. Ariel Sharon made the blunder of bowing to pressure to score a decisive victory before a possible withdrawal from Gaza. He may have already prejudiced the pullback, scheduled for next month, and the peace process altogether.

Hamas to target Sharon, but US not in firing line

Gaza, March 24 (Reuters): Palestinian militant group Hamas said today it had the right to target Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to avenge Israel's killing of a Hamas leader but reassured the US it was not in the firing line.

Israeli tanks thrust into a Gaza refugee camp, keeping up the pressure as Washington warned Americans in West Asia and North Africa of a heightened attack threat after Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Ahmed Yassin today.

Amplifying the mood of spiralling conflict, Abdel-Aziz al-Rantissi, the Palestinian Islamic group's hardline replacement for Yassin in Gaza, urged attacks on Israelis "everywhere". The Jewish state vowed to target him and other militant leaders for death.

Exiled Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal was quoted as telling pan-Arab *al-Hayat* daily in Damascus that Hamas now had the right to "hunt down the big Zionist heads" including Sharon. But he added that any decision would depend on Hamas' military wing.

The state department told Americans that Hamas had threatened revenge on US interests after Yassin's death, urging them to leave the Gaza Strip and also advising against travel to Israel or the West Bank.

US President George W. Bush said in Washington: "Whether it be an Hamas threat, or an al Qaida threat, we take them very seriously in this administration." But Hamas officials later sought to reassure the US, Israel's chief ally, that they would confine their armed struggle to Israeli and Palestinian territory.

"It's not in our policy to target Americans or American interests," Hamas political leader Sayed Seyam said.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat — who has declared three days of mourning for Yassin —



A Palestinian boy with stones during clashes in the West Bank city of Hebron. (Reuters)

signalled an appeal for calm amid militants' pledges of revenge attacks.

"I am against any attacks on civilians, on Israeli civilians and Palestinian civilians. We want peace," Arafat said at his head-quarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Israel says Arafat foments violence, an accusation he denies. Keeping up pressure in Gaza, about 10 Israeli tanks backed by helicopter gunships rolled about 100 metres into Khan Younis refugee camp early today and bulldozers razed several homes overlooking a Jewish settlement, witnesses said.

About 60 families fled as the tanks laid down covering fire, witnesses said. There were no reports of casualties. "The army uprooted shrubbery and destroyed abandoned buildings used as cover by gunmen for shooting mortar bombs and antitank rockets," an Israeli military source said.

Israel has pledged to keep targeting leaders of Hamas and

other militant groups waging a campaign of suicide bombings.

Yassin's death in an Israeli missile strike sparked a shakeup in Hamas' hierarchy that appeared to tilt toward the faction's most hardline elements.

Rantissi, 56, was named to head Hamas in its Gaza Strip powerbase, making him the pivotal figure in the Islamic group bent on destroying Israel. Rantissi will now answer to politburo chief Meshaal, the group's top political leader living in shadowy exile in Syria. Both have survived Israeli attempts on their lives.

Some Palestinians considered Yassin, Hamas' wheelchair-bound founder, a relative moderate within the group. Israel called him the "Palestinian bin Laden".

Israel was on high alert for the painful payback Hamas has promised, and Israeli missions in the Arab League countries of Qatar and Mauritania were shut.

Boy bomber foiled

Hawara Checkpoint (West Bank), March 24 (Reuters): Israeli troops today arrested a 14year-old Palestinian would-be suicide bomber at a West Bank checkpoint after talking him into taking off his explosives vest at gunpoint, the army said.

"He was taken by surprise by the reflexes of the soldiers, who were very quick and aimed their weapons at him and took cover," the lieutenant-colonel, who gave his name as Guy, said.

Rantisi emerges as Hamas stro

a Hamas strongman in the Palestinian areas after the group's founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, assassination

Yassin or take over the group. Since its creation in 1987, Hamas has been run year-old paediatrician, is However, Rantisi, a 54not expected to replace senior activists in Gaza and the Arab world, with Yassin in a key role as largely as a collective of ideologue, spiritual leader

group's operations, includis a blow to morale, and strategist.

> even a temporary truce with Israel, is emerging as

Hamas is secretive about its organisation, though the broad outlines are known. political bureau, headed by Khaled Mashaal, who is General policy is set by the Other members of the bubased in Damascus, Syria, mas leaders in the Arab Oassam, plans and carries Hanieh and Mahmoud Zahar in Gaza. The Hamas military wing, Izzedine al reau include several Ha world, as well as Rantisi to Israel's destruction.

india condemns killing: outrage today at the killing of the spiritual leader of Hamas, SNS adds from Despite its close ties with Israel, India expressed out attacks on Israelis.



and spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, being consoled during the second day of mourning in Gaza City on Tuesday. — AFP Hallma Yassin (facing camera), wife of assassinated Hamas founder

Hamas feaders said that while the killing of Yassin would not hamper the ing its ability to carry out attacks. Hamas is pledged

E 3 E 2 국요큰 유급 특별 ĝ

- Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a hardliner who opposes GAZA CITY, March 23. Abdel Aziz Rantisi Associated Press 걸순도도

End of the road to peace?

N MARCH 14 last year, six the British Prime Minister, days before the Iraq war, Tony Blair, was in an ebullient mood. The U.S. President, George W. Bush, had just announced publication of the long-delayed Middle East road map to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

was convinced progress towards a It was a decision Mr. Blair had long two-state solution was vital if the been urging on the White House. He West was to demonstrate its "evenhandedness" and commitment to security, democracy and human rights.

In his attempt to justify Britain's involvement in the looming fight against Saddam Hussein, overt American backing for the road map had Blair as obtaining a second United Nations resolution on Iraq. It was also a test of his influence with the Bush become almost as important to Mr.

manent two-state solution (and) a "I believe the importance of what Blair said. "The road map represents the will of the international community ... it provides the route to a perfinal and comprehensive settlement the Israel-Palestinian conflict by President Bush announced earlier simply cannot be overstated," Mr.

What a difference a year makes. If

the road map were not already dead egy of freedom in the Middle East." In in the water, then Monday's assassition, this, Palestine had but a walk-on part. Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, may finally non-specific ideas have morphed innation by Israel of the Hamas leader, true is that the grounds for optimism have sunk it. But what is surely also

Since then, Mr. Bush's grandiose, to an even vaguer reform plan entitled the Greater Middle East Initiative. Many in Washington now believe his

ism was doubtless deliberate. For in nentum, and left to his own devices ter, Ariel Sharon, was busy drawing the absence of any road map moy U.S. inaction, Israel's Prime Minishis own maps.

One aspect of Mr. Sharon's evolvated construction of a security fence closing off large parts of the West Bank. Another was his failure, although the Palestinians were also to ing, alternative path was the accelerblame, to launch a substantive bilat eral dialogue.

with) the road map. By suggesting all the remaining steam out of U.S. policy as stated with such apparent conviction by Mr. Bush 12 months But most importantly, Mr. Sharon quite separate from (and at odds and close some settlements in the West Bank, he appears to have taken proposed what is in effect his own made-to-measure, territorial deal that Israel may vacate Gaza entirely

gagement are the new names of the game — and Washington is playing Indeed, the Americans have almost stopped talking about a viable twostate solution. Separation and disenernmental Geneva accord as a way to Straw was grasping at the non-gov-

sassination may sound the final death-knell for the road map. — This as much as Sheikh Yassin's as-©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

Sheikh Yassin may finally have sunk it. Monday's assassination by Israel of

If the road map for peace in the Middle East were not already dead in the water, then

expressed by Mr. Blair have steadily

eroded almost since the moment his affair, while momentous, is but the press conference ended. The Yassin latest blow.

aim is merely to contain the Israel-

On the American side, Mr. Bush's focus on a two-state solution has gradually diminished. "America is mitted, to implementing our road map toward peace," he declared on committed, and I am personally com-March 14, 2003. But then came Iraq and all the unanticipated post-war problems that still plague the Amer-

oping a far broader Middle East "vision" in which Palestine was one By November, Mr Bush was develissue among many. In a speech to the National Endowment for Democracy, he vowed to develop "a forward straticans there.

On the ground, in the embattled lem's suicide-bombed streets, the road map has meanwhile been slowly Palestine conflict until the November U.S. presidential election is out of the occupied territories and in Jerusadying. By February this year, Mr.

"The peace process is at a fork in the road," Mr. Straw warned. "There is a real risk that people on both sides become so hardened ... that they stumble down the other road towards more violence, towards unilateral efforts to redraw borders. keep hope alive.

Mr. Straw's reference to unilateral-

হাুমাস-নেতা হত্যাকাণ্ডের বদলা

নৈওঁয়ার হুমকি দুলি আল কায়ুদ্ধুও

গাজা, ২৩ মার্চ— ইজরায়েলি ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র হানায় প্যানেজি ইনের জঙ্গি সংগঠন হামাসের ধর্মীয় নেতা শেখ আহমেদ ইয়াসিনের মৃত্যুর পর আমেরিকা ও তার সঙ্গী দেশগুলির বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিশোধ নেওয়ার হুমকি দিল আল কায়দা। এ ব্যাপারে আল কায়দার সহযোগী জঙ্গি সংগঠন আবু হাফস আল-মাসরি ব্রিগেডের দেওয়া বিবৃতি প্রকাশ করেছে একটি ইসলামি ইন্টারনেট সাইট। উল্লেখ্য, আল মাসরি ব্রিগেডই স্পেনে ১১ মার্চের বিক্ষোরণের দায় স্বীকার করেছিল।

