

Laden tape calls for boycott of Iraq polls; Baghdad blast kills 15



Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim political leader Ammar Abdel Aziz al-Hakim speaks to reporters at the site of the car bomb in Baghdad on Monday. — AFP

Associated Press

CAIRO, Dec. 27. — In an audiotape broadcast by Al-Jazeera satellite television today, a man, purported to be Osama bin Laden, endorsed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as his deputy in Iraq and called for a boycott of next month's elections there.

The voice on the tape described al-Zarqawi as the Emir of Al-Qaida in Iraq and called upon Muslims there "to listen to him."

Speaking of a statement last month in which Zarqawi declared allegiance to Laden and changed his group's name to Al-Qaida in Iraq, the voice on the tape called it "a great step towards unifying all the

mujahideen." The voice sounded like Laden's but there was no way to confirm it. It said Zarqawi and those with him are fighting "for God's sake." Al-Jazeera broadcast excerpts of the tape while showing a still photo of the bearded Laden wearing a white robe and a head-covering.

Zarqawi's group is responsible for numerous car bombings and beheadings of foreign hostages in Iraq.

Shi'ite leader attacked

A suicide-bomber rammed an explosives-laden car into the Baghdad headquarters of top Iraqi Shi'ite Muslim political leader Mr Abdel Aziz Hakim today, killing 15 people and wounding many more. Mr Hakim, head of one of the country's main Shiite political parties, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), escaped with his life but a number of his guards were killed.

28 DEC 2004

THE STATESMAN

Split parade blot on marriage milestone

TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

Lucknow, Dec. 25: The executive body of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board today approved the draft model *nikaahnama*, which discourages triple *talaq*, in a step forward to its formalisation.

The achievement of the reform "milestone" of sorts by working out an overdue consensus, however, could not cushion the organisation from news of yet another "Muslim law board" being formed by an obscure group claiming to represent the Shia sect.

The draft, which will now be placed before the board's general body, has also given marriage an institutional framework by including a record of details of the bride, groom, their parents, witnesses and *mehr*; some marital dos and don'ts; and a dispute settlement mechanism. (See chart)

"Marriage in Islamic law is not a ritual. It is a sacrosanct contract," said S.Q.R. Ilyas, ex-

PART BY PART

A model *nikaahnama* will have the following sections

INTRODUCTION

- Name, age, address and educational qualification of bride/groom
- Name of parents, witnesses
- Amount of *mehr* for bride on marriage termination

GUIDELINES

- Marriage obligations and responsibilities

ecutive body member.

The draft *nikaahnama* (marriage contract) has three parts: introduction, guidelines and declaration.

The first will record the bride and groom's names, addresses, ages and educational qualification; their parents' and witnesses' names, and specification of *mehr* (dower and not dowry, the board clarified).

The guidelines detail the obligations and responsibilities of the couple. "By coming together, a man and a woman should be inspired by love and work towards their mutual satisfaction," said Kashmi Rasool Ilyas, a senior member.

- Marriage dos and don'ts

DECLARATION

- Couple's moral oath against hasty triple *talaq*
- Elaborate dispute settlement mechanism involving family elders, Shariat panchayat, Shariat court

The declaration, which covers areas of discord in the community, lays down a moral oath for couples to avoid hasty triple *talaq* and instead seek the counsel of family elders. If this fails, they are to approach the local Shariat panchayat where the qazi, too, will help out. The final appeal will be made to Darool Khaza, the Shariat court.

Asked why the board does not recommend abolition of triple *talaq*, spokesman Abdul Rahim Qureshi said it was outside the board's power to do so "but we are clearly discouraging its use".

The board, functioning

since 1971 as an unregistered, representative body of Muslims in India, has no power of adjudication and would thus campaign for the draft's promotion, members said.

The board also iterated its resolve to start a systematic media campaign on Muslim women's right to their parents' property. It ostensibly avoided any more bold reform decision after discontent over various sects' representation intensified this morning.

Shikoh Azad of the former Awadh royal family, along with Ali Hasan Qummi of the Shia Youth Federation, mooted a parallel board. Another had been launched by the Bareilvi sect's Maulana Taqueer Raza.

An angry Maulana Rabey Nadvi, the board chief, said going by the trend, the country will soon have "72 Muslim personal law boards". His feelings were assuaged by several noted leaders who said the "united face of the community" would give fringe elements a befitting answer.

26 DEC 2004 THE TELEGRAPH

Muslims face wall of suspicion in Europe

By John Elliott

Europe's reputation as a tolerant haven for people of all religions is under threat. Muslims are being viewed with high levels of disapproval, a survey has revealed.

Sweden emerges as the least welcoming west European nation; 75% of Swedes questioned said there is "definitely a lot" or "rather a lot" of disapproval of Muslims there. Britain is relatively tolerant. Just 39% of respondents said they believed that a significant number of people were opposed to Muslims.

The survey was conducted in the wake of the September 11 attacks and the Madrid train bombings to examine religious attitudes. Researchers surveyed 1,000 people in 19 European countries.

In Holland, 72% said there was a lot of disapproval of Muslims and in Denmark the figure was 67%. On average, 52% of people interviewed across western Europe believed that there was large-scale unhappiness about the number of Muslims.

An estimated 13 million Muslims live in the 25 countries of the European Union. On top of fears over Al Qaida attacks, tensions have risen in countries such as Holland where Theo van Gogh, the radical film maker, was stabbed to death by an Islamic extremist. This was followed by at least 13 arson attacks on mosques, churches and Islamic schools across the country.

The study also suggests that anti-Semitism has increased; 30% of those questioned believed that it had risen in their country over the past five years, 35% thought there had been no change and 14%

believed it had fallen. In Britain 33% believed there was more anti-Semitism while 50% believed there had been no change and 17% thought it had declined.

Mark Hofmans of GfK Worldwide, the German market research company that prepared the report with The Wall Street Journal, said he had been surprised by the results. "Most shocking were the results about anti-Semitism and attitudes towards Muslims, which were much more negative than we expected and widespread, too," he said.



Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, deputy director of the Islamic Foundation, a Leicester-based centre that promotes understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims, said the study "reflects the general perception now prevalent in our society."

He added: "Being a Muslim I am worried that Europe is replacing its anti-Semitism with yet another cancer—Islamophobia. There is nothing worse than the feeling that

you are not trusted or viewed with suspicion by your neighbours and fellow citizens." He added that Muslims viewed Britain more positively than other countries in Europe: "We feel we are much better treated here than anywhere else."

"In France for example Muslim girls are denied wearing the hijab in schools and in Germany, while the Turkish population have been living there for more than 30 years, they are still treated as guest workers and not allowed to be part of mainstream society." Azher Basharat, 35, a shop worker and devout Muslim from east London, said: "Things have got a little worse since September 11, some people look at us with greater suspicion. You can see it in their faces—they look a little uneasy." The Sunday Times

20 DEC 2004

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Dhaka leg of tour cleared

But Bangladesh may have to shift Chittagong matches

Rajnish Sharma and
Atreyo Mukhopadhyay
New Delhi/Dhaka, December 7

TEAM INDIA will leave Kolkata on Wednesday and play the first Test in Dhaka from December 10, but Chittagong is still uncertain as the second Test venue.

The home ministry said today Chittagong hadn't got the clearance because the Indian security team would visit the port city only on Wednesday to assess the arrangements. The home ministry doesn't want to take chances with Chittagong because Harkat-ul-Jehad al-Islami, which had threatened to kill the Indian cricketers to avenge the death of Muslims in the Gujarat riots, had a "strong presence" there. Sources said the city was also the landing point for weapons and explosives for the militant outfit.

The BCCI and the Bangladesh Cricket Board will have to shift the matches out of the port city if the home ministry report says it is not a safe venue.

Dhaka was cleared as a venue only after the Bangladeshi agencies said they would follow the elaborate list of security arrangements given by the Indian home ministry. The security team, led by Intelligence Bureau joint director (VIP security) Yashovardhan Azad, had detailed talks with senior Bangladeshi army and police officers. The team also met Bangladeshi home secretary Omar Farooq, who agreed to provide "foolproof security cover to Team India and make additional arrangements proposed by the Indian side".

Among the home ministry's suggestions are anti-sabotage checks, "access control" at the stadium and the team hotel and keeping vacant the floors above and below that occupied by the Indians. Even the route the play-

SECURITY CHECK



- ✓ Anti-sabotage checks at stadium and team hotel
- ✓ Hotel floors below & above those of Indians to be vacant
- ✓ Hotel-stadium route and security along it specified
- ✓ As in Pakistan, securitymen could accompany the Indians

NEW ITINERARY

1st Test	Dec 10-14	Dhaka
2nd Test	Dec 17-21	Venue to be fixed
1st ODI	Dec 23	Venue to be fixed
2nd ODI	Dec 26	Dhaka

ers would take to the stadium and the security along it have been specified, an official said.

Also, the home ministry would like to send securitymen with the players — an arrangement Pakistan had accepted for the series in March. Some Indian high commission officials in Dhaka, desperate to leave office after what they called was a "very busy day", were kind enough to say that the home ministry team, that reached here on Monday said all the matches might have to be played in Dhaka.

"We can't say anything now because we don't know anything. Nothing has been conveyed to the BCB so far," the Bangladeshi board's media panel vice-chairman said.

08 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MUSLIMS UNWELCOME, SAYS POLL

UNQUIET IN THE NETHERLANDS



A man being arrested by police during a major anti-terror raid in The Hague on Wednesday. The raid on an apartment came as part of an operation launched by the public prosecutor's office. — AFP

The Times, London

AMSTERDAM, Nov. 10. — Religious violence flared yesterday as thousands turned out to line the streets at the funeral of the murdered filmmaker and vocal critic of Islam, Theo van Gogh.

Two Dutch churches were attacked by arsonists, in seeming retaliation for earlier attacks on mosques, while an opinion poll showing that 40 per cent of Dutch people no longer considered Muslims welcome under-

lined a rapid deterioration of tolerance in the previously liberal Netherlands.

Theo van Gogh, whose last film *Submission* criticised the treatment of women under Islam, was cremated in an upbeat ceremony broadcast on large screens for the crowds outside an Amsterdam cemetery and live on national television.

A sarcastic letter was read out to his killer, promising "we will do our very best to learn more about your beliefs to prevent further misunder-

standing", and apologising that the killing "had to happen in the middle of Ramadan".

Theo van Gogh, a distant relative of the painter Vincent van Gogh, was shot six times and nearly decapitated as he cycled down a street in Amsterdam last week. A five-page letter declaring holy war and threatening death to the critics of Islam was stabbed to his chest with a knife.

At the funeral, crowds waved banners demanding: "Let's protect our freedom of speech" and "No to fundamentalism". Six alleged Islamic radicals are in custody in connection with the murder, including the alleged killer, Mohammed Bouyeri, (26), who holds Dutch and Moroccan passports. All face charges of conspiracy to murder.

Racism in Ireland too

Racist threats against Ireland's immigrant communities are growing, a government-appointed panel on racism reported Wednesday. The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Inter-culturalism said it had received reports of 70 racist incidents, ranging from verbal taunts to assaults, over the previous six months.

11 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

আদর্শ নিকাহনামা তৈরি করতে চায় মুসলিম ল. বোর্ড

লখনউ, ৯ অক্টোবর: তিন তালাক প্রথা নিয়ে বিতর্কের সমাধান খুঁজতে এ বার আদর্শ নিকাহনামা তৈরির কথা ভাবছে মুসলিম সম্প্রদায়ের অন্যতম শীর্ষ সংগঠন, অল ইন্ডিয়া মুসলিম পার্সোনাল ল বোর্ড।

ডিসেম্বরের শেষে কোম্বিকোডে অনুষ্ঠেয় বোর্ডের বার্ষিক সভায় এ বিষয়ে আলোচনা হবে। সংস্থার মুখপাত্র জানিয়েছেন, সামগ্রিক ভাবে শরিয়তি আইন এবং মুসলিম মেয়েদের পৈতৃক কৃষিজমির উত্তরাধিকার দেওয়ার বিষয়টিও খতিয়ে দেখা হবে।

সম্প্রতি তিন তালাকের অপব্যবহার নিয়ে নতুন করে বিতর্ক ঘনিয়ে ওঠে। কিন্তু মুসলিম ল বোর্ড ওই প্রথা বাতিল করতে রাজি হয়নি। তবে এর অপব্যবহারের সুযোগ যে রয়েছে, সেটা তারাও স্বীকার করেছিল। তাই এ বার স্বামী-স্ত্রী উভয়ের জন্য এক আদর্শ নিকাহনামা তৈরির কথা ভাবা হচ্ছে। সংস্থায় সভায় তা অনুমোদিত হলে সারা দেশে সব গোষ্ঠীর মুসলিমদের মধ্যেই তা কার্যকর হবে। মুখপাত্র আব্দুল রহমান কুরেশির মতে, এ দেশে মুসলিমদের মধ্যে কোনও

সাধারণ বিবাহবিধি না থাকতেই বিতর্ক জন্ম নিচ্ছে।

কিন্তু নিকাহনামায় একটি হলফনামা রাখা হচ্ছে, যেটি উভয়কেই কাজী এবং দুই সাক্ষীর উপস্থিতিতে স্বাক্ষর করতে হবে। ওই হলফনামা উভয়ের বৈবাহিক জীবনে একটি নির্দেশিকা হিসাবে কাজ করবে বলে আশা করা হচ্ছে।

তবে, মেয়েদের সরাসরি তালাক বা বিবাহবিচ্ছেদ চাওয়ার অধিকার দিতে রাজি নয় বোর্ড। কুরেশি বলেন, নিকাহের চুক্তিতে আর্থিক দায়ভার যে হেতু পুরুষকেই নিতে হয়, তাই তালাকের অধিকারও তার হাতেই থাকা উচিত। মেয়েদের ওই অধিকার দেওয়ার কোনও যুক্তি নেই।

কিন্তু তাঁর মতে, শরিয়ত কোনও ভাবেই মেয়েদের স্বার্থবিরোধী নয়। শরিয়তি আইনে বহু বিধি আছে যা মেয়েদের অধিকারের সমর্থক। তাই অ-মুসলিমদের মনে শরিয়ত নিয়ে ভ্রান্ত ধারণা দূর করতে শাহবানু মামলার পর যেমন সচেতনতা-প্রচার চালানো হয়েছিল, তার পুনরাবৃত্তির কথাও ভাবছে বোর্ড।

— পি টি আই

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

10 OCT 2004

Muslim board divided over family planning issue

9/15/04
159
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: All is not well within the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB). Top office-bearers of the Board are divided over the issue of taking up family planning and education to curb the Muslim growth of population.

Terming Maulana Syed Kalbe Sadiq's suggestion, that the Board would take up FP and education issues, as his "personal" opinion, AIMPLB chairman Maulana Syed Mohammed Rabey Hasan Nadvi's office told TOI that both the issues were outside the Board's purviews and there was no proposal from any quarter to include them in the next general body meeting in December.

"The Board has nothing to do with it. It may be the personal view of Dr Sadiq. The Board has no plan to take up the issue of family planning during its next meeting. However, Dr Sadiq is free to raise the matter with the permission of the Board chairman," said Jafrayab Jilani, a Board member, reacting to Sadiq's statement after the release of the census data.

Jilani, who held talks with Board



assistant general secretary Rahim Qureshi on the issue, claimed that the AIMPLB was created to protect the Muslim personal laws, which are covered under the Shariat Application Act of 1933, and is not a forum to discuss family planning, health or education. "There are other bodies which are looking into these things. As per its constitution, the Board is for protecting Muslim personal laws," he clarified. Significantly, the chairman has already set the agenda for the Board's next meeting in December and FP and education are not included in it. Although a member or office-bearer can raise the issue with the

permission of the chairman, Sadiq has not submitted any written proposal so far for raising both the issues.

Usually, the Board takes up issues related to marriage, talaq, meher, maintenance, guardianship, waqf, gift, will and other matters relating to the Muslim personal laws. During its last meeting in Kanpur, the issue of triple talaq had kicked up a country-wide debate forcing the Board to work in the direction of drafting a new talaqnama and educating community members about the ill-effects of triple talaq. In 1975, the Board had to intervene when nasbandi (vasectomy) was "forced" upon community members during the Emergency. "Islam is not against family planning. There are no restrictions for Muslims on family planning methods. Like any other community, Muslims too adopt it by choice," Jilani clarified.

"It is nothing but propaganda by the BJP and the RSS," Jilani said, adding that educated Muslims in India did not have large families. "In slums and rural areas, even Hindus and other communities also have large families. Why blame Muslims alone?" Jilani asked.

Al Qaida tape warns US of defeat in Iraq

Dubai: Two days before the third anniversary of 9/11, Osama bin Laden's right-hand man emerged for the first time in a year to warn Americans of "imminent defeat for their armies in Iraq and Afghanistan".

With Americans needing no reminder of their vulnerability to potential terrorist attack, Al Qaida No. 2 Ayman al-Zawahiri was shown on Al-Jazeera television on Thursday night doing just that. "Americans will no longer be safe if their government does not stop committing crimes against Muslims in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine," said the fugitive Egyptian cleric, shown on the tape with an assault rifle at his side.

"The American defeat in Iraq and Afghanistan has become just a question of time, God willing," he told the world, nearly three years to the day since the September 11, 2001, attacks on New York and Washington. "In the two countries, the Americans are between two fires: if

they remain there, they will bleed to death, and if they withdraw they will have lost everything."

Zawahiri said that armed Islamists, whom he described as Al Qaida's mujahedeen, had foiled US forces in Iraq and left them hiding in the trenches in Afghanistan.



Ayman al-Zawahiri

The US death toll in Iraq hit the 1,000 mark earlier this week as American troops battle a deadly insurgency that has also set its sights on taking hostage any foreigners perceived as collaborating with the US-led forces.

"In Iraq, the mujahedeen foiled the American plan after the interim government showed such weakness," said the 53-year-old Zawahiri, considered by Washington to be Al Qaida's ideologue and main strategist. He claimed that the terror network's mujahedeen were in control of "the entire east and south of Afghanistan" with the support of the people. AFP

Jemaah claims Jakarta bombing

AFP & AP

DUBAI, Sept. 10. — The Al-Qaida-linked group Jemaah Islamiyah claimed responsibility for the car bomb attack outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta that killed at least nine people and warned of further attacks.

An Islamic web site, www.islamic-minbar.com, posted a statement saying: "We decided to settle accounts with Australia, one of the worst enemies of God and Islam, ... and a mujahideen brother succeeded in carrying out a martyr operation with a car bomb against the Australian embassy" in Jakarta. The authenticity of the claim could not be immediately verified.

"It is the first of a series of attacks... We advise Australians in Indonesia to leave this country or else we will transform it into a cemetery for them." The statement said: "We advise the Australian government to withdraw its troops from Iraq. If our demand is not satisfied, we will deal them many painful blows," reads the text signed "Jemaah Islamiyah in eastern Asia — department of information — Indonesia".

In Jakarta, police today

Manhunt for two



WANTED: Azahari bin Husin, a key JI bomb maker. — AFP

JAKARTA, Sept. 10. — Indonesian police chief Gen. Dai Bachtiar said authorities were hunting for two key alleged members of Jemaah Islamiyah — suspected Malaysian bomb makers Azahari bin Husin and Noordin Top — and had discovered an empty house near the international airport rented last month by the suspects. — AP

said they suspect two suicide bombers were behind the car bombing and were investigating whether two suicide bombers were among the dead.

Meanwhile, a senior police officer said the vehicle used in the attack was a green Daihatsu minivan. He said police have recovered a vehicle chassis and other car parts — a key step that led to the arrest of suspects in the Bali bombings.



Elizabeth Manuela Musu, a five-year-old Australian girl who was wounded in the Jakarta explosion, arrives at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore on Friday. — AFP

Mother killed, child in hospital

SINGAPORE, Sept. 10. — A five-year-old Australian girl critically injured in the bombing outside her country's embassy in Indonesia arrived in Singapore today for specialist treatment.

