

U.S. versus Iran in Iraq

10-11
21/12

Iran's influence over the SCIRI, a key constituent of the Iraqi Government, is setting up a confrontation with the United States.

Atul Aneja

AFTER FIRST courting Shia groups following their invasion of Iraq, the Americans have effected a major policy turnaround. Fearing that the Shia resurgence was helping to consolidate Iranian influence to unacceptable levels in Iraq, the Bush administration has been reaching out to rival Sunni groups in a big way. This shift became evident towards the third week of November, when the United States backed the Cairo conference on reconciliation in Iraq. Held under the aegis of the Arab League, the invitees included hardline Sunni religious groups as well as former Ba'athists having links with the Iraqi resistance movement.

The U.S. during the run-up to the December 15 elections, exhorted the Sunnis to participate in strength, in an apparent effort to limit Iranian influence in mainstream Iraqi politics.

Among the Shia groups, Iran is said to exercise maximum influence over the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The SCIRI's leaders, including present head Abdul-Aziz al-Hakim, spent several years in exile in Iran, when Saddam Hussein was the President of Iraq. There is enough material to suggest the Iranians have funded, armed, and trained the Badr corps, the SCIRI's armed wing.

The SCIRI became the centrepiece of the new Iraqi Government after the January 2005 elections. It has dominated the Interior Ministry, including the intelligence services, and its fighters form the core of the new Iraqi army. The group has been accused of spearheading street battles with Sunni resistance groups, who have, in turn also targeted the new Iraqi army regularly, raising the spectre of a civil war.

The SCIRI, a key constituent of the Shia United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), is now attempting to position Adel Abdul-Mehdi as Iraq's new Prime Minister, and thereby enhance its political profile. It has also sounded least interested in forging a political compromise to form a national unity government involving the Sunnis.

Rebuffing proposals for a compromise with the Sunnis as well as the secular

Iraqiyah grouping of the former Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, the SCIRI, instead, has demonstrated its keenness to establish a political tie-up with ethnic Kurds, who appear to have done well in the parliamentary poll. At a press conference with Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani in the northern Iraqi city of Arbil on December 27, Mr. Hakim signalled he was disinclined to include the National Dialogue Council, led by Sunni leader Salih Mutlak, or Mr. Allawi's party in a possible grand national coalition.

Alarmed by the rise of Iranian influence, the U.S. has been making a deliberate effort to demonise the SCIRI. On November 13, the U.S. military command said in Baghdad that it had discovered a torture chamber, in the basement of the building where Sunni prisoners were being abused.

It alleged that the Interior Ministry, headed by Bayan Jabr Solagh of the SCIRI, ran the cell. Four days later, the U.S. Embassy issued a statement, which said that, "There must not be militia or sectarian control or direction of Iraqi Security Forces, facilities, or ministries."

Some analysts, however, have pointed out that the U.S. had long known about SCIRI hideouts where abuses have been alleged, but has gone public about them only after it decided to confront the pro-Iran group openly. For instance, the *Christian Science Monitor* has reported that the U.S. authorities had been made aware of the Interior Ministry's detention centres, where torture was suspected, even prior to June 2005.

Targeting the SCIRI after the elections, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, told a press conference on December 19 that, "You can't have someone who is regarded as sectarian as Minister of the Interior."

The U.S. discomfort with pro-Iranian Shia groups has risen substantially after what it considered was "bad news," began to flow in torrents in recent weeks. Contrary to its expectations that the Sunnis and Mr. Allawi's group would do well, it is the Shia alliance that seems to have emerged as the dominant political force in Iraq following the December 15 elections. The effort to malign the polls as partially rigged has also boomeranged.

31 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

Sunni protesters allege election fraud, stage rally in Baghdad

Shia groups working to form an alliance with Kurds

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: Alleging fraud in the recent parliamentary election, thousands of Sunnis have rallied in Baghdad amid sectarian tensions that appear to have deepened following the December 15 poll.

At least 5,000 protesters took to the streets in the Iraqi capital on Tuesday, holding aloft banners, as preliminary results showed that Shia United Iraqi Alliance was likely to dominate the new Parliament. "No democracy without real elections", "rigged polls", "down with the electoral commission" some of the banners read. The demonstration had been called by the Maram alliance, an Arabic acronym for the Conference Rejecting Rigged Elections, and included Sunni and secular factions.

Re-election sought

The rally, in which the Sunni National Accord Front, the secular National Dialogue Council and National Iraqiya list of former Iraqi Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi were the main constituents, was preceded by a key meeting that was held in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

According to the Arabic daily *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, the participants, which included Mr. Allawi, Sunni leaders Adnan Dulaimi and Salih Mutlak decided to urge Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa to call for a re-run of the elections, especially in the northern cities, Basra and Baghdad where widespread fraud has been alleged.

The Arab League comprises 22 countries most of which have a dominant Sunni population. The League plans to host another conference on Iraq, in February or March, and has appointed the former Sudanese Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail to do the groundwork.

Also on Tuesday, Sunni Arabs and Turkomans called upon the United Nations, the Arab League and the U.S. administration to probe election results, especially in northern Iraq, where the Kurdish population, in most places, is dominant.



TRUMPETING THEIR CAUSE: An Iraqi plays the trumpet as another plays a drum during a protest against the results of the recent national elections in western Baghdad on Tuesday. — PHOTO: AFP

Meanwhile, Shia groups are working behind the scenes to strike a deal that would allow the formation of the Shia-Kurdish alliance, in the hope that the combination would help them control the new Parliament by a two-thirds majority. Shia leader

Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, on Tuesday met Massoud Barzani, the leader of the Kurdistan regional government, to discuss the formation of a coalition government. Mr. Hakim, who heads the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI), is ex-

pected to address the Kurdish regional Parliament in Arbil on Wednesday.

The Shias have already rejected accusations of voting fraud and the use of street pressure to alter the results. Hundreds of demonstrators assembled in the Shia city of Karbala on Monday, in support of election results and reinforce demands for a new term for Prime Minister Ibrahim

Al-Jaafari. The final results of the election are expected next week. In a bid to achieve a political breakthrough, the office of the Iraqi President Jalal Talabani has announced that he would hold consultations with the heads of all major parties so that a government of "national unity" could emerge.

After a brief pre-poll lull, a U.S. soldier and 19 Iraqis were killed in surging violence. The dead included SCIRI member Sultan al-Thabhawi, who succumbed to his injuries following an attack by gunmen on Monday.

Mass grave found in Karbala

KARBALA: The remains of women and children, believed to be victims of Saddam Hussein's ousted regime, have been found in a mass grave dug up by workers who were laying down pipes in Iraq's southern city of Karbala, a local official said on Tuesday.

"The skulls of children and women with long hair were found in the grave," Abdel Rahman Meshawi, a spokesman for Karbala province told AFP.

Some 20 bodies have so far been recovered and taken to the local hospital for DNA testing, he said. The people appear to have been victims of Mr. Hussein's bloody suppression of a Shia uprising in 1991.

The mass grave was uncovered by chance on Monday some 500 metres away from Imam Hussein's mausoleum, in the centre of the Shia town, some 100 km south of Baghdad.

— AFP

28 DEC 2005

THE HINDU

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'US tried to buy Saddam brother testimony'

Ibrahim was offered the President's chair, say lawyers

ASSOCIATED Press
Amman, December 26

A LAWYER for Saddam Hussein and a Jordanian newspaper claimed on Monday that the United States had offered the former ruler's half brother — a co-accused in the trial — a chance to be the next Iraqi President if he testified against Saddam. Barzan Ibrahim rejected the offer, which allegedly was made in a closed-door hearing of the Higher Iraqi Tribunal on Thursday.

The lawyer spoke to AP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to give details of the closed session. Saddam's chief Iraqi lawyer, Khalil al-Dulaimi, made the same allegations in an interview published on Monday in the independent Jordanian daily *Al Arab Al Yawm*.

Dulaimi, who is in Baghdad, and the other lawyer said they were present in the Iraqi courtroom when Ibrahim made his claim. Dulaimi and US Embassy officials in Amman were not immediately available for comment.

Ibrahim told the court that the Americans had offered me a senior political post in return for testifying against the president," the newspaper quoted Dulaimi as saying. He said Barzan did not wish to elaborate on the post, but that the defence attorney believed it was "Iraq's presidency".

"I categorically refused and told them (the Americans) it would be impossible to testify against the president," Dulaimi and the other lawyer quoted Ibrahim as saying. He was captured in April 2003 shortly after US forces took Baghdad.

Dulaimi claimed that Ibrahim said he was "tortured" after rejecting the offer. Ibrahim reportedly accused US troops

Violence claims 19

AT LEAST 19 people were killed across Iraq on Monday. Gunmen shot five police officers at a checkpoint north of Baghdad, while six vehicle bombs killed at least five people and injured more than 40 in the capital. Meanwhile, preliminary poll results released on Monday from ballots cast by expatriate Iraqis and an early vote carried out for soldiers, hospital patients and prisoners, showed a coalition of Kurdish parties and the main Shi'ite religious bloc each taking about a third of the vote.

AP, Baghdad

Coalition arms smuggled out

THE SEIZURE of lethal collections of illicit weapons from Iraq indicates that weapons are being smuggled into UK by coalition forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Ministry of Defence, according to a *Times* report, has launched Operation Plunder to search vehicles and baggage for military souvenirs.

HTC, London

of stripping in his prison cell, leaving him naked for several hours and refusing to allow him to use the toilet.

The lawyer quoted Ibrahim as saying that US forces wanted him to reveal information on \$36 billion, which they believed was under Saddam's control.

Both lawyers also said that Saddam believed he will stage a comeback.

"They (Americans) will come back to me once they fail to calm the situation in Iraq," Dulaimi quoted Saddam as saying in a private meeting this week, according to *Al Arab Al Yawm*.

Dulaimi reportedly added that Saddam said that he allegedly was beaten with "rifle butts and punched by American troops and an Iraqi translator accompanying them."

The Iraqi lawyer, who still regards Saddam as Iraq's president, said he had no other details because "out of courtesy to my president, I felt embarrassed to ask him to elaborate." On Friday, Dulaimi echoed charges by the ousted leader that he was beaten and tortured by US troops, saying he had seen the bruises himself.

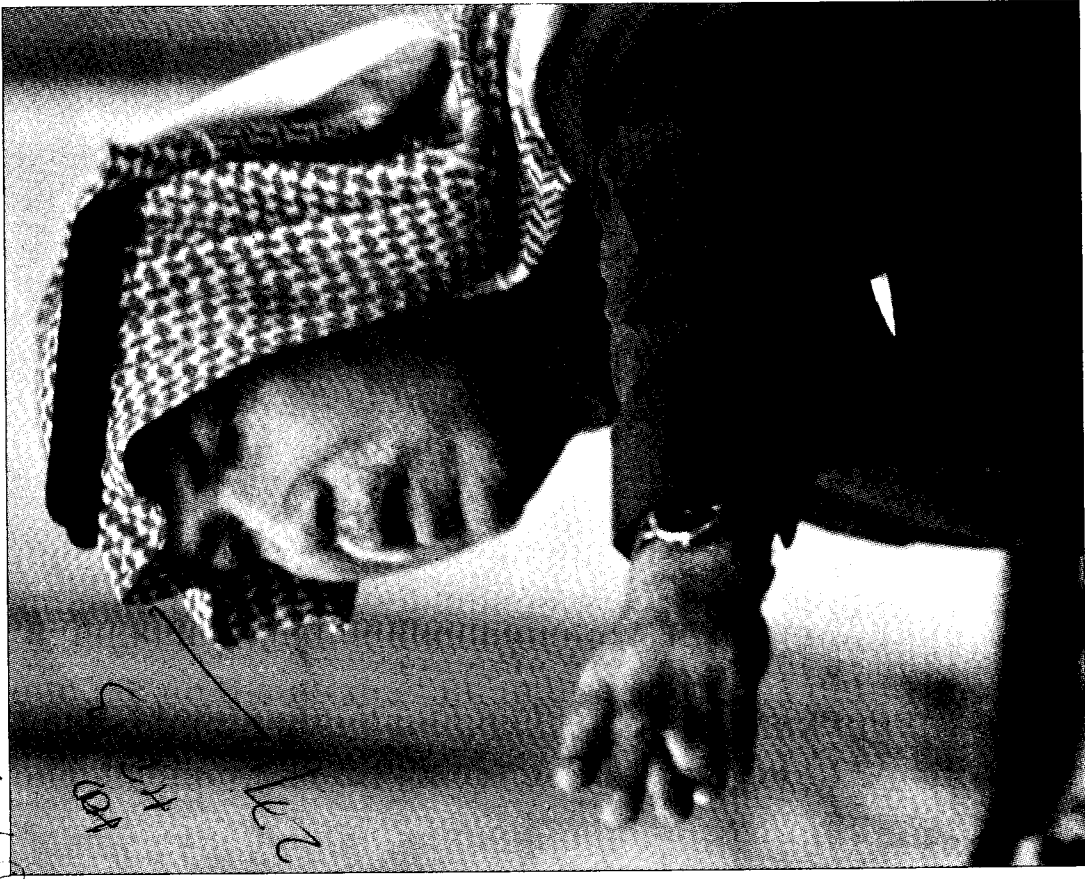
The US has strenuously denied American guards harmed Saddam. The Iraqi judge who investigated Saddam said that until this week Saddam had never claimed any mistreatment, even when asked directly if he had been abused.

Dulaimi told the AP that the torture was revealed to him during a brief meeting with his client during the leader's trial sessions in Baghdad on Wednesday and Thursday.

"The Iraqi president was tortured severely by the American forces and I saw bruise marks on his body. They are visible," Dulaimi said. "They are still torturing him psychologically." He did not say where the bruises were on Saddam's body or describe them. He also gave no details on what he meant by psychological torture.

Dulaimi said he had filed a complaint with the court on Thursday, urging it to investigate the abuse charge.

Saddam's trial is set to resume on January 24.



Saddam Hussein's half-brother, Barzan Ibrahim, speaks to the trial judge in court.

AP

Gassing of Kurds 'genocide': court

Anne Penketh

LONDON, Dec. 24. — A Dutch court has ruled that the killing of thousands of Kurds by Saddam Hussein's regime was an act of genocide as the tribunal sentenced a trader to 15 years in jail for selling the chemicals used in the gas attacks. Dozens of Kurds packed the court and danced outside after the verdict.

The trial was the first to deal with war crimes stemming from action against Kurds in Iraq and Iran. But it is unclear whether the landmark ruling could lead to other prosecutions in the West for complicity in genocide in the Halabja killings. Some 5,000 Kurdish villagers died in March 1988 by the gas attack launched at the end of the bitter Iran-Iraq war.

Britain has incorporated the International Criminal Court Act into domestic legislation which is not retrospective, and therefore limited to events after May 2001. But the Dutch legislation has retrospective effect. The USA, which cited Saddam's

Christmas without Kember

LONDON, Dec. 24. — The family of Norman Kember, the British hostage being held in Iraq, will mark Christmas without him by placing an advert in Iraqi newspapers and radio programmes calling for his release. There has been no news of the 74-year-old peace campaigner from Pinner, north-west London, since the deadline his captors set for his execution expired two weeks ago. Others said that a "cautious optimism" had emerged that Mr Kember might be freed as a result of repeated appeals from across the Muslim world. **The Independent**

weapons of mass destruction as a pressing reason for invading Iraq in 2003, turned a blind eye to Saddam's use of poison gas against the Kurds.