কাল ইয়াসিন-হত্যার পরেই ইহুদি রাষ্ট্রের উপর পাল্টা আঘাত হানার কথা ঘোষণা করেছিল হামাস। এই মুহুর্তে হামাসের শীর্ষ রাজনৈতিক নেতা আব্দেল-আজিজ-আল-রানতিসি আজ বলেছেন, "এখন দু'পক্ষের মধ্যে প্রকাশ্যেই যুদ্ধ হবে।" এ দিকে, আমেরিকার হয়ে সাফাই গেয়ে ইজরায়েল আজ বলেছে, এই হানার ব্যাপারে হোয়াইট হাউস আগাম কিছুই জানত না। এর পাশাপাশি, প্যালেস্তাইনি জঙ্গিদের সতর্ক করে দিয়ে তারা বলেছে, গাজা ও ওয়েস্ট ব্যাঙ্কে সম্ভ্রাসবাদী কার্যকলাপে লিপ্ত সব নেতাই তাদের ক্ষেপণাস্ত্রের আওতার মধ্যে রয়েছে। ইজরায়েলের সরকারি সূত্রে আজ ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে যে, ইয়াসিনের পর প্যালেস্তাইনের আরও কিছু জঙ্গি নেতা তাদের খতম তালিকায় আছেন। প্যালেস্তাইনের নেতা ইয়াসের আরাফতের আশঙ্কা, ইয়াসিনের পর এ বার তাঁর উপর আঘাত হানবে ইজরায়েল। আরাফতের নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে চিস্তিত প্যালেস্তাইন মন্ত্রিসভা কালই জরুরি বৈঠকে বসে। এ দিকে, ইজরায়েলের প্রধানমন্ত্রী অ্যারিয়েল শ্যারনের মন্ত্রিসভার কয়েক জন সদস্য এবং পশ্চিম এশিয়া বিশেষজ্ঞরা-সহ কেউ কেউ মনে করছেন, ইয়াসিনের হত্যা প্যালেস্তাইনি জঙ্গিদের হিংসাত্মক কার্যকলাপ বন্ধের বদলে তা আরও বাড়িয়ে দেবে।

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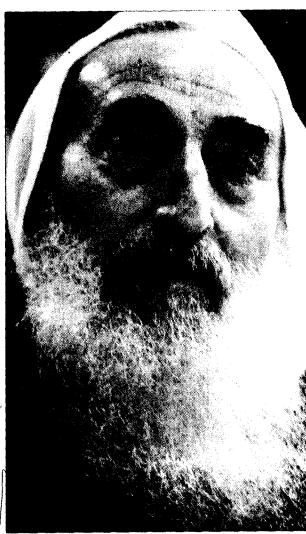
হামাসের হুমকির প্রেক্ষিতে ইজরায়েলে সাধারণ মানুষের মধ্যে আতঙ্ক ছড়িয়েছে। রাজধানী তেল আভিড-সহ যে সব শহরে প্যালেন্তাইনি আত্মঘাতী জঙ্গি হামলার প্রকোপ বেশি, সেখানে ভয়ে বেশির ভাগ লোকই আজ গৃহবন্দি। চার দিকে কড়া নজর রেখেছে ইজরায়েলি সেনা বাহিনী। ভিন দেশে তাদের দ্তাবাসগুলিকেও নিরাপত্তা কড়া করতে বলা হয়েছে। ভাঁজ পড়েছে আমেরিকার কপালেও। ইয়াসিন-হত্যার খবর জানার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই মার্কিন মুলুকে ডলার ও শেয়ারের দাম পড়তে শুরু করে। বুশ প্রশাসন বলেছে, এই ঘটনায় তারা গভীর ভাবে চিন্তিত। তবে ইয়াসিন-হত্যার নিন্দা করতে রাজি হয়নি তারা।

এ দিকে, আহমেদ ইয়াসিনের হত্যীর নিন্দায় সরব হয়েছে প্রায় গোটা বিশ্ব। শুধু আরব দুনিয়া নয়, মুসলিমপ্রধান অন্যান্য দেশেও ইজরায়েল-নিন্দার ঝড় উঠেছে। সব চেয়ে বেশি মুসলিমের বাস যে দেশে, সেই ইন্দোনেশিয়ার বিদেশ দফ্তরের মুখপাত্র মারতি নাতালোগওয়া বলেছেন, "এই জঘন্য হত্যাকাণ্ডের জীব্র নিন্দা করছি। আজকের দিনে বিনা বাধায় কেউ যে এ ধরনের হত্যাকাণ্ড চালাতে পারে সেটা দেখেই আমরা বিমিত। ইজরায়েলকে এই ঘটনার দায় বহন করতে হবে।" ইয়াসিনের হত্যা আরও বছ হিংসাত্মক ঘটনার জন্ম দেবে বলে আশক্ষা প্রকাশ করেছেন তিনি। ইজরায়েলের রাষ্ট্রদূতকে ডেকে পাঠিয়ে জাপান বলেছে, 'এই হত্যা অযৌক্তিক।' নিউজিল্যান্ডের মতে, এই হত্যার পর পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার যে সামান্য সম্ভাবনা ছিল তা-ও নষ্ট হয়ে গেল।

ইয়াসিন-হত্যার নিন্দা করেছে ভারতও। বিদেশ দফতরের এক মুখপাত্র আজ বলেছেন, এই হত্যাকাণ্ডে সরকার স্তম্ভিত। এই অবস্থায় যুযুধান দু'পক্ষ সংযম বজায় রেখে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ প্রদর্শিত পথে শাস্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার চেষ্টা চালিয়ে যাবে বলে ভারত আশা করছে।

আহমেদ ইয়াসিনকে শালোম 'মানববোমার গডফাদার' বলে বর্ণনা করলেও প্যালেস্তাইনি কর্তৃপক্ষের কাছে কিন্তু তিনি 'মধ্যপন্থী' হিসাবেই পরিচিত ছিলেন। তাঁর ভূমিকা নিয়ে ইজরায়েলি নেতাদের মধ্যেও মতভেদ ছিল। কট্টরপন্থীরা মনে করত ইয়াসিন জঙ্গি নেতা। তাঁকে 'প্যালেস্তাইনের ওসামা বিন লাদেন' আখ্যা দিয়েছিল তারা। ইজরায়েলের প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী শাওল মোজাফের দাবি, ইয়াসিনের হাতে ইজরায়েলিদের রক্ত লেগে আছে। কিন্তু ইজরায়েলি স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী আব্রাহাম পোরাজ এই মতের শরিক নন। তিনি মনে করেন, ইয়াসিন মোটেই অত বিপজ্জনক ছিলেন না। তাঁর আশঙ্কা. এই হত্যাকাণ্ডের জন্য ইজরায়েলের সাধারণ মানুষকে চড়া দাম দিতে হতে পারে। তবে পশ্চিমী সংবাদমাধ্যম ইয়াসিনকে ইজরায়েলের বিরুদ্ধে সবচেয়ে শক্তিশালী আন্দোলনের নেতা হিসাবেই দেখেছে। ইজরায়েলের হাত থেকে গাজা ও ওয়েস্ট ব্যাঙ্ক মুক্ত করার লক্ষ্য নিয়ে ১৯৮৭ সালে হামাস আন্দোলনের সূচনা করেন তিনি। এর আগেও দু'বার তাঁর প্রাণনাশের চেষ্টা হয়েছিল। ২০০২ সালে এক সাক্ষাৎকারে 'মানববোমা' ব্যবহারের যক্তি দিয়ে ব্যানিক বলেছিলেন, "আমাদের হাতে ইজরায়েলের মতো এফ-আপাচে হেলিকন্টার বা ট্যাব্ধ ও ক্ষেপণান্ত নেই। আমাদের ছেলেরা শুধু শহিদ হতে পারে।" — রয়টার্স, এ এফ পি

Hamas chief killed in Israeli air strike



Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. — AFP

WALK IN INTERVIEW Engagement of STATEMENT OF STAT Part Time Dental Surgeon on contract basis in B.R. Singh Hospital

Dental Surgeons are invited for a WALK IN INTERVIEW for engagement as part time Dental Surgeon on contract basis in B.R. Singh Hospital, Sealdah.

Nature of Engagement: The engagement will be on contract basis for a period of one year or less. Duration of duty will be 2 hours from 9.00 hrs. to 11.00 hrs.

Qualification: Bachelor of Dental Surgery with at least 55% marks in the final examination from a Recognised Govt. Institution and Registered with Indian Dental Council. Preference will be given to higher qualified Dental Surgeons.

Remuneration: Rs. 3,950/- per month. No other allowance will be granted.

Experience: Three (3) years working experience after graduation. No working experience will be required for candidates having Post Graduate Qualification.

Age: Not more than 59 years as on 01.01.2004. Candidates should obtain and refer to the detailed terms and conditions of engagement and application from the Office of Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer, Eastern Railway, Sealdah, Kaiser Street, Kolkata-700014 on any day between 10.00 hrs. and 18.30 hrs.

Willing candidates should report for WALK IN INTERVIEW on 26.04.2004 at 12.00 hrs. and register themselves with Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer, Eastern Railway, Sealdah. No registration will be done after 13.00 hrs. Candidates should come with original and attested copies of proof of date of birth (SSC Certificate), BDS/MDS Certificate, Dental Council Registration, Mark Sheet, Internship and House Job Certificate, Experience Certificate and Passport Size Photographs duly attested at the top. No Travelling Allowance for journey will be paid. Sr. Divisional Personnel Officer, Sealdah

EASTERN RAHWAY

GAZA CITY, March 22. - Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, founder and spiritual head Palestinian militant group Hamas, was killed in an Israeli air strike as he returned from a mosque here at day break, triggering calls of revenge from Palestinians and setting the West Asia cauldron on fire.

Six bodyguards and one of Yassin's sons were reported to be among those killed when Israeli helicopters fired three missiles at the car carrying wheelchair-bound paraplegic leader as he left a mosque near his house. At least 15 people were injured in the air strikes.

Later, hundreds of thousands of angry Palestinians flooded the streets here today to bury the assassinated leader.

The killing of Yassin, the most prominent Palestinian targeted by Israel in more than three years of fighting, threatened to deepen the conflict, with militants pledging unprecedented retaliation, including veiled threats against the USA.

Many world leaders condemned the killing, and the USA urged both sides to show restraint.

Chants of "revenge, revenge" rose from the huge crowd. "We will get revenge for every drop of blood that spilled from (Yassin)," said Salman Bdeiri (24), a Hamas supporter crying near the mosque.

Angry Palestinians in the Yarmuk refugee camp, south of Damascus, march to protest against the assassination of Yassin on Monday. - AFP

To protect against attacks, Israel sealed off the West Bank and Gaza, banning Palestinians from entering Israel, and placed security forces inside Israel on high alert.

This evening, Palestinian militants fired several rockets and mortar shells at Israeli targets in and near Gaza, but caused no injuries. Hizbullah guerrillas fired an anti-tank missile at Israeli troops along Israel's border with Lebanon, and Israel responded with an

Fallout?

part of Prime Minister Mr from Gaza.

Ariel Sharon's effort to crush Hamas ahead of a possible Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. But, the killing was seen as a huge gamble that could galvanise the Palestinians behind Israel's arch-foe Hamas.