Elizabeth Manuela Bin Musu's Indonesian mother, 27-year-old Maria Eva Kumalawati, was among the nine people killed in yesterday's explosion. Her father, Sydney police officer Mr David Norman, flew to Singapore to be with his daughter. Doctors said the girl had two large pieces of shrapnel removed from her abdomen before leaving Jakarta, and they would check for smaller pieces and assess the extent of her head injuries. "It does look like she sustained a significant head injury as she has been in and out of consciousness," said Dr Charles van Reenan, a medical director with SOS International, the company that evacuated her from Jakarta. "Her chances of full recovery were 'quite high,'" he added. When the blast occurred, the child had been heading to the embassy to pick up her new Australian passport after becoming a citizen on 1 September. "Elizabeth's well-being is of great concern to the Australian government," the country's high commissioner to Singapore, Mr Gary Quinlan, said today. — AP

'Worse than Bali'

JAKARTA, Sept. 10. — Explosives used in the attack on Australia's embassy in Jakarta were more powerful than devices which killed 202 people in the Bali bombings, but lives were spared because of heavy security, Australia's foreign minister said today.

Speaking during a tour of the site of yesterday's blast, Mr Alexander Downer paid tribute to the nine Indonesians who perished in the attack but said it was a "miracle" that there were not more fatalities. He also claimed that police had received a mobile phone text message 45 minutes before the bombing warning that foreign missions in Jakarta would be attacked unless the alleged head of Jemaah Islamiyah, Abu Bakar Bashir, was freed from prison. Indonesian police said they had received no such warning.

Mr Downer also issued a stark warning to those behind the bombing: "These terrorists need to know that Australia will hunt down terrorists until we catch every single one of them." — AFP & AP



Grieving relatives of an Indonesian man killed in the Jakarta bombing. — AFP

আল কায়দা শিবিরে পাক হানা, হত ৭০

ইসলামাবাদ, ৯ সেপ্টেম্বর:
অফগানিস্তান সীমান্ত ল্যাপোয়া দক্ষিণ
ওয়াজিরিস্তান প্রদেশে আল কায়দা
জঙ্গিদের ঘাটিতে কের হামলা চালাতে
শুরু করল পাক সেনাবাহিনী। আজ
সকালে একটি জঙ্গি প্রশিক্ষণ শিবিরে
চালানো ক্যাম্পেত্র ও বিমান হামলায়
কমপক্ষে ৭০ জন প্রাণ হারিয়েছে বলে
সরকারি সূত্রে দাবি করা হয়েছে।

সেনা মুখপাত্র শৌকত সুলতান
জানান, খুনখেলা পার্বত্য এলাকার
লাহিমানজাই গ্রামে আল কায়দা,
তালিবান ও অন্যান্য ইসলামি জঙ্গি
গোষ্ঠীর সদস্যেরা প্রশিক্ষণ শিবির
চালাচ্ছিল। সেই শিবিরে উজবেক,
চেচেন ও আরব জঙ্গিরা ছিল বলেও
তারা দাবি। সেখানে ক্যাম্পেত্র হামলা
চালানো হলে ৪০ জনের মৃত্যু হয়
বলে একটি বেসরকারি টেলিভিশন
চ্যানেল জানিয়েছে। মৃতদেহগুলি
উদ্ধার করার সময় জঙ্গি বিমান থেকে
ফেলা বোমায় বহু স্থানীয় মানুষ মারা
যান বলে খবর। সুলতান জানিয়েছেন,
এ দিন সকালে টানা দু'ঘণ্টা অভিযান
চালায় পাক সেনাবাহিনী। জঙ্গি
শিবিরটি পুরোপুরি ভেঙে দেওয়া
হয়েছে বলে দাবি করেছেন তিনি।

বুধবার দক্ষিণ ওয়াজিরিস্তানের
রাজধানী ওয়ানা শহরে পাক
সেনাবাহিনীর একটি কনভয়ের উপরে
হামলা চালায় জঙ্গিরা। এই ঘটনায়
তিন জন সেনা আহত হন। তার পর
গুলির লড়াইয়ে মৃত্যু হয় ছয় জন
সাধারণ নাগরিকের। সেনাদের
গুলিতে এই ছ'জন মারা গিয়েছেন
বলে স্থানীয় সূত্রে জানানো হলেও
সেনার দাবি, জঙ্গিদের গুলিতেই তারা
প্রাণ হারান। এই ঘটনার পরের দিনই
জঙ্গি শিবিরে অভিযান চালায় পাক
সেনা। — রয়টার্স, পি টি আই

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

10 SEP 2004

The love of Islam

The Prophet interpreted jihad as primarily a struggle with oneself, a war within. Yet its meaning is being monstrously distorted by Islamic movements. There is a need to find an Islamic alternative to Al Qaeda

■ KAMAL DAVAR

TO MUCH of the so-called civilised world, the second largest and the fastest growing religion in the world—Islam—unfortunately gets bracketed with terror thanks to the Osama bin Ladens, Al-Zawahiris, Al-Zahars, Syed Nasarullahs. It is argued with some conviction that the growth of terror is directly proportional to the increasing presence of Islamic fundamentalists in certain regions of the world. The once venerable 'madarsa' is being increasingly referred to as the 'jihad factory'. The very word 'jihad' conjures up in the West visions of a holy war.

Westerners are not the only people who misconstrue the idea of jihad. Muslim fundamentalists and militant Islamic movements have distorted its profound meaning of 'an inner struggle to be a good and devout Muslim'. The greater jihad as enunciated and interpreted by the Prophet Mohammad is firstly inward seeking and primarily involves the effort of each Muslim to become a better human being.

However, it may be noted that Islam sanctions rebellion against an unjust ruler and this is the lesser jihad. Today's Islamic Jihadi movements—from the Taliban in Afghanistan, to the Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad in Pakistan, from the Hezbollah in Lebanon to the Hamas in Israel to the extremists in Indonesia and the



After the Beslan horror: Nowhere in any Muslim writings is the killing of innocent non-Muslims, men, women, kids or fellow Muslims sanctioned

Moros in Philippines, the IMU and HUT in Central Asia and, above all, the Al Qaeda worldwide—have conveniently ignored the greater jihad as advocated by the Prophet and managed to thrust the lesser jihad down the throats of many innocent Muslims as political and social gospel. Yet, nowhere in any Muslim writings, the killings of innocent non-Muslims, men, women, children or fellow Mus-

lims sanctioned.

The sole superpower, the US, notwithstanding being the most threatened, must understand that nothing is more self-defeating for a "hyperpower" than the temptation of unilateralism. The UN has to take on the leadership of the global war on terror by evolving a multi-faceted and all-embracing grand strategy that synthesises the views of all its member

countries besides synergising their resources.

The ultimate solution to Islamic terrorism lies within the faith of Islam itself. The Holy Quran places far more emphasis on love, mercy, equality, justice, peace and compassion than the few and much-quoted verses on the call for jihad against infidels. Muslim seats of learning like the Al Azhar in Cairo, the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Aligarh Muslim University in India and other well-respected institutions of Muslim learning and madarsas all over the Muslim and Muslim countries must be encouraged by the world community and enlightened Muslim clerics to preach and impart the true interpretation of the word of the Prophet and not the perverse interpretations of the Terror Masters.

Indian Muslims practise a tolerant and pluralistic form of Islam and fully subscribe to India's secular and democratic polity. There is no contradiction in being a devout Muslim and also being modern. Muslim countries like Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia are good examples of developing Islamic societies, with even a theocratic state like Iran opening up to modernity without renouncing Islamic values. However, many Muslim nations in the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia do require potent doses of democracy and reforms and the global community has also to look in that direction. The world over, moderate

Muslim regimes need all the encouragement, both political and economic, to get into the mainstream.

Another aspect that requires far more honing and cooperation is a much greater degree of willing information-sharing among governments. The global reach of terrorist infrastructure necessitates genuine cooperation, ingenuity and creative approaches in information-sharing among both non-Muslim and Muslim governments.

The Quran places far more emphasis on love, mercy, equality and peace than the few and much-quoted verses on the call for 'jihad' against infidels. Muslim seats of learning like AMU must be encouraged to preach the true interpretation of the Prophet's word

There are many Arab and other Islamic countries who have effective intelligence at the grassroots level but do not share it with their Western counterparts, perceiving it to be anti-Islamic. If Sudan and Syria could share intelligence with the US after 9/11, cooperation in this vital field is possible.

The mention of the Islamic 'ummah' creates some discomfort in non-Muslim minds. The Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) must assert itself not only as an Islamic entity but as a voice of sanity and reason the world over. The OIC must thus symbolise modern Islam. It is indeed paradoxical that a country like India, which is home to the second largest number of Muslims in the world, is not represented in this community of nations. Such dichotomies need to be addressed by the OIC.

Lt Gen Kamal Davar recently retired as the first chief of Defence Intelligence Agency. These are his personal views

Militants seek fatwa on Iraq foreigners' kidnap

Associated Press
Baghdad, September 5

AN IRAQI militant group appealed on Sunday to an influential Sunni Muslim organisation for an edict on whether the kidnapping of foreigners who work for occupation forces is acceptable under Islam.

The appeal came in a video aired on the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya satellite channel, which showed a masked man reading a statement seeking a "fatwa" from the Association of Muslim Scholars.

"We are confident that all the Islamic resistance in Iraq will abide it if it was in the interest of Islam, Jihad and Iraq," said the man, who identified himself only as a member of Holders of the Black Banners.

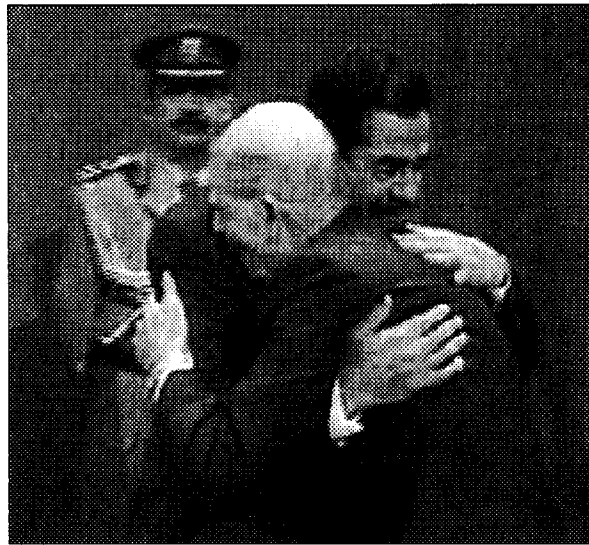
The group recently kidnapped seven truck drivers, demanding their employer stop working in Iraq. The drivers were released after weeks in captivity. The Association of Muslim Scholars had no immediate comment.

Militants waging a 16-month insurgency have increasingly turned to kidnapping to force coalition forces and contractors from the country. More than 100 foreigners have been abducted since the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2002 and many have been executed.

On Sunday the body of an Egyptian man was discovered in northern Iraq.

Iraqi National Guard Maj. Gen. Anwar Mohammed Amin said the body was found near Beiji,

IN HAPPIER TIMES



AFP

A file picture shows former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein with Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri in Baghdad.

150 miles north of Baghdad. The man's hands were bound with a rope and it appeared he had been beaten. Amin said identification found on the body showed the man was an Egyptian citizen.

Officials at the Egyptian Embassy in Baghdad said they had no immediate information about the body found near Beiji.

On Saturday, militants threatened to behead a Turkish truck driver if his employers and a Kuwaiti contractor did not leave Iraq within 48 hours.

And France's foreign minister, Michel Barnier, returned home from the Middle East without winning the release of two French journalists held hostage since mid-August.

Former Saddam deputy arrested

Associated Press
Baghdad, September 5

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S former second-in-command, Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, was arrested in northern Iraq, an Iraqi Defence Ministry spokesman told al-Hurra television today.

US Maj. Neil O'Brien of the Tikrit-based 1st Infantry Division, however, said he could not confirm the report. A US Embassy spokesman in Baghdad also said he had no information about an arrest.

Defence Ministry spokesman Saleh Sarhan said al-Douri was captured while in a clinic where he was receiving medical treatment.

"There was a major operation around Tikrit and al-Dour and American forces supported by Iraqi civil defence corps members were able to capture Izzat al-Douri," he told the station in a live telephone interview.

Sarhan said al-Douri was now in the hands of the Americans. Ahmed Hadi, a spokesman for the minister of state for provincial affairs, said officials were doing DNA testing to confirm his identity.

"To be sure that he is Izzat al-Douri, a sample of his blood has been taken," he said. "It will be examined so that it could be confirmed that he is Izzat al-Douri."

Hadi said the man was arrested during a raid by US forces and Iraqi National Guard in Tikrit and the areas around it.

Tall Afar fighting

Violence also flared in northern Iraq as US troops and insurgents fought in Tall Afar, which the military claims serves as a way station for militants slipping into Iraq from Syria.

Fighting erupted after gunmen fired on a US army convoy outside the town, 60 km west of Mosul, said police lieutenant Ghaith Mohammed Al-Obeidi.

US soldiers and Iraqi national guardsmen poured into Tall Afar and clashes broke out lasting for about two hours before the US and Iraqi forces withdrew. Thirteen Iraqis were killed and 53 injured on Saturday when a US army battalion, backed by Iraqi national guardsmen, launched an offensive in Tall Afar.

Putin sees Chechen links to Al-Qaeda

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, AUG. 31. Russia's President, Vladimir Putin, said the bombing of two Russian airliners last week proved a link between Chechen terrorists and Al-Qaeda.

"The fact that an international terrorist organisation linked to Al-Qaeda took responsibility for blowing up the two planes shows once again the connection between destructive elements in Chechnya and international terrorism," Mr. Putin told reporters. He was speaking after tripartite talks with the French President, Jac-

ques Chirac, and the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, in the Black Sea resort of Sochi.

Investigators found traces of explosives in the wreckage of both planes, and voiced suspicion that two female Chechen suicide bombers — one on each aircraft — had brought down the planes, killing 90 persons. Last week, an Al-Qaeda linked group called "Islambouli Brigades" claimed responsibility for downing the Russian planes.

'Joint effort needed'

Flanked by the leaders of France and Germany, Mr. Putin today reiterated the importance

of joint efforts for fighting international terrorism.

"The latest events in the world, in Russia, in Iraq — the problems our French partners have encountered — demonstrate the danger of international terrorism for all the countries of the world," he said at the press conference in Sochi. "We need joint efforts for dealing with the threat."

He said Russia would continue to combat rebels in Chechnya, and his Government was prepared "to continue dialogue with any forces interested in a political solution in Chechnya." On Sunday, Chechens elected a

Kremlin loyalist as their President in snap elections called after the previous President was killed by a bomb blast in May.

Solidarity

The French President, Mr. Chirac, voiced support for Mr. Putin's policy on Chechnya. "A political solution is necessary and this is what Russia wants but a political solution has a limit," Mr. Chirac said at the news conference following talks with Mr. Putin. "It is a limit that everyone can understand and that no-one can seriously contest ... the territorial unity of the Russian Federation."

Scarf shadow on scribes' kidnap

French Muslims plead for release

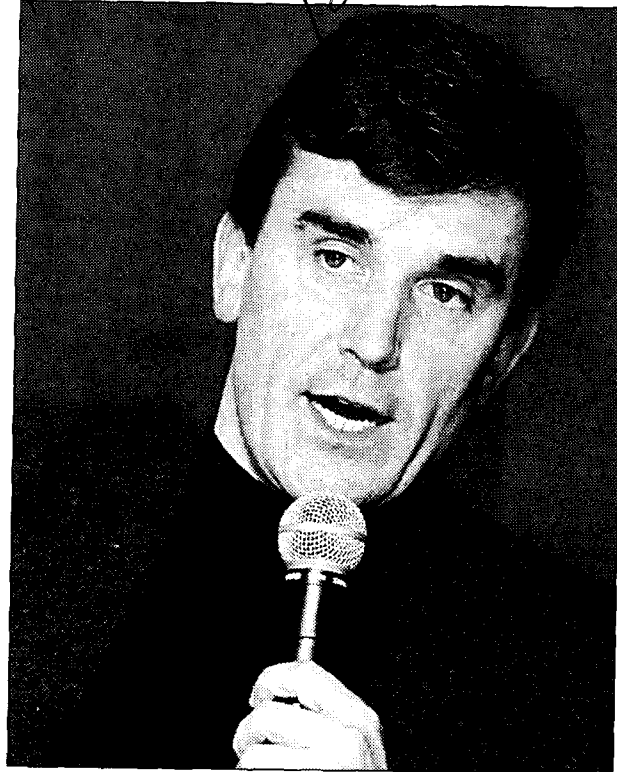
Paris, Aug. 29 (Reuters): France's government and leaders of its Muslim minority urged Iraqi militants today to free two French journalists they were holding hostage in a bid to force Paris to revoke its ban on Muslim headscarves in schools.

The appeal came as Paris held a series of emergency meetings to consult cabinet ministers and parliamentarians about the demand by the Islamic Army in Iraq holding journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot.

The militant group, which the Arabic television station Al Jazeera last Thursday reported had killed Italian journalist Enzo Baldoni, has given Paris 48 hours to rescind the ban due to apply from the start of state schools on Thursday.

"We want everyone to know that secularism in our country does not divide the French but unites them," interior minister Dominique de Villepin said, flanked by Muslim leaders. "French people of all origins and all religions are united in support of our compatriots Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot," he said. "Together, we ask for their release."

French Muslim leaders reacted nervously to the news and denied there was any link between the two issues.



French Committee of the Muslim Faith member Fatiha Ajbli (right) speaks to the press following the committee's meeting with interior minister Dominique de Villepin to discuss the kidnapping of French journalists Christian Chesnot and Georges Malbrunot (Reuters picture on the left) in Iraq. (AFP)

"The French Muslim community is absolutely innocent," said Dalil Boubakeur, head of the French Council of the Muslim Faith. "I beg that there not be any confusion between the French Muslim community and this odious blackmail."

Lhaj Thami Breze, head of the Union of French Islamic Organisations (UOIF) which has urged schoolgirls to defy the ban, said the headscarf issue was strictly a French affair. "We cannot accept any outside interference," he said.

France passed the law banning conspicuous signs of faith in state schools last March in reaction to the grow-

ing influence of Islamist activists among its five million Muslims and mounting tensions between Muslim and Jewish youths in schools.

Criticised abroad as a violation of religious freedom, it won a boost in June when the European Court of Human Rights ruled in a case from Turkey that banning headscarves did not abuse human rights and was valid to fight fundamentalism.

Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin met interior minister Villepin, foreign minister Michel Barnier and culture minister Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres early today for a first review of the



situation.

He was due to meet President Jacques Chirac later today "for a working meeting on the situation of the two French journalists," presidential spokeswoman Catherine Colonna said. Raffarin was also due to meet education minister Francois Fillon and defence minister Michele Alliot-Marie as well as the speakers of the National Assembly and the Senate.

Chesnot worked for Radio France International (RFI) and Malbrunot for the dailies *Le Figaro* and *Ouest France*. They disappeared en route from Baghdad to Najaf on August 20, the day after Baldoni

was taken hostage.

RFI vice president Alain Menargues sought a ray of hope in the fact the militants' communique did not threaten to kill the two journalists.

"When you read the text in Arabic, it's very clear — 'we give France 48 hours to respond to this communique'," he told France 2 television. "We don't consider this an ultimatum. We're hanging on to this hope."

The Paris-based media watchdog Reporters Without Borders appealed to Iraq's Shia leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Sunni religious leaders to help free the journalists.

Veil venom hits France in Iraq

Dubai, Aug. 29 (Reuters): An Iraqi militant group has kidnapped two French journalists and given the French government 48 hours to end its ban on Muslim headscarves in school, Arabic television station Al Jazeera said yesterday.

Jazeera identified the hostages as reporters George Malbrunot and Christian Chesnot. Last week, the French foreign ministry said the two men had gone missing in Iraq.

The channel aired a brief video showing what it said were the two journalists standing in front of a black banner bearing the name of the Islamic Army in Iraq. One man told the camera: "I would like to tell my family that everything is OK".

Malbrunot worked for *Le Figaro* and *Ouest France* newspapers and Chesnot for Radio France International. They were declared missing on the day Italy said freelance journalist Enzo Baldoni was also missing and his driver had been reportedly killed.