In November 1988, the British foreign secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe, said there was "compelling but not conclusive" evidence that Iraq had used chemical weapons against the Kurds.

At the time, he said it was better to continue relations with Saddam rather than "isolate Iraq and make its unacceptable behaviour more likely".

Mr Peter Carter QC, chairman of the Bar's human rights committee, said Dutch and British

jurisdictions were restricted in that they could try only their nationals. "But this means British mercenaries who support regimes that commit war crimes can expect prosecution," he added.

The ruling on genocide said the Dutch court "thinks and considers legally and convincingly proven that the Kurdish population meets requirement under Genocide Conventions. T

he court said that these attacks were committed with the intent to destroy the Kurdish population of Iraq". The Dutch trader, was found guilty of complicity in war crimes.

The Independent

25 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

Bush, Blair draw up Iraq pullout plan

WCF 17
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THE Guardian and Agencies
Fallujah/Basra, December 23

JUST DAYS after Iraq's elections, the main players in the war on Saddam Hussein's regime — the US and Britain — have made clear their intentions of a withdrawal of combat troops present in Iraq.

US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced on Friday the first of what is likely to be a series of US troop drawdowns in Iraq in 2006, and the British Prime Minister handed his Christmas gift to the Iraqis with the assurance that he would order a phased withdrawal of British troops within six months.

Rumsfeld, addressing US troops at the former insurgent stronghold of Fallujah, said President George W. Bush had authorised new cuts below the 138,000 level that has prevailed for most of this year. He did not reveal the exact size of the troop cut, but Pentagon officials say it could be as much as 7,000 combat troops.

The Pentagon did not announce a timetable for the reductions, but indications are that the force could be cut significantly by the end of 2006.

Blair too refused to divulge a specific timetable, but he sounded an optimistic note that pullout could begin in the first half of 2006.

Asked whether Major General Tim Dutton, the former British commander in southeast Iraq, had been right when he said troop withdrawals could begin in six months, Blair replied: "There is no reason why not, if everything goes to plan." He added: "The general is probably in a better position than me to give a timeline."

Blair insisted the political and security situation in Iraq was completely different from that of a year ago. "We don't want to leave people here longer than we need to. The whole process is to build up the Iraqi capability in the armed forces and police so we can draw down our own forces. The political aspect can only be buttressed by a strong security aspect increasingly taken over by the Iraqis themselves."

Britain has 8,000 troops in Iraq, and the US 158,000. Rumsfeld said two Army brigades that had been scheduled for combat tours — one from Fort Riley, Kansas, the other now in Kuwait — would no longer deploy to Iraq.

A senior US military source in Iraq told *The Guardian*: "There is a plan in place." He said the commanding officer in all 18 Iraqi provinces would have a series of issues to consider, including: the capability of Iraqi forces; level of insurgency; trustworthiness of police force; and degree of ethnic and sectarian violence.

Diplomat abducted

A SUDANESE diplomat and five other Sudanese men were kidnapped on Friday as they left prayers at a Baghdad mosque, One Sudan's foreign ministry said. One of the hostages was able to briefly call the country's mission on his cellphone after he was taken. Four of the hostages are employed at the Sudanese diplomatic mission in Baghdad. The diplomat was identified as a second secretary, Abdel Moneam Mohammad Tom. So far, there has been no contact between the kidnapers and the Sudanese government.

AP, Baghdad



George W. Bush (top) gestures at White House aides as he departs for Camp David on Thursday. Tony Blair (bottom) meets British soldiers in Basra on Friday.



Bill Dearing and his granddaughter Faith await the return of his son Sgt Kris Dearing, who was posted in Iraq. In Fort Hood, Texas, on Thursday.

#10-10
21/12

An election that resolves little

H. Ari
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Believe it or not, President George W. Bush claims the United States-led occupation forces are on their way to victory in Iraq. By way of proof, he points to the significant turnout in the December 15 parliamentary election. The claim rings hollow not only because violence has flared up again after a brief lull around Election Day. The good turnout, contrasting with low voter participation in the two elections held earlier this year, is largely attributable to a change in strategy by those waging the national resistance against foreign occupation. The Sunni groups spearheading the insurgency have reason to believe they erred by enforcing boycotts of the January election for a constituent assembly and the October referendum on the Constitution. They have come to recognise that they can use ballots as well as bullets to achieve their objective. The Sunnis hope that with a sizable presence in parliament, they will be able to mobilise other communities behind their call for an end to the occupation. This change of course is likely to meet with a positive response. Candidates across Iraq (other than in the Kurd-dominated pockets) made the ouster of foreign troops the central feature of their campaigns. Public opinion polls show that an overwhelming majority of Iraqis support this demand. Mr. Bush must be dangerously out of touch with reality if he can characterise this democratic upsurge against the U.S.-led occupation as an augury of victory.

While the final outcome of the election will not be known for several weeks, the composition of the next parliament is likely to be very different from that of the existing one. The United Iraqi Alliance, a conglomerate of Shia parties, appears set to emerge as the largest bloc. However, the Alliance is unlikely to win as many seats as it did in the January election. Given the Sunni boycott and a system of voting by nation-wide lists, the Shias carved out a parliamentary presence much larger than their share of the national population. There are likely to be at least four distinct blocs in the incoming parliament but at this stage it is difficult to predict what kind of equations they will establish with one another. The situation is complicated by the Constitutional requirement that the government to be formed after the election must have the support of at least two-thirds of the 275 legislators. The coalition formed between the Shia Alliance and a group of Kurd parties after the January election was effective in drafting a Constitution weighted in favour of these two communities. It is unlikely to hold in the new political situation where the Shia masses are clamouring for the ouster of foreign troops. The Sunni groups will try to take advantage of this situation as they strive to recast the Constitutional scheme. These political differences are likely to give an edge to the animosities that exist within various sects and ethnic groups. They might well push Iraq closer to civil war.

Bush acknowledges difficulties in Iraq

SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI
WASHINGTON, DEC 19

US PRESIDENT George Bush has warned that despite the political progress in Iraq more violence lies ahead in the country but urged the divided American people not to give in to "defeatism."

"Defeatism may have its partisan uses, but it is not justified by the facts. For every scene of destruction in Iraq, there are more scenes of rebuilding and hope. For every life lost, there are countless more lives reclaimed.... My fellow citizens: not only can we win the war in Iraq—we are winning the war in Iraq," Bush said last night.

The address capped an extraordinary media campaign in recent weeks by the White House to recover the political ground lost since US forces invaded Iraq 33 months ago.

Acknowledging that the work in Iraq has been especially difficult or "more difficult than we expected", he took on

US operated secret prison near Kabul: Rights group

NEW YORK: US officials operated a secret prison near Kabul where detainees were abused and tortured as recently as 2004, the rights group Human Rights Watch said today, citing former inmates as sources. Eight detainees being held at the prison for terror suspects at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba described to their attorneys how they were held at a site near Kabul they called the "dark prison" or "prison of darkness", the group said in a statement. The witnesses, held at various times between 2002 and 2004, said US interrogators and US and Afghan guards wore no uniforms at the site, which suggests that the prison may have been operated by personnel from the Central Intelligence Agency, HRW said. —AFP

his critics by pointing out that any hasty pullout might mean severe consequences. "It is also important for every American to understand the consequences of pulling out of Iraq before our work is done. We would abandon our Iraqi friends—and signal to the world that America cannot be trusted to keep its word."

"To retreat before victory would be an act of recklessness and dishonour and I will not allow it," he emphasised adding that scaling down in Iraq is related to the progress made on the ground and on different fronts. "I will make decisions

on troop levels based on the progress we see on the ground and the advice of our military leaders—not based on artificial timetables set by politicians in Washington. Our forces in Iraq are on the road to victory—and that is the road that will take them home," he said.

"Some look at the challenges in Iraq and conclude that the war is lost," he remarked. "I don't believe that. Our military commanders do not believe that. Our troops in the field who bear the burden and make the sacrifice do not believe that America has lost."

—Reuters

20 DEC 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

Early Iraq results show Shia lead

HP-13
20/12

REUTERS

Baghdad, December 19

IRAQ'S RULING Shi'ite Islamists, at odds with Washington over human rights and ties to Iran, may hold on to a slim parliamentary majority despite a big turnout by minority Sunnis, partial election results showed on Monday. At any rate it will be by far the biggest party.

Leaders of the United Iraqi Alliance, whose performance in government has been criticised by US officials and Sunni Arab rebels who accuse them of backing sectarian militias, said they would start informal talks on Tuesday with Sunnis, Kurds and other groups to try to form a national unity coalition.

In Baghdad, biggest of Iraq's 18 provinces and accounting for 59 of 230 parliamentary seats, the Alliance won 58 per cent in Thursday's election with 89 per cent of the vote counted, the Electoral Commission said.

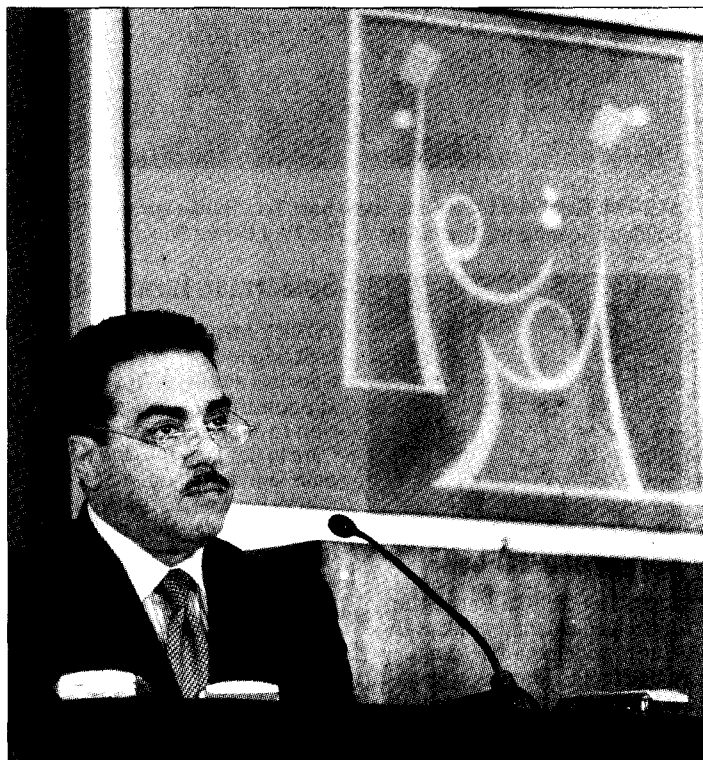
Though comparative data from January's vote, boycotted by Sunnis, were not available, the result showed its resilience in the capital, where Sunnis and secular groups are strong.

Results from nine other provinces where the bulk of the vote had been counted showed the Alliance dominant again in the southern Shi'ite heartlands - in poor Maysan, for instance, it outscored by more than 20 times the second-placed Iraqi National List led by secular former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

In a nation polarised on sectarian and ethnic lines, voters had been expected to rally to parties posing as strong champions of their interests; calls from cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani to avoid splitting the Shi'ite vote may have helped the Alliance resist defections and the effect of disillusionment with continued insecurity and poverty.

"It seems we have between 120 and 140 seats in total," senior Alliance official Abbas al-Bayati told Reuters. "We don't think that the official results will be very different."

Saad Qandeel, a senior member of SCIRI, said the results would reinforce the Alliance's determination to nominate a prime minister from its own ranks even if it goes into a broader coalition: "We ... Will announce names soon," he said.



Manager of Iraq's Electoral Commission, Adel al-Lami, announces the preliminary results in Baghdad on Monday. AP



Ingrid Hala, mother of German archaeologist Susanne Osthoff, who was released in Baghdad on Sunday, celebrates. EPA

US releases Dr Germ; rebels kill American

About 24 top former officials in Saddam Hussein's government - including two women detainees known as "Dr Germ" and "Mrs Anthrax" - have been released from jail. Rihab Taha, a biological weapons expert, was known as "Dr Germ" for her role in making bio-weapons in the 1980s. Huda Salih Mahdi Ammash, "Mrs Anthrax," a former top Baath party official, was a biotech researcher.

But the Sunni Arab captors of American contractor Ronald Schulz broadcast a videotape on the internet on Monday showing his execution. The tape showed a blindfolded and handcuffed man on his knees being shot by a machine gun from behind.

20 DEC 2005

Monitors allege poll violations in Iraq

Allawi's party files 60 complaints; security forces accused of siding with Shia candidates

Jonathan Steele

BAGHDAD: Suspected polling violations on voting day last week far exceeded the number in Iraq's first election in January, local and international monitors said on Sunday.

On the deadline for filing complaints, the number of alleged violations which could swing results in the 275-seat Parliament was "well into double figures", an accredited international election observer, who wished to remain anonymous, said.

In January there were only five of these "red" complaints, the observer added. Red complaints are alleged breaches se-

rious enough to potentially hand a seat to a party or election bloc unfairly. The Election Commission has declined to say how many such complaints it has received, but several parties handed in dossiers listing breaches allegedly seen by their monitors.

Secular Arab parties have accused the Shia religious bloc, which dominates the current Government, of intimidating voters in Baghdad and many southern cities.

The Iraqi National List, headed by former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi filed more than 60 complaints on Sunday. They alleged that at several polling stations, policemen, National Guard troops or men from major

asked voters if they were going to vote for 555. Unless they said yes, they were not given ballot papers.

A source close to Mr. Allawi's campaign said that in one Baghdad polling station "around 600 men, some with walkie-talkies and purple ink on their fingers showing they had already voted, forced their way in. When the manager tried to stop them asking for ballot papers, they threatened to put him in a car boot and drive him away... He let them in."

He declined to be identified, citing the fact that an Allawi candidate and five campaign workers were murdered before the poll. Complaints from the cities of Dohuk and Kirkuk against the

two large Kurdish parties are also said to be numerous.

Hamid Mousa, the Iraq Communist party's general secretary, which is allied with Mr. Allawi, said: "The Election Commission is weak. Some members are unwilling to issue judgments against major parties. Others are biased in favour of a particular party. The violations on Thursday were much bigger than in January. Government forces, like the police and army, did not interfere so openly then."

The need to resolve complaints is the main reason why it will take two weeks to announce the results, officials say. —

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• Shia bloc, accused of intimidating voters

• Numerous complaints against Kurdish parties

• Leader says weak Election Commission cause of problems

• Announcement of results to take two weeks

crimes unit were chanting for the Shia religious list, known as 555.

At the Sharqia high school in central Baghdad, which was used as a polling station, a senior election official was said to have

Iraqi Shiite Leader Shot Dead

Sunnis talk of forming a coalition

Baghdad: Iraqi authorities on Saturday eased tight security measures imposed for the election, lifting a ban on traffic and opening border crossings except along the frontier with Syria, while the main Sunni Arab alliance said it was open to forming a coalition if necessary. But in four attacks on Saturday, gunmen killed a former Iraqi air force officer, a member of a prominent Shiite party and two policemen, authorities said.

