

REUTERS

The scene of the blast inside a market in General Santos, Philippines, on Sunday.

Philippines blast kills 15 X'mas shoppers

Associated Press
Manila, December 12

A POWERFUL explosion ripped through an outdoor market packed with Christmas shoppers in the southern Philippines on Sunday, killing at least 15 people and injuring 58 others, the military said.

A homemade bomb or a grenade concealed in a box went off in the market's meat section in General Santos city. Officials immediately stepped up security, fearing more attacks in the port city 620 miles south of Manila.

"This is a terrorist attack by any measure," Sen Richard Gordon, who heads the Philippine Red Cross, said. He criticised the military and police for failing to prevent the attack despite what he said was intelligence information of an imminent terror strike in the city.

"I'm getting reports from

some of our people there that they knew there was a plan to pull this off but still it happened," Gordon said. "They need to bolster their spying and their surveillance of places that should be under guard."

Army Col. Medardo Geslani, who heads a regional anti-terrorism force, said no group claimed responsibility and it was not yet clear if terrorist groups were involved.

"It was most possibly caused by an improvised explosive device," Geslani said.

Islamic and communist rebels operate in provinces near General Santos, and despite a crackdown by the military and police, Muslim militants are believed to still have a presence in the predominantly Christian city of 500,000.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo strongly condemned the attack, saying there was no way to justify

"this heinous deed".

Police investigator Capt. Maximo Sebastian said three people were instantly killed by Sunday afternoon's bomb blast and other victims died in hospitals.

"The market was packed with people because there were Christmas flea market stalls there, and the explosion was powerful," Sebastian said.

In 2002, a bomb ripped through a shopping mall in General Santos, killing 14 people in an attack authorities blamed on the Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf and a larger separatist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Some of those arrested are being tried for multiple-murder charges.

The sprawling archipelago has suffered a rash of bloody terror attacks and mass kidnappings in recent years that largely have been blamed on Muslim extremists.

India, neighbours unite against terror

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 10 DECEMBER

INDIA and its immediate neighbours, barring Pakistan, have decided to draw a broad framework with legal sanctity to tackle terrorism and transnational crime in the subcontinent.

Under the aegis of Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec), the move is being seen as significant which can go a long way in enhancing cooperation to strike at terrorist as well as mafia networks and close the tap on their funding.

New Delhi has already gained some success in getting assistance of individual countries like Myanmar and Bhutan to flush out camps belonging to North



East extremist networks. Coordinated operations along the borders in Bhutan last year and recently in Myanmar has resulted in the extremists camps being dismantled. According to official

sources, it is precisely to formalise and make durable such arrangements of cooperation in dealing with terrorists and transnational crime that was the agenda of the first meeting of the joint working

group (JWG) of Bimstec that ended on Thursday.

The discussions of the two-day long JWG, which will serve as the nodal arm for cooperation, went at length into how the member states could work together to enhance information and intelligence sharing regarding terrorism and transnational crime.

A statement by the foreign office said the meeting looked into aspects on how member states can effectively deny sanctuary and transit facilities against individuals, groups and entities involved or associated with terrorist activities and transnational crime. Another important aspect that was explored was on prevention and suppression of illicit trade and trafficking in arms, ammunitions and other dangerous materials.

11 DEC 2004

The Economic Times

[WIDE ANGLE]

SPOILSPORT

Al-Qaida fuels HUJI run in Bangla

Anirban Roy
Kolkata, December 9

ON MAY 21, an explosion in the northern commercial town of Sylhet in Bangladesh killed three people and injured 100. It became an international issue as the list of wounded included British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury.

The needle of suspicion pointed at Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) and its student wing Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM). Under pressure from London, security agencies detained Jameya Madania madrasa principal Mowlana M. Habibur Rahman in Kazirpar for extending logistic support to the HUJI and JuM cadres for carrying out the blast. Rahman was reportedly trying to establish a Taliban-style rule in Bangladesh.

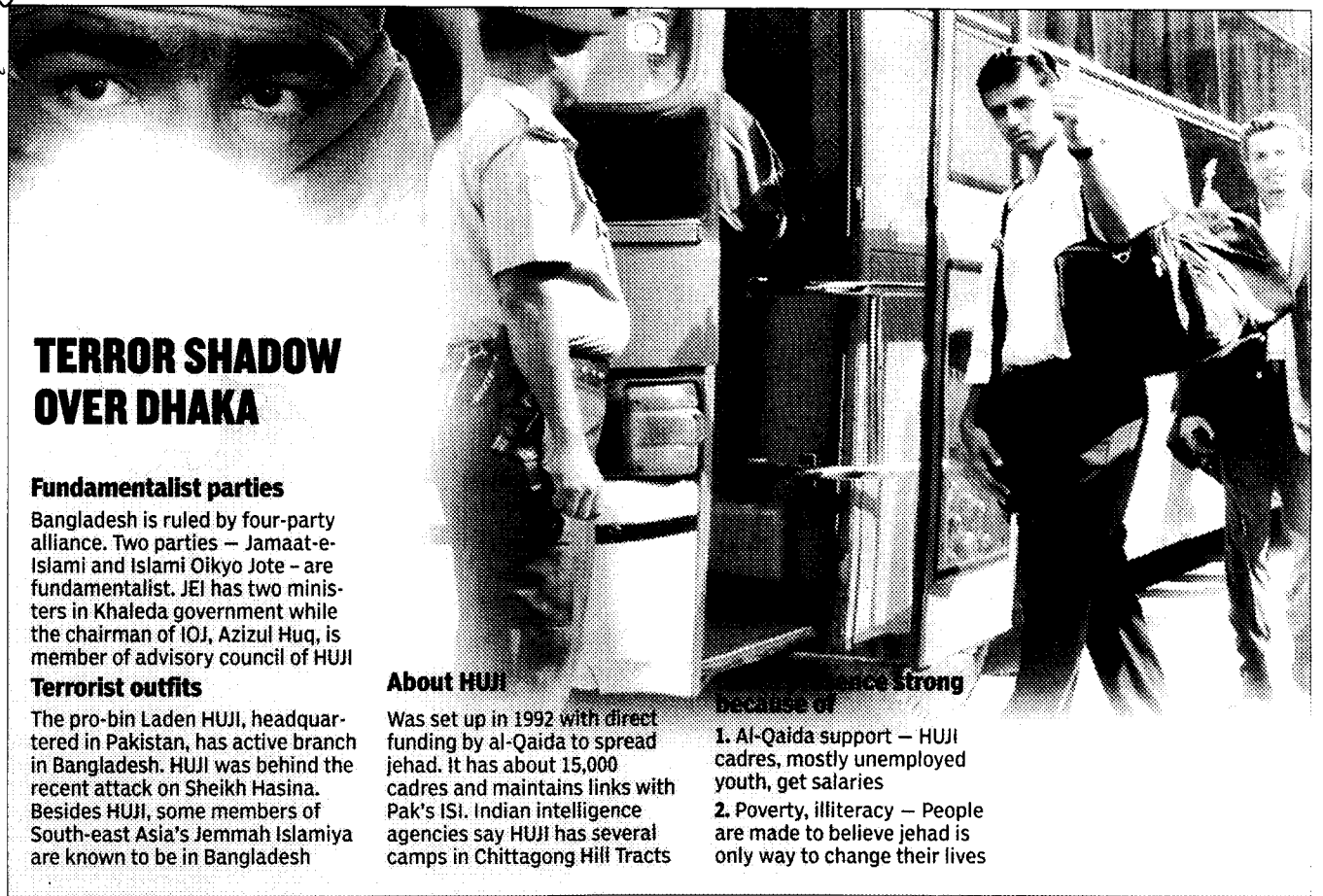
But why did they try to assassinate the British High Commissioner?

The HUJI and JuM are members of the International Islamic Front for Jihad, which targets the USA, UK and Israel. That front is led by Osama bin Laden.

HUJI maintains several terrorist-training camps in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). The September issue of *Jagaran*, a monthly journal published from Dhaka, reported how the mushrooming of mosques and madrasas in different parts of the CHT was a threat to South Asia's security. The madrasas are being used to impart training to youths to take part in jihad. *Jagaran* reported that there are around 2,000 madrasas in Cox's Bazar district of CHT.

Jagaran has claimed that the Al-Iamana Trust-run madrasa Abdullah-bin-Abbas-al-Islamia at Ramu-khunia was the nerve centre of jihadi training. The Al-Iamana Trust is based at Bahrain. It also reported that there are five jihadi training camps in the jungles of Dochri, Lechmuri and Achartali with a few more mobile training camps at Harinmara, Lemchuri, Purulia chari, Damerchara and Balubasa.

It was a matter of great concern for the Indian intelligence agencies when they stumbled upon the information that the HUJI floated the Bangladesh Islamic Manch (BIM), an umbrella organisation of eight insurgent organisations in September 2002. The Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) is also a member of BIM. It was reported in 1999 that as many as 4,000 members of the outfit had voluntarily fought the Holy War at Kargil against India.



TERROR SHADOW OVER DHAKA

Fundamentalist parties

Bangladesh is ruled by four-party alliance. Two parties — Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikyo Jote — are fundamentalist. JEI has two ministers in Khaleda government while the chairman of IOJ, Azizul Haq, is member of advisory council of HUJI

Terrorist outfits

The pro-bin Laden HUJI, headquartered in Pakistan, has active branch in Bangladesh. HUJI was behind the recent attack on Sheikh Hasina. Besides HUJI, some members of South-east Asia's Jemmah Islamiya are known to be in Bangladesh

About HUJI

Was set up in 1992 with direct funding by al-Qaida to spread jihad. It has about 15,000 cadres and maintains links with Pak's ISI. Indian intelligence agencies say HUJI has several camps in Chittagong Hill Tracts

Why is it so strong because of

1. Al-Qaida support — HUJI cadres, mostly unemployed youth, get salaries
2. Poverty, illiteracy — People are made to believe jihad is only way to change their lives

Graphic: SANJAY KAPOOR

Holding sport to ransom once again

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, December 9

SPORT IS the biggest casualty of the growing militant Islamic movement in Bangladesh. Jihadis are now calling the shots and the HUJI threat to kill Indian cricketers was not an aberration.

The Indian players, in this series, will have two rivals. While the Bangladesh cricket team would try to trap the visitors with googlies and in-swingers, the "hidden" players of the Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI), would be after them with Kalashnikovs and rocket launchers.

This won't be the first time, pro-Islamic rebels have played spoilsport before. The national women's swimming competi-

The presence of the radical Jamaat-e-Islami in the ruling coalition in Dhaka has given a fillip to the pro-Islamic lobby during the past three years

tion on Monday was cancelled after protests from an Islamic group — Anti-Islamic Activities Prevention Committee — which branded the event "un-Islamic".

The Bangladesh government was again embarrassed when the FIFA-sponsored women's football tournament ran into rough weather because of opposition from fundamentalists.

In July last year, the country's first women's wrestling competition had to be cancelled after threats from Islamic groups, believed close to HUJI.

The presence of radical Jamaat-e-Islami in the ruling coalition in Dhaka has definitely added a fillip to the growth of a strong pro-Islamic movement in Bangladesh during the last three years. The policy-makers in New Delhi are now worried with the growth of the movement in Bangladesh, which was born because of India's trans-border Good Samaritan.

Interestingly, some of the slogans of the fundamentalists include, "Sylhet loilam ganabhotey, ekhon Assam loibo lathir jorey (captured Sylhet by referendum and now we will occupy Assam forcefully)".

10 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

সার্ক সম্মেলনের আগে হুজি-তৎপরতা নিয়ে উদ্বিগ্ন দিল্লি

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

৯ ডিসেম্বর: আলফা-কে এল ও-র মতো জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির পাশাপাশি, বাংলাদেশে 'আল কায়দা'র ছাত্তার তলায় লালিত হরকত উল জিহাদ উল ইসলামি (হুজি)-র মতো সংগঠনের তৎপরতা সম্পর্কে রিপোর্ট পেয়ে ভারত সরকার উদ্দিগ্ন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের কাছে ভারতীয় গোয়েন্দারা সন্দেহিত যে রিপোর্ট দিয়েছেন তাতে বলা হয়েছে, অবিলম্বে বাংলাদেশে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ বন্ধ না হলে এই এলাকাটি গুরুতর মাথাব্যাথার কারণ হয়ে দাঁড়াবে। গোয়েন্দাদের রিপোর্ট অনুসারে, এই জিহাদি সংগঠনের স্রোতান, আধারা সবাই হবে

সম্মেলনে ভারত-বাংলাদেশ বন্ধুত্ব যে সম্পর্ক অগ্রগতির পথে, তাকে বিনষ্ট করে দেওয়াই আপাতত এই জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির উদ্দেশ্য বলে গোয়েন্দাদের আশঙ্কা।

সম্প্রতি ভারতীয় ক্রিকেটারদের হত্যার হুমকি দিয়ে চিঠি পাঠিয়ে জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলি আন্তর্জাতিক স্তরে প্রচারও পেয়েছে। কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক বজায় রাখার জন্য সার্ক সম্মেলনে যোগদান করা থেকে বিরত না-থাকার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে ভারত এবং এই একই কারণে ক্রিকেট সফরও বহাল রাখা হয়েছে। এমনকী চট্টগ্রামের সংবেদনশীল এলাকাতেও ভারতীয় দল শেষ পর্যন্ত খেলাতে যাচ্ছে। কিন্তু কূটনৈতিক সম্পর্ক

বক্ষার কারণে এই বুকি নিলেও ভারত মনে করছে বাংলাদেশের পরিস্থিতি যথেষ্ট ষোরালো। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের রিপোর্টে বলা হচ্ছে, শওকত উসমান '৯২ সালে হুজি সংগঠন শুরু করেন। '৯৮ সালে ওসামা বিন লাদেন আন্তর্জাতিক ইসলামিক ফ্রন্ট গঠন করেন। এই ফ্রন্ট আ-নুসালিমদের বিরুদ্ধে 'ধর্মযুদ্ধ' ঘোষণা করে। হুজি সেই সময়ে আল কায়দার অধীন এই বিশেষ সংগঠনের ছাত্তার তলায় আসে। তবে

আলফা-কামতাপুরীর মতো জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশে এই জিহাদি সংগঠনগুলির কেন্দ্র ও সম্পর্ক আছে কিনা, তা জানা যায়নি। এ ব্যাপারে তেমন প্রামাণ্য তথ্যও মেলেনি যেমন পাওয়া যায়নি আই এস আই-হুজি সম্পর্কের

প্রমাণ। তবে আই এস আইয়ের মতো পাক গোয়েন্দা সংস্থার সঙ্গে আলফার মতো জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির সম্পর্কের কথা জানা গিয়েছে।

ঢাকায় নিযুক্ত ব্রিটিশ হাইকমিশনার আনোয়ার চৌধুরি জম্মুশুদ্রে বাংলাদেশি কিছু গণতন্ত্র ২১ মে হুজি তাকে সিলেটে বিক্ষোভে ঘটিয়ে হত্যার চেষ্টা করে বলে রিপোর্ট। এই ঘটনায় তিন জন নিহত হন, আহত হন ১০০ জন। হুজির ছাত্র সংগঠন জামায়েত-উল-মুজাহিদিনও এই ঘটনার জড়িত ছিল বলে জানা যাচ্ছে। কক্সবাজার এই সব সংগঠনের মায়ুকেত্র হয়ে উঠেছে। এখানে যেআইনি অস্ত্র কেনাকাটার বাজারও তৈরি হয়েছে। হরকত-উল-জিহাদ-আল-ইসলামি ছাড়াও জামায়েত-উল-

মুজাহিদিন শাহাদাত-ই-মুস্তফার মতো সংগঠনও সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠেছে।

মনমোহন সরকার বাংলাদেশ সরকারের কাছে সোট হুদফা অভিযোগ জানিয়েছে—
 • বাংলাদেশের মাটিতে ভারতীয় বিচ্ছিন্নবাদী গোষ্ঠীগুলিকে আশ্রয়দান ও প্রশিক্ষণ
 • বেআইনি মাদ্রাসা গঠন করে সেখানে ভারত-বিরোধী জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ চালানো
 • আই এস আই কার্যকলাপকে প্রসারিত করা
 • ভারতের সামান্য রাজাগুলিতে নাশকতামূলক কার্যকলাপ চালানো
 • বেআইনি অনুপ্রবেশ জানুয়ারি মাসে বাংলাদেশে গিয়ে বেগম খালেদা জিয়া সরকারের সঙ্গে এই ছুটি বিষয় নিয়েই কথা বলবেন মনমোহন সিংহ।

Dhaka matches cleared



Mr Yashowardhan Azad, I-G (VIP security section), talks to Bangladeshi security officers at Bangabandhu National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on Tuesday. — AFP

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, Dec. 7. — The Centre today gave the go-ahead to the Indian cricket team's tour of Bangladesh after a security delegation expressed satisfaction with the arrangements put in place in the wake of the death threat by a militant group.

The government has advised the Board of Control for Cricket in India to proceed with the tour for matches in Dhaka only, since assessment of Chittagong, the other venue for the two Test-match and three one-day series, is yet to be completed.

"The cricket team's visit to Chittagong will be decided on the basis of the assessment given by the delegation," external affairs ministry spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna told reporters.

A BCCI release said the first Test in Dhaka has been postponed by a day to 10 December. The second Test will start on 17 December, the venue of which has yet to be decided. Dhaka will also host the second and third one-dayers (26 and 27 December).

Sources close to the BCCI said that even before the clearance came the Indian team was provisionally booked on a morning flight from Kolkata to Dhaka tomorrow. Now, with the government giving the go-ahead, the departure is certain.

The Indian security delegation, which reached Dhaka last evening, inspected the venue of the matches in Dhaka, the hotel where the players will put up as well as the routes which would be used by the team. "Our officials also made recommendations for strengthening the security arrangements for the visiting team. These were accepted by the Bangladesh authorities," he said.

The BCCI vice-president, Mr Rajeev Shukla, said: "We will have to wait for the government's clearance for matches in Chittagong," he said. — SNS

08 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

8 killed as militants attack U.S. consulate in Jeddah

Person
HD-1
9/12

By Atul Aneja

MANAMA, DEC. 6. Armed militants today attacked the American consulate in Saudi Arabia's port city of Jeddah, marking the first strike on a U.S. diplomatic facility, six years after the deadly embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania.

At least eight persons were killed in the attack, including five staff members of the consulate and three intruders, Saudi officials said. Two of the attackers were wounded and arrested.

Arabs, Asians among victims

U.S. Embassy spokeswoman, Carol Kalin, confirmed that five non-Americans had been killed. "We have five confirmed dead among our locally engaged staff and one of them is a contract (security) guard," she said. She refused to give their nationalities but security sources said they were Arabs and Asians. Ms. Kalin said a handful of other employees were in hospital. A State Department official, who asked not to be named, said some Americans had been lightly wounded. The U.S. con-

sulate in Dhahran had been closed as "a precautionary measure."

Earlier reports said that four Saudi national guards were also killed. Speaking to *The Hindu*, over telephone from Jeddah, L. Ramnarayan, Chief of Bureau of Saudi Arabia's English daily, *Arab News*, said that one of the buildings in the compound was on fire and black smoke was visible from a long distance. As security forces launched a counter-attack, policemen cordoned off the area. By evening, the operation had been called off, several hours after the intruders breached the sprawling high security compound.

Saudi police during the day had claimed that gunmen had taken 18 local staffers hostage, but diplomats said they were released. CNN quoting Saudi officials in Washington said that an unknown number of third country nationals who worked in the visa section of the consulate, had been taken hostage for some time. Some suffered wounds but all were released.

Al-Qaeda hand seen

Saudi authorities hinted that the Al-Qaeda was responsible

for the attack. "Members of the deviant group this morning threw explosives at the gate of the U.S. consulate in Jeddah and then entered the compound," the Interior Ministry official said. (In official parlance militants loyal to Saudi-born Al-Qaeda leader, Osama bin Laden, are always described as deviant.)

Conflicting reports

There have so far been conflicting reports about the terrorist attack. Reuters news agency reported that the intruders had shot their way in on foot through a side entrance.

But presenting another version, Saudi officials said that militants threw explosives at two gates of the sprawling, walled consulate and then entered it, exchanging fire with guards.

The attack has sent shock waves in Jeddah. Khalid Al-maena, editor-in-chief of *Arab News*, said the scale of the operation had taken people by surprise.

"We never expected such a type of thing, especially after the calm period we had over the past few months," he said.

07 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Militants call the shots

Bangla radicals threaten to kill Indian cricketers, tour in trouble

Rajnish Sharma, Saurabh Shukla and Anirban Roy
New Delhi/Kolkata, December 5

THE INDIAN cricket team's tour of Bangladesh may be in jeopardy following death threats issued to its players by Harkat-ul-Jehad al-Islami (HUJI), a radical Islamist outfit based in Bangladesh.

The Indians were scheduled to leave for Bangladesh on Tuesday and play two Tests and three ODIs in that country. Their departure has been deferred for now by a day. The decision comes in the wake of a letter faxed on Thursday to the Indian High Commission by HUJI, which said, "In revenge for the killing of 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat, we will kill the Indian cricketers if they visit Bangladesh," an agency reported from Dhaka, quoting mission spokesman Saibal Roy Choudhury.

A team from the ministry of external affairs is leaving tomorrow for the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka for an on-the-spot assessment of the security threats to the Indian cricketers.

Ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said the team would liaise with the Bangladeshi authorities and recommend specific steps, if necessary.

Union home minister Shivraj Patil said the players' security was of paramount importance and the governments of both countries must address the matter. "The home and external affairs ministries will do whatever is necessary on the security front," he assured.

The Bangladesh cricket board said it was giving no credence to the threats, but Indian board secretary S.K. Nair said in a release, "The BCCI is in continuous touch with the sports ministry and the ministry of external affairs and (is) awaiting their final decision. The board has always abided by the government's directives."

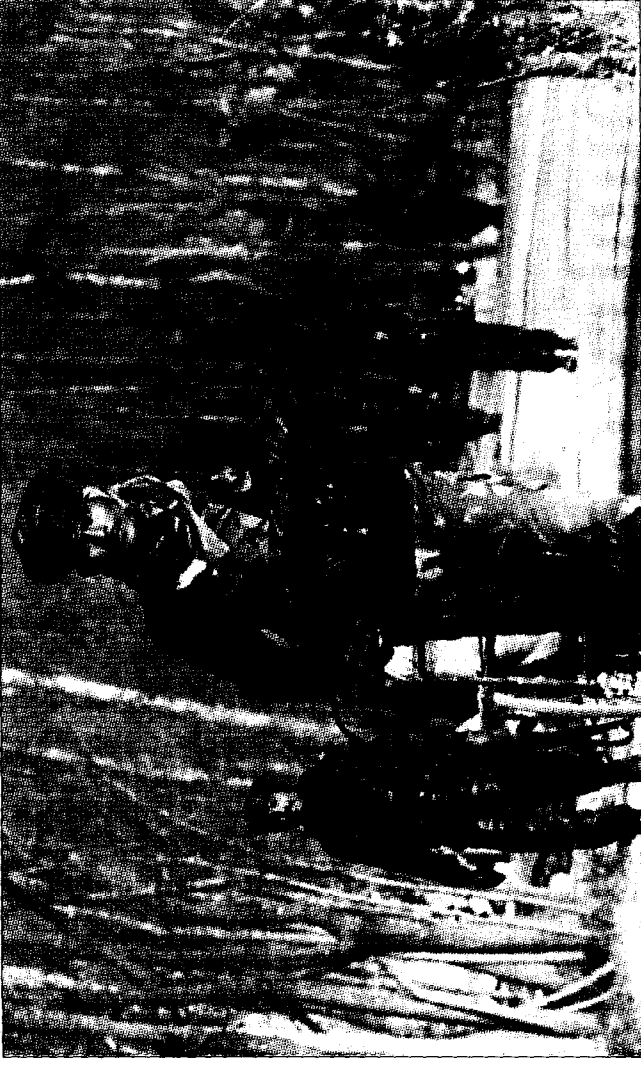
Skipper Sourav Ganguly said it was for the government and the BCCI to decide whether to go ahead with the tour. "It wouldn't be proper for me to make a statement. Whatever decision is taken by the government and the board, we will follow it. I have no idea about the group, or how threatening it is. The case is sensitive. So my saying whether or not we wish to tour won't be right," he told a TV channel.

Indian High Commission officials in Dhaka said they had taken up the matter with the Bangladeshi authorities. The director of publicity of the Bangladeshi foreign Ministry, Nurus Safa Chowdhury, said the Indians would be provided the "highest possible security".

Bangladesh deputy high commissioner in Kolkata Touhid Hossain said it would be unwise for the Indian team to call off the tour. "Our people love the game. We want them to enjoy the games when the Indians visit Bangladesh." There would be foolproof security for cricketers and fans, he said.

But senior RAW officials told *Hindustan Times* that HUJI had lately gained considerable expertise in hit-and-run operations, and the tour would be cleared only after a close scrutiny of the security setup in Bangladesh.

B.B. Nandy, former RAW deputy chief, said he hadn't been surprised by HUJI's threat. "The outfit is getting stronger, and is all set to wage war against India".



Soldiers patrol a street in Pulwama after a landmine blast killed 11 people, including a Major, on Sunday.

J&K landmine blast kills 11

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, December 5

ELEVEN PERSONS, including a Major and a police officer, were killed in a landmine blast at Naina-Batpora in Pulwama district late on Saturday night. The victims were travelling in a private vehicle and were on their way to an operation.

The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the attack and has said that its activists involved in the attack had escaped with six assault rifles, one light machine-gun and two wireless sets.

The police said only two broken rifles had been recovered from the spot. "The assailants appear to have fled with the other weapons," a senior police officer said.

Sources said a Rashtriya Rifles contingent was on its way to an operation when its vehicle ran over an improvised Explosive Device (IED) planted on the main road at Batapora.

Quoting eyewitnesses, the sources said the vehicle blew up and fell yards away in the fields around. "All eleven men travelling in the vehicle died instantly," a senior police officer said.

Apart from the Major and the officer, those killed were eight soldiers and the driver. A major hunt has been launched to track down the militants.

Maoists strike terror in West Midnapore

Rahul Das
Kakrajhore, December 5

MAOISTS CARRIED out a spate of lethal attacks at Kakrajhore through Saturday night and Sunday morning, blowing up three forest bungalows and abducting seven employees of a construction firm, which is building a road from Odulchua to Kakrajhore.

The rebels set off 15 blasts and beat up local leaders of the CPI(M).

"They don't want the road, which is coming up under the PM's Gramik Sadak Yojana. They beat up the abductees and released them with the warning that they must not go ahead with the construction. We are combing the jungles for them," police super Ajay Nand told HT.

A worker said, about 10 pamphlets were found later at the site.

rebels arrived at the site around 8:30 pm on Saturday, made enquiries about the work and left. "But two hours later, 50 of them returned and began beating us up. They torch-ed our vehicles and then the moved to the guest house. Within minutes, they fitted the building with explosives and blew it up. By then, the others had blown up the tourist bungalows," he said.

The rebels' next targets were local CPI(M) leaders Kailash Mura and Banapali Mura. "They dragged us out, picked up three contractors and took us to an unknown place. They beat us up and released us, but only after warning that we must not undertake any development work," Mura said. Stacks of MCC and PW pamphlets were found later at the site.

The situation there (Bangladesh) is different from the time we last toured that country

ALL ABOUT HARKAT-UL-JEHAD AL-ISLAMI

- HUJI was formed in Bangladesh, reportedly with the help of Osama bin Laden, in 1992. Led by Shaykat Osman alias Sheikh Farid, the outfit became truly active from 2000
- It is committed to 'establishing Islamic hukumat (rule) in Bangladesh'
- Active in the coastal areas from Chittagong through Cox's Bazar to the Myanmar border
- Has an estimated membership of 15,000 activists. In June, the police neutralised a HUJI training camp in Chittagong's hilly area of Porri-Kup Mulatoli



Indian skipper Sourav Ganguly after a workout in Kolkata on Sunday.

Revive Afghan jehad: Al-Qaida

USA Today
Kabul, November 26

AL-QAIDA HAS sent out a call for recruits to come to Afghanistan to reverse that country's momentum toward democracy and stem an increasing number of military victories by the US-led coalition, a top US military commander said.

Maj. Gen. Rick Olson, second in command of US forces in Afghanistan, also said that senior leaders of al-Qaida, including Osama bin Laden, are still operating in northwestern Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan and are giving direction to Taliban and foreign fighters.

"Do not underestimate what is left of them," Olson said. "They are still a viable organisation."

But Olson said that al-Qaida has been seriously disrupted and that the Taliban that once ruled Afghanistan is splintering in the aftermath of last month's presidential election — the country's first open election. "They have been dealt significant blows," he said.

"There is evidence that the Taliban has recognised they have suffered," Olson said. "(Intelligence) shows that they are very disappointed they could not stop the election. (They failed) to mount significant attacks that had a negative effect on the coalition or ... that had succeeded in intimidating the population of Afghanistan."

The result is "a number of reports ... that there is a lot of recrimination and finger-pointing about the failure to get something going, some kind of 'spectacular event'," Olson said. The evidence from intelligence shows "that they know things aren't going the way they like them to go", he said.

On November 20, seven Arab fighters were killed in the Barikaw district of eastern Nangarhar province by US and Afghan forces. The Arabs had established a bomb factory. Their presence surprised US military leaders. Olson said that while more militants now see Iraq as the preferred battleground against the US, al-Qaida has not given up on Afghanistan.

27 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Terror cloud on consulate closure

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 23. — An alert by US intelligence agencies today about the possible infiltration of an Al-Qaida militant in India forced the closure of the US consular section and the American Center in Mumbai.

Officials in Indian intelligence agencies said that the US Homeland Security Department and the CIA have warned that a Saudi Arabian has sneaked into India. "The alert has warned that the Saudi Arabian is an Al-Qaida militant and could carry out attacks on US installations in Delhi and Mumbai," said an intelligence official. "It was a warning, which didn't give details about the possible hideouts or physical description of the

suspected Al-Qaida militant."

US mission staff forwarded a copy of the note to the external affairs ministry which informed the Intelligence Bureau. IB then issued "warning notes" to police in Delhi and Mumbai.

Intelligence reports have said Al-Qaida enjoys the support and has sympathisers among Kashmir-based militant groups like Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammed who have bases in Delhi and Mumbai.

The US mission in New Delhi was open. A spokesperson of the Embassy here said: "We are taking every measure to ensure the security of American citizens." The "decision to open the consular section and the American Center in Mumbai will be taken after a review tomorrow".

24 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

US consulate closed in Mumbai for a day

CIA Issues Warning About Terror Attack



A sniffer dog outside the US consulate in Mumbai

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The US consulate in Mumbai shut down for a day on Tuesday following a fear of being attacked by a 'suicide bomber' from the Al Qaida, police sources said. Though the consulate officials did not comment about the threats, sources said that the consulate had received a communication from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Washington about the terror threats. The consulate here was informed about a possible attack on Tuesday.

Senior consulate officials apprised the city police about the threats and demanded more security cover. A huge posse of policemen have now been stationed outside the consulate in Breach Candy area and at the American Centre at New Marine Lines, which was also closed on Tuesday. Policemen were also posted at the

American International School in Bandra-Kurla complex. The consulate also has a private security staff.

In a statement issued on its website, the US consulate has issued a grim warning that its interests in India could be targeted by terrorists in the near future. The warning perhaps is the first of its kind issued in recent months.

Although not specific, the website stated that "an attack could be aimed at US

interests in New Delhi or Mumbai where US citizens and other foreigners congregate or visit.

These include residential areas, business offices, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, hotels and public areas which could be targeted.

"US citizens are advised to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security," the warning states.

► On January 23, 2002, security was beefed up at the consulate, the American Center and the Washington House on Altamont Road where senior consulate officials reside and the American International School at the Bandra-Kurla complex following an attack on the American Center in Kolkata.

► On August 6, 2004, the American Embassy and the American Center in New Delhi was placed on high alert following a tip off from the US Homeland Security Department that there would be a terrorist strike. Both these establishments were shut on that day. Intelligence inputs had suggested that there could be a suicide attack or a bomb explosion. But, it was business as usual at the Mumbai establishments on that day. TNN

interests in the Bandra-Kurla complex. They are likely to shift in near future, a source from the consulate said.

Senior IPS officers conducted a spot inspection of the US establishments in Mumbai on Tuesday. Said joint police commissioner (law and order) Ahmed Javed, "Providing security to the American establishments is an ongoing exercise. But we are serious about the fresh threats."

ইরাকে বহু গুম-ঘরের হদিস পেল মার্কিন সেনা

ফালুজা, ২২ নভেম্বর: ব্রিটিশ পণবন্দি কেনেথ বিগলেকে যেখানে বন্দি করে রেখে হত্যা করেছিল ইরাকি জঙ্গিরা, সেই ঘরের সন্ধান মিলেছে বলে দাবি করেছে মার্কিন সেনাবাহিনী। সেনা সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, ফালুজা শহরের দখল নেওয়ার পরে বাড়ি বাড়ি তল্লাশি চালিয়ে প্রায় কুড়িটি অত্যাচার চালানোর ঘরের (টর্চার সেল) হদিস মিলেছে। একটি খাঁচাও পাওয়া গিয়েছে। গলা কেটে খুন করার আগে বিগলেকে তাতেই বন্দি করে রাখা হয়েছিল বলে মার্কিন সেনাদের ধারণা।

সেনা মুখপাত্র মেজর জিম ওয়েস্ট বলেছেন, “কুড়িটির মতো ঘরের হদিস আমরা পেয়েছি, যেখানে জঙ্গিরা পণবন্দিদের উপরে অত্যাচার চালাত।” সিএনএনের সংবাদদাতা জানাচ্ছেন, ফালুজায় ধরা পড়া এক ইরাকি মার্কিন

সেনাদের একটি বাড়িতে নিয়ে যায়। সেখানে একটি খাঁচা ছিল। জঙ্গিদের পাঠানো ভিডিও টেপে বিগলেকে এই রকমই খাঁচায় বন্দি অবস্থায় দেখা গিয়েছিল। বাড়িটির দেওয়ালে রক্তের দাগ। বন্দিদের দেওয়ালে শিকল দিয়ে বেঁধে রাখার নজিরও মিলেছে।

এ দিকে, মসজিদে ঢুকে নিরস্ত্র ও আহত ইরাকিকে গুলি করে মারার ঘটনা সম্পর্কে এনবিসি’র সাংবাদিক কেভিন সাইটস জানিয়েছেন, ওই ব্যক্তি মোটেই মার্কিন মেরিনকে আক্রমণ করেনি। কেভিনই গুলি করার ঘটনার ছবি তোলেন। মার্কিন সেনা সূত্রে বলা হয়, হামলা থেকে বাঁচতেই মেরিন গুলি চালান কি না, তদন্ত করে দেখা হচ্ছে। সাইটসের বক্তব্য সত্ত্বেও মার্কিন সাফাইয়ে জল ঢেলে দিল বলে ওয়াকিবহাল মহলের মত। — রয়টার্স

এবার নকশালপন্থী হানা উত্তরপ্রদেশে বিস্ফোরণে ট্রাক ধ্বংস, হত ১৭ পুলিশ

বারানসী, ২০ নভেম্বর (পি টি আই)— উত্তরপ্রদেশে নকশালপন্থী হামলার শিকার হল কমপক্ষে ১৭ জন পুলিশ। এই ভয়াবহ হত্যাকাণ্ড ঘটেছে বারানসীর পাশের জেলা চান্দৌলিতে। সেখানে পুলিশ ও প্রভিন্সিয়াল আর্মড কনস্টাবুলারি (পি এ সি)-র জওয়ানদের একটি কনভয় লক্ষ্য করে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটায় উগ্রপন্থীরা। তাতে উড়ে যায় পি এ সি জওয়ানদের একটি ট্রাক। ঘটনাস্থলেই মৃত্যু হয় ১৩ জন জওয়ান-সহ ৪ জন পুলিশকর্মীর। জখম বহু আহতদের ৪ জনের অবস্থা আশঙ্কাজনক। পুলিশ সূত্রের খবর, সকাল ৮টা নাগাদ নওগড় থানা এলাকায় চিরুনি তল্লাশি অভিযানে যোগ দিতে যাচ্ছিল পুলিশ ও জওয়ানদের একটি বড় দল। তাদের কনভয়ে ছিল পি এ সি-র ৩৬তম ব্যাটেলিয়নের একটি ট্রাক ও ২টি জিপ। ওই কনভয়ের দিকে তাক করে আশপাশেই লুকিয়েছিল প্রায় ১৫০ জন নকশালপন্থী। নওগড়ে একটি ছোট সেতুর ওপর দিয়ে জিপ দুটি নির্বিঘ্নে গেলেও ট্রাকটি যাওয়ার সময়ে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটে। পুলিশের সন্দেহ, শক্তিশালী বিস্ফোরক রাখা ছিল সেতুর নিচে। দূর থেকে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানো হয়। বিস্ফোরণের পর নিহত পুলিশ-জওয়ানদের অস্ত্র লুট করে পালায় নকশালপন্থীরা। গত ১৮

অক্টোবর নওগড়েই নকশালপন্থীদের হানায় প্রাণ হারিয়েছিলেন ৩ জওয়ান। আজকের চিরুনি তল্লাশি অভিযানের উদ্দেশ্য ছিল সেদিনের অপরাধীদের খুঁজে বের করে সেখানকার উগ্রপন্থীদের ঘাঁটি ভেঙে দেওয়া। সকালে বিস্ফোরণের খবর পেয়েই ঘটনাস্থলে যান জেলাশাসক সি এ দুবে, আই জি দেবরাজ নাগর এবং অন্য পুলিশ ও প্রশাসনের কর্তারা। নওগড়ের জঙ্গল এলাকা ঘিরে ফেলে অপরাধীদের তল্লাশি চলছে। যদিও এখনও পর্যন্ত এই বিস্ফোরণের দায় স্বীকার করেনি কেউই। উল্লেখ্য, গতকাল চান্দৌলি জেলার বন বিভাগের রেঞ্জার ভবনের একাংশ বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়ে ধ্বংস করে দেয় নকশালপন্থীরা। ওই ঘটনায় ২ বনরক্ষী নিহত এবং ২ জন আহত হয়েছেন। এদিকে, ছত্তিশগড়ের দান্তেওয়াড়া জেলায় আজ নিষিদ্ধ মাওবাদীদের ঘটানো ল্যান্ডমাইন বিস্ফোরণে প্রাণ হারিয়েছেন সি আর পি এফ-এর একজন কনস্টেবল। গতকাল রাতে বিহারের ঔরঙ্গাবাদ জেলার খিবড়া অঞ্চলে ২ গ্রামবাসীকে পিটিয়ে মেরেছে মাওবাদীরা। বন গৌরাইয়া গ্রামের ২ জন বাসিন্দাকে শিশু-হত্যার অপরাধে পিটিয়ে মারার শাস্তি দেয় স্থানীয় মাওবাদীদের গণ আদালত। বিষয়টি নিয়ে তদন্ত চলছে।

21 NOV 2004

AAJKAL

Margaret's family believes she is dead

Associated Press

LONDON, Nov. 16. — The family of Margaret Hassan, a 59-year-old aid worker abducted in Iraq last month, said today they believed she was dead.