Jean-Louis Validire, editor-in-chief of *Le Figaro's* foreign service, said Malbrunot and Chesnot were last spotted in Baghdad on August 20 and were probably preparing to go to the Iraqi city of Najaf where US troops battled an insurgency.

Baldoni was ambushed along the Baghdad-Najaf road and taken hostage by the Islamic Army in Iraq. On Thursday, Al Jazeera reported the

group killed him because Italy refused to heed a deadline to withdraw troops from Iraq.

The Al Jazeera announcer said the Islamic Army in Iraq issued an ultimatum to France to abandon its "unfair and aggressive" ban on Muslim headscarves in state schools within 48 hours. It did not say whether the group threatened to kill its captives if France did not comply.

RFI vice president Alain Menargues told LCI television it was a great relief to see the two reporters alive, but knowing their situation made waiting for news hard to bear.

"I'm thinking of my Italian colleague, I'm thinking of these two Frenchmen and I say to myself maybe there is still hope. So let's hang on to that hope," he said.

The French foreign ministry confirmed it had heard the news about the two journalists broadcast on Al Jazeera and said its embassy in Baghdad was ready to act.

"More than ever before, the French embassy in Baghdad, as the other French authorities, are mobilised for action," a French foreign ministry spokesperson said. "Once again, we call for the freeing of the two French journalists."

France is home to five million Muslims, the largest Muslim population in Europe. Its law banning Muslim headscarves in state schools passed its final parliamentary hurdle in March.

RUSSIAN CRASHES / MORE ATTACKS WARNED

Islam
1-21-2
29/8

Bombers linked to Al-Qaeda

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, AUG. 28. The leader of an Islamist group that claimed responsibility for the bombing of two Russian airliners on Tuesday had long been based in Pakistan before moving to Chechnya, a Russian daily reported.

The Al-Qaeda-linked militant group, "the Islambouli Brigades" on Friday said it had blown up the two Russian passenger airplanes to avenge the killing of Muslim Chechens. Russian investigators found traces of explosive in the wreckage of both planes and named two Chechen women passengers who are suspected of blowing up the aircraft.

First blow

"Our *Mujahideen*, with God's grace, succeeded in directing the first blow which will be followed by a series of other operations in a wave to extend support and victory to our Mus-

lim brothers in Chechnya and other Muslim areas which suffer from Russian faithlessness," the statement said.

The same group claimed responsibility for last month's attempt to assassinate Pakistan's Prime Minister-designate, Shaukat Aziz. At that time the group explicitly said that it was an "organisation of the Al-Qaeda."

A Russian business newspaper said today "the Islambouli Brigades" was lead by Mohammed Islambouli, younger brother of Lt. Khaled Islambouli, leader of the group of soldiers who assassinated the Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, during a military parade in Cairo in 1981. Lt. Khaled Islambouli was tried and executed in 1982.

From 1983 to 2001 Mohammed Islambouli lived in Pakistan's Peshawar, where he headed a recruiting and training outfit of Osama Bin Laden's Maktab al Hidmat (MAH). When the Al-Qaeda was estab-

lished in 1988 Islambouli became one of its leaders and closely interacted with Osama's military commander, Muhammad al-Zawahiri, the *Kommersant* daily said. Islambouli also fought against Russian forces in Afghanistan. In 2001 he moved his base to Jalalabad in Afghanistan where he trained Egyptian militants who fought U.S. forces when they moved against the Taliban in the aftermath of 11/9. The daily cited intelligence information that Islambouli was captured by U.S. commandos in December 2001, but for some reason was released. At the end of December, 2001, Arab sources said Islambouli was a field commander in Chechnya and canvassed for financial aid in Europe in return for sending Chechen militants to West Asia. His name was found in a list of members of a rebel group found on the field commander Oibek Rakhimov who was killed in Chechnya on January 16, 2002.

THE HINDU

2001-08-29

Moderate voices in Islam

By Hasan Suroor

A community freed from the constant pressure of having to justify and explain itself is likely to feel more confident to take a harder look at itself.

IT IS perhaps too early to start celebrating but two new — and controversial — books on Islam have raised hopes that the long-awaited debate in the Muslim community over reforms may have begun, at last. One is by a United Kingdom-based Pakistani scholar who is also a practising Muslim with solid grounding in Islamic theology; and the other by a Canadian Muslim woman broadcaster who calls herself a “Muslim refusenik,” someone who refuses to “join an army of automatons in the name of Allah.”

Both Ziauddin Sardar (*Desperately Seeking Paradise: Journeys of a Sceptical Muslim*) and Irshad Manji (*The Trouble with Islam*) write from the “inside” and both are heavily critical of Islam and their Muslim brethren. Though they approach the issues differently, the conclusions that they reach are the same: without urgent reforms in the Islamic world and a radical change in the way Muslims perceive themselves and their religion in the modern world, the community is doomed.

Mr. Sardar is a devout believer, and has studied Islam closely — seeking answers to questions which the “establishment Islam” pretends do not exist. He has worked extensively with Islamic groups in Britain and the Muslim world — an experience which left him profoundly disturbed, and worried that Islam was in the danger of being hijacked by right-wing preachers and “leaders” engaged in promoting ignorance and blind faith. His critique is steeped in deep scholarship and the questions he raises are at the heart of what has gone wrong with Islam.

I am deliberately harping on Mr. Sardar’s Islamic credentials to emphasise that, given his background, what he says cannot be dismissed as simply another Islamophobic rant. His analysis will not make pleasant reading to those who believe that Islam has all the answers, and anyone who calls for a debate or reform is anti-Islam, if not plain *kafir*. He says he found such people “repugnant.” “Islam, for them, was an ideology that allowed for no imperfections, no deviation, and, in the final analysis, no humanity. This is why I found so

many of them so repugnant.”

Ms. Manji, on the other hand, comes from a very different background and fits in more with the idea of an “average” Muslim — someone who happens to be a Muslim and sees it more as a cultural baggage. She is interested in Islam in terms of how it affects her personal freedoms rather than in its spiritual aspects. To her what is important is how her faith affects her in her daily life, especially in relation to the individual freedoms that her Western peers enjoy.

As a host of Queer Television, a TV and internet series about gays and lesbians, she was apparently bombarded with hate mail from both Christian and Muslim “fundamentalists.” What bothered her was that while among Toronto’s Christians there were also those who wrote to present the liberal viewpoint on the subject, no Muslim ever came forward with anything resembling a liberal perspective. “Any time I aired anti-gay comments from Bible-citing Christians, other Christians would be sure to follow up with rival, tolerant interpretations. That never happened, when Muslims bawled me out,” she writes.

Like Mr. Sardar, she also underlines the “rigidity” of Islam. But while he blames the mullahs for turning Islam into an inflexible, almost intolerant, set of beliefs and practices, Ms. Manji finds fault with Islam itself — an argument which misses the historical context of Islam, ironically, much the same way as the religious Right fails or refuses to recognise the social and cultural specificity of many of Islam’s teachings.

But this is not intended to be a review, and the reason I have brought up these two books is to refute theories about an alleged “conspiracy” of silence among Muslims to protect Islam from any criticism. Of course, you can argue that two books do not add up to a debate but, ac-

ording to those who move in informed Muslim circles, there is a real “chatter” going on — and the debate is taking place at different levels. “It is happening on the campuses, in local newspapers and journals, in community centres, among women’s groups and round the dinner table,” says a London-based Left-wing Pakistani commentator.

Arguably, it has not taken the form of organised public debate, and the voices are not as many or as loud and outspoken as they should be. As Mr. Sardar and Ms. Manji repeatedly stress, an overwhelming majority of the global Muslim community remains cut off from the world of modern ideas, stuck in a time-warp and refusing to engage in the big issues of the day such as democracy, women’s rights, personal freedoms or alternative lifestyles.

Yet one can sense signs of restlessness and there is an increasing acknowledgement that Islam and its followers have reached a fork in the road: if they do not abandon their present course, they will end up in a *cul-de-sac* of their own making. The belated but growing intervention of liberal Muslims is significant. Until as recently as a decade ago, the liberal Muslim could not give a damn to “Muslim issues.” Indeed, a liberal Muslim was seen as a contradiction in terms: you were either a Muslim or a liberal. You could not possibly be both. As much as the rest of the community saw the liberal Muslim intelligentsia as something outside the pale, such Muslims, too, regarded themselves as a “secular” elite, with little interest in “sectional” Muslim issues.

But events in the 1990s brought about a profound change in their attitude. In India, the rise of right-wing Hindu nationalism and, in the West, attempts to whip up Islamophobia by portraying Islam as the new “enemy” after the decline of Communism

led to an aggressive assertion of Muslim identity across the board. And liberal Muslims, who had remained aloof, were provoked to speak up, prompted on the one hand by a concern that a great civilisation and faith was in danger of being hijacked by religious extremists; and, on the other, by the fear that if they did not intervene to halt the slide they too would be dragged down by such forces. In the words of Mirza Ghalib, they were concerned: “*Hum to doobenge sanam, tum ko bhi le doobengein*” (we are going to drown anyway, but we will take you also with us).

In the wake of 9/11, more and more Muslims have spoken up arguing for reform in the Muslim world but in the media and political circles — not to mention the pubs and playgrounds — it is the fanatic fringe that is still seen as the true representatives of Muslims. Invariably, what we hear on TV and read, even in “quality” broadsheets, are sensational views while moderate voices are relegated to the graveyard slot.

For the debate in the Muslim community to move forward, it is important that the media project the alternative Muslim/Islamic viewpoint more aggressively in order to change the perception that all Muslims are extremists. Once the moderate face of the community comes into public view it is likely to have a knock-on effect on anti-Muslim prejudices leading, hopefully, to Muslims shedding their siege mentality.

A community, freed from the constant pressure of having to justify and explain itself, is likely to feel more relaxed and confident to take a harder look at itself. In the present climate which one British commentator has likened to the Cold War, when you were either with Americans or “in bed with the Reds,” pro-reform Muslims have been reluctant to speak up fearing that they might be accused of sleeping with the “enemy.” The fact that they have broken their silence must be welcomed but any attempt to approach their criticism in a way that might pit them against their own community or to seize it to push other agendas can only harm the cause of a debate, which has barely begun.

Mortar barrage in Iraq kills 27 Shiite marchers

Mosque In Kufa Attacked; 63 Left Injured

Kufa (Iraq): A mortar barrage hit the main mosque in the Iraqi city of Kufa on Thursday, killing 27 people and wounding 63 others as they prepared to march on the violence-wrecked city of Najaf, hospital officials and witnesses said.

Hours after the attack, unidentified gunmen opened fire on thousands of Shiite Muslim marchers heading to Najaf, killing at least one, witnesses said. Thousands of people were crowded around Kufa's golden-domed mosque at the time and ambulances raced to the scene to take scores of wounded to a nearby hospital. Dead bodies lay around the mosque compound, a stronghold of followers of radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, witnesses said.

Hussam al-husseini, an al-Sadr aide, said one mortar shell hit the mosque compound itself and two others hit near the mosque gates. Others said there were only two explosions. Shrapnel from the explosions tore small chunks out of walls and the pavement, but there appeared to be no serious structural damage to the compound.

Mohammed Abdelkhadum, an official at al-Furat al-Awsat hospital in Kufa, said 27 people were killed and 63 injured. The morgue overflowed with bodies, and more



than a dozen corpses had to be stored in the hospital's garden.

It was unclear who fired the mortars. US forces have battled Shiite insurgents loyal to al-Sadr in neighboring Najaf and sporadically in Kufa for three weeks.

After the attack, thousands of demonstrators loyal to al-Sadr marched on nearby Najaf, but came under fire from a base between the two cities housing Iraqi national guardsmen and US troops, witnesses said.

The marchers scattered when the gunfire broke out. Casualties were carried away in private civilian vehicles and ambulances. An Associated Press reporter on the scene saw at least one body and witnesses reported seeing other casualties.

MPs aim to impeach Blair

London: Eleven members of the British parliament are planning to table a motion in the House of Commons calling for the impeachment of Prime Minister Tony Blair over the way he took the nation into the Iraq war.

Led by Adam Price of the Welsh nationalist Plaid Cymru party, the MPs allege that Blair was less than honest when he insisted that the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003 was needed to halt Saddam Hussein's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. Reuters



The day before, gunmen shooting from the same base killed two people and wounded five others who were taking part in what appeared to be a peaceful demonstration supporting al-Sadr, according to TV footage and hospital officials. AP

হাসিনাকে মারার নয়া হুমকি দিল ইসলামি গোষ্ঠী

রহমান জাহাঙ্গির • ঢাকা

২৫ অগস্ট: ঢাকায় শনিবার আওয়ামী লিগ সমাবেশে গেনেড-হামলার ঘটনা কে বা কারা ঘটাল তা নিয়ে দেশব্যাপী জঙ্কনার মধ্যেই অজ্ঞাতপরিচয় এক ইসলামি গোষ্ঠী 'হিকমতুল জেহাদ' এই ঘটনার দায় স্বীকার করেছে। ওই সংগঠনের এক মুখপাত্র বাংলাদেশের একটি সংবাদপত্র-দফতরে কাল ই-মেল মারফৎ শুধু এই ঘটনা ঘটানোর কথাই স্বীকার করেনি, নতুন করে হুমকি দিয়েছে, এ যাত্রা রক্ষা পেলেও এক সপ্তাহের মধ্যেই বিরোধী নেত্রী শেখ হাসিনাকে খতম করতে তারা বদ্ধপরিকর। সব মিলিয়ে পরিস্থিতি এমনই দাঁড়িয়েছে যে আমেরিকা, ব্রিটেন, কানাডা ও অস্ট্রেলিয়ার মতো দেশগুলি

ইতিমধ্যেই বাংলাদেশকে অনিরাপদ দেশ হিসাবে চিহ্নিত করে তাদের নাগরিকদের আপাতত সেখানে যাতায়াত এড়িয়ে চলার পরামর্শ দিয়েছে। ঢাকার সংবাদপত্রের দফতরে হিকমতুলের তরফে যে ব্যক্তি ই-মেল করেছেন, তার নাম হায়দার রব। তার বক্তব্য, "মনে করবেন না হাসিনার বিপদ কেটে গিয়েছে। আগের সুযোগটা আমরা হারিয়েছি। কিন্তু এ বার আমরা আমাদের লক্ষ্য স্থিরা। সাত দিনের মধ্যেই সে লক্ষ্য পূরণ করা হবে। এটাই আমাদের শপথ।" বাংলাদেশের স্বরাষ্ট্র দফতরের প্রতিমন্ত্রী লুৎফুজ্জামান বাবর জানিয়েছেন, বিশেষজ্ঞেরা কম্পিউটারটি পরীক্ষা করে মেল-থেরককে খুঁজে বার করার চেষ্টা করবেন। সরকার হাসিনার নিরাপত্তার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় সব রকম ব্যবস্থাও নিচ্ছে।

ই-মেল প্রাপ্তির পাশাপাশি ঘটনার তদন্তেও বেশ কিছু জরুরি তথ্য উদ্ঘাটিত হয়েছে। ঠিক কী ভাবে গেনেডগুলি ছোড়া হয়েছিল তা এখনও জানা না গেলেও তদন্তকারীরা প্রায় নিশ্চিত, বঙ্গবন্ধু আভিনিউয়ে সমাবেশ স্থলের খুব কাছ থেকেই হামলা চালানো হয়েছে। সি আই ডি-র এক পদস্থ কর্তা জানিয়েছেন, হামলাকারীরা পাঁচটি গোষ্ঠীতে বিভক্ত ছিল। দু'টি গোষ্ঠী আওয়ামী লিগ কার্যালয়ের উক্টো দিকে নগর ভবন ও রমনা ভবনে ঘাঁটি গেড়েছিল। একটি গোষ্ঠী ছিল ওই দু'টি ভবনের মাঝের গলিতে ও বাকি দুই গোষ্ঠী দলীয় অফিসের পশ্চিম ও পূর্ব দিকের বাড়িগুলিতে। হাসিনা যে ট্রাকটির উপর ছিলেন, সেটিকেও পরীক্ষা করে দেখা হচ্ছে।

শনিবারের ঘটনার পরিস্ফোটকিত বাংলাদেশ

এখন ঠিক নিরাপদ নয় বলে মনে করছে আমেরিকা, ব্রিটেন, কানাডা ও অস্ট্রেলিয়া। ফের বিজ্ঞপ্তি না পেওয়া পর্যন্ত নাগরিকদের বাংলাদেশে বেশি যাতায়াত না করার নির্দেশই দিয়েছে তারা। একান্তই যেতে হলে রাজধানী শহরে চলাফেরার সময়ে ব্যক্তিগত নিরাপত্তার ব্যবস্থা রাখা ও বেশি অস্ট্রেলিয়া সরাসরি বলছে, বাংলাদেশে পশ্চিমীদের বিরুদ্ধে জঙ্গি হামলার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। শুধু এই দেশগুলি নয়, দেশের মধ্যেও যে নাশকতার ভীতি ক্রমশ ছড়িয়ে পড়ছে তার প্রমাণ, আওয়ামী লিগ দেশের ১১টি বামপন্থী দলের সঙ্গে এক সঙ্গে 'ন্যাশনাল ইউনাইটেড ফ্রন্ট টু রেসিস্ট টেররিজম অ্যান্ড কমিউনাল ফোর্সেস' নামে একটি সম্মিলিত মঞ্চ গড়ে তোলার সিদ্ধান্তও নিয়েছে।

Al Qaida runs secret travel service: probe

9/26/02
29/8
5/15

Washington: The Al Qaida runs a clandestine travel service, possibly partnered with human smugglers south of the US border, to move its terrorists around the world, according to results of new report by The National Commission that investigated the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the US.

"There are uncorroborated law enforcement reports suggesting that associates of Al Qaida used smugglers in Latin America to travel through the region in 2002, before travelling onward to the United States," the panel said.

The disclosure comes as several key financial and government institutions in New York, New Jersey and Washington, remain on high alert, following reports that suspected terrorists were casing the buildings early this year.

The US border patrol has also begun patrolling the Arizona stretch of the US-Mexico border using pilotless 'predator' aircraft, where human smuggling has been rampant for decades. So far, however, only one smuggler, Salim Boughader-Mucharafille, a Tijuana restaurateur, has

been convicted for helping at least 80 Lebanese nationals to cross the US-Mexican border into California since late 1999.

Determined to send its agents all around the world, Al Qaida put a premium on creating false travel documents and identity cards, according to the report. Prior to the 2001 US invasion of Afghanistan, it operated a secret office in the

Afghan city of Kandahar, headed by Mohammed Atef, the late chief of Al Qaida's military operations, which specialised in forging passports, visas and other travel documents.

To have a steady supply of identity pa-

pers, Al Qaida required those coming to fight in Afghanistan to turn in their passports before going to the front.

If they were killed, their documents were recycled for use by others, investigators said. After the occupation of Kandahar, the office moved to Zormat in Paktia province and then to Karachi in Pakistan. The terror network also used experienced travel facilitators, chief among whom was Abu Zubaydah, a close Osama Bin Laden associate captured in Pakistan in 2002. AFP



20 AUG 2002

Pak foils major Qaeda attack

ZEESHAN HAIDER
ISLAMABAD, AUGUST 22

9/11 panel
96-7
2398

PAKISTAN has arrested up to 10 Al Qaeda suspects, including two Egyptians, suspected of planning suicide attacks against the government and the US embassy, ministers said on Saturday.

Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said the targets included the presidency, the military residence of President Pervez Musharraf, the US Embassy, the office of the chief minister of Punjab province, and the National Convention Centre.

The targets are all in the capital Islamabad, or its adjoining city Rawalpindi.

Ahmed said up to six people had been arrested over a period of about a week before the planned attacks on August 13, the eve of Pakistani Independence Day. He said the group were found with rockets, grenades, rifles and explosives.

Interior Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat said "eight to 10" people were being held and the two Egyptians, Qari Ismail and Sheikh Essa, were suspected of being "key elements" of the group.

He said the plots bore the hallmarks of Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network.

"We have obtained valuable information from the foreigners... we have unearthed a big and sinister plan," he said.