Police said Sheik Kerim Al Asadi, a member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, was shot and killed outside his home on Palestine Street in eastern Baghdad.

Although no official figures have been released, Iraq's 15 million registered voters cast ballots on Thursday. The high turnout—particularly among Sunni Arabs who boycotted the last parliamentary election in January—have boosted hopes that increasing political participation could undermine the insurgency and allow the United States to begin withdrawing its troops next year.

"It is a great thing that the elections was violence-free, contrary to many elections in the world," Adnan Al Dulaimi, a former Islamic studies professor who heads the main Sunni Arab bloc, said in a news conference.

Most Americans oppose early troops pullout

Washington: A solid majority of Americans oppose immediately pulling US troops out of Iraq, citing as a main reason the desire to finish the job of stabilising the country, an AP-Ipsos poll found. Some 57% of those surveyed said the US military should stay until Iraq is stabilised, while 36% favour an immediate troop withdrawal. AP

His Iraqi Accordance Front is expected to significantly increase the Sunni Arab share of seats in the 275-member parliament from the current 17.

Al Dulaimi, who thanked insurgents for not carrying out attacks on elections day, said he would be open to forming a coalition with the governing Shiite United Iraqi Alliance.

"For the sake of Iraq, there is nothing impossible. We have to forget the past and we extend our hands to everybody," he said.

US officials view Al Dulaimi as a possible intermediary who could persuade some Sunni-led insurgent groups to join the political process after boycotting previous votes. AP

Iraq vote won't end violence: Bush

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 17

PRESIDENT Bush acknowledged on Friday that the elections in Iraq were "not going to stop violence" there, and that "we're behind" on the training of capable Iraqi police forces.

In a lengthy interview with Jim Lehrer on the PBS programme "The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer," he called the elections "a very important step, because part of our strategy is to encourage a political process that will marginalise those who want to use violence to achieve ends." He also said there would be a reduction in the American force in Iraq by about 30,000 troops. The American force was bol-

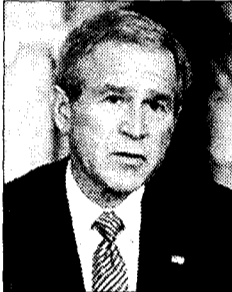
stered by about that much, expanding to more than 160,000 troops for a few months, to provide security during the election campaign.

"The elections won't say, OK, the security situation has, you know, changed dramatically, because there are still people out there that are going to try to affect the political outcome, the political debate, with violence," he said. "However, as General Casey, the American commander in Iraq said, we're behind when it comes to training the police forces, and one of the real challenges

is to make sure that the police force does not become a haven for militia" controlled by political parties.

"If we have a policy of zero violence, it won't be

met," Bush said in the interview. Asked if defining violence to continue was an unusual definition of winning wars, he answered, "Yes."



Meanwhile, a group of US senators, demanding increased protection of civil liberties, defied Bush on Friday by blocking renewal of the USA Patriot Act, a centrepiece of his war on terrorism.

A showdown bid to end

debate and move to passage of renewal legislation fell eight votes short of the needed 60 in the 100-member Senate. The vote was 52-47, with a handful of Republicans joining most Democrats in a procedural roadblock.

The Patriot Act was passed after the September 11, 2001, attacks to expand the authority of the federal government on fronts like information sharing, obtaining private records and conducting secret searches and also wiretaps in its effort to track down suspected terrorists.

Approved by the House of Representatives this week, the renewal legislation would make permanent 14 provisions set to expire on December 31, and extend three others for four years.

18 DEC 2005

INDIAN EXPRESS

Bush defends Iraq invasion, accepts intelligence failure

Repeats The Right To Preemptive War In Future

Washington: Just a few hours before Iraqis began voting in the historic parliamentary elections, US President George W Bush defended his decision to invade that country and reserved the right to preemptive war in the future.

"In an age of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, if we wait for threats to fully materialise, we will have waited too long," he said in a speech aimed at shoring up flagging US support for the conflict.

through a watershed moment in the story of freedom," he said. Iraq "will be a model for the Middle East. Freedom in Iraq will inspire reformers from Damascus to Teheran."

Bush's job approval ratings have sunk sharply since his November 2004 re-election because of high gas prices, worries about the economy and growing concerns about Iraq as the US death toll has risen beyond 2,140 soldiers.

In a new Wall Street Jour-

ary elections.

Non-Iraqi extremists and Saddam loyalists "lack popular support, and over time, they can be marginalized and defeated by the security forces of a free Iraq", said Bush. He also warned that violence would continue even after the vote, and laid out how to measure progress towards the day when the US can bring home its roughly 160,000 troops.

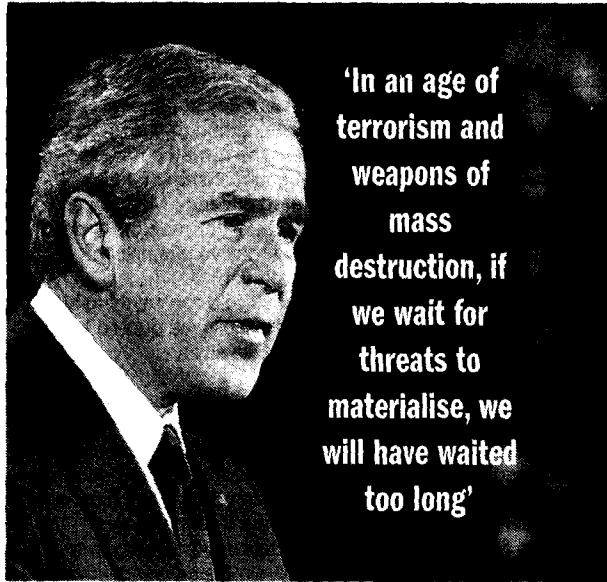
Bush said victory will have been achieved when extremists and Saddam loyalists are no longer a threat to Iraq's democracy, when Iraqi security forces are self-sufficient and when Iraq is not a "safe haven" for terrorists. "These objectives, not timetables set by politicians in Washington, will drive our force levels in Iraq," said the president. "We cannot—and will not—leave Iraq until victory is achieved."

Bush acknowledged that the war had sharply divided the US and that intelligence about Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons programs had turned out to be false.

But he sharply rebuked "irresponsible" charges that he had deliberately misled the country.

"These charges are pure politics. They hurt the morale of our troops," he declared, saying that even countries which opposed the war agreed that Saddam possessed weapons of mass destruction. But US media have quoted French and German intelligence officials in recent weeks as saying that they repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, warned Washington that crucial parts of its case for war were flawed or outright false.

German intelligence officials warned their US counterparts that accounts from an Iraqi defector code-named Curveball, a critical US source for charges that Iraq possessed mobile germ weapons labs, could not be confirmed and, in many cases, were deeply suspect, The Los Angeles Times reported in November. AP



The president took responsibility for launching the March 2003 invasion based on intelligence that "turned out to be wrong" about Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction, none of which were found.

"As president, I'm responsible for the decision to go into Iraq—and I'm also responsible for fixing what went wrong by reforming our intelligence capabilities. And we're doing just that," he said.

The US president, who embraced preemptive war as US strategy after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, did not name any potential targets, but said the Iraq vote would put pressure on the governments of Iran and Syria. "We are living

national/NBC News poll released Wednesday, 60% of respondents said they favoured a gradual reduction of US troops from Iraq, up four percentage points from last month. In what some political analysts have perceived to be a move by Bush to talk more frankly on the US difficulties in Iraq, Bush also admitted to "tactical mistakes" in an interview with Fox News.

"No question we made some, I would call them, tactical mistakes," he told Fox.

The president said in his speech that Sunni Arabs, who have fuelled the bloody insurgency, were increasingly abandoning violence to take part in their Iraq's politics and would turn out in large numbers on Thursday after boycotting Janu-

Huge turnout in Iraq elections

DEXTER FILKINS and KIRK SEMPLE
Baghdad, December 15

IRAQI VOTERS streamed to the polls on Thursday morning in nationwide elections as Iraqi leaders predicted that the vote would split almost evenly between secular and Islamist parties and usher in lengthy political manoeuvring.

The elections, which are expected to draw as many as 10 million Iraqis to the polls, will be the last formal milestone in the American-backed political process that was devised to foster a democratic government.

Iraqi and American leaders see the polls as the definitive test of the Bush administration's assumption that a free vote is the best means for reconciling Iraq's vastly polarised ethnic and sectarian groups and defeating the Sunni Arab insurgency that is threatening to break

Poll violence takes a back seat

■ A mortar shell struck the middle of the Green Zone in Baghdad on Thursday morning.

■ About the same time, a roadside bomb exploded in Ramadi.

■ In Mosul, the American military said a bomb killed a hospital guard near a polling station.

■ But throughout the country, voting was reported to be vigorous



the country apart. As the polls opened at 7 am, a mortar or rocket shell struck the middle of the Green Zone compound in central Baghdad, the site of the American Embassy and the offices of top Iraqi officials. About the same time, a roadside bomb exploded in Ramadi. There were no immediate reports of casualties in either blast.

In Mosul, the American military said a bomb killed a hospital guard near a polling station, while a mortar landed near another polling station in the city without causing any injuries. But throughout the country, voting was reported to be vigorous, with entire families travelling together to make their way to the polls, "like a wedding," said Zalmay Khalilzad, the United States ambassador here.

"The numbers are larger than the previous election," Khalilzad said on CNN.

In Ramadi, a restive and violent Sunni Arab city, thousands of residents streamed to the polls on today in the first few hours of voting.

The turnout was a dramatic change for this city, the capital of Anbar Province and a redoubt of the insurgency, where only about 2000 people cast votes in the October referendum, and most of those were Iraqi Army soldiers and poll workers from out of town.

Several polling stations reported before noon on Thursday that they had nearly exhausted their allotment of ballots, each numbering in the thousands, a development that overjoyed Iraqi electoral officials and American military officers, who scrambled to redistribute ballots around town.

The New York Times

THE PRICE OF DEMOCRACY IN IRAQ

DEAD: 30,000 Iraqis DEAD: 2,300 Americans & Allies COST OF WAR: \$250 Bn

Today Iraqis Head For The Polls, Amid The Continuing Mayhem And Violence. The American-Led War Brought With It A Heavy Toll. Will It Also Bring The Constructive Nation-Building US President George W Bush Has Promised?

Baghdad: As campaigning ground to a halt in Iraq before Thursday's landmark election, a roadside bomb killed four US soldiers and gunmen assassinated a candidate for parliament. The killing continues even as 15 million voters prepare to cast their ballots. The death toll now stands at 2,300 and counting for the US and its allies. For the Iraqis, the number is as high as 30,000. That's the count according to US President Bush, who made the admission late on Tuesday. But, rights groups and other organisations have said that as many as 100,000 Iraqis may have perished in Washington's effort at "nation building".

The US and allies have spent \$250 billion in Iraq. The figure is likely to go higher. The Pentagon is in the early stages of drafting a wartime request for up to \$100 billion more for Iraq and Afghanistan, top US lawmakers say. If approved it would push costs for both wars beyond \$450 billion.

Meanwhile, the US ambassador to Iraq has said the total number of abused prisoners found so far in jails run by the Shiited Iraqi interior ministry came to about 120. The statement by ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad reinforced Sunni Arab claims of mistreatment by security forces—a major issue among Sunnis in the election.

But despite the continuing violence, more than 1,000 Sunni clerics issued a religious decree instructing followers to vote, boosting American hopes that the election will encourage more members of the disaffected minority to abandon the insurgency.



A US soldier marks an Iraqi suspect

The Bush administration hopes the election will draw a large turnout among Sunnis and produce a government that can win the trust of the minority community that is the backbone of the insurgency. That would allow the US to begin bringing troops home next year.

Three leading Iraqi politicians agreed on

Tuesday that a speedy withdrawal by foreign troops would cause chaos and unwarranted expense for Iraq. Former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi (a secular Shiite), Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani and Sunni Arab politician Tariq al-Hashimi represent important constituencies in the Thursday vote, when Iraqis will choose a 275-member parliament.

Gunmen killed Sunni Arab candidate Mezher al-Dulaimi as he was filling his car at a gas station in Ramadi, an insurgent stronghold west of Baghdad. However, the Islamic Army in Iraq, a prominent insurgent group, said on Tuesday it would not attack polling stations. On Monday, five Islamic militant groups, including Al Qaida in Iraq, also promised not to try to disrupt the voting, even though it branded the election a "satanic project".

Iraqis living outside the country began voting on Tuesday in the US and 14 other countries. A strong turnout was seen in Syria, Jordan and Iran. Agencies

Iraqi border guards deny claim about forged ballots

Baghdad: The head of Iraq's border guards denied police reports on Wednesday that a truck stuffed with thousands of forged ballot papers had been seized crossing into Iraq from Iran before Thursday's elections.

"This is all a lie," said Lt Gen Ahmed al-Khafaji, the chief of the US-trained force which has responsibility for all Iraqi borders. "I heard this yesterday and I checked all the border crossings right away. The borders are all closed anyway," he said. Iraq's frontiers are closed for the elections. "I contacted all the border crossing points and there was no report of any such incident," he said.

Iraqi police earlier said that a tanker packed with ballots had been stopped at Badra, east of Baghdad. They said the driver had told them three other tankers had also crossed from Iran at other points with forged ballots, in what would be an attempt to influence the polls.

The reports had raised concerns that Shi'ite Iran was attempting to influence Thursday's landmark election. Reuters

Iran head in Holocaust denial again

Associated Press

TEHERAN (Iran), Dec. 13. — Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has iterated his doubt about the Holocaust and called on Muslim nations to take a proactive stand on the Palestinian issue.

The president's comments, published today on Iranian state television's website, were the second time in a week that he has expressed doubt about the Nazi destruction of European Jewry during the World War II. President Ahmadinejad provoked an international outcry in October when he called Israel a "disgraceful blot" that should be "wiped off the map". "If the killing of Jews in Europe is true," the website quoted the President as saying, "And the Zionists are being supported because of this excuse, why should the Palestinian nation pay the price?" The television did not broadcast the comments, and the website offered no reason.

In Israel, foreign ministry spokesman Mr Mark Regev said: "The real problem with the repeated statements of the Iranian president is that they correctly represent the mind-set of the Iranian leadership, and they accurately articulate the policies

of that extremist regime."

The President made the remarks yesterday at an Islamic conference in Teheran that was attended by Khaled Mashaal, the political leader of the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Later in the day, he discussed the Palestinian issue with Mashaal, the website reported.

"The Islamic world should give up its policy of passivity and deal with the Palestinian issue more actively," the Iranian leader said, according to the website. He did not elaborate.

He said the West could not play a neutral role in the Palestinian-Israeli issue. "The West's policy has always been in favor of the Zionist regime and to the detriment of the Islamic world. It can't be a judge or mediator now," President Ahmadinejad said.

The President provoked an angry reaction from Europe, the USA and even Russia, an ally, on Thursday when he told reporters in Saudi Arabia that Israel should be moved to Europe if the West wanted to make up for the Holocaust. The comment also infuriated the Saudis as it was made on the sidelines of a meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference that was dedicated to showing the moderate face of Islam.