The Arab satellite station, al-Jazeera, said it had received a videotape showing the murder of a woman believed to be Hassan, a British-Irish national who had lived in Iraq for three decades.

Al-Jazeera said it wouldn't broadcast the footage. "We don't show acts of killing," said Jihad Ballout, its spokesman.

The station received the tape a few days ago but was not sure of its authenticity. CARE, the Brussels-based charity whose Iraq office Hassan headed, said: "It is with profound sadness that we have learnt of the existence of a video in which it appears that our colleague Margaret Hassan has been killed. ... The whole of CARE is in mourning." A statement from Hassan's four brothers and sisters was released by Britain's foreign office.

"Our hearts are broken," it said. "We have kept hoping for as long as we could, but we now have to accept that Margaret has probably gone and



A TV grab from an al-Jazeera video broadcast on 22 October shows Margaret Hassan pleading for her life then. — AFP

at last her suffering has ended." Hassan was kidnapped by armed men who stopped her car as she was going to work in Baghdad on 19 October. She held British, Irish and Iraqi nationality, was married to an Iraqi and had lived in Iraq for 30 years.

The family's statement did not indicate why they now believed Hassan was dead, but said: "Those who are guilty of this atrocious act, and those who support them, have

no excuses. Nobody can justify this. Margaret was against sanctions and the war. To commit such a crime against anyone is unforgivable. But we cannot believe how anybody could do this to our kind, compassionate sister. The gap she leaves will never be filled."

Videos of Hassan in captivity were released over the last few weeks, but no group had claimed responsibility for her abduction.

17 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Terror trauma in the Netherlands

Associated Press

'Prove you're anti-terror'

THE HAGUE, Nov. 15. — Dutch authorities are seeking to launch an international manhunt for the alleged Syrian leader of a Netherlands-based terrorist group responsible for the murder of a filmmaker, and other similar groups of megrown Muslim radicals are believed operating the country, justice minister Mr Piet Hein Donner said today.

Mr Donner said the alleged leader of the radical cell behind the 2 November murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh has fled the country and is believed to be in hiding abroad.

The alleged ringleader, Redouan al-Issar, was detained by Dutch police before Van Gogh's murder, but released due to insufficient evidence proving he had committed or was plotting a crime, Donner said.

"He became, at a certain moment, the spiritual leader of the group," Donner said. "He was apprehended at that time and he was extradited to Germany." Al-Issar headed the "Hofstad Network", a group following the ideology of the radical Islamic philosophy el-Takfir wa el Hijra, which inspired groups like Al-Qaida.

LONDON, Nov. 15. — Muslim leaders in Britain should point out that the community has no time for terrorism, and the mainstream society will have to show genuine respect to them, chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, Mr Trevor Phillips said today. "It remains important for mainstream Muslim leaders to point out that British Muslims have no time for terrorism," Mr Phillips said in a speech at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. — PTI

"We are now confronted with groups of radicals that have developed internally in the Netherlands," Mr Donner said, disclosing new details about the first known murder linked to international terrorism.

16 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Abbas caught in factional firefight

Gaza, Nov. 14 (Reuters): Palestinian militants burst into a Gaza City mourning tent set up for Yasser Arafat today and fired shots in protest at the presence of his moderate successor Mahmoud Abbas, but he was unhurt, witnesses said.

Palestinian officials said it was not an assassination attempt.

A Palestinian security man was fatally wounded in an exchange of fire between the militants and bodyguards shielding Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, witnesses said.

Abbas, who officials later said was safe in his Gaza City office, had been on a visit to accept condolences for the Palestinian President, who died in a French military hospital near Paris on Thursday at the age of 75.

The clash was indicative of the factional lawlessness plaguing Gaza and threatening the interim collective leadership of veteran moderates formed to usher Palestinians towards elections for a successor to Arafat.

Abbas, a critic of violence in a four-year-old Palestinian uprising, has been chosen as chairman of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, one of the posts held by Arafat.

The incident began after gunmen from Arafat's faction-ridden Fatah movement



A security guard rushes to protect Mahmud Abbas (right) as shots were fired while Abbas was visiting the mourning tent. (AFP)

shouting "No to Abu Mazen" walked by him as he stood outside the tent and began firing shots into the air.

The gunmen's rifles were pointed upwards, and not at Abu Mazen, as they fired more bursts into the air, witnesses said. Members of Arafat's presidential guard hustled Abbas, 69, into the tent and threw him to the ground for his safety as the militants burst in.

Chaos ensued as gunmen and bodyguards began shoot-

ing at each other. At the end of the clash one of the bodyguards, in an olive drab uniform, lay dead from a head wound in the tent.

Witnesses said the gunmen withdrew and no arrests were made.

Poll date

Palestinians will hold presidential elections on January 9 to replace Yasser Arafat, interim President Rawhi Fattouh said on Sunday.

Fattouh made the announcement at a news conference after consultations with the Palestinian elections commission.

Earlier, US secretary of state Colin Powell said on Saturday he hoped to meet Palestinian leaders soon as part of a harder US push for peace in the region following the death of President Yasser Arafat.

Powell will travel to Egypt for a November 22-23 conference and could meet there with the current and former Palestinian Prime Ministers, Ahmed Qurie and Mahmoud Abbas, respectively, or visit them in the Palestinian territories, an official said.

Sending his top diplomat to meet Arafat's moderate successors would add substance to President George W. Bush's pledge to use the prestige of the US to help create a Palestinian state during his second four-year term.

15 NOV 2004

THE TELEGRAPH

TERRORISM IN RUSSIA

Need For Responsible Political Parties

By DMITRY ROGOZIN

Some Russian officials have described the series of terrorist attacks on Russian citizens as war. This is not a revelation. The war has been being waged for a long time. Russia has achieved no impressive victories in it. On the contrary, it is losing in an undignified manner. The main reason is the authorities' obstinate reluctance to call a spade a spade. One gets the impression at times that our security policy in the Caucasus is not designed to achieve anything real, but to deceive ourselves and the Europeans.

The authorities continue to feed us with stories about a "terrorist international". Terrorism doubtless has support from abroad, but its roots lie in the miscalculations of our pacification policy in the Caucasus, and the favourable local conditions for terrorism to emerge, develop and spread across the country.

Self-deception

The Caucasus has been struck with new misfortunes today. We missed the Maskhadovs trained in the Soviet Army being forced out by young and hitherto unknown mobsters. They grew up during the latest Caucasian wars and know no other life. These Caucasus-bred Talibs are far more dangerous than Dudayev (the first rebellious President of Chechnya in 90s).

Our military commanders are lying to the Supreme Commander and their compatriots about success against the bandits. Government representatives file false reports about the restoration of Grozny (we remember the Russian president's surprise when he saw the construction process from a helicopter).

Our civilian officials and the security services can blame the "terrorist international" as much as they like. But if it so freely exists on Russian soil, then somebody must be allowing it to do so. If the budget allocations for Chechnya are all but officially looted, if militants are buying Russia's most advanced arms, if an immature and inexperienced man in Grozny represents the federal centre, then any finger-pointing by senior officials towards foreign shores and complaints about "international gan-

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gs" are, in essence, either signs of helplessness or irresponsibility.

The crux of the matter is a new procedure for forming executive bodies of authority in the regions and the transition to a proportional system of elections to the State Duma (the Lower Cham-



ber of the Russian Parliament) and regional legislative assemblies. Those who suggest that the President's initiatives and the Beslan tragedy are not related have not been completely honest. There is a link, and a direct one at that. If we knew the full name of Russia's enemy number one, we could be organised better. For now, the country's main enemy is a lack of order, the lack of a reliable political system capable of counteracting the numerous enemy forces operating both inside and outside the country, in the economic and military spheres.

The President's initiatives have been given a positive response. Patriotic forces have always been in favour of appointing governors and giving priority to federal legislation, as it can guarantee real equality for citizens regardless of their ethnic and social backgrounds.

Centralised state

Russia was formed as a centralised state, not as a unity of federation members. Some governors today have turned their regions into latter-day fiefdoms,

where they establish political absolutism and blackmail the federal authorities. This is particularly true of the heads of "ethnic" republics that adopted their own laws in the 1990s, sometimes contradicting federal laws, including in terms of civil rights. Liberal values, i.e. freedom of the

press and public organisations, have borne the brunt.

The parliamentary process is a competition of viewpoints and ideas based on different political schools. The most significant of them must be represented in parliament and in regional legislative assemblies by no more than six parties. If there are more parties, then their leaders' personal ambitions begin to take the upper hand, which has nothing to do with the ideological competition and interests of the people they represent. The experience of developed democracies shows that there cannot be dozens of genuine political parties in a country. Four to five parties are enough to reflect the entire spectrum of political opinion in society.

We are sometimes accused of not criticising the President enough. But we have no intention of turning opposition into a fetish. We do not need opposition as a ritual. We consider opposition to be the right to have and express a different viewpoint.

The trouble with our current authorities is lack of responsibility for mistakes, miscalcula-

tions, negligence and plain theft. There are no serious criteria for politically assessing the work of the Cabinet and officials in general, which makes it impossible to evaluate a functionary's efforts.

President Putin's obvious and well-known mistake is his reluctance to take radical personnel decisions. The number of benchwarmers is insignificant. The spring reshuffle, which was presented as a "reorganisation", has proved to be little more than a game of musical chairs. Embezzlers, who are neither popular nor quick-footed, are again in comfortable positions, thereby tarnishing the political image of the president.

It is obvious today that the stake on bringing former security officers into the organisation of power in the state has not paid off. The *siloviki* as they are known are a spent force. They have proved unable to cope with the new threats to the country and have been unsuccessful as the heads of local administrations. The problem is not so much with the *siloviki* themselves. The problem lies in the organisation of power and the authorities' unwillingness to find healthy forces in the country and rely on them to encourage creative energy in society and use it to the advantage of the entire country.

Wolves and wolf hounds

The main thing the authorities' hyper-project needs to do is to complete the formation of a healthy and strong multi-party system. We need civilised and responsible political parties capable of forming their own shadow governments, offering alternative viewpoints on the authorities' projects and extending professional and ethical control over the security services. These should be parties orientated to national interests and with the resources to promote realistic and sound initiatives.

The state of war, in which we find ourselves against the "wolves" of the Chechen Ichkerian flag means the nation and its political leaders must deal with at least our main deficiencies. The patriotic opposition, capable of countering the evil and, in particular, becoming "wolfhounds" to the Chechen "wolves," could play a major role in this cause.

In this journey, you have given me the honour and the gift of learning. I'm going to fight on for people and the principles that I've stood for. — Senator John Kerry, after conceding the Presidency to George W Bush.

Call it Hindutva, Bharatiyata or Indianness. They are all synonymous. Hindutva is a way of life. You should not be apologetic about your beliefs and roots in the RSS. — Mr LK Advani.

Changing the party head cannot change the policy and system of the BJP. The system which existed earlier is not there. — Mr Giriraj Kishore, VHP leader.

Pakistan's fundamental position on Kashmir remains the same and it desires a solution according to the wishes of the Kashmiri people... President has spoken about a hypothetical situation. — Mr Shaukat Aziz,

Pakistan Prime Minister, referring to the formula suggested by General Musharraf to divide Kashmir into seven different regions, demilitarise them and change their status.

Gen Musharraf has not given any proposal for resolving the Kashmir issue, rather he has asked the media to carry out a debate to elicit public opinion. — Pakistani foreign office spokesman.

I have never met or seen *hathkata* Dilip. I have heard of him. He is a criminal. Those linking me with him are out to malign my reputation... I don't find any fault with (Sasthi) Duley. If a criminal visits a person's house it is not the latter's fault. If anything is found against him, his club can take action against him. — Mr Subhas

Chakraborty.

These parties (BJP allies) must realise that an alliance with BJP means an alliance with the Sangh Parivar and their communal agenda. They know the BJP is an electoral liability for them. If they don't (part ways), it will destroy their credibility. — Mr Prakash Karat, CPI-M leader.

Some opposition party leaders and a section of the Press have sought to give the wrong and misleading impression that what was filed in the Supreme Court was a transcript of the recorded conversation between the Union home minister and myself. I am not in the habit of recording or taping any telephonic conversation with anyone. — Miss Jayalalitha.

They (Naxalites) fail to realise

they themselves are enveloped in an atmosphere of fear and are taking to violence to assert themselves. — Mr YS Rajasekhara Reddy, Andhra chief minister.

By chance they are in a position today to do back-seat driving in the government and, therefore, are engaged in conspiring to harm the Hindu forces. The progeny of Karl Marx and Lord Macaulay, because of their negative thinking, can only do destructive work and never constructive work. Why haven't they transformed West Bengal during their uninterrupted regime of 27 years? — Mr KS Sudarshan, RSS chief.

I married and had children and now I'm having some fun. — Jemima Khan, ex-wife of former Pakistani cricketer Imran Khan, on her relationship with actor Hugh Grant.

on
RECORD

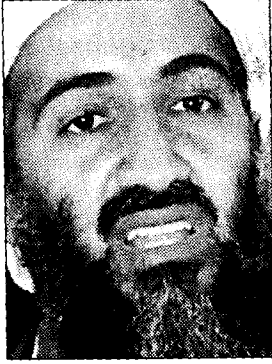
আমেরিকাকে দেউলিয়া করতে চান লাদেন

ওয়াশিংটন, ২ নভেম্বর- বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন প্রান্তে চোরাগোপ্তা হামলা চালিয়ে, রক্তক্ষরণ ঘটিয়ে ধীরে ধীরে আমেরিকাকে আর্থিক দিক থেকে দেউলিয়া করে দেওয়ার চেষ্টা চালাচ্ছে ওসামা বিন লাদেনের আল কায়দা জঙ্গিরা। আল জাজিরা টিভি-র তরফে লাদেনের সাম্প্রতিক টেপের পূর্ণ বয়ান প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে। 'আমেরিকা দেউলে না হওয়া পর্যন্ত রক্তপাত' নীতির ব্যাখ্যা করতে গিয়ে লাদেন সেখানে মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন, আফগানিস্থানে সোভিয়েত বাহিনীর বিরুদ্ধে মুজাহিদরা একই নীতি নিয়ে সাফল্য পেয়েছিল। লাদেনের কথায়, "আশির দশকে আমরা মুজাহিদদের সঙ্গে হাত মিলিয়ে দশ বছর ধরে গেরিলা যুদ্ধ চালিয়ে রক্তপাত ঘটানোর পরে সোভিয়েত রাশিয়া দেউলিয়া হয়ে পরাজয় স্বীকার করে। তার পরেই তারা সেনা প্রত্যাহার করতে বাধ্য হয়েছিল।" মার্কিন গোয়েন্দা দফতর

স্বীকার করেছে, আল জাজিরা লাদেনের বিবৃতির যে বয়ান প্রকাশ করেছে, সেটাই লাদেনের সাম্প্রতিক বিবৃতির পূর্ণ বয়ান।

আল কায়দার গেরিলা যুদ্ধের কৌশল ব্যাখ্যা করে লাদেন জানিয়েছেন, আমরা যদি এখন পৃথিবীর সুদূরতম কোনও প্রান্তে দু'জন মুজাহিদ পাঠিয়ে 'আল কায়দা' লেখা একটা ঝাঙা তুলি, তা হলেই মার্কিন সেনাবাহিনীর

জেনারেলরা সেখানে ছুটে আসবে। পরিণতিতে আমেরিকার লোকসংখ্যা, ধনসংখ্যা ও রাজনৈতিক লোকসান হবে। হয়তো তাদের কিছু বেসরকারি সংস্থার কিছু লাভ হবে। কিন্তু এর অতিরিক্ত কিছু লাভ তাদের হওয়ার নয়।



আমেরিকা দেউলিয়া না হওয়া পর্যন্ত রক্তক্ষরণ চালিয়ে যাওয়ার যে নীতি আল কায়দা নিয়েছে, তার সমর্থনে

লাদেন একটি ব্রিটিশ সূত্র উদ্ধৃত করে দাবি করেছে, ৯/১১ কাণ্ড ঘটানোর জন্য আল কায়দার সব মিলিয়ে মোট পাঁচ লক্ষ ডলার খরচ হয়েছিল। কিন্তু তার জেরে আমেরিকার যে বিপুল পরিমাণ আর্থিক ক্ষতি হয়েছে, তার তুলনায় সেটা কিছুই

নয়। উল্লেখ্য, মার্কিন ট্রেজারি বিভাগের হিসাব অনুযায়ী আমেরিকার জাতীয় ঋণের পরিমাণ এখন ৭ লক্ষ কোটি ডলার। আর মার্কিন সরকারের ঋণ ৪১ হাজার কোটি ডলারেরও বেশি। লাদেনের দাবি, এই লড়াইয়ে আল

কায়দা লাভবান হয়েছে। যদিও এটাও ঠিক যে বুশ প্রশাসনেরও কিছু লাভ হয়েছে। বুশ প্রশাসনের লোকজনের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কযুক্ত হ্যালবার্টন-এর মতো সংস্থাগুলি যে সব মোটা অঙ্কের কাজের বরাত (ইরাকে) পাচ্ছে, তা দেখলেই এটা বোঝা যায়। এই কথা জানানোর সঙ্গেই লাদেনের মন্তব্য, "শেষ বিচারে এটা স্পষ্ট যে সত্যিকারের লোকসান হচ্ছে আমেরিকার জনগণের, আমেরিকার অর্থনীতির।" বুশের ইরাক-নীতি সম্পর্কে লাদেনের মন্তব্য, কালো সোনার (পেট্রোল) জন্য বুশের দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ হয়ে রয়েছে। এ ছাড়া আমেরিকার সাধারণ মানুষের স্বার্থকে উপেক্ষা করে বুশ কিছু বেসরকারি গোষ্ঠীর স্বার্থকে অগ্রাধিকার দিয়েছেন। ফলে, যুদ্ধ চলছে, ক্ষয়ক্ষতি বেড়ে চলেছে আর আমেরিকার অর্থনীতি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হচ্ছে।

লাদেনের উপহাস, জর্জ বুশ ইরাকের জঁতাকলে আটকে পড়েছেন।

Death deadline hangs on UN hostages

Kabul, Oct. 31 (Reuters): Militants holding three foreign UN workers in Afghanistan have threatened to kill them unless all Taliban and al Qaeda prisoners are released from US custody by 0730 GMT on Wednesday.

The leader of Jaish-e-Muslimeen (Army of Muslims) said that the UN must also cease operations in Afghanistan, or the hostages would be killed "in such a way by which Muslims will be happy".

The group also released a video of the hostages to the Arabic TV channel Al Jazeera today showing them in good health. The three — Filipino Anjelito Nayan, Annetta Flanigan from Northern Ireland and Shqipe Hebibi from Kosovo — were snatched from their UN vehicle in rush hour traffic on Thursday.

They had been helping to organise Afghanistan's first presidential election, which was held on October 9.

Mullah Sayed Mohammed Akbar Agha, leader of the kid-

nap group, said in an interview that the group had four demands.

"The UN should leave Afghanistan and it should call Britain and America's meddling in Afghanistan as illegal," he said.

"Those who have no military involvement in Afghanistan, such as Philipines, must call Britain and America's meddling in Afghanistan as illegal and must stop its contributions through the UN for America and Britain's activities."

He also demanded that Kosovo and Britain immediately withdraw their forces from Afghanistan and that all Muslim prisoners in Afghanistan and Cuba, "be they Taliban or al Qaida", be freed.

The kidnappings have stoked fears among the 2,000-strong foreign community that militants in Afghanistan may be copying tactics used by insurgents in Iraq.

But a spokesperson for the Taliban — the headline Islam-



A video image released on Sunday shows the three UN employees — (from left) Annetta Flanigan who holds dual British and Irish citizenship, Filipino Anjelito Nayan and Shqipe Hebibi from Kosovo. (Reuters)

ic regime ousted by a US-led coalition in November 2001 and now the main group fighting the government and more than 28,000 American and Nato troops in the country —

said Hamid Agha, chief spokesperson for the Taliban. Another Jaish-e-Muslimeen commander, Sabir Mohmin, said that some members of President Hamid Karzai's faction-ridden government

had assisted the kidnappers.

Karzai is the as-yet-undeclared winner of the election and is expected to choose a new cabinet by the end of November. A government official said Mohmin's allegation that the kidnappers received help from a faction in government could be an attempt to exploit differences just as the interim government is going to be replaced by one of Karzai's own choosing.

The Jaish-e-Muslimeen have already proved they are holding the three by giving Reuters credit card numbers that authorities have confirmed are genuine.

Security sources say so far the group has only contacted a handful of journalists in Kabul about the kidnappings, and investigators were trying to open up channels of communication with them.

"We call on those holding them not to harm them," UN spokesperson Manoel de Silva e Almeida told a news briefing today. "All three require medical attention and the best response to such a situation is their immediate release."

Al-Qaida chief claims ordering 9/11 attacks ■ New threat shadow on US polls

I did it, I'll do it again: Osama

AFP & AP

DOHA, Oct. 30. — Claiming responsibility for 9/11, Osama bin Laden has threatened the USA with more such attacks. The Al-Qaida chief also accused President George W Bush of "misleading" his people, in a video message aired yesterday just days ahead of the US presidential election.

In the video, broadcast by Al-Jazeera TV, Osama accused Mr Bush of negligence during the 9/11 attacks, further inflaming the already intense final

struggle between the President and his rival Mr John Kerry to win the White House.

Osama told the American people that their security is not in the hands of either Mr Bush or his Democrat challenger in the 2 November presidential vote but depends on US policy.

"Despite the fact that we are into the fourth year after 9/11, Mr Bush is still misleading you and hiding the real reason from you, which means that the reasons to repeat what happened remain," he said.

PROBE REPORT INCOMPLETE
NEW YORK, Oct. 30. — The US Justice Department has not released a final chapter of the 9/11 commission's report related to conflicting accounts of efforts to track and chase the jets hijacked that day, and is unlikely to do so before Tuesday's presidential vote, the *New York Times* reported today. Meeting a pre-election deadline for release of the full report had been a top commission priority. The newspaper report came as Mr George W Bush and rival Mr John Kerry accused each other of playing politics with the war on terror. — AFP

he did so because of injustices against the Lebanese and Palestinians by Israel and the USA.

He said he was first inspired to attack the USA by the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon in which towers and buildings in Beirut were destroyed. "While I was looking at these destroyed towers in Lebanon, it sparked in my mind that the tyrant should be punished with the same and that we should destroy towers in America..."

The tape, deemed authentic by US intelligence

agencies, showed Osama standing at a pulpit against a plain brown background, reading from a prepared statement and dressed in a white turban and beige cloak.

Poll fodder

Both presidential candidates immediately responded on the campaign trail to the tape, with Mr Bush vowing that the USA would not be intimidated and Mr Kerry pledging that he would "hunt down and destroy" the Al-Qaida leader.

THE STATESMAN 31 OCT 2001

সম্মত রুখতে তথ্য বিনিময়ে রাজি ১৭ দেশ

আলমতি (কাজাখস্তান), ২২ অক্টোবর: বেছে বেছে কোনও একটি সমস্যাকে বিশেষ গুরুত্ব দিয়ে নয়, সম্মতবাদকে মোকাবিলা করতে হবে তার সামগ্রিকতায়। এশিয়ার ১৭টি দেশ 'পারস্পরিক আদানপ্রদান ও আস্থাবর্ধক পদক্ষেপ' (সিআইসিএ) বিষয়ক সম্মেলনে আজ সর্বসম্মত ভাবে এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিল। আন্তর্জাতিক সম্মতবাদকে রুখতে এই দেশগুলি নিজেদের মধ্যে এক সামরিক-রাজনৈতিক মিত্রতায় আবদ্ধ হতে যাচ্ছে। সম্মতবাদের 'সব রকম রূপ ও প্রকাশের' বিরুদ্ধে সমান দৃঢ়তার আহ্বান জানিয়ে ভারত-পাকিস্তান-চীন-রাশিয়ার মতো দেশগুলি সম্মতবাদ-উগ্রপন্থা তথা বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদ দমনে 'একযোগে দীর্ঘমেয়াদি' লড়াইয়ে সামিল হওয়ার অঙ্গীকার করেছে।

সম্মেলনে স্থির হয়েছে, সম্মতবাদের মতো সাধারণ শত্রুর মোকাবিলায় সম্ভাব্য সব রকম দ্বিপাক্ষিক এবং বহুপাক্ষিক সহযোগিতার পথ খোলা রাখা হবে। সদস্য রাষ্ট্রগুলি তাদের জাতীয় আইনবিধি লঙ্ঘন না করে যৌথ নিরাপত্তার খাতিরে পরস্পরের মধ্যে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তথ্য আদানপ্রদান করবে। এর মধ্যে রাষ্ট্রের নিজস্ব সামরিক বাহিনীর গঠন, প্রতিরক্ষা বাজেট, দেশের অভ্যন্তরে অন্য রাষ্ট্রের সেনা বাহিনীর অবস্থান— ইত্যাদিও আলোচিত হতে পারে। ইরাক-আফগানিস্তান এবং পশ্চিম এশিয়ার পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে উদ্বেগ প্রকাশ করে সিআইসিএ দাবি করেছে, সম্মতবাদ নিয়ে কোনও রকম বৈষম্য, দ্বিচারিতা বা একদেশদর্শিতা দেখানো চলবে না। সে ক্ষেত্রে আন্তর্জাতিক শান্তি-শৃঙ্খলা বজায় রাখতে কেন্দ্রীয় ভূমিকা রাষ্ট্রপঞ্জের হাতেই থাকা উচিত বলে মত প্রকাশ করেন অংশগ্রহণকারী দেশের মন্ত্রীরা।

সম্মত-দমনই বর্তমানে রাষ্ট্রের পয়লা নম্বর দায়িত্ব বলে সিআইসিএ সম্মেলনে মন্তব্য করেছেন ভারতের বিদেশমন্ত্রী কে নটবর সিংহও। তিনি মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন, দু'বছর আগের শীর্ষ বৈঠকেও একই ধরনের শপথ গৃহীত হয়েছিল। "এখন দরকার তাকে কাজে পরিণত করা।"

নিরাপত্তা প্রশ্নে ভারতের অবস্থান প্রসঙ্গে আলোচনা করতে গিয়ে, ১৯৪৭ সালে 'এশিয়ান রিলেশনস কনফারেন্সে' জওহরলাল নেহরুর বক্তৃতার কথা উল্লেখ করেছেন নটবর। পাশাপাশি, পুরনো চিন্তা আর মতাদর্শের বাইরে বেরিয়ে আসার প্রয়োজনের কথাও বলেছেন। আন্তর্জাতিক পরিস্থিতি যে ভাবে বদলাচ্ছে, নিরাপত্তা পরিকাঠামো বদলানো উচিত তার সঙ্গে তাল মিলিয়েই। নটবর বলেন, ঠান্ডা-যুদ্ধ পরবর্তী পৃথিবীর উপযুক্ত মিত্রশিবির এখনও গড়ে ওঠেনি। পরিবর্তিত সময়ের চাহিদা মিটিয়ে পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতামূলক নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা গঠনের ক্ষেত্রে সিআইসিএ একটা মুখ্য ভূমিকা নিতে পারে বলে মন্তব্য করেন তিনি। ভারত-পাক শান্তি আলোচনার গতিপ্রকৃতিতে সন্তোষ প্রকাশ করে এশিয়ার নিরাপত্তা পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে আশাবাদী পাক বিদেশপ্রতিমন্ত্রী মাকদুম খুসরু বখতিয়ারও।

— পি টি আই

Pak amends terror law, widens ambit

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Oct. 19. — The Pakistan government has amended the Anti-Terrorism Act, bringing in its ambit culprits behind suicide attacks on mosques and laying out stringent guidelines for judicial officials for speedy disposal of terrorism cases.

The amendment to the 1997 ATA was passed by the National Assembly yesterday, authorising the Anti-Terrorism Courts to try offences, including abduction or kidnapping for ransom and the

use of fire or explosives in worship places regardless of damage. The courts will also try those who are accused of firing or using explosives on the court's premises and impound passports of the accused.

An amendment also bars the ATA to make more than two consecutive adjournments during the trial. If the defence counsel did not appear after two consecutive adjournments, the court could appoint a state counsel for the defence of the accused.

Under the new law, disciplinary

action could be taken by the courts concerned against any presiding officer of the court if they failed to comply with the amended law restricting more than two consecutive adjournments.

Under the amended ATA, each high court will establish a special bench or benches consisting not less than two judges to hear appeals against the decisions of the ATC.

The special bench will also not grant more than two consecutive adjournments.

"The Bill enhances both mini-

imum and maximum punishments for acts of terrorism, limits the adjournments of cases and provides for appeals to be decided by special benches in the high court," the government said in a written statement attached to the Bill.

The National Assembly also passed a Contempt of Court Bill to streamline the defamation procedures. The new legislation empowers superior courts to punish those guilty of civil, criminal or judicial contempt of court.

The Bill also defined the three types of contempt of court.

U.N. Council passes anti-terror resolution

By Warren Hoge

10/10
40-15
UNITED NATIONS, OCT. 9. The Security Council unanimously passed a Russian-initiated anti-terror resolution on Friday that declared all acts of violence against civilians unjustifiable by any political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic or religious considerations.

The heavily reworked resolution, introduced last month in the aftermath of suicide bombings of two Russian airliners and the hostage crisis in a North Ossetia school in which more than 320 children and adults died, failed to achieve its original purpose of creating a global black-list of terror suspects.

A Security Council committee currently compiles a list restricted to people and groups

linked to al-Qaeda and the deposed Taliban in Afghanistan whose assets, weapons purchases and travel member-states are supposed to block.

In broad terms, the resolution urged the 191 member-states of the U.N. to begin a campaign against terror. — *New York Times News Service*

Team to probe 'genocide'

AP reports:

The Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed a five-member international commission on Thursday to investigate whether genocide took place during the 19-month conflict in Sudan's Darfur region. The commission includes legal and human rights experts from Italy, Peru, Egypt, Pakistan and Ghana.

7/12/04

10 OCT 2004

Egypt resort blasts kill 26

Most of the bombing victims are Israeli tourists; Al Qaeda blamed

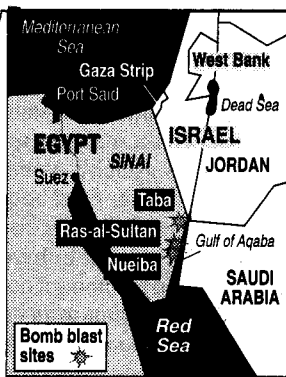
SULEIMAN AL-KHALIDI
TABA, OCTOBER 8

A SERIES of bombings killed at least 26 people in Egyptian Red Sea resorts packed with Israeli tourists. Israeli officials said the attacks seemed like those carried out by organisations like Al Qaeda.

The death toll looked certain to rise. Israeli officials said dozens of people were missing and bodies remained buried in the rubble of the Taba Hilton, on Egypt's border with Israel, after a truck bomb sheared off a big chunk of the hotel.

The attack was followed by blasts at two back packer beaches on the Sinai Peninsula, crowded with Israelis vacationing there during a week-long Jewish holiday despite official warnings they might be targeted by Islamic militants.

The explosions were the first major attacks on tourists



IE Map/B.K. SHARMA

in Egypt since 58 foreigners were killed in Luxor in 1997.

Nineteen of the dead in Thursday night's blasts were Israelis, an Israeli newspaper website said. A Russian and an unknown number of Egyptians were also killed. Some 120 people were wounded as normally placid vacation spots were plunged into nightmares of smoke, blood and screams.

In the aftermath, Israel complained of delays in Egyptian approval for bring-



An Israeli woman injured in the blast is evacuated. Reuters

ing equipment across the border for the search effort. But a compromise was reached and Israeli cranes moved in and began lifting broken concrete. Officials said a truck bomb loaded with explosives rammed into the lobby. A suicide bomber detonated another blast near the swimming pool moments later.

An entire wing of the 10-storey, 430-room hotel was torn off. Some guests fell to their deaths from their rooms.

A previously unknown pro-Al Qaeda Islamist group called Islamic Tawhid Brigades claimed the blast on a website. The claim, along with one from another unknown group calling itself the World Islamist Group, could not be verified. But Israel's deputy Defence Minister Zeev Boim told reporters the attack appeared to be the work of "international terror groups like Al Qaeda or branches of it". —Reuters

More blasts greet Patil in Assam

SNS & PTI 4/10

GUWAHATI, Oct. 3. — Seven blasts rocked Assam today as the Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, arrived here to take stock of the situation not only in Assam but also in Dimapur, the commercial hub of Nagaland, where twin blasts took place yesterday.

Six people were killed in the blasts, the last of which was triggered at Gauripur Market in Dhubri district around 7:20 p.m. Dhubri SP Mr LR Bishnoi said one person was killed on the spot in Gauripur Market while 15 were injured.

Four army men on patrol were also killed when Ulfa cadre hurled grenades at their vehicle at Talap, Tinsukia, around 3 p.m.