Rival Palestinian militant groups immediately pledged solidarity with Hamas.

The missile strike dealt what could be the final blow to the stalled US-led "road map" peace plan. It also angered Egypt and Jordan, two moderate Arab states whose tacit support Sharon needs for The assassination was any unilateral withdrawal

THE LAST INTERVIEW

AMMAN, March 22. — Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin said in an interview that Israel's targeted killings of Palestinian militants reflect the Jewish state's "failure", before he himself died in a helicopter strike today.

Such policies show "the failure and redundancy" of Israel, Yassin told the Jordanian Islamist weekly Al-Sabil in an interview that is to be published tomorrow. "The enemy is trying to calm the street in Israel and tell them: we will react," the spiritual leader of the Palestinian radical Islamist group said in the interview carried out last Friday.

"Military action is the only means to force the enemy to withdraw from the Palestinian territories," he said, in reaction to Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon's plans to pull back from the Gaza Strip. - AFP

WORLDWIDE ANGER



Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat reacts

The killing of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin today drew widepsread condemnation from around the world with leaders fearing that it could herald a dangerous new phase in dragging the West Asia

■ Paleatinians: The battle is open and war between us and them is open... Today the Israelis killed an Islamic symbol.

■ USA: America did not have advance warning of the attack. We would just ask everyone to step back and do noth that precludes a better day... The USA has asked all sides to remain calm and exercise restraint.

Araba: The assassination was regrettable and cowardly... It was state terrorism in its most hideous form.

■ UN: Secretary-General Mr Kofl Annan strongly condemned the killing saying it would not help peace efforts in the region and violated international law. ■ Britain: The killing was a "setback" for West Asia. We recognise Israel's right to defend itself, but equally any steps should be within international law. — Agencies

Sharon defends assassination, politicians divided

Press Trust of India

JERUSALEM, March 22. — Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon justified today's assassination of Hamas spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin saying the Jewish people had a "natural right" to pursue those who would destroy them, even as the Israeli political establishment expressed widely divergent views on the targeted killing.

"Yassin's ideology was killing and murdering Jews, wherever they were, and the destruction of the state of Israel," Mr Sharon parliamentary caucus after the assassination.

dubbed Yassin as an "arch-ter- port for the Israeli action today.

rorist" who plotted attacks that killed hundreds of Israelis, while asserting to continue with the policy of targeted assassinations. "The war against terror has not ended and will continue day. after day, everywhere," he declared. "It is the natural right of the Jewish people, like that of all nations in the world that love life, to hunt down those who rise to destroy it."

Defence minister Mr Shaul Mofaz told the caucus meeting that since the outbreak of the current Israeli-Palestinian violence in September 2000, Hamas has carried out 425 attacks, which told a meeting of his Likud Party caused the deaths of 377 Israelis and wounded 2,076 others.

The political establishment, The Israeli Prime Minister however, was divided in its sup-

Interior minister Mr Avraham Poraz (Shinui party) warned many Israelis could pay with their lives for the assassination of the Hamas spiritual leader.

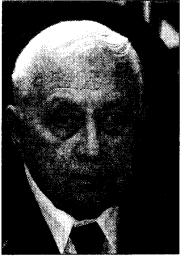
Finance minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Israel

'Yassin was the arch terrorist, whose ideology was killing and murdering Jews and the destruction of the state of Israel'

Radio: "Even if there will be harsh responses by Hamas to the assassination in the short term, in the long term, they will be restrained because the leaders will know that they will be assassinated... It's highly possible that we will have to carry out many operations in the Palestinian Authority-areas." He added that Israel would have to continue to root out terrorists and continue to guard the border crossings.

Deputy defence minister Mr Ze'ev Boim told Israel Radio that Yassin had been "marked for death". He added: "Yassin and the others were behind the terror framework in the Gaza Strip."
The interior minister, who

voted against the decision to target Yassin along with Shinui party boss, justice minister Mr Yosef Lapid, however, differed. He said: "Certainly those who are perpetrating terrorism, preparing a bomb which we know they are about to place somewhere have to be targeted. But Yassin was not a 'ticking bomb'.'



Israeli Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon at a Cabinet meeting in Jerusalem on Monday. - AFP

High-value targets may have slipped Pak dragnet

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, March 22, - Pakistani authorities are conducting DNA tests on the bodies of six foreign militants killed during its largest anti-terrorist operation in the northwestern region bordering Afghanistan, even as military sources said some "high value targets" may have escaped through a tunnel.

arrived at Rawalpindi yesterday... We're going to carry out tests to confirm who they are and also confirm their nationality and identity since they do not carry any identity documents on them," Mai. Gen. Shaukat Sultan told reporters here in a joint appearance with foreign office spokesman Mr Masood Khan.

An earlier statement

"The six dead bodies said the bodies of all "six wanted tribesmen and collected." miscreants... are foreign- leading to a stream... It ers." Meanwhile, Brig. Mehmood Shah, chief of looking into the possibility security for Pakistan's northwest tribal region, get may have escaped told reporters that an "important" target at the centre of the offensive may have escaped through the DNA tests would be a tunnel. He said: "Authorities

have found a two-kilometre long tunnel running between the homes of two

was a new tunnel. We are that some important tarthrough the tunnel," he said in Peshawar.

Maj. Gen. Sultan said matched with "whatever information is available" but refused specify the information, "Either it is available or it would be if all have been killed."

Of almost 200 people arrested since the assault began on Thursday, most were Chechen or Uzbek, officials have said. Maj. Gen. Sultan said

"quite a few miscreants" were understood to have been killed. "That will be confirmed only once the operation is over and a complete search is carried out. So far we are not sure

CORRIGENDUM Corrigendum Against Bid No. 1.

2003-2004 Change in Description and Opening Date : Tender No 090455010 Description & Part No Loctite 70-41 sealeant alternate loctite-577 in 250 ML, pack. part No 84980278. Revised Description & part No. Locitite 70-41 sealean alternate loctite0577 in 250 MI pack or similar to sealant for sealing liner sleeve to block sheet 1 to 3 dated 04.03.04 enclosed, part No. 84980278 Quantity 667 Nos Existing due date 25.03.2004 Revised due date 16.04.2004 Note Other terms and conditions are rema unchanged. P.R.O./D.L.W./S-60 For Controller of Stores

Yassin's killing evokes wide condemnation

Jerusalem: '

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The killing of Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in an Israeli attack on Monday drew widespread condemnation from the Arab world and Europe with leaders fearing that it could herald a danger-

ous new phase in the West Asia conflict, while the US urged all sides to exercise restraint and remain calm.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said that the killing of the Hamas leader was a "setback" for the Middle East. "We recognise Israel's right to defend itself against terrorism, but equally any steps should be within international law and should be neither disproportionate nor excessive," he said condemning the killing. His for-

ing the killing. His foreign secretary Jack Straw described
the killing "unacceptable" and "unjustified". National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice told Fox News that "US
did not have advance warning" of the
attack. We would just ask everyone to
step back and do nothing that precludes
a better day," she said. US state department spokesman Lou Fintor said "The
US has asked all sides to remain calm
and exercise restraint".

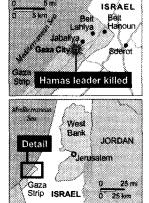
Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak described the assassination as "regret-

table" and "cowardly" while King Abdullah of Jordan called it a crime. Arab League secretary general Amr Moussa said it was "state terrorism in its most hideous form". French foreign minister Dominique De Villepin said such acts could only "feed the spiral of violence". EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana condemned the killing as "very,

very bad news" for the Middle East peace process. "This type of action does not contribute at all to create the conditions of peace," Solana said. Australian foreign ministry spokesman called for efforts to "try and prevent any further decline into violence".

In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan said China was "greatly worried" over the possible impact of the Israeli assassination of Yassin. "China is

possible impact on the Middle East regional situation brought by the death of the Palestinan Hamas spiritual leader Yassin," Quan said. Russia said it was deeply concerned that the killing could trigger a new wave of violence. "It threatens a new wave of violence which could sabotage efforts to restart negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis by the 'quartet' of international mediators and key regional powers," the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement. Adencies



SOURCES: Associated Press; ESRI AP

BRUTAL AND SENSELESS x9

ISRAEL'S ASSASSINATION ON Monday of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual guide of the Islamic Resistance Movement, was an act of utter barbarism and recklessness. This particular Palestinian militant organisation, better known by its Arabic acronym, Hamas, has no doubt resorted to the condemnable tactic of killing civilians through suicide bombings. While the killing of innocents cannot be justified in any manner, the actions of the Palestinian militants must be assessed against the backdrop of the overall situation in which they operate. They are carrying out a grossly unequal struggle against a powerful and ruthless Israel that does not restrict the degree of force it uses against a people it keeps under colonial occupation. Seven other Palestinians besides Sheikh Yassin were killed in the missile attack. Israel had tried to assassinate him last September when it dropped a 550-pound bomb on an apartment complex in the Gaza Strip. While suicide bombings draw instantaneous attention worldwide, the truth is that a far larger number of Palestinians have died in the violence visited on them by the Israelis. These deaths have occurred in the course of direct military action such as missile attacks on crowded streets and on account of the routines of the occupation such as roadblocks that prevent the critically ill from being hospitalised in time.

The killing of Sheikh Yassin was senseless even from a tactical point of view. He no doubt crafted a political ideology that calls for the destruction of Israel and he did extol the cult of the suicide bomber. But, it is difficult to believe the Israeli claim that the murder of this septuagenarian paraplegic will make a material difference to the levels of militancy. To the contrary, the assassination is more

likely to exacerbate the violence since all the Palestinian militant factions have sworn vengeance. The considerable following that Hamas has at the grassroots level will only grow with their leader becoming the foremost Palestinian to be martyred in recent times. This outrage will further undermine the Palestinian Authority and reduce its capability to curb the militants among its people. Until now President Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia had relied on Sheikh Yassin to restrain the militants during the fleeting periods of peace. The spiritual guide had usually succeeded in ensuring that his followers were not the first to break a truce. Following his assassination the militants have declared that they will not be bound by self-imposed restraints.

Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who closely supervised the early morning attack, bears prime responsibility for this atrocity. However, the United States is almost as guilty since it has persistently condoned the brutal methods that the Sharon Government has used against the Palestinians. The promise that once existed of a peaceful West Asian future in which two nations would exist side by side has withered because Washington could not shake off its partiality for Israel. Although the American leadership knows very well that the injustice perpetrated on the Palestinians is a root cause of Islamist extremism, it refuses to address the issue even as it prates about its campaign against terror. The U.S. might soon have reason to regret its inhumane attitude to the Palestinians. Hamas not only condemned Washington for having made Sheikh Yassin's murder possible by extending unstinted support to Israel but also declared that all Muslims would be honoured to join in the retaliation.

23 MAR 2004

Israeli ministers Say no to talks with Palestinians

Agence France Presse

JERUSALEM, March 15. — Israel's deputy Prime Minister Mr Ehud Olmert accused the Palestinian leadership today of abetting attacks, following a double suicide bombing which left 10 people dead plus the two bombers.

And agriculture minister Mr Israel Katz called for veteran Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat to be expelled from the West Bank. "The Palestinian leadership has no intention of fighting against terrorism and (Arafat)'s Fatah was involved in the Ashdod bombing," Mr Olmert told public radio. "We do not trust this corrupt Palestinian leadership

"We do not trust this corrupt Palestinian leadership which abets terrorism. We should make our moves independently, and at the same time fight against terrorism," said Mr Olmert, who also holds the trade portfolio.

Mr Olmert, a senior member of Prime Minister Mr Ariel Sharon's Likud party, was alluding to Mr Sharon's unilateral plan for a partial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. He was also justifying Israel's decision to postpone indefinitely the much-delayed summit between Mr Sharon and his Palestinian counterpart Mr Ahmed Qorei expected to take place tomorrow.

Abbas burial in Syria: Palestinian guerrilla leader Abul Abbas, mastermind of the 1985 hijacking of the Achille Lauro passenger ship, will be buried on Friday in the refugee camp in Syria where he was born, a spokesman for his militant group said today. The announcement came after Israel said it would not allow Abbas to have the West Bank burial Palestinian officials wanted.

Targeted killings: Israel will intensify targeted killings of Palestinian militants in retaliation for yesterday's bombing in Ashdod port, an official said.

Israel hits Gaza camps, 14 dead

Reuters
Gaza Strip, March 7

ARMOURED ISRAELI forces raided two Gaza refugee camps and killed 14 Palestinians during gunbattles on Sunday after militants staged an audacious attack on Israeli soldiers at Gaza's border.

Palestinian medics said half of the dead were civilians, including three boys, and the rest militants, some from Hamas, which has killed scores of Israelis in suicide bombings and other attacks in a Palestinian revolt that erupted in 2000. Dozens of armoured vehicles joined the sweeps for militants in the Nusseirat and al-Bureij camps in the central Gaza Strip. Israeli helicopters, tanks and troops battled Palestinian gunmen in the narrow camp streets, witnesses said.

Medics said the dead civilians included boys of 14, 12 and eight, and at least 72 Palestinians were wounded, many of them teenagers who were throwing stones

at armoured vehicles.

Israeli forces withdrew from the camps at mid-morning, witnesses said, around five hours after sweeping in under cover of darkness to hunt down wanted militants. "It's a big massacre today against our people. We call on the whole world to condemn it," said Abdallah Abu Samhadama, Palestinian governor of central Gaza.

Israeli military sources said the raid was a "pinpoint operation" against "terror groups" which had been escalating gun, mortar and rocket attacks on Jewish settlements in Gaza and areas on either side of the border with Israel for months.

Israeli commentators have predicted the army will intensify operations against militant groups in Gaza before Prime Minister Ariel Sharon sets in motion a plan to remove Jewish settlements from occupied territory, probably starting late this year.

Militants, in turn, are seen as

Fence & Neighbours

W (i)

Israel's Antidote to Terrorism

By Robbie Sabel

Although they may indeed be naive, the majority of the Israeli public, both supporters of the government and supporters of the opposition welcomed the building of a fence between Israel and the West Bank as a security measure against suicide bombers. Prior to the construction of the fence, there was no physical barrier to prevent terrorists freely crossing from the West Bank into Israel's towns and villages. Incidentally, only some eight km of the barrier is a wall; the remainder is a fence so I believe it legitimate to refer to it as a fence and not as a wall.

For some years we have had a fence between Israel and the Gaza Strip and not a single suicide bomber has succeeded in crossing it. In those parts of the West Bank where the fence has been built, so far no suicide bomber has succeeded in crossing the fence without being detected. Just recently, two suicide bombers were caught as they were on their way to a high school in the north of Israel. They were stopped only because of the fence. The simple truth is that this fence is saving lives.

There is nothing political about the

fence. It is a temporary, non-violent measure. In its written statement of January 30, 2004 to the International Court, Israel declared offi-cially that the fence does not, and is not, intended to prejudice the outcome of political negotiations on borders, Jerusalem, settlements or any other issue. Israel expects, in due course, when the terrorist threat has

ceased, that the fence will be moved to reflect any agreement between the two sides. Israel is fully committed to doing so. Where peaceful arrangements have been achieved, Israel has moved such fences before, on its borders with Egypt and Jordan in accordance with peace agreements and on the border with Lebanon in cooperation with the UN.

It is, in fact, the Palestinians who are trying to politicise the fence and use it to pre-determine the Green Line as the future border. The agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and the roadmap all call for the border to be negotiated. The Green Line was the 1949 armistice line which the Arabs and the Palestinians themselves refused to recognise as a permanent border. This 1949 Green Line ran through villages cutting them off from their land and ran through the centre of Jerusalem, in some cases even dividing buildings. It is incongruous to hear a call for the fence to be built on such a line.

The Palestinian Authority not only did not take steps to prevent suicide bombers but it actively acquiesced in such acts. In such circumstances, international law allows a state to take measures of self-defence in the territory from which the terrorist acts emanate. It is strange to argue that a state is entitled to use armed force in self-defence, with the ensuing inevitable loss of life, but yet to argue that a temporary fence which can cause no physical harm is illegal. International law stipulates that where privately-owned land is used for security purposes, the owner is entitled to compensation. Israel complies fully with this stipulation and pays rent for the use of private land for the fence. If the owner is dissatisfied with the amount of rent, he has recourse to courts to challenge the amount.

Clearly, building a fence, any fence, disrupts civilian life in the area of the fence and causes hardship to civilians. Israel has taken steps to limit such harm as far as possible. However, international law relating to self-defence recognises that sometimes hardship is caused to civilians and has set out rules whereby any incidental harm to civilians resulting from the exercise of the right of self-defence must be proportional to the military utility of the act of self-defence. Temporarily inconveniencing civilians would seem to be clearly proportional to the saving

of human lives from the scourge of suicide bombers.

Israel regretted the unbalanced method by which the issue of the fence was brought before the International Court of Justice. The question posed by the General Assembly made no reference whatsoever to terrorism or terrorist acts and attempted to prejudge the issue by referring to

the route as being on occupied Palestinian territory. The Palestinian and Arab spokesmen appearing before the court likewise refrained from any mention of the terrorism and suicide bombers that led to the need for the fence.

Israel has proved in the past that it is willing to negotiate withdrawal from any territory in the context of real peace. Israel has even been willing to put up the border dispute for international adjudication. A dispute with Egypt over the Taba area on the border was settled by international arbitration. However, such adjudication can only be done on the basis of an agreement between the parties.

The obligation of the Palestinians in accordance with international law and in accordance with their written undertakings is to prevent terrorism. If they had fulfilled their undertaking, there would have been no need for a fence and we could have seen a flourishing independent Palestinian state as a peaceful neighbour of Israel, instead of the sorry situation in which the Palestinian people find themselves today.

(The author is a lecturer in international law at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.)



IRAQ BLASTS / LEADERS CALL FOR CALM

Al-Qaeda hand seen behind attacks

Ваднрар, мавсн 2. The U.S.-ap-pointed Governing Council for Iraq blamed Tuesday's bloody cities on "terrorists" seeking to spark sectarian strife in the bombings at Shia shrines in two country and called on Iragis to

The Council condemned the "evil and terrorism that targets fragi unity and seeks to enflame divisions among the people" in a statement read by a grim-faced Adnan Pachachi, a Sunni Muslim on the Council. maintain calm.

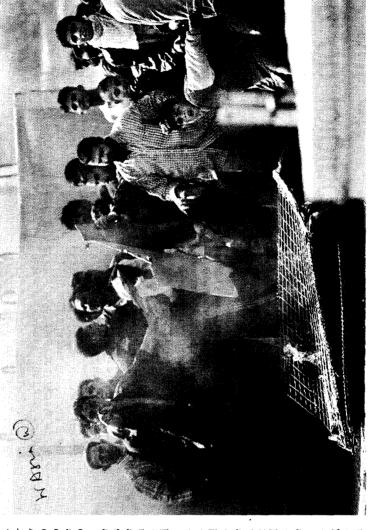
"I draw attention to the nemies who want evil to befall the ceed with the building of the people only more determined cessity of keeping calm and patient and to adhere to nationa unity, in order to stop the enenation," the statement said "Such crimes will only make out to maintain unity and to pro new Iraq

resentatives from the Council in clared a three-day national a show of unity. The Council dement to journalists, standing Mr. Pachachi read the statealongside Shía and Kurdish rep mourning.

ington suspects of working for "This is a message from Zarqawi, a Jordanian whom Washqawi to the Iraqi people," Mr

Mowaffaq al-Rubaie, blamed the attacks on Abu Musab Zar-

Another Council member



Youth vent their anger at U.S.troops (not seen in the picture) after a series of explosions near a Shla mosque in Khadimiya in Baghdad on Tuesday. — AP

way and his (Zarqawi's) inten-Shias in a bid to spark civil war. this country will not be successful."

The U.S. military in Iraq said from Zarqawi, which it said urged suicide bombings against a computer disc with a letter previously they had intercepted We will not react in a sectarian Rubaie told CNN from Baghdad.

nated blasts in Iraq, which tore Western Governments expressed horror today at coordi-World expresses horror

Britain, Germany and France at least 124 people.

cal progress made by the Governing Council. — AP/Reuters condemned the attacks outside mosques in Baghdad and the holy city of Karbala. The British Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, said the attacks were 'outrageous' and aimed at hurting Iraq's majority Shias and politithrough Shia worshippers to kill

THE HINDU

MAR 200A

MANAMA, MARCH 1. Qatar is likely to release chen rebel leader in Doha earlier this month in exchange for the freedom of two two Russian nationals that it had detained of its citizens who are being held by Mosfollowing the assassination of a top Checow since Saturday.