14 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

More torture victims found at Iraq ministry detention centre

ELLEN KNICKMEYER
BAGHDAD, DECEMBER 12

AN IRAQI government search of a detention centre in Baghdad operated by Interior Ministry special commandos found 13 prisoners who had suffered abuse serious enough to require medical treatment, US and Iraqi officials said Sunday night.

An Iraqi official said at least 12 of the 13 prisoners had been subjected to "severe torture", including courses of electric shock and episodes that left them with broken bones.

Government spokesman, Laith Kubba, said on Sunday that any findings at the prison would be "subject to an investigation", but declined to comment on the allegations.

The site, which was searched on Thursday, is the second Interior Ministry detention centre where cases of prisoner abuse have been confirmed by US and Iraqi officials.

US troops found the first site last month in an Interior Ministry building in central Baghdad. Several

prisoners at that site appeared to have suffered beatings, and many were emaciated, US and Iraqi officials and witnesses said.

US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad issued a sharp public rebuke of the Iraqi government after the secret prison was discovered last month, demanding in a statement that all detainees nationwide be treated in accord with human rights.

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, under heavy pressure from Khalilzad and Gen. George Casey, the top US commander in Iraq, ordered a nationwide investigation of detention centres after that discovery. The prison investigated on Thursday was the first centre examined as part of the government-ordered inquiry.

Investigators said they found 625 prisoners at the centre but declined to give details about them. Most of the detainees found at the secret prison last month were Sunni Arabs who had been picked up by the Shi'ite-dominated Interior Ministry forces.—LAT/MP

13 DEC 2005

INB...

Iran lures US with share of N-pie

ASSOCIATED Press
Tehran, December 11

IRAN ON Sunday offered the United States a share in building a new nuclear power plant in an apparent effort to curb U.S. opposition to its atomic programme.

"America can take part in international bidding for the construction of Iran's nuclear power plant if they observe the basic standards and quality," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said at a news conference.

Asefi was apparently talking about a 360-megawatt light water nuclear power plant in southwestern Iran, which the head of the country's top atomic organisation announced plans to build on Saturday.

Iran also wants to produce 2,000 megawatts of electricity by building nuclear power plants with foreign help in southern Iran.

Relations between both countries have been severed since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. Washington also imposes unilateral sanctions on Iran, preventing U.S. companies from doing business in Iran.



Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

The United States has also ratcheted up pressure against Tehran, accusing it of pursuing a nuclear weapons program and supporting anti-Israeli militants.

Iran, which denies it wants to build atomic bombs, has been involved in stalled talks with European negotiators over its contentious nuclear program aimed at making Tehran permanently freeze uranium enrichment.

Enrichment is a process that can produce material for use in warheads or fuel for nuclear plants to generate electricity.

7-101
The ...

Now Ahmadinejad says Holocaust was a myth

Iranian President Wants The Jewish State To Be Shifted To Europe

By Benedict Brogan

Iran was left isolated Thursday night after its president stepped up his campaign against Israel. He claimed the Holocaust never took place just weeks after calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map".

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also called for the Jewish state to be moved out of the Middle East and re-established in Europe.

He added his voice to those who claim the mass murder of Jews under the Nazis was either exaggerated or never took place. His inflammatory comments will heighten tensions between Israel and Iran and increase fears about the Islamic republic's efforts to develop nuclear weapons. "Some European countries insist on saying that Hitler killed millions of innocent Jews in furnaces and they insist on it to the extent that if anyone proves something contrary to that they condemn that person and throw them in jail," President Ahmadinejad told an Islamic conference in the Muslim holy city of Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

"Although we don't accept this claim, if we suppose it is true, our question for the Europeans is: Is the killing of innocent Jewish people by Hitler the reason for their support to the occupiers of Jerusalem?"

He added: "If the Europeans are honest they should give some of their provinces in Europe like in Germany, Austria or other countries to the Zionists and the Zionists can establish their state in Europe. You offer part of Europe and we will support it."

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw led condemnation from the European Union, saying: "The com-

ments attributed to President Ahmadinejad are wholly unacceptable, and I condemn them unreservedly. They have no place in civilised political debate."

Israeli officials condemned his remarks as "outrageous and even racist". Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Mark Regev said: "Only recently the UN General Assembly condemned Holocaust denial and here the Iranian leader is showing himself to be fundamentally contradicting the norms of international behaviour and decency."

"I hope that anyone who had illusions about the true nature of the Iranian regime has received these recent remarks as a wake up call."

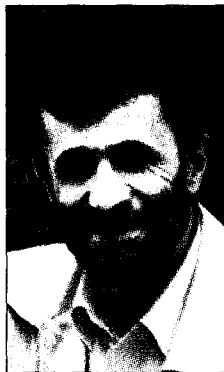
Raanan Gissin, a spokesman for

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, said President Ahmadinejad was voicing "the consensus that exists in many circles in the Arab world that the Jewish people do not have the right to establish a Jewish, democratic state in their ancestral homeland". "Just to remind Mr Ahmadinejad, we've been here long before his ancestors were here," the spokesman for the Is-

raeli leader added. "Therefore, we have a birthright to be here in the land of our forefathers and to live here."

German and French governments also condemned the Iranian president's comments.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said: "It just further underscores our concerns about the regime in Iran and it's all the more reason why it's so important that the regime not have the ability to develop nuclear weapons." Daily Mail



REWRITING
HISTORY: President
Ahmadinejad

Iraqi Sunnis reverse policy, to join poll

W. A. ...
pg 6-10

Leaders urge kidnappers to free foreign hostages; disavow Al-Zarqawi's actions

Atul Aneja 10-15 10:00 AM
DUBAI: As the countdown for parliamentary elections begins, Iraq's Sunni community is likely to show up in strength at polling stations. Unlike Iraq's previous elections, which have been boycotted, the headline Sunni factions, who are known to have links with resistance fighters, have been appealing in mosques for a larger turnout during the December 15 elections. A cleric from The Association of Muslim Scholars told worshippers that the upcoming elections would be a "landmark event."

were represented at last month's Cairo conference, where Iraq's Sunni-dominated neighbouring countries, including Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan were present, apart from Iran and the United States.

The Arab League sponsored conference acknowledged that resistance to foreign occupation in Iraq was legitimate. The participants, however, made it clear that they opposed terrorism as perpetrated by the Al-Qaeda linked Abu Musab Al Zarqawi's group. Reinforcing their rejection of terrorism, Sunni clerics have urged kidnappers to release an American, two Canadians and a Briton who had been abducted on November 26.

During prayers in the Al-Imam Al-Aadam mosque in Baghdad's y Sunni Arab neighbourhood, cleric Ahmed Hassan stressed on the "necessity to release the four kidnapped foreigners who have helped the residents of Azamiyah."

"It is a decisive battle that will determine our future. If you give your vote to the wrong people, then the occupation will continue and the country would be lost. Participation in the elections is a must and it is a religious duty," he said. Buoyed by inroads made by resistance fighters, Sunni factions have now begun to acquire a larger political profile. They



TACKLING TERROR: Iraqi police commandos arrest a presumed militant during a drill in preparation for providing security during the Parliamentary elections, in Baghdad recently. - PHOTO: AFP

Second N-plant planned by Iran

6712
59-2
Associated Press

TEHERAN, Dec. 5. — Iran plans to construct a second nuclear power plant, despite international concern over its nuclear programme, state television reported today.

The broadcast said President Mr Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Cabinet ministers decided Sunday night to build the reactor in Khuzistan province, southwestern Iran.

Previously Iran has said it would build a second power plant at Bushehr, where its first nuclear reactor is due to begin generating electricity in 2006. Khuzistan province was the site of a French-built power plant that began in the mid-1970s and was stopped after 1979 Islamic revolution.

The Iranian parliament has asked for the construction of 20 nuclear power plants. Russia, which built the Bushehr reactor, has offered to build more nuclear plants in Iran. Iran is under intense pressure

to curb its nuclear program, which the United States claims is part of an effort to produce weapons.

Iran says its program is limited to generating electricity. While Iran has frozen its enrichment program, it restarted uranium conversion, a step toward enrichment, in August. The International Atomic Energy Agency has warned Iran that its nuclear program could be referred to the UN Security Council, which has the power to impose sanctions on the country.

On Saturday, Iran approved a bill that would block international inspections of its atomic facilities if it were referred to the Security Council.

The step strengthens the government's hand in resisting international pressure to permanently abandon uranium enrichment, a process that can produce fuel for either nuclear reactors or atomic bombs and could lead to further tense relations.

0 5 DEC 2005

THE STATESMAN

Chaos takes over Saddam trial

Agence France Presse

BAGHDAD, Dec. 5. — The court has adjourned the trial of Saddam Hussein until Wednesday as he proclaimed today in court that "I am not afraid of execution" during an unruly trial.

The trial was marred by chaotic scenes today as the defence team walked out of the tribunal and the ousted Iraqi dictator stood up to shout a tirade of abuse at the court. The outburst was one of several by Saddam or his co-defendants at the trial that also saw a brief walkout by his defence lawyers.

At one point, Saddam appeared to threaten the judge, saying: "When the revolution of the heroic Iraq arrives, you will be held accountable." Chief Judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin replied: "This is an insult to the court. We are searching for the truth." The dramatic scenes, which prompted a recess of the tribunal to solve the problems, were a further setback for the court whose time before today has been limited to just two brief sessions after two earlier adjournments.

The walkout was in protest against the court's refusal to let Saddam's foreign lawyers, former



NO-CAGED LION? Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his half brother Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti (back) berate the court during their trial in Baghdad on Monday. — AFP

US attorney general Ramsey Clark and former Qatari justice minister Mr Naji Nuaimi, address the court.

"Make a written request," said presiding judge Mohammed Rizkar Amin. "I just want two minutes," Mr Clark said in English,

but Mr Amin refused.

From the dock, Saddam interrupted: "How is it (the court) legitimate when it was set up under the occupation?" Members of the defence team then said they would leave the court and Mr Amin said "As you like. Then we will have to



WITH BATED BREATH... A blind Iraqi follows the trial on radio. At a cafe in central Baghdad on Monday. — AFP

summon other lawyers". Saddam refused to have lawyers appointed by the court and stood up to shout at the top of his voice, "Long live Iraq."

Long live the Arab nation. Long live Iraq."

The trial was then suspended to allow defence lawyers who quit the courtroom to confer on their next move. Saddam and seven of his deputies are on trial for the massacre of 148 people from the Shiite village of Dujail in 1982, for which all the accused could face the death penalty. The first

witness to appear in person at the trial of Saddam Hussein gave harrowing testimony against the former Iraqi leader today after a walkout by defence lawyers briefly threatened to derail the process.

Mr Ahmed Mohammed Hassen al-Dujaili showed no fear over worries for witnesses' security as he testified over the massacre of 148 people from the Shiite village of Dujail in 1982, for which Saddam and seven ex-henchmen are on trial.

He was the first witness to appear in person at the

court, which has previously held just two brief sessions after earlier adjournments and until now only heard videotape testimony from an official just before he died. The proceedings had earlier been marked by extraordinary scenes when the defence team briefly walked out of the tribunal and the ousted Iraqi dictator shouted a tirade of impassioned abuse at the court.

The dispute over whether Saddam's foreign lawyers could address the court prompted a recess of the tribunal for 90-minutes.

Legitimacy of Saddam trial challenged

Court is "made in America", says former Iraqi President

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: The legitimacy of the court trying former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his seven co-defendants has come into sharp focus, with foreign lawyers defending Mr. Hussein questioning the legality of the proceedings.

As the trial resumed, the former U.S. Attorney-General, Ramsey Clark, and the former Qatari Justice Minister, Najeeb Al-Naumi, who are defending Mr. Hussein staged a 90-minute walkout after chief Judge Ruzgar Mohammed Amin declined them permission to address the bench.

Chaotic scenes

Chaotic scenes in the courtroom followed, where on one occasion Mr. Hussein, from the dock accused the court of being "Made in America." His half-brother Barzan Al-Tikriti, who is also facing trial shouted: "Long live Saddam." "Why don't you just execute us and get this over with?"

The foreign attorneys were later allowed to speak and both of them questioned the legitimacy of the court, which was originally formed under Amer-

ican occupation. They also stressed the lack of security for the defence team, which they stressed undermined the basic principles of justice.

Mr. Clark in his presentation said, "This trial can either divide or heal. Unless it is seen as absolutely fair and is absolutely fair in fact, it will irreconcilably divide the people of Iraq. An essential element of fairness ... is protection."

He stressed that "There is virtually no protection for the nine Iraqi lawyers and their families

who are heroically here to defend truth and justice," and referred to the two defence lawyers who were shot dead shortly after the trial began on October 19. "Without that protection a fair trial is impossible."

Chief judge Amin heard out Mr. Clark and asked him to stop exactly after the five-minute time allotted to him had lapsed. It was then the turn of Mr. Naumi, who was allowed to speak for 15 minutes.

Mr. Naumi made a scathing attack on the legality of the court, which he said was originally established under U.S. occupation and was therefore illegal under international law. "There's no legal basis for what's taking place, this is part and parcel of the legal system in Iraq," he said. "What we have seen is one country attacking another and then enacting a law in stark violation of international norms ... this land is becoming more American than Arab."

Soon after, the court heard its first witness in the case about the failed assassination attempt on Mr. Hussein's life in 1982, and the alleged reprisals by his government, which led to the deaths of over 140 men in the Shia town of Dujail.



HIGH ESTEEM: Demonstrators hold a picture of the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, during a rally in his hometown of Tikrit in Iraq on Monday. - PHOTO: AP

"Not afraid of execution"

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: The former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, who is facing trial told judges in a courtroom in Baghdad, "I am not afraid of execution."

"Execution is cheaper than the shoe of an Iraqi," Mr. Hussein said, "The purpose of this trial is public opinion."

NRI among four held hostage in Iraq

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, November 30

AN INDIAN Canadian is among four Western peace activists kidnapped and held hostage in Iraq by a militant outfit, which calls itself the Swords of Righteousness Brigade.

Harmeet Singh Sooden, a 32-year-old electrical engineer, was in Iraq along with a fellow Canadian, an American and a Briton as part of the Chicago-based anti-war group, called Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT).

Sooden and the three other hostages were paraded by their captors in a video clip first broadcast by Al-Jazeera,

the Arab satellite channel, on Tuesday. They all had been snatched at gunpoint from a dangerous segment of Baghdad sometime on Saturday.

Raised in Montreal, Sooden has been pursuing a master's degree in English literature in Auckland University, New Zealand, to prepare for a teaching career. A CPT statement described him as someone "passionate about the plight of the underprivileged around the globe".

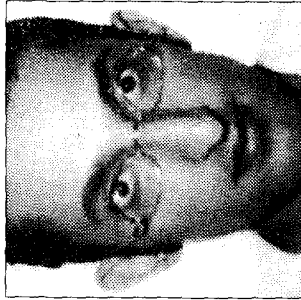
While the Iraqi group claimed that the hostages were "spies" working under the cover of humanitarian activity, the CPT refuted the allegation and said its members have been fighting for

opened to its peace team.