Three persons were killed and 15 injured in the Dhubri blast. Earlier, six blasts claimed three and injured 40 at Gossaingaon, Baska, Dhekiajuli, Rangpara,

Talap and Sonari. The first blast of the day took place at Gossaingaon around 7:30 a.m. Two NDFB ultras as were killed at Rangapara, Sonitpur district, when the bomb they were carrying went off. Also, at Sonari in Sibasagar district of Upper Assam, suspected Ulfa ultras triggered a blast targeting a pipeline of the Gas Authority of India Limited.

Preliminary probe of the samples of explosives collected by experts from the blast sites at the railway station and Hong Kong Market in Dimapur has indicated that RDX could have been used by suspected Ulfa activists, officials said today. The explosives were in suitcases fitted with timers. Experts said, only the Ulfa has the expertise to use RDX. Sources said the Assam blasts were also suspected to be the handiwork of the Ulfa, along with other extremist outfits like the NDFB and the United Democratic People's Solidarity, a

Karbi-Anglong-based outfit. Meanwhile, the NSCN (I-M) has said they were not responsible for yesterday's blasts in Dimapur. The outfit would conduct its own probe to hunt down the perpetrators of the twin blasts, it claimed.

Bengal, North-east on high alert

GUWAHATI, Oct. 3. — West Bengal and all North-eastern states, except Mizoram, were today put on high alert in view of the series of blasts and attacks by militants in Assam and Nagaland. Security forces in Assam were put on "maximum alert" with the deployment of additional security troops, DGP Mr PV Sumant said. Security along railway tracks has also been beefed up and patrolling intensified, he said.

Security has also been tightened in all vulnerable areas where NDFB militants were active, particularly Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Darrang, Chirang, Sonitpur, Morigaon, Nalbari and Kamrup districts. Troops have been alerted along the border districts to prevent the movement of the ultras.

In Manipur, security and police posts were also put on maximum alert in the past 24 hours, officials said from Imphal. Sources said security forces on patrol in sensitive areas have been instructed to report to the headquarters if they find any suspicious object or material. Bomb disposal squads have been put on standby. Security forces deployed on the Manipur-Nagaland and Manipur-Assam borders have been particularly asked to maintain a hawk-eyed vigil to prevent ultras from slipping into the state. — SNS & PTI

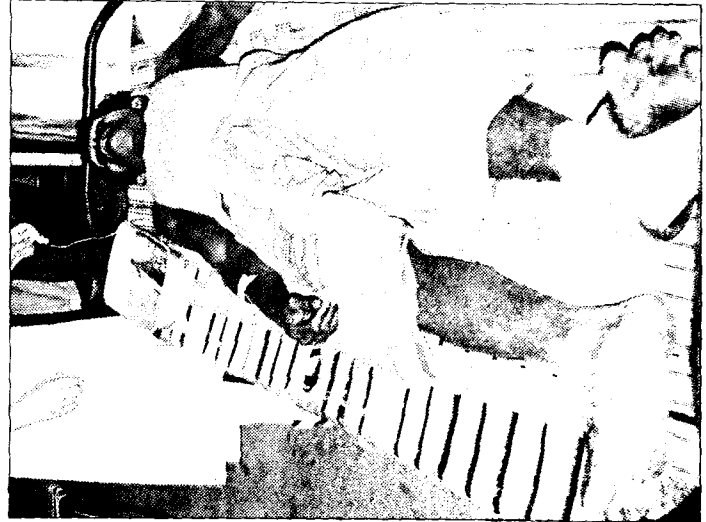
More reports on page 4

such senseless and cruel acts," he said in a statement.

In separate condolence messages to the chief ministers of Assam and Nagaland, President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam today hoped that permanent peace would return to all the N-E states soon.

The home minister said here tonight that the Centre would soon work out a long-term joint strategy to tackle militancy in the North-east and asserted that talks were the only way to resolve issues.

Mr Patil first had a meeting with the Assam chief minister and then went to Dimapur where he reviewed the situation with Nagaland's Governor and chief minister. He told reporters later that emphasis would be given on coordination among the N-E states' law-enforcing agencies, Army and paramilitary forces. All help, including additional security forces, will be provided, he assured.



An injured being treated at Dhubri Civil Hospital.— PTI

3 OCT 2004

Civilians fodder in flare-up

JAHANSHER FIROZE IN DIMAPUR AND OUR BUREAU IN GUWAHATI

Oct. 2: Terror struck in the heart of Nagaland, where for the first time civilian targets came under attack, and reared its ugly head in neighbouring Assam on a day that left more than 50 people dead according to unofficial estimates.

In the worst-ever attack in Nagaland, two bombs went off almost simultaneously this morning at the railway station and a nearby market in Dimapur; the state's com-

mmercial hub and its largest city. Superintendent of police Janardhan Singh put the toll at 26, but unofficial reports said at least 40 people had died and over 100 were injured.

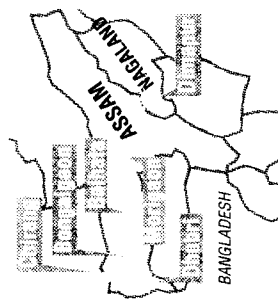
The first blast ripped the main Dimapur Railway passengers' platform at 9.29 am — the station clock stopped ticking from the impact. Seconds later, another powerful explosion rocked the multi-storey Hong Kong Market — always busy on Saturday mornings — a few hundred metres away.

Bodies, most of them charred beyond recognition, were strewn all around and mangl-

ed limbs dangled from steel frames. At the station, body parts were found 100 metres from the blast site. Children were among the dead.

"It was aimed at causing maximum civilian casualties," said an army officer. Civilians have never been targets of Nagaland militants, who are known to focus their attacks on security forces or government officials.

Chief minister Neiphiu Rio who ordered an inquiry refused to point fingers, saying he would wait for a report. Security agencies in Delhi did not rule out the hand of the



United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa).

Although police could not confirm the chemical used in the blasts, intelligence sources said it was RDX. "From our experience, I could say with cer-

tainty that it was RDX," said a senior intelligence officer.

Hours after the blast, emergency forces, the police, security forces and shopkeepers were still trying to retrieve the bodies from the debris at the market. "We are fortunate the roof did not cave in," said shopkeeper Ahidur Rahman.

At the station, tea vendor M. Pal said he was getting ready for the Tinsukia-bound passenger train to arrive when the bomb went off. "It went off about 50 metres ahead of my shop," he said. An employee of a Wheeler bookstore was among two vendors who died.

The casualties could have been much higher had the passenger train arrived on time — it was late by 30 minutes — or heavy rain not kept potential shoppers at home.

Rio said the attacks were aimed at derailing the peace process. "I urge the Naga people to be united and strongly come out against terrorism."

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has condemned the terror attack and home minister Shivraj Patil is reaching Dimapur tomorrow.

Violence racked neighbouring Assam as well as the National Democratic Front of Bor-

oland went on the rampage before its 19th raising day. Twelve people were gunned down when militants opened fire at a weekly market in Dhubri around 5 pm. Around 9 am, some militants had killed two persons in a grenade attack at a market in Chirang. A Chinese grenade was found at the spot. A grenade strike in New Bongaigaon — also at a market — killed three at 6.30 pm.

At Bongaigaon again, two persons died in a grenade strike at 6.45 pm. This time, the attackers were suspected to be Ulfa militants.

■ See Page 4

Hostage to Terror

Now, Even Children Are Not Spared

By Lalita Panicker

Remembrance
G-1-4

According to an ancient Ossetian custom, the living say goodbye to the dead by bringing things the deceased liked to their graves. Besides the small graves of Beslan's murdered children, chocolate, cookies and candy are the main offerings. What makes it even more heart-rending is that the children died begging for food and water. A schoolgirl from Colorado posted this message on a website: "I keep seeing the pictures of the children and it breaks my heart. Why? Why the children?"

Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev who has claimed responsibility for the massacre could probably answer that one. Involving children not only gives him maximum publicity but also inculcates a high degree of terror and dread. The image he wanted to project is that a man who is capable of brutally butchering children could be capable of anything. He reckons that the Russians will now think twice before taking him on. The killings were necessary, he later said, the children proved valuable negotiating currency in his fight against Russia.

The Beslan tragedy is part of a trend in terrorism to target the weakest link. Of course, many governments too follow this policy in their so-called war against terror. Once upon a time, terrorists had their own code of honour — their targets were big, usually political leaders, police chiefs or army personnel. But it was rare to target children and women. There is an apocryphal story set in 1904 when a band of Russian revolutionaries set out to assassinate a certain grand duke. But on learning that he was travelling with his wife and small children, they called off the mission at considerable risk to themselves.

Basayev's theory that targeting children could ensure that his demands have a greater chance of being conceded is not far off the mark. In fact, Vladimir Putin was reported to have been on verge of conceding some of the demands raised in Beslan, though Russian officials are reluctant to confirm this. But, why stop at Beslan? In the illegal war being waged in Iraq, the US troops are increasingly not differentiating between armed combatants and innocent civilians, many of them children. The children of Iraq will live with the horror and trauma of war long after it is over. The depleted uranium from spent shells is already causing horrendous deformities and cancers among them.

When asked about the sufferings of children in Iraq former secretary of state Madeleine Albright dismissed this as collateral damage. Of course, she has a staunch ally in the inimitable Donald Rumsfeld who just shrugs off the whole thing with 'stuff happens'. Israel, of course, considers any Palestinian fair game. In an interview with

28/9

this paper a few years ago, an Israeli ambassador to India brazenly justified Israel's use of heavy artillery against civilians, among them children. What can we do when they approach us with sticks and stones, he asked plaintively, but open up the heavy artillery? So brutalised has an entire generation of Palestinian children become that they in turn think nothing of blowing up innocent Israeli children. A very high percentage of Palestinian children suffer from psychological strain which manifests itself in bedwetting, lack of concentration and a withdrawal from the outside world.

Closer home, we saw that for the first time children were considered legitimate targets in the Gujarat carnage. In their bid to make sure that a whole generation of children don't grow up to take revenge, the murderous mobs went as far as to rip unborn foetuses out of their mothers' wombs. As subsequent events proved, there was a deliberate strategy to target children as it would ensure speedier submission of the minority community. The added advantage that the mobs had was that children don't have the motor skills to flee from danger as quickly as adults. So, in effect, they were sitting ducks. After the initial shock

and horror, we have forgotten Gujarat's children, both those who died and those who live with the trauma of having seen their families slaughtered. The survivors will never regain their lost childhoods as will those who survived Beslan.

This complete blurring of lines between childhood and the adult world is seen in conflicts across the world. With the abundance of small arms

and lighter weapons, it has become easier for both state and non-state actors to press children into war. Two million children have been killed in conflicts over the last 10 years, mainly in Africa and Asia. Children as young as seven have been sent into battle. In many cases, children have been forced to kill their own family members. The moral taboos that excluded children from conflict zones no longer exist. As more militias and non-state players engage in conflicts, the treaties and laws which protected children no longer apply. When fanaticism dictates that murder is permissible, indeed desirable, the rules of war cease to be relevant.

As we have seen with Gujarat and Beslan, the moral revulsion which greets this brutalisation of children diminishes with each passing incident. Children will then increasingly be considered fair game for terrorists and other combatants. It is the ultimate irony that in a globalising world which supposedly promotes inter-dependences, people are becoming ever more intolerant of others mostly on the basis of religion. The worst outcome of this is that children are considered extensions of fundamentalist ideologies and, therefore, not excluded from the theatre of conflict.



Putin flays double standards

Press Trust of India

MOSCOW, Sept. 24. — Flaying double standards in combating terrorism, Russian President Mr Vladimir Putin today said the world must unite to fight the menace and that the media should not be a passive observer but play a more responsible role to help tackle the threat.

Addressing the International Congress of over 120 news agencies from across the world here, Mr Putin said the world must learn to speak in the same voice in combating terrorism.

"We should learn to speak the same language, we should have one definition of killer and terrorist, otherwise we will not be able to protect the people and would

fail to evolve common approaches in tackling the threat of not only terrorism, but also other threats of the 21st century." "How can you say that two heads of a three-headed dragon are bad but one is good?" he questioned.

He said the mechanism of a bipolar world were things of the past and new mechanism for ensuring security from terrorist threats could be achieved through consolidated efforts of the world community.

"I'm convinced that in the condition of a global terrorist threat, that when people are being killed, the mass media cannot be simply observers," the Russian President said. Terrorism must not be used as an excuse to limit the freedom of the press and that media could be used as a more effective instru-



Mr Putin at the World Congress of News Agencies in Moscow on Friday. — AFP
 In coverages of the Beslan hostage crisis by the media, he resented the use of words such as "rebels" and "siege".

Rebel denies role

MOSCOW, Sept. 24. — Chechen rebel leader Aslan Maskhadov purportedly denied his involvement in the Beslan hostage-taking, in a statement released today. He put the blame on another rebel chief, Shamil Basayev, saying he should stand trial for staging it.

In a statement posted on a rebel website, Maskhadov, who was elected president of Chechnya in 1997, said he couldn't immediately bring Basayev to justice because of war but pledged to do it once the hostilities end. "I categorically declare that after the end of the war, persons who are guilty of carrying out provocative acts will be taken to court, including Shamil Basayev," said Maskhadov. — AP

America won't free Iraqi women prisoners

Associated Press
Baghdad, September 23

AUTHORITIES INSISTED on Thursday that they won't give in to militants' demands to free female Iraqi prisoners despite the plea of a tearful British hostage begging Britain to save his life in a video released by his captors.

Bigley's wife appealed to the kidnappers to release her husband. Sombat Bigley, a Thai woman, said she had seen the video with Bigley's plea for help.

"We have been married for seven years and I love him very much ... I desperately want to be reunited with my husband," she said, reading a Thai-language statement in front of news television cameras in Bangkok.

The 62-year-old Bigley was being held by a militant group led by Jordanian-born terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The group has already beheaded Americans Eugene Armstrong and Jack Hensley, demanding the release of all female prisoners in Iraq.

Two high-profile female security detainees are in custody Rihaab Rashid Taha, a scientist who became known as "Dr Germ" for helping Iraq make weapons out of anthrax, and Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash, a biotech researcher known as "Mrs Anthrax".

A dispute broke out on Wednesday when Allawi's Justice Ministry announced that Taha would be freed on "Wednesday or Thursday" because she was no longer a threat to national security. But the US Embassy and Prime Minister Iyad Allawi quickly said the women would not be released soon. Allawi underlined that US and Iraqi authorities would not give in to hostage-takers' demands.

"We have not been negotiating and we will not negotiate with terrorists on the release of hostages," Allawi said. "Really, my heart goes out for the victims of terrorism, and their families and we are

US needs to stay in Iraq: Bush

STANDING BESIDE Iraq's interim leader, President George W. Bush contended on Thursday that insurgents could "plot and plan attacks elsewhere, in America and other free nations," if the US pulled out. He said his top commander in Iraq has not asked for more troops but if he did, "I'd listen to him." In a clear jab at Democratic opponent John Kerry, Bush said the US must remain in Iraq to fight insurgents, who he said are part of the global terror threat. "If we stop fighting the terrorists in Iraq, they would be free to plot and plan attacks elsewhere, in America and other free nations," Bush said.

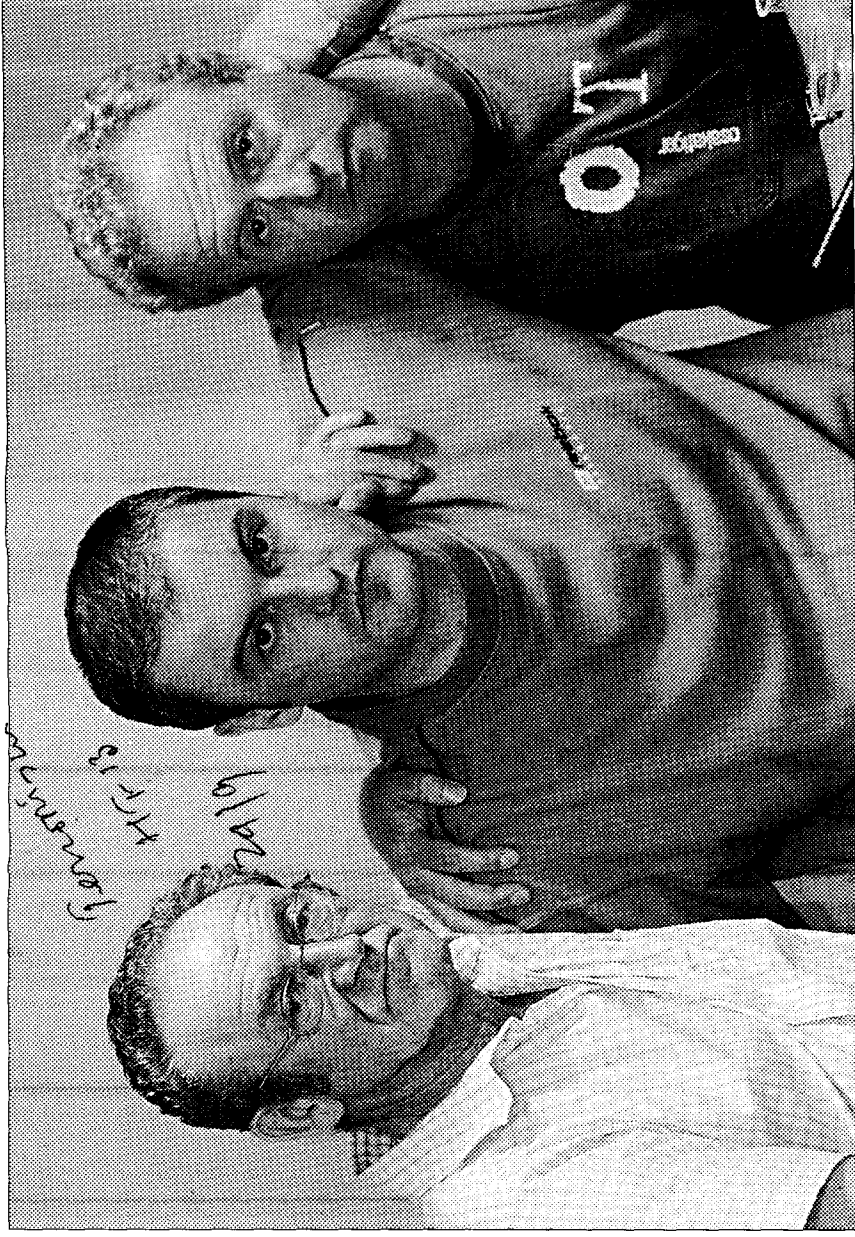
AP, Washington

trying to do our best to ensure the release of them."

Iraqi national security adviser Qassim Dawoud said on Thursday that while the status of prisoners — including Taha — is under review, there was "no question" of making decisions on them "in the light of the demands of a terrorist group which has taken three hostages and criminally and barbarically murdered two of them."

US and Iraqi officials also found themselves at odds over who had custody over Taha and Ammash. Dawoud said they were in the hands of Iraqi security forces and that "Iraqi judges decided to release them because they didn't have any evidence". A US Embassy spokesman disagreed, saying the two "are in our custody".

Dawoud on Thursday sought to clear up the matter, saying the two sides were jointly reviewing the status of prisoners, including that of Taha — but not Ammash.



British hostage Kenneth Bigley's brothers, Stanley (left) and Philip (right), and son Craig, appeal to his abductors to spare his life during a televised appeal in Liverpool on Thursday.

REUTERS

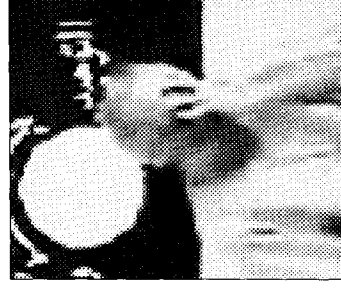
Tearful Briton begs Blair for life

Agence France-Presse
Baghdad, September 23

IRAQ'S HOSTAGE crisis deepened as Islamists who beheaded two Americans let a Briton make a desperate videotaped plea, while another extremist group claimed to have executed two women Italian aid workers.

In an apparent bid to influence British domestic opinion, the Tawhid wal Jihad group holding Kenneth Bigley posted on a website a video of the engineer begging Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair to meet the kidnappers' demands.

"I need you (Blair) to be compassionate as you al-



A web image shows Kenneth Bigley pleading Tony Blair to help save his life.

ways said you were ... I don't want to die ... Please, please release the female prisoners

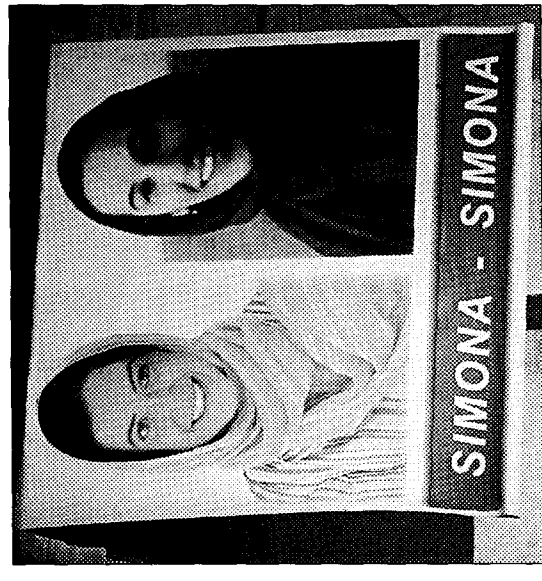
Italian hostages killed: Website

A **MILITANT** group claimed in a Web posting on Thursday that two Italian women taken hostage in Iraq had been killed, a day after another group made a similar statement. Neither claim could be immediately verified.

Italy cast doubt on the claims, saying the commandos could be part of a terrorism campaign through the media. "Italian intelligence services have confirmed ... that they believe these claims to be completely unreliable," Enzo Bianco, a lawmaker told Italian news agencies. "I urge caution because this will be a long and complicated story. A war through the media is underway," Bianco added.

The new posting about the purported beheadings of Simona Pari and Simona Torretta appeared on a little-known website and was signed by a group

AP, Cairo



Portraits of the two abducted Italian aid workers Simona Torretta (right) and Simona Pari on display in Rome.

AFP

ইরাকে আবার মুণ্ড কেটে খুন

কায়রো, ২৩ সেপ্টেম্বর (এ পি, এ এফ পি)

— দ্বিতীয় আমেরিকান পণবন্দীকেও মাথা

কেটে হত্যা করল ইরাকের জঙ্গিরা।

ওয়েবসাইটে দেখিয়েওছে সেই হত্যাদৃশ্য।

এরপর আরেকটি ওয়েবসাইটে জঙ্গিরা দাবি

করেছে, পণবন্দী দুই ইতালিয়ান মহিলাকেও

তারা খুন করেছে। আল কায়দা নেতা আবু

মুসা'ব আল জারকায়ারির গড়া তোহায়িদ ও

জিহাদ জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীর ওয়েবসাইটে গত রাতে

দেখানো হয়, মুখোশধারী ৫ জঙ্গির পাহারায়

জঙ্গি সংগঠনের ব্যানারের নিচে কমলা

পোশাক পরা মার্কিন পণবন্দী জ্যাক

হেনসলে বসে আছেন। এরপরই একজন

জঙ্গি তাকে ঠেসে ধরে মাটিতে শুইয়ে ধারাল

অস্ত্রে মুণ্ডচ্ছেদ করে। আল্লাহ আকবর ধ্বনি

দিয়ে ৪ মিনিটের ভাষণে ঘোষণা বলে,

মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট বুশকে ইরাক আক্রমণের

জন্য চড়া মাশুল দিতে হবে। উচিত শিক্ষা

দেওয়া হবে মার্কিন লেজুড ব্রিটেনকেও।

দু'দিন আগে একইভাবে এই জঙ্গিরা মার্কিন

পণবন্দী জ্যাক আর্মস্ট্রংকে হত্যা করেছে। এই

জঙ্গিদের হাতে আটক আছেন ব্রিটিশ

ইঞ্জিনিয়ার কেনেথ বিগলেও। ওয়েবসাইটে

দেখা যায় তাঁর মুক্তির জন্য বিগলে ব্রিটিশ

প্রধানমন্ত্রী টনি ব্লেয়ারের প্রতি অনুরোধ

জানাচ্ছেন জঙ্গিদের দাবিগুলি বিবেচনা

করতে। লন্ডনে বিগলের স্ত্রী সোমবাট

জঙ্গিদের প্রতি আবেদন করেছেন তাঁর স্বামীর

প্রাণরক্ষার জন্য। এদিকে স্বল্পপরিচিত একটি

ওয়েবসাইটে আল জওয়াহরির জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী

দাবি করেছে, তারা ইতালিয়ান দত্ত মহিলা

পণবন্দী সিমোনা তরেন্তা ও সিমোনা

পারিকে হত্যা করেছে। জঙ্গিদের মতে ওই

দুই মহিলা ইতালিয়ান গোয়েন্দা সংস্থার

এজেন্ট। ওয়েবসাইটে জানিয়েছে পরে

তারা হত্যাদৃশ্যের ভিও টেপ দেখাবে।

AAJKAL

23 SEP 2004

US hostage beheaded

Militants threaten to kill another in 24 hrs

Agence France-Presse
Baghdad, September 21

ISLAMIC MILITANTS beheaded a US citizen and threatened to repeat the gruesome spectacle in 24 hours by executing one of the dead man's British or American colleagues if female prisoners were not released across Iraq.

Tawhid wal Jihad (Unity and Holy War), the radical movement of suspected al-Qaida agent Abu Mussab Zarqawi, posted grainy footage on an Islamic website of the killing of Eugene "Jack" Armstrong, one of three foreign contractors grabbed at gunpoint last Thursday from their home in an upscale Baghdad neighbourhood.

A US official in Washington said that Armstrong's decapitated body had been found on Monday by Iraqi police outside a Baghdad mosque and transferred to US custody.

The video showed five masked gunmen decapitate Armstrong before placing his severed head on his

Bush defends Iraq policy at UN meet

US PRESIDENT George W. Bush has issued a strong defence of his Iraq policy in a speech to the UN General Assembly's annual meeting in New York. He said the world had to tackle violence and oppression as there was no safety in looking away. He urged the UN

to "do more" to help build a safer, more prosperous Iraq. "We all have a stake in the world's newest democracies," President Bush said, saying the people of Iraq and Afghanistan were on the path to freedom.

Agencies, New York

back in the latest grim killing by Zarqawi's movement, which has claimed multiple car bombings and assassinations in the last four months.

The executioner threatened to kill another hostage — either British engineer Kenneth Bigley or fellow American Jack Hensley — in 24 hours if London and Washington persisted in ignoring the demands for the release of Iraqi women prisoners in the custody of US-led forces.

The executioner denounced "the American occupier... who is carry-

ing out butchery in Iraq, without discriminating between the infant and the old man, between men and women". "Because you Americans have not freed our sisters... and because your agent (Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad) Allawi claims that in your prisons you have only two women from the former regime... we are cutting off this head."

When he finished the speech he pulled out a knife and slit the American's throat before sawing off his head, ignoring the victim's screams. The victim was dressed in orange overalls like those worn in American prisons and associated with images of Muslims detained at the US prison in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba.

Armstrong, who counts among at least 27 foreign hostages murdered here since April, was the second American beheaded in Iraq after 26-year-old Jewish businessman Nicholas Berg was decapitated in May by Zarqawi's faction, heralding the new wave of sadistic killings plaguing the country.

Family appeals to Blair

The family of a British civil engineer held hostage in Iraq appealed to Prime Minister Tony Blair to intervene to save his life, after grisly images of the beheading of a US hostage appeared on the Internet. In a dramatic appeal to the Blair, late Monday night, Bigley's son, Craig, said: "I ask Tony Blair personally to consider the amount of bloodshed already suffered. Only you can save him now. You have children and you will understand how I feel at this time."



Relatives at a memorial service for slain US hostage Eugene Armstrong in Hillsdale, Michigan, on Monday.

AP

Briton faces execution

Blair decides to 'stand firm' in 'terrible' situation

The Guardian & Agencies
Baghdad/London, Sept 20

LAST-DITCH ATTEMPTS to save the life of a Britisher being held hostage by Iraqi militants were under way last night as a deadline set by his kidnappers loomed.

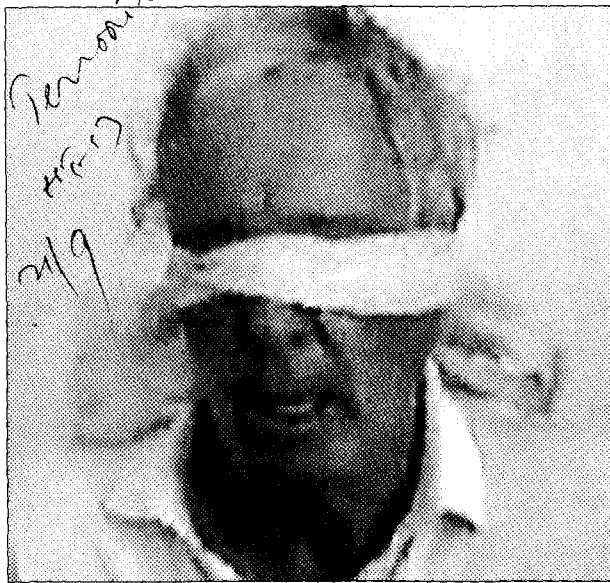
Prime Minister Tony Blair has said the UK will "stand firm" in the face of the insecurity and bloodshed plaguing Iraq. Blair acknowledged that the Iraqi situation was "terrible", but he said there was a clear choice to make between right and wrong there. The militants had demanded the release of Hazem al-Aaraji, an aide of the radical Shia cleric Muqtada Sadr, detained by US forces over the weekend. They also wanted all Iraq's female prisoners to be freed by Monday.

The families of Kenneth Bigley and the two Americans being held with him begged the kidnappers not to carry out a threat to execute the men when the deadline was reached in the early hours this morning. The Foreign Office took the rare step of putting up an official to make an appeal for help on the Arabic satellite television station, al-Arabiya.

In Iraq officials said authorities were pursuing a number of leads in connection with the kidnapping of the men, who were shown blindfolded and bound in a video released at the weekend. British and US special forces were also thought to be standing by.

The British embassy in Baghdad has set up a hotline for information about the men after a Foreign Office official appeared on Arabic television to ask Iraqis for help.

Despite US President George W. Bush declaring that



REUTERS
Briton Kenneth Bigley is seen in this video posted on the Internet.

'Distraught Saddam begs for mercy'

DEPOSED IRAQI President Saddam Hussein is depressed and has begged the Iraqi government for mercy, Iraq's Prime Minister Iyad Allawi says. "He is distraught and depressed," Allawi said of Saddam, who was Iraq's President for 24 years and is awaiting trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

"Saddam and his colleagues are not the giants that the media sometimes talks about. Saddam sent us an oral message in

which he begged for mercy. He said that they were working in the public interest and did not mean any harm," Allawi said in an interview with the pan Arab al-Hayat newspaper published on Monday.

A defiant and unrepentant Saddam insisted before a young special tribunal judge that he was still the legitimate president of Iraq, defended his 1990 invasion of Kuwait and gave a lecture on points of law.

Reuters, Cairo

combat operations were over more than 16 months ago, the growing hostage crisis and insurgency led Blair yesterday to talk of a second war.

In a joint press conference with his Iraqi counterpart, Iyad Allawi, who was

on his first visit to Britain yesterday, he said coalition forces were engaged in a "new conflict" now that the "first conflict" to remove Saddam Hussein was over. But the battleground of this fight was global terrorism

versus "the side of democracy and liberty".

Fears for Bigley were raised last night when two more videos were released by militants. One purported to show up to 18 members of the Iraqi national guard, who were being held by extremists. The captors claimed they would be killed unless a detained Shia leader was freed. The second showed the beheading of three Kurdish Democratic party members, possibly seized near Baghdad.

Bigley, an engineer from Liverpool, was kidnapped from the house he was sharing with colleagues Jack Hensley and Eugene Armstrong in Baghdad on Thursday. The men worked for the Qatar-based company Gulf Supplies and Commercial Services. In a video transmitted by the al-Jazeera TV on Saturday, they were shown blindfolded, with their hands bound. Al-Jazeera said the men were being held by the Tawhid and Jihad group. It reported the extremists had threatened to kill them within 48 hours unless women prisoners were released from Abu Ghraib and Umm Qasr prisons.

In other developments:

■ A Sunni cleric, Sheikh Muhammad Jadwa, was killed in Baghdad, less than 24 hours after another Sunni cleric, Hazem al-Zaidi, was kidnapped and killed.

■ American warplanes bombarded the northern part of Fallujah, a rebel stronghold west of Baghdad.

■ A car bomb exploded in the northern city of Mosul, killing three people.

■ Iraqi security forces conducting a raid near Nasiriyah freed a Jordanian civil servant who was kidnapped last month.

FEARSOME TENTACLES

Al-Qaeda Inspiring New Generation Of Terrorists

By SANKAR SEN

America has reason to be happy with President Musharraf's fight against Al-Qaeda terrorism. On 13 July, the Pakistani authorities arrested Mohammed Naeem Noor Khan at Lahore airport. He is an engineer and had been using Islamic websites to transmit encrypted instructions to Al-Qaeda cells. He was assisting in evaluation of potential targets and served as a clearinghouse of information. He used different internet cafes and relayed coded messages through secure websites that required a number of passwords to gain entry.

After the arrest under the supervision of Pakistani officers, Khan sent e-mails to other Al-Qaeda members who were unaware that he had been arrested thus allowing the investigators to pinpoint the key people. The information gathered from Khan led to the arrest of other important Al-Qaeda operatives, including some top leaders.

Potential targets

On 25 July a top Al-Qaeda leader, Tanzanian-born Ahmad Khalfan Ghailani who had \$5 million on his head was captured in Gujarat, 160 km south of Islamabad. Ghailani was wanted by the United States for his role in 1998 bombings of American Embassies in East Africa that killed 224 people. Ghailani was captured with 13 others after a 14-hour gun battle with the security forces. This raid uncovered three laptop computers and 51 data-rich discs. In the computers were stored 500 photographs of potential targets in the USA, detailed analysis of their vulnerabilities and also communications among some of the wanted terrorists of the world. Information elicited was very detailed and specific. A senior US intelligence officer called them an "unprecedented treasure trove of information". Ghailani, who is in his early thirties, is the seniormost Al-Qaeda operative caught in Pakistan since the arrest in March 2003 of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, the mastermind of 11 September attacks.

Though most of the data contained in the hard drives were at least three years old, the intelligence analysts point out that the Al-Qaeda has cased targets for years before attacking. Preparations for the 1998 bombing of the two US embassies began in 1993. Though the surveillance for information in the hard disc was done mostly in 2000, information was also periodically updated. The discs detailed the operatives' extensive reconnaissance of buildings like New York's stock exchange, Citi group building, Washington HQ of both IMF and World Bank. The surveillance reports note the structure of the buildings, their security arrangements, the flow of traffic outside the buildings and whether explosives could melt steel underpinnings of a building etc. All this prompted the security alert in New York and Washington. The Home Land Security

The author is a former Director, National Police Academy

chief Tom Ridge went public with the names of the targeted buildings arguing that employees of the targeted companies could be helpful in reporting anything relevant or in unraveling the mystery of those who had done the surveillance.

The information provided by Khan and his files led to the arrest of another 13 suspected terrorists in Britain on 3 August. Among them was one Abu-Isa-

It now seems that Al-Qaeda and the Taliban uprooted from Afghanistan are using Pakistan, their former transit station, as a temporary staging group for terrorist operations. Some of them created a network within Pakistan taking advantage of poor law enforcement and the state's sympathetic attitude towards pan-Islamic militancy.

Musharraf remains one of the prime targets of Al-Qaeda. Last



Al-Hindi who was sent to the USA by Osama bin Laden in 2001 to case targets. He is also wanted for plotting attack on Heathrow airport last year. Al-Hindi has been identified by British Intelligence Services as a young Hindu convert who had published under "nom-de-guerre" a memoir of his jihad in Kashmir.

The Pakistan government suspended more than 60 local policemen, including several officers, for negligence in detecting and monitoring the foreigners who could be captured only with the American assistance. In the wake of the arrest of Al-Qaeda operatives came an attack on Shaukat Aziz, the present Prime Minister of Pakistan, in which nine people including his driver were killed. A group calling itself "Islambouli Brigades" of Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility and declared that it would target pro-American government leaders in Pakistan. The outfit is named after the leader of militant Islamic group, which assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981. This is for the first time Al-Qaeda has claimed responsibility for terrorist attacks in Pakistan and is unlikely to be the last.