"The most dangerous aspect was that their targets included army headquarters, the Parliament building, Prime Minister's house and important people," he said. "This kind of terrorism can



People from Pakistani tribal areas pray for militants killed by Pakistan Army during anti-Al Qaeda operations during a gathering in Peshawar. AP/PTI

only be done by terrorists like Al Qaeda."

Ahmed said three or four more suspects were being sought.

Hayat said the men were found with "the latest gadgetry and equipment".

He named one of the Pakistanis arrested as Farooq Usman and described former member of Parliament Javed Ibrahim Piracha as a "key element" in the conspiracy.

Piracha is a pro-Taliban hardline Muslim who has taken part in legal moves to defend Al Qaeda suspects arrested in Pakistan in the past.

Ahmed said Abdul Rashid Ghazi, a hardline Islamic cleric from Islamabad, was also wanted in the case, but was still at large. "Our intelligence agencies have arrested a very dangerous group," he said.

Police have conducted several raids on mosques and religious schools in Islamabad in the past week to try to arrest Ghazi.

The arrests follow a crackdown launched since the arrest in Pakistan last month of an al Qaeda computer expert, Mohammad Naeem Noor Khan, who has proved a key source of information on the identity of operatives from the organisation.

Khan's arrest has led to the detention of more than 60 suspected militants in Pakistan and revealed plans for attacks on British and US targets. But the Information Minister said the latest arrests were not connected to that of Noor Khan.

Suspected Al Qaeda militants made two unsuccessful attempts to kill Musharraf, a key ally of Washington's global "war on terror", in December. —Reuters

9/11 panel report details Qaeda funding

GREG MILLER
WASHINGTON, AUGUST 22

FINANCIAL support for Al Qaeda and the size of its operating budget have plummeted in the three years since the September 11 attacks, but the network "continues to fund terrorist operations with relative ease," according to new findings released on Saturday by the commission that investigated the strikes.

The report from the panel also says that the Saudi government provided lackluster cooperation in the effort to stanch the flow of money to Al Qaeda for two years after the attacks, but began to respond more aggressively after several Al Qaeda strikes in the kingdom last year.

Al Qaeda's annual budget appears to have shrunk from about \$30 million a year before the September 11 attacks to as little as a few million dollars per year now, the commission reported. Funding for the terrorist network has shriveled during that same period, partly because of the more aggressive stance by Saudi Arabia, the report said.

But the financial shortfalls have not caused a commensurate decline in Al Qaeda's capabilities because the attacks it sponsors are relatively inexpensive, it said.

The commission also released a comprehensive account of Al Qaeda's exploitation of lax US border and immigration security.

—LAT/WP

Malaysia keen on projecting moderate face of Islam

By Mukund Padmanabhan

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 22. "We want to showcase Malaysia as a country which practises an Islam that promotes development, peace and progress — an Islam that is moderate, that does not confront any group or people of other religions," said the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. "We have to prove to the people that what we are doing is the best for Malaysia and all Malaysians."

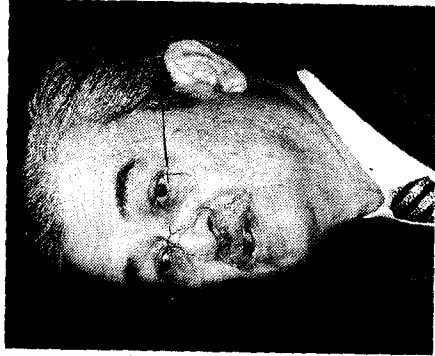
During a recent interaction with a small group of journalists and academics from around the world, Mr. Abdullah refused to speculate on whether the crushing defeat of PAS (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia) in the recent general election signalled the end of the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalist parties. "They will continue with the politics they have, about to have aspirations about ruling the country. During the election, I made it a point to

explain what we are trying to do rather than react to what this party was saying. To explain that what we have done so far is consistent with the teaching of Islam."

Reforms in Islamic law

In response to a question relating to reforms in Islamic law, Mr. Abdullah said Malaysia "cannot outlaw what is there in the Koran." He said the ruling coalition had stood for the education and emancipation of women, who are far better off today than before. He suggested that this was a more positive approach to tackle some of the issues that have a bearing on personal law.

On the issue of Malaysia's relationship with the United States, the Prime Minister said the main differences relate to Iraq and Palestine. Stressing the importance of the United Nations playing a larger role in the process of letting Iraq decide its own destiny, he said that Malaysia was pressing



Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. — AFP

hard for the warring parties in Palestine to return to the negotiating table.

Barring Iraq and Palestine, he said, "the relationship with the U.S. has been excellent." "We are the tenth largest trading partner

of the U.S. and cooperate with them on defence, though only in the area of training." Mr. Abdullah disagreed with a suggestion that Malaysia's foreign policy had altered from the days it was ruled by former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. "There is a difference in the way that Dr. Mahathir and I say something," he admitted. "But the substance is the same — even on issues such as Iraq and Palestine."

On the issue of developing countries speaking in a collective voice, he said there was no doubt that these countries deserved a much better deal. "At the same time, we must do something on our own. We cannot merely be demanding all sorts of things and making all sorts of statements," he said, underlining the importance of implementing policies that foster economic development. OMr. Abdullah refuted the suggestion that the anti-corruption drive, which his Government had declared a few months ago,

has suffered a slowdown. "We have already taken in 200-odd people. The anti-corruption agency is not being quiet, but doing its work. Corruption must be met with zero tolerance."

Bumiputra policy

In reply to a question relating to Malaysia's Bumiputra policy, which positively discriminates in favour of the Malay majority, he said it must be understood against the backdrop of the country's history. Explaining how the policy emerged from the racial clashes between the Chinese and Malays in 1969 and the perceived need to "break down the economic barriers in a compartmentalised society," Mr. Abdullah said the policy was directed towards a more equitable distribution of opportunity. At the same time, he said, since such policies should not become a subsidy or a crutch, there have been moves to introduce elements of a merit system to correct certain imbalances.

TUESDAY, JULY 13, 2004

TRIPLE TALAQ

Arslan
10-10
13/7

THE RECENT MEETING of the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board in Kanpur ended in something of a whimper. The keen interest in the outcome of the annual meeting of its executive committee was fuelled by reports that the AIMPLB would take the bold decision of calling for an abolition of triple *talaq* and would adopt a model *nikahnama* (marriage contract) with more equitable and gender-sensitive procedures governing the process of divorce. As it turned out, the Board stopped far short of this: the meeting ended with the tame promise that it would spread awareness among the Muslim community about practices such as "triple *talaq* in one sitting." Against the backdrop of hope and expectation, this was a real disappointment. However, the (albeit thin) silver lining is that the Board — which has been traditionally unenthusiastic when it comes to questions of reforming Muslim personal law — has, in effect, committed itself against this regressive practice, whereby Muslim men may obtain divorce, instantly and without the consent of their wives, by merely saying the word *talaq* thrice.

Over the years, the AIMPLB has been under pressure to declare that the laws relating to triple *talaq* must be amended. Such pressure has come from within (for example, certain reform-minded members of the Board's national executive) and from without (for instance, some progressive Muslim and non-Muslim women's organisations). At the same time, the Board has faced countervailing pulls from conservative Muslim outfits, some of which recently threatened to launch an agitation in case it went ahead with calling for an abolition of triple *talaq*. Although the AIMPLB has no legal status, it is widely recognised as the body to deal with on questions of Muslim personal law. It is true that the Board has adopted reactionary positions in the past, most conspicuously when it fiercely op-

posed the Supreme Court's historic judgment in the Shah Bano case, which upheld the right of divorced Muslim women to claim maintenance beyond the traditional *iddat* period (usually three months). But the influence it wields and the role it can play in persuading the community to accept the reform of unequal and discriminatory features of Muslim personal law should not be underestimated. Therefore, it would be a significant step if the AIMPLB, through which at least some feeble winds of change seem to be blowing at the moment, were able to press for a serious reform of Muslim law.

The abolition of triple *talaq*, which has visited untold suffering on many thousands of Indian Muslim women, deserves to be uppermost on any programme of such reform. The practice, which is only one of the many forms of divorce permissible under Muslim personal law in India, is not recognised by the Shia sect and, as a number of scholars of Islamic jurisprudence have pointed out, does not find sanction anywhere in the Koran. In fact, it is a distortion of the Koran; as the Bombay High Court observed many years ago, the practice may be "good in law" but is "bad in theology." Ironically, while triple *talaq* continues to receive legal recognition in India, there is either an express or implied restriction against its practice in a large number of avowedly Islamic countries, which have periodically reformed or modernised their personal laws. The discriminatory features of Muslim personal law have an enormous bearing on the social and economic well-being of women and it is not surprising that progressive women's organisations have been at the forefront of pressing the AIMPLB, the Wakf Boards and the *Ulema* to end this arbitrary practice. As a resolution of the All India Democratic Women's Association pointed out many years ago, triple *talaq* is not merely un-Islamic; it is also "a violation of human rights."

Muslim law board sets oath hurdle to divorce

Haidar Naqvi
Kanpur, July 4

THE ALL-INDIA Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) — while rejecting outright any ban on the “triple talaq” — has introduced a new *nikahnama* to reduce the impact of the practice. The *nikahnama* comes with an added note that seeks an undertaking from both husband and wife that in case of matrimonial discord they will go for a settlement instead of opting for divorce.

“The added condition allows the husband and wife to appoint arbitrators or move to Darul Quza for settlement,” said Syed Nizamuddin, general secretary of the board. “We cannot ban this practice but only make attempts to discourage it. We are making some significant process in this direction.”

The board’s 42-member working committee met here today for the first time and discussed several issues at length. The controversial issue of banning ‘triple talaq’ was not on the agenda.

Though the working committee expressed deep concern over ‘triple talaq’ in one sitting — permissible under Hanafi law — it refused to take it up for discussion. “The board represents various school of thoughts and cannot take any decision of this sort without building popular support among muftis and mujtahids,” said AIMPLB spokesman, Qasim Rasool Ilyas.

Much of the focus of executive members was on the establishment of Darul Quza, for the settlement of family disputes according to Shariat laws. The meeting decided to establish Darul Quza in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. A delegation is likely to meet Union Law Minister Hansraj Bharadwaj soon to seek legal powers for Darul Quza.

Goodbye to 'triple talaq'?

All-India Muslim Personal Law Board Prepares to Reform Divorce Law

By Srawan Shukla/TNN

Lucknow: For millions of people in India today, all that it takes to end a marriage, or sever a relationship, break a home and throw lives into turmoil is for a man to say three words. "Talaq, talaq, talaq". But not for much longer. In a move that could mark a big step forward for women's rights, the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) is set to ban this practice from next month and adopt 'phased talaq'.

The board's move will be in line with Shariat-approved procedure. Many Islamic countries, including Pakistan, do not follow the 'triple talaq' system. Even within India, there are conflicting schools of thought about its validity. But the system has persisted despite protests by liberals and activists, who have taken up cases like that of Sheru and Najma.

The couple has faced social ostracism and economic misery in Bhadrak (Orissa) because they chose to stay together after Sheru had said 'talaq, talaq, talaq' in an inebriated state. Once sober, he insisted he had no wish to leave his wife, but was forcibly evicted from his home by a group of villagers.

Such episodes may cease from next month. The AIMPLB, the highest body governing civil law for Muslims in India, is likely to adopt a resolution scrapping the 'triple talaq' system during the annual meeting of its 41-member working committee on July 4 at Lucknow's Nadwa College. A new talaqnama has been drafted by board clerics after discussions for three years. Al-

though the draft was approved by the board at a meeting in Patna in October 2003, it was awaiting the final nod from the working committee, the board's highest decision-making body. "A final decision will be taken during the working committee meeting on July 4," revealed a committee member.

Under the new talaqnama, couples wishing to separate will be given a minimum of three months to reconcile. Muslim women have also been given equal rights to approach the Qazi for separation

from their erring husbands.

"It's all being done as per the Shariat. Instead of three talaqs at one go, couples will be given three months to reconsider their decision. If they still insist on separation,

the Qazi is empowered to formalise the divorce as per the new talaqnama," explained Zafrayab Jilani, a Board member. Once the proposal is approved, the board will print new talaqnama forms in large numbers in Urdu as well as in the regional languages and make it mandatory for all couples to fill them at the time of marriage.

The board is also recommending an increase in 'mehr', the sum to be paid by the groom to the bride in case the marriage is terminated. Although no upper or lower limits will be set, parents will be advised to fix large amounts to discourage divorces. "It will be a welcome step in the direction of reforming Muslim society in India. The new talaqnama will drastically bring down the number of talaq cases as no sensible husband will dare to breach it," Jilani said.



Eyeing The Future

সৌদিতে আল কায়দার হাতে খুন এক মার্কিন

রিয়াধ, ১৩ জুন: ইরাকের আবু গ্রাইব ও কিউবার গুয়ানতানামোয় মুসলিমদের উপরে মার্কিনদের নির্মম অত্যাচারের প্রতিশোধ নিতে এক জন মার্কিন নাগরিককে আল কায়দা অপহরণ করেছে ও অন্য এক জনকে হত্যা করেছে বলে রবিবার একটি ওয়েবসাইটে দাবি করা হয়েছে। সত আল জিহাদ নামে ওই ওয়েবসাইটে আটক মার্কিন নাগরিকের পরিচয় জানানো হয়েছে। বছর পঞ্চাশকের ওই ব্যক্তির নাম পল মার্শাল জনসন। তিনি নিউ জার্সির বাসিন্দা। তিনি আপাচে হেলিকপ্টার বিশেষজ্ঞ। পলকে আটক করা ছাড়াও অন্য এক মার্কিন নাগরিককেও কাল তাঁর বাড়ির সামনে জঙ্গিরা গুলি করে হত্যা করে। তিনি একটি মার্কিন সংস্থার ম্যানেজার ছিলেন।

এই নিয়ে গত এক সপ্তাহে তিন জন পশ্চিমী নাগরিককে হত্যা করল আল কায়দা। সৌদিতে অন্তত ৩৫০০০ মার্কিন নাগরিক কর্মরত রয়েছেন। গত মাসে খোবারে আল কায়দা জঙ্গিদের হামলার পর থেকে তাঁরা আর সৌদি কর্তৃপক্ষের সাধারণ নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থায় আস্থা রাখতে পারছেন না। অনেক সংস্থাই উদ্বিগ্ন হয়ে নিজেদের কর্মীদের নিরাপত্তা সুনিশ্চিত করতে বেসরকারি নিরাপত্তা সংস্থার কাছ থেকে বিশেষ প্রশিক্ষণ প্রাপ্ত সুরক্ষাকর্মী নিয়োগ করছে। তা ছাড়া বুলেট-প্রুফ গাড়ি, কালাশনিকভের গুলি ঠেকাতে পারে এমন কাচ ব্যবহার করা হচ্ছে।

ওয়েবসাইটে খবর বেরনোর পর রিয়াধে মার্কিন দূতবাসের তরফেও জানানো হয়েছে, এক জন মার্কিন নাগরিক নিখোঁজ হয়েছেন। এক মুখপাত্র জানিয়েছেন, “আমরা স্থানীয় কর্তৃপক্ষের সাহায্যে তাঁকে খুঁজে বার করার চেষ্টা করছি।” কাল পুলিশ শহরের বাইরে বিশেষরকম বোকাই একটি গাড়ি পেয়েছিল। তার সঙ্গে কালকের খুনের ঘটনার কোনও যোগাযোগ আছে কি না তা খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। নিহত মার্কিনকেও শহরের বাইরে তাঁর বাড়ির সামনে গাড়ি রাখার জায়গায় জঙ্গিরা গুলি করেছিল। শনিবারের ঘটনার পরে পুলিশ শহরে চিরুনি তল্লাশি চালাচ্ছে।

মঙ্গলবার এক মার্কিন প্রতিরক্ষা ঠিকাদারকে জঙ্গিরা তাঁর বাড়িতে গুলি করে মেরেছিল। গত পাঁচ সপ্তাহের মধ্যে এটি পঞ্চম হামলা। তাতে বিদেশিদের মধ্যে আতঙ্ক আরও ছড়িয়েছে। সুরক্ষা কর্মীদের উপর তাঁরা আস্থা হারিয়েছেন। ওয়েবসাইটে ওই মার্কিন নাগরিক রবার্ট জেকবকে হত্যার সম্পূর্ণ ছবিও দেখিয়েছে জঙ্গিরা।

সৌদিতে আল কায়দার প্রধান আব্দুল্লাজিজ আল-মাকরিন। তাঁর নেতৃত্বে সৌদিকে এক ‘রক্তাক্ত ২০০৪’-এর হুমকি দিয়েছে আল কায়দা। মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সহযোগী হিসেবে সৌদি আরবের জন্য এটি ছিল তাদের নববর্ষের ঘোষণা। তারা মনে করে, “গুয়ানতানামোয় এবং আবু গ্রাইবে আমাদের ভাইদের উপরে মার্কিনরা যে অত্যাচার চালিয়েছে তার জবাবে তাদের একই ধরনের যন্ত্রণা দেওয়ার অধিকার আমাদের অবশ্যই আছে।” ওয়েবসাইটের বিবৃতিতে তারা এ কথা জানিয়েছে। উত্তরে সৌদি অফিসাররাও নীরব রয়েছেন। কী ভাবে সম্ভাব্য হামলা প্রতিরোধ করা হবে সে বিষয়ে তাঁরা জনগণকে কোনও আশ্বাস দিচ্ছেন না। ফলে এলাকায় বসবাসকারী পশ্চিমীদের পক্ষে আস্থা হারানোই স্বাভাবিক। —রয়টার্স

Lashkar raising Islamist brigades for Iraq

By Praveen Swami and
Mohammad Shehzad

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD, JUNE 12. Less than three months after *The Hindu* broke the news of the detention of a top Lashkar-e-Taiba commander in Iraq, information is emerging that the Pakistan-based terrorist organisation may have set up a full-blown unit for suicide squad operations against Western forces.

Up to 2,000 men, mainly between the ages of 18 and 25, are believed to have signed up for the Lashkar-e-Taiba's armed operations in Iraq. Most come from towns in the Pakistani province of Punjab, where the Lashkar-e-Taiba's overground political patron organisation, the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, wields considerable influence. Most

The Hindu that the Lashkar hoped to be able to send at least some suicide squad members to Iraq overland through the porous Iran-Pakistan border.

In April, this newspaper reported that a key Lashkar commander, Danish Ahmad, had been held by allied troops in Iraq. Mr. Ahmad played a central role in the organisation's operations in Jammu and Kashmir from at least 1999, operating under the *nom de guerre* of Abdul Rehman al-Dakhil. Mr. Ahmad was first held by British forces in the southern city of Basra, and has since been interrogated by Central Intelligence Agency personnel. Western intelligence experts initially dismissed Mr. Ahmad's initiative in Iraq as a one-off enterprise, but the new information emanating from Pakistan may force a re-think.

ing sectarian violence in Pakistan," he told followers. "America is now bending over backwards to foment a Shia-Sunni divide in Iraq. But we should not forget that Muqtada al-Sadr is a hero of Islam. Forget that he is a Shia. He is a great *Mujahid* because he is fighting the worst devil on earth, that is, America. It is our religious duty to support him," Dr. Saeed told the gathering.

Dr. Saeed's tone on events in Iraq has intrigued observers, given his historically comfortable relationship with the military and intelligence establishments in Pakistan. "The U.S. and Britain are raping our mothers and sisters," the Jamaat-ud-Dawa leader said. "In this situation *jihad* becomes mandatory against them. The *Mujahideen* are our last hope. If they are not supported today, then tomorrow, Islam will be erased from the map of the world." Referring to possible Pakistani troop commitments in Iraq, Dr. Saeed said that he would support President Pervez Musharraf "if he sends troops to Iraq to fight against the U.S. and Britain. If he sends them to support the U.S., then we will spearhead a countrywide campaign against him."