"We're angry because what has happened to our teammates is the result of the actions of the US and the UK governments due to the illegal attack on Iraq and the continuing occupation and oppression of the people," it said.

While Sooden's family could not be immediately reached, the CPT's delegation coordinator, Claire

Evans told the Hindustan Times that the young man had applied some months ago to be a part of the group's welfare mission in Iraq. She said the CPT has been working in Iraq right from October 2002.



Harmeet Singh Sooden

the rights of Iraqi prisoners illegally detained by the US.

On Wednesday, the CPT indeed turned its ire on the US and the UK governments for the current state of affairs in Iraq and for what has hap-

The other CPT peacemakers in captivity are Norman Kember (74) from Britain; Tom Fox (54) from Virginia, US; and James Loney (41) from Toronto, Canada.

Evans said the CPT has not been able to establish independent contact with the captors. It is coordinating efforts with the US, Canadian and British embassies in a bid to secure the release of its members.

"We were the first people to publicly denounce the torture of Iraqi people at the hands of US forces... We hope that we can continue to do this work and we pray for the speedy release of our beloved teammates," the CPT said.

No let-up in Iraq violence

THE WHITE HOUSE, in its most detailed public plan yet for success in Iraq, said on Wednesday it expected to reduce US forces there in 2006 but warned the country would face violence "for many years to come."

"No war has ever been won on a timetable and neither will this one," US President George W. Bush's national security council said in a policy paper entitled "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," dated November 2005. The White House released the strategy to set the stage for a speech a few hours later by Bush, who hoped to convince a skeptical US public two and a half years after the war began that he has a plan to end it. **AFP, Washington**

Protests follow Iran tough talk

Associated Press

TEHERAN, Oct. 28. — More than a million Iranians staged anti-Israel protests across the country today and repeated calls by their ultraconservative President demanding the Jewish state's destruction.

World leaders have condemned remarks made on Wednesday by President Mr Mahmoud Ahmadijanejad, who repeated the words of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of Iran's Islamic revolution, by saying: "Israel must be wiped off the map."

Marching alongside protesters in downtown Teheran, Mr Ahmadijanejad renewed his criticism of the West: "They become upset when they hear any voice of truth-seeking... They think they are the absolute rulers of the world." The protests took place during the Al-Quds — or Jerusalem — Day protests, which was among the largest held since they were first held in 1979 after Shi'ite clerics took power in Iran.

But some worked to soothe tensions. Former President Mr Hashemi Rafsanjani suggested a referendum be held for Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and other West Asian countries to decide on the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"If Muslims and Palestinians agree

'Wipe off' echo

TEHERAN, Oct. 28. — Iran has insisted that Israel was an "illegitimate" regime that must be wiped off the map, and said international condemnation to comments by Iran's President were aimed at "covering up" what it called Israeli crimes against Palestinians. Foreign minister Mr Manouchehr Mottaki yesterday said: "The comments expressed by the President is the declared and specific policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran." — AP

(to a referendum), it will be a retreat but let's still hold a referendum," Mr Rafsanjani said.

In Moscow, the Iranian Embassy tried to soften the impact of Mr Ahmadijanejad's remarks with a statement saying the President "didn't have any intention to speak in sharp terms and engage in a conflict".

But at least 200,000 Iranians massing in Teheran unleashed virulent condemnation against Israel, the USA and the West in general, accusing them of siding with the Jewish state and oppressing Palestinians and Iran.

"Israel must be destroyed" and "Israel must be wiped off the map" said many banners held above thronging crowds which packed streets throughout the capital, a gesture of open support for Mr Ahmadijanejad's controversial comment.



Anti-Israeli posters dotted Teheran during massive protests to mark Jerusalem Day — a carnival-style event heavy on bloodthirsty rhetoric — on Friday. — AFP

WORLD RAP

Jewish Council

BERLIN, Oct. 28. — Germany's Germany's Jewish Council, the leading Jewish organisation in the country, said the Iranian President's call for Israel's destruction could provoke anti-Semitic attacks. — AP

Britain

HAMPTON COURT (England), Oct. 28. — Iran will be seen by the rest of the world as a "real threat" if it persists with its hard line on Israel and its suspected pursuit of nuclear weapons, British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair said. Upping the ante in a looming showdown with Teheran, Mr Blair said he felt "a real sense of revulsion" after the Iranian President's comments. — AFP

Japan

TOKYO, Oct. 28. — Japan's foreign ministry today said that Iranian President's calls to wipe off Israel from the map was "unacceptable in whatever context". — AP

Israel asks U.N. to expel Iran

18/10
JERUSALEM: Hitting back at Iran, Israel on Thursday asked the United Nations to remove it from the membership of the world body amid an international outcry over Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's remarks that the Zionist nation be "wiped off the map."

"It's the first time since the creation of the U.N. in 1945 that one of its members has openly called for the destruction of another," Israeli Vice-Premier Shimon Peres told Israel Radio calling for the United Nations to throw out Iran.

Dubbing a nuclear Iran as "a nightmare", Mr. Peres said "it is impossible to ignore this and close your ears."

"Iran's intentions are dangerous because this country wants to develop a nuclear weapon and long-range missiles," he was quoted as saying.

Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Gillerman, put up the demand to debar Iran from the U.N. membership at the instructions of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon after Mr. Ahmadinejad's declaration that Israel should be "wiped off the map".

Mr. Sharon and Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom were urged by Mr. Peres to respond to the Iranian of-

fensive, it said. "It is unacceptable that the leader of a state member of the U.N. advocates genocide. This call goes against the U.N.'s treaty and constitutes a crime against humanity," Mr. Peres wrote in a letter sent to them. "The words of the Iranian president are especially se-

vere in light of Iran's attempts to develop nuclear arms and obtain long-range missiles. "Israel must unequivocally demand of the U.N. and the security Council that Iran be removed from the organisation," Mr. Peres wrote to Mr. Sharon and Mr. Shalom. — PTI

Teheran faces flak

Ewen MacAskill
and Chris McGreal

LONDON: Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on Wednesday called for Israel to be "wiped off the face of the earth". It is the most uncompromising statement about Israel by a senior Iranian in the last five years and he was immediately condemned by the U.S., Britain, France, Germany and Israel.

The White House spokesman Scott McClellan said such remarks confirmed why the U.S. was fearful of Iran acquiring a nuclear bomb. This was echoed by the British Foreign Office, whose spokesman described the

speech as "deeply disturbing". He added: "He is only going to heighten concern yet further about Iran's nuclear ambitions." Mr. Ahmadinejad, speaking to 3,000 students at a Teheran conference called The World Without Zionism, condemned Muslim countries that recognise Israel. He said a new wave of Palestinian attacks could finish off Israel. His remarks came as a Palestinian suicide bomber, after a relative lull in violence, killed five people in Hadera in Israel.

The U.S. and Britain are pressing for Iran to be referred to the U.N. Security Council over its alleged nuclear weapons ambitions. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

The marginalisation

of Iraq's Sunnis

While Iraq's new Constitution has been approved in a referendum, this development is not likely to bring about a slackening of the insurgency. The Sunnis have every reason to regard the outcome of the vote as further evidence of their marginalisation. This community, which spearheads the resistance against foreign occupation, had tried to muster the two-thirds majority in three provinces it needed to block the adoption of the Constitution. The 'no' vote did cross the 66 per cent mark in the provinces of Salaheddin and Anbar but fell significantly short in Nineveh. The expectation that Shias in Baghdad and other central areas of the country would cast negative votes was also not borne out. Under the constitutional scheme, the Sunnis are likely to be deprived of their fair share of national resources since the Shias of the South and the Kurds who dominate the North will control Iraq's petroleum reserves. The Constitution grants extensive autonomy to the provinces and also permits two or more to merge. There are strong indications that the Kurd- and Shia-dominated provinces could coalesce into powerful regional entities virtually independent of the central government. These regional entities might not pay much heed to the constitutional provision that the country's oil wealth, which is concentrated in territories under their control, should be distributed among all provinces in proportion to their population. The sectarian divide is likely to widen since the Sunnis have cause to believe that Baghdad's Shias have let them down.

In the days leading up to the referendum, the Shia and Kurd parties that controlled the constitution-drafting exercise offered a compromise of sorts which was incorporated in the Constitution after endorsement by one of the Sunni parties. Under this provision, the parliament to be formed after elections (scheduled for December) is to set up a special committee to review the Constitution. There are indications that the Sunnis will participate in the coming elections in larger numbers than they did last time. If they do so, the next parliament will be more representative of the country's population-mix than the current one. However, the Sunnis constitute less than a quarter of the Iraqi population. Some Sunni parties are of the view that they should form an alliance with the secular-minded among the Shias, religious minorities, and others who are dissatisfied with the constitutional scheme. But even if all of these disparate elements come together, they might not get the two-thirds parliamentary majority necessary to see the amendments through. For their part, the Shia and Kurd parties do not appear to be ready to make any meaningful concessions. While the occupying forces led by the United States assert that the adoption of the Constitution represents yet another milestone in Iraq's return to democracy in reality the coun-

THE HINDU

Charter underscores Iraqis rifts

2.1 million of the country's 15.5 million voters oppose the draft Constitution

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Constitution has been approved by almost four out of five voters, but the results finally released on Tuesday have served only to underscore deep sectarian rifts the charter aimed to heal.

The first post-Saddam Hussein charter passed by a simple majority after opponents failed to muster the two-thirds majority in three of Iraq's 18 provinces necessary to block ratification.

Nationwide, 78 per cent voted "yes" in the October 15 referendum, Electoral Commission spokesman Farid Ayyar said, while in the key Sunni-dominated province of Nineveh, 55.08 per cent voted "no" — well below the 66 per cent that would have scuttled the charter.

Path to democracy

"It is a civilised step that puts Iraq on the path to democracy, to rebuilding our new Iraq," Mr. Ayyar said.

But 2.1 million of Iraq's 15.5 million voters nonetheless opposed the Constitution, largely a result of fears among the displaced Sunni Arab minority that it will place too much power in the hands of regions and lead to a break-up of Iraq.

Sunnis may find themselves high and dry in areas bereft of the vast oil wealth, and militants who move freely in their areas could crank up violence to force talks with U.S. and Iraqi authorities. "The referendum led to a split instead of a union," said political science professor Hasan

Bazaz. "The results uncovered two extremes, ethnic, geographic and confessional," added Abdul Jabbar Ahmed, a professor of international relations in Baghdad.

Deep chasm

"There was either manipulation by the Electoral Commission or there is a really deep chasm in the society."

The outcome of the referendum finally hinged on the results from Nineveh, after the Sunni provinces of Al-Anbar and Salaheddin voted against the charter by the necessary two-thirds majority.

But while Mr. Ayyar insisted the results were "precise and honest," and met international standards, others immediately cried foul. "There was fraud in Nineveh, we know that," Iraqi researcher Nabil Mohammed Salim claimed.

Sunni Arabs who dominated Mr. Hussein's regime and all previous Iraqi governments, gener-

ally opposed the Constitution, fearing its federal nature would leave the vast oil resources in the hands of Kurds and Shias.

The charter's approval will pave the way for legislative elections in December, after which lawmakers are to convene a body to consider further changes under a last-minute accord hammered out ahead of the referendum.

"There is polarisation from the results because there was no accord among [Sunni] constituencies on the text," Mr. Bazaz said. Around 15.5 million Iraqi voters were asked whether or not they approved the new charter that places real power in the hands of regional authorities, and enshrines Kurdish autonomy in the north.

The Shias are now expected to form a similar autonomous region in central and southern Iraq, while Sunnis are left with mostly deserted regions around Baghdad and in western Iraq. — AFP

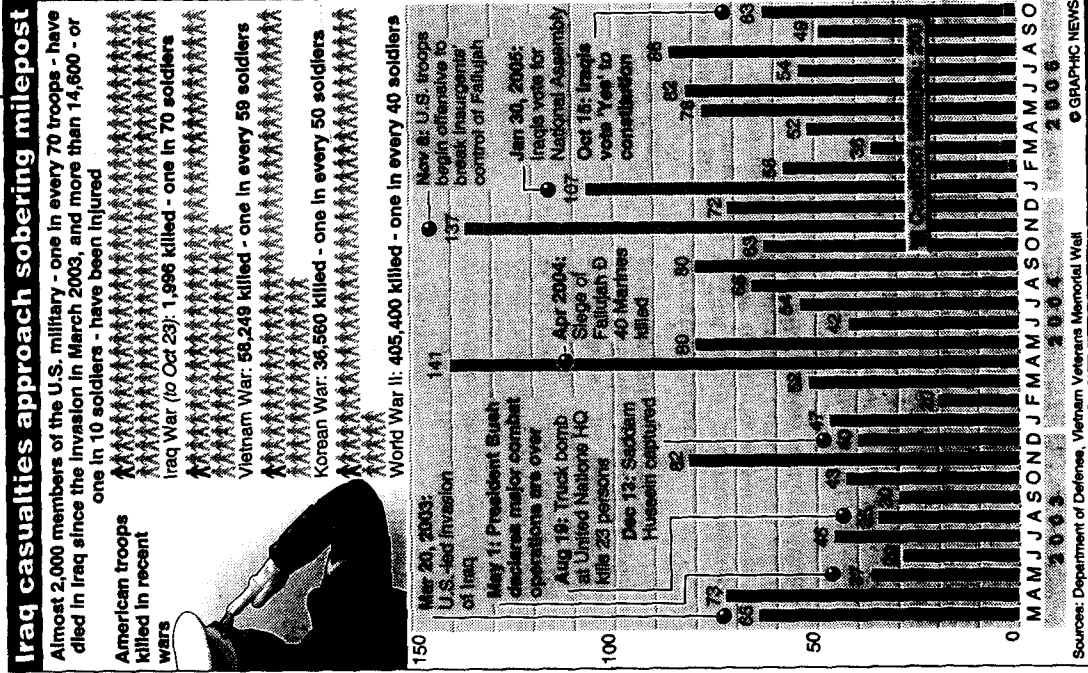
Two U.S. Marines killed

AGHDAD: Two U.S. Marines

were killed by a roadside bomb during fighting with militants in western Iraq, the military said on Tuesday. The deaths occurred on Friday near Amiriyah, 40 km west of Baghdad, the military said in

a statement.

The deaths raised to 1,999 the number of members of the U.S. military who have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. — AP



THE HINDU

25 11 2005

Will Syria benefit from Iraq's lessons?

Do those who make charges against Syria over the Hariri killing want to find the assassins or change the Damascus regime?

Marianna Belenkaya

A LONG diplomatic campaign to establish the degree of Syria's involvement in the murder of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri on February 14, 2005, and to decide on the punishment for the culprits, has begun. The situation is reminiscent of the United Nations Security Council's treatment of Iraq three years ago. The solution of the Syrian problem will show if the international community has learned its lessons from the Iraq collision.

The charges brought against Syria were based on a report by the international independent investigation commission headed by Detlev Mehlis. Its conclusion is that the crime could not have been perpetrated without the approval of high-ranking officials of Syrian security-related structures and their collusion with Lebanese colleagues. The investigators also said that the inquiry had to be continued.

Members of the U.N. Security Council agree, but this does not stop many of them from passing judgment on Syria.