Computer experts

Computer records e-mail addresses and documents seized after the arrest of Md Noor Khan show that new operatives are filling up Al-Qaeda ranks. The new evidence suggest that Al-Qaeda has retained some elements of its previous centralised command and communication structure using computer experts like Khan to relay messages and directions from leaders to subordinates in countries like Britain, Turkey and Nigeria.

Armitage, and General Abizaid have pressed Musharraf to capture high value targets as early as possible. It remains to be seen if Musharraf is able to do this before the American election. The string of arrests in Pakistan may have disrupted a plot but may not have derailed it. Further, though Pakistan is helping America to nab Al-Qaeda terrorists, Musharraf has always provided support to local Islamic groups who provide succour to the Al-Qaeda. This policy of supporting the local militants while banning others does not work in practice. Kashmiri jihadis and Kandahari jihadis forge links. The group called Herkat-ul-Jihad-I-Islami, which keeps close links with Al-Qaeda after being banned two years ago, has re-emerged under different names.

Small-scale attacks

Earlier interrogation of Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, an alleged mastermind of the 11 September attacks, who was arrested in Rawalpindi in March 2003, revealed that Al-Qaeda has not been dispersed totally by American attacks on Afghanistan. Even after receiving hard knocks, its organisational core perhaps remains intact. Experts estimate that the Al-Qaeda is no longer a omnipotent hydra of destruction and its capacity for launching elaborately planned spectacular attacks has diminished. But more small-scale attacks, such as this year's bombings in Madrid, will be carried out by individuals who have only a passing contact with the Al-Qaeda organisation. Thus though massive attacks like that of 11 September by Al-Qaeda are very unlikely, though not impossible, decentralised terrorists will continue to haunt the USA and its allies. Even if bin Laden is knocked out, the battle will not be over.

The US National Commission investigating the 11 September 2001, terrorist attacks has correctly pointed out that the Al-Qaeda now represents an "ideological movement and not a finite group of people. In this way it has transformed itself, to a decentralised force". Bin Laden may be limited in his ability to organise major attacks from his hideouts but his message of inspiration to a new generation of terrorists, particularly in the embittered Muslim world, would influence many. In its second coming as the standard bearer of extremist ideology, Al-Qaeda is scoring a nightmarish success and inspiring generations of embittered Muslim youth. This rampant dissemination of Al-Qaeda's ideology has made it easier for the group to recruit individuals.

In the past three years, the USA has put the fight against terrorism at the top of its global agenda. It has added about \$200 billion to its spending on international affairs and homeland security. But the USA has to get global cooperation in fighting this long struggle. Without a wide multilateral system to fight against this common scourge, there will be too many loopholes for the terrorists to exploit.

Threat to kill Iraq hostages

Baghdad, Sept. 18 (Reuters): Insurgents threatened today to cut the throats of two Americans and a Briton seized in Baghdad, and launched a suicide car bomb attack on Iraqi security forces in Kirkuk that killed at least 23 people.

In Internet video footage the three hostages were shown kneeling blindfolded on the ground, with a hooded gunman aiming his weapon at the head of one of the captives. The gunman said the Tawhid and Jihad group led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi would kill the men unless female Iraqi prisoners were freed from two Iraqi jails within 48 hours. "Tawhid and Jihad sets a 48-hour deadline for the release of all our Muslim sisters in Abu Ghraib and Umm Qasr prisons or else, by God, these three hostages will have their throats slit to set an example," the militant said.

The US military said no women were held at either jail.

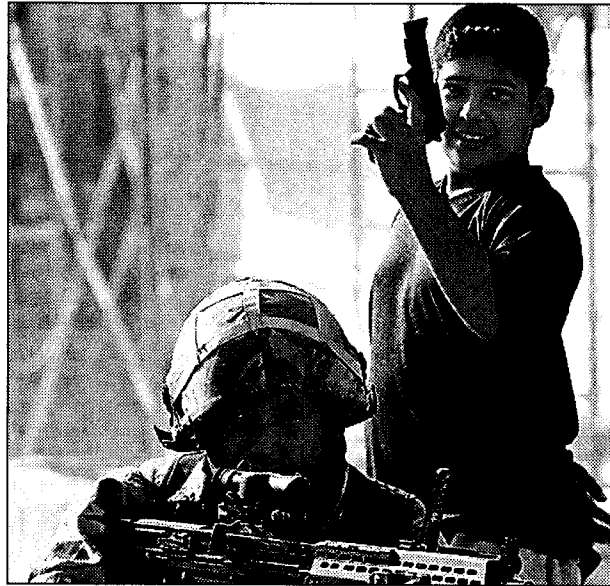
Zarqawi's group has claimed responsibility for many of the bloodiest attacks in Iraq, and in May released video footage of the beheading of US hostage Nicholas Berg.

An Islamist website said today it had received a message purportedly from an Iraqi group holding two French journalists hostage saying it had conditionally agreed to free them. The website said it could not authenticate the message.

Guerrilla violence and instability across Iraq have undermined the authority of the US-backed Iraqi government and raised doubts that elections can be held in January as planned.

In the third major suicide attack this week against Iraq's beleaguered security forces, a car bomber today killed at least 23 people outside the headquarters of the Iraqi National Guard in the northern city of Kirkuk, hospital officials said.

The bomb ripped through a crowd of people waiting to apply for jobs at the offices in Kirkuk, 250 km north of Baghdad. Iraqis queuing up to join the country's security forces have repeatedly been targeted by guerrillas.



A boy plays with a toy gun behind a British soldier during clashes with Shia militants in Basra. (Reuters)

Nepal Maoists kidnap 11 from border

Pramod Giri
Birtamore (East Nepal), Sept 18

IF THE gunning down of two policemen, including one inspector, near Dhulabari close to the India-Nepal border confirmed the growing presence of Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) in eastern Nepal, last night's kidnapping of 11 mainstream political leaders from here proved that the Maoists, in northern Nepal, had begun dictating terms in the east as well. The eastern districts of Nepal share a long border with West Bengal.

On Friday night, a day after the killing of two policemen, the NCP(M) guerrillas abducted 11 senior leaders belonging to different political parties. Naresh, believed to the No.3 within the NCP (M) and in-charge in the area,

called the offices of some national dailies this morning and claimed responsibility. Naresh, however, assured that the leaders wouldn't be harmed and that they would be released once the leaders answered the Maoist queries on the present political situation.

The 11 abducted leaders included Surya Narayan Tajpuria, working president of the Nepali Congress (Prajantrik), Punya Dahal, and Bhakti Situala, both Mahasmiti members of the Nepali Congress, Khodnath Chapagai, a member of the teachers' council, Madhav Dhakal, local leader of the United Marxists Leninist party, Amnika Adhikari, another UML leader, and Bhola Mainali, a local Congress leader.

According to the Nepal police, NCP(M) men went to the houses

STATE ON ALERT

of these leaders after 6 pm last evening in the Shivganj area, about one km from Birtamore town, and asked them to come out for some discussion. They were then abducted and taken away to an unknown destination. The leaders were whisked away without any gunshot being fired.

The Maoists confirmed the abductions, first of its kind in eastern Nepal, this morning by calling up newspaper offices. The caller said the leaders had been taken away for two days for discussions and would be released unharmed.

The abduction was the second major Maoist operation in the last three days in Jhapa district. On

Thursday, the rebels gunned down police inspector Binay Kumar Dewan and a Havildar Prem Kumar Rai while they were returning to Dhulabari on motorcycle. On Wednesday, the guerrillas killed Siromani Oli, a sub-inspector attached to the National Research Centre at Anarmani.

The Maoist activities in Nepal's Jhapa district bordering Bengal has become a security concern for India, particularly West Bengal. Jhapa has a long and porous border with West Bengal along Darjeeling district and Bihar.

After the recent killings and the abductions, security along the India-Nepal border has been tightened. District police and SSB sources say that every effort was being made to prevent infiltration of the Maoists into India.

9/19
9/19

THE NEWSPAPER

19 SEP 2004

Car bomb kills 47 near Baghdad market

MARIAM KAROUNY & LUKE BAKER
BAGHDAD, SEPTEMBER 14

AN EXPLOSION tore through a market close to the West Baghdad police headquarters on Tuesday, killing at least 47 people in the deadliest single attack in the capital in six months.

The US Army and the Iraqi Interior Ministry said the blast was a car bomb attack on the police building in Haifa Street, a haven for guerrillas and criminals. Many of the casualties in Sunday's car bomb and mortar attacks across Baghdad were also in Haifa Street, where US troops have repeatedly clashed with guerrillas.

The Health Ministry said 47 had been killed and 114 wounded.

The Interior Ministry and witnesses said there may have



A woman at the site of the blast in Baghdad. *Reuters*

been at least two simultaneous car bomb blasts. Witnesses said mortars may also have been fired at the same time.

"I was standing there talking to my friend when suddenly

all I saw was blood, and my friend lying dead," said a wounded Iraqi man who identified himself as Zafer.

In another attack at Baquba, 12 policemen were

US moves funds for security, not water

■ HOLLAND (MICHIGAN): Faced with mounting violence in Iraq, the Bush administration plans on Tuesday to propose shifting \$3.46 billion from Iraqi water, power and other reconstruction projects to improve security, boost oil output and prepare for the January elections. Officials briefed on the plan said it cleared the way for President George W. Bush to waive 95 per cent of Iraq's pre-war debts to the US, which amount to about \$4 billion. —*Reuters*

killed and two wounded when gunmen opened fire on their minibus, a source at the town's main hospital said.

Interior Minister Falah al-Naqib visited the blast site and

condemned the perpetrators. "They are targeting the Iraqi people and they are trying to destroy Iraq. These powers won't stop the rebuilding of Iraq," he said. "There will be no space for terrorists and the enemies of Iraq."

Fighting has surged in Iraq over the last few days after US-led forces launched a drive to pacify areas under guerrilla control ahead of elections in January.

Air Force Brigadier General Erv Lessel, Deputy Director of Operations for the US Military in Iraq said, "The overriding strategy is to gain local security control in all the cities throughout Iraq by the end of December. That control has to do with getting capable Iraqi security forces—police backed up by Iraqi National Guards—and competent local authorities in control of the cities so that life can go on, so that re-

construction can continue, so that elections can take place."

In Baquba, 12 Iraqi policemen and their driver were killed and two others wounded today when gunmen sprayed their vehicle with bullets in Baquba near Baghdad, police said.

"The police were in a minibus when two civilian cars blocked them off in the Tahrir district. The men stepped out of their vehicle and started to fire," Mohamed Mabrouk, a police officer said.

The group had arrived from the Kurdish village of Qanaqin to arrange for their trip to neighboring Jordan for police training.

Iraqi security forces are regularly attacked in the restive city. In the most recent killing, an Iraqi National Guard Colonel, his son and a fellow officer were assassinated in Baquba on Sunday.

Blast in Baghdad rebel district kills 59

USA Today
Baghdad, September 14

A CAR bomb on Tuesday ripped through a busy market near a Baghdad police headquarters where Iraqis were waiting to apply for jobs on the force, and gunmen opened fire on a van carrying police home from work in Baqouba, killing at least 59 people and wounding at least 114.

The group headed by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi claimed responsibility in a Web statement for the attack.

The statement, signed by the Tawhid and Jihad group, said: "Thanks to God alone, a lion from the Brigades of Those Seeking Martyrdom succeeded in attacking the center of volunteers for the renegade police apparatus."

The attacks marked the latest attempts by insurgents to disrupt U.S.-backed efforts to build a strong Iraqi police force capable of taking over security in many towns and cities ahead of nationwide elections slated for January.

The bomb exploded by a bustling row of shops and cafes in the capital, and many of the 47 dead were people who had been shopping or having a morning meal. The blast left a gaping 10-foot crater and a trail of charred bodies, and devastated buildings and gutted cars

gasoline streetside vendors, police said. There was no word on casualties.

Interior Ministry spokesman Col. Adnan Abdel-Rahman said the bomb was placed inside a Toyota vehicle parked near the commercial hub, located a short distance down the road from the police station, which had been closed to traffic.

Mahdi Mohammed, 30, was standing outside his barber shop when the explosion went off. "It was a horrific scene. Seconds earlier people were drinking tea or eating sandwiches and then I could see their remains hanging from trees," he said. "I could see burning people running in all directions."

"This is a crime committed against innocent people who needed to find work to feed their hungry children," said Alaa Khamas, a falafel vendor. He said he saw a man who had just bought a falafel from him killed by a flying car wheel.

Angry crowds of young men pumped their fists in the air and denounced President Bush and interim Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, saying the had failed to protect Iraqis. "Bush is a dog," they chanted.

Ali Abul-Amir had been waiting with those trying to join the police force but had gone around the corner to buy a drink when the explosion went off.

"Such places were targeted before," he said. "I blame Ayad Allawi's government for what happened because they did not take the necessary security measures."

Others, however, directed their anger at the militants. "Such acts cannot be considered part of the resistance (against American forces). This is not a jihad, they are not mujahideen," said Amir Abdel Hassan, a 41-year-old teacher. "Iraq is not a country, it's a big graveyard," he said.

In Baqouba, gunmen in two cars opened fire Tuesday on a van carrying policemen, killing 11 officers and a civilian, said Qaisar Hamid of Baqouba General Hospital.

The incident occurred when the policemen were returning to their station after they were told that a trip to a training camp has been postponed, said a police officer.

It was at least the second recent attack on Baqouba security forces: On July 28, a car bomb exploded outside a police recruiting center in the eastern, Sunni-dominated city, killing at least 68 people. Attacks on Iraqi security forces and police officers — seen as collaborators by militants — have left hundreds of people dead since insurgents began a 17-month campaign to expel US-led forces and destabilize Allawi's government.



REUTERS

Iraqi women cry at the scene of an explosion in central Baghdad on Tuesday.

near the western Baghdad police headquarters on Haifa street, an insurgent enclave that has been the scene of fierce clashes with US troops.

Paramedics and residents picked up body parts scattered across the street and put them into boxes. Anguished men lifted bodies

Kesman Saad Al-Amili said. Hours later, another explosion echoed across the capital, but the blast was caused by an accident involving

417-14
1819

Terrorist network active in Russia, says expert

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, SEPT. 12. The latest wave of terrorist attacks in Russia points to the existence of a ramified terrorist network in the country, an anti-terror expert said.

"We are convinced that the extremist network covers at least two-thirds of Russia and can be mobilised to full combat readiness at any moment," a security service source told the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* daily. "They are capable of simultaneously striking in most major cities of the country."

The expert was commenting on an unprecedented spate of Chechen-linked terrorist attacks in Russia between August 24 and September 1 that claimed over 450 lives. It began with the downing of two airliners, continued with a suicide bomb blast near a Moscow metro station and climaxed with the seizure of over 1,200 persons at a school in Beslan, North Ossetia. The terrorist network has its

roots in an array of extremist religious organisations that sprang up in Russia in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Last year, Russia's Supreme Court banned 15 Islamist groups, including Jamaat-e-Islami, Hizbul-Tahrir al-Islami and Islamic Brotherhood. However, the situation has since become worse, the security service source said.

"The extremist groups have gone underground and organisers of terrorist attacks have used this to their advantage," the *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* quoted the source as saying. Russia has about 20 million Muslims, which makes them the second biggest ethnic group after Russians.

The Defence Minister, Sergei Ivanov, on Sunday described terrorists active in Russia as "very serious forces."

"They are well-organised, effectively controlled and have very substantial financial resources," Mr. Ivanov said in a TV interview. "The latest series

of terrorist acts ... shows that the (terror) war is acquiring a systematic character and involves very serious forces."

The Russian terrorist underground linked to international extremist organisations is especially active in the North Caucasus, where Moscow has been fighting Chechen separatists for 10 years now. Drawing on Islamic fundamentalists in neighbouring regions, Chechen rebels have mounted a number of high profile attacks in the North Caucasus. In 1999, local Islamists helped Chechen militants stage a massive invasion of Dagestan. It took the Russian army six weeks to oust the rebels.

In June this year, a bloody rebel attack on Ingushetia revealed the existence of Ingush Islamic radicals, the so-called "Ingush Jamaat." In August, security services for several days battled a group of militants in Kabardino-Balkaria, another North Caucasian region of Russia.

AFTER KILLING CHILDREN

How much smaller did the militants want them to be? As the images of cowering, traumatized, wounded and dead children from the desecrated school in Beslan go out into the world, this is perhaps the only question that seems relevant. On the third anniversary of the World Trade Center devastation, the world is still learning new definitions of the concept known as humanity. There is no evil, no hitherto inconceivable cruelty of which human beings are incapable. The siege at the Beslan school

was not like a bombing operation, where the perpetrators could take refuge behind distance, invisibility and anonymity. In this operation, criminals and victims were designed to be face-to-face in a steaming, airless gymnasium lined with bombs, where children could be shot at point blank range, where older children could be asked to throw the dead bodies of their younger schoolmates out of the window, and a little boy racked with thirst could be bayoneted when he asked for water.

There will be time to discuss the failures of Russia's Chechnya policy, for in the rising spiral of hatred and bloodshed, there is always a generating moment. But now there is another question. Do those Chechens who want independence from Russia feel that their cause has been served? That is impossible, because the siege in Beslan has become identified worldwide with the most extreme revulsion and grief. That would mean that the

predicament of the ordinary Chechen is far more tragic than it could have been imagined to be before Beslan. Terrorists have hijacked his dream and turned it into pure nightmare. Inhuman cruelty is also truly stupid: it goes out of its way to serve its perceived enemy. The Russian government needs no other weapon in its publicity arsenal to appeal to its own people than images of dying toddlers in the arms of unbelieving adults, of children scarred and bleeding from bullet wounds, of row upon row of

bags full of twisted, mangled young limbs. And it only has to talk about "Islamists" to the powers outside its boundaries to achieve the rest.

Beslan is another watershed in the history of terrorism, and its effects may turn out to be more significant than those of 9/11. The most striking outcome

The Beslan school siege has shown that there is no form of hitherto inconceivable cruelty that human beings are incapable of

so far has been a sudden clear voice being heard above the grief, the voice of the courageous, clear-thinking Muslim. By speaking out in unqualified condemnation of the Beslan attack, of all such attacks and killings, by differentiating uncompromisingly between the ordinary person of the community and the blood-thirsty, suicidal figure now so familiar all over the world, this voice is doing the world a great service. To this, the refusal of the radical groups to condemn Beslan is in telling contrast. Perhaps they are wondering how to escalate the horror, what is left to do after the destruction of children.

Families, world remember 9/11 terror victims

Parents read out victims' names

Associated Press
New York, September 11

WITH QUAVERING voices, parents and grandparents of those killed at the World Trade Center read the names of victims in a solemn recitation early on Saturday to mark the third anniversary of the terror attacks.

Moments of silence were observed at 8:46 and 9:03 a.m., the times at which the two planes slammed into the trade centre towers on Sept. 11, 2001. Similar moments were to be observed to mark the times of the towers' collapse.

The president and first lady presided over a moment of silence on the White House's South Lawn as the nation began a day of remembrance. At Arlington National Cemetery, there was a moment of silence at 9:37, the time that another hijacked plane hit the Pentagon, where 184 people died. On the west edge of the trade centre site in lower Manhattan, parents and grandparents stood in pairs at two podiums, reading the list of the 2,749 people killed there — a recitation expected to last over two hours.

They read slowly and precisely and added poignant dedications when they recalled the names of their own loved ones. "We miss you, Chris," said Patricia Allingham, who lost her son.

Gov. George Pataki quoted former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, describing losses of World War II: "There's no tragedy in life like the death of a child. Things never get back to the way they were."

As the reading began, other family members of

September 11 victims descended the ramp into the pit of the World Trade Center site itself, many clutching roses and photos of their relatives. Many consider the area, seven stories below street level, sacred ground. It was there that rescue workers combed the debris with rakes, painstakingly searching for the tiniest fragments of human remains.

The family members laid flowers in two small reflecting pools in the pit that were meant to evoke the footprints of the twin towers. Others scrawled messages on the edges of the pools.

Last year, children recited the names, and on the first anniversary, it was dignitaries, community leaders and some relatives of victims. Mayor Michael Bloomberg said parents and grandparents were chosen this year to "acknowledge their great sacrifice and thank them for helping all of us to shoulder the loss."

"A man who loses his wife is a widower. A woman who loses her husband is a widow," Mayor Michael Bloomberg said. "There is no name for a parent who loses a child, for there are no words to describe this pain."

Pat Hawley, 44, was among the family members at the site. Hawley, of Charlotte, NC, said he comes to the ground zero ceremony every year to remember his older sister, Karen Sue Juday. "It seems like it gets harder every year, because it's that much more time since I've been able to talk to my sister," he said.

In Pennsylvania, bells will toll across the state at the minute the fourth plane went down.



Children who lost their family members place flowers in the reflecting pool at the base of the former WTC twin towers on the third anniversary of the 9/11 attacks in New York on Saturday. AP

Mixed feelings echo from Afghanistan

Reuters
Bagram Air Base, Sept. 11

AFGHANS MARKED the anniversary with mixed emotions — some glad of the US-led intervention that toppled the Taliban after September 11, but others deeply suspicious of Washington's intentions.

US forces and their allies in Afghanistan remembered the third anniversary of the September 11 attacks in sombre fashion on Saturday, conscious that the war on terror will be a long one.

It is more than a year since Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on a visit to Afghanistan that US forces had moved from major combat to stabilisation and reconstruction.

Since then, the Taliban insurgency has picked up rather than slowed, with more than a 1,000 people killed in militant-related violence in the past year. Soldiers with the 18,000-strong US-led force on the ground expect no quick victory.

"We have all seen that in Afghanistan the road to freedom can be a hard struggle," Major-General Eric Olson, operations commander of the US-led force, told a September 11 commemoration at the main US base at Bagram to the north of Kabul. The sprawling Bagram base was developed

by the Soviet Union in the 1980s during its doomed 10-year occupation of the country. The ceremony was attended by around 200 US soldiers and representatives of allied forces involved in the pursuit of Taliban, al-Qaida and other militants in Afghanistan.

They saw video footage of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and heard speeches extolling the virtues of honour, courage, freedom, sacrifice and faith, before a concluding chorus of "God Bless America".

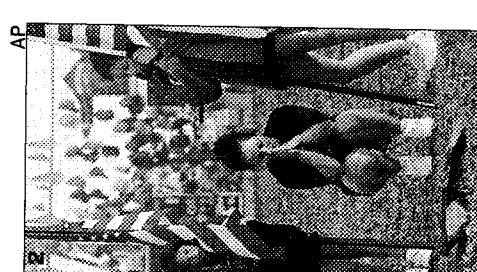
"I am proud to be part of it," said Major Andy Preston, a ranger with the 25th Infantry Division who was working in the Pentagon when hijackers flew a plane into the building.

"It's an important time to remember those who were lost and why we are here. We have to prevent future ceremonies like this and future 9/11s." But the troops are under no illusions about the task ahead.

Command Sergeant Major Franklin Ashe, the senior enlisted soldier with US forces in Afghanistan, said they were making progress on all fronts and improving tactically everyday.

"Nobody expected this to go fast," he said. "This is a global war and it's going to take many years to win."

DIFFERENT FACES OF MOURNING



REUTERS

Anti-US rallies in Islamabad

AFP
Islamabad, September 11

The alliance rules North West Frontier Province

PAKISTANI ISLAMIST parties demonstrated against US "anti-Muslim pollies" to mark the third anniversary of September 11 terror attacks as security forces went on high alert. Rallies were held on Saturday in cities and towns across the country a leader of the powerful Islamic Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal alliance said. Liaqat Baloch said the terror attacks on the US were condemnable but Washington had turned its war on terror into an indiscriminate campaign of high alert around the country. There is no specific threat, but the measures are part of a general precaution around 9/11," he said. "Extra force has been deployed around foreign missions." Around 15,000 paramilitaries and police took up positions in the restive southern port city of Karachi.

1. Relatives of 9/11 victims at the memorial service at the WTC site in New York on Saturday.
2. Girls pray during a sunrise visit to the temporary memorial to passengers of United Flight 93 in Shanksville.
3. An unidentified woman holds a photograph of a victim at the WTC site.
4. People form a giant candlelight symbol of peace at Meiji Park, Tokyo.



US calls India a partner in fighting terrorism

T.V. Parasuram

WASHINGTON 11 SEPTEMBER

DESCRIBING India as a partner in fight against extremism in the East Asia and Central Asia, the United States said it is updating its existing alliances based on security realities of the new century.

"Countries like Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Pakistan, India — to cite but a few examples — are now partners in the fight against extremism in the East Asia and in Central Asia," US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said at the National Press Club here on Friday.

"We are updating our existing alliances and building new relationships based on security realities of the new century, and not the last century," he said.

Pointing out that the terrorists are ruthless, he said: "They seek



RUMSFELD: NEW AGE DONS

to drive our coalition out of the newly liberated countries of Afghanistan and Iraq and to reimpose dictatorial regimes. They will fail, let there be no doubt. And they are conducting a reign of terror against those who represent hope and freedom — the mayors, the city

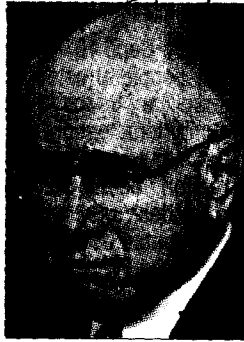
councilmen, the women — who register to vote in Afghanistan.

"I am sure you all read about the bus that was stopped by some Taliban near the Pakistan border, and they went through the women's possessions to see if they had registered to vote, and the ones that had registered to vote were killed," he said.

Mr Rumsfeld said: "No one should underestimate the powerful impact of human freedom. Today, Iraqis are among those who are allowed to say what they want, go where they want, write and watch and listen to whatever they want." "The assassins and the terrorists who are fighting know that the rise of a free, self-governing Afghanistan and a free, self-governing Iraq will give powerful momentum to reformers throughout the region and it will discredit their extremist ideology," Mr Rumsfeld said. — PTI

Howard fears more attacks

119
AFP & AP



SYDNEY, Sept. 10. — Intelligence agencies have warned there is a “distinct possibility” of new terror attacks in Jakarta following yesterday’s bombing, Australian Prime Minister Mr John Howard said today.

Prime Minister Howard: Poll-eve alert.

“The information they (intelligence agencies) have available indicates that the number of operatives is sufficiently large to support the fear that there could be more attacks,” Mr Howard told reporters in Canberra. “They have no specific hard information in relation to that but the nature of the intelligence gathered and the size of the operatives indicates that that is a distinct possibility.”

He, however, stopped short of raising the overall domestic terror alert level, which is currently assessed as “medium”, but said Australia will create new emergency response teams and upgrade measures at airports and overseas missions.

The Prime Minister, who faces elections next month in which Iraq is a key issue, said Australia would not falter in its commitment to the campaign, despite claims that the embassy attack was a warning by Islamic extremists to pull out troops.

Mr Howard and his Labour Party rival Mr Mark Latham today agreed to stop campaigning for two days out of respect for victims of the blast. The stumping will resume on Sunday with a televised debate that is likely to focus on security.

জাকার্তা বিস্ফোরণে দায় স্বীকার করে ফের হুমকি

জাকার্তা, ১০ সেপ্টেম্বর: ইন্দোনেশিয়ার পুলিশ বিস্ফোরণের ৪৫ মিনিট আগেই এ বিষয়ে ইঙ্গিত পেয়েছিল বলে অভিযোগ করেছেন অস্ট্রেলীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রী আলেকজান্ডার ডাউনার। আল কায়দার সহযোগী সংগঠন জেমা ইসলামিয়ার নেতা আবু বকর বশির পুলিশি হেফাজতে রয়েছেন। তাঁকে মুক্তি না দিলে পশ্চিমী দূতাবাসগুলির উপরে হামলার হুমকি দিয়ে একটি এস এম এস কালকের ঘটনার ৪৫ মিনিট আগেই পুলিশের কাছে পৌঁছেছিল বলে দাবি করেছেন ডাউনার। যদিও পুলিশ অভিযোগ অস্বীকার করেছে। তবে আজ ইন্টারনেটে একটি বিবৃতিতে ইসলামিয়া বিস্ফোরণের দায় স্বীকার করেছে। অস্ট্রেলিয়া ইরাক থেকে সেনা প্রত্যাহার না করলে এ ধরনের আরও হামলার হুমকিও দিয়েছে তারা। বিবৃতিটির সত্যতা যাচাই করা যায়নি।

বশির অবশ্য জেমা ইসলামিয়ার সঙ্গে সম্পর্কের কথা অস্বীকার করে কালকের বিস্ফোরণের তীব্র নিন্দা করেছেন। এ ধরনের হামলা শরিয়তের বিরোধী বলে তিনি মন্তব্য করেন।

এ দিকে, প্রধান সন্দেহভাজন আজাহারি ছসেনকে ধরার জন্য

ইন্দোনেশীয় পুলিশ দেশ জুড়ে তল্লাশি শুরু করেছে। গত বছর অগস্টে জাকার্তার মারিয়ট হোটেলের ২০০২ সালে বালিতে নাইট ক্লাবে বিস্ফোরণেও সন্দেহের তির ছিল ছসেনের দিকে। তা ছাড়া আরেক নেতা নুরদিন মহম্মদকেও খুঁজছে পুলিশ।

ডাউনার বলেন, সন্দেহভাজন জঙ্গিদের খুঁজে বের করে শাস্তি দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে ইন্দোনেশিয়াকে সাহায্য করবে অস্ট্রেলিয়া। তিনি এই হামলাকে সরাসরি অস্ট্রেলিয়ার উপরে আঘাত বলেই মনে করছেন। যদিও কালকের বিস্ফোরণে এখনও পর্যন্ত যে ক'জন হতাহত হয়েছেন তাঁদের অধিকাংশই ইন্দোনেশীয়।

এই হামলার ফলে রাজনৈতিক ভাবে বিপাকে পড়েছে অস্ট্রেলিয়া ও ইন্দোনেশিয়ার প্রশাসন। অস্ট্রেলিয়ায় ৯ অক্টোবর নির্বাচন। ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন এ মাসের ২০ তারিখেই। প্রেসিডেন্ট মেঘবতী সুক-র্নপুত্রীর প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী তাঁরই প্রাক্তন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী সুসিলো য়ুথোয়নো। মেঘবতীর বিরুদ্ধে জঙ্গি দমনে ব্যর্থতার অভিযোগ প্রবল। এই ঘটনায় তাঁর রাজনৈতিক ভবিষ্যতও কিছুটা অনিশ্চিত হয়ে গেল। — রয়টার্স

Jemaah hand suspected in blast

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, SEPT. 9. Eight persons were killed and about 161 others were injured when a powerful "car bomb" exploded outside the Australian Embassy in central Jakarta today.

The death toll, as of 4 p.m. local time, might go up, according to Indonesian officials.

Those killed included two of the embassy security guards, while four Chinese were listed among those injured.

The Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, said that all the members of the embassy were accounted for. They were all safe.

Megawati shocked

Until nightfall, no organisation claimed responsibility, while the Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, said that

suspicion centred on the Jemaah Islamiya (JI), widely thought to be a regional affiliate of the Al-Qaeda.

As the Indonesian President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, flew back home from Brunei, where she had gone, to address the situation, several countries, including Indonesia's neighbours, expressed shock and condemned the terrorist action.

The Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Marty Natalagewa, told *The Hindu* here, over phone from Jakarta, that the explosion bore "all the hallmarks of the previous attacks in Indonesia" — the October 2002 Bali bomb blasts that claimed over 200 lives, including nearly 100 Australians, and the August 2003 bombing at the JW Marriott Hotel in Jakarta that killed 12 persons. Mr. Natalagewa was speaking after visiting today's scene of

devastation.

Indonesia's police chief, Dai Bachtiar, told reporters in Jakarta that initial investigations indicated that the blast was caused by a "car bomb" and that "the modus operandi was similar" to that in the terrorist strikes at Bali and in Jakarta.

He said that two suspects in the other two cases, identified as Azahari and Noordin from Malaysia, were still at large, and that the police would like to zero in on them.

The car, suspected to be the bomb carrier, was approaching the gate of the Australian Embassy when the blast occurred.

As for the timing of the blast, an Indonesian official told *The Hindu* that there was "absolutely no relation whatsoever with the presidential poll," due on September 20. Fears of terrorist attacks and other forms of violence have

been expressed during the campaign for the presidential poll run-off between Ms. Megawati and her challenger, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

A menace

Condemning today's "heinous act," Mr. Natalagewa said: "If anything, this further reinforces our determination to actually root out, eliminate this menace."

Noting that the victims were almost entirely Indonesians, he said terrorism was as much a menace to them as to "any decent folks and civilised nation." Asked whether Australia had expressed concern over the level of security in Jakarta, two days before the third anniversary of the "9/11" terrorist strikes in the U.S., Mr. Natalagewa said Canberra's response had been one of "stand(ing) side by side" with Indonesia.

10 SEP 2004

Car bomb rocks Australian embassy in Jakarta

September 9

VERFUL car bomb exploded on Thursday outside Australian embassy in Jakarta, killing at least nine people and wounding more than 160.

Scattered debris, bodies and twisted wreckage of motorcycles, cars and a truck lined the road outside the embassy immediately after the blast. The blast blew a large hole in the security fence around the embassy and left a deep crater in the road outside.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard breathed defiance. "This is not a nation that is going to be intimidated by acts of terrorism," he told reporters in Melbourne. There were no known Australian casualties. Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri pledged

Pakistan kills 70 al-Qaida, Taliban militants

AROUND 70 people, believed to be Taliban or al-Qaida militants, were killed on Thursday when Pakistan's Air Force jets raided a terrorist training camp in a tribal region bordering with Afghanistan.

"Pakistan security forces launched precise strikes on a foreign terrorist training camp in area Dilla Khuala of South Waziristan Agency, about 25 km north east of Wana and successfully knocked it out," de-

fence spokesman, Shaukat Sultan said.

Many civilians had also been killed in a subsequent air strike when they gathered to survey the damage. "There was a gathering of about 40 or so militants early Thursday morning," said villager Ajab Nur. "Two bombs fell on them. Then villagers went to see what had happened ... and there was a second attack and many people were killed."

Without mentioning the casualties he said the air raids were conducted after receiving confirmed reports on training camps being run by foreign elements including Uzbeks, Chechens and Arabs.

"These trained terrorists were indulging in sabotage and terrorist acts in the country, as was revealed through investigations into the recent terrorist acts," he said.

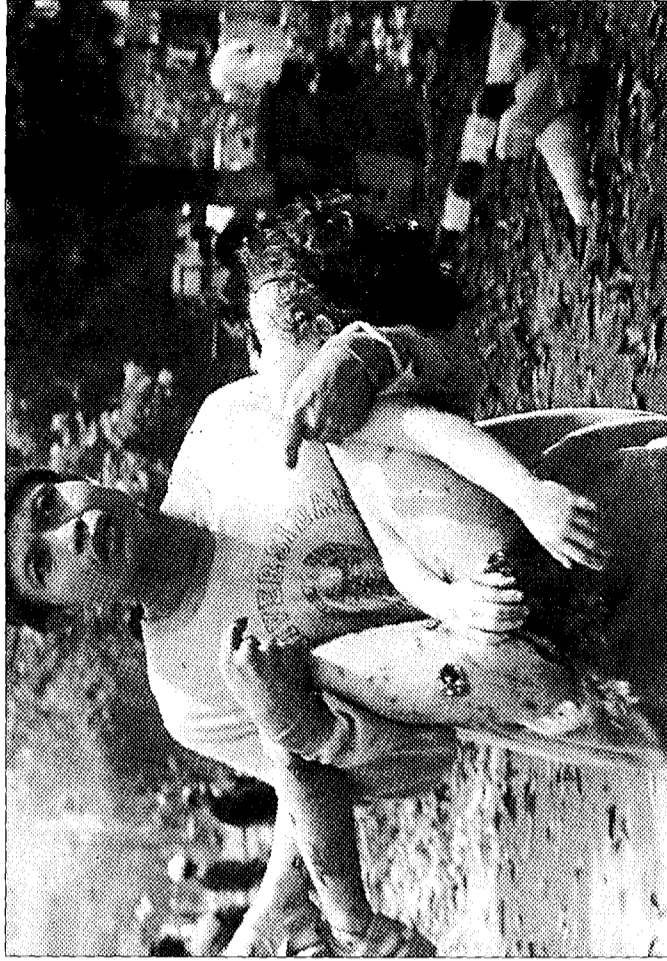
Agencies, Islamabad

eral Da'i Bachtiar said the attack was similar to the 2002 Bali blasts that killed 202 people and last year's suicide car bombing of Jakarta's J.W. Marriott hotel that left 12 people dead.