Despite its venomous polemic against General Musharraf, and its presence on a Pakistani Government terrorism watchlist, the Jamaat-ud-Dawa has enjoyed considerable freedom to raise funds and recruit cadre in recent months. General Musharraf declared the Lashkar-e-Taiba a terrorist outfit on January 13, 2002 following the attack on the Indian Parliament on December 13, 2001. The Jamaat-ud-Dawa, however, escaped censure by changing its name, which was earlier the Markaz Dawa wal' Irshad.

If Dr. Saeed's claims to have prepared two brigade-strength forces for Iraq are true — or even close to the true scale of recruitment — there could be serious trouble ahead for the beleaguered Western forces in Iraq. His organisation was among the pioneers in the use of suicide bombings in Kashmir, which started in 1999. The Lashkar-e-Taiba claims to have orchestrated around 200 suicide attacks between 1999 and 2002. Although India has been pushing for greater restrictions on the activities of *jihadi* groups, Pakistan has been reluctant to go beyond curbing cross-border infiltration, for fear of provoking a backlash from the Islamist Right.



Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Mohammad Saeed

Lashkar suicide squad volunteers come from the ranks of seminary students at Muridke, the Jamaat-ud-Dawa's main centre. However, some have also been raised from the Binori Town seminary in Karachi, which used to be run by the fundamentalist cleric, Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, until he was assassinated.

At a recent meeting, the Lashkar-e-Taiba's overall head, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, told followers that "Islam is in grave danger, and the *Mujahideen* are fighting to keep its glory. They are fighting the forces of evil in Iraq in extremely difficult circumstances. We should send *Mujahideen* from Pakistan to help them." Dr. Saeed's comments were made at a private meeting in the Jamia al-Qudsia mosque in Lahore late last month. Sources close to him told

Interestingly, Mr. Ahmad may have trained many of the men now being prepared for combat in Iraq. Islam-ud-Din, a Lashkar operative arrested in 1999, told Indian intelligence that Mr. Ahmad had trained hundreds of cadre at the Lashkar's Maskar Abu Bashir camp in the use of arms and explosives. In 1999, the Karachi-based newspaper, *The Dawn*, quoted Lashkar spokesperson Ghulamullah Azad as saying that Mr. Ahmad had led "dozens of fresh fighters of our outfit [who] have reached the Kargil sector to continue the *jihad* ."

While the Lashkar-e-Taiba has historically backed sectarian violence against Pakistan's Shia minority, Dr. Saeed attempted to break with the past at the recent meeting. "America has failed to divide Shia and Sunni Muslims despite mastermind-

Pak Army, Qaeda clash, at least 50 dead

K.J.M. VARMA
ISLAMABAD, JUNE 11

AT LEAST 15 Pakistani soldiers and more than 35 Al Qaeda militants were killed as the Army backed by heavy artillery and helicopters attacked militant hide-outs in the tribal South Waziristan region near the Afghanistan border today.

The early-morning strike, as part of a continued offensive by Pakistan Army to flush out militants from the tribal region, triggered a fierce gun-battle between the government forces and Qaeda-backed fighters.

"Today we responded appropriately to the latest unprovoked attacks by the terrorists," Pakistan Army spokesman General Shaukat Sultan

Militants held over attack on Corps Commander

KARACHI: Pakistani police have detained several Islamic militants from Al Qaeda-linked groups after an attempt to kill Karachi's Army chief and a major crackdown could be launched in coming days, officials said on Friday. Gunmen ambushed a convoy escorting Corps Commander Lt Gen Ahsan Saleem Hayat in Karachi on Thursday. "We have made raids in Karachi and activists of various groups were arrested," Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat said. —Reuters



A lone Pakistani Ranger stands guard outside a mosque after security was beefed up in Karachi on Friday. Reuters

15. The government was left with no choice but to respond in order to establish its writ and eliminate these

foreign elements," the Pakistan Military said in a separate statement.

Reports about the operation,

which is on its third day, said the Army was targeting the hide-outs with artillery and mortars and helicopters were seen carrying out regular sorties in the area. "The foreign elements, along with their accomplices, had not only taken the local population hostage but were also a nuisance for the entire area... They forcibly occupied a civilian compound and used women and children as human shield and the security forces had to respond in self-defence," the statement said.

The Army, however, would not give more details about the attack and said "following the provocation and terrorist activities of foreign elements, the Pakistan security forces are appropriately responding against the known and confirmed hideouts of miscreants." —PTI

'Al-Qaida' attack threat to airliners

Associated Press

CAIRO, (Egypt) June 7. — A statement bearing Al-Qaida's name warned today that Western airliners will be the terror group's target. It appeared on an Islamist web site known for posting messages from militants, including the video in which a terror group with al-Qaida links executed the American kidnapped in Iraq, Nick Berg.

The statement's authenticity could not be verified, but it was signed "Al-Qaida on the

Arabian Peninsula." It referred to "crusaders" and warned "all that is affiliated with these crusaders - from compounds, bases and means of transport — especially Western and American airliners, will be direct targets of our next operations, with God's help."

The statement begins by urging Muslims to ignore Americans and Westerners "in their homes, compounds, movements and means of transport — in all shapes and forms."

According to the statement, the purpose of the warning is to

spare "our Muslim brothers' blood". "We act only to protect them, their religion, honour and life," the statement reads. It reiterates its warning to those who work in proximity to Westerners: "We renew our warning to all security personnel, guards of crusader compounds and American bases, and all those that have stood by America and its allies... We ask them to return to the right path, to separate themselves from non-believers, to become their enemies and to fight holy war against them by money,

word and weapon. This enemy must be fought. There is no other way but to fight it and eradicate it."

The statement appeared to be concerned with the American presence in Saudi Arabia, rather than in Iraq. It referred to the Arabian Peninsula, which is south of Iraq, in its signature and it spoke of "agents of the tyrannical Saudi government."

The web site has carried several statements and claims of responsibility from Islamic militants, most recently for last

month's terrorist attack in Khobar, Saudi Arabia.

Pak tribal army draws blank

Large groups of armed tribesmen searching for AlQaida suspects in Pakistan's tribal areas bordering Afghanistan have drawn a blank after inspecting dozens of houses, officials said, PTI adds from Islamabad.

Around 5000 tribesmen, at the instance of Pakistan army, had launched search operation at Shakai area near Afghan borders where officials suspect

over 400 Al-Qaida and Taliban militants are hiding, the officials said in South Waziristan.

The tribesmen have formed a lashkar or tribal army which has started action at the directives of 36-member committee of tribal elders following warnings from the army. More than 2000 armed tribesmen forced several tribes for searching of their houses.

Meanwhile, economic restrictions on the Ahmedzai tribe continued, which has been accused of not cooperating with the government to identify the foreigners, today.

Musharraf plea to stem plunge into barbarism

2/6
Islamabad, June 1 (Reuters): A day after a bomb killed 19 Shias in Pakistan, President Pervez Musharraf called on the West and Muslims to stop civilisation from falling into an "abyss of barbarism".

Musharraf, a key ally of the US in its war on terror, also urged reform and restructuring of the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) saying it had become paralysed in front of present challenges.

"It is imperative that the entire international community collectively addresses the dangers that tend to push human civilisation into the abyss of barbarism," Musharraf told a conference of the OIC in Islamabad.

Musharraf, who twice escaped attempts on his life late last year, is a target of Islamic militants enraged by his support to the West against Islamic militancy after September 11, 2001 attacks on the US.

Lately he has become more forceful in condemning religious extremism at home, only to be answered with more deadly bombings and assassinations of religious figures.

In May at least 47 Pakistanis, most of them Shias, and three Chinese were killed and more than 200 people wounded, in seven incidents of car bombings, suicide attacks and ambush.

Musharraf warned Muslims they had to pull themselves out of a "pit" or western perceptions that Islam was a religion promoting extremism would be perpetuated. "We need to infuse life into this body. OIC needs to be restructured, reformed and energised to meet the challenges of the 21st century," he said.

Musharraf called the West, particularly the US, to quickly resolve political disputes con-

fronting Muslims to remove perceptions in the Islamic world that the West was bent upon subjugating them.

"Most of those living under foreign occupation, be it Palestine, Kashmir or Iraq, are Muslims," he said. He warned the world was headed the wrong way. "The emerging political contours do not kindle any hope for enhancing international cooperation for peace and prosperity, for the rule of law and justice, for combating poverty and social evils, or pursuing the path of accommodation and moderation.

Shia protest

Angry Shias clashed with police during funerals today for most of the 20 people killed in the apparently sectarian suicide bombing of a mosque in Karachi.

Riot police fired tear gas and live rounds into the air to drive back crowds of thousands gathered for the funerals.

Some mourners pelted them with stones and torched nearby vehicles.

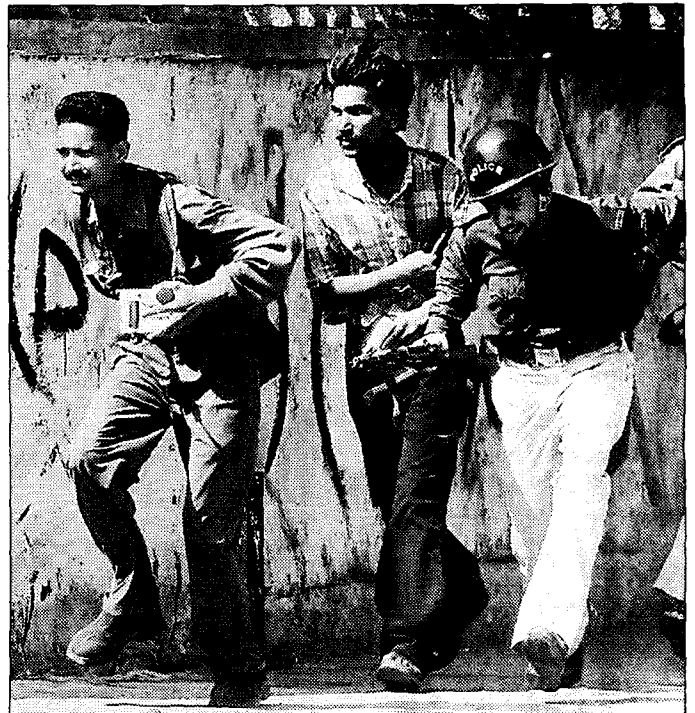
"We have no faith in police and rangers because they failed to protect our mosques," senior Shia cleric Hasan Zafar Naqvi said. "We demand that the government deploy the army to ensure their security and safety."

The blast wounded at least 50 people, some seriously, and three Shias died later in clashes with police. It appeared to be another in a spate of tit-for-tat sectarian violence in the volatile port city, coming less than 24 hours after the killing of Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, a senior cleric from the majority Sunni sect.

It was the second bloody attack on a Shia mosque in Karachi in less than a month. A suspected Sunni suicide bomber killed 24 people on May 7.



Musharraf



Pakistani policemen and journalists run for cover after Shia mourners open fire during clashes in Karachi. (AFP)

Bloodbath after al Qaida slashes global oil vein

INDIAN AMONG FOREIGNERS KILLED IN SAUDI STRIKE, 50 HELD HOSTAGE

Khobar, Saudi Arabia, May 29 (Reuters): Suspected al Qaida militants killed at least 16 people, including westerners and an Indian, and took 50 foreigners hostage in an attack on the world's biggest oil exporter.

Security forces stormed the Oasis housing compound, where the hostages were being held, in the eastern city of Khobar after the militants — spraying gunfire at several buildings — killed at least nine Saudis and seven foreigners.

"They are holding 50 foreign hostages. There are Americans, but there are more Italians. There are also Arabs," said a compound manager. Security sources said the Arab hostages were Christians.

A policeman said the militants were using the hostages as human shields and that officials were trying to negotiate.

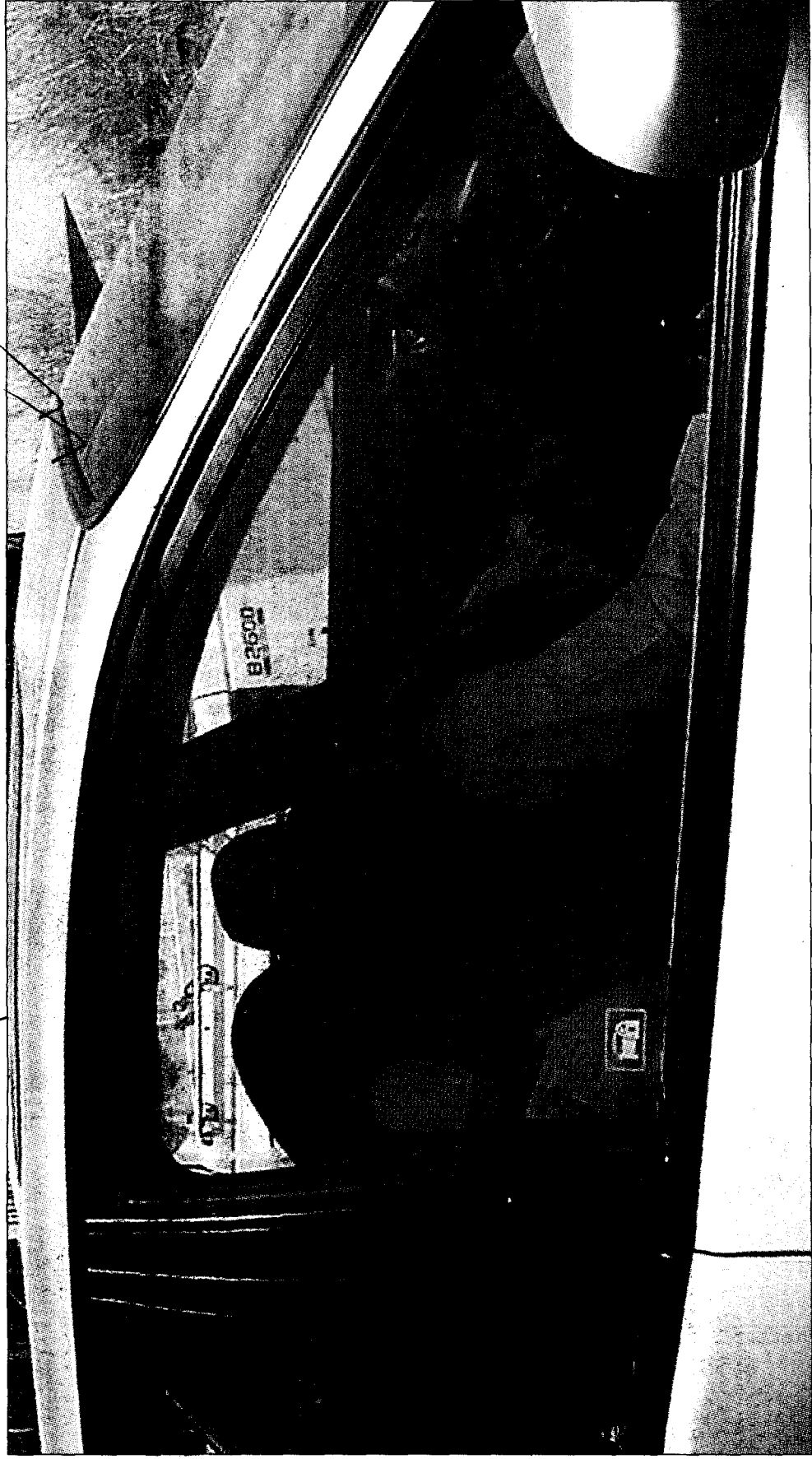
An Indian, an American, a Briton, an Egyptian, two Filipinos and a Pakistani were among the dead, the sources said.

The attack in the main Saudi oil-producing region was the second in less than a month to target the kingdom's vital fuel industry and westerners who form a large part of its workforce.

Saudi Arabia is the world's largest crude exporter and oil markets have been on edge over the possibility of a militant strike that would disrupt supplies. The unease has already helped push world prices to \$40 a barrel.

"This is close to the nerve centre of the Saudi oil industry, (state oil firm) Aramco headquarters in Dhahran," said Yasser Eguindi, an analyst in New York. "It could have a devastating impact on the oil market when we reopen (on Tuesday) after the Memorial Day weekend."

If the rocketing crude oil prices are not reined in, it will



An unidentified body inside a car at one of the attack sites in Khobar in Saudi Arabia on Saturday. (AFP)

have ramifications for the new Indian government, too. The Congress-led government will then find it difficult to stave off domestic fuel price increases that were put off because of elections.

"This (the attack) is clearly targeting the oil sector," said a senior western executive in the

Saudi capital Riyadh.

Employees of Shell, Honeywell and General Electric lived in one of the compounds. The Oasis residence has housed executives from leading oil firms Royal Dutch/Shell, Total and Lukoil.

A statement purportedly from Saudi-born Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network was

posted on Islamist Internet sites claiming responsibility for the attack, the third on foreigners in less than a month in the birthplace of Islam.

Al Qaida has vowed to destabilise the US-allied Saudi kingdom. The US embassy iterated a call to its citizens to leave the kingdom after the attack.

An employee at the Oasis compound said the militants, wearing military uniforms, had asked residents to show their identity cards to find out their religions.

"(The militants) went around asking people if they were Christians or Muslims. They got hold of an uncle of a friend and

asked him to get his residence permit, but he fled," said the employee.

The attack occurred two days after the top al Qaida leader in the kingdom, Abdulaziz al-Muqrin, issued a battle plan for urban guerrilla war, specifying strategies to topple the royal family.

Review Islamic laws: General

11-13 1975
Islamabad: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf called on religious scholars to re-examine strict Islamic laws which rights groups say discriminate against women and non-Muslims, state media reported on Sunday. Musharraf also announced the establishment of the country's first officially sponsored National Rights Commission.

The President called for a review of the blasphemy law, which imposes the death penalty for defiling Prophet Mohammad and the Muslim holy book the Koran, and the strict Hudood Islamic laws, which mostly deal with crimes of adultery and rape. Under the Hudood laws, a rape victim has to produce four witnesses in court to confirm her assault otherwise she can be tried on charges of wilful adultery while the rapist goes free.

Musharraf said the Hudood and blasphemy laws must be studied afresh to ensure they cannot victimise innocent people. "The blasphemy law needs to be looked into so that it is not misused," state television quoted

Musharraf as telling a convention on human rights on Saturday.

Secular parties, rights groups and minorities claim the blasphemy law is often misused to settle personal scores.

Dozens of people have been convicted under the law but no one has been executed because higher courts have ordered an acquittal.

Musharraf added: "We must not shy away from re-examining the Hudood Ordinance."

Pakistan's Islamists stridently support the Hudood laws, saying they are sacred, but they are widely considered discriminatory towards women. "This is our creation, what is the problem in discussing it?" Musharraf asked. "Why are we so close-minded; is this the teaching of Islam that we can't even discuss it?" Agencies



THE TIMES OF INDIA 17 MAY 2004

Al-Sadr comes under fire from moderates

**PATRICK J. MCDONNELL &
ALISSA J. RUBIN**
BAGHDAD, MAY 11

US AND British forces have recently inflicted heavy casualties on Moqtada Al-Sadr's militia, but the Shiite cleric is bracing for a showdown with a more familiar foe: Moderate Shiites who do not support his uprising.

A senior Shiite leader, Sadruddin Al-Qubanchi, allied with the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, has called for a mass demonstration on Friday in Najaf to expel Sadr's private army.

Al-Sadr, who has long been at odds with the Shiite establishment in Najaf, responded with a call of his own. An aide told followers that it was time to intensify resistance to the US-led occupation. Al-

Sadr has apparently calculated that his enemies—both foreign and domestic—have come together to force him out.

The militant cleric has never been a favourite of the Shiite establishment but even conservative Shiite leaders have warned US officials that taking direct action against the militant cleric could be counter-productive.

But in recent days, moderate Shiites have begun to complain openly about Al-Sadr. On Tuesday, hundreds marched in Najaf calling on Al-Sadr to pull his militia out of the city.

Many Najafis believe that Sadr's uprising is affecting their livelihood. Since Saddam's ouster, multitudes of visiting pilgrims boosted business in the city. But pilgrims have stopped coming since Al-Sadr moved in with his armed men to occupy the shrine. A Shiite-led move to oust



A Shi'ite fixes a portrait of Al-Sadr in Baghdad on Tuesday. Reuters

Al-Sadr is good news for the US — it avoids the need for coalition troops to confront Al-Sadr's forces directly.