Immediately following the publication of the report, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said that the Security Council might consider imposing international sanctions against Syria. United States Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton said Washington did not rule out sanctions either.

It takes the agreement of all permanent members of the Security Council to approve international sanctions, but Russia and China are not ready to vote on the issue. Other council members may wait until the end of the investigation provided Syria fully cooperates with the Mehlis commission. Syria is ready to comply, but only if the investigation does not turn into a political circus where Syrians will be proclaimed guilty regardless of their testimony.

According to *RIA Novosti's* sources, Mr. Mehlis said in Syria a month before the publication of the report that he had no proof of Syria's guilt and was satisfied with his contacts with Damascus. Yet the report expresses disappointment over the scale of Syrian authorities' cooperation with the commission. This reminds me of the long debates in the Security Council over the validity of Iraq's claim that it was no longer producing weapons of mass destruction. As we know now, Iraq was right and the world was proved wrong on that count.

The issue of sanctions against Syria is still on the agenda, but the example of Iraq highlighted the ineffectiveness of the sanction mechanism. The sanctions imposed against various countries in the

past were invariably rooted in the intention not only to force regimes into cooperation on certain issues but also to destroy them from within. Libya is the only successful example of sanctions, while in all other cases the sanctions regime either collapsed or failed to serve its purpose.

On the other hand, I am not sure that sanctions forced Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi to terminate his weapons of mass destruction programmes. Mr. Gaddafi's decision was preceded by extended secret talks between Tripoli, Washington, and London. For years the U.S. kept secret its plan of replacing the Gaddafi regime, unlike the plans regarding Baghdad and Pyongyang and the recent intentions regarding Damascus and Teheran.

Therefore, Libya's example (like the recent events around North Korea's nuclear programmes) is another proof that a reasonable dialogue with due account of pragmatic interests is much more effective than sanctions and accusations, even when they are justified.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told journalists in mid-October, "Sanctions are ineffective as an instrument of attaining foreign policy goals." Russia prefers other methods, he said, such as reaching a compromise. The issue under discussion was not Syria but the essence of the statement applies to it equally.

It is also uncertain how effective an international tribunal would be at prosecuting members of Syrian and Lebanese security-related services if Damascus and Beirut extradite them.

The international community is facing a challenging task, which can create a precedent of a reasonable solution of such problems. To begin with, we need to understand the goals of those who have initiated charges against Syria. Do they want to find the assassins or change the Syrian regime? The answer to this question would clarify the situation.

Russian experts believe that the pressure Europe and America are putting on Syria is convenient for Syrian President Bashar Assad, helping him carry out reforms. This may be a smart diplomatic game, and it may be that nobody is interested in changing the Damascus regime. In fact, the West does not have the means and resources for this, considering the situation in Iraq and the rest of the region. But, even though it lacks resources, I doubt that the U.S. will have the wisdom to act prudently.

What is doubtless is that destabilisation in Syria will be far more destructive for the entire region than the Iraqi crisis.

— **RIA Novosti**

First day in court

No witness for the prosecution

None among the dramatis personae, least of all the Pentagon colonisers overseeing the trial of Saddam Hussein, had anticipated that the proceedings would come to a halt on the very first day. It has been adjourned till 29 November as witnesses to the damning charge that 143 people were killed on his orders in Dujail were much too frightened to go to court. This is an unexpected setback for the USA's puppet rulers who after several postponements had timed the trial to coincide with the constitutional referendum. If the conduct of the opening day's session is any indication, it is the prosecution rather than the accused that seems more unnerved, almost terrified. That the US army has taken over security in the court suggests fears of an imminent insurgent onslaught. At the centre of world attention on Wednesday was of course Saddam. The former Iraqi President came through as a far from shattered man. Indeed, the striking feature of the trial's opening was his imperious presence as he snubbed the Bench with cutting queries: "Who are you? What is your identity?"

Even the composition of the Bench has been kept under wraps, with television allowed to show only one of the judges. As the Iraqi foreign minister, a Kurd, admitted, it was difficult to find judges willing to risk their lives. This is said to be one major reason for the delay. Even as it gets under way, the witness protection programme is still not in place. Saddam's trial must meet the highest international standards even if he is tried by an Iraqi court. This calls for transparency, with the defendant given a fair hearing with proper legal support. Misgivings over the status of the court, formed when the country was formally under US occupation, are not wholly unfounded. Which makes it doubtful whether the Iraqi judges will be sufficiently independent or whether they will be remote-controlled by the White House. Saddam is yet to be apprised of all the charges; the court has thus far focussed on the Dujail killings. It will be Iraq's tragedy if a rough-and-ready justice were to lead to his execution. Ergo, it would have been in the fitness of things for the charges to be referred to the International Court of Justice.

THE STATESMAN

Saddam trial lawyer killed

27/10
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19-14
Murder will have negative implications, say advocates

Atul Aneja

MANAMA: A defence lawyer involved in the trial of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has been killed.

The body of Sadoun Nasouaf al-Janabi was found dumped behind a mosque on Thursday night soon after he was abducted from his office. He was shot in the head and chest.

Mr. Al-Janabi was the defence attorney for Awad Hamed al-Bandar, who was one of Mr. Hussein's co-defendants at the trial which began on Wednesday.

Eyewitnesses claimed that gunmen stormed into the building housing Mr. Al-Janabi's office, two hours after the daytime fast was broken.

He was allegedly dragged from his office by men wearing suits and ties, who said they were Interior Ministry employees.

The Government, however, denied any involvement in the killing.

"Those suggestions [of government involvement] are ridiculous and baseless.

"The Government does not condone attacks against minorities and former figures in Saddam's Ba'ath Party," national

security adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie was quoted as saying. Analysts point out that there have been instances when armed pro-government groups have acted as vigilantes, targeting minorities.

The Iraqi lawyers' union said the killing would have negative implications on justice.

"This will hinder lawyers from defending those held for political reasons," Diaa al-Saadi,

an official from the union, said. Unlike the panel of judges, where four out of five names were kept secret, the identities of the defence lawyer had been revealed.

Mr. Hussein's top lawyer, Khalil Dulaimi, has said many in the team had been threatened.

The Government has now offered protection to any of the defence attorneys on request.

Guardian journalist freed

Ewen MacAskill

LONDON: Rory Carroll, the *Guardian* journalist kidnapped in Baghdad on Wednesday, was freed on Thursday night. Mr. Carroll phoned the *Guardian* to confirm that he had been released from an underground cell.

The end of the hostage drama came when one of his captors received a mobile phone call and unbolted Mr. Carroll, telling him he was free to go. "He put me in the boot of his car and drove me alone and dropped me in the middle

of Baghdad," Mr. Carroll said.

On Thursday night, he was under the protection of the Iraqi Government.

Mr. Carroll (33), who has been in Iraq for nine months, had been in Sadr City, interviewing a victim of Saddam Hussein. He was snatched by gunmen as he was leaving the home of the interviewee. He said he had been handcuffed and held in a darkened room for 36 hours. He did not know who was responsible but suspected it had been an opportunistic, criminal gang. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

Saddam trial — a political sideshow

The trial in Baghdad could backfire if Saddam Hussein is humiliated by unfair or high-handed treatment. 817-11 2/2/10

Jonathan Steele

NINEVEH HAS always been a place to conjure with, lurking in people's school-time memories or popping up in quiz shows as some sort of fabled ancient city. Founded by Nimrod, "the mighty hunter," it was in fact the last capital of the Assyrian empire, before the armies of Babylon razed most of it.

This week Nineveh was buried again. Its evocative name belongs to one of Iraq's 18 provinces and, thanks to its multicultural population, Nineveh was the swing region for the referendum on the constitution Iraqis voted on last Saturday. How Nineveh goes, so goes the country, as you might say.

Remember the referendum? Last weekend the world's airwaves were full of broadcasts about the success of the voting in turning out to cast their ballots. Then we heard preliminary but "informed" speculation that the constitution had passed. Majorities of Kurds and Shias had given it enthusiastic support in the north and south-east. In Sunni areas, where voters had been expected to reject it, not enough had come forward to turn it down. The rule was that if two-thirds of voters in any three provinces rejected the constitution, it would fail. Election officials conceded that two-thirds had done so in the two fiercely anti-American provinces that include Fallujah, Ramadi, and Tikrit. But Nineveh, which Sunnis share with Kurds and Christians, had not produced a big enough no vote. So the message was: "Sorry, Sunnis. Our constitution is safe."

Along comes a second big Iraqi event: the

trial of Saddam Hussein. Important though it is as a catharsis for the former dictator's hundreds of thousands of surviving victims, it has little political significance since only a small minority of Iraqis still support him. Of course, it could backfire on the Americans if Mr. Hussein is humiliated in court by unfair or high-handed treatment. To a wider circle of Iraqis, and other Arabs, he might then become a symbol of wounded national pride, as he was briefly when Washington published pictures of his mouth being examined by a military dentist after capture.

Attention diverted

Manipulating the trial's timing is the real story. Why suddenly this week? A fortnight ago, at Chatham House in London, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said he did not know when the trial would take place. Within days a date was fixed, conveniently diverting reporters' attention from the referendum count. With the issue out of the spotlight, it is a fair bet that when the official result is declared, the announcement that the constitution has passed will be treated as pretty dull since we already "know" that from the weekend leaks by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, and the Iraqi Government.

How could they be sure, since counting was not yet complete? Was the fact that the count would be flawed the real thing they knew? Was the trial an improvised political device to get rigging out of the headlines?

On Monday some Iraqi election officials were beginning to say they had come upon major irregularities and suspiciously high Kurdish voter turnouts, in places exceeding

95 per cent. Below the radar of the Saddam Hussein trial, more questions have been raised. Turnout figures in such cities as Najaf doubled from an initial figure of 45 per cent. In Nineveh and Diyala, another province with a Sunni Arab majority, officials initially talked of startling yes votes of up to 70 per cent in each. Later, they changed the Nineveh figure to say the no votes had won — but the figure was only 55 per cent, and so below the crucial 66 per cent threshold for rejection.

In an analysis for the Inter Press Service, American scholar Gareth Porter questions even that figure. He says it is based on an unbelievably low turnout among Sunnis. It implies that Nineveh's Christians, who had declared their opposition to the constitution in advance, changed their mind on the day. He quotes a U.S. military liaison officer who used to work there as admitting that Kurdish officials, who have long vied for control over Mosul, Nineveh's main city, and inflate its population figures, stuffed ballots in January's election and may have done it again.

Does this matter? The constitution will be declared to have passed, because the Bush administration wants it passed. It paves the way for elections in December, which will be spun as further proof of Iraq's gradual democratisation. Yet it will have been bought at a high price. Cheating the Sunnis is not a sensible policy, especially when, out of the other side of its mouth, the Bush administration claims to be trying to get them into the political process.

The fact that large numbers of Sunnis voted last week does not mean they no longer support armed resistance. Reporters in Fallujah found voters who said they backed

the insurgency even as they cast their ballots. This is logical enough. Iraqis who questioned the legitimacy of the January elections had no option but to boycott. Those who question the constitution's legitimacy had a more complex choice. They could boycott it, as the Association of Muslim Scholars and some other groups close to the resistance proposed. Or they could vote it down. This made pragmatic as well as ideological sense — if you assume the counting will be fair.

The real debate inside the insurgency seems to centre on targeting and whether car-bomb attacks on civilians are politically inept. Washington's spooks recently released a letter purportedly intercepted from Al-Qaeda's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri. He urged his people in Iraq to give up attacks on Shias and other civilians because they alienate potential supporters. The letter may be forged, meant in part to frighten Syrians as well as Iraqis. It calls for Al-Qaeda to move on from setting up a Sunni Islamic state in Iraq when the Americans pull out — "perhaps faster than we imagine" — and extend the *jihad* "to Iraq's secular neighbours."

Unintended irony

Most Iraqis denounce the suicide bombings as the work of foreign *jihadis* rather than as legitimate revenge. It would be one of the many unintended ironies of George W. Bush's futile war on Iraq that he has spawned so much terrorism there that he now has to use letters from Al-Qaeda's leaders to moderate the more extreme tactics of their followers. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

Iran likely to escape UN referral over nuclear plans, say diplomats

LOUIS CHARBONNEAU
BERLIN, OCTOBER 20

THE International Atomic Energy Agency will most likely not refer Iran to the UN Security Council when the UN agency's board meets next month despite fears that Tehran is seeking nuclear weapons, diplomats said.

Last month, when the 35-nation governing board of the UN's nuclear watchdog declared Iran to have violated the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, European and US officials had said that the IAEA would refer Iran to the Security Council if Tehran continued to process uranium at a plant at Isfahan, which was mothballed until August under an agreement last year with France, Britain and Germany.

Tehran has so far refused to reinstate the suspension of sensitive nuclear work, but the EU's three biggest powers

Iran gives IAEA key documents

VIENNA: Iran, after a recent decision to co-operate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, has given it key documents about activities that could be used to make a nuclear weapon and has allowed them to question a senior official suspected of involvement in the programme, diplomats said on Thursday. A US official also described Iran's decision to co-operate after nearly two years of foot-dragging as "important concessions." AP

have decided not to press for a Council referral at this time.

"The approach is not to refer Iran to the Security Council at the moment," an official from one of the so-called EU3 countries said. "The idea is not to provoke Iran."

One of the reasons, diplomats say, for the decision to back off from a Security Council referral next month is that

Tehran has improved cooperation with agency inspectors since the IAEA passed its resolution. After a recent trip to Tehran, IAEA safeguards inspector Olli Heinonen reported "his visit was positive and access was easier", a Western diplomat said.

"At the moment we have the feeling that the report we will get (from the IAEA on Iran) in November will not be negative," the diplomat said, adding that the intense international pressure on Iran might be beginning to yield positive results.

Another EU diplomat said Tehran appeared to be working hard to avoid a Council referral and warned that being too confrontational with Iran could be counterproductive. "If it's significant cooperation, then I would imagine people would want to think very carefully about whether to do anything that would upset that cooperation," he said. —Reuters

Saddam trial's credibility under question

Handwritten notes: "Hussein" and "Iraqi-13" with a circled "100".

Key witness to testify on Sunday

A key prosecution witness in Saddam Hussein's trial will testify at an



unexpected session on Sunday because the former intelligence official is seriously ill with cancer, officials said Thursday. Wadah Ismael Al-Sheik was a senior Iraqi intelligence officer at the time of the Dujail massacre in 1982 that Saddam and his co-defendants are charged with.

AP, Baghdad

Saddam nephew held in Tikrit

Iraqi security forces have arrested Yasser Sabawi, a nephew of Saddam Hussein, in the deposed dictator's hometown Tikrit on suspicion of financing insurgents, national security adviser Mowaffaq al-Rubaie said. "He was seen distributing money to incite violence," Rubaie said. Sabawi was suspected of funneling money to Sunni Arab insurgents.

Reuters, Baghdad

Guardian scribe abducted



The Guardian's Iraq correspondent, Rory Carroll, went missing on

Wednesday after being kidnapped by gunmen in Baghdad. Carroll, 33, was accompanied by two drivers and a translator when he was confronted by gunmen. He and one of the drivers were bundled into cars. The driver was released later.