"This group is the same as

Azahari's group of bombers," he added. Azahari is a senior figure inside the Southeast Asian militant Islamic group Jemaah Islamiyah, which is linked to al-Qaida and blamed for the Bali and Marriott blasts. Azahari is believed to have helped make the Bali and Marriott bombs.

The Bali blasts killed 88 Australians. The blast tore off the glass fronts of office towers surrounding the embassy, wounding many office workers. Australian embassy worker Elizabeth O'Neill said she felt as if the wind had been pushed out of her lungs by the blast. "It was an enormous bomb. The enormity of the crater, the police truck outside has been blown to bits, it's like the wind has been pushed out of you, because the force of the bomb has a reaction on your lungs," she told Australia's Nine Network.



A man carries the body of a girl who was killed in a car blast in front of the Australian embassy in Jakarta on Thursday. REUTERS



SCHOOL HORROR: A video grab image shows a militant with hostages in the gym of the school in Beslan, North Ossetia. The video was shot by the militants during the siege but was released by authorities on Tuesday. Nearly 338 persons, half of them small children, died when the crisis ended on Friday. — Reuters

Tape of Beslan school siege broadcast

By Nick Paton Walsh

MOSCOW, SEPT. 8. Dramatic images of life inside the gym during the hostage-taking at middle school 1 in Beslan were shown on Tuesday night by the Russian television station NTV for the first time.

The images show a room packed with about 1,000 hostages, including men, women and children. Barely a square metre of the gym appears to

be empty and the hostages are seen fanning themselves in the heat.

The camera begins to close up on the face of a militant, his head covered by a balaclava. He grabs an AK-47 and stands it on its butt end. His fellow gunmen all wear hoods.

The film shows the wires, explosives and placing of the mines. Twin wires that extend between two basketball hoops appear to carry explosive

charges. The footage shows a female suicide bomber, her face also covered, apparently speaking on a mobile phone.

The footage's chronology is uncertain: it begins with the centre of the gym empty of children, and then focuses on grandmothers gripping the backs of their heads. It shows a gunman with his foot poised on a pedal apparently wired to detonate the explosives.

The floor appears to be wet

as the tape progresses, and bloodstains can be seen.

The film was shot by the gunmen themselves, perhaps using the camera of a local TV cameraman who had been a casualty in the early hours of the siege. At least 335 people, around half of them children, died when Russian troops stormed the school. ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

Captors demand \$5 million for French hostages

Guardian News Service
Baghdad/Paris, September 7

THE MILITANT Iraqi group holding two French journalists hostage on Monday night demanded a \$5m ransom for their release and set a 48-hour deadline for the request to be met.

In a statement that could not be authenticated, the Islamic Army of Iraq suggested that it had been prepared to free the two men earlier but had abandoned the plan after a major military operation in Latifiya, south of Baghdad, at the weekend. "We warn you not to bombard us as you did ... on the day when we intended to deliver them (the hostages) to you," the statement, posted on a radical Islamist website, said.

The message appears to be the first confirmation for more than a week that Georges Malbrunot, 41, who works for *Le Figaro*, and Christian Chesnot, 37, of Radio France International, are still alive.

The news came after several days of uncertainty during which the French government and various Muslim negotiators had repeatedly indicated that the signs were positive for the men's release, but the details of the handover were proving hard to finalise.

The French Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, said the statement was being taken seriously. "We are trying to check its authenticity, which is not established at this time," he said. Raffarin said the situation was "worrying", adding, "Nothing is calling into question the confidence we have in a favourable outcome of the situation."

IRAQ UPDATE



AFP

Militants from the al-Tauhid and Jihad group display parts of a US drone they claim to have shot down in Fallujah on Monday.

■ US forces battled insurgents loyal to Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in the Baghdad slum of Sadr City on Tuesday, in clashes that killed 34 people, including one American soldier, and wounded 193, US and Iraqi authorities said

■ A roadside bomb targeted the Baghdad governor's convoy, killing two people but leaving him uninjured, the Interior Ministry said. Three of Governor Ali al-Haidri's guards were also injured

■ Two Italian women were kidnapped from an aid organisation they worked for in Baghdad on Tuesday

As well as setting the ransom, the kidnappers called for a truce with Osama bin Laden and demanded a promise of no military and commercial dealings with Iraq — appeared to be directed at France. They would release the men if only one of their demands was met, they added.

Putin to West: Why not meet Osama?

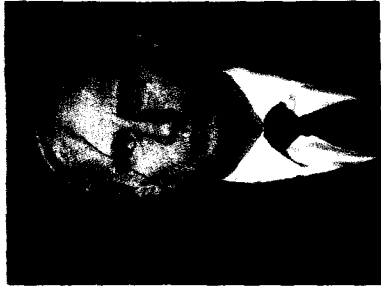
Associated Press

BESLAN, Sept. 7. — Mourners carried caskets, wreaths and once-cherished toys to the fast-growing town cemetery for a third day of burials in this southern Russian town on Tuesday, and Russian President Mr. Vladimir Putin denied a link between Russia's policies in Chechnya and the hostage-taking that claimed over 350 lives.

In an interview late yesterday with foreign journalists and academics, Mr. Putin again rejected Western calls for negotiations with Chechen rebel representatives, Britain's *Guardian* newspaper reported.

"Why don't you meet Osama bin Laden, invite him to Brussels or to the White House and engage in talks, ask him what he wants and give it to him so he leaves you in peace?" the *Guardian* quoted Mr. Putin as saying sarcastically. "You find it possible to set some limitations in your dealings with these bastards, so why should we talk to people who are child-killers?"

Mr. Putin said foreigners should have "no more questions about our policy in Chechnya" after the at-



You find it possible to set some limitations in your dealings with these bastards, so why should we talk to people who are child-killers?

tackers shot children in the back, and said the Chechen cause was aimed at undermining all of southern Russia and majority-Muslim regions of the country. "This is all about Russia's territorial integrity," Mr. Putin was quoted as saying.

He also said his government would conduct an internal investigation but not a public one — warning that a parliamentary probe could turn into "a political show." Two opposition politicians had called yesterday for an investigation, including into the questions of whether the authorities had prior information about planned terrorist attacks, and what the government was doing to stabilise the situation in Chechnya.

Beslan's streets were crowded with funeral processions today. At the muddy cemetery, where grave-diggers have opened up two new tracts over the past three days, relatives opened the tiny coffin of eight-year-old Vasily Rshetnyak, touching his forehead and kissing him goodbye. One of his favourite toys, a red car, was placed alongside the body.

In Vladikavkaz, the North Ossetian capital about 30 km north of Beslan, hundreds of people gathered on central Freedom Square to protest against terrorism and to castigate local authorities for failing to prevent last week's tragedy.

"Today we will bury our children and tomorrow we will come here and throw



Chechen students hold posters reading 'No terrorism' and 'Chechen youth against terrorism' during an anti-terrorism rally in the Chechen capital Grozny on Tuesday. — AFP

these devils out of their seats, from the lowest director up to ministers and the President," said one of the speakers.

Rally against terror
As Russia observed the second day of national mourning today in memory of over 330 hostages killed in Beslan school carriage, over one lakh people gathered in Moscow at a rally to say "no" to terror. In the biggest ever rally since the break up of the Soviet Union, people from

all walks of life converged at the mammoth rally near the Kremlin wall on St Basil's Slope saying "Russia is united against terror."

"Russia cannot be put on its knees," "We are not afraid of terrorists." The authorities had mobilised a massive police and security force and the people had to go through security gates for the rally. No untoward incident was reported. In the resolution passed by the rally, anti-terror protesters expressed their support for Mr. Putin and his anti-terror efforts.

Musharraf calls up
Mr. Putin and Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf have agreed to intensify bilateral interaction to combat international terrorism and terminate sources of its financing. Gen. Musharraf called up Mr. Putin today to express his "deep condolences" with the people of Russia in connection with the tragic events in Beslan, Kremlin press office said.

Troops bungled siege: Experts

Moscow, Sept. 6 (Reuters): Security forces bungled the handling of Russia's worst hostage drama because nobody was in charge and special forces were not ready when the shooting started, security analysts said today.

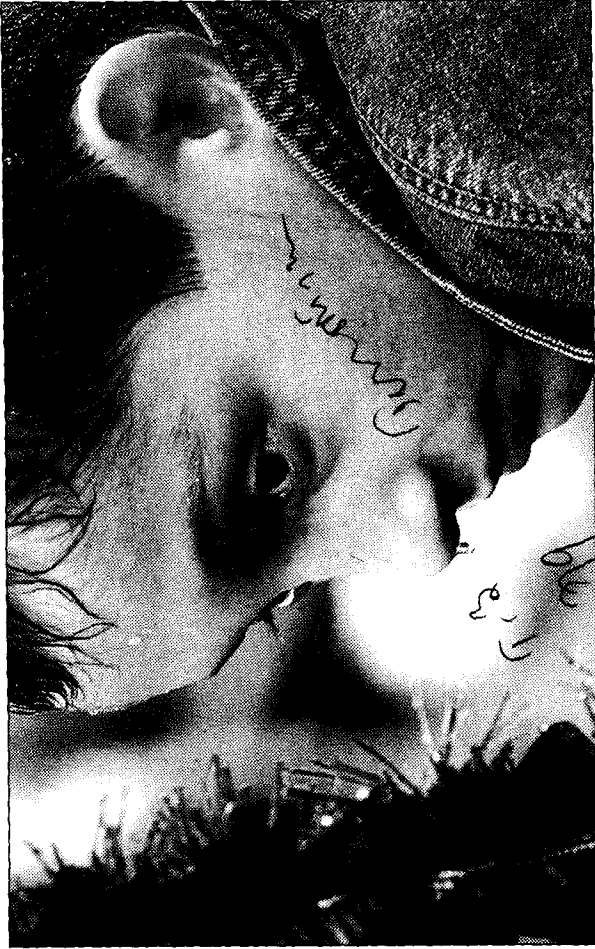
"It's clear that it was a total mess," leading military analyst Alexander Golts said. "They were not prepared."

As the death toll from the battle that ended the siege in the North Ossetian town of Beslan rose above 330, Russia's media asked how the vaunted special forces had allowed a two-day standoff to turn into a bloodbath.

Authorities said they were forced to storm the school when the militants fired on hostages who were fleeing in the confusion following two explosions. With no security cordon to keep them back, armed local people pressed forward and were among the first to return fire.

Local troops — unprepared and possibly short of ammunition — suddenly found themselves assaulting the school, while special forces moved in only half-an-hour after the battle began, Golts said.

The newspaper *Vremya Novosti* said that when the fighting started, two special forces squads from the FSB se-



A boy stands in the rain during funerals for those killed in the school tragedy in Beslan, North Ossetia. (Reuters)

curity service were still discussing assault plans and had not even agreed on approach routes or where the defenders' firing points were.

It said the two squads, Alfa and Vypel — equivalent to Britain's Special Air Service or the US Delta Force — suffered unprecedented casualties totalling 10 dead and up to 31 wounded.

However, according to the *Izvestia* daily, the assault was

launched by furious parents and relatives. "It seems that the personnel flying squads, fathers of hostage children, volunteers manning the security cordon and bystanders launched the assault," a federal security officer was quoted by *Izvestia*.

Security expert Andrei Soldatov said on Ekho Moskvy radio that the battle began so suddenly that many of the special forces fought without

bullet-proof vests. But local troops were also too close to the school, keen to show the media the scene.

Nato meeting

Nato secretary-general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer has called a meeting of Nato states and Russia tomorrow to discuss the siege of a school by Chechen separatists in which more than 335 people died, a Nato spokesman said.



The 'gunman' as shown on Russian television. (Reuters)

"This man directly took part in the attack, he is a member of the gang," said deputy prosecutor general Sergei Fridinsky. "Tomorrow the court will sanction his arrest and he will be charged."

The man, dressed in dirty black shirt, looked and spoke very much like a native of one of Russia's North Caucasus regions.

"I did not shoot. I swear by Allah I did not shoot," said the man, who looked scared. "I swear by Allah I want to live."

Russia TV shows rebel suspect

Moscow, Sept. 6 (Reuters): Russian television showed footage yesterday of an unshaven and heavily-guarded man, described by a top prosecutor as a member of a Chechen rebel group which held more than 1,000 people hostage in a school last week.

At least 338 children and adults were killed during the 53-hour hostage crisis in the southern town of Beslan and the bloody shootout between the rebels and Russian troops that ended it on Friday.

Russian officials initially said the 32-member group included Chechen separatists and 10 Arab fighters and that three of the hostage-takers had been captured alive.

But later they said all the hostage-takers were killed and that three suspected accomplices had been detained. State-controlled First Channel television showed the man being escorted in handcuffs into a room by masked commandos.

জঙ্গি দমনে ব্যর্থতা স্বীকার পুতিনের

সন্দেহের
তালিকায়
এল আল
কায়দাও

বেসলান (রাশিয়া), ৫ সেপ্টেম্বর: বেসলানে স্কুলের শিশুদের নিরাপত্তা দেওয়ার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েও রক্ষা করতে না পারায় কার্যত নিজের ব্যর্থতা স্বীকার করলেন রুশ প্রেসিডেন্ট ব্লাদিমির পুতিন। সরকারি টিভিতে প্রচারিত দশ মিনিটের এক বিবৃতিতে পুতিন বলেন, সন্ত্রাসবাদের মোকাবিলায় ব্যর্থ হচ্ছেন তাঁরা, বিশ্বের সামনে রাশিয়ার দুর্বলতা প্রকাশ হয়ে পড়ছে, আর তারই সুযোগ নিচ্ছে জঙ্গিরা। পুতিন তাঁর বিবৃতিতে চটেন জঙ্গিদের কথা না বললেও বেসলানের পশ্চিম সড়কে আল কায়দার হাত ছিল বলে সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে।

তবে সাম্প্রতিক কালের সবচেয়ে ভয়ঙ্কর পণবন্দি সঙ্কটের আপাত সমাধানের পর বেসলান শহরে এখন শুধুই কান্নার শব্দ আর চাপা ক্ষোভ। শোকে ভারী হয়ে আছে শহরের পরিবেশ। মৃতদের গণসংকারের ব্যবস্থা করা হচ্ছে। জঙ্গিরা স্কুলে আগে থেকেই বিস্ফোরক ও অস্ত্রশস্ত্র মজুত করে রেখেছিল বলে জানাজানি হওয়ার পর ক্ষোভে ফেটে পড়েছেন বেসলানের সাধারণ মানুষ। পণবন্দিদের এক জন জানিয়েছেন জঙ্গিদের কয়েক জনকে গরমের ছুটির সময় স্কুলে মেরামতির কাজ করতে দেখেছেন তিনি। ওই সময়ই স্কুলের মেঝেতে অস্ত্র রেখে গিয়েছিল জঙ্গিরা।

রুশ নিরাপত্তা সংস্থা এফ এস বি-র ওসেতিয়া শাখার প্রধান ভ্যালেরি আশ্বেয়েভ জানিয়েছে, স্থানীয় পুলিশ বাহিনীকেও জোর করে নিজেদের



নিহত সহপাঠিনীর কফিন ঘিরে কান্নায় ভেঙে পড়েছে বেসলানের সেই স্কুলের ছাত্রীরা। রবিবার। — এ এফ পি

কাজে লাগিয়েছিল জঙ্গিরা। এই তথ্যগুলি সামনে আসার পর সেনা ও গোয়েন্দাদের ব্যর্থতার প্রসঙ্গটি আরও বেশি করে আলোচিত হচ্ছে। পুতিনও ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন বেসলানে এত বেশি প্রাণহানির জন্য সেনাদের প্রশিক্ষণের ব্যর্থতাও দায়ী। তিনি বলেন সোভিয়েত রাশিয়ার পতনের পর এতগুলো বছর কেটে গেলেও একটি যথাযথ নিরাপত্তা নীতি গ্রহণ করতে পারেনি রাশিয়া। তবে সেনাবাহিনীতে সংস্কার আনার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছেন পুতিন। এ দিকে, বেসলানের ঘটনার দায় স্বীকার করে ইস্তফা দিয়েছেন উত্তর ওসেতিয়ার স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী। তিনি বলেন, “এর পর

মানুষ হিসেবে আমার এই পদ দখল করে থাকার কোনও অধিকার নেই।” বেসলানের পণবন্দি কাণ্ডের মর্মান্তিক পরিণতির জন্য দু’দিনের রাষ্ট্রীয় শোক ঘোষণা করেছেন পুতিন। পণবন্দি কাণ্ডে মৃতের সংখ্যা বেড়ে প্রায় চারশোর কাছাকাছি পৌঁছেছে, এদের মধ্যে ১৫৬টি শিশু। হাসপাতালে ভর্তি প্রায় ৭০০ জন আহতের অনেকেই অবস্থা গুরুতর বলে মৃতের সংখ্যা আরও বাড়বে বলে আশঙ্কা করা হচ্ছে। এ দিকে, শুক্রবার সেনা অভিযান চালিয়ে পণবন্দিদের উদ্ধারের দু’দিন পরেও স্কুলের ধ্বংসস্থল থেকে এখনও মৃতদেহ বের করে আনা হচ্ছে। আরও

বহু দেহ স্কুলের জিন্মাসিয়ামে আটকা পড়ে আছে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। সরকারি সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে এখনও প্রায় ২০০ জনের খোঁজ মিলছে না। শনিবার বেসলানে তিন জনকে গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছে। তবে এরা ওই ঘটনার সঙ্গে যুক্ত জঙ্গি, না কি তাদের সাহায্যকারী তা জানা যায়নি। গেরিলাদের সঙ্গে অন্তত ১০ জন আরব জঙ্গি থাকায় এই ঘটনার পিছনে আন্তর্জাতিক জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী, এমনকী আল কায়দার হাত ছিল বলেও সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে। ইতার তাস জানিয়েছে বেসলানে এই ঘটনার জন্য টাকা ঢালে চেকনিয়ার আল কায়দা পণ্ডান ক্যান-দ-ফান আস

সায়ফ এবং জঙ্গি অভিয চালিয়েছে চটেন জঙ্গি নেতা শা বাসায়েভ। পুতিনও রাশিয়ায় এ পর এক সন্ত্রাসবাদী কার্যকলা পিছনে আন্তর্জাতিক জঙ্গিদের আছে বলে জানিয়েছিলেন। নিখোঁজদের সন্ধানে আজও চত্বর, হাসপাতাল ও মর্গে পাগা মতো ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছেন আত্মীয় বেসলানের ও মর্গ থেকে শনাক্ত ক জন্য নিহত ও আহতদের ছবি ছাপ হয়েছে। শহরের প্রধান সমাধিস্থে পাশেই একটি মাঠে গর্ত খুঁড়ে মৃত কবর দেওয়ার ব্যবস্থা করা হ

কলকাতায় বিস্ফোরণের ছক কষে লস্কর-ঘনিষ্ঠ হুমায়ুন

কিশোর সাহা • শিলিগুড়ি

কলকাতার কোনও জনবহুল এলাকায় বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানোর জন্যই ওটি শক্তিশালী টাইম বোমা উত্তর দিনাজপুরের করণদিঘির প্রত্যন্ত গ্রামে মজুত করা হয়েছিল। ওই ঘটনায় ধৃত ৫ জন লাগাতার জেরার মুখে এ কথা কবুল করেছে বলে পুলিশের দাবি। ‘লস্কর-ই-তেবা’র কাছে প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত হুমায়ুন রেজা ও তার শাগরেদদের নির্দেশেই কলকাতায় নাশকতার ছক কষা হয়েছিল বলেও স্পষ্ট প্রমাণ পেয়েছে পুলিশ। প্রাথমিক ভাবে পুলিশের ধারণা, তিনটি বোমাতেই আর ডি এন্ড ছিল। সেগুলি এক সঙ্গে ফাটলে ১০০ মিটার ব্যাসার্ধ জুড়ে

ব্যাপক ক্ষয়ক্ষতি হত। গেরিলা কায়দায় নাশকতা চালাতে সিদ্ধহস্ত হুমায়ুন ও তার ঘনিষ্ঠ দুই সঙ্গী আলাউদ্দিন ও জাকারিয়া বাংলাদেশের রাজশাহীতে ঘাঁটি গেড়ে অনজুমান-ই-জয়সুল্লা মুজাহিদিন নামে একটি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী গড়তে সক্রিয়। ‘জিহাদ’-এর ডাক দিয়ে তারা রাতারাতি শিরোনামে আসার তাগিদেই কলকাতায় বিস্ফোরণের ছক কষেছিল বলে ধৃতেরা তদন্তকারী অফিসারদের কাছে জানিয়েছে। হুমায়ুন ও তার দুই শাগরেদের খোঁজে পুলিশ বাংলাদেশ সীমান্তবর্তী এলাকার গ্রামে বিশেষ সতর্কতা জারি করেছে। সীমান্তরক্ষী বাহিনীকেও সতর্ক করা হয়েছে। রাজ্য পুলিশের উত্তরবঙ্গের আই

জি বাগীশ মিশ্র বলেন, “১৫ অগস্টের আগেপিছে বাড়তি কড়াকড়ি থাকায় ওই সময়টি এড়িয়ে অগস্টের শেষ সপ্তাহে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ও জনবহুল এলাকায় নাশকতার ছক কষে হুমায়ুন ও তার দলবল। অগস্টের শেষে হুমায়ুনের কলকাতায় যাওয়ার ছক কষে। কিন্তু তার আগেই করণদিঘিতে বোমা-সহ ধরা পড়ে দু’জন। হুমায়ুন, আলাউদ্দিন ও জাকারিয়ার খোঁজে তল্লাশি চলছে। রাজশাহী এলাকায় ওরা ঘাঁটি গেড়েছে বলে ধৃতেরা জানিয়েছে।” ২৬ অগস্ট করণদিঘির দক্ষিণ পাটনোর গ্রাম থেকে তিনটি টাইম বোমা-সহ দুই ব্যক্তিকে গ্রেফতার করে পুলিশ। ধৃতদের এক জন একটি মাদ্রাসার শিক্ষক। অন্য জন বিড়ি

শ্রমিক। ধৃতদের বাড়িতে বড় স্টিলের কৌটায় বোমাগুলি রাখা ছিল। একেকটির ওজন ২ কেজি। তার মধ্যে ঘড়ি-সহ নানা ধরনের ছোট যন্ত্রাংশ ছিল। ধৃতদের জেরা করে পর দিনই মুর্শিদাবাদ থেকে আরও তিন জনকে ধরা হয়। জেরার পর পুলিশ হুমায়ুনের নাম জানতে পেরেই নড়েচড়ে বসে। পুলিশ জানাচ্ছে, মধ্য তিরিশের হুমায়ুন সীমান্তে পণ্য পাচারে যুক্ত ছিল। সেই সূত্রেই বাংলাদেশের এক মৌলবাদী সংগঠনের সঙ্গে তার যোগাযোগ হয়। ‘৯৬-এ হুমায়ুনের ‘লস্কর-ই-তেবা’ প্রশিক্ষণ নিতে তাদের ঘাঁটিতে যায়। দু’বছরের মাথায় দিল্লির এক জনবহুল এলাকায় হুমায়ুন টাইম বোমা বিস্ফোরণ ঘটায়। তাতে এক জন

মারা যান। গুরুতর জখম হন কয়েকজন। তার পরেই হুমায়ুন, জাকারিয়া ও আলাউদ্দিন রায়গঞ্জের দক্ষিণ পাটনোর গ্রামে এক পরিচিতের আশ্রয়ে ওঠে। সেখানে কিছু দিন থাকার পরে আলাউদ্দিন, জাকারিয়া সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে বাংলাদেশে চলে গেলেও দিল্লি পুলিশ পরে হুমায়ুনকে গ্রেফতার করে। বছর দুয়েক আগে জানিয়ে ছাড়া পেয়ে হুমায়ুন বাংলাদেশে চলে যায়। তার পর থেকেই সে আই এস আইয়ের মদতে একটি নয়া জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী গড়তে সক্রিয়। এক বছরে মালদহ, মুর্শিদাবাদ, উত্তর ও দক্ষিণ দিনাজপুরে বৈঠক করে অন্তত ৫০ জন বেকার যুবককে ‘জিহাদ’-এ যোগ দেওয়ার জন্য রাজি করিয়েছে হুমায়ুন ও তার দলবল।

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2004

BESLAN LESSONS

69
THE THREE-DAY school hostage drama in Russia came to a heart-rending end on Friday. More than 330 people died — half of them children. At least 700 others were maimed or injured when violence erupted at the school in Beslan, North Ossetia, seized by a gang of fundamentalist terrorists even as Russian negotiators were trying to engage them in substantive talks. While the terrorists' demand of independence for Chechnya was unacceptable to the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, he promised to put the lives and health of over 1,000 hostages above all other considerations. Russian authorities have explained they had no plans to storm the school and were seeking a peaceful end to the standoff. But they were compelled to act when the terrorists set off bombs in the school and opened fire on fleeing children. In his message of sympathy to the Russian President, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed understanding that "Russian forces were compelled to act in very difficult circumstances." Many other world leaders sent similar messages of sympathy and solidarity to Russia and condemned the school siege by terrorists as a barbaric and despicable act.

The Beslan calamity has revealed the ugliest face of fundamentalist terrorism. The Chechnya-linked terrorists deliberately targeted innocent small children. For three days they held at gunpoint hundreds of boys and girls and adults caring for them; the hostages were packed, in sweltering heat, in a small school gymnasium with bombs hanging over their heads and without food and water. The terrorists demonstrated they had no compunction in detonating the bombs that killed the children in the end. The crisis climaxed a bloody week of apparently coordinated terror attacks in Russia. It began with the simultaneous bombing of two airliners in which 90 people died. Then came the suicide bomb blast in Moscow that took 11 lives and injured more than 50 people. That 10 of the 32 hostage-

69
Terrorism
HD-088
takers killed by Russian forces in Beslan were reportedly of foreign origin appears to provide fresh proof of the nexus between Chechen rebels and international terrorist networks. Russian investigators claim they have found evidence that the school raid was financed by an Al-Qaeda operative, Abu Omar al-Saif, who has been active in Chechnya for some time now.

President Putin has highlighted the truth that international terrorism has unleashed an "all-out war" against Russia. Displaying a commendable resolve not to give in to terrorists, the Russian leader made it clear his Government had learnt its lessons. He called for an overhaul of the country's security system, and for effective anti-crisis management mechanisms. Russia has sought — and, at last, received — unqualified international support for its struggle against terrorism. Meeting in emergency session at Moscow's request, the United Nations Security Council denounced the Beslan hostage-taking as a "heinous act." In a unanimously approved resolution, the 15-nation world body characterised acts of terrorism as "criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation" and reaffirmed determination to combat "one of the most serious threats to international peace and security." The Security Council called on all states actively to cooperate with Russian authorities in tracking down and bringing to justice those who carried out, organised, and financed the recent attacks. The hope is that the world will draw from the Russian tragedy the appropriate lesson: that international terrorists, outrageously appropriating the banner of Islam, have come a long way in forming a united front against civilised humankind. It is high time western countries stopped differentiating between "bad" and "good" terrorists — between those who target the United States and its allies on the one hand and those who target Chechnya, Jammu & Kashmir, Xinjiang, and so forth — and close ranks in fighting the terrorist menace.

THE HINDU

6 SEP 2004

TARGET: CHILDREN

Terrorism



Can it happen here in India?

Soni Sangwan
New Delhi

THE FLICKERING television images showing barely-clad children being rushed out of a school building with sounds of blasts in the background yesterday were from Russia. But given the current climate, the backdrop may well be a top school in New Delhi. Aware of such a possibility, the Delhi Police has already tasked its deputy com-

missioners with the duty of sensitising the schools in their areas about security concerns.

"Our officers will go to the schools and brief them about access control. Schools cannot have fortress-like access control, but sensitisation about the risks is important," said a senior crime branch officer. And as in the post-Akshardham situation, when blueprints of all religious places have been obtained by the police, a similar exercise may be undertaken with regard to schools.

"Having access to building plans is important as it allows the special forces team to know what they are up against and also be able to plan possible exits for evacuation," said a senior police officer.

While most senior security experts feel that the National Security Guard has the requisite plans, preparations and practise to handle a hostage situation, it would be impractical to expect a face-off to end cleanly. "We should be prepared for collateral damage," warns Brig Raj Seethapathy, who was at the head of the Akshardham temple operation in Gujarat in October 2002. "I gave my men two lines of reference — that there should be no loss of life and no damage to the temple. But even then we lost one man on the scene and one was injured."

But its India's history as a "soft state" that security officers are more concerned about. "Media images of distraught mothers and teary-eyed fathers exert a lot of pressure on the government. One just doesn't know when the government, especially a coalition government, will cave in. Remember Rubaiyya Sayeed, remember Kandhar. And don't forget the truck drivers in Iraq. Everyone knows that money exchanged hands," says an officer.

"There's a valuable lesson we can learn from the Russians. They have had planes blown up, theatres taken over and now school children targeted. But they are not talking to any hostage takers. They are sending a very clear message across," he adds.

While one school of thought is all for a SWAT type special force, NSG stalwarts feel that the training and skills imparted to their personnel are more than adequate. "After the IC-814 hijacking, several high level meetings have been held and Standard Operating Procedures for various eventualities

Civilians under fire in new trend

Islamist outfits have unleashed a lethal wave of global terrorism, and as the Russian massacre shows, the increasing preference is for soft targets

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi

IT'S BEYOND doubt now: There are no innocents in terrorism. The net is flooded with grisly videotapes of beheaded civilians. Commuters in buses being blown up and airliners being downed barely elicit comment. A suspected Islamic militant was arrested for casing a US shopping mall. Now we have the hostage-taking and subsequent murder of 155 school-children, some only five-years-old.

Almost all terrorism experts say there is a clear and present trend towards attacking "soft targets". In other words, away from military or even government sites and towards purely civilian targets.

Most also believe the shift is irreversible. And that the worst is yet to come.

Jonathan Stevenson, terror expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, was quoted after the Beslan school tragedy as saying that terrorists were "crossing thresholds — no question about it."

There are a number of reasons for this trend. The first is a lack of easy hard targets. Since 9/11 much of the world has converted its government buildings, nuclear installations and airports into fortresses. For example, such precautions have so far prevented al Qaeda from striking inside the US since 9/11. So terrorist groups have focussed on more lightly-defended targets. And this means schools, trains and airliners.

The second is a desire for the spectacular. The Twin Towers were not only funeral pyres, their collapse made Osama bin Laden the anti-hero of the Arab street. Terrorists are "much more educated in terms of what will have an effect", said Sandra Bell, homeland security expert at the UK's Royal United Services Institute. Beslan was not the first time Chechen militants had targeted children, but it was unprecedented in scale and the degree it was virtually made for television.

The third, and arguably most important, is that the very nature of terrorism has changed. Terrorism ex-

perts like Bruce Hoffman say the world is in its third, and most lethal, avatar of terrorism. The first were violent nationalist movements in the 1940s and 1950s like Israel's Irgun Gang. The second were radical left-wing groups of the 1960s and 1970s. Remember Germany's Red Army Faction?

But what these groups wanted were "a few people dead and a whole lot of people watching". They wanted to humiliate the authorities. However, they knew they walked a fine line between trying to attract attention and not wholly alienating public opinion.

All this is missing in the 21st century terrorism. It has been variously labelled "postmodern terror" or "messianic terror" or simply "new terrorism." Its characteristics are the same. A militant religious overtone. Political goals that are virtually non-negotiable like the overthrow of the West. And a dehumanised, almost inexplicable willingness to expend human lives.

A RAND Corporation survey of terrorist incidents made this clear. While terrorist incidents had actually declined since the 1970s, the civilian body count at each attack had increased dramatically in the 1990s. And this was tabulated before 9/11.

It sounds oxymoronic, but terror is becoming more lethal.

The primary reason for this grimmer reaper statistic has been the rise of radical Islamic terrorism. But there have been other millenarian fringe groups: the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo terror cult attempted to cause mass death in the Tokyo subway system in 1995 and white supremacists in the US had planned to poison water supplies of towns.

The trailblazer in terrorism today is al-Qaida. Its use of videotaped messages, its use of hijacked aircraft as bombs and trademark multiple attacks has made it an international brand of dread.

Islamic groups around the world have copied its tactics. As well as its willingness to inflict unparalleled slaughter.

Rohan Gunaratna, author of *Inside al-Qaida*, noted

after Beslan. "These groups are copycats and imitative... In terms of scale, this is unprecedented and follows the category of spectacular and theatrical attacks akin to al-Qaida".

In other words, the Beslan school is likely to inspire other groups to carry out similar attacks. Just the way the suicide bombers of the LTTE and the Shia Hezbollah have become part of the militant Sunni's armoury.

Ironically, terrorist groups who prefer to see themselves as freedom fighters in the 1950s mold are horrified. The Palestinian Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, for example, was quick to denounce what happened in Russia. "We would never agree to such a thing. We never did such a thing and never would," their spokesman said. Yasser Arafat has long denounced bin Laden for using his people's cause as "an alibi" for al-Qaida's terrorist attacks.

As security around public events and hard targets becomes increasingly impenetrable, the terrorists find ever new ways to make their mark.

For example: parallel terrorism. When George W. Bush and Tony Blair held a summit, Islamic groups bombed a British diplomatic compound in Turkey.

But soft targets are easy. After 9/11, the US asked its state governors to tally primary and secondary terrorist targets. The preliminary list had 16,500 sites and that was just the beginning. The US Department of Homeland Security holds soft target awareness workshops for local authorities. However, says Andre De-Marce of the Terrorism Research Centre, "it's virtually indefensible. You cannot protect every hotel...every apartment complex."

If anything, terrorist experts say they are surprised that militants haven't plucked lower-hanging fruit more often. One reason could be a twisted professionalism. Having done 9/11, al-Qaida may be reluctant to do anything less spectacular. But Beslan shows that compensation can be had: By killing more, killing them younger and killing them before cameras.



have been laid down. In no eventuality will another Indian aircraft be allowed to fly out of Indian air space," says Brig Seethapathy.

But even with a highly trained force of commandoes ready for any eventuality, some confusion still persists given the federal nature of our government. "With law and order being a state subject and each state police force wanting its own brand of commandoes, there are chances that valuable time may be a victim in the execution of a successful operation in the future," says a police officer.

And what is causing more alarm is the "strike at will" capability of terrorists as opposed to the impossibility of being able to secure all potential targets. "Schools are certainly vulnerable. But for terrorists interested in creating an international media blitz, there is no dearth of potential sites. They can strike at any of the smaller government offices and take officers as hostages, they can attack a swanky MNCs office or they can hold an entire movie theatre hostage. The only protection lies in general security consciousness," says a police officer.

Moscow angered by EU demand

Moscow/Valkenburg (Netherlands), Sept. 4 (Reuters): Russia denounced today as "blasphemous" a request by the EU's Dutch presidency for an explanation for the bloody end to a mass hostage seizure at a school by Chechen gunmen.

But Dutch foreign minister Bernard Bot, who made the request in a statement yesterday on behalf of the EU presidency, said he had been misunderstood and he would try to calm the row by talking to his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov.

"There obviously was a misunderstanding," Bot told a news conference after a meeting of EU foreign ministers in the Netherlands. "My words have been misinterpreted. I never said that I needed to be ... informed."

More than 320 people, almost half of them children, were found dead after troops stormed a school yesterday in the southern Russian town of Beslan, where Chechen separatists had held more than 1,000 hostages for 53 hours.

In a statement issued in the name of the EU presidency yesterday, Bot said all countries should work together to stop such tragedies, adding: "We also would like to know from the Russian authorities how this tragedy could have happened."