Qatar's Al Jazeera satellite television channel reported on Monday that the swap deal between Qatar and Russia had been finalised. Qatar would release two Russian 'security agents" who were detained on Russia, in turn, was expected to free two nation of the Chechen separatist leader, Zesuspicion of being involved in the assasiimkhan Yandarbiyev, earlier this month.

According to authorities in Qatar, Russia has been holding two officials, who were Qatari nationals.

free detained nationals

Serbia to participate in a sports event.

Serbia to participate in a operation Yandarbiyev was killed in the Qatari capital on February 13 after his booby-trapped ital on February 13 after his books. Two of in the explosion, and his 13-year-old son Yandarbiyev's bodyguards were also killed was seriously wounded.

Qatar, analysts say, has agreed to the arsions that had crept in its relationship with Moscow following Yandarbiyev's assassinarangement in order to ease diplomatic ten-

in the incident and sought their freedom. It also accused Qatar of being soft on coun-Russia had reacted with outrage at the arrest of its personnel, denied involvement

Russia's requests to extradite Yandarbiyev, Qatar had earlier refused to comply with

tests about the arrests for the second time Ministry on Friday summoned Qatar's am bassador in Moscow to hear Russia's proin two days.

The response from a Qatari newspaper that is mainly owned by the Government was equally scathing following Saturday's detentions at Moscow airport.

An editorial in the Asharq newspaper editorial headlined "Russian-style piracy", accused Moscow of "jungle diplomacy". It charged Moscow with seeking to use the men "to barter" for the two security agents. Hints that Qatar might be inclined to end

the diplomatic row with Russia emerged The GCC said it would like its good reladuring a meeting of the six-nation Gulf Co ordination Council (GCC).

tions with Russia to "flourish and prosper"

ARABS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST ISRAEL'S CONSTRUCTION OF SECURITY BARRIER

orld Court begins hearing on W Asia wa

pleted will leave the Pahskinian people with only half of the West Bank within isolated, non-contiguous walled enclaves. THE HAGUE, Feb. 23. — The barrier being built by Israel on the

Agencies

roadmap peace plan which aims for the creation of an independent will render the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict practically impossible," he said. "Saving the roadmap and the prospects for manent representative at the UN. said the construction was destroying the internationally-backed Palestinian State by next year, "It peace requires a cessation of the construction of this wall, its removal and non-recognition by Mr Qidwa, the Palestinians' per states of any of its consequences." of the Palestinian delegation at a West Bank is not about security, but is designed to entrench the occupation of Palestinian lands, the head world court hearing said at the start In a related development, people across the Arab world today demon-In The Hague, Mr Nasser alstrated against the Israeli construcing the occupation and the de facto Oidwa told the UN's International about security, it's about entrench-

Israel has insisted that what it terms the security barrier is essential to bring a halt to the wave of

annexation of large areas of the Palestinian land... This wall if com-

Court of Justice: "The wall is not

have killed hundreds of Israelis since the start of the intifada, or Palestinian suicide attacks which uprising, in September 2000.

The government of Mr Ariel Sharon has boycotted the hearings, arguing that the case is beyond the competence of the court.

chanted: "We oppose the racist wall!" Meanwhile, about 2,000 Palestinians marched through the refugee camp of Ein el-Hilweh in southern Lebanon, carrying pictures of Mr Yasser Arafat, who described In Cairo, about 125 protesters the barrier as "another Berlin Wall"

the Palestinians. Some 80 Syrians and In Damascus, courts fell silent for an hour as the Syrian Bar Association called a stoppage in solidarity with Palestinians staged a sit-ju-in front of the European Compaission offices.



Palestinians demonstrate against Israel's baryler in front of the concrete blocks. — AFP,

THE GREAT DIVIDE

Palestinian supporters, condemnscepticism by more than 30 other israel is constructing in the West countries including the USA and Sourt of Justice over the barrier The case at the International Bank is being championed by ed by Israel and treated with those in the EU

The Palestinians say the 740-km and trenches — amounts to a land Bank to unite Jewish settlements barrier — a line of walls, fences grab. It cuts deep into the West with Israel's own territory.

Israel says the barrier, which is militants and suicide bombers. about one-third complete, will protect it against Palestinian

24 FEB anna

tion of a barrier in the West Bank.

of proceedings today.

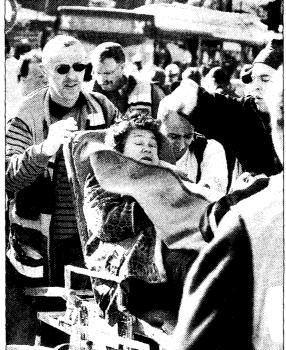
Suicide bomber kills 37 in Jerusalem bus

Jerusalem: A Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on a crowded Israeli bus in Jerusalem on Sunday, killing at least seven people on the eve of a World Court hearing on Israel's controversial barrier in the West Bank.

The explosion turned the bus into a charred skeleton at a busy intersection near the Inbal Hotel, where leaders of major US Jewish organisations were meeting. "People were screaming mommy, daddy.' There were body parts everywhere, including some hands and feet scattered outside the bus,' medic Reuven Pohl said.

The World Court starts hearings in The Hague on Monday on the legality of a West Bank barrier that Israel says keeps suicide bombers out, but which Palestinians call a land grab. The Palestinian militant group Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, part of President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, claimed responsibility

for the bombing in a statement which called the barrier "a Nazi wall which will not stop us attacking."



Israeli rescue workers wheel away an injured woman from the wreckage of a destroyed bus following an explosion in Jerusalem on Sunday

It named the bomber as Mohammed Zaal, a 23-year-old from a

tack was a reaction to the barrier and to an Israeli army raid that killed 15 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on February 11. Jerusalem police chief Mickey Levy said the bomber blew up in the middle of the bus during the morning rush hour at the start of the Israeli work week, killing seven people and wounding 60.

Police said the bomb was packed with metal shards to make it more deadly. "If there was a fence around Jerusalem there would not have been an attack today.' said Israeli justice minister Yosef Lapid. Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Korei condemned the attack but said it showed the barrier would not give Israel security. A passenger said a security guard from a team meant to prevent bombings got off the stop before the blast. Minutes before the blast, Israeli work crews began tearing down an eight

km-long section of the barrier that separated a Palestinian village from village near the West Bank town of the rest of the West Bank. Reuters

Sharon survives no-frust motions

the government, but it could not Associated Press 14 R7 ...

plan to evacuate almost all the settlements from the Gaza Strip and a few in the West Bank as part of his 'unilateral disengagement' steps if peace talks with the Palestinians coalition partners continued to use the votes to emphasise their threat to quit if he goes ahead with his muster even a simple majority.
Still, two of Mr Sharon's three

he needs to resign," deputy educa-tion minister mr Zvi Hendel of the National Union Party told Israel TV. He did not take part in the no-confidence vote as a protest against "Whenever the Prime Minister wants to expel Jews from their land, remain bogged down. Mr Sharon's policies. Opposition would have needed an absolute majority of 61 of the 120

settlements, especially unauthorised ones, to comply with the US-backed road map Despite Mr Sharon's plan to dismantle peace plan, his hawkish coalition has infuriated the Opposition

JERUSALEM, Feb. 17. — Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government survived three motions of mentarians from the ruling coalition abstained or stayed away, reflecting deep divisions over his plans to evacuate Jewish settlements. no confidence yesterday, but parlia-

With the cracks showing in his centre-right coalition, Mr Sharon appealed for a broad-based govern-The parliament voted the mo-tions down by 53 to 45. The ment of national consensus.

members of parliament to topple

Libya tells Britain it did not squeal or on Qadir Khan

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
Times News Network

London: Libya has denied it shopped Pakistan and its chief nuclear weapons scientist, Dr Abdul Qadir Khan, to the US and UK, in a desire to worm its way into Western affections after nearly half-a-century out in the cold.

In fact, said Colonel Gaddafi's emissary in London on Tuesday the West "al-

ready knew about him (Khan). They never asked and we never gave any information."

Tuesday's comments came from Libyan foreign minister Abdul Rahman Shalgam, whose UK visit was described by British foreign secretary Jack Straw as "historic."

And offering a uniquely Arabic similie, Mr Shalgam insisted that all its "know-how", which is thought to be acquired from Pakistan, and all its "scientists" did not lead Tripoli to develop a nuclear weapon.

He said, "the presence of flour, water and fire does not mean that you've actually got bread".

Analysts said Libya's very public insistence, before the world's press in London, that Tripoli did not inform on Pakistan and Mr Khan may be calculated to help build up pressure on Islamabad.

Tripoli's protestations of innocence about the Pakistan expose is only the latest step of a carefully-choreographed sequence of events, which began last March with secret negotiations between Libyan, British and American officials about Libya's weapons programmes.

Mr Shalgam's London sojourn came on the same day that Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi visits Tripoli, in

a sign that the West is increasingly keen to enfold and embrace oil-rich but dirt-poor Libya.

Mr Straw confirmed that Prime Minister Tony Blair would also be visiting Tripoli soon.

Khan right-wing American policy, former assistant defence secretary Frank Gaffney expressed concern about Col Gaddafi's newest love-fest with Britain and Europe.

Mr Gaffney, of the right-wing Centre for Security Policy, told the BBC it was "worrisome" that Col Gaddafi might be "allowed to remain in power and garner even more resources from the West—financial as well as technological—he could pose a considerably more serious threat to all of us down the line".

sharon yows to empty Gaza of Jews

Jerusalem, February 2 Reuters

6

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon said on Monday that he planned to evacuate almost all of the Jewish settlements in the

ne isolated settlements a "security line" aro-, absorbing large swawhen the Israeli govser als about moving ahead with "agement strategy to repied land thes on "Usu and und (a di

But despite the surge in vio-lence, Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Korei said preparations are underway for his first meeting with Sharon since taking office in November. on of settlements, it aims only at public relations," Palestinian Ca-'If Israel wants to leave ... no ernment speaks about evacuati binet member Saeb Erekat said Palestinian will stand in its way.