The Guardian

REUTERS

Baghdad, October 20

Handwritten note: "21/10"

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S trial lasted only a few hours before being adjourned, but it was long enough for international observers to get a taste — and overall they were left unconvinced about the credibility of Iraq's tribunal.

While praising the efforts of the chief judge, a Kurd with a wry smile and a pleasant manner, legal experts said they were uneasy about how parts of the process unfolded and uncertain whether it would ultimately be seen to be fair.

Several said the most positive aspect of the trial for crimes against humanity was that it was quickly adjourned. "We have our fair trial reservations," said Miranda Sissons, a senior associate with the International Centre for Transitional Justice, which offers help to countries dealing with past abuses.

The three or so hours that Saddam and seven others spent in court were mostly taken up with the defendants identifying themselves, giving Saddam a chance to showboat about still being President.

One of the biggest concerns observers raised was that the chief prosecutor, in his opening statement, was permitted to ramble for 15 minutes, making a sweep of allegations unrelated to the case at hand. Richard Dicker, director of Human Rights Watch's international justice programme, said, "There was this sense of an 'anything goes' process, and I wasn't at all encouraged by that."

But they did praise the judge, Rizgar Mohammed Amin, to show fairness and respect to the defendants, and for being patient. Harangued by Saddam, the grey-haired Amin, had only smiled.

In an effort to show it can handle high-profile cases such as Saddam being tried for crimes against humanity — and genocide and war crimes in the future — the tribunal and its American advisers have created a hybrid judicial structure.

They have taken elements of international courts, like that in The Hague, and built them on top of Iraq's criminal codes, creating a potentially strong structure but with rough edges. Dicker would have preferred more international elements. "A fully internationalised structure would have maximised the chances for a fair and efficient trial," he said. "The new statutes go some way further than Iraqi law in granting rights to the accused ... but they are still deeply flawed."

For many Iraqis, however, even if Wednesday's proceedings didn't look like most Iraqi trials, there was huge relief at seeing their former tormentor in court, and in the end that may go the furthest to ensuring the success of the tribunal.

"Despite shortcomings, it was a momentous day for Iraqis," said Dicker.

Iraq referendum on Constitution appears headed for approval

Seventy killed in air strikes on "militant safe house" in Ramadi, says U.S.

BAGHDAD: Iraq's new Constitution seemed likely to be adopted following Saturday's historic vote, even though election officials on Monday warned it was too early to give definite results.

On the militancy front, about 70 rebels were killed in U.S. air strikes Sunday in the Ramadi region of western Iraq, where five U.S. soldiers died in a roadside bombing the previous day, the U.S. military said.

Over 60 per cent of the 15.5 million electorate were estimated to have cast their ballots in the largely peaceful referendum on a constitution for the new Iraq.

Iraq's majority Shia community and minority Kurds overwhelmingly support the document. The minority Sunnis, believed to form the backbone of the country's raging militancy, oppose it.

Commission unhappy

Abdul-Hussein Hindawi, a senior member of Iraq's Independent Election Commission, was unhappy with early reports of a "Yes" victory.

"We are trying to remain cold-blooded about this. Our credibility depends on it," he said. "Our work must be respectable, transparent and credible."

In London, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters on Sunday that the Constitution had "probably passed", but later adopted a position of wait and see.

Mr. Hindawi told AFP that he was "astonished" by Ms. Rice's



A NATION REMEMBERS: People walk between rows of boots representing the 1,975 American soldiers killed in Iraq, at a travelling campaign sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee, a group opposed to the war, in Brooklyn on Sunday. - PHOTO: AP

statement. "As far as I know, she's not a member of the electoral commission," he said.

Officials might have an indication of the direction of the vote late on Monday, he said.

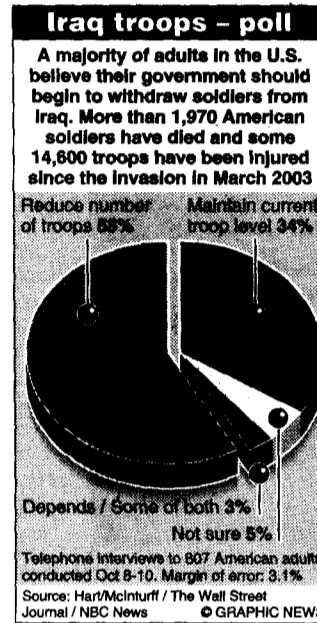
But a source close to the electoral commission said it seemed "very difficult" for the "No" vote

to win. The Constitution will be defeated if two-thirds of voters in three of Iraq's 18 provinces vote against it.

Sunni opposition

There is a majority Sunni populations in three provinces - Al-Anbar, Salaheddin and Nineveh

-and all three locations reported a strong voter turnout. In the Ramadi incident, about 70 militants were killed in U.S. air strikes in the region where five U.S. and two Iraqi soldiers were killed in a weekend roadside bombing, the U.S. military said on Monday. Fifty rebels were



killed on Sunday in raids by helicopters and fighter jets on a suspected safe house in the Abu Faraj region north of Ramadi.

Another 20 were killed just east of the town when a fighter jet fired a precision-guided bomb as rebels were in the process of planting a roadside bomb, it said.

Meanwhile, a police captain and a Christian woman were killed in targeted attacks in Baghdad.

Armed men forced their way into an apartment where the Christian woman lived in Baghdad and killed her, the source said, adding there was no known motive for the attack. - AFP

'I preserve my rights as President of Iraq. I do not respond to this so-called court'

SADDAM TRIAL

JAMES Sturcke
Baghdad, October 19, 2005

SADDAM HUSSEIN took a defiant stance on Wednesday as he appeared in a court on charges of crimes against humanity, arguing with the judge and repeatedly refusing to confirm his name.

The former dictator (68), who ruled Iraq for 24 years, pleaded not guilty to charges in the first of several cases. He refused to recognise the court, which adjourned the trial to November 28.

With neatly combed hair and a tidy greying beard, Saddam was ushered into one of three chest-high pens in the courtroom in the former national command headquarters of his feared Baath party.

Asked by judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin, a Kurd, to identify himself, Saddam replied: "I hear from your accent that you are Iraqi. You know me well."

Saddam stood up to tell the five-judge panel: "I preserve my constitutional rights as the President of Iraq. I don't recognise the body that has authorised you and I don't recognise this aggression ... I don't respond to this so-called court, with all due respect."

Saddam was the last of the defendants to enter the courtroom, escorted by two Iraqi guards in bulletproof vests who guided him by the elbow. Entering the room, Saddam glanced at journalists watching through bulletproof glass from an adjoining room. He motioned for his escorts to slow down a little. After sitting, he greeted his co-defendants, saying, "Peace be upon you," sitting next to Awad Hamed al-Bandar, former head of Iraq's revolutionary court.

The other defendants include Saddam's former intelligence chief Barazan Ibrahim, the former vice president Taha Yassin Ramadan, and other lower-level Baathist civil servants. Most were wearing traditional Arab robes and they complained that they had not been allowed to have head-dresses, causing a slight delay while court officials brought out red headaddresses for them.

If convicted, they could face the death penalty. **The Guardian**

THE EXCHANGE

We want your identity, your name, then we'll listen to what you have

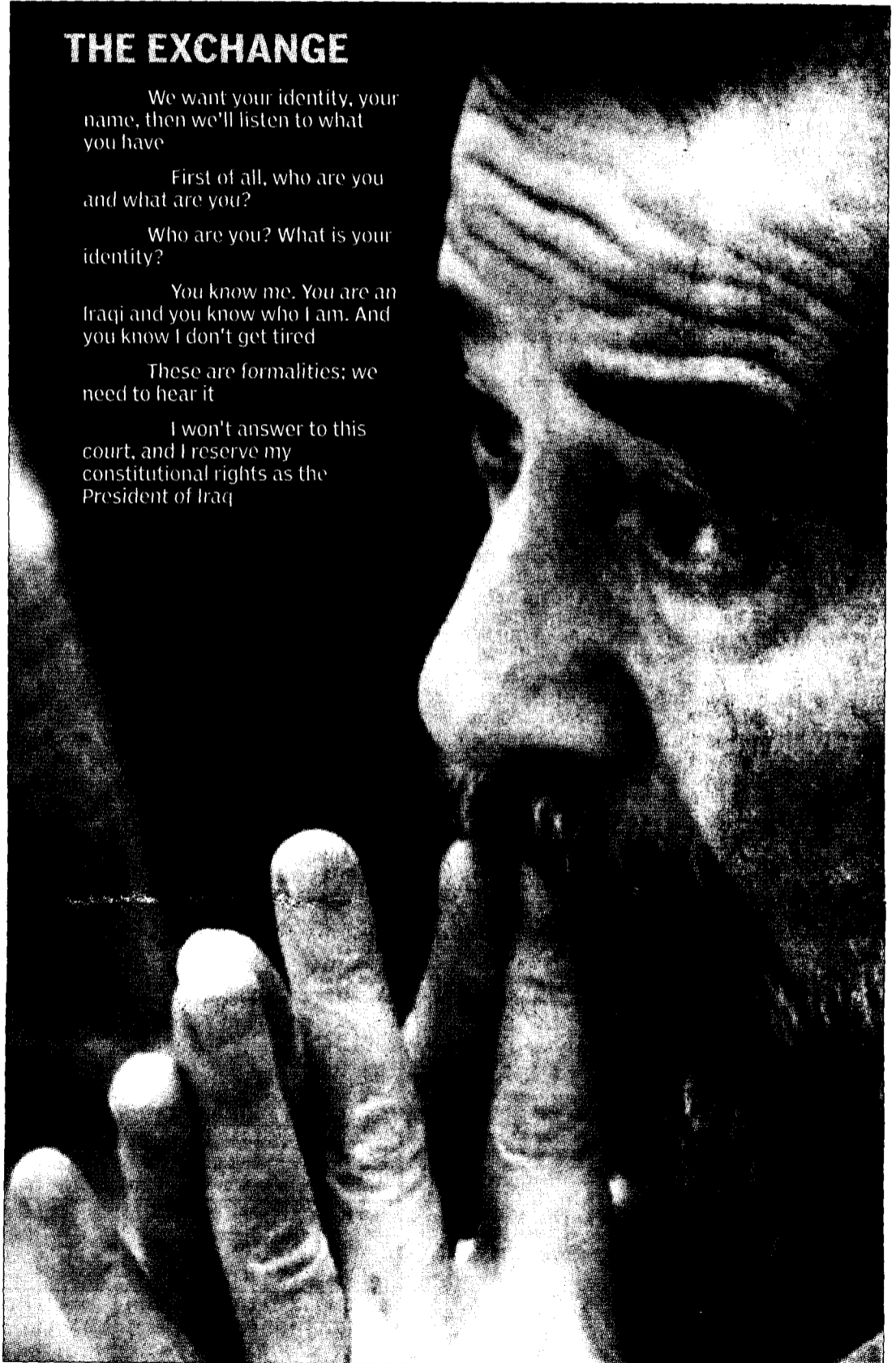
First of all, who are you and what are you?

Who are you? What is your identity?

You know me. You are an Iraqi and you know who I am. And you know I don't get tired

These are formalities; we need to hear it

I won't answer to this court, and I reserve my constitutional rights as the President of Iraq



Full coverage on Page 13

Saddam Hussein listens to the judge during his trial at a Baghdad court on Wednesday.

AFP

Defiant dictator, jilted judge

Who're you,
they ask
each other

Reuters
Baghdad, October 19

Saddam Hussein on Wednesday argued with presiding judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin. A transcript of that exchange
Judge Amin: asks a question
Saddam: stands up and begins reading aloud from a copy of the Qur'an.

Judge Amin: Mr Saddam, we ask you to write down your identity, your name, occupation and address and then we will allow you to talk. Now it is time to write down your identity.
Saddam: I was not about to say much.

Judge Amin: We want your identity, your name, then we will listen to what you have. We are writing down the identities at this time. We will hear you when we need to listen to you.
Saddam: First of all, who are you and what are you?

Judge Amin: The Iraqi Criminal Court.
Saddam: All of you are judges?

Judge Amin: We don't have time to get into details. You can write down what you like.

Saddam: I have been here in this military building since 2.30, and then from 9 I have been wearing this suit. They have asked me to take it off and then put it on again many times.

Judge Amin: Who are you? What is your identity? Why don't you take a seat and let the others say their names and we will get back to you.

Saddam: You know me. You are an Iraqi and you know who I am. And you know I don't get tired.

Judge Amin: These are formalities and we need to hear it from you.
Saddam: They have prevented me from getting a pen and a paper because paper is frightening these days. I don't hold any grudges. But upholding what's right and respecting the Iraqi people who chose me I won't answer to this court, with all due respect to the individuals involved in it, and I reserve my constitutional rights as the president of Iraq. You know me.

Judge Amin: These are the procedures. A judge cannot rely on personal knowledge.

Saddam: I don't recognise the group that gave you the authority and assigned you.



Saddam speaks to the presiding judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin as his trial begins in Baghdad on Wednesday.

Rights scanner on Baghdad court

Reuters
Berlin, October 19

CAN IRAQI judges, in a court established under US occupation, grant a fair trial to their former dictator?

Legal experts and rights groups will be following every step of the trial of Saddam Hussein, amid concerns about whether his lawyers will get the chance to mount a fair defence and how high a standard of proof the judges will demand. For the trial to succeed, the judges must handle proceedings in a "very sober neutral, non-partisan way, leaving reasonable chances for the defence", said Jan Wouters, professor of international law at the University of Leuven in Belgium.

The court's decision to adjourn the trial to November 28 soon after it opened on Wednesday may help to allay criticism from Human Rights Watch and others that the defence had had too little time — just 45 days — to prepare. But the New York-based rights group, in a 19-page paper, cited a catalogue of other concerns, including to what extent Saddam will be allowed to speak in his own defence and whether he will get the chance to cross-examine witnesses.

Saddam may be convicted if the evidence is to the "satisfaction" of the judges — a standard falling short of the international benchmark of proof beyond reasonable doubt.

"This 'satisfaction' standard does

raise many alarm bells," said Edgar Chen of the Washington-based Coalition for International Justice. Some Western legal experts are disappointed at the limited scope of the trial. Seeking to focus proceedings and prevent them dragging on for years, prosecutors have chosen just one episode on which to press charges: the killing of more than 140 Shi'ite men from the village of Duqail after a 1982 assassination attempt on Saddam. Saddam will not have to answer for politi-

HOW FAIR WILL THE TRIAL BE?

cal murders and the mass repression of Shi'ites, Kurds and Marsh Arabs. For Benjamin Ferencz, a U.S. prosecutor at the Nuremberg trial of leading Nazis after World War Two, the most telling omission is the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, in violation of the international law.

"That was as clear a case of aggression as you can imagine, and no one is talking about that," Ferencz told Reuters from the United States, where he watched court proceedings on television. "That is a disappointment. I think it could have been, and should have been, presented quickly. But it's a great step forward whenever a president of a country is called to account for massive crimes."