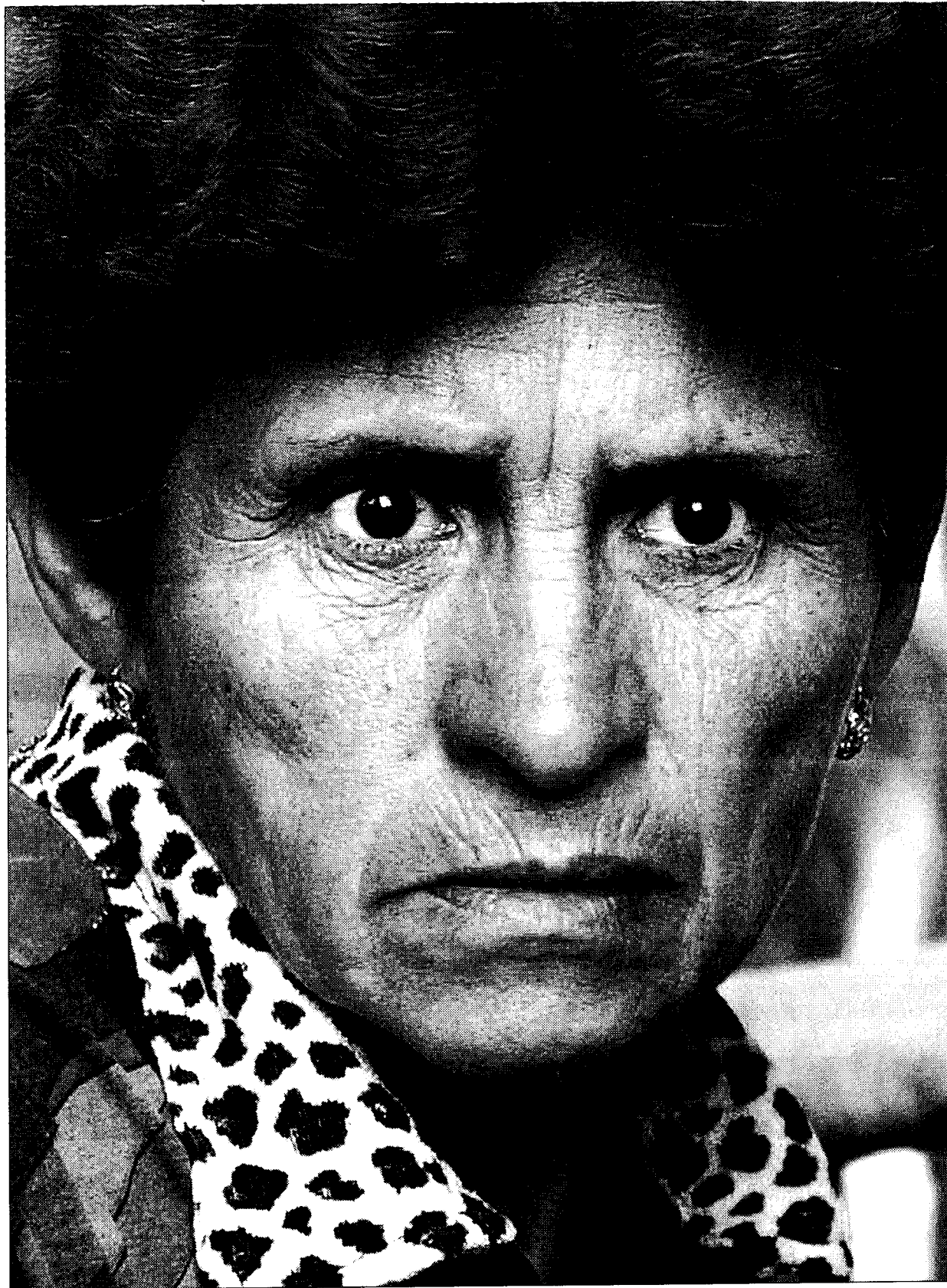
The Russian foreign ministry reacted with outrage to Bot's statement, and Interfax news agency said the Dutch ambassador had been summoned to the ministry to explain.

"Mr Bot's elaborations are an absolute contrast with the wide international support and solidarity with Russia in these tragic days," a ministry statement said.

"Inappropriate statements by the Dutch minister look odious ... and blasphemous," it said. "We expect explanations from the Dutch side." Bot said had only sought more information from Moscow and had not intended to criticise. "I will certainly set the record straight with my colleague Lavrov later in the day," he said.



Maria Sharapova prepares to serve during a US Open match in New York. Sharapova is wearing a black ribbon in memory of the people killed in the Beslan tragedy. (AFP)



A relative of a victim near the school in Beslan. (AFP)

Kids will suffer trauma for decades, feel experts

DAVID DERBYSHIRE

London, Sept. 4: Many of the children caught up in the Russian siege will carry psychological scars for decades and some may never fully recover, according to some of Britain's leading experts in childhood trauma.

While the symptoms of post-traumatic stress vary from child to child, many will suffer such terrifying nightmares that they will develop fear of falling asleep. Some will experience daily flashbacks.

Younger children may be so frightened of being left alone that they become obsessively clingy. Bed wetting, tantrums, repetitive behaviour and difficulties with relationships will become common. Many will be terrified of returning to school.

But despite the risks of post-traumatic stress disorder, the Russians should avoid sending in counsellors, Prof. William Yule, an expert in childhood trauma at the Institute of Psychiatry, London, said. "The first thing they need is to be reunited with their parents and to feel safe."

Prof. Yule, who advised the National Institute for Clinical Excellence on the NHS guidelines for post-traumatic stress disorder, said experts should take a back seat to start with.

"There is a suspicion that going in too soon might actually interfere with normal healing processes," he said.

"We know from studies that over the first eight to 10 weeks after a violent assault or road accident stress reactions come down quite considerably. The sleep gets back to normal, they are not so jumpy and they don't avoid things."

"Some people argue that you delay doing intensive treatment for two to three months afterwards. But someone needs to be in contact with

the children and their families and monitor them as unobtrusively as possible."

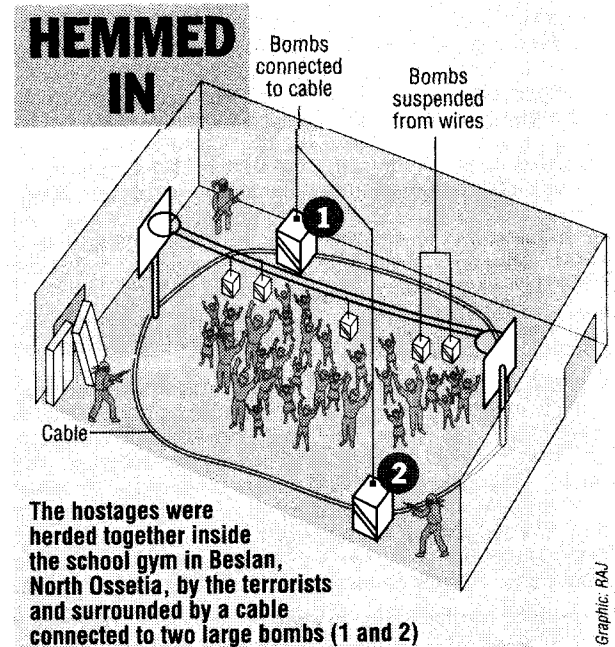
Victims of post-traumatic stress disorder, or shell shock, suffer intrusive, vivid "replays" of their ordeal. Other symptoms include depression, emotional detachment, guilt and fear.

Children suffering from stress are likely to express their anxiety in drawings and repetitive behaviour. Younger children become "impet-

uous" and "impulsive". A heep disaster in Wales found that 30 per cent of primary school children who survived had post-traumatic stress disorder 30 years later.

Peter Norman, an educational psychologist in Buckinghamshire who deals with disasters and accidents involving children, said: "The key is the support systems that children already have. The last thing you need is to send in teams of counsellors."

"What you need is the sup-



Graphic: RAJ

like", clinging obsessively to parents.

"That can be exceedingly irritating to parents who are also traumatised," said Prof. Yule. "The parents need guidance. They also need to listen to the children and not tell them to shut up about it."

Prof. Yule's study of child victims of a Greek cruise ship disaster found that five to seven years after the sinking 15 per cent were still suffering post-traumatic stress.

Studies of the Aberfan slag

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Agonising vigil ends in reunion and despair

C. J. CHIVERS

Beslan (North Ossetia), Sept. 4: When the first tremendous explosion shook the air, sending a blast wave through the neighbourhood around Middle School No. 1, the crowd of women near the southern police barricades buckled over.

An old woman's eyes welled instantly with tears. She began to pound her head with her fists. Another woman wailed. "Nayyyyyyyyyy!" she screamed, and collapsed to her knees.

The worst of the uncountable fears that had been stalking Beslan for 52 hours had been realised. Violence had erupted inside the school, where hundreds of children were held captive by armed militants who had wired the place with bombs.

Then came another explosion, as loud as the first. Within seconds, as dusty clouds rose over the school grounds, their great widths suggesting blasts of terrifying force, bursts of rifle fire began to sound, quickly building to a sustained and rolling roar.

The children of Beslan, many stripped to their underwear by their masked captors, were in the midst of a ferocious battle.

It was an afternoon and evening of confusion, savagery, daring and horror, as the battle swept aside lives with the blind indifference of a lottery, but also allowed many of the children to manage desperate escapes.

There were scenes of sudden reunions between parents and children who had vanished into the clutches of the militants two days before, of nervous searches for the missing and vigils for the wounded, and of incomprehensible waste and loss: unclaimed children lying dead on litters on the lawn outside the morgue, beside the tiny bodies of classmates whose mothers knelt in the grass, stroking their blood-matted hair.

In the first minutes of battle, with rifle and machine-gun bursts punctuated by occasional blasts of grenades, people ran wildly about, hunched low, shoulders forward, in animal fear. Several women screamed.

In the beginning the volume of fire was unrelenting. But within minutes there came a brief lull, and a white Volga raced along parallel to the police lines, its engine high-pitched and complaining as it weaved down the road as fast as it could go.

When it passed a crowd that had sought cover behind a thick brick wall, a child's face could be seen, that of a dirty shirtless boy who sat crying on the lap of a man who held him in a tight embrace. The car raced past. The crowd traded news.

"Children made it out!" someone said, and the word was passed along.

More cars sped toward the group, a column of makeshift ambulances, some crammed with four, five and six children. Many children were stripped to their underwear, looking filthy. Some sat upright and calm. The eyes of others were jumpy with fright. A few drank from water bottles with trembling hands.

A van pulled up with a man whose left eye was blackened shut, blood running in a rivulet along the side of his

face. A skinny boy who looked 14 sat shirtless beside him.

"Where's the hospital?" the driver yelled. Everyone pointed. "There!" The car lurched away.

Two transport helicopters appeared, circling the battle in a wide, counter-clockwise loop. A helicopter gunship soon joined them. More cars came by, apparently carrying the more gravely wounded, including a black-haired girl, bleeding and looking wan, slumped backward on the passenger's seat, mouth open, in what seemed the last moments of life.

At 1.54 pm, a tan Lada careered to a halt, and two of the fleeing girls stepped from the back seat. One wore a short blue dress and dirty ankle socks. The other was in a man's white business shirt, stained with dried blood.

For a moment they did not speak. The crowd touched them as if in disbelief, and they were quickly led to a courtyard two doors away. A woman of about 40 appeared, her face an empty and emotionless blank until the realisation set in: her children

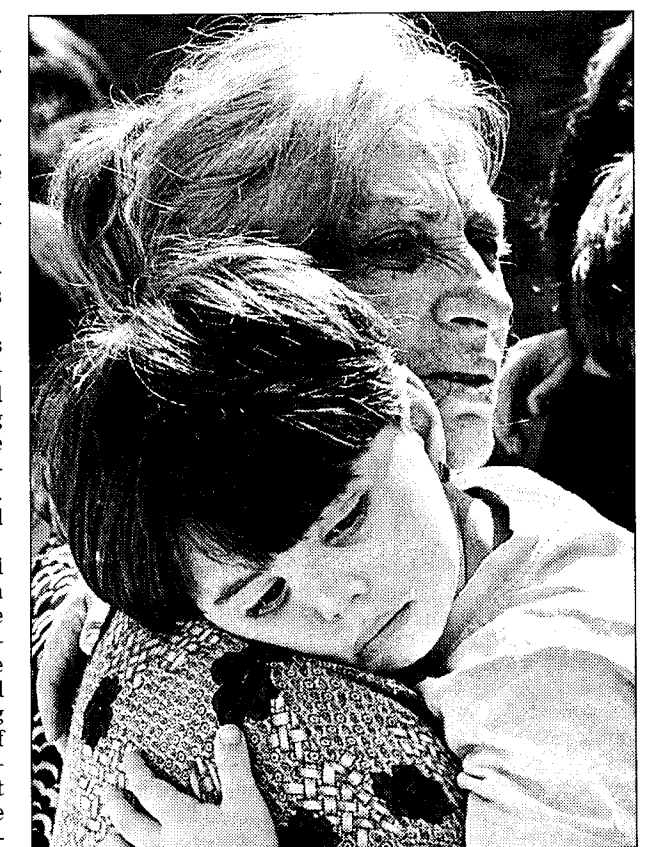
were standing before her. "Mama!" the younger girl exclaimed, and the mother grabbed her, then the other, burying her nose in their sweaty hair. The three of them spun around and around. The girls were covered in dirt from their ordeal. The family quickly retreated into the house.

Outside, the shooting continued. The helicopters thumped overhead.

At 4.05 pm, three hours into the battle, a sweaty Russian soldier ran by and stopped among the civilians, carrying a rifle and peering toward the fight. "Has the school been secured?" an old man asked him. "I don't know," he said, and ran off.

As the battle approached its fourth hour, one man crouching behind a tree seemed perplexed. The authorities had said there were 16 to 40 fighters. How could they hold out for so long against so many hundreds of Russians, against such volume of fire, even against tanks? "How many can there really be?" said the man, Russian Gudeyev, 46.

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE



A woman carries her grandson at a hospital in Beslan. (AFP)

RUSSIA SCHOOL SIEGE

Putin silence underlines chilling trend



Vladimir Putin speaks to a woman in a hospital in Beslan, North Ossetia. (AFP)

DAVIDE HOFFMAN

Moscow, Sept. 4: Several hours after bloody, half-naked and terrified children and teachers fled Middle School No 1 yesterday afternoon amid explosions and automatic weapons fire, NTV television correspondent Ruslan Gusarov told viewers he had heard law enforcement authorities saying on their walkie-talkies that there were a significant number of dead and wounded victims inside.

The anchorwoman in Moscow admonished him. "We have to stop," she said. "We cannot broadcast this information."

The warning was a glimpse into the reality hanging over the hostage crisis in the town of Beslan in southern Russia. At a moment of great distress, there was near-total silence from President Vladimir Putin and the rest of

Russia's political leaders. Information about victims trickled out slowly. Secrecy and obfuscation, tools of the authoritarian past, cast a chilling shadow over television news broadcasts.

All three major television networks are now state-controlled, but the restrictions they face are offset somewhat by Russia's newspapers and lively websites, which offered fast-breaking and firsthand accounts from the scene.

Soon after explosions and gunfire rocked the school, the main television channel shifted away from the scenes of mayhem and broadcast a soap opera about World War II twelve hours after commandos stormed the school. Putin had not said a word in public, reflecting a penchant for opacity that has characterised his response to controversy since the sinking of the Kursk nuclear submarine four

years ago. Back then, he went jet-skiing on the Black Sea while navy families waited anxiously for word about the doomed sailors.

"People do not see that they have politicians who can save them, guarantee their security and stability and who can suggest any kind of solution," said Lilia Shevtsova, senior associate of the Carnegie Moscow Center, a research organisation. "They would love to see a tough, harsh, resolute President, but they have not seen one. Russia has lost its President in these days."

"Politics is really dead, but in a way that is dangerous for Putin. This is the moment of truth for the country. The Duma is afraid to convene an emergency meeting," she said, referring to the lower house of parliament.

"Nobody has made a comment. The President is hiding. The government is hiding."

This is the end of politics, when no one wants to take responsibility."

Sergei Markov, a political analyst who has worked for the Kremlin, said the attack took Russia's intelligence agencies by surprise. Putin spent his career in the KGB and later was director of its domestic successor, the Federal Security Service, or FSB, before rising to power.

But Markov said that criticism would be directed primarily at the security services rather than at Putin.

As President, Putin has often promoted his image as a tough guy, discreet and stone-faced. In his attempts to corral the influential Russian tycoons, he has often let subordinates adopt pressure tactics, while portraying himself as distant, cool and unconcerned. According to those who have dealt with him, he takes a behind-the-scenes role

in the manoeuvring. Since he became Boris Yeltsin's handpicked successor, Putin has also sought to stamp out challenges to his power, with crackdowns on independent television, the creation of a pliant parliament and the imposition of restrictions on regional governors.

Journalists, academics and politicians have described a growing atmosphere of anxiety. Shevtsova said Russians were on edge in public spaces. The attack came after a bombing at a Moscow subway and the apparent downing of two airliners. "It's like a Hitchcock movie," she said. Yet the ferocity of the attack in Beslan was an important factor that may generate sympathy for Putin, who came to power in 1999 by championing a renewed military offensive against the Chechen rebels.

LOS ANGELES TIMES
WASHINGTON POST NEWS SERVICE



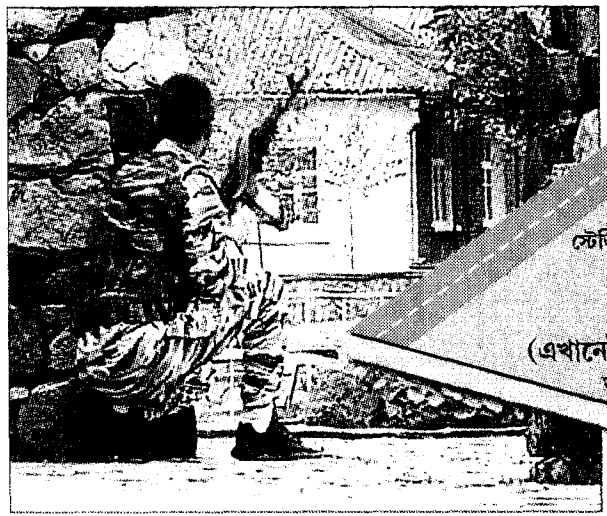
A dead kidnapper lying on a Beslan street. (Reuters)

দুশো প্রাণের মূল্যে স্কুল জঙ্গিমুক্ত

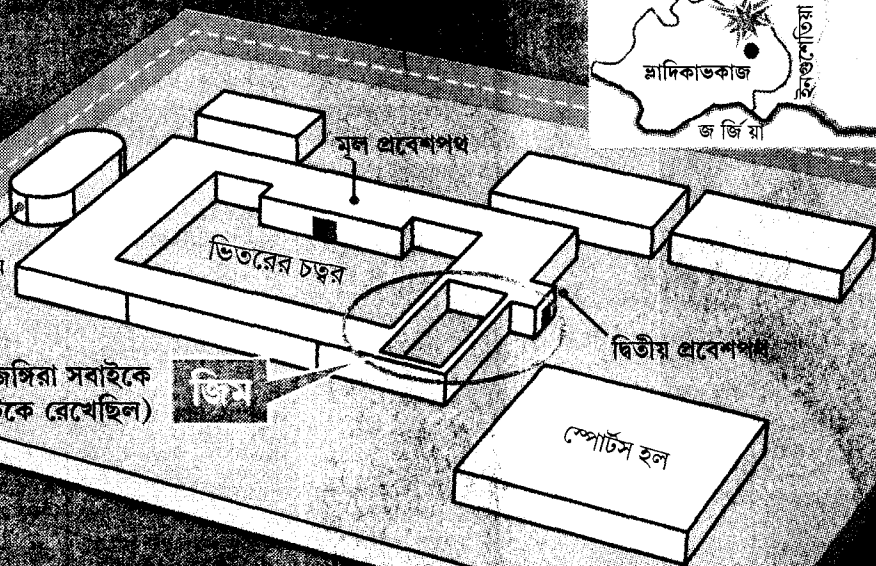
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Demotion ৩১ নভ. ২

যেখানে কাটল রক্তধ্বাস ৫৩ ঘণ্টা



বেসলানের স্কুলের বাইরে রুশ সেনা। — রয়টার্স



রাতে শিশুরা কাঁদলে চুপ করানো হত গুলির শব্দে

বেসলান (রাশিয়া), ৩ সেপ্টেম্বর: ৫৩ ঘণ্টা ধরে মৃত্যুকে সামনে থেকে দেখেছে ওরা। স্কুলে নতুন বছর শুরু প্রথম দিনটা আনন্দে কাটাতে অনেকেই সঙ্গে এনেছিল বাবা-মা ছোট্ট ভাইবোনদেরও। যাদের অনেকেই হয়তো আর ঘরে ফিরতে পারবে না কোনও দিন। যারা ফিরে এল তারাও সারা জীবন বয়ে বেড়াবে এই ৫৩ ঘণ্টার অসহ্য স্মৃতি।

দক্ষিণ রাশিয়ার আপাত শান্ত এই শহরটির ইতিহাসে এই ৫৩ ঘণ্টাকে ভুলে যাওয়া কঠিন অনেকের পক্ষেই। ১৭ জন চেচেন গেরিলা হাতে পণবন্দি হয়ে কেমন ছিল বেসলানের সেকেভারি স্কুলটির অসংখ্য ছাত্রছাত্রী ও শিক্ষক-অভিভাবকেরা। মুক্তি পাওয়ার পর পণবন্দিদের কাছ থেকে যা শোনা গিয়েছে তাতে আতকে উঠবেন যে কোনও সুস্থ মানুষ।

রুশ কর্তৃপক্ষ বারবার বলেছেন পণবন্দি সংখ্যা ৩৫০। কিন্তু কাল স্কুল থেকে বেরিয়ে এসে মুক্ত পণবন্দিরা গুনিয়েছেন অন্য কথা। ২৭ বছরের জালিনা জান্দারোভা কালেকের ২৬ জন সৌভাগ্যশালীদের এক জন। তিনি বললেন, “৩৫০ জন নয়, কমপক্ষে এক থেকে দেড় হাজার মানুষ আটক গেরিলাদের হাতে।” স্কুলের জিমন্যাসিয়ামে প্রচণ্ড গরমে এক জনের উপর আর এক জনকে শুইয়ে রেখেছিল গেরিলারা। রাতে বাচ্চারা কাঁদলেও শুনো গুলি চালিয়ে তাদের শাস্ত করা হত। তেঁটা মেটাতে একফোটা জলও খেতে দেওয়া হয়নি। শিশুরা শৌচাগারে গিয়ে জল খাওয়ার চেষ্টা করেছিল। কিন্তু সেখান থেকে তাদের টেনে হিচড়ে সরিয়ে এনেছে সশস্ত্র জঙ্গিরা।

আজ সেনা অভিযান শুরু হওয়ার পরই এই কথার সত্যতা প্রমাণ হয়ে যায়। গোলাগুলির মধ্যেই স্কুল থেকে ছুটে বেরিয়ে এসেছে নগ্ন ও অর্ধনগ্ন শিশুর দল। এসেই সেনা ও ডাক্তারদের হাত থেকে ছিনিয়ে নিয়েছে জলের বোতল। “আমি জানালা ভেঙে বেরিয়ে এসেছি। ওরা ছাদ থেকে গুলি ছুড়ছিল। চারদিকে লোকেরা ছোট্ট ছুটি করছে”— অ্যাথুলগ থেকে মুখ বাড়িয়ে বলছিল একটি ছোট ছেলে।

স্কুল গেটের আশপাশেই স্ট্রিকারের উপর পড়ে আছে ছটি মৃতদেহ। উৎকণ্ঠিত আত্মীয়েরা ছুটে এসে সেই দেহগুলির মুখের ঢাকা সরিয়ে দেখে

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

বন্দিদের উপর গুলি চলতেই শুরু অভিযান

বেসলান (রাশিয়া), ৩ সেপ্টেম্বর: রুশ প্রেসিডেন্ট পুতিন বার বার আশ্বাস দিয়েছিলেন, বলপ্রয়োগ হবে না, রক্তপাত না ঘটবে জঙ্গিদের হাতে পণবন্দি শিশুদের অক্ষত দেখে স্কুল থেকে উদ্ধার করে আনা হবে। কিন্তু বাস্তবে ঘটল ঠিক উল্টোটা। শুক্রবার দুপুরের অভিযানে দক্ষিণ রাশিয়ার বেসলানের ওই স্কুলকে জঙ্গিমুক্ত করা গেল ঠিকই, কিন্তু দু'পক্ষের গোলাগুলি ও বোমা বিস্ফোরণের মধ্যে পড়ে প্রাণ হারাল অন্তত দুশো জন। স্কুল চত্বরে এবং স্কুল বাড়ির পিছনের জিমন্যাসিয়ামে শ'খানেক মৃতদেহ পড়ে থাকতে দেখেছেন প্রত্যক্ষদর্শীরা। তার মধ্যে কত জন শিশু রয়েছে, তা গভীর রাত পর্যন্ত স্পষ্ট নয়।

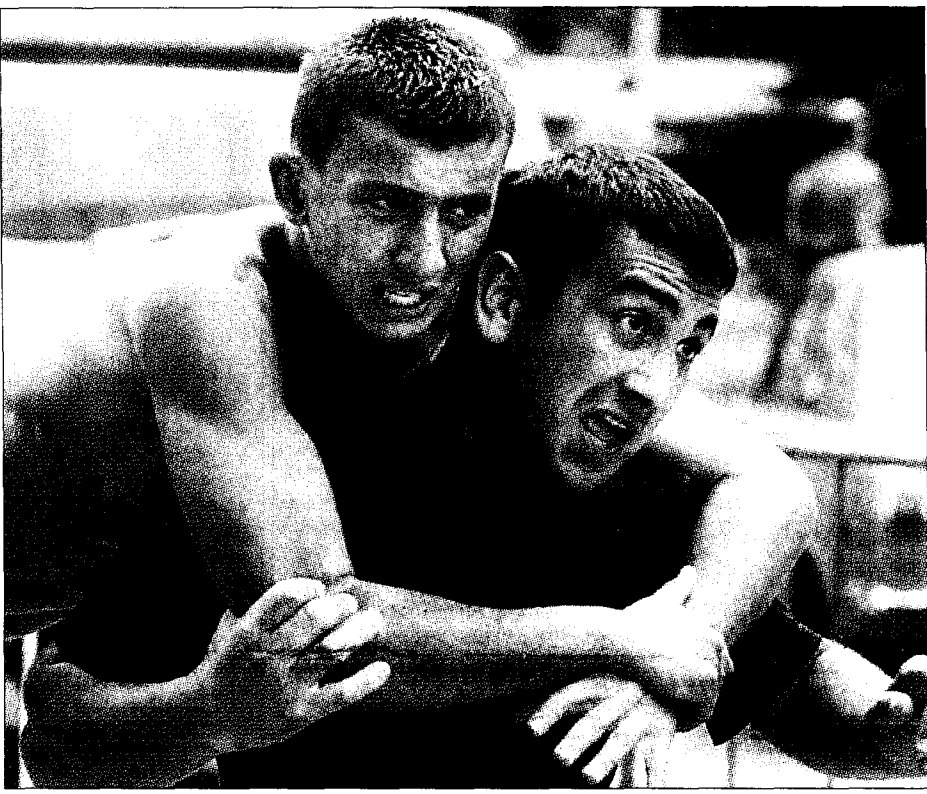
স্কুল বাড়ি থেকে সাধারণ পোষাকে পালানোর সময়ে পাঁচ জন জঙ্গি ধরা পড়েছে বলে দাবি রুশ কর্তৃপক্ষের। রুশ সংবাদসংস্থা ইটার-তাস জানিয়েছে, জঙ্গিদের নেতা কয়েকজন সঙ্গী-সহ স্কুল চত্বরের একটি বাড়ির ভিতর থেকে সেনাদের সঙ্গে লড়াই চালাচ্ছে। তবে অন্য একটি বাড়িতে আশ্রয় নেওয়া ১৩ জন জঙ্গি পরে আত্মসমর্পণ করেছে।

বিভিন্ন হাসপাতালে ভর্তি আহত শিশুদের মধ্যে অন্তত আট জন মারা গিয়েছে বলে সরকারি ভাবে জানানো হয়েছে। সংবাদ সংস্থা ইটার ফ্যাক্স জানিয়েছে, রুশ স্বাস্থ্য দফতরের তরফে বলা হয়েছে সব মিলিয়ে মৃতের সংখ্যা অন্তত ২০০। পুতিনের চেচনিয়া বিষয়ক সহকারী আসলাম আসলানকভ বলেছেন, এ পর্যন্ত ৭৯ জনকে শনাক্ত করা গিয়েছে। ঠিক দু'বছর আগে যে ভাবে কমান্ডো-অভিযান চালিয়ে মস্কোর প্রেক্ষাগৃহ থেকে প্রায় সাতশো পণবন্দিকে উদ্ধার করা হয়েছিল, আজও অনেকটা সেই কায়দায় স্কুল থেকে জঙ্গিদের হঠিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে। সে বারের অভিযানে প্রাণ গিয়েছিল ১২৯ জন নিরীহ পণবন্দি।

তবে ওই স্কুলে ৫৩ ঘণ্টা চেচেন জঙ্গিদের হাতে ঠিক কত জন পণবন্দি ছিলেন এবং তাঁদের সকলেই বেরিয়ে আসতে পেরেছেন কি না, তা নিয়ে রাত পর্যন্ত যথেষ্ট বিতর্ক রয়েছে। বিভিন্ন সূত্র থেকে পাওয়া খবর মেলালে পণবন্দিদের সংখ্যা ১২০০-র কাছাকাছি হবে বলে মনে হয়। এদের মধ্যে ৮০০ জনই শিশু। রুশ সংবাদসংস্থা ইটার-তাস জানিয়েছে, সংঘর্ষে ২০ জন জঙ্গির মৃত্যু হয়েছে। এদের মধ্যে অন্তত ১০ জন আরব জঙ্গি। কয়েকশো শিশুর জীবন নিয়ে এমন রক্তধ্বাস টানা পোড়েনের পরে বেশি রাত পর্যন্ত কোনও মন্তব্য করেননি রুশ প্রেসিডেন্ট। পাওয়া যায়নি ক্রেমলিনের সরকারি বিবৃতিও। তবে, উত্তর ওসেতিয়ার নিরাপত্তা-প্রধান মেজর জেনারেল ভ্যালেরি আন্দ্রেইয়েভ সরকারি টেলিভিশন চ্যানেলে বলেছেন, এই ঘটনার পিছনে আন্তর্জাতিক জঙ্গি সংগঠনের হাত আছে।

পণবন্দি শিশু, অভিভাবক ও শিক্ষকদের অক্ষত দেখে উদ্ধার করাই জরুরি

এর পর সাতের পাতায়



বেসলানের স্কুলে অভিযান চলাকালীন এক ছাত্রকে উদ্ধার করে নিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে। শুক্রবার। — রয়টার্স

এ যেন নতুন জন্ম, দেশে ফিরে অন্তর্যামীদের ক্লান্ত মুখে হাসি

সৌভদ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় • নয়াদিল্লি

৩ সেপ্টেম্বর: নতুন জীবনের সকালে যা সবচেয়ে প্রাণাশিত, সেই হাসি অনেক কষ্টে ফুটিয়ে উলতে হচ্ছে।

গ্রামের দরিদ্র পরিবারের তিন ছেলে হঠাৎ এসে পড়েছেন মন্ত্রী, আমলা, পুলিশের ছড়োছড়ির মাঝে। তাই কি এমন সন্ত্রস্ত মুখচোখ? না কি অশুভি ফটোগ্রাফার, টিভি-ক্যামেরার ভিড় আর চেঁচামেচিতে হঠাৎই আকর্ষণের কেন্দ্রবিন্দুতে চলে আসার অশুভি? হয়তো কিছুই নয়। শ্রেফ ক্লান্তি। টানা ৪২ দিন প্রতিনিয়ত মৃত্যুর সঙ্গে লড়াই করে বিধবস্ত স্নায়ু ধাতস্থ হতে সময় নিচ্ছে। সামান্য ধনাবাদ জানাতে গিয়েও আটকে যাচ্ছে অন্তর্যামীর কথা। হাত-পা কাঁপছে।

“৪২ দিন পরে বুধবার আমরা প্রথম সূর্য দেখি। আমাদের একটা ঘরে বন্ধ করে রেখেছিল। কথা বলতে দিত না। ঘরে শুধু একটা টিভি। তাতে আরবি চ্যানেল চলত। মাঝে একদিন ভিডিও দেখাল উনাতে কী রকম বিক্ষোভ হচ্ছে।” বললেন মুক্ত তিন টাকচালকের মধ্যে বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ টিলক রাজ। জঙ্গিদের কম আলায়ে তোলা ভিডিওতে যে সাদা কালো স্ট্রাইপ জামায় তাঁকে দেখা যেত, আজও সেই জামা। ছেলে মেয়েদের হাত ধরে স্ত্রী তখন দাঁড়িয়ে আছেন বেশ খানিকটা দূরে। টিলক রাজ বললেন, “কোথায় ছিলাম, কিছু বুঝতে পারিনি। কয়েকবার জয়গা বদলালে। প্রতিবারই চোখ বন্ধ করে আমাদের নিয়ে যায়।”



মুক্ত তিন ভারতীয় দিল্লিতে। শুক্রবার। — পি টি আই

ভোর চারটে পয়তাল্লিশে কুয়েত এয়ারওয়েজের বিমানের দিল্লি পৌঁছানোর কথা ছিল। বিমান পৌঁছলো ছটা ছত্রিশে। মিনিট দশেক পরে বেরিয়ে এলেন অন্তর্যামী, টিলক রাজ ও সুখদেও সিংহ। অন্তর্যামীর গায়ে নতুন ধূসর জামা, পায়ে নতুন নীল-সাদা স্লিকার্স। সুখদেও সিংহের নতুন ফুলহাতা চেক শার্ট। মন্ত্রী ও আমলাদের সামনে তিনজনেরই এক কথা। আমরা সরকারের কাছে কৃতজ্ঞ। সবসময়ই ভরসা ছিল, ভারত সরকার যখন আছে, তখন কোনও ক্ষতি হবে না। বিদেশ প্রতিনিয়তী ই আহমেদের বক্তব্যও সংক্ষিপ্ত। “আজ খুশির দিন। আপনারদের সবাইকে ধন্যবাদ।”

মাঝরাত থেকেই ছেলের জন্য ইন্দিরা গান্ধী আন্তর্জাতিক বিমানবন্দরে অপেক্ষা করেছিলেন সুখদেওবের পিতা শের সিংহ, ভাই হরবিন্দর সিংহ ও জ্যাঠা গুরদেব সিংহ। পঞ্জাবের রোপার জেলায় মকরৌনা কলী গ্রামে চাষবাস করেন তাঁরা। ছেলেকে পাঠালেন কেন? শের সিংহের উত্তর, “আমাদের গ্রামে তো তেমন কিছু করার নেই। ‘খেতিবারি’ করে কী আর সংসার চলে?” এক একের জমি, গয়না বেচে ১ লক্ষ টাকা খরচ করে বিদেশে পাঠাতে হয়েছিল সুখদেওকে। এখন তাঁরা সরকারের মুখাপেক্ষী। “সরকারকে আবেদন করব, যাতে চাকরির ব্যবস্থা করে দেয়।” সুখদেওবের শ্যালক এখন ইরাকে। গুরদেব বললেন, “গত প্রায় ২০ দিন তারও কোনও ফোন আসেনি। সে-ও কে জি এলের কাজ করে।

এর পর সাতের পাতায়

SLAUGHTER AT SCHOOL

CHILDREN AMONG 150 KILLED. SOME TERRORISTS FLEE

Terorism HPI 419

Fred Weir and Agencies
Moscow/Beslan, September 3

A TWO-DAY-OLD terrorist siege in a school in southern Russia exploded into a violent confrontation on Friday amid machine-gun fire, bomb blasts and the screams of fleeing children as commandos stormed the building.

More than 150 of the hostages were killed and the toll could go up significantly. A number of the dead were children. Latest reports said that 646 people had been injured. Of them, there were 332 children.

Most of the 1,500-odd hostages escaped, but security forces were fighting to rescue others.

Security officials said 20 militants, of whom 10 were of Arab descent, were killed.