A Palestinian militant who lost his legs and an arm to an Israeli tank shell a year ago battled sol diers who came to arrest him on The surprise announcement came amid a surge in violence doubt on the chances of reviving last week that has cast further a US-backed peace "road map".

man, was also killed in the confrontation. Palestinian loses life after limb

Monday in a Gaza Strip raid that ended with him being killed along with three other gunmen.

REUTERS

Islamic Jihad group, threw a grenade at the soldiers who came to arrest him. He was shot Aesh, a senior local leader of the and killed. His brother, a gun-The army said Yasser Abu al

refugee camp near Bethlehem on the West Bank on Monday. Four Palestinians were killed in the operation. EYEBALL GAMES: An Israeli soldier points his gun at Palestinians during a raid to arrest militants in Aida for the evacuation of 17 settlements in Gaza Strip," the right-wing PM told *Haaretz*. "I am working on the assumption that in future there will be no Jews in Gaza." Gaza Strip, dropping a political bombshell that stunned friends Sharon, once considered the godfather of the settlement move-ment, later told his pro-settler Likud party the proposal he will take to Washington later this mediate outrage from settler leaders. "I am in shock," Likud month will also call for removing a smaller number of Jewish engave no time-frame for uprooting settlements, one of the thorniest It was the first time Sharon Sharon's move appeared aimed at showing Washington he is "I have given the order to plan claves in the West Bank. But he had revealed plans for such a far tories Israel seized in the 1967 West Asia war, and sparked imreaching withdrawal from terri legislator Yehiel Hazan said. points of conflict in Israel and foes alike.

> 73 FEB 2nn' 3 FEB 2004

THE HIDUSTAN TIMES

না আঁচাইলে বিশ্বাস নাই

লেস্ডিনীয় গেরিলাদের

ফিদাইন হামলা, তাহার জবাবে ইজরায়েলি সৈন্যদের বিধ্বংসী অভিযান এবং এই সব কিছুর মাধ্যমে এই ভূখণ্ডের রক্তাক্ত অপচয়ে ছেদ পড়ে নাই। তাহারই মধ্যে সহসা সুপবনের মতো প্রবাহিত হইল ইজরায়েলের প্রধানমন্ত্রী এরিয়েল খ্যারনের ঘোষণা, গাজায় যে ২০টি ইইদি বসতি গড়িয়া উঠিয়াছে, তাহার •\$৭টিই প্রত্যাহ্বত হইবে। সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে ধ ্রীল-গেল' রব। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নিজের •**দ্বৰ** লিকুদ পাৰ্টি এবং তাঁহাকে সম্র্থনকারী দলগুলির মধ্যে ব্যাপক বিক্ষোভ। সকলেরই অভিযোগ, এতদ্বারা শ্যারন প্যালেস্তাইনিদের কাছে ইজরায়েলকে বিক্রয় করিতেছেন, সন্ত্রাসের গতিবিধি অবাধ করিয়া দিতৈছেন, উগ্ৰপন্থী হামাস ও ইসলামি **্রেরা**দের কাছে আত্মসমর্পণ

করিতেছেন, ইত্যাদি। অবস্থা এমন

দাঁড়ায় যে শ্যারনের বিরুদ্ধে ইজরায়েলি

পার্দামেন্টে অনাস্থা প্রস্তাব পর্যন্ত তোলা

হয় এবং মাত্র এক ভোটের ব্যবধানে

শ্যারন কোনও ক্রমে প্রতিনিধিসভার

আস্থা অর্জন করেন। তবে শ্যারন বিচলিত নন। তিনি স্পষ্ট জানাইয়াছেন, ক্রাঁহার এই প্রস্তাব কার্যকর করিতে গিয়া যদি সমর্থকদের সমর্থন হারাইতে হয়, তথাপি তিনি গাজা হইতে ইছদি বৃশতি অপসারণ করিবেনই। প্রয়োজনে ক্রিনি নৃতন সরকার গঠনেও প্রস্তুত। ্র এ পর্যন্ত সব ঠিক। জর্ডন নদীর

পশ্চিম তীরের মতো গাজাও যে প্যালেন্ডাইনি ভূখণ্ড এবং সেখানে গড়িয়া তোলা ইহুদি বসতিগুলি যে ভবিষ্যতের সার্বভৌম প্যালেন্ডাইনের প্রথৈ মূর্তিমান কাঁটা, তাহাতে সংশয় নাই। এই বিষয়েও সংশয় নাই যে ওই বসতিগুলি প্যালেস্তাইনি আন্তর্জাতিক আপত্তি অগ্রাহ্য করিয়া গড়িয়া উঠিয়াছে। ওই সব বসতির র্নিরাপত্তার জন্য বিপুল ইজরায়েলি সৈন্য গাজায় মোতায়েন, যাহারা সামান্য ছুতায় প্রতিবেশী প্যালেস্তাইনি বসতিগুলির উপর নির্যাতন চালায়। প্যালেস্তাইন সমস্যার মীমাংসার প্রধানতম পূর্বশর্তই হইল, গাজা সহ যাবতীয় প্যালেস্তাইনি জমি হইতে ইজরায়েলি দখল নির্মূল করা। ১৯৬৭ সালের আরব-ইজরায়েল যুদ্ধের সময় গায়ের জোরে যে সব এলাকা ইজরায়েল দখল করে, তাহার উপরেই এই সব ইহুদি বসতি গড়িয়া তোলা হয়। কিন্তু এরিয়েল শ্যারন তাহা

করিতে উদ্যোগী হইবেন কেন? লিকুদ পার্টির প্রধান হিসাবে তিনি নিজেই তো অনেকগুলি বসতি পত্তন করিয়াছিলেন। আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে দক্ষিণপন্থী লিকুদ পার্টি গাজা ও ওয়েস্ট ব্যাংকে ইজরায়েলি বসতির স্থাপন ও প্রসারের প্রবক্তা। সেই পার্টির নেতা, অধিকৃত আরব ভূখণ্ডে গায়ের জোরে ইহুদি বসতি স্থাপন আন্দোলনের জনক এবং কট্টরপন্থী ইহুদি রাজনীতিক শ্যারন এমন একটি 'আত্মঘাতী' প্রস্তাব করিলেন কেন? তবে কি ইহাও ইজরায়েলি রাষ্ট্রনীতির আর এক প্রস্থ প্রতারণা ? প্রশ্নটি উঠিতেছে, কারণ শ্যারনের পূর্বসূরি ইজরায়েলি রাষ্ট্রনেতারাও অনুরূপ নানা প্রস্তাব বা উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করিয়াছিলেন। সেই সব উদ্যোগ বাস্তবায়িত হইলে এত দিনে প্যালেস্তাইন এবং ইজরায়েল শান্তিতে সহাবস্থান করিত। তাহা হয় নাই। ইজরায়েল বার বার পিছু হটিয়াছে।

এমন নয় যে জনমত প্যালেস্তাইনিদের সঙ্গে আপস-রফার বিরোধী। আন্তর্জাতিক জনমত তো বটেই, ইজরায়েলেও অধিকাংশ মানুষ প্যালেন্তাইিদের জমি ফিরাইয়া দিয়া শান্তি আবাহনের পক্ষপাতী। সর্বশেষ জনমত-সমীক্ষাতেও শ্যারনের ইহুদি বসতি অপসারণের প্রস্তাবকে প্রায় ৬০ শতাংশ ইহুদি সমর্থন করিয়াছেন, বিরোধিতা করিয়াছেন ৩৪ শতাংশ। তবু শ্যারনকে মাত্র এক ভোটে গরিষ্ঠতা রক্ষা করিতে হইয়াছে। এমনও হইতে পারে যে নিজের ও নিজের পরিবারের বিরুদ্ধে আনীত দুর্নীতি ও আর্থিক অনিয়মের অভিযোগ শ্যারনকে ইজরায়েলি রাজনীতির দৃষ্টি অন্য দিকে ঘরাইতে প্ররোচিত করিয়াছে। প্যালেস্তাইনিদের জন্য গাজা ও ওয়েস্ট ব্যাংক ছাড়িয়া দিতে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র-সহ পশ্চিমি সমর্থকদের চাপ তো বরাবরই আছে। এত কাল তাহা প্রতিরোধ করিলেও এখন শ্যারন এ কাজে পশ্চিমি মিত্রদের পূর্ণ স্মর্থন পাইবেন। ঘরের রাজনীতিতে তাঁহার বিরুদ্ধবাদীরাও কিছুটা কোণঠাসা হইয়া পড়িবে। এই সব হিসাব কষিয়াই শ্যারন গাজা হইতে ইহুদি বসতি গুটাইবার প্রস্তাব করিয়াছেন কিনা, কে জানে। সে ক্ষেত্রে প্যালেস্তিনীয়দের আবার একটি প্রতারণার জন্য প্রস্তুত থাকাই ভাল। তাঁহারা অবশ্য 'ঠগের বাড়ির নেমন্তর' খাইতে অভ্যস্ত, না-আঁচাইলে তাই বিশ্বাসই করেন না, আদৌ নিমন্ত্রিত হইয়াছিলেন!

10 KILLED, 30 INJURED IN EXPLOSION INSIDE JERUSALEM BUS

Suicide blast outside Sharon residence

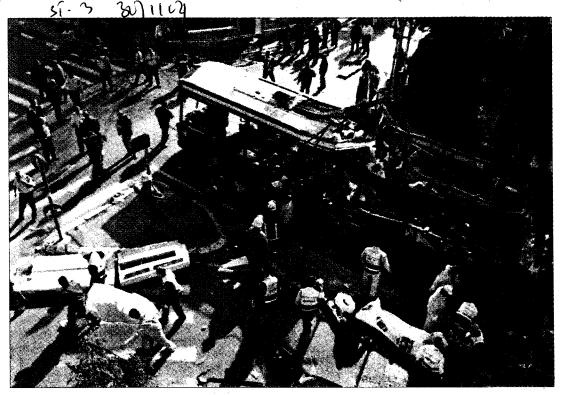
AP & AFP

JERUSALEM, Jan. 29. — At least 10 people were killed and 30 injured when a suicide bomber blew up on a bus outside the Israeli Prime Minister's residence here today, police and paramedics said. Mr Ariel Sharon wasn't in the area at the time of the explosion.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an armed offshoot of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, claimed responsibility for today's suicide bus bombing in a phone call to AFP. The attack was carried out by Ali Munir Yussef Jihara (24), a policeman from the Ayda refugee camp, the group said. He was the nephew of Jihad Jihara, one of 13 expelled Palestinians European countries after a siege at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity in May 2002. The explosion coincided with a Germanbrokered prisoner swap between Israel and the Lebanese guerrilla group Hizbullah.

The explosion went off just before 9 a.m. in the Rehavia district in downtown Jerusalem, just 15 m from Mr Sharon's official residence. Mr Sharon was at his farm in southern Israel at the time, his aides said. Mr Eli Beer, a paramedic, said victims had been scattered over a wide area.

The bomber was in the back of the bus when he detonated the explosives, said Jerusalem police chief Mr Mickey Levy.



Rescue workers carry a body at the site where a suicide bomber blew up a bus in Jerusalem on Thursday. The explosion killed at least 10 people and wounded about 30. — PTI

"It was a very serious attack on a bus packed with passengers," Mr Levy said at the scene. "According to what we know at the moment... we're talking about a suicide bomber.

Mr Sharon's spokesman, Mr Raanan Gissin, said the attack illustrated why Israel is building a contentious separation barrier in the West Bank.

In Cairo, the Palestinian ambassador to the Arab

League said today's bombing is a message that "walls and massacres" cannot guarantee Israeli security. "It's a message proving that only the recognition of the rights of others can guarantee peace and security," the ambassador, Mohammed Sobeih, said. "The separation walls and massacres, like the one in Gaza, do not bring security." "Walls and massacres, as well as the humiliation and

destruction of the property of Palestinians can only bring more violence and operations like that which took place this morning," he added.

UN chief Mr Kofi Annan said the West Asia peace process was "in distress but not dead" following the blast. He appealed for "courage and leadership" from the Israeli and the Palestinian administra-

Israel releases prisoners

COLOGNE, Jan. 29. — Israel released more than 400 prisoners today as part of a longawaited swap with the Lebanese guerrilla group Hezbollah exchange for the return of an Israeli businessman and the bodies of three Israeli soldiers.

The German-brokered exchange was completed despite a earlier on a bus in Jerusalem that killed at least 10 bystanders and wounded about 50.



suicide bombing A Palestinian prisoner holds up his handcuffed hands after crossing into the Palestinian side of the Erez crossing along the Gaza-Israeli. border on Thursday. — AFP

We are releasing another 400 Palestinians with a very heavy heart, because we know that these 400 will return very quickly to the cycle of violence," Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Mr Jonathan Peled said in Jerusalem.

The complex swap proceeded after a team of Israeli forensic experts confirmed the identities of the three Israeli soldiers at a Germany military airport, where they arrived before dawn on a flight from Beirut, Lebanon with Israeli businessman Mr Elhanan Tannenbaum.

In the first phase, Israel released 400 Palestinians at checkpoints into the West Bank and Gaza Strip and also turned over the remains of 60 Lebanese militants. The swap was completed under tight security at Cologne's Wahn military airport with the departure of a German air force jet bound for Lebanon carrying prisoners released from Israeli jails. Moments later, an Israeli jet departed with Tannenbaum and the bodies of the three soldiers. — AP

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THE STATESMAN

Jerusalem: A suicide bomber blew himself up on a bus in Jerusalem on Thursday, killing at least ten bystanders and wounding about 30 in an attack outcial residence, police and paramedics said. The prime minister wasn't in the side Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's offi-

The explosion went off just before 9 a.m. in the Rehavia district in downtown Jerusalem, just 15 metres from Mr Sharon's official residence. Mr Mr Sharon was at his farm in southern Is-

Eli beer, a paramedic, said victims been scattered over a wide area. The bomber was in the back of the bus when he detonated the explosives, said rael at the time, his aides said. had

The bus was charred, with wires dangling everywhere. One side of the bus had been blown out and the back half of Palestinian authority officials conthe roof was blown off. Police investiga tors with sniffer dogs searched the bus. Jerusalem police chief Mickey Levy.

Mr Sharon's spokesman, Raanan Gissin, said the attack illustrated why Israel is building a contentious separation barrier in the West Bank. demned the bombing.

its West Bank separation barrier at next challenge the International Court of Justice's right to rule on the legality of month's hearing in The Hague, a senior The Israeli cabinet has decided

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gue that the court cannot give a ruling "The cabinet decided on Wednesday to file a document in which we will ar-

on the fence as it is a political issue, whe source close to Mr Sharon said

gered Palestinians as its route at times struction of the barrier which has an-The 150-page document will also detail the "security reasons" behind concuts deep into their territory.

The suicide bombing in Jerusalem is cannot guarantee Israeli security, the Palestinian ambassador to the Arab a message that "walls and massacres League said

"It's a message proving that only the Mohamed Sobeih, said on recognition of the rights of others can Egyptian state television which asked guarantee peace and security," the amhim to comment on the bombing. bassador,

rity," Mr Sobeih said, stressing that the bombing took place near the residence "The separation walls and massacres, like the one in Gaza, do not bring secuof Mr Sharon.

he "Walls and massacres, as well as the humiliation and destruction of the property of Palestinians can only bring more violence and operations like that which took place this morning,"

Mr Sobeih denounced what he said were Israeli efforts to "throw the blame ity before even having identified the cul-Meanwhile, Israel began releasing for the attack on the Palestinian author-

rilla group Hezbollah after forensic exawaited swap with the Lebanese guerperts confirmed the identities of the re-Palestinian prisoners as part of a long-

mains of three Israeli soldiers at a German air base.

ers—400 Palestinian prisoners, 35 from Arab countries and a German convicted Under the German-brokered deal, Israel is to release a total of 436 prison of spying for Hezbollah and the three

the identities of the remains of three Israeli forensic experts confirmed soldiers at a German air base on Thurs day, clearing the way for a prisoner

exchange had begun. The families of A short time later, buses carrying Farqumiya checkpoint, signalling the prisoners waved Hezbollah and Palesfrom Israel into the West Bank at the about 145 Palestinian prisoners crossec swap to begin tinian flags.

Israel also turned over the remains of 60 Lebanese militants at Israel's northern border with Lebanon as part of the

> W.W 1310 1

truck, which then rumbled through a diers carried the coffins one by one and placed the wooden boxes into a red cross Looking like pallbearers, Israeli sol border crossing.

However, there was no immediate prison and a German air force plane carrying Tannenbaum and the bodies of three Israeli soldiers touched down before dawn under tight security. Millitary sign of activity at Germany's Wahn ai base, where an Israeli air force jet car rying 36 prisoners released from Israel police ringed the area and kept journal sts and cameras away. Agencies



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WALLAL TACTORY MOITH

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 .14N 2004

Gaddafi, sticks to his promise

Associated Press 311 H F Jum

WASHINGTON, Jan. 28. — Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, following up a promise to end his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, has shipped 55,000 pounds of nuclear and missile components to the USA in a bid to break out of diplomatic isolation.

Bush administration officials indicated that Gaddafi could expect some easing of economic pressure in return if he continued on a cooperative track.

Another official said that Libya had not proved that it no longer supported terrorism. As a result, the State Department is not ready to cancel Libya's designation as a terror sponsor, said the official on condition of anonymity. Therefore, at least some economic sanctions will remain in place.

An American transport plane carrying the components arrived yesterday at an airport outside Knoxville, Tennessee, with the equipment. It included stock to enrich uranium, centrifuge parts and guidance sets for long-range missiles, White House spokesman Mr Scott McClellan said.

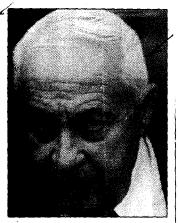
The equipment probably will be evaluated at the Oak Ridge nuclear weapons plant in Tennessee, the major storehouse in the United States for bombgrade uranium where uranium can be converted into fuel for nuclear reactors.

In London, Mr Tony Blair said Gaddafi has confirmed that Libya plans to dismantle all such programmes immediately. The British Prime Minister said Britain and the USA had been engaged in talks with Libya for nine months.

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Ariel Sharon

Sharon w under bribe cloud

Jerusalem, Jan. 21 (Reuters): Israeli prosecutors are considering whether to indict Prime Minister Ariel Sharon after a court charged a businessman today with trying to bribe him in the 1990s, a justice ministry source said.

The source said prosecutors would decide within months whether to charge Sharon — a move that would almost certainly force from office the Rightwing former general who has won popularity for tough measures against a Palestinian uprising. Sharon's spokesperson had no immediate comment.

An Israeli court indicted property developer David Appel earlier today on charges of trying to bribe Sharon when he was foreign minister in the late 1990s, sparking Opposition calls for his resignation.

Sharon, 75, has denied any wrongdoing in a string of corruption scandals that have failed to seriously dent his popularity.

But mounting legal troubles could threaten his support in Israel and weaken his hand in seeking a peace arrangement with Palestinians. Sharon, if indicted, would likely be charged along with his son, Gilad, and Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, a close ally in the ruling Likud party.

"The state attorney's office will take from a few weeks to a few months to decide whether or not charges will be brought against Sharon, Olmert and Gilad on the Greek island affair," the justice ministry source said, referring to a real estate deal.

Analysts said that while the indictment against Appel would tarnish Sharon's image, it posed no direct threat to his power because prosecutors had not presented any evidence showing he knowingly accepted money for political favours. A senior political source close to Sharon said: "He's not going to resign. There is no charge against him."

Senior legal analyst for Israel Radio, Moshe Negbi, said the chances of an indictment against Sharon were 50 per cent.

Although an indictment alone would not force Sharon to step down, Israeli justice minister Yosef Lapid suggested otherwise when he said the Prime Minister would have to "draw conclusions" if charged.

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THE TELEGRAPH

Israel threatens to annex parts of West Bank

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM, Jan. 11. — Israel will react to any Palestinian declaration of independence by formally annexing parts of the occupied West Bank, health minister Mr Danny Naveh said today.

"Our message is clear: if the Palestinians unilaterally proclaim an independent state, Israel will annex parts (of the West Bank) that it judges essential to its secur-

ity," he told public radio.
"The Palestinians are trying every trick in the book to avoid implementing the roadmap, which demands that they put an end to terrorism," the minister added in reference to the peace plan drafted by an international quartet.

The Palestinian leadership said in a statement issued yesterday that it was mulling the possibility of unilaterally proclaiming an independent state on land oc-

cupied by Israel since 1967.

"The Palestinian leadership... believes it has the right under international law... to work towards the creation of a democratic state in all territories occupied in 1967, with Jerusalem as its capital," said the statement issued after a meeting chaired by Palestinian leader Mr Yasser Arafat.

The statement came after Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei revived the idea of a bi-national state, which would abandon the prospect of two states living side by side, and place Jews and Palestinians under common authority on land covering historic Palestine, from the Jordan river to the Mediterranean.

Suicide bomber killed: A suicide bomber was killed today when his device prematurely exploded near a settlement in the northern West Bank, while another Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli troops in the area, sources on both sides said, a report from Nablus adds.

Witnesses said that body parts of the bomber could be seen scattered near the site of the explosion close to the settlement of Karnei Shomron, east of the

town of Qalqiliya.

"One Palestinian exploded himself between the village (of Jinsafut) and the settlement," a Palestinian security source said.

An Israeli military source said: "It appears a suicide bomber prematurely detonated himself," adding that there were no Israeli casualties.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian teenager was shot dead by Israeli soldiers near the northern West Bank town of Nablus.

Fuad Jarwuan (18) was fatally injured when Israeli soldiers fired to disperse a group of stone-throwing Palestinians in Zeita, south of Nablus.

THE STATESMAN

1? JAN 2004

Assad defends arms build-u

BENEDICT BROGAN Damascus, Jan. 6: Syria is entitled to defend itself by acquiring its own chemical and biological deterrent, President Bashar Assad said last night as he rejected American and British demands for concessions on weapons of mass destruction.

In his first major statement since Libya's decision last month to scrap its nuclear and chemical programmes, he came closer than ever before to admitting that his country possessed stockpiles of WMD. Speaking to The Daily



Bashar Assad

Telegraph, Assad said that any deal to destroy Syria's chemical and biological capability would come about only if Israel agreed to abandon its undeclared nuclear arsenal.

Since the capture of Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi's decision to dismantle his WMD programme, Assad has risen towards the top of America's target list.

The White House and Downing Street have been waiting for his re-

sponse to Gaddafi's appeal for other Arab leaders to follow his exam-

ple or risk inflicting a "tragedy" on their people.

President Assad spoke for more than 90 minutes at his discreet villa, which he prefers to the grand palace overlooking Damascus built by his father, the late Hafez Assad. Asked about American and British claims that Syria had a WMD capability, he stopped short of the categorical denial that has been his government's stock response until now. Instead, he pointed to the Israelis' recent attack on alleged Palestinian bases in Syria and the occupation of the Golan Heights as evidence that Syria needed a deterrent. "We are a country which is [partly] occupied and from time to time we are exposed to Israeli aggression," he said. "It is natural for us to look for means to defend ourselves. It is not difficult to get most of these weapons anywhere in the world and they can be obtained at any time."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH



Renamed road links Iran, Egypt

Tehran, Jan. 6 (Reuters): Iran and Egypt have agreed to restore diplomatic relations severed 25 years ago, Iran's Vice-President Mohammad Ali Abtahi said

nite move and right now they are making the preparations," Ab-"The two countries have de cided to restore ties. It's a defi-

tahi said

ential power in world issues," he "By working together, Iran and Egypt can become an influ added.

and Iran had agreed to restore istry spokesman said he could not confirm reports that Egypt An Egyptian foreign min

"I advise you to stay tuned," said another Egyptian official,

the decision today by Tehran of Egypt's late President Anwar Sadat, thus removing a major ob-Abtahi's comments followed that had honoured the assassin stacle to the restoration of ties City Council to rename a street who asked not to be identified. between the two countries.

Khaled Islambouli street to Inian uprising, at the request of The official Irna news agency said the council had changed tifada street, after the Palestin-Iran's foreign ministry.

pressed a desire in recent weeks name the street before it would Cairo had demanded Iran reto patch up their differences contemplate restoring relations.

"This is a step in accordance with (Iran's) detente policy and spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi as Irna quoted foreign ministry trust-building with all countries especially Islamic countries, saying.

Palestinians) want it," Asefi "For the same reasons that relations with Egypt were cut ans and they themselves (the they should now be restored be cause it will help the Palestini

olution for striking the Camp hosting Iran's exiled shah, who Iran broke ties with Egypt shortly after the 1979 Islamic rev-David peace deal with Israel and died in Cairo in 1980 and re-Islambouli, an Islamic radi mains buried there.

Khaled Islambouli street was not a condition for restoring ties "Changing the name of Egyptian peace deal, shot Sadat cal who opposed the Israeli in 1981. He was later executed.

symbolic it was necessary for us to respect some (Egyptian) conwith Egypt," Asefi said.

ex-

and Egypt have



A cleric crosses Tehran's Khaled Islambouli street. (AFP)

By early afternoon, the street sign had not been changed and a huge mural of Islambouli on the side of a building overlooked the

of Lieutenant Islambouli, the A caption reads: "In honour Revolutionary Execution Agen of Sadat"

on the sidelines of a conference such meeting for more than two mad Khatami and Egyptian in Geneva last month — the first Iranian President Moham President Hosni Mubarak met decades.

Khatami's reformist government faced some opposition from religious hardliners in The renaming of the street by

Iran. The hardline *Jomhuri ye Es*today, referred to Islambouli as a "martyr" and said changing the him was "an insult to Islamic and revolutionary values and name of the street that honoured

Iran has used street names to One street adjacent to the score diplomatic points against several other countries. causes,

example, is called Bobby Sands British embassy in Tehran, for street after the Irish Republican hunger strike in Belfast in 1981 Army prisoner who died

NT JAM ZOJA

THE TELEGRAPH

Inflexible Israel

New Year brings little cheer for Palestinians

The New Year, and the good resolutions that go with it, make most people's thoughts turn to peace and friendship. But not in the case of Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon. His latest policy speech shows that he has every intention of continuing with his hardline approach towards the Palestinians despite advice to the contrary from key ally. America. In recent times, even troops from the elite security forces have expressed their reluctance to act against civilians in the Palestinian areas. Many in Israel now realise that Mr Sharon's harsh policies have only made Israel more vulnerable to suicide bombings and other terrorist acts. The situation in Iraq too will have a bearing on Israel-Palestine relations. The inglorious capture of Saddam Hussein, who has been a strong advocate of the Palestinian cause, has generated yet more anger and resentment in the West Bank and Gaza. With an increasing number of Arab states falling in line with Washington, this is an opportune moment for Mr Sharon to get the peace process back on the rails. But, instead, he has threatened unilateral action, the most contentious being the fencing work in the West Bank.

When completed, the fence will shut out thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank from their lands and livelihood. Tel Aviv's logic is that the fence will prevent suicide bombers from entering Israeli territory. Mr Sharon refuses to acknowledge that the fence in itself will not solve the problem. He must initiate a dialogue with key people in the Palestinian Authority like prime minister Ahmed Querei as he is averse to a dialogue with Yasser Arafat. In addition, Israel has to ease the economic squeeze on the Palestinians. Unemployment rates in the West Bank and Gaza are sky high — the idle youth are a fertile recruiting ground for jehadi groups like the Hamas. An impoverished and desperate Palestine poses a greater threat to Israel than a Palestine that has some hope of a better and dignified future. Many European nations have already signalled their impatience and anger with Mr Sharon's aggression. They are also aware of how disastrously wrong the American operation in Iraq has gone. A broken people, crippled by war and sanctions, are hitting back at the mighty American arsenal, much as the Palestinians are doing against the Israeli army. Since Mr Bush is on a crusade to spread democracy and world peace, he might well start by inculcating a little spirit of goodwill in the belligerent Mr Sharon.

· 7 JAN ?

Libya N-bomb finger at Pak

London, Jan. 4 (PTI): Libya bought plans to make a nuclear bomb from Pakistani scientists for "millions of pounds", Saif al-Islam Gadaffi, son of Libyan chief colonel Muammar Gadaffi, has admitted.

In an interview published in the Sunday Times today, 32-year-old Saif said his country had spent \$40 million on its quest to acquire nuclear capability. Some of the "five-star Libyan scientists" working on the bomb had trained in Britain, he claimed. He confirmed that Libya had bought nuclear components, including centrifuges, from a variety of black market dealers.

Some of the material came from Malaysia and various Asian countries, he said. Other components had been bought on the black market in South Africa. "We dealt with an underground network of middle men and secret work-shops," he said. "This piece from here, that piece from there."

According to the report, revelations of the extent of Pakistani involvement will certainly increase American and British

pressure on Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, who is already accused of failing to prevent the illicit sale of nuclear material to Iran.

Pakistan admitted last week that "rogue scientists" may have peddled technology for "individual gain". It said several had been questioned, among them Abdul Qadeer Khan, regarded as the "father" of the country's nuclear bomb.

British and American experts who went to inspect Libyan weapons sites were taken aback when they found that nuclear scientists working for Gadaffi had what one western official described as a "full bomb dossier" from the Pakistanis.

Western officials said the Pakistani scientists had received payments from Libya — which they said could have been substantially higher, even as much as \$100 million — over several years, starting in the late 1990s.

They appeared to have been working on their own account, without the knowledge of the authorities in Islamabad, the report said.

Sharon responds to Syria peace overtures with settlement plan

Agence France Presse M Brow Co

JERUSALEM, Dec. 31. — The Ariel Sharon govern-ment today dealt a blow to hopes for a thaw in the Israeli-Syrian chapter of the Middle East peace process with a defiant move to build hundred more homes on the occupied Golan Heights. The announcement of a plan to construct 900 new homes on this strategic plateau quelled any speculation that the Israeli Prime Minister could seek to gain credit

tiations with the Palestinians are at a standstill.

Agriculture minister Mr Israel Katz said some nine new communities would be created in the region, which Israel seized in 1967 and annexed 14 years later, in addition to expansion projects for existing settlements.
"The aim is to send an unequivocal message that Golan Heights are an integral part of Israel and we will continue to develop settlements," Mr Katz said.

from a breakthrough with face of Syrian President Mr must begin from the scratch.

Damascus, while the nego- Bashar al-Assad, who has repeatedly voiced his willingness to reopen talks with Israel four years after they broke down. At the beginning of December, Mr Assad had called on the USA to support renewed negotiations with Israel to defuse the volatile situation along Israel's northern border. He stressed, negotiations should resume where they were left off in January 2000 between his late father Hafez and Mr Sharon's predecessor, Mr Ehud Barak, but Mr Sharon The move was a slap in the said on Sunday, negotiations

THE STATESMAN