Iraqis indifferent to trial of Saddam Hussein

WASIN
 9/20/06
 8/12/17 28
 19/10

Sunnis see the prosecution by "kangaroo court" as a Shia stratagem

Rory Carroll

BAGHDAD: The stage is set, the actors are ready, but the audience is distracted. Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's trial starts on Wednesday, trailing words such as momentous and historic, a courtroom drama with gallows in the wings.

The former President is expected to play his part, defiant and confident even if denied a tie lest he make a noose. The prosecution and defence have studied transcripts from Nuremberg and The Hague and rehearsed their lines. Five judges will determine the final act.

Iraq, however, does not quite fit the bill of a nation thirsting for justice.

Fading stature

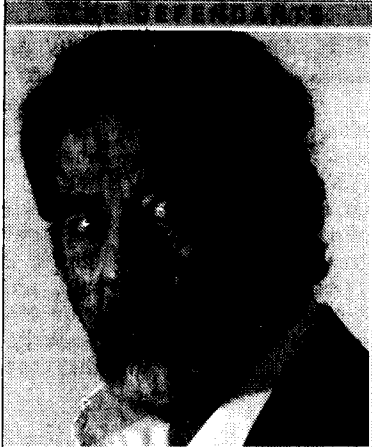
The man whose persona invaded his citizens' thoughts more effectively than his troops invaded neighbouring countries, has shrunk.

The ragged fugitive dragged from a spider hole near Tikrit in December 2003 was physically diminished — Mr. Hussein lost weight on the run — and the subsequent incarceration and near-invisibility whittled his relevance.

"People here don't think it will be a fair trial. But they will do nothing because they don't care about him," said Fawzi Mohammad (48), a cement plant manager in Fallujah, a city of ruins and a symbol of resistance to the Americans. "Saddam now is the past for us. He is like an old currency, worthless."

Abbas Ali Hassan, secretary of Fallujah's city council, bristled at the name. "Forget him. We want to develop. We don't want to remain on the shore. We want to go deeper into the sea." It is not that the pain is forgotten. How can survivors from Halabja, the Kurdish town gassed in 1988, forget losing 5,000 friends and relatives? How can Shias forget those executed in the 1991 uprising while mass graves are being excavated in the desert? Wednesday's trial, the first of 12, concerns the killing of 143 Shias from the village of Dujail, re-

THE CHARGES
 ■ Premeditated murder, torture, forced expulsion and disappearances of 143 Shia men from the village of Dujail, north of Baghdad, following a failed attempt on Saddam's life in 1982



■ **Saddam Hussein Aged 68.** President of Iraq from 1979 until his removal and capture during the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq

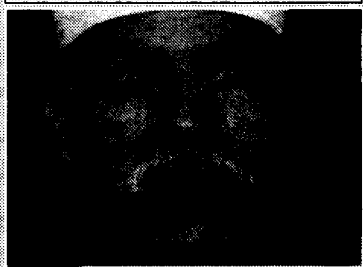
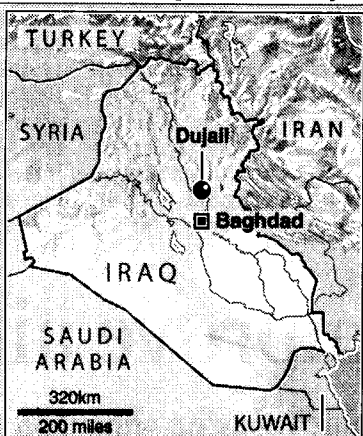


■ **Awad Hamed al-Bander:** Above left. Judge in Revolutionary Court who allegedly sentenced to death many of the 143 men accused of trying to assassinate Saddam as his motorcade drove through Dujail

■ **Taha Yassin Ramadan:** Above right. Vice-President until 2003. Allegedly involved in brutal suppression of Shia Muslim uprising in 1991 and killing of thousands of Kurds in 1988

Saddam's day in court

Human rights groups have raised profound concerns about the independence of the court trying former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and whether it meets international standards. Saddam and seven others are charged with crimes against humanity

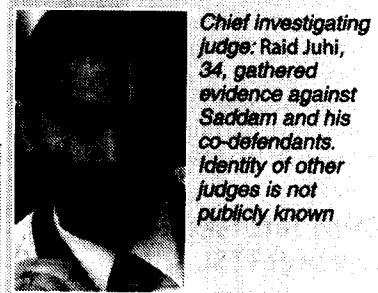


■ **Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti:** One of Saddam's three half-brothers. As head of feared Mukhabarat intelligence service, he is accused of ordering mass murder, torture, and personally taking part in human rights abuses

■ **Abdullah Kadhem Ruaid**
 ■ **Ali Daeem Ali**
 ■ **Mohammed Azawi Ali**
 ■ **Mizher Abdullah Rawad:** All local Baath party officials in Dujail area

THE SUPREME IRAQI CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL

■ **Trial chamber:** There is no jury. Five judges decide which witnesses shall be called and what questions are put to witnesses and defendants



Chief investigating judge: Raid Juhi, 34, gathered evidence against Saddam and his co-defendants. Identity of other judges is not publicly known

■ **Witnesses:** Lawyers for prosecution and defence must address questions to witnesses only through judges

■ **Non-Iraqi lawyers:** May be appointed as advisors to judges and prosecutors

■ **Defence:** Saddam's chief lawyer, Khalil al-Dulaimi, says he has been allowed only 45 days to prepare a defence and has not been able to question witnesses already interviewed by investigating judge

■ **Conviction:** No requirement to prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt. Judges' panel will decide guilt or innocence of Saddam and his co-defendants - verdict and sentence issued in a written opinion

■ **Appeals:** Considered by Appeals Chamber - nine appellant judges including President of Tribunal. Conviction and sentence may be reversed, revised, or set aside and case sent back for re-trial

■ **Death penalty:** No opportunity for clemency if death penalty is handed down. Mandatory execution within 30 days of final judgment

Pictures: Associated Press, aljazeera.net

Sources: Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, wire agencies

© GRAPHIC NEWS

venge for a failed assassination attempt when he visited in 1982.

If the televised proceedings inflame Arab Sunni passions it will not be out of concern for Mr. Hussein but what his presence in the dock repre-

sents: victory for Shias and Kurds. Government officials admit that Shia militias are operating death squads against Sunnis. Many Sunnis suspect that Mr. Hussein is facing a kangaroo court which is another front in the

campaign against their sect. Sunnis in Dujail have no love for the former President, yet they have started killing and terrorising the village's Shias in revenge for the trial. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

The problem with a weak federation

h Asia
power

The adoption of a weak Iraqi federal constitution is likely to unleash an ethnic and sectarian crisis across the region.

19/10

H0-11

David Hirst

IN THE great settlement that followed the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, one of the Middle East's largest ethnic groups, the Kurds, were the main losers. They had been promised their own state, but, thanks to Kemal Ataturk's nationalist rebellion and abandonment of the project by the Western powers, they ended up as repressed minorities in the four countries – Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria – among which their vast domains were divided.

The Kurds are set to become the greatest beneficiary of whatever new order emerges from the current Western intervention in the region's affairs. This has not reached the scale of the earlier intervention, being mainly confined to Iraq, but, in its expanding – and unplanned – ramifications, it could well become comparable to the earlier one. After all, its chief architects, the Bush administration's pro-Israeli, neo-conservative hawks, with their grandiose ideas of "creative chaos" and "regime change," always saw Iraq as the springboard of an enterprise that had to be regionwide to succeed. In this respect, if no other, they are in unison with the inhabitants of the Middle East themselves, for whom it is virtually axiomatic that what happens in Iraq profoundly affects everyone else.

At all stages in the Iraqi drama, Arab pundits and politicians have dwelt apprehensively on these wider implications. And they are doing so now with the new Iraqi constitution, which looks like it will be approved after Saturday's referendum. This is the latest and possibly the most fateful stage, enshrining as it does, under the general heading of "federation," a whole new concept of statehood and identity.

In this constitution, Iraqi Kurds do not get the state that 98 per cent of them want, according to a recent referendum, but they do get gains – vast legislative powers, control of their own militia and authority over discoveries of oil – which in effect consecrate the quasi-independence they have enjoyed since Western "humanitarian" intervention on their behalf in the 1991 Gulf war and which Kurds regard as a way station towards the real thing. The Iraqi republic is to be "independent, sovereign, federal, democratic and parliamentary"; but one thing, explicitly, it is no longer, is "Arab."

The adoption of a federal formula is seen by the Arab world not as a remedy for Iraq's inherent divisiveness, but, in conditions of rising inter-communal tensions and violence, as a stimulus to it. Prince Saud al-Faisal, the veteran Saudi Foreign Minister and voice of the Sunni Arab establishment, told Americans that it is "part of a dynamic pushing the Iraqi people away from each other. If you allow for this – for a civil war to happen between Shias and Sunnis – Iraq is finished forever. It will be dismembered." What makes it more alarming is that, unlike the Kurds, Iraqi Shias, however ambivalently they feel about it, enjoy the strong support of a powerful neighbour. Now, under its new President, in some-

thing of a neo-Khomeinist revivalist mode, Iran is clearly accumulating all the Shia-based geopolitical assets it can, from Iraq to south Lebanon, in preparation for a showdown with the U.S.

Arabs have long warned of the "Lebanonisation" of Iraq, automatically mindful of the fact that virtually every Western-created state in the eastern Arab world contains the latent ethnic or sectarian tensions that produced that archetype of Arab civil war. But whereas, in concert with the U.S., the Arabs finally managed to put out the Lebanese fire before it spread, their prospects of achieving the same amid the violence in Iraq are slight indeed. The inter-Arab state system – and its chief institution, the Arab League – has long been incapable of concerted action against what, like Iraq, are perceived as threats to the Arab "nation." Now the system itself is threatened by the growth of non-state activities, the cross-border traffic in extreme Islamist ideology – along with the jihadists and suicide bombers who act on it – or ethnic and sectarian solidarities of the kind that threaten to tear Iraq apart.

Syria in the frontline

Syria, once the nub of the Sykes-Picot carve-up, is again in the frontline, alone among Arab states to be exposed to the Iraqi contagion in both its Kurdish and Shia dimensions. Thanks to the sudden, self-inflicted weakness of Iraqi Ba'athist rule, it was Iraqi Kurds who, in 1991, achieved the first great, contemporary breakthrough in the Kurdish struggle for self-determination. Syrian Kurds now sense similar weakness in their own, deeply troubled Ba'athist regime. If it collapses amid generalised chaos, many will push for secession and amalgamation with their brethren in north Iraq.

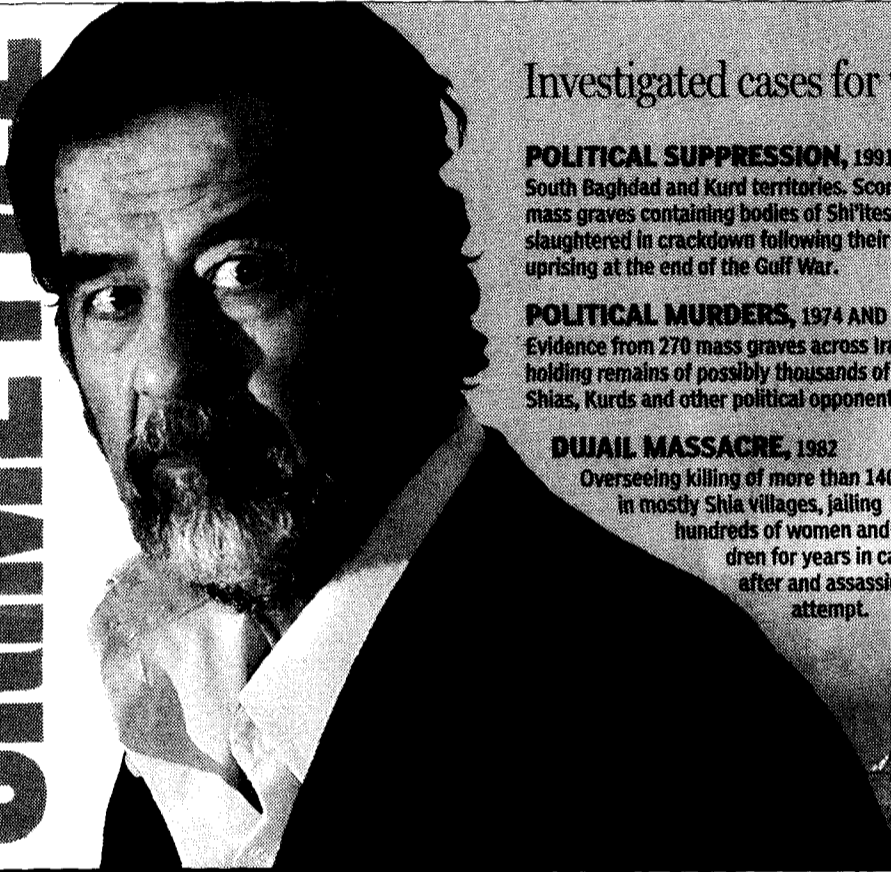
On the Shia front, if sectarian identity is to become the organising principle of Arab polities, Syria is the most vulnerable to the convulsions that it will unleash. A small minority, the Alawites, has in effect run the country for more than 40 years. It is a predominantly Sunni society, which, historically, represents an even greater anomaly than the Sunni minority rule, also in Ba'athist guise, that the majority Shias and Kurds dispensed with in Iraq. A Sunni majority restoration will become unstoppable if, with the eventual break-up of Iraq, its disempowered Sunnis turn to Syria, of which, but for Sykes-Picot, a great many would long have been citizens anyway.

In the next most vulnerable region, the Gulf, historically persecuted Shia minorities (or majority in Bahrain), inspired by the triumph of their co-religionists in Iraq, will press their claims for equality with new vigour. But nervous Sunni regimes will be loath to cede too much, not least in Saudi Arabia where, like their terrorist alter ego in Iraq, the Al-Qaeda boss Abdul Musab al-Zarqawi, the more hidebound of the Wahhabi religious hierarchy still regard Shia Muslims as no better than heretics.

– ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005
(David Hirst reported from the Middle East for the London-based Guardian newspaper from 1963 to 2001.)

Saddam's Judgment Day

CRIME FILE



Investigated cases for which Saddam could be tried

POLITICAL SUPPRESSION, 1991

South Baghdad and Kurd territories. Scores of mass graves containing bodies of Shi'ites slaughtered in crackdown following their uprising at the end of the Gulf War.

POLITICAL MURDERS, 1974 AND 1983

Evidence from 270 mass graves across Iraq holding remains of possibly thousands of Shias, Kurds and other political opponents.

DUJAIL MASSACRE, 1982

Overseeing killing of more than 140 men in mostly Shia villages, felling hundreds of women and children for years in camps, after and assassination attempt.

MARSH ARABS, 1980-1988

Ordered marsh habitat to be drained, destroying their livelihood.

KURDISH GENOCIDE, ETHNIC CLEANSING, 1987-1988

Halabja village. 5000 people said to have been killed at Halabja village with nerve gas and cluster bombs. "Chemical Ali" accused of worst tortures.

INVASION OF IRAQ, 1990

Ordering invasion in violation of international law. Alleged tortures and executions of prisoners during occupation. Setting alight more than 700 oil wells while fleeing from Kuwait.

Iraqi