The sudden eruption of violence was apparently unplanned by either side. Russian authorities had earlier pledged to seek a peaceful resolution to the stand-off to save the lives of as many children as possible.

The violence broke out early Friday afternoon, as Russian emergency workers approached the besieged school grounds to remove the corpses of seven people killed by snipers on the first day of the crisis. The operation had been carefully negotiated between the hostage-takers and local authorities.

But witnesses say a group of about a dozen terrorists, dressed in civilian clothes, chose that moment to break out by mixing with the crowds of relatives, on-lookers and journalists milling outside the security perimeter.

In the confusion that followed, about 30 women and children hostages also attempted to flee the building, many of them half-naked, some bleeding and screaming in panic.

Terrorists still inside the school opened fire at the escaping hostages, prompting the special forces to move in. Troops using small explosive charges blew several holes in the walls of the school to encourage more hostages to make a run for it.

Russia's official ITAR-Tass news agency said most of the hostages had been saved by the swift action of security forces. "Those children who remained in the school were not hurt," Tass reported. "The ones who suffered were the children in the group which ran from the school."

Witnesses reported several powerful explosions inside the school, which caused part of the roof and one wall to collapse. Dark smoke billowed from one part of the building. The gun battle continued late into the night, with reports of three terrorists being holed up in the school basement.

Thirteen terrorists escaped. Security forces had reportedly laid siege to a building in which some of them had taken refuge. The others were being pursued.

Full coverage on Page 13



REUTERS



REUTERS

A volunteer carries an injured child after troops stormed the school in Beslan near Chechnya (left). A boy is carried by his father after he was released.

The hostage-takers

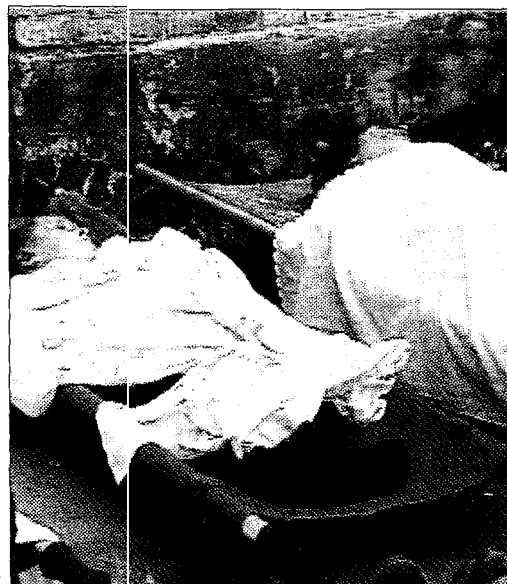
Reports say this was a mixed group of about 40 Islamic militants; 20 were killed, 10 Arabs among them, say Russian officials. Evidence of an increasing Al-Qaeda influence on Chechen rebels

The fighting

Wasn't planned. Negotiations were on. It appears as if the terrorists panicked and shot at some children who tried to escape. Troops had to storm the school

The children

Most of them who died did so in the battle for the gym. The gym was sealed and became very hot. The kids were dehydrated and had taken their clothes off



REUTERS

INNOCENTS: Bodies of children killed in the battle.

'I smashed the window to get out... The terrorists shot from the roof'

Reuters
Beslan, September 3

HALF-NAKED AND bloodied children ran terrified through the street, thirstily grabbing water bottles from medics as gunfire cracked, ambulance sirens sounded, and mothers and children wailed.

Russia's school siege ended in scenes of chaos and pandemonium on Friday, with an unknown number of dead and injured among the up to 1,500 children and adults held at gunpoint by suspected Chechen separatists for more than two days.

A stream of ambulances left the

school carrying bodies, many of which looked lifeless.

"I smashed the window to get out," one young boy with a bandaged hand told Russian television. "People were running in all directions...They (the rebels) shot from the roof."

Six bodies lay covered with white sheets near the school gates, one that of an almost naked corpse of a girl of around 16 with an unnaturally pale face, another a young boy, less than a metre in height.

Men and women filed past, hands covering their mouths, tentatively lifting the sheets to see if they recognised the bodies. A 40-year-old man

wearing a light brown shirt kneeled by a body, crying into his hands.

The lucky ones among the crowds of relatives who had waited day and night outside Middle School Number 1 held emotional reunions with children who had stripped to their underwear during two days in a stifling gym with little water and no food.

Anger also flared in this Russian Orthodox part of the Caucasus mountains, ethnically and religiously distinct from the nearby Muslim regions of Chechnya and Ingushetia.

A crowd of around 200 people started to attack a swarthy man who

looked like he might be a Chechen, until police intervened, firing shots into the air to disperse them.

Others sought to organise care of the wounded at local hospitals where 1,000 beds had been prepared, health officials told the Interfax news agency.

In the midst of the barbarism, humanity reigned. On Thursday, a nanny held hostage carried an infant in her charge out as 26 women and children were freed.

But immediately after handing the baby to her family, the woman went back to join her own children who were still captive.

RUSSIAN FORCES STORM SCHOOL ■ 150 DEAD, OVER 500 IN HOSPITAL

SIEGE ENDS IN BLOODBATH

Associated Press

BESLAN, Sept. 3. — Commandos stormed a school today in southern Russia and battled separatist Chechen rebels holding hundreds of hostages as crying children, some naked and covered in blood, fled the building through explosions and gunfire. Ninety-five bodies were identified, but an official said the toll could exceed 150.

Hundreds escaped the school, but the bodies of 100 dead hostages lay on the gymnasium floor where the captives had been held since Wednesday. A police sapper told NTV that commandos stormed the building after bombs — hung in basketball hoops by the hostage-takers — exploded. A hostage who escaped said a suicide bomber blew herself up in the gym where children were kept captive.

Twenty militants were killed in gunfights with security forces, 10 of them Arabs, Mr Valery Andreyev, the region's Federal Security Service chief, said. President Vladimir Putin's adviser on Chechnya, Mr Aslanbek Aslakhanov, also said some of the dead militants were Arab mercenaries.

After trading fire with militants holed up in the basement of a school annexe, officials said the fighting was over, but two militants remained at large. Three suspected hostage-takers were arrested while trying to escape in civilian dress, Channel One TV reported. Ekho Mosky radio said a suspected female hostage-taker was detained when she approached an area hospital wearing a white robe.

Regional President Mr Alexander Dzasokhov said the hostage-takers demanded that Russian troops leave Chechnya — the first clear indication of their demands and of a direct link between this attack and the ongoing war in Chechnya.

Officials at the crisis headquarters said 95 victims were identified and Mr Andreyev said 556 people were hospitalised, including 332 children,



(Top) An injured schoolgirl is carried on a stretcher during the rescue operation. (Centre) A volunteer rescues an injured boy. (Above) Another child is being taken to hospital. — AFP

while the emergency situations ministry put the number of hospitalised at 646, 227 of them children. Mr Aslakhanov told Interfax the toll might be "much more". He said the militants initially seized some 1,200 hostages, most of them children — far more than earlier estimates of 350.

A member of an elite security unit died saving two young girls, the Itar-Tass reported. A police sapper, speaking on NTV, said bombs hanging from basketball hoops exploded. The gym had been rigged with explosives packed in plastic bottles strung up around the room on a cord and stuffed with metal objects, he said.

Women escaping the building were seen fainting and others, some covered in blood, were carried away on stretchers. Many children — parched, hungry and only partly clothed because of the stifling heat in the gym — ran out screaming and begging for water.

Two emergency services workers were killed and three wounded during the chaos. Interfax said the school's roof collapsed, possibly from the explosives. The militants had reportedly threatened to blow up the building if authorities used force. Mr Andreyev and Mr Aslakhanov said there had been no plans to storm the school and that the authorities had been hopeful about negotiations.

The militants had broken most of the windows early in the crisis in what might have been an effort to prevent authorities from using gas to knock them out against them.

Less than a kilometre from the school, anguished relatives mobbed arriving ambulances to see who was inside. Some two dozen children lay on blood-splattered stretchers under a grove of pine and spruce trees.

'Most unfortunate': Dr Manmohan Singh tonight wrote to President Putin and expressed sympathies of the people of India for the families of those killed.

Another report, photographs, and timeline on page 3



Russian special forces personnel and two women take cover behind an armoured carrier during the storming of the school. — AFP

When Riya went back in...

BESLAN, Sept. 3. — In duty under fire, motherhood stood second, only just. A nanny held hostage in a school here, carried the infant in her charge out as some women and children were freed, then went back in to join her own children still being held, authorities said. Ms Riya Yuzhenevich and her story was mentioned on a list of names of freed hostages posted inside a public building near the school being used as a shelter for family and friends of the hostages. Ms Yuzhenevich carried two-year-old Dyana Azieva out of the building to be

returned to her family before walking back into the school and an uncertain fate in order to be with her own children, according to the posting. There is no news of her yet... Overall, the children were at the centre of a maelstrom of explosions and bullets, of shattered windows, bodies and masonry — a mind-bending cauldron of bloodshed. At first, there was only confusion — for the children, for the families, and for the millions of horrified spectators around the world. To the beat of a sickening rattle of gunfire,

blood-smearing girls stripped down to their underwear fled the school gymnasium where they had been kept captive — a scene chillingly evocative of the iconic image of a naked girl screaming in pain and terror as she runs from a napalm attack during the Vietnam War. "We didn't know if we were going to live," said Aslan Zaratsov, a 14-year-old boy who had been kept captive — hungry, thirsty, and insomniac — for three days in the gymnasium, along with several hundred other hostages. — AFP & AP

Cemetery at siege-end school

HEAVY PRICE IN LIVES AFTER RUSSIA OPERATION



A man carries a boy to safety as a soldier and a volunteer look on during the rescue operation at the Beslan school on Friday. (AFP)

Beslan, Sept. 3 (Reuters): More than 100 people were killed when Russian troops stormed a school today in a chaotic battle to free children, parents and teachers who had been held hostage for 53 hours by Chechen separatists.

Amid confusion and carnage, authorities said they had been forced into an unplanned operation by hostage-takers who opened fire on fleeing children. Some children were still being held hours after the raid, officials told Interfax news agency.

Machinegun fire and explosions boomed out and helicopters clattered overhead as naked children ran for safety, screaming.

Julian Manyon, a reporter for Britain's ITV television news, said his cameraman had seen into the gutted gymnasium of the school in Beslan, in the North Ossetia region adjoining Chechnya, after the hostage-takers left.

"Our cameraman... told me that in his estimation there are as many as 100 bodies, I am afraid, lying on the smouldering floor of the gymnasium where we know that a large number of the hostages were being held," he said.

Interfax, however, quoted an adviser to President Vladimir Putin as saying: "The number of those killed in the terrorist act in Beslan could be much more than 150."

Tass news agency said there were more than 400 wounded, and witnesses saw around 20 bodies at a hospital morgue.

The rebels fled with soldiers in pursuit. A top security service official was quoted as saying 20 gunmen, including

10 Arabs, had been killed.

The authorities said events had forced their hand after insisting from the outset they would not resort to violence.

Manyon said police had told him some children had tried to escape and when the captors fired and chased them the troops opened fire and the battle began. Moments earlier, authorities said they had sent a vehicle to fetch the bodies of people killed in Wednesday's seizure of the school.

"No military action was planned. We were planning further talks," the regional head of the FSB security service, Valery Andreyev, said.

In the chaos, children ran from the building or were carried by soldiers. Stripped to their underwear after two days without food or drink in a stiflingly hot and crowded school, they gulped bottles of water and waited in a daze for relatives.

"I smashed the window to get out," one boy with a bandaged hand said. "People were running in all directions.... They (the rebels) were shooting from the roof."

The outcome of the siege may have repercussions for Putin, who came to power in 2000 on a promise to restore order in Chechnya after years of violent rebellion.

Officials had said some 500 people were being held in the school, but released hostages said the number could be nearer 1,500.

The masked gunmen had demanded an independent Chechnya, the first clear link between them and the separatist rebellion in the neighbouring province.

■ See Page 3

TERRORISM IN IRAQ

US Withdrawal Can Only Bring Sanity In A Devastated Society

By KK GANGULY

^{sr 6}
^{2/19}
The terrorists are fighting to see the backs of over one and a half lakh foreign troops in Iraq. Prime Minister Allawi led interim government is also striving for the same. Only the approach of the two sides is different. The interim government is trying to create stability in the country with the help of US led forces, so that national elections can be held to elect a new Iraqi Government in January '05. Once that government is in power, state police and newly trained military forces are in position, hopefully US forces will bid adieu to Iraq. On the other hand, the terrorists believe they can force the foreign powers out of Iraq by their acts of terrorism.

Vietnam and Iraq

One expects history should teach lessons to the terrorists. Terrorism can only prolong the agony for ages but cannot win a war against a world power. Vietnam was a different story. The Vietcong could vanquish the French at Dien bien Phu and later the US might from Saigon because they were totally backed by China. Also, the terrain in Vietnam was more suitable for guerrilla warfare, hit and run tactics by the guerrillas. But the terrain in Iraq is more suited to conventional warfare, use of high technology, heavy weapons and air power.

The pay-off from Vietnam was not as lucrative as the same from Iraq. However, there were no terrorist activities by the Vietcong against innocent civilians. Many countries around the world, though initially opposed to the invasion of Iraq, are now slowly veering round to the US efforts to bring stability and aid in the reconstruction of Iraq. Basically these countries do not want to antagonize the world's only superpower and would instead like to lap up the crumbs in the form of the reconstruction pie. Despite this, the holding of free and fair national elections in Iraq in January is also doubtful in view of the intensified terrorist activities.

India had strongly opposed the US-UK invasion of Iraq and stoutly resisted pressure to contribute Indian troops for Iraq. Even then a terrorist group, namely "Holders of the Black Banner" had kidnapped three

Indian nationals working as drivers for the Kuwait-based Kuwait Gulf Link Transport (KGL). This transport firm is engaged in transportation of goods in Iraq for the US military. The terrorist group had been threatening to execute these hostages unless KGL

Indians do not realize that pre- and post-invasion Iraq is not the same. There is no law and order in Iraq at present.

The naive can question the justification of holding Indians as hostages and threatening execution in light of India's warm relation with Iraq under Sad-



Transport ceases all activities in Iraq, the countries of the hostages withdraw their troops from Iraq, and the US releases all Iraqi prisoners. The credentials of the terrorist group could easily be understood, as it does not even know that Egypt, India and Kenya have no troops in Iraq. Two South Koreans were beheaded, one Japanese, two Pakistanis and twelve Nepalese were executed by different terrorist outfits and then the Indians, Egyptians and Kenyans were in line for execution. India could never imagine that Indian nationals could face such ordeals. The Government of India should have issued suitable advisories to Indians working in the Middle East against accepting jobs in Iraq.

Between two stools

It is understood that the previous regime had directed the Indian Embassy in Kuwait not to issue "No Objection Certificates" to Indians desirous of work in Iraq. However, the temptation of petro-dollars is so strong that the embassy succumbed to heavy pressure from Indians in the Gulf countries.

dam's regime, opposition to the US led invasion and stout refusal to send troops. But we should not wonder about the attitude of the Islamic terrorists. Terrorists have no allegiance, no loyalty, no religion and no principles. They are just terrorists. They had kidnapped and killed foreign tourists in Kashmir and elsewhere, who had nothing to do with India, Pakistan or Kashmir. They have bombed or derailed running trains, blown up aircraft and held children as hostages in schools. For many it is simply an easy source of ransom money.

President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair in the security of their own countries are still justifying the invasion. "It was essential to rid the people of Iraq from the evil rule of Saddam and ensure security and safety of American and British people." But their singular act defying world opinion has irrevocably brought much greater perils to the lives of millions of Iraqis. Who should hold the Bush and Blair duo accountable for the loss of innocent lives?

Once Saddam was removed, Islamic *jihadis* from all parts of the Islamic world, particularly members of Taliban and Al

Qaeda, have entered Iraq. A truly secular country became a haven for Islamic fundamentalists. The hostage crisis has brought in focus the basic question whether the invasion of Iraq has brought about enhanced security for US and UK citizens and better quality of life for Iraqi people. Any nation in the grip of terrorism may take up to 50 years to achieve normalcy when under a legitimate government. Iraq is presently under a puppet government without any indigenous police or military force worth the name. The question is how long the hapless people of Iraq should suffer this repression by the terrorists on one hand and bombardment by the US military on the other.

Base for Al Qaeda

Even if general elections are held in Iraq in January, there is no guarantee that terrorism will vanish. It is more likely that Islamic terrorists with Al Qaeda links will not leave their hold on the country easily, as it is sure to provide fresh recruiting grounds for their cause. First they would like to establish an Islamic Republic in Iraq and turn it into a base like the erstwhile Afghanistan for anti-US, anti-European activities.

The antidote lies in the hands of the US, but it is not the use of more and more firepower. They have to decide to leave Iraq—lock, stock and barrel leaving the destiny of the nation in the hands of the people of Iraq. They have to be prepared to forego a controlling interest in Iraqi oil wealth.

Hopefully, an elected government, if installed, could have the credibility of sovereign status. If by then a sizeable Iraqi military force can be raised, the international borders can be guarded against infiltrating terrorist groups; the situation can be retrieved. In that eventuality, United Nations peacekeeping forces may be inducted to clean up the destructive forces inside Iraq.

There are plenty of ifs and buts. However, unless the US forces are withdrawn and security responsibilities passed on to the UN immediately, the Indian lives will not be the last to be at stake and many more innocent lives will perish at the altar of terrorism for many years. Does the US want this? And who will make the difficult decisions — Mr Kerry or Mr Bush?

The author is a retired officer, Indian Army

Shocked Nepal's day of mourning

Remembrance *HR 73 3/9*
Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, September 2

WITH ITS national flags flying at half-mast, Nepal on Thursday mourned the death of its 12 nationals at the hands of Iraqi militants. Offices, markets, educational institutions and traffic remained closed in honour of the dead.

Angry and hurt Nepalese organised protest rallies and condolence meetings in most parts of the kingdom. Authorities imposed an indefinite curfew from 1 pm at Butal, about 400 km west of Kathmandu, near Uttar Pradesh, after clashes between security forces and demonstrators. One person was injured in the incident.

In Udaipur district in eastern Nepal, attempts were made to attack a place of worship. Authorities are keeping a close watch on districts bordering UP and Bihar, as these have a sizeable Muslim population.

To contain religious strife, King Gyanendra, in an unprecedented move, on Wednesday evening asked political leaders and civil societies to help safeguard "the age-old brotherhood, unity and tolerance among various sections of Nepalese society." The estimated Muslim population in Nepal is about 15 lakhs.

Nepal Muslim Ittehad Sangh chairman and ex-tourism minister Salim Mia Ansari complained that a



AP
People on Thursday gather around an area burnt by rioters in Kathmandu on Wednesday.

madrassa run by Bareli Muslims was set afire in Kathmandu on Thursday morning. He alleged that about 40 Muslims fled to Uttar Pradesh after their madrassa was attacked in Dhangarhi, about 600 km west of here. However, the home ministry said it was not aware of any such incidents.

Maoists rule out talks

Maoists have ruled out the possibility of their holding talks with the palace-installed Deuba government. This comes amid frequent claims by the latter about getting positive signals from the rebels. They said dialogue was possible only under UN mediation.

THE HINDU

3 SEP 2004

Rebels free 32 women, children

Explosions, gunfire heard near school ■ Russia rules out immediate use of force

Agencies
Moscow, September 2

ARMED MILITANTS holding over 350 pupils and adults hostage in a school in southern Russia on Thursday released 32 women and children as two large explosions and some gunfire was heard in the vicinity, amidst indications that the country was preparing for a long-drawn crisis.

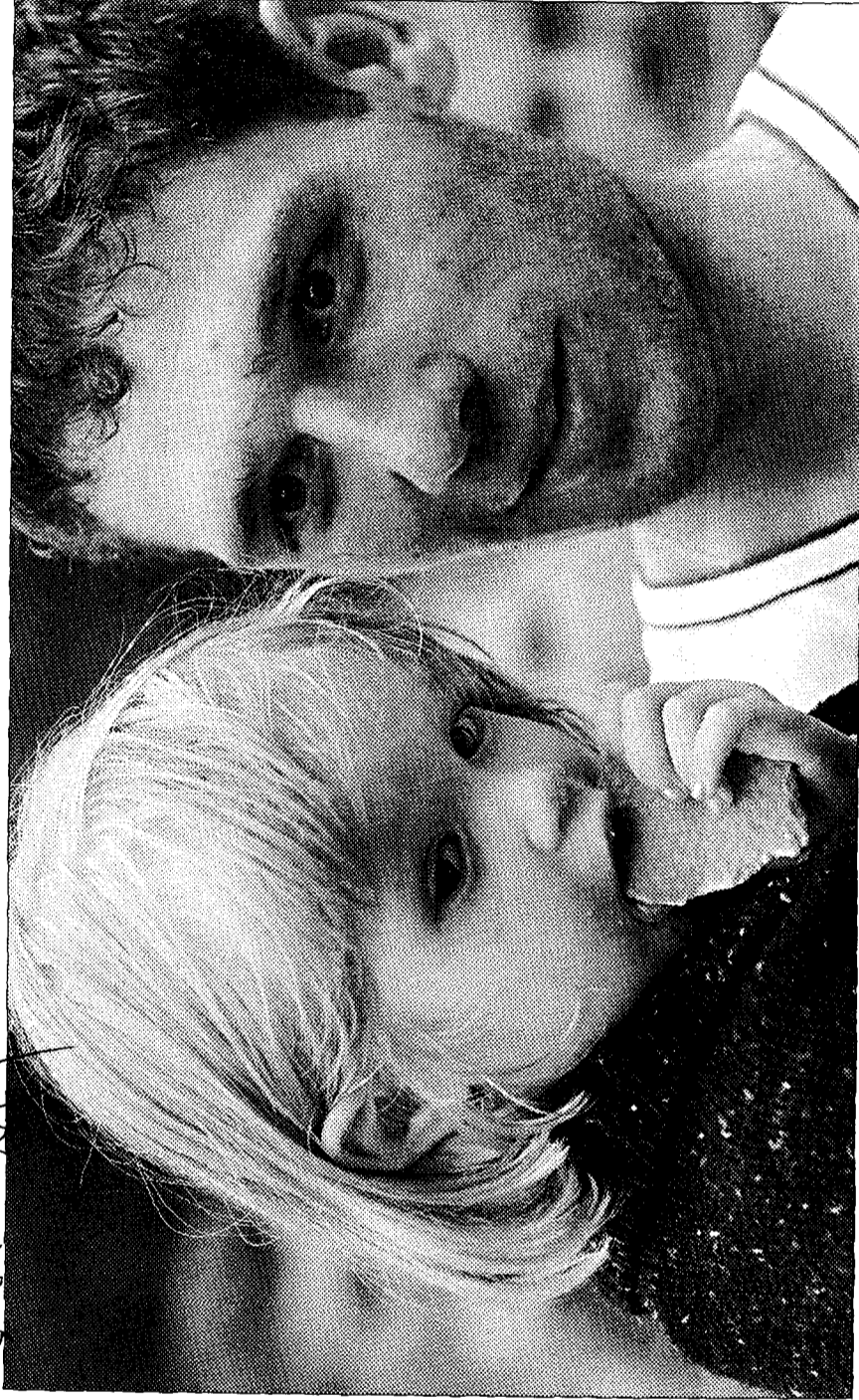
As hundreds of anxious relatives waited nearby, President Vladimir Putin, who cancelled his trip to Turkey to deal with the crisis, said that the release of the hostages is paramount. "All the actions of our forces... will be devoted to solving this task," he said in a nationally televised address. "Our main task is to save the life and health of those who have ended up as hostages," he said.

Two explosions rocked the area around the school about 10 minutes apart. A cloud of black smoke followed the blasts. No further details were available.

Earlier on Thursday, Valery Andreyev, the Federal Security Service's chief in North Ossetia, seemed to rule out the immediate use of force. "There is no alternative to dialogue," the ITAR-Tass news agency quoted him as saying. "One should expect long and tense negotiations," the Federal Security Service official said.

Outside, crowds of distraught relatives and townspeople waited helplessly for news of their neighbours and loved ones, their distress sharpened by the sporadic rattle of gunfire from the cordoned-off crisis site. "Not one official came out to talk to us during the entire night. Our hearts and souls are there. What would you do if your child was there? What should we do? Should we go down there as human shields?" said the relative of a hostage.

"We did offer an exchange of the same number of adults for the children, but they refused. We even offered to give them a free passage out if they let the children and people go," said Kazbek Dzentiev, In-



A man holds his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter who was released by the hostage-takers from a school in Beslan on Thursday. REUTERS

Hours into the standoff, Russian security officials used a phone number they were given and began negotiations with the hostage-takers. During the night, officials reported that Leonid Roshal, a well-known paediatrician who aided hostages during the deadly seizure of a Moscow theatre by Chechens in 2002, had established contact with the upper floor of the three-story building.

Little was known about food and sanitary condition inside the school; offers to deliver food and water to the school were turned down. Camouflage-clad special forces carrying assault rifles encircled the school, while the militants placed a sniper on an upper floor of the three-story building.

terior Minister, North Ossetia.

Iranian asked to mediate

Russia's FSB security service has asked a Moscow-based Iranian journalist to help negotiate with the gunmen, the reporter said on Thursday.

George Bush on Iraqi insurgency

Trail of Terror

Iraq to Chechnya, America

(11/12) fails to see big picture 20/9

Terrorism is back on page one as the top story. Even as India rejoices over the safe return of three nationals who were held hostage in Iraq for 42 days, our neighbour Nepal is mourning the death of 12 citizens. The Nepalese, who were working as cooks and cleaners for a Jordanian company, were shot by an Iraqi militia after keeping them in custody for over 10 days. Nepal, already reeling under a Maoist insurgency, now faces the threat of communal hatred. Elsewhere in Russia, a Chechnyan terror gang is threatening to shoot dead children held hostage in a secondary school. These incidents may appear separated in time and space. Yet, they are all linked. The shadow of guns looms over the incidents. Innocents are forced to participate in the theatre of terror, a collage of real and perceived fears and threats. No one is safe anywhere; globalised terror has melted boundaries of nation states. Terrorism needs to be analysed and tackled in its entirety. The US, which claims to be in the vanguard of the global war on terror, harbours a blinkered vision. Or else why would it be sceptical about Russian president Vladimir Putin's claim that the Islamists in Chechnya are linked to Al-Qaida? Or about India's repeated arguments that Kashmiri militants are connected to bin Laden via the ISI?

The US hunt for bin Laden, the near-mythical terror boss, seems to have lost its way in the caves of Tora Bora. The misplaced adventure in Iraq hasn't yielded any WMD yet. Instead, the US occupation of Iraq has become a weapon of mass destruction by spawning terror worldwide. The main flaw in the war on terror is America's lack of sincerity in taking on the real proliferators of terrorism. It is well-documented that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the two main allies of the US, are the hotbeds of terror. The fear that removal of Musharraf would enable mad mullahs to capture Islamabad has made the US less demanding with the general. Saudi Arabia is the financial and ideological fountainhead of Islamic militancy. The Saudi exports are far more damaging than the ISI brand of terror besides being a slur on Islam. They threaten the economic and social fabric of communities. Wahabism seeks to impoverish the richness of Indian Islam; it fails to understand its syncretic character. No one's making a case for a putsch or an Iraq-style adventure by the US in the two states. But, the US needs to deal with the House of Saud and Musharraf with more purpose.

Countering terror

By Rajeev Dhavan

Where counter-terrorism violates human rights, it produces state terrorism directed against a nation's own people.

149-10
279

BOTH COLLECTIVELY and individually, nations across the world are obsessed with policies of counter-terrorism. This obsession is subversive of peace and good governance in ways that are beginning to dwarf the terrorism such policies claim to counter. Counter-terrorism acquired a new lease of life after September 11, 2001, when planes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York. 'Nine eleven,' as the incident is called, provided the excuse for evolving devastating policies of counter-terrorism. America unleashed wars on Afghanistan and Iraq for reasons that test the patience of international law. There is no telling what the United States will do next. The United Nations has passed mandatory resolutions for countering terrorism that are binding on the nations of the world which are obliged to implement them. Various countries have enacted counter-terrorist laws that surpass one another in devising means of oppressing their own people. Counter-terrorism is now profiled as a major threat to the peace of the world.

On September 12, 2001, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 1368 to exhort all nations to suppress terrorist acts. Such speed by the U.N. is unprecedented. More significantly, on September 28, 2001, the U.N. Security Council exercising power under Part VII of the U.N. Charter passed the magnum Resolution 1373 making it binding on all U.N. member-nations to enact counter-terrorism measures within 90 days and remain under the surveillance of a Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC). Resolutions under Part VII of the Charter are not discretionary but must be followed. On January 16, 2002, the U.N. passed Resolution 1390 to demand worldwide steps to freeze terrorism-oriented assets and especially move against 'listed organisations' mentioned in earlier resolutions. On March 18, 2003, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime assembled 12 conventions to guide anti-terrorist efforts. The U.N.'s dictates being mandatory and compulsory had to be complied with immediately — within an emergency timetable.

The U.N.'s initiatives resulted in regional and national responses. On October 17, 2001, the European Union produced an anti-terrorist road map to result in a framework decision on June 22, 2002, which along with other measures fundamentally rewrote extradition and other laws, oblivious of civil liberties, to strengthen interaction within the Union. To implement Resolution

own Central Committee on Terrorism (CCT) and pledged to strengthen its existing anti-terrorist legislation. The African Union created a plan of action to implement U.N. resolutions at Algiers on September 14, 2002. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation supported U.N. resolutions to create a Regional Convention in January 2002 and an additional protocol in January 2004. America enacted its Patriot Acts and other legislation from 2002 onwards to vest vast powers in the administration against ethnic groups, minorities, migrants, tourists and others in ways that were oppressive. Former Defence Minister George Fernandes vows never to visit America because of the treatment he received.

The U.S. has created the most oppressive, racist and reactionary anti-people regime since World War II and the McCarthy era. In 2000-02, Britain reworked its anti-terrorist laws in ways unknown to its common law history to bring back internment without trial, arbitrary arrests and deportations. Pakistan added amendments to its anti-terrorist laws in 2002 to detain a person without charge for 12 months — amongst other provisions. Like India's Prevention of Terrorism Act, it was abused many times over and used against political opponents and for personal vendetta. Following the blasts in Bali, on October 12, 2002, Indonesia strengthened its legislation to poise itself for unbridled abuse. In Europe, Germany has used its anti-terrorist legislation against 'extremist' religious groups.

At a conference of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) on August 28, 2004, a German spokesman virtually spoke in terms of the Huntington thesis asking for a counter-jihad against Muslims who were targeted without remorse. At the meeting, an activist lawyer, Karina Moskalenko, demonstrated through case after case from Russia how people were picked up and they disappeared. We still do not know the full details of the 'gas' used in the rescue operation in the Dubrovka theatre. There is no end to the stories in every country on the gross abuse of anti-terrorist laws. Using 9/11 as an excuse to enact measures of counter-terrorism, every country seems to be fighting America's war whilst oppressing its own people in a free-for-all without reserve. If this continues,

counter-terrorism will become a greater threat to people and good governance, than terrorism is made out to be. America's war has become the world's excuse for war, arms, destruction, death, torture and violation of civil liberties.

The obsession with counter-terrorism knows no limits. Shockingly, the famous American lawyer, Alan M. Dershowitz, has written a book, *Why Terrorism Works* (2002), suggesting that provisions be made in criminal procedures to enable governments to get a court order to inflict torture during investigations. In other words, counter-terrorist measures can include whatever they want within their remit to be "effective." India's troubles in Manipur are about army lawlessness, custodial torture and rape. Although the latest American decision on the Guantanamo Bay detenus now allows

for some judicial review, it permits the U.S. army abroad to pick up civilians on suspicion for indefinite interrogation, detention and secret proceedings without the authority of law on the basis of a Resolution of Congress.

Where counter-terrorism violates human rights, it produces state terrorism which is directed against a nation's own people. International norms under Article 4 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and others speak of certain rights being non-derogable including the injunction against torture. But the canopy of non-derogable rights is wider. Even where rights are not non-derogable, it does not mean the state can violate them. Any permissible derogation must be reasonable and proportionate in its use.

The U.N.'s Human Rights Committee has taken great exception to the vast derogations in the name of counter-terrorism. Its strictures have been ignored by many countries. Its decisions have been flaunted. Countries have used international law to usurp anti-terrorist powers to subvert its human rights prescriptions. Before '9/11', the Human Rights Committee's General Comment No.29 of July 24, 2001, laid down stringent guidelines to ensure that all derogations are "strictly required by the exigencies of the situation ... based on objective assessment."

The truth of the matter is that counter-terrorism does not admit to oversight assessment or monitoring.

In 2003-04, India set up a low resourced review committee with ineffectual results. The MDMK leader, Vaiko, may have been released, but the release was due to public pressure. Internationally, while the U.N. resolutions must be implemented there is no monitoring mechanism. The U.N.'s Counter Terrorism Committee promotes counter-terrorism but does not engage issues of human rights violations. Dr. Seiderman in a paper for the ICJ suggests the need for an international monitoring mechanism in the form of Special Rapporteur or Sub Committee of the Human Rights Committee or a Special Committee answerable to the Security Council. Such mechanisms are useful.

Since Security Council Resolutions mandate counter-terrorism measures, the Council must effectively monitor its abuse. However, in January 2003, the U.N.'s CTC declared that monitoring human rights violations was not within its remit. It is imperative that counter-terrorism is placed under comprehensive scrutiny, nationally and internationally.

The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance Government has decided to repeal POTA and weave anti-terrorist measures in its ordinary law. This has led to a protest from Narendra Modi, Chief Minister of Gujarat, who is seeking support from other Chief Ministers. It is well known that the greatest abuse of the erstwhile Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act came from Gujarat and POTA has been misused in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere.

At the ICJ conference in Berlin in August 2004, it was refreshing to hear Germany's Minister of Justice say that his country planned to contain its counter-terrorism within the ordinary law and procedure. This is precisely what India should do. India's Criminal Procedure Code already has onerous provisions on pre-trial detention and bail as well as strong legislation on unlawful associations. India would be in good company and set an example to place its anti-terrorist measures within a normal legal framework. States in India should be denied the dangerous power to terrorise their own people in the name of anti-terrorism.

India can neither portray nor echo support for American chauvinism. Nor can it use the U.S.' excuses oppressively to target Indians or others. We cannot live in a contrived and open-ended global emergency that threatens both global peace and democratic governance. Counter-terrorism is proving to be as disastrous as the menace it claims to stop.

Three Turkish hostages killed

CAIRO, Sept. 2. — A militant group in Iraq linked to Al-Qaida has issued a video purportedly showing the killing of three unidentified Turkish hostages, *Al-Jazeera* TV reported today.

The station said it also received a statement claiming the killings from Tawhid and Jihad, a group believed to be led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian held responsible for a string of attacks on US and Iraqi forces in Iraq and believed linked to the Al-Qaida. The station did not say how it got the video and the statement. It broadcast only a part of the video, but not the footage showing the killings. It did not say how the three were killed.

The broadcast showed three men sitting on the floor with five masked men, two of them armed, standing behind them. One of the masked men was reading a statement. "The time of forgiveness has gone. You have nothing left but killing and beheading," said the brief printed Arabic statement, which *Al-Jazeera* showed.

Police in Iraq had reported finding the slain bodies of two Turkish citizens and a third unidentified man in northern Iraq late yesterday. It was not immediately clear when the three were killed, nor what they were doing in Iraq, police said.



Newly recruited Iraqi women soldiers during their graduation ceremony at the Jordanian Military Academy in Zarqa, 27 km from Amman, on Thursday. — AFP

US strikes kill 20 in Fallujah

FALLUJAH, Sept. 2. — Twenty Iraqis were killed and six wounded in a US air strike overnight on suspected Abu Mussab al-Zarqawi's safe houses in Fallujah, medical officials and the US military said today. Two buildings were destroyed when a US fighter jet fired a pair of missiles or a large bomb around 11.45 p.m. (1:15 a.m. IST) in the residential neighbourhood of Jebel in Fallujah, a hotspot of Sunni insurgency 50 km west of Baghdad.