US officials have been open about

their attempts to woo moderate Shiites to defeat Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army. "We have been meeting with local sheiks, religious leaders, local businesses," said Brig Gen Mark P. Hertling of the 1st Armoured Division, which dispatched 2,500 troops to Najaf last month after Al-Sadr's uprising began. "The message from everyone is that no one likes Moqtada. Everyone wants law and order installed again."

Since early April, Al-Sadr has been stoking an uprising in southern Iraq and in a Baghdad neighbourhood known as Sadr City. His forces suffered heavy losses in recent clashes with US troops in Sadr City and with British forces in Basra and Amarah. US forces were also arrested two of Al-Sadr's top aides on Saturday in Sadr City. The arrests, commanders said, likely triggered the intense fighting on Sunday and early Monday. —LATEWP

Sunni cleric gunned down in Karachi

Islamabad: A senior Sunni cleric Maulana Nizamuddin Shamzai with close links to Afghanistan's ousted Taliban militia was gunned down in Karachi by unidentified men early on Sunday, triggering violence in different parts of Pakistan's southern metropolis, the police said.

Shamzai, a religious scholar at Jamia Uloom-e-Islami, Karachi was travelling in his car when unidentified gunmen riding in two cars and a motorcycle opened fire around 8:30 a.m., killing him and injuring four others, including his son, the police said.

He was rushed to hospitals but he died there, the police said, adding the assailants managed to flee from the spot. But one of them sustained injuries when a guard fired at him.

However, no group has claimed responsibility for the attack.

As the news of his murder spread, an agitated mob attacked the Binori police station and set it on fire. A red alert has been declared as the killing could trigger sectarian violence.

Violence erupted in several parts of Karachi, forc-

ing the deputy IG (Karachi) Tariq Ameer to put the police force on high alert to check any backlash.

Angry supporters of Shamzai numbering eight to 12 set Jamsheed quarters police station on fire and prisoners locked in the jail

with authorities to nab the culprits.

Meanwhile, acting chief of alliance of Islamic groups, the MMA condemned the murder and said the government must provide security to religious scholars.



Angry supporters of slain Pakistani Sunni Muslim cleric Maulana Nizamuddin Shamzai (inset) shout slogans during a clash with the police in Karachi on Sunday

managed to escape, they said, adding some vehicles parked outside the police station were torched.

Terming the killing as a "terrorist act" governor of Sindh province Isratul Ibad said, "Security forces will make efforts to nab the culprit."

"Steps have been taken to maintain peace in the city," the governor said.

He also appealed to followers of Shamzai to not lose cool and cooperate

Shamzai was famous for issuing 'fatwas' or religious decrees on important issues.

He was a close associate and friend of Taliban's reclusive one-eyed leader Mullah Omar.

Karachi, Pakistan's southern port city, has been in the grip of sectarian and terrorist attack this month.

At least, 10 people were killed and over 200 injured in a suicide attack in a Shia mosque in Karachi. Agencies

Angry Thais seek answers to massacre

Pattani (Thailand), April 30 (Reuters): Saddened and angry, Muslims attended Friday prayers across restive southern Thailand as troops stepped up the hunt for what officials said could be thousands of Islamic separatists.

Thailand is reeling from Wednesday's unprecedented violence in its three southern, Muslim-majority provinces, where troops and police shot dead 108 gun- and machete-wielding Islamic militants after coming under attack in a series of dawn raids.

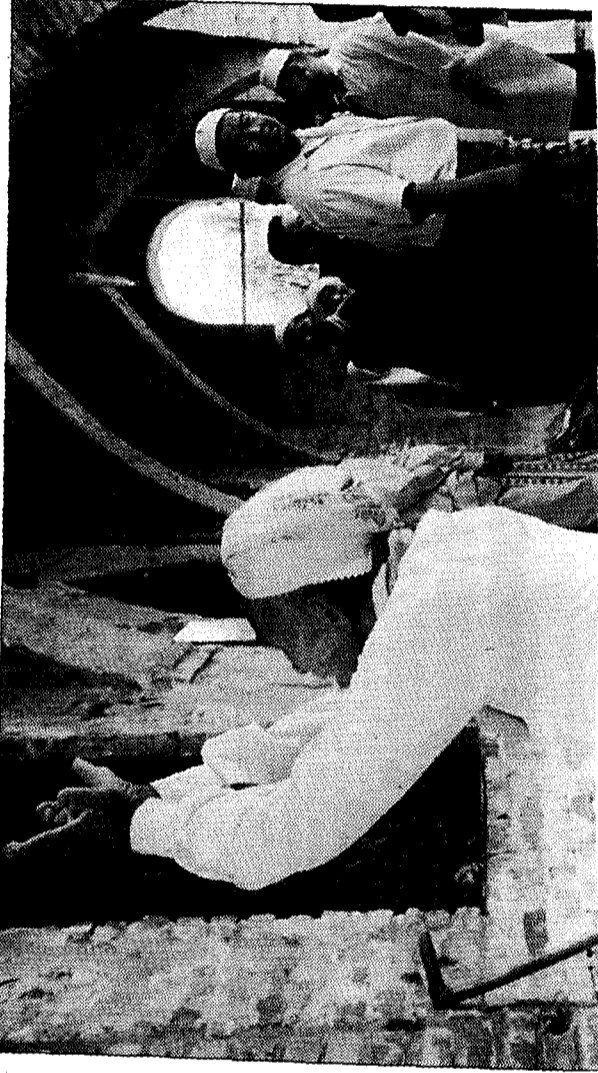
"The people are upset and angry," said Yosoff Samail, 60, head cleric at the central mosque in the provincial town of Pattani, where troops with rocket-propelled grenades and teargas stormed another mosque and

pathy is strong for Malay-speaking Thai Muslims. Opposition politicians branded the shootout the "massacre of Pattani".

"This is an oppression, a massacre against Muslims," said Sallehuddin Ayob, youth chief of the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS), adding that no one had proved the dead were terrorists.

Relations between the neighbours have been strained since Thai officials said in March that militants behind renewed violence in the area had taken refuge in Malaysia.

In a move likely to be seen with suspicion in Bangkok, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said his country was willing to offer refuge to Thais fleeing the trouble. "It will not be refugee camps but some arrangements must be made," the official Bernama ne-



Footballers on suicide mission

Baan Susoe (Thailand), April 30 (Reuters): The shooting of an entire team of 19 soccer players from the same Muslim village in southern Thailand after they attacked a security checkpoint has left relatives and neighbours stunned.

Revelations about the soccer team give a disturbing insight into the minds, if not the motives, of those involved in Wednesday's violence, in which troops shot dead 108 machete-

Stop attacks on Spanish troops: Sadr

Baghdad: Radical Shiite cleric Muqtada Sadr has called on his followers to stop attacks on Spanish troops of the US-led coalition after Madrid announced it would withdraw its contingent from Iraq as soon as possible, a Sadr spokesman said on Monday.

"We call (on them) to ensure the security of Spanish troops until their departure as long as these forces do not perpetrate aggressions against the Iraqi people," said Qais al-Khazaali.

"Other countries which assign troops to the coalition in Iraq are urged to follow the example of Spain and to withdraw their forces to save the lives of their soldiers," he added.

Meanwhile, the top US administrator L Paul Bremer said that Iraqi security forces will not be capable of protecting the country against insurgents by the June 30 handover of power.

In an unusual, blunt assessment, Bremer made the comments on Sunday to defend the continued heavy presence of US troops in Iraq even

after an Iraqi government takes sovereignty.

The military has always planned to remain after June 30, and in recent months coalition officials have acknowledged that the handover of security duties will be significantly slower than initially hoped because Iraqi forces were not ready.

But Bremer said the fighting across the country this month showed the problems with the security forces.

"Events of the past two weeks show that Iraq still faces security threats and needs outside help to deal with them. Early this month the foes of democracy overran Iraqi police stations and seized public buildings in several parts of the country," he said. "Iraqi forces were unable to stop them."

"It is clear that Iraqi forces will not be able, on their own, to deal with these threats by June 30 when an Iraqi government assumes sovereignty," Bremer said in a statement issued by the US coalition. With US-led forces fighting on two fronts and insurgent violence elsewhere flaring, April's US combat death toll is approaching the toll during the Iraq invasion itself. Agencies



Saudi Qaida leader calls for attacks on Americans

Dubai, April 8 (Reuters): One of Saudi Arabia's most wanted al Qaida militants has called on Muslims to kill Americans everywhere and vowed attacks against Arab leaders allied to Washington, according to a video carried on an Islamist website.

A masked man identified as Abdulaziz al-Muqrin in a video on the Dirasat website said Americans had yet to feel the "real fires of battle". In an apparent reference to a guerrilla uprising in Iraq, he said Washington faced another Vietnam.

"O mujahideen, fight the Americans everywhere and fight the Americans with all your might and capabilities. Terrorise them as they have terrorised your brothers," the man said.

There was no independent confirmation of the identity of the figure whose brown cloth mask obscured all but his eyes.

"O mujahideen this is your day, your jihad, and this is your enemy occupying your land, turning it into bases to fight Islam and Muslims, and controlling apostate agents. So fight them until...you only see blood and body parts as they have done to your brothers in Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq in their battles in the Muslim peninsula," the man said.

The website has in the past

carried statements purporting to be from Saudi-born al Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, widely believed to be behind September 11 attacks on the United States, and other officials of the militant network.

The video was posted on the website as US-led forces faced growing rebellion from both Sunni and Shia guerrillas in Iraq. The fighting that has killed some 35 soldiers and at least 200 Iraqis in three days has thrown into doubt plans for a handover of sovereignty to Iraqis on June 30.

US and Pakistani forces are involved in a spring drive to capture al Qaida militants in Afghanistan.

Muqrin is on a Saudi wanted list of top al Qaida militants, blamed for suicide bombings which killed at least 50 people in the capital Riyadh last year.

"The mujahideen will target the crusaders at first. As for the apostate, agent rulers their day is coming soon, God willing, after we are done with their masters and the convoys of martyrs will continue," said the man dressed in brown fatigues and holding an automatic rifle. He was speaking in Arabic.

Muqrin was reported last month to have taken over leadership of al Qaida in Saudi Arabia after the killing of the former top operative Khaled Ali Ali Haj.

Earlier this month a strategy paper posted on a website and signed by Muqrin listed Jews, Americans and Britons as main targets and called on militant cells worldwide to "turn the infidels' lands into hell".

The man in the video — which carried the title "Expel The Polytheists from the Arab Peninsula" — warned Muslim rulers and security and intelligence forces against confronting militants fighting Americans at pain of death.

Militant Islamic cells scattered across Italy, many of them dormant and used to support attacks abroad, could turn to targets inside the country, Italy's top guerrilla investigator said on Thursday.

Italy on alert

Italy, which like Spain supported the US-led offensive in Iraq, has been on a state of alert since the March 11 Madrid train bombs which killed 191 people.

"The main lesson from Madrid is that a cell everyone would have considered as one providing logistic support can suddenly change," prosecutor Stefano Dambruoso said just weeks before he is due to take up a job with UN crime-fighting agencies in Vienna. "Many countries, including Italy, had been considered crossroads for attacks abroad," he said.

The new generation of U.K. Muslims

By Steven Morris and
Tania Branigan

LONDON, APRIL 1. Until last year Işhtiaq Alamgir held down a good, solid if slightly dull job as an accountant for the U.K.'s Inland Revenue at Luton in Bedfordshire, north of London. On Wednesday, the university graduate, who now prefers to be called Sayful Islam (spirit of Islam), was to be found agitating outside the town's Central Mosque, criticising the police raids on suspected Islamist terrorists in the south of England and condoning attacks by Islamists across the world.

Today, he said, he would be distributing leaflets outside a nearby school. He handed over a copy, complete with a skull and the instruction: "Allah has prescribed jihad ... do not let the fear of death be the reason for you not engaging in this struggle."

Mr. Islam (24) quit his job to take over as leader of the Luton branch of al-Muhajiroun, the group which has been accused of recruiting young Muslims and preaching radical, violent interpretations of the Koran.

This week's arrests of young British Muslims suspected of involvement in a terrorist plot makes the views and motives of men like Mr. Islam — and the reaction to them of the wider Muslim community — pertinent. There have been suggestions that some of those arrested have had past dealings with al-Muhajiroun, which espouses controversial views but has never been linked to violence.

While the U.K.'s national leadership of the group has toned down its rhetoric in recent years, Mr. Islam said he condoned the September 11 attacks and the train bombings in Madrid, and backed the aims of

Osama bin Laden. "All these acts are being committed by Muslim people whose lands have been occupied," he said. "These people have legitimate reasons to strike back. I support Muslims who defend themselves."

And because it was involved in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq — and was a firm ally of the U.S. — Britain could be regarded as a legitimate target. "Britain must expect to be attacked," he said.

But other Muslims have little patience or sympathy for the rhetoric of groups such as al-Muhajiroun. While Mr. Islam claims that there are perhaps around 50 members of al-Muhajiroun in Luton, and perhaps 800 across Britain, others describe them as "toothless tigers" which attract minimal support.

In Luton, the elders of the Central Mosque were all too aware that agitation by al-Muhajiroun has given the town a reputation as a hotbed of extremism. Muhammad Sulaiman, its president, has banned the group from the grounds and ejected Mr. Islam and his fellow campaigner Abdul Haq (slave of the truth).

Yaqub Hanif (24), a mosque regular, had nothing but contempt for the pair: "They do not represent the young Muslims of Luton at all. They have extreme views which the vast majority of people here do not share. The young people are more interested in gadgets and computers than terrorism."

Yet Akbar Dad Khan of the group Building Bridges — which promotes harmony between faiths — conceded there was concern about potential support for organisations including al-Muhajiroun. A fifth of local young Muslims are un-

employed. "Some of them do feel rejected, unwanted and dejected," he said. "They feel they haven't been served well by the political and educational system. There is some fertile ground for the extremists here (and) we are working hard to make sure they do not get a foothold."

As a new generation of British Muslims grows up — a third of all Muslims in England and Wales are 14 or under — many want to integrate more closely into British society than their parents have done. But others feel little affection for a society which seems to offer them little respect, according to Tahir Abbas, director of the centre for the study of ethnicity and culture at the University of Birmingham in central England.

Marginalised groups

"A lot of people are from the poorest, most marginalised and disaffected groups: they have had poor jobs, poor housing, poor health and low skills," he said. "Their parents are prepared to take racism and discrimination but the second generation feel they have had enough."

"There's a feeling that teachers don't understand us, parents don't understand us and society is not going to give us a job. There's a state of anomie, and when they do rebel and make a noise they get attention."

"There are masculinity issues there in some ways. If you're in a community and are young and have no hope, how do you get status and get yourself recognised?"

The perceived backlash against Islam in the wake of the attacks on September 11 has fuelled anger. There is a widespread feeling that Muslims are being unfairly stereotyped as

potential terrorists. But domestic grievances gain added potency from a widespread sense that Muslims are under threat around the world, thanks to turmoil in the Middle East (West Asia), the war in Chechnya and the war in Iraq. The concept of the Ummah — the Islamic community — has no western equivalent, but means that many Muslims believe that an attack on any believer is an attack on the community as a whole.

Yet Magnus Ranstorp, director of the centre for the study of terrorism and political violence at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, argues that few people spontaneously turn to violence even when underlying pre-conditions are present.

He argues that new recruits tend to be drawn in slowly through a sophisticated process of ideological and psychological manipulation, often through radical clerics met in person or whose teachings they study via the internet.

"It's also about the presence of specific individuals who ignite the dry grass that already exists," he said. "It only takes a couple of people to exploit and manipulate young and impressionable individuals."

In Denmark, for instance, "talent spotters" have recruited people found in radical mosque environments.

"Some individuals may then be invited to a back room to meet one of the fighters from Chechnya, for example," he said.

Recruits might be asked to store documents, commit crimes and then go "further and further (until there is) no turning back". But, he added, there was a wide gulf between alienation and violence. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2004

Al Qaida spy chief killed in Pak sw

Wana, March 29 (Reuters): Pakistani troops killed a spy chief in Osama bin Laden's al Qaida network in a 12-day sweep on its volatile Afghan frontier, an army official said today, vowing to step up the hunt for Islamic militants.

The army said it would flush foreign fighters from its mountainous tribal territories bordering eastern Afghanistan after a bloody offensive in South Waziristan district ended yesterday with more than 100 people killed. "The casualties were relatively high but a small cost for the lofty cause of elimination of terrorism from Pakistan society," military spokesman Major-General Shaukat Sultan said.

He said troops had killed 63 militants, including an al Qaida intelligence chief whom he identified only as "Mr Abdullah". He would not provide further details such as the man's national-

ty, full name or how and when he was killed. "He was killed in this operation," he said.

US forces are hunting on the other side of the border in a pin-cer operation. Militants linked to al Qaida are widely believed to be behind bomb blasts in Madrid this month that killed 190.

Sultan said a wounded senior Uzbek al Qaida leader, Tahir Yuldashev, was on the run. Yuldashev was the 10th most senior member of al Qaida and was now hiding somewhere along the Afghan border, he added.

The military claimed victory after securing the release yesterday of 12 paramilitary troops taken hostage when the fighting began, but about 50 soldiers were killed and an unknown number of fighters escaped, possibly through a labyrinth of tunnels.

The raid, Pakistan's biggest on its semi-autonomous South Waziristan tribal territory, net-

ted 163 militants, including 73 foreigners, Sultan said. More than a dozen civilians are believed dead.

About 50,000 army troops have been deployed in Pakistan's rugged Afghan frontier to clear foreign militants. "There are no other tribal communities that we know of sheltering and harbouring militants. But if there are, we will find out," said Sultan.

But in the latest of a series of small attacks elsewhere on the border, two rockets were fired at a paramilitary camp in North Waziristan late yesterday, causing some damage but no injuries, residents in the area said.

Capturing Yuldashev would be a prize for President Pervez Musharraf, accused by conservative Islamic politicians of pandering to US President George W. Bush at the expense of Pakistani Muslims in the South Waziris-

tan offensive. Musharraf says al Qaida militants with links to the tribal area were behind two attempts on his life in December.

Yuldashev, leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, was accused of a series of bomb deadly blasts in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, in 1999 and is rumored to have led resistance to US forces during fighting in Afghanistan in the spring of 2002.

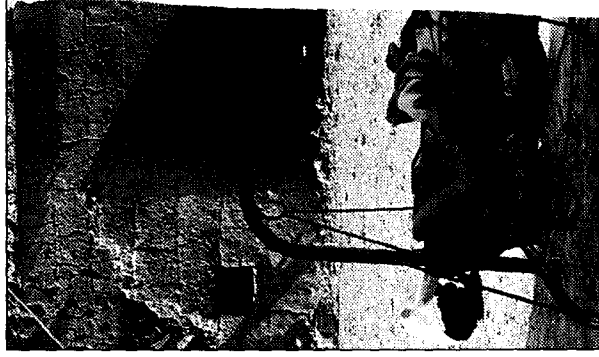
As convoys of troops withdrew from the area around the militant hideout to a nearby base near South Waziristan's capital of Wana, families returned on wagons and tractor-trolleys to the site of the fighting, many finding their homes destroyed.

"My family has nothing to do with any group or militants, but my house is totally destroyed. We are poor people. They have ruined us," said one, from Serwakai, near Wana. Some schools

were hit and a number of water wells damaged, they added.

Military bulldozers had flattened nearly all the mud-walled fortress-like homes where Pashtun tribesmen had given refuge to al Qaida and foreign fighters believed to include Uzbeks, Arabs and Chechens, the residents said. Tribal elders in the Afghan border district of Zhob, about 60 km south of Wana, met a Pakistani general and agreed to fight if al Qaida-linked militants reach their area.

The fighting began when paramilitary forces hunting al Qaida and other militants ran into a hail of bullets on March 16, suggesting tribesmen were helping to protect a "high-value target", perhaps bin Laden's deputy Ayman al-Zawahri. Pakistani, while supporting the US war on terror, had come under pressure for not doing enough to flush out militants.



A child sleeps in a cradle near Wana

Israel to target entire Hamas

Agencies

Jerusalem, March 23

ISRAEL WILL attempt to kill the entire leadership of Palestinian militant group Hamas, striking wherever opportunities present themselves, an Israeli security official said citing a decision made by Israeli security chiefs following the assassination of Hamas's founder.

The killing of Sheik Ahmed Yassin on Monday threatened to escalate three and a half years of Israel-Palestinian fighting. Fearing revenge attacks, Israel beefed up security throughout the country and at its missions abroad.

The report comes after Israel attracted widespread international condemnation — including criticism from Washington — for Monday's assassination of Ahmed Yassin, the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas. The White House last night said that it was "deeply troubled" by the assassination.

Speaking on Tuesday on condition of anonymity, the Israeli security official said that the decision to kill the Hamas leadership had been secretly made by the Israeli cabinet last week. It came in response to a double suicide bombing at an Israeli seaport. According to the unnamed security official, the heads of Israel's security branches had reaffirmed the cabinet decision. Israel will not wait for the next Hamas attack before taking action, but will strike whenever an opportunity presents itself, the source said.

The Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz on Monday met security officials for five hours to discuss the fall-



Yemenis brandish their knives during a demonstration to condemn Yassin's killing in Sanaa. AFP

out from the assassination.

Despite the outpouring of rage, Israeli security chiefs decided during a five-hour meeting Monday to step up targeted attacks, the security sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity. They said officials decided to go after the entire Hamas leadership, without waiting for another attack by the militant group.

Israeli police and security forces were deployed in force across the country Tuesday in an anticipation of a backlash to the air strike which killed Yassin and seven other

Palestinians near a mosque in Gaza City on Monday.

Security was particularly tight around buses, which have been the target of dozens of suicide attacks since the start of the Palestinian intifada in September 2000.

Hamas responded to the killing by calling for Muslims around the world to attack Israelis, and Americans who support them, with "unprecedented severity". It also hinted for the first time that the United States could become a target for backing Israel.

On Tuesday, Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Korei headed to the Gaza Strip to offer his condolences to Hamas, Palestinian officials said. Korei was due to attend a ceremony at the Yarmouk Stadium in Gaza City.

Around 200,000 Gaza residents on Monday poured onto the streets to follow Yassin's coffin. Mourners at his funeral heard Hamas leaders call for a broadening of the conflict with Israel.

The Palestinian Authority has declared three days of mourning, and stores throughout the West Bank and

Gaza Strip were closed on Tuesday. Yassin was the most prominent Palestinian leader to be killed by Israel in more than three years of fighting.

Security chiefs are closely watching to see who fills the political vacuum caused by Yassin's death. At least initially, hardliner Abdel Aziz Rantisi, has emerged as a Hamas strongman. Rantisi, a 54-year-old pediatrician who escaped an Israeli assassination attempt last June, opposes even a temporary truce with Israel.

Ismail Hanieh, a top Yassin aide, said Hamas took a blow to morale, but would continue carrying out attacks on Israel. "Sheik Yassin's death is not going to harm or affect the movement," Hanieh said.

The assassination, which killed seven other people, received large support in Israel, despite the belief that it will spark more violence. The *Yediot Ahronot* daily published a poll showing 60 per cent of Israelis that killing Yassin was the right thing to do, while 32 per cent thought it was wrong.

On the other hand, 81 per cent of Israelis believe the assassination will lead to an increase in militant attacks, while 15 per cent think it will have no impact and only three per cent think it will lead to a decrease.

The Dahaf poll had a margin of error of 4.4 percentage points.

"No one in the system, not even Sharon, believes that the assassination of the sheik will reduce the scope of terror. There is no strategy here: just bitter frustration," wrote *Yediot* columnist Nahum Barnea.

Killers of prophets, cry Palestinians

'Sons of Zions, await response in hours'

Reuters
Gaza, March 22

EVEN AS Israel assassinated Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin outside a Gaza mosque on Monday, striking its heaviest blow to the militant group behind dozens of suicide bombings and drawing vows of revenge, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians marched in an outpouring of grief in a funeral procession for Yassin and the other dead. Eyes burning with tears and rage, mourners reached out to touch Yassin's Islamic flag-draped coffin.

"They're the killers of prophets and today they killed an Islamic symbol," said Abdel Aziz al-Rantissi, now the most prominent face of Hamas. "It's a war on Islam... What happened was beyond the assassination of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, they wanted to assassinate the Palestinian cause".

Each side has been trying to bloody the other as much as possible ahead of the possible pullout of the 7,500 Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip proposed by Sharon.

A senior official of the State Department urged all sides to remain calm. The United States, which brands Hamas a terrorist group, has been trying with little success to revive the peace road map envisaging a Palestinian state by 2005.

Hamas said it believed Washington, where Sharon hopes to win support for go-it-alone steps Palestinians fear could turn into an Israeli land grab in the West Bank, had given the green light for Yassin's assassination.

"War, war, war on the sons of Zion. An eye for an eye. There will be a response within hours, God willing," said a statement from the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, part of Arafat's Fatah faction behind many suicide attacks. Israeli security sources said Prime Minister Ariel Sharon personally ordered and monitored the helicopter attack against the paralysed

cleric, whose wheelchair lay squashed in a pool of blood after three missiles exploded.

It was the highest-profile assassination of a Palestinian since the April 1988 killing in Tunis of Palestinian commando chief Khalil al-Wazir: At least seven other people died in the Gaza strike and two of Yassin's sons were among 15 wounded. The attack on Yassin as he and his entourage left dawn prayers seemed to be aimed at weakening Hamas, a group seeking Israel's destruction, to prevent it from claiming victory should Sharon go ahead with a planned unilateral pull-out from Gaza.

Officials in the Palestinian Authority called Yassin a moderating force in Hamas, an Islamic movement he co-founded in 1987 with encouragement from Israel, which hoped the new group would undercut its long-time enemy, PLO chief Yasser Arafat. "It is a clear message to the world that the Israelis are not ready to sit with the Palestinians for peace," Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Korei told reporters after the killing, which he said "opened the door to chaos".

In an outpouring of grief, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians marched in a funeral procession for Yassin and the other dead. Eyes burning with tears and rage, mourners reached out to touch Yassin's Islamic flag-draped coffin. "Sharon, start preparing your body bags because (Hamas') Qassam Brigades will put Israeli houses in mourning and make a funeral in every Israeli street," the crowd chanted.

In the first sign of revenge within Israel, a Palestinian with an axe hurt three people outside an army base near Tel Aviv. He was arrested. In scenes reminiscent of the start of a Palestinian uprising that began in September 2000, protests erupted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Mosques called an immediate general strike.

Handwritten: "Islam Hi- 20/3" above the headline "EYE FOR AN EYE..."



A Hamas supporter protests the killing of spiritual leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin at Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp in south Lebanon on Monday.

No dent to Hamas

Agence France-Presse
Gaza City, March 22

ISRAEL'S KILLING of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin may have robbed Hamas of its most charismatic and distinctive voice but is unlikely to deal more than a glancing blow to a movement whose popularity has steadily climbed throughout the Palestinian intifada.

"Hamas is a well-structured organisation with a clear hierarchy. Therefore losing its leaders will be a blow in the short-term," said Palestinian analyst Ali Jerbawi.

"But for the same reason, there is no doubt its broad support base and the level of its organisation will ensure that Hamas won't really be affected," he added.

The radical Islamist movement was founded by Yassin back at the start of the first Palestinian uprising (1987-1993) but its popularity really took off with the eruption of the second intifada in late September 2000.

Its standing has grown particularly among the more impoverished residents of the Gaza Strip, who were grateful not only for the bloody attacks it carried out against the Israelis but also as re-

ipients of its vast "charitable" network through which it provides schooling and medicine and other social services.

After Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement, polls show that Hamas is now the second most popular of the array of political parties.

The wheelchair-bound Yassin, a father of nine, was the movement's most recognisable face, and his high-pitched voice was a regular feature of the airwaves. His portrait adorns many of the walls in Gaza and other parts of the occupied territories as well as the cells of Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

The movement now has a vast network of political and military leaders, with many observers regarding its chief powerbroker these days as being the Damascus-based Khaled Meshaal.

In an interview with a Hamas website only last week, a defiant Yassin predicted that Israel would never be able to deal a death blow to his movement.

"Israel has tried to destroy Hamas more than once and each time, the movement has come out stronger," he said.

Israel rid of chief terrorist: Sharon

ISRAELI PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon led a chorus of public support on Monday for Yassin's assassination,



saying it had rid Israel of the Palestinians' "chief terrorist". "The state of Israel this morning hit the leader of the Palestinian assassins and terrorists," Sharon said as he congratulated the armed forces over the operation. "The guiding ideology of this man was the assassination and murder of Jews wherever they were and the destruction of Israel," he said. "I would like to thank the defence apparatus."

AFP, Jerusalem

Assassination a mistake: Peres

ISRAEL'S DOVISH opposition leader, Shimon Peres, said on Monday that Yassin's assassination was a mistake.



"Had I been a member of the government I would have voted against this. I think it was a mistake," said the elder statesman who was awarded the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize. Peres said, "I would have voted against for the following reasons: is this (strike) going to result in an increase or a decrease in terrorism? I think there's a risk it will increase. 'I don't think we can eliminate terrorism by wiping out leaders,'" Peres said.

AFP, Jerusalem



Armed Hamas members attend the funeral of slain leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in Gaza on Monday.

Muslims blast Israel, world condemns

■ Envoys from the UN, US, Russia and the EU have arranged to meet for talks on the consequences of Israel's killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Maher said.

■ European ministers denounced Yassin's killing, claiming it would set back hopes of reviving peace talks in West Asia. "We have to fight terror everywhere, Israel also has to fight terror... But extrajudicial killings is not one of the ways," Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller said. Ideas including a new post of EU counter-terrorism coordinator and a Nato-style commitment for EU governments to rush to one another's aid in the event of terrorist attacks may be adopted by the end of this week when the bloc's leaders gather in Brussels.

■ Head of Lebanon's Hizbollah guerrillas said on Monday that

Israel would pay the highest price for the assassination of Yassin. "The Zionists will discover soon that they have committed a very big folly, to add to their series of previous follies," Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah said. "They will pay a heavy price for their ugly crime at the hands of the loyal mujahideen".

■ Israel's killing of the Hamas spiritual leader was "state terrorism in its most hideous form", secretary general of the Arab League, Amr Mussa, said. "This operation reveals Israel's aggressive intentions and unarguably shows its refusal of an eventual return of calm to the region," said Mussa, quoted by his spokesman Houssam Zaki.

■ South Africa also denounced the killing of Yassin and said the only way to end the violence in West Asia was for Israel to return Palestinian territories and for both sides to resume unconditional talks.



An Israeli policeman arrests a Palestinian demonstrator as an undercover policeman takes position during clashes in Jerusalem on Monday.

Madrid 'bombers' name next target

Associated Press

CAIRO, March 18. — The Islamic militant group that claimed responsibility for last week's Madrid train bombings has warned that its next targets could be Japan, Italy, Britain or Australia, an Arabic newspaper reported today. The London-based Al-Quds al-Arabi said on its Web site that it had received a statement from "The Brigade of Abu Hafs al-Masri (Al-Qaida)" in which the group reiterated its responsibility for the March 11 attacks that killed more than 200 people and wounded more than 1,600.

"Our brigades are getting ready now for the coming strike," said the statement dated March 15. "Whose turn will it be next? Is it Japan, America, Italy, Britain, Saudi Arabia or Australia?" The statement warned these countries that "the brigades of death are at your doors," adding that they would strike "with an iron hand at the right time and place." The Web site did not say how the statement had been received. But Al-Quds al-Arabi has received e-mails from this group in the past. On the evening of the Madrid bombings, the paper released a copy of an e-mail from Abu Hafs al-Masri in which they made the first claim of responsibility.

'Australian group swelling': A radical regional group linked to Al-Qaida and blamed for Southeast Asia's worst terror attacks has thousands more followers than previously believed, Australian foreign minister Mr Alexander Downer said.

But Mr Downer went on to shrug off fresh warnings by the alleged leader of the

Police arrest four more

MADRID, March 18. — Spanish police have arrested four more suspects, believed to be of Moroccan origin, in last week's train bombings in Madrid, sources at the National Court said today.

Three were arrested in Alcala de Henares, the town outside Madrid where three of the four trains bombed on Thursday originated. It was also in that town where police found a van with detonators and a cassette tape with verses from the Quran and a witness said he saw three men in ski masks carrying knapsacks toward the train station. The fourth suspect was arrested in northern Spain, the sources said. Five suspects arrested earlier in the week were scheduled to appear in court Thursday; among them, three Moroccans including Jamal Zougam, who is considered the main suspect. Two Indians were also to appear in court. — AP

Indonesian-based Jemaah Islamiyah group, Abu Bakar Bashir, and Al-Qaida that Australia and other close US allies would be the next terrorist targets. In an interview published today in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Mr Downer said Australia believed "there are somewhere between three and five thousand Jemaah Islamiyah adherents in Indonesia". "Three to five thousand people can do a lot of damage if they get their hands on TNT," Mr Downer said.

'Spanish Al-Qaida cell had links to Indonesia': The Spanish Al-Qaida cell which

is a suspect in the Madrid bombings had links to militant training camps in Indonesia, an expert said today. "There is a clear link between Spanish Al-Qaida and training camps in Poso," said Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group of political analysts. An ICG report last month said the head of Spain's Al-Qaida cell, Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, visited the Poso district in Indonesia's Central Sulawesi in May 2001.

Madrid bombing suspect lives in Britain, says report:

An alleged leader of an Islamist group linked to recent Madrid bombings and suicide attacks in Casablanca last May is living in Britain, leading daily claimed today quoting intelligence sources. Mohammed al-Gerbouzi has shaken off repeated requests from Moroccan authorities who want to extradite him to face charge related to the 44 deaths caused by the Casablanca bombings, *The Guardian* reported. He has been based in Britain for 16 years.

Agencies meet Suresh Kumar's parents

HOSHIARPUR, March 18. — A team of central investigation agencies on Wednesday met the parents of Suresh Kumar, one of the two Indians arrested in connection with devastating train bombings in Madrid last week. The team met Suresh Kumar's father Sham Sunder and his wife Kanta, sources here said today.

Kumar was arrested along with Vinay Kohli. Spanish police recovered a mobile phone and its bill from the bomb explosion site. After investigation, it was revealed that the mobile phone was purchased from the shop of Suresh Kumar.

Evidence shows extremists' role in Madrid attacks: USA

Agencies

WASHINGTON, March 16. — US authorities increasingly believe Muslim extremists played a role in the Madrid railway bombings last week.

One US counter-terrorism official, speaking yesterday on condition of anonymity, said nothing has been ruled out: Authorities are considering Al-Qaida and other Muslim extremist groups, such as the one run by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The Basque separatist group, ETA, may also have been involved or was perhaps working with Muslim extremists, the official said. "It appears increasingly likely that Islamic extremists played a role in these attacks," he added. "What's clear is we still don't know." Spanish authorities are questioning three Moroccans and two Indians in connection with the attacks. US officials, who declined to discuss specifics of the Spanish probe, say the focus primarily is on the Moroccan's possible links.

Meanwhile, President Mr George W Bush called to congratulate Spain's incoming Prime Minister yesterday. He expressed hope the two countries can coop-

India to seek consular access

NEW DELHI, March 16. — India will approach Spanish authorities tomorrow for consular access to the two Indians, Vinay Kohly and Suresh Kumar, alleged to be illegal immigrants who have been held in connection with the Madrid blasts. The Spanish law prohibits any access to an accused for 72 hours, sources in the home ministry said. — PTI

erate on fighting terrorism but the two avoided perhaps the thorniest issue: White House spokesman Mr Scott McClellan said the topic of Spain withdrawing troops from Iraq did not come up.

Spain explains ETA blast claim to UN: Spain has sent the UN Security Council a formal letter explaining why it pressed a resolution blaming Basque militants for the Madrid blasts before evidence emerged pointing to Al-Qaida, diplomats said. **Militants discussed attack:** Islamic militants discussed the possibility of a terrorist attack timed to affect the Spanish general election as long ago as December, Britain's *Channel 4 News* reported.

THE STATESMAN

17 MAR 2004

Held Moroccan has 9/11 links

Agencies

Madrid, March 15

Advani seeks details of detained Indians

A MOROCCAN arrested in the Madrid train bombings had links with an alleged al-Qaida cell leader charged with helping plan the September 11 attacks in the US, an indictment shows.

The 700-page September 17, 2003, indictment by Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzon names Jamal Zougam — one of three Moroccans arrested on Saturday in connection with Spain's worst-ever terrorist attacks — as a "follower" of Imad Yarkas, whom Garzon jailed for allegedly helping plan the attacks on New York and Washington.

Zougam's alleged al-Qaida links strengthen suspicions that the terror group was involved in Thursday's Madrid bombings, which killed 200 and injured 1,500.

Zougam was not indicted

DEPUTY PRIME Minister L.K. Advani on Monday spoke to senior officials of the Home Ministry and asked them to seek details of the reported involvement of two Spanish citizens of Indian origin in the Madrid train blast.

The Spanish authorities, meanwhile, have told the Ministry of Ex-

ternal Affairs they found no immigration records for Vinay Kohly and Suresh Kumar, the two men arrested in connection with the serial train blasts in Madrid. The two men apparently have connections with an illegal immigration racket and are involved in the theft of mobile phones.

HTC, New Delhi

ed by Garzon, but the indictment clearly showed the police were keeping an eye on him. His home was searched at least once, the indictment showed, turning up a video of mujaheddin fighters in Dagestan, Russia, and telephone numbers of three members of the Madrid al-Qaida cell allegedly led by Yarkas.

In Morocco, a high-ranking official said Zougam, 30, had been under surveillance for months on suspicion of having ties to international terror groups, but faced no formal accusations in Morocco.

Zougam is described as a friend of Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, or Abu Dah, the suspected leader of

a busy Qaida cell based in Spain. The indictment also includes evidence showing that Zougam had been in contact with several of Yarkas's associates since at least 2001.

Judge Garzon has asserted that Yarkas helped arrange an important preparatory meeting for the Sept. 11 hijackers and provided them with support.

The other two arrested Moroccans, Mohamed Bekkali, 31, and Mohamed Chaoui, 34, have no police record in Morocco. Spanish authorities have not publicly spoken of Zougam's alleged link to al-Qaida since his arrest on Saturday, even though Garzon's indictment has been publicly available for months. Intelligence agencies, meanwhile, worked on Sunday to verify another possible link in the Madrid attack to al-Qaida.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 MAR 2004

2 Indians among 5 held for Madrid terror

By Elaine Sciolino
and Lizette Alvarez

Madrid: Spain's interior minister said early on Sunday that a videotape had been discovered claiming that Al Qaida carried out train terrorist attacks on Thursday that killed hundreds, but that its authenticity could not be confirmed. Several hours earlier, Spain arrested three Moroccans and two Indians in connection with the bombings.

At a hastily called news conference in the first hours of Spain's national election day, interior minister Angel Acebes said a man identifying himself as the military spokesman of Al Qaida in Europe claimed on the tape that the group was responsible for the attacks that killed 200

people and wounded 1,500 in Madrid.

"We claim responsibility for what happened in Madrid just two and a half years after the attacks in New York and Washington," said the man, according to a government transcription of the tape, which was recorded in Arabic. "This is an answer to your cooperation with the Bush criminals and their allies."

Hours earlier, Acebes announced that the Spanish police had arrested the five men in connection with the bombings. The men were charged with selling and falsifying a telephone card and a telephone attached to an unexploded bomb found in a gym bag on a train shortly after the bombing.

The sending of the videotape seemed intended to cause maximum politi-



Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar and his wife Ana Botella vote in the general election on Sunday

cal turmoil in a tense country. During the night, helicopters flew over Madrid, and police officers were deployed to secure important governmental buildings. Acebes said the tape was found after a man called a Madrid television station at 7:40 p.m. on Saturday

and claimed to be the military spokesman for Al Qaida in Europe.

"This is an answer to crimes which you committed in the world, notably in Iraq and Afghanistan, and there will be more, so help us God," it said. "You want life, we want death, which is an example of what the prophet Mohammed said. If you do not stop your injustices, more blood will be spilt, and these attacks are very little compared to what you call terrorism," the man in the tape said and threatened further attacks.

"This is a response to the crimes that you caused in the world, and specifically in Iraq and Afghanistan, and there will be more if God wills it."

NYT News Service

মার্কিন-বিশ্বেশ্বারণে সন্দেহের তির আল কায়দার দিকে

মার্কিন, ১২ মার্চ: মার্কিন বিশ্বেশ্বারণের পিছনে গতকাল বাস্ক সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের হাত রয়েছে বলে স্পেন সরকার দাবি করলেও এখন আল কায়দাকে সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে। সন্দেহের একটা বড় কারণ, লন্ডনের আল-কুদস আল-আরাবি সংবাদপত্রে একটি ইসলামি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী ই-মেল করে এই ঘটনার দায় স্বীকার করেছে। ওসামা বিন লাদেনের আল কায়দার জঙ্গিরা সত্যিই এই বিশ্বেশ্বারণের পিছনে রয়েছে কি না, তা এখনও নিশ্চিত ভাবে না জানা গেলেও তাদের ওই তিরি খবর জানার পরেই গোটা চিত্রাই পাল্টে গিয়েছে। স্পেন-সহ যে সব ইউরোপীয় দেশ এতদিন ইরাকে মার্কিন বাহিনীর সঙ্গে হাত মিলিয়ে কাজ করছে, তারা সবাই নতুন করে আল কায়দার জঙ্গি হানার আশঙ্কা করছে। মার্কিনে গতকালের বিশ্বেশ্বারণে নিহতের সংখ্যা বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে ১৯৮। আহত অন্তত ১৪০০ জন। এ দিকে এই বিশ্বেশ্বারণে আল কায়দার জড়িত থাকার সম্ভাবনা চূড়ান্ত হওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আন্তর্জাতিক শেয়ার বাজারে দর পড়তে শুরু করেছে।

বিশ্বেশ্বারণের পরেই স্পেন সরকার বাস্ক বিক্ষিতবাদী সংগঠন ইটাকে এ জন দক্ষী করেছিল। কিন্তু লন্ডনের আরবি পত্রিকার অফিসে চিঠি পাঠিয়ে আল কায়দা স্পেনের প্রধানমন্ত্রী জোশ মারিয়া আনজার আজ বলেছেন, তদন্তে সম্ভাব্য সব দিকেই খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। আবু হাফস আল-মাসরি নামের যে সংগঠনটি ওই চিঠি পাঠিয়েছে, তারা আল-কায়দার ঘনিষ্ঠ। মার্কিন মিত্রদেশের বিরুদ্ধে এই হামলা চালিয়েছে তারা। আমেরিকার জন্যও ১১ সেপ্টেম্বরের মতো হামলার প্রস্তুতি চলছে। কিন্তু আল কায়দার সত্যিই এই বিশ্বেশ্বারণের পিছনে রয়েছে কি না, তা নিয়ে মার্কিন গোয়েন্দা দফতরের খটকা রয়েছে। তাদের মতে, আল কায়দা কেনও হামলা চালালেও এত তাড়াতাড়ি দায় নিতে বিবৃত দেয় না।

মার্কিনে ও আরও কয়েকটি রেলস্টেশনে গতকাল যে ভাবে বিশ্বেশ্বারণ হয়েছে, তা দেখে প্রাথমিকভাবে স্পেন সরকার মনে করেছিল এটা বাস্কদেরই কাজ। কারণ, অতীতেও বাস্করা এই ধাঁচে বিশ্বেশ্বারণ ঘটিয়েছে। কিছুদিন আগেই মার্কিনদের কাছে একজন বাস্ক জঙ্গিকে প্রচুর বিশ্বেশ্বারক সহ গ্রেফতার করা হয়েছিল। বিশ্বেশ্বারণের পরে পরে



জঙ্গি-হানার প্রতিবাদে মার্কিনে বিক্ষোভ। — রয়টার্স

বিশ্বদক্ষী আনা পালাসিও জানান, যে ভাবে বিশ্বেশ্বারণটি ঘটানো হয়েছে, তাতে বিক্ষিতবাদী বাস্ক জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী ইটাই এর পিছনে রয়েছে বলে স্পষ্ট ইঙ্গিত মিলেছে। কিন্তু ইটা এই ঘটনার দায় অস্বীকার করেছে। কাল স্পেনের স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী অ্যান্ড্রেসেস জানান, ঘটনাস্থল থেকে আটক করা একটি ভাণ্ডানে ৭টি ডিটোনোটের ছাড়াও কোরানের উদ্ধৃতি-সহ টেপ উদ্ধার করা হয়েছে। তা থেকেই প্রথম সন্দেহ করা হয়, ইসলামি কোনও জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী এই ঘটনার পিছনে থাকতে পারে।

এই বিশ্বেশ্বারণের পিছনে আল-কায়দার হাত থাকার সম্ভাবনা গোটা ঘটনার মোড় অন্য দিকে ঘুরিয়ে দিয়েছে। বাস্ক জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীর বদলে আল-কায়দা এর জন্য দায়ী প্রমাণিত হলে রবিবার স্পেনের নির্বাচনে তার মারাত্মক প্রভাব পড়ার সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। পাশাপাশি, ইসলামি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী আলোচনার কেন্দ্রে চলে আসায় ইউরোপের অন্যান্য দেশও শঙ্কিত, সতর্ক। ইরাক আক্রমণের সময়ে স্পেনের মতোই আমেরিকার জেটসঙ্গী পোল্যান্ড সীমান্তে সতর্কতা জারি করেছে।

ইটা থেকে সন্দেহের তির আল-কায়দার দিকে ঘুরে গেলে স্পেনের বর্তমান সরকার সঙ্কটে পড়তে পারে। স্পেনের রাজনীতি বিশেষজ্ঞ জোসু মেজোর মত হল, স্পেনের বর্তমান সরকার বাস্ক জঙ্গিদের বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার নীতি নিয়েছে। সেই জায়গা থেকে, বিশ্বেশ্বারণের জন্য ইটা দায়ী হলে জনসাধারণের সহানুভূতি সরকারের দিকেই যাবে। তদন্তের জন্য সব সম্ভাবনা খোলা জানিয়েও স্পেন সরকার এখনও ইটাকেই দায়ী করছে। জার্মানিও জানিয়েছে, তারা বিশ্বাস করে, স্পেনের গেরিলা জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীই ঘটনার পিছনে রয়েছে। এই কারণে দেশে বাড়তি নিরাপত্তা জারি করার কথাও ভাবছে না জার্মানি। উল্টো দিকে, আল-কায়দার মতো ইসলামি সংগঠন দোষী প্রমাণিত হলে পুরো পরিস্থিতিই ঘুরে যাবে বলে জোসুর মত। ইরাক যুদ্ধে আমেরিকাকে সঙ্গ দিয়ে সরকার যে আসলে দেশের নিরাপত্তাকেই বাজি রেখেছে, বিদ্রোহীরা ইতিমধ্যেই এই স্লোগানে মুখর হয়েছে। কিন্তু কোনও দিক থেকেই স্পষ্ট প্রমাণ না মেলায় পুরোটা ইজ্ঞনার স্তরে রয়েছে। আসন্ন ভোটে শোকসত্ত্ব স্পেনবাদী কোন দিকে সাজা দেন, এই মুহুর্তে তার আন্দাজ পাওয়া রীতিমতো কঠিন।—রয়টার্স

Al-Qaida hand in Madrid blasts

Agencies
Dubai/Madrid, March 12

A STATEMENT attributed to al-Qaida and sent to the London-based daily *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* claimed responsibility for Thursday's series of bombings in Madrid and a suicide attack on a masonic lodge in Istanbul two days earlier.

"The death squad (of the Abu Hafs Al-Masri Brigades) succeeded in penetrating the crusader European depths and striking one of the pillars of the crusader alliance — Spain — with a painful blow," said the statement, signed "Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades/al-Qaida" and dated March 11.

Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar was a fervent ally in the 2003 US-led war in Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein and Madrid still deploys 1,300 troops as part of a multinational force in the war-torn country.

Thursday's strike in Madrid "was a part of the settling of old scores with crusader Spain, America's ally in its war against Islam," said the statement. The claims could not be verified and *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* has previously relayed several claims by al-Qaida. "Where is America, O Aznar? Who is going to protect you, Britain, Japan, Italy and other collaborators from us?" the statement added.



IN MEMORIAM: A woman mourns for the victims of Thursday's blasts in Madrid on Friday.

AFP

Whodunit: Two suspects in the Madrid massacre

The case against al-Qaida

▲ An al-Qaida affiliate has sent a letter to the London-based Arabic newspaper, *Al Quds*, claiming responsibility. The affiliate said Spain was one of the 'pillars' of the anti-Muslim crusade

▲ A van with seven detonators and tapes of Quranic passages found near a train station from where three of the four trains started

▲ Last July, Germany arrested an Algerian with suspected al-Qaida links for planning to carry out attacks on Spain's Costa del Sol

▲ Last October, Osama bin Laden had listed Spain among five countries to be targeted by Islamic terrorists because of their closeness to the US

The case against ETA

▲ An ETA truck was intercepted last month on its way to Madrid loaded with Titadine, the dynamite-like explosive used in the Madrid blasts

▲ The train explosives were left in the rakes by bomb-laden backpacks. Similar backpacks were found when Spanish police stopped a suspected ETA attempt on a train station last Christmas Eve

▲ ETA is almost the only terrorist group to carry out terrorism on Spanish soil to date

▲ There is a possibility that younger ETA members may have formed a more radical splinter group. It is not impossible that tied up with al-Qaida, ETA used to get training in Lebanon and explosives from Libya

Islamic Renaissance

Muslims Must Take the First Step

By Salman Khurshid

Little has changed in the Muslim world since Allama Iqbal made his revolutionary plea for the reconstruction of Islamic thought. The inherent tension between liberals and ultra-conservatives continues everywhere, but in India it has acquired a unique complexity. Among Indian Muslims, there are progressive Muslims and most of them speak the language of the majority; there are liberals who honestly seek to represent the aspirations of minorities but with the intention of imposing their own thinking on all Muslims; and finally, there are Muslims whose majority refuse to accept that there is a world beyond their villages and mohallas.

While the rest of the Islamic world debates within the *millat*, in India debates about Islamic culture and aspirations of Indian Muslims inevitably spill over to, and are conducted in, the general fora. In the Muslim world liberal reformers are accused of being *kafirs* (as indeed was a charge against Allama Iqbal himself) but in India they are considered the collaborators of the *kafirs*. At the same time, in India those liberals who genuinely endeavour — and without any political ambition and with a hidden agenda of being leaders — to build bridges with other communities in order to guide Muslims to an enlightened existence, are looked upon with suspicion and even accused of being 'communal' or 'secular' (read anti-Muslim) by the Muslims themselves.

These linguistic, political and conceptual controversies need to be cleared up quickly. Persons cannot be dubbed communal or anti-Muslim simply because of conforming to and promoting their community's aspirations on lines contrary to those prescribed by the Mullahs. Unfortunately, these days those labelled as progressives — who have been aspiring for a leadership role among Muslims on the grounds that they represent the moderate face of Indian Muslims in plural India — are quite comfortable in the company of the RSS. These are the drawing-room progressives who have never done anything to propagate plural values among Muslims. In fact, they have been quite indifferent to the challenge posed to the Muslim community by certain fascist forces. Having done no homework and presenting no credible vision, they cannot try and appropriate leadership roles.

Reform and reconstruction must for all practical and moral reasons come from within the community. But since many aspects of reform in a plural society must *per se* rely upon and involve state institutions, it is important that they be sensitive to the sensibilities of Muslims. This includes encouraging and accommodating community institutions that can address these issues in a meaningful manner.

Since the repudiation of the two-nation

theory, many attempts have been made to conceive theoretical positions about the political role of Muslims in a secular India. There was an early Congress model followed by variants of the Janata Dal and that of Mulayam Singh Yadav. Syed Shahabuddin and various Muslim parties like the Indian Union Muslim League and Majlis Ittehad-ul Muslemeen have periodically offered political formulations which have found no support amongst Muslims nationwide as well as among non-Muslims. On the eve of the general elections, groups fighting against communalism have perceived a sense of desperation in the political system to capitalise on the insecurities of Muslims. This may be an opportunity to secure for them a place in the current scheme of things.

Given the current political climate, an enlightened Muslim leadership will certainly develop. But Allama Iqbal's requisite of power would have to be satisfied by a collaborative effort involving an all party-all religions legislature, Muslim universities and institutions, community leaders and most of all, the *ulema*. The crucial question here is — Can a Muslim leader be a leader of all Indians and not just a leader of Indian Muslims? *Ijma* and *ijtihad* will equally have to be viewed in the light of the collaborative model.

Despite 55 years of educational progress in the country, the Muslim masses, especially in the north, remain educationally handicapped and their problems have not been addressed satisfactorily from the political angle. The impact of Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia has been inadequate to meet the enormity of the challenge. The southern states have made an impressive stride in education through the voluntary sector.

As long as modern educational opportunities are not available, the Muslim masses will perforce gravitate towards adulterated versions of Sufism and those engaged in political opportunism. The cultural aggression that they will encounter will be both western-oriented as well as self-serving *swadeshi*. They need reinforcements on both fronts, not only by providing them access to education but also to the finer aspects of a composite Indian culture, Urdu as a functional language in the common civic space, literature, music etc. Political manifestos will have vigorously to counter the restricted view of *swadeshi* so as to associate with more than just a narrow political view of Hinduism.

Without resolving these political issues, no serious effort will be possible to begin an ambitious national project of reconstruction of religious thought in Islam by Indian Muslims. Perhaps this can be done by dedicating ourselves with greater vigour to realising Iqbal's dream of a renaissance in Islamic culture. And the first step must be taken by the Indian Muslims themselves.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 MAR 2004

Pak build-up for al Qaida offensive

Wana (Pakistan), Feb. 22 (Reuters). Pakistan is gearing up for a drive against al Qaida and Taliban militants in remote western tribal areas and have sought the deployment of more paramilitary troops, officials said today.

PTI, quoting information minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, reported that the Pakistan army has already launched an offensive in the tribal-dominated south Waziristan.

Ahmed was also quoted by the official APP news agency as saying the operation in Waziristan was to uproot "terrorism".

"This exercise is not against a person or an individual but against terrorism," he told reporters in remarks broadcast on private television.

A large number of militants, including the world's most wanted man Osama bin Laden, are thought to be hiding in the rugged border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"We have built up enough pressure on these people and we should not let this pressure ease. These people are on the run and we are also determined to end this menace once and for all," said Muhammad Azam Khan, a

top official in South Waziristan. The US military has also said

Bin Laden

London, Feb. 22 (PTI): Osama bin Laden has been tracked down and the SAS, Britain's elite soldiers, are poised to seize him in his secret mountain lair in Pakistan, the *Sunday Express*, a London tabloid said.

it will launch a spring offensive against Islamic rebels in

Afghanistan in what could be part of a concerted effort to find bin Laden.

Authorities have been pressuring tribesmen in Waziristan for weeks to stop sheltering al Qaida suspects and Taliban fighters.

Yesterday, political authorities governing the semi-autonomous tribal regions asked for 8,000 paramilitary soldiers to add to the 4,000 already deployed.

"We have asked for additional paramilitary troops," Khan said. "We have one full brigade from the regular Pakistan army, but we would like to use them

only as a back-up force."

Last week President Pervez Musharraf urged tribal leaders to turn over al Qaida and Taliban suspects they were sheltering. Pakistan has stepped up efforts to track down al Qaida and Taliban militants in recent months in response to American concerns that Islamic militants have been using Pakistani territory to launch attacks inside Afghanistan.

Ahmed denied media reports that Pakistan had received satellite pictures of bin Laden or his deputy, Egyptian national Ayman al-Zawahri.

Denmark to impose curbs on imams

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Religion

The Times, London

COPENHAGEN, Feb. 19. — Denmark is proposing to curb the activities of radical Islamic leaders given permission to teach in the country. The measures, to be presented to the Danish parliament tomorrow, are aimed at imams who preach against Western values, encourage Muslims to wear the *hijab* — the Islamic head scarf, and demand that women do not work.

The initiative is part of a package of tough immigration reforms that reflects mounting concern in Denmark about the growth of Islamic communities who reject the country's values. There is also alarm about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism — Danish citizen who fought in Afghanistan is being held at Guantanamo Bay. The Danish government is trying to ban the radical Muslim group Hizb ut-Tahrir, which campaigns for *sharia*, or Islamic law.

Prime Minister Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen said: "Access to obtaining a Danish residence permit for foreign missionaries has been too easy until now. That is why we now

put forward new requirements for residing in the country, like the demand that imams and others have an education and that they be financially self-sufficient." One commentator said: "It is about imams who don't speak Danish or know nothing of Danish society. They drag Muslims back 200 years and know nothing about modern European life. It is directly the opposite of integration."

The new legislation will apply to missionaries from all religions, but the far-right Danish People's Party, which first proposed the reforms, confirmed that they were aimed at curbing the activities of Muslims.

Mr Peter Skaarup, a DPP spokesman, said recently: "In theory these rules concern all clerics from all religions. But in practice they target imams." The proposed legislation is almost certain to be passed after a political deal in September between the Liberal Conservative Government, its ally the DPP and the Opposition Social Democrats.

Other measures include a doubling of the fine to £500 for people who harbour failed asylum-seekers, with imprisonment for repeat offenders.

German state goes ahead with scarf ban

The western German state of Saarland today became the fifth in the country to propose legislation that would ban Muslim teachers from wearing headscarves in public schools, AP adds from Frankfurt. The proposal states that neutrality in public schools must not be endangered "through political, religious or ideological displays" and specifically names wearing headscarves as an example.

Displaying Christian and Jewish symbols, however, would be allowed under the law because the teaching of Western religions is part of the public school curriculum in Saarland, a conservative-governed state on the border with France. The ban has still to be approved by the state legislature.

Germany has roughly 3.5 million Muslims, mostly of Turkish origin.

Its 16 states have been divided over whether to ban Muslim teachers from covering their heads in the classroom since the nation's highest court ruled in September that veils were allowed unless existing legislation specifically outlawed them.

THE STATESMAN 20 FEB 2004

A Sunday Of Tragedies

Two Indians Among 244 Killed In Haj Stampede

Mina (Saudi Arabia): As many as 244 people were trampled to death and a similar number injured on Sunday in this valley near Mecca as pilgrims jostled to stone a pillar representing the devil, according to Saudi Arabia's Haj minister Iyad Madani.

Two Indians were among those killed in the stampede, an ever-present threat during the annual pilgrimage that attracts two million people from across the world. Syed Akbaruddin, the Indian consul-general in Jeddah, said they were Mohammed Ali from Kerala and Gulam Mohamed Mir from Anantnag in Jammu and Kashmir.

An official spokesman blamed "jostling among pilgrims" for the stampede and said security forces intervened quickly, limiting the toll. Police and medical teams immediately launched relief and rescue operations in the temporary camp city of Mina.

Despite the large number of deaths, the stoning, which is one of the last important rites of the pilgrimage, was continuing on Sunday. The ritual also marked the first day of Eid ul-Azha.

● Stampede always a threat, Page 15



Bridge of Sighs

Stampede occurred on Jamarat Bridge in Mecca, where pilgrims throw stones at a pillar symbolising the Devil. Muslims believe pillar marks the spot where the Devil appeared to biblical patriarch Abraham. Thousands walk over, under the 50 ft wide bridge which spans a valley between two cliffs. It has been the scene of several stampedes in the past.

Suicide attack on Kurd leaders

Arbil (Iraq): More than 100 people were killed or injured when two suicide bombers blew themselves up in this northern Kurdish city on Sunday, after US deputy defence secretary Paul Wolfowitz flew into Baghdad.

The bombers separately entered the offices of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Democratic Party and detonated explosive belts as residents gathered to celebrate Eid with local officials.

Islamist extremists were blamed for the attacks in Arbil, 350 km north of Baghdad, at the start of the three-day Eid festival. Agencies