Three bodies were pulled from the rubble today as bulldozers cleared wreckage and a crowd of rescue workers dug through the debris and searched for body parts and bits of flesh, said rescue worker Hossam Ibrahim. "All the wounded are families. Among the dead, there could be two or three children, but the bodies are torn to pieces and it's difficult to tell," a doctor at the Fallujah General Hospital said. Two giant craters gouged the ground, leaving one house completely destroyed and the second badly damaged. The blast knocked down a few palm trees and smashed up furniture and television could be seen in the wreckage. The US military describing the attack as a "precision" strike. — AP

War threat to Syria

JERUSALEM, Sept. 2. — Claiming to have "concrete evidence" of Syria's involvement in the double suicide attack in the southern city of Beersheva in which 16 people were killed and more than 80 injured, Israel today threatened to launch military action against the country.

"There is no immunity, and if there's a need, we will act," deputy defence minister Mr Ze'ev Boim said today. "The rule that anyone who deals in terror against Israel is a target' is a rule that must be stated and one that we must stand behind," he said and added that necessary steps would be taken to check a "conflagration" if an attack is carried out on the Syrian soil.

IAEA report boost for Iran

Iran was emboldened today after the IAEA again failed to produce a "smoking gun", confirming US allegations of a secret weapons drive, adds AFP from Tehran. The latest IAEA report said it was "plausible" that Tehran was telling the truth in claiming uranium contamination found by IAEA inspectors came from imported equipment and not because Iranians were enriching uranium as material for an atomic bomb.

ইরাকে মুক্তি, রাশিয়ায় শিশুরা বন্দি, নেপালে আগুন

পগবন্দি-নাটকের তিন অঙ্ক

বন্দিরা ঘরে ফিরলে তবে উৎসব উনা, রোপারে

রোপার, ১ সেপ্টেম্বর: তিক এক মাস আগে আজকের মতোই আনন্দে ভেসেছিল রোপার। সে দিন অবশ্য বিলি হয়েছিল মিষ্টি। ভাঙা দেয়ালে সূর্যের আলোয় আত্মীয়-বন্ধুরা। সেই আনন্দ স্থায়ী হয়নি। কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই ঘের বিঘাদ গ্রাম করেছিল তাদের। এবং তীর আতঙ্কও।

৪২ দিন মৃত্যুর সঙ্গে ঘর করে সুখের অবশেষে মুক্তি পেয়েছেন, এই খবরটা সত্যি জেনেও তাই যেন বিশ্বাস করতে পারছেন না তাঁর পরিজনরা। আগে ঘরের ছেলে ঘরে ফিরুক। উৎসব তার পরে।

একই কথা উনার বাসিন্দা অন্তর্যামী পরিবারের। ছেলে মুক্তি পাওয়ার শুভেচ্ছা জানাতে আসা সকলকে বারবার ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছেন রামমুর্তি। বলছেন, সরকার থেকে শুরু করে প্রতিবেশী, বিপদের সময়ে যারা পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছিলেন তাদের কৃতজ্ঞতা জানানোর ভাষা নেই। অন্তর্যামীর সঙ্গে ইতিমধ্যে কোনো কথাও বলেছেন। কিন্তু তাঁকে চোখে না দেখা পর্যন্ত শান্তি পাবেন না তিনি। মিষ্টি বিলি, উৎসব— সবই হবে সে ফেরার পরে।

হেলিয়ায়পুরে টিলকরাজের বাড়িতে মুক্তির খবর যখন পৌঁছল তখন মাঠে কাজ করছিলেন তাঁর মা কিশনি দেবী। পড়শিরাই খুঁজে পেতে খবর দেন তাঁকে। টিলকের স্ত্রী প্রমীলা দেবী বাচ্চাদের নিয়ে এখন উনায়, বাপের বাড়িতে। প্রায় ছিটিয় হয়ে যাওয়া জীবাণী ফের জোড়া লাগায় চোখের জল সাময়িক পেরেননি কিশনি, প্রমীলা দু'জনেই। ফের প্রাণ ফিরেছে দুই বাড়িতে।

গুরু গ্রন্থ সাহিব শিখ ধর্ম গ্রন্থ হিন্দুরা বীকটি পাওয়ার ৪০০ বছর পূর্তি উৎসবের মাঝে সুখবরের মুক্তিকে গুরু কৃপা হিসেবেই দেখছে তাঁর পরিবার। সুখের ফিরলে পায়ে হেঁটে মাথা নমন দেবীকে পূজা দিতে তাদের মনস্থ করছেন তারা।

২১ জুলাই অপহরণ-কাণ্ডের পরে সবার মাথামেরে ডিউ উপরে পাড়ছিল রোপার, উনার গ্রামে। এই দেড় মাসে টিউ চ্যানেল আর খবরের কাগজ কখনও আশার আলো দেখিয়েছে পগবন্দিদের পরিবারকে, কখনও টেলে দিয়েছে হতাশার অঙ্ককারে। ১ অগস্ট বন্দিরা মুক্তি পেয়েছে বলে ঘোষণা করে দিয়েছিলেন কেনিয়ার মন্ত্রী। সেই ঘোষণা সত্যি হয়নি। তার পর, ৭ অগস্ট বিদেশমন্ত্রক জানিয়েছিল, আলোচনা চূড়ান্ত হয়ে গিয়েছে। পগবন্দিদের মুক্তির পথ পরিষ্কার। পনের দিনই টাকার দাবি বাড়িয়ে দেয় জঙ্গিরা। ফের অনিশ্চিত হয়ে পড়ে বন্দিদের ভবিষ্যৎ।

হতাশা নেমে এসেছিল তাদের পরিবারেও। গোড়ার উদ্দামনা তখন অনেকটাই স্তিমিত। সাংবাদিকদের আনাগোনা অনেক কম। অবশেষে মুক্তি সুনিশ্চিত করার দাবি জানিয়ে পথ অবরোধ করা প্রতিবেশীরাও যেন হাল ছেড়ে দিয়েছেন। বিদেশমন্ত্রকের অফিসারেরা কয়েক দিন অন্তর জানাচ্ছেন, বন্দিরা ভাল আছে, এই মাত্র। সেই দিনগুলিতে কার্যত নিরস হলে পড়েছিলেন পগবন্দিদের স্বজনরা। সেই দুঃসহ স্মৃতি অবশ্য তারা আর মনে রাখতে চান না। আজ সরকার, কে জি এল, প্রতিবেশী, সবার প্রতিই তারা কৃতজ্ঞ। — পিটিআই



মুক্তির প্রাক্কালে বন্দিদের হাতে কোরান তুলে দিচ্ছে ইরাকি জঙ্গিরা। বাগদাদের পশ্চিমে ফালুজা শহরে দীর্ঘ বন্দিদশা কাটিয়ে বৃদ্ধার মুক্তি পেলেন সাত পগবন্দি। — এ এফ পি

চেচেন জঙ্গিদের হাতে রাশিয়ার স্কুলে বন্দি শিশুরা

মস্কো, ১ সেপ্টেম্বর: শিশুস্বর্গের প্রথম দিনে রাশিয়ার আর পাঁচটা স্কুলের মতোই ডিউ জমাট বেঁধেছিল দেশের দক্ষিণ প্রান্তে বেসলানের স্কুলটিতেও। কয়েক কয়েক জন মুখোশপরা বন্দুকধারী স্কুলের গেট দিয়ে ঢোকার সময় অনেকেই ভেবেছিলেন নেহাৎ রসিকতাই হচ্ছে বুঝি। কিন্তু শুনলে গুলি চালিয়ে যখন সশস্ত্র লোকগুলি স্কুলের ভিতরে ঢুকে পড়ল ততক্ষণে বেশ কিছুটা দেরি হয়ে গিয়েছে। গেরিলাদের হাতে পগবন্দি হয়ে গিয়েছে কয়েকশো ছাত্রছাত্রী, যাদের বয়স ৭ থেকে ১৭-র মধ্যে। প্রায় চিকনাটের মতো ঘটনাটি ঘটেছে কাম্পিয়ার সাগর ও কৃষ্ণমাগরের মধ্যবর্তী উত্তর ওসেশিয়া প্রদেশের বেসলান শহরে। ৪০০ পগবন্দিদের অধিকাংশই ছাত্রছাত্রী ও শিক্ষক।

এই ঘটনার পিছনে চেচেন জঙ্গিরা আছে বলে জানিয়েছেন রুশ কর্তৃপক্ষ। যদিও বেশি রাতে বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদী চেচেন নেতা আসলান মাসকাদভের মুখপত্র আখমেদ জাকায়েভ বলেছেন, তাঁরা এর জন্য দায়ী নন। তবে রাশিয়ার দমননীতির কারণে কেউ 'স্কু হুয়ে' এই কাণ্ড ঘটতে পারে বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন জাকায়েভ। গভীর রাতে জানা গিয়েছে, জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা শুরু হয়েছে।

জিম্যান্সিয়ামে পগবন্দিদের আটকে রেখে জঙ্গিরা হুমকি দিয়েছে, কোনও রকম সামরিক অভিযান চালানো হলে পুরো বাড়িটিই উড়িয়ে দেওয়া হবে। স্কুলবাড়িটিতে তারা মাইন পেতে রেখেছে বলেও মনে করা হচ্ছে। জঙ্গিদের গুলিতে অন্তত ৯ জন মারা গিয়েছেন, আহত হয়েছেন কমপক্ষে ১১ জন। রুশ সংবাদসংস্থা ইতার তাস জানিয়েছে, পুলিশের সঙ্গে গুলির লড়াইয়ে এক জঙ্গি মারা

গিয়েছে। পগবন্দিদের সংখ্যা নিয়েও বিভ্রান্তি আছে। স্কুলটির ছাত্রসংখ্যা প্রায় ৯০০, শিক্ষক ৬০ জন। এদের মধ্যে কতজনকে গেরিলারা আটক করেছে তা স্পষ্ট নয়। পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, জঙ্গিদের অনামনস্তার সুযোগে ৫০ জন ছাত্রছাত্রী পালিয়ে এসেছিল। পেরে জঙ্গিরা আরও ১৫ জনকে ছেড়ে দেয়। সব মিলিয়ে আটকের সংখ্যা ১২০-১৩০ জনের বেশি হবে না বলে পুলিশের একাংশ মনে করছে।

স্থানীয় সময় সকাল সাড়ে ৯টা ১৭ জন সশস্ত্র জঙ্গি শরীরে বিস্ফোরক বোম্বেরে ঢুকে পড়ে। পরে জঙ্গিরা জানায়, সেনা অভিযানে যদি একজন গেরিলা মারা যায় তবে বন্দা হিসাবে ৫০ জন শিশুকে খুন করা হবে। আর কোনও জঙ্গি আহত হলে ২০ জন শিশুর প্রাণ যাবে। স্কুল সংলগ্ন পুরো এলাকা পুলিশ ও সেনাবাহিনী ঘিরে রেখেছে। দুই থেকে স্কুলের মধ্যে কয়েকটি মৃতদেহ পড়ে থাকতেও দেখা গিয়েছে। সারা সকাল আশপাশের মানুষ স্কুলের ভিতর থেকে গুলির শব্দ শ্রুতে পান।

চেচনিয়া সংলগ্ন বেসলানে হামলাকারী জঙ্গিদের মধ্যে মেয়েরাও আছে। এই নিয়ে গত এক সপ্তাহের মধ্যে চেচেন জঙ্গিরা চতুর্থবার ভয়াবহ হামলা চালায় রাশিয়ার উপর। ২৪ অগস্ট দক্ষিণ রাশিয়াতেই চেচেন সীমান্তের কাছেই তিন মিনিটের ব্যবধানে দু'টি রুশ বিমান ভেঙে মারা যান ৮৯ জন। মঙ্গলবার মস্কোর একটি সাবওয়ের সামনে আত্মঘাতী বিস্ফোরণে প্রায় হাজার ১০ জন, আহত হন ৫০ জনেরও বেশি। এ বছরেরই মে মাসে চেচনিয়ার সিন্ডেইস্ট আখমদ কাদিরভ চেচেন রাজধানী গ্রেজনিতে এক বিস্ফোরণে মারা যান।

গেরিলারা চেচনিয়া থেকে সেনা এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়



রাশিয়ার বেসলানের স্কুল থেকে একটি শিশুকে উদ্ধার করে আনছেন সশ সেনারা। বৃদ্ধার। — রয়টার্স

কার্ফু, গুলি, হত ২, নেপাল জ্বলছে বন্দিহত্যার ক্রোধে

কাঠমাণ্ডু, ১ সেপ্টেম্বর: প্রতিবিন্দুসার আগুনে জ্বলছে নেপাল। সেনা নামিয়ে, অনির্দিষ্টকালের জন্য কার্ফু জারি করেও পরিস্থিতি নিয়ন্ত্রণে আনা যাচ্ছে না। আজ সন্ধ্যা থেকে দেখা মাত্র গুলির নির্দেশ দেওয়া হয়।

পরিষ্কৃতি সামাল দিতে পুলিশ গুলি চালালে দু'জন নিহত হন, আহত তিন। ইরাকে জঙ্গিদের হাতে ১২ জন নেপালি পগবন্দিকে হত্যার ঘটনায় সরকারের উপর ক্ষোভে ফেটে পড়ার পাশাপাশি জনগণ আক্রমণের লক্ষ্য হিসাবে বেছে নিল সংখ্যালঘু সম্প্রদায়কে। আজ কাঠমাণ্ডুতে প্রায় হাজার খানেক বিক্ষোভকারী জড়ায় হয়ে একটি মসজিদে আগুন ধরিয়ে দেয়। কয়েকটি সরকারি দফতর ও পশ্চিম এশিয়ার দু'টি বিমান সংস্থার দফতরে ব্যাপক ভাঙচুর করে আগুন লাগায় জনতা। বিক্ষোভ ছড়িয়ে পড়েছে দেশের অন্যান্য শহরেও।

তরফে নিহতদের পরিবারবর্গের প্রতি ১০ লক্ষ টাকা ক্ষতিপূরণ দেওয়ার কথা ঘোষণা করা হয়েছে। তিনি আরও আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, ইরাকে আর যে নেপালিরা আছেন, তাদের দ্রুত দেশে ফিরিয়ে আনার ব্যবস্থা হবে।

কিন্তু এই সব আশ্বাসেও মানুষকে শান্ত করা যাচ্ছে না। কাঠমাণ্ডুর দরবার মার্গে বিক্ষোভকারী এক যুবক বলেন, "কাল সরকার যা করবে, তাতে তাদের ক্ষমা নেই।" প্রতিক্রিয়ার আশঙ্কায় কাল নেপাল সরকার প্রথমে ইরাকি জঙ্গিদের হাতে ১২ জন নেপালি পগবন্দির কোলত হওয়ার ঘটনা চেপে যাওয়ার চেষ্টা করেছিল। পরে অবশ্য ওয়েবসাইটে নিহত নেপালিদের ছবি দেখিয়ে দেওয়ার পরে সরকারকে ওই ঘটনার কথা স্বীকার করে নিতে হয়। ইরাকে জঙ্গিদের হাতে নিহত পগবন্দি রমেশ খাদকারের দালা সুদর্শনের অভিযোগ, "সরকার পগবন্দিদের মুক্তির জন্য যথেষ্ট চেষ্টা করেনি।" দেশ জুড়ে মানুষের একটাই কথা, সরকার ওই ১২ জনকে ছাড়ানোর জন্য সত্যিই চেষ্টা করলে এই পরিণাম হত না। দেশের সংবাদমাধ্যমেও পগবন্দিদের উদ্ধার করতে না পারার জন্য সরকারেরই কড়া সমালোচনা করা হয়েছে।

মাওবাদীদের হামলায় জেরবার নেপাল সরকার দেশব্যাপী এই বিক্ষোভের সামনে দিশাহারা। সরকারের এক মুখপাত্র বলেন, নিরাপত্তার কারণে নেপাল থেকে ইরাকে যাওয়ার উপরে অনেক দিন আগেই নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করা হয়। তবু রোজগাজা জারি হয়। তবু রোজগাজা পশ্চিম এশিয়ার বিভিন্ন দেশ দিয়ে ইরাকে ঢুকে পড়ছেন বলেই এই বিপত্তি।

এর পর দেশের পাতায়



কাঠমাণ্ডুতে কাতার এয়ারওয়েজের দফতরটি জ্বালিয়ে দিয়েছে বিক্ষোভকারীরা। বৃদ্ধার। — এ এফ পি

উৎকণ্ঠা শেষ, ৪২ দিন পরে মুক্ত অন্তর্যামীরা

দুবাই, ১ সেপ্টেম্বর: টানা ৪২ দিন আটকে রাখার পরে তিন ভারতীয় ট্রাকচালককে ইরাকি জঙ্গিরা আজ মুক্তি দিয়েছে। কয়েকটি সংস্থা কে জি এল-এর তরফে তারা পগবন্দিরাই ট্রাক নিয়ে ইরাকে গিয়েছিলেন। একই সংস্থার আরও চার ভিন্দুসার (তিন জন কেনিয়ার, একজন মিশরের) ট্রাকচালককে ছেড়ে দিয়েছে জঙ্গিরা। ভারতীয় তিন পগবন্দি—অন্তর্যামী, টিলকরাজ ও সুখদেব সিংহকে আজ বিকেলেই বাগদাদে ছেড়ে দেওয়া হয়। বন্দিদের বাগদাদের পশ্চিমের শহর ফালুজা থেকে নিয়ে আসা হয়েছে। ভারতীয় দু'তাবাসে অক্ষয় বিক্রাম করে তাঁরা বিমানে ইরাক ছেড়ে কয়েক সিটিতে এসে পৌঁছন। ভারতের বিশেষ প্রতিমন্ত্রী ই আহমেদ জানিয়েছেন, বৃহস্পতিবার রাতে কয়েক সিটি থেকে বিমানে করে তাঁদের নিয়ে আসা হবে। শুক্রবার সকালে তারা দিল্লিতে পৌঁছবেন। ইরাকে জঙ্গিদের হাতে আটক ১২ জন নেপালিকে হত্যার পরে ভারতীয় বন্দিদের নিয়ে প্রচণ্ড উৎকণ্ঠা তৈরি হয়েছিল। দীর্ঘ টানাপোড়নের পরে আজ তাঁরা মুক্তি পাওয়ার তাদের বাড়ির লোকজনের পাশাপাশি ভারত সরকারও খুস্তির নিঃশ্বাস ফেলল।

পগবন্দিরাও তাদের মুক্তির জন্য ভারত ও কয়েক সরকারকে ধন্যবাদ জানিয়েছেন। ইসলামিক সিক্রেট আর্মি-র 'হোমসার্চ অফ দ্য গ্ল্যাক বার্নার্ড' নামে পরিচয় দিয়ে যে জঙ্গিরা এত দিন ঘরে ওই ট্রাকচালকদের আটকে রেখেছিল, গোড়া থেকেই তাদের দাবি ছিল যে, কয়েকটি সংস্থা কে জি এলকে ইরাকে আশ্রয়িতার হয়ে কাজ করা বন্ধ করতে হবে। একই সঙ্গে তারা ফালুজায় মার্কিন সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে যুদ্ধে নিহত ইরাকিদের পরিবারকে সাহায্য করার জন্য কে জি এল-এর কাছ থেকে বিপুল অর্থ দাবি করছিল। কে জি এল-এর হয়ে ইরাকি উপজাতি নেতা শেখ হিশাম আল-দুলাইলি মধ্যস্থতা করছিলেন। মুক্তিপনের অর্থ নিয়ে দীর্ঘ দিন কয়েকটি পরে বার বার আলোচনা ভেঙে অচলাবস্থা দেখা দেয়। এই অবস্থায় আটক পগবন্দিদের প্রাণরক্ষা নিয়ে আশঙ্কা বাড়ছিল। দাবি না মানলে জঙ্গিরা ওয়েবসাইটে ও আরব টিভি চ্যানেলে অন্তর্যামীকে দেখিয়ে এক বন্দিকে হত্যার হুমকি দিয়ে রেখেছিল। বিশেষ করে গতকালই আর একটি ইরাকি জঙ্গি সংগঠন ১২ জন নেপালি যুবককে হতিন বন্দি রাখার পর হত্যা করার ভারতীয়দের নিয়েও আশঙ্কা বাড়ছিল। তারই মধ্যে আচমকা আজ কে জি এল মুখপাত্র রানা জাইনে খবর দেন, তাদের সাত জন ট্রাকচালককে মুক্তি পেয়েছেন। কে জি এল-এর প্রেসিডেন্ট সইদ ইসমায়েল আল দাবি আজ রাতে কয়েকটি সিটিতে দাবি করেন, "জঙ্গিদের আগেও টাকা দেওয়া হয়েছে। তবে শেষে আমরাও ৫ লক্ষ ডলার দিয়েছি।" তবে আগে টাকা দেওয়া হয়েছে, তার অর্থই বা কত, তা তিনি খোলাসা করেননি।

দুবাইয়ের আল আরাবিয়া টিভি সাত ট্রাকচালককেই টিভির পর্যায়ে হাজির করেছে। তাদের হাসতে দেখা গিয়েছে, মোটামুটি সুস্থও দেখাচ্ছিল। তারা জানিয়েছেন, বন্দি অবস্থায় তারা বাবহারই পেয়েছেন। কে জি এল মুখপাত্র বলেছেন, "জঙ্গিরা পগবন্দি সাত জনকে বাগদাদেই ছেড়ে দেয়। খবর পেয়ে আমাদের চোটে আমরা তখন লাফাতে শুরু করেছিলাম। মনে হল এক দীর্ঘ দুঃস্বপ্নের রাত কাটল।"

কিন্তু ইরাকে এখনও বিভিন্ন দেশের ১৩ জন নাগরিক বিভিন্ন জঙ্গিগোষ্ঠীর হাতে আটক রয়েছেন। তাদের মধ্যে দু'জন ফরাসি ও এক জন ইরানি সাংবাদিক রয়েছেন। বাকিরা প্রধানত তুরস্ক, কুয়েত, জর্ডান, সৌদি আরব প্রভৃতি দেশের নাগরিক হলেও তারা বিভিন্ন সংস্থার ট্রাকচালক হিসাবেই কাজ করছিলেন। প্রায় সব ক্ষেত্রেই জঙ্গিদের দাবি, মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের অর্থ হিসাবে ইরাকে রসদ নিয়ে আসা বন্ধ করতে হবে। জঙ্গিদের দাবি মেনে জনৈক ইতিমধ্যেই ইরাক থেকে তাদের সব সংস্থার কাজকর্ম গুটিয়ে নিয়েছে। সবদিকসংস্থা রয়টার্স জানিয়েছে, ১৪ এপ্রিল

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

নেপাল সীমান্ত উত্তাল... পৃঃ ৫

Back-to-back terror attacks rattle Russia

Agencies
Moscow, September 1

AS NEWS of the school siege broke, commercial NTV broke into its regular programming and a news presenter read out reports of Russia's latest terror attack.

The first TV pictures from the siege, of troops surrounding the school and dragging civilians to cover, appeared on state-owned Russia TV. The story was the lead item in all television and radio news, pushing aside the suicide bomb attack on a Moscow underground station just hours earlier, which killed 10 people and wounded 51.

Russia TV did not break into programmes but carried news of the school siege in its regular news bulletins. "Three people have been killed and children have been placed at the windows as human shields," Ekho Moskvyy radio reported from the siege in the town of Beslan.

Television footage from outside the school showed men in camouflage with heavy-calibre machine guns taking up positions on the perimeter and other men in civilian dress with light automatic rifles pacing nervously.

At one point, a flak-jacketed soldier pulled a girl aged about seven in a floral print dress and a red bow in her hair around a corner, followed by an older woman, apparently fleeing from the school.

Heightened tension in Moscow itself was captured by Ekho Moskvyy radio during the morning. "Moscow awaits new terrorist attacks," it announced.

Ekho Moskvyy said police



REUTERS

A TV grab shows tense relatives near the school where unidentified gunmen are holding up to 400 school children hostage in Beslan on Wednesday.

guarding schools on the first day of the school term received photographs of female terrorist suspects reported by the press to be at large in the city.

Newspaper headlines told a similar story. "Crusade. Suicide-bomber terrorism is gathering pace", said *Komsomolskiy*. "Again a terrorist

act" headlined *Vedomosti*.

In one bulletin, an Ekho Moskvyy correspondent took a vox-pop of opinions on the streets of Moscow about measures to improve their security. "People have different views but are generally unsure of what they can do. All agree that the state must lead the fight against terror-

ism," the radio said.

The press, the radio and commercial NTV television all mulled over theories behind the attacks on the metro station and the two passenger airliners last week.

An Islamic group called the *Islambuli Brigades* claimed responsibility for the metro bombing. Russia

TV reported.

Some papers named a woman believed to be Tuesday night's suicide bomber and said she was connected to the two Chechen women suspected of blowing up the airliners.

But *Gazeta* voiced anger at ordinary Russians' increasing sense of vulnera-

bility. "How many more victims are needed for the authorities finally to admit and draw conclusions from the obvious fact: the methods used at present to fight terrorism are totally ineffective. In one week there are 100 innocent Russians killed and nearly 60 injured."

CRIME CHRONOLOGY

2004

August 31 Car blows up outside a Moscow subway, killing at least 10. Federal Security Services blame a female suicide bomber

August 24 Two airliners crash within minutes of each other after taking off from the same airport, killing a total of 90 people. Officials say explosive traces were found in the wreckage, and President Vladimir Putin calls the crashes terrorist acts

May 9 Bomb rips through a stadium in the Chechen capital, Grozny, killing provincial President Akhmad Kadyrov and 24 others. A Chechen warlord claims responsibility.

Feb 6 Explosion rips through a subway car in the Moscow metro during rush hour, killing 41 people. Authorities suspect a terrorist attack

2003

Dec 9 Female suicide bomber blows herself up outside Moscow's National Hotel, across from the Kremlin and Red Square, killing five bystanders

Dec 5 Suicide bombing on commuter train in southern Russia kills 44

Sept 16 Two suicide bombers drive a truck laden with explosives into a government security services building near Chechnya, killing three people and injuring 25

Aug 1 Suicide bomber rains truck filled with explosives into a military hospital near Chechnya, killing 50 people

June 5 Female suicide attacker detonates bomb near a bus carrying soldiers and civilians to Muzdak, killing at least 16 people



Relief at home ● Riots in Nepal ● Fresh crisis in Russia

HOSTAGE HIGH DRAMA

Indian trio freed in Iraq against \$1m ransom

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, September 1

THE UPA government's refusal to give in to hostage-takers — in sharp contrast to the NDA regime's handling of the Kandahar hijack — paid off today when the three Indian hostages were released by their Iraqi abductors after 42 nerve-racking days in captivity.

The breakthrough came after KGL, the Indians' Kuwaiti employer, paid their captors a ransom of \$1 million (nearly Rs 5 crore) even though it did not cease operations in Iraq, the company said. The abductors then released Antaryami, Tilak Raj and Sukhdev Singh as well as the four other hostages.

For the government, it meant immense relief — coming barely a day after 12 Nepalese hostages were slain by their Iraqi captors, deepening worries in India. "We were prepared for the worst, with a statement to be released if the abductors were to kill the hostages," a top government source told *Hindustan Times*.

The three hostages were handed over to Indian diplomats at the Egyptian embassy in Baghdad. They were taken to Kuwait by a KGL-chartered plane — to be flown to Delhi on Friday morning.

The happy news was broken by some Arabic news channels. The Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed, promptly got in touch with the Indian missions in Baghdad and Kuwait and then briefed External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The freed Indians, in a joint statement, thanked the governments of India and Kuwait. "We are happy to be free. We are thankful to our employers KGL for their efforts to bring us back. We are grateful to our own government and to the government of Kuwait for their sincere efforts to ensure our safety and safe return," the statement said. "Those who were holding us treated us well and gave us food, water and a place to stay. We are thankful to them for the good treatment given to us."

Ahamed said, "It's a matter of pride for all of us that our people have been released in conformity with our policies — without any of our principles sacrificed."

For the Centre, which refused to enter into any negotiations with the abductors even if that cost three Indian lives, the hostage drama had become a long-drawn-out game of chess, fraught with great political risk. Ahamed, the chief architect of the breakthrough, used his back channels in the Gulf — including a senior Qatari judicial official and an influential Omani cleric — holding out against mounting pressure from within the ruling alliance.

It was a tightrope walk. The government didn't want to be seen wilting under pressure, didn't want to negotiate with the abductors bypassing the interim regime in Baghdad and, most of all, was sworn against suffering a Kandahar-like loss of face.

See also Page 4



AFP

Rebels seize school, hold 400 captive

Fred Weir & Agencies
Moscow, September 1

TERRORISTS WEARING suicide-bomb belts today seized a Russian school near Chechnya taking hostage about 400 people, including 200 children. The attack, in the town of Beslan in North Ossetia, comes a day after a suicide bomber killed 10 people near a Moscow metro station.

The terrorists have threatened to kill 50 children for every abductor killed and 20 for every injured rebel, an official said. They have threatened to blow up the school if commandos attempt a rescue, and have forced children to stand at the windows.

The hostage-takers, suspected to be Chechen separatists, have demanded the release of militants held in neighbouring Ingushetia, but President Vladimir Putin said he would never negotiate with "terrorists and separatists".

About 20 armed men and women stormed the school in the morning, wearing black ski masks. A father who had brought his child to the school was shot dead when he tried to resist the raiders, said a spokeswoman for the regional parliament. A raider also was killed and nine people were injured. Unconfirmed reports said six of the injured had died in hospital, taking the death toll from the raid to eight.

After a brief gun battle with the police, the terrorists seized the building, herded about 400 hostages inside and mined all the entrances. It's believed that many parents had accompanied their children to the school and were trapped inside.

TV footage from outside the school showed a girl of about age seven in a floral print dress and a red bow in her hair streaking around a corner apparently after fleeing from the school, her hand held by a flak-jacketed soldier, followed by an older woman. Reports said about 50 students managed to escape, some after hiding in the school's boiler room during the raid.

"I was standing near the gates, music was playing, when I saw three armed people running with guns. At first I thought it was a joke. Then they fired in the air and we fled," a teenage witness, Zarubek Tsumartov, said on TV.

Related report on Page 13

Nepal mobs attack mosques, Bengal sounds border alert

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, September 1

MOBS SEEKING revenge for the killing of 12 Nepalese hostages by Iraqi militants ran wild across Nepal today, attacking mosques and Muslim establishments, prompting many Nepalese of Indian origin to flee into India.

In Kathmandu, mosques and over 100 offices of foreign employment agencies — even the Egyptian embassy — were attacked. The rioters ruled the streets in the morning, forcing the authorities to clamp indefinite curfew in the city.

As mosques were attacked just across the Bengal-Nepal border and refugees trickled in, an "alarmed" Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, fearing a spillover of the violence, asked the Centre to despatch the Indo-Tibetan Border Police. The police and BSF said they had already beefed up vigil.

New Delhi has initiated steps to evacuate its nationals to safer places if they, especially Muslims, become targets of attack. "We have kept our contingency plans ready," an Indian em-



AP

bassy official said. "We are in constant touch with Nepalese officials." With the anti-Indian riots of four years ago fresh in their minds, few Indians ventured out of their homes.

The rioters broke into the 150-year-old Kashmiri mosque and Nepali Jame Masjid, both situated close to the palace. Shouting "blood for blood" and "head for head", they stoned the mosques and smashed and burnt their belongings.

Most of the violence took place within 500 metres of the royal palace. Protesters

marched around the area, crying for revenge and chanting anti-government slogans. A building housing the offices of Qatar Airways and Sahara Air was set ablaze. Sahara cancelled its maiden flight to Kathmandu scheduled for today. The offices of Saudi Airlines, Gulf Air and Pakistan International Airlines were ransacked and their furniture dumped on the streets and burnt.

The police said that two persons had been killed in clashes between the mobs and the security forces.

Page 5: State government fears Muslim exodus from Nepal



(Clockwise from top) An Iraqi kidnapper reads a statement before the release of seven hostages, including three Indians, in Fallujah ● TV grab of special forces soldiers evacuating a girl and a woman, apparently after they escaped from the Russian school seized by rebels ● Riot police prevent protesters from entering a burning mosque in Kathmandu.

Iraqi ultras kill 12 Nepalese hostages

Associated Press

DUBAI, Aug. 31. — A website linked to an Iraqi militant group showed a video of what was purported to be the killing of 12 Nepalese workers by militants who had kidnapped them.

In a statement issued after an emergency Cabinet meeting tonight, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's government said it "considers this inhuman killing an act against human civilization and strongly deplorable."

The government, which announced relief for the families of the deceased, has decided to stop issuing permission to send Nepalese workers to Jordan, from where they usually cross border in Iraq.

In a village south of the Nepalese capital, relatives informed of the website pictures by reporters said they were shocked and accused the government of not trying hard enough to free the hostages. The 12 had been reported kidnapped on 20 August. The news of the killings sparked angry demonstrations in various parts of Kathmandu tonight.

The video showed a masked man in desert camouflage apparently slitting the throat of a blindfolded man lying on the ground. The blindfolded man moans and a shrill wheeze is heard, then the masked man displays the head to the camera before resting it on the decapitated body. Other footage showed a man firing single shots from an assault rifle at the back of the heads of 11 others. The 11 are dumped in a row in what appears to be a ditch. Blood seeps from their bodies on to the sand.

Still photos of similar scenes were posted on other websites known for militant Islamic comment. A statement on the website with the video was signed "Ansar al-Sunna Army" and vowed to keep fighting the Americans in Iraq.

The four-minute video was followed by a statement addressed to the Nepalese government "and other lapdogs of the Jews and the Christians", saying executions would be the fate of "every agent, traitor and spy". Nepal has sent no troops to Iraq despite requests from the USA.

Deaths show helplessness of Nepal govt, page 2



Photograph taken from the website of the militant group Ansar al-Sunna Army shows the bodies of the 11 Nepalese hostages in an undisclosed location after they were executed. The twelfth was beheaded. — AFP

Nepal hostage horror plays out on screen

Dubai, Aug. 31 (Agencies): A militant Iraqi group said it had killed 12 Nepali hostages and showed pictures of one being beheaded and the others being shot dead, the worst mass killing of captives since a wave of kidnappings erupted in April.

The 12, who were working as cooks and cleaners for a Jordanian company, had been reported kidnapped on August 20. The militant group Ansar al-Sunna said it had kidnapped them because they were cooperating with the American troops in Iraq.

The Nepal foreign ministry said it could not confirm the report of the hostages' deaths but added that the government had nothing to do with the US-led invasion of Iraq.

The website featured video footage that showed a masked man in desert camouflage apparently slitting the throat of a blindfolded man lying on the ground. The blindfolded man moans and a shrill wheeze is heard, then the masked man

displays the head to the camera before resting it on the decapitated body.

Other clips showed a man firing single shots from an assault rifle at the back of the heads of the others. The 11 are prone in a row in what appears to be a ditch. Blood seeps from their bodies on to the sand.

Still photos of similar scenes were posted on other websites known for militant Islamic comment.

At the hometown of Ramesh Kadhka, one of the Nepali hostages, relatives wept inconsolably after reports filtered in that the captives have been killed. "Oh God, why have you kept me alive," Kadhka's father Jit Bahadur cried at Lele, near Kathmandu.

Like hundreds of his fellow Nepalis, Kadhka was lured to West Asia with the dream of making a fortune that could change his life. Kadhka, the fifth of seven children, expected to make nearly 40,000 rupees (Rs 25,000) a month — six times what he would have made

from his old job working at a restaurant in Kathmandu.

The report of the massacre coincided with a stream of official statements from Delhi that three Indians taken hostage in Iraq would be freed soon.

In Himachal Pradesh, Ram Murti, the father of Indian hostage Antaryami, described the reported killings of the Nepali hostages as unfortunate but felt that it would not affect the prospects of his son's release.

In a statement, Ansar al-Sunna said: "We have carried out the sentence of God against 12 Nepalis who came from their country to fight the Muslims and to serve the Jews and the Christians...believing in Buddha as their God."

"Our brothers, do not feel any mercy or pity for these nasty and spiteful people," the statement added. "They have left their homes and their countries and crossed thousands of kilometres to work for the American crusader forces."

■ See Page 4

1 SEP 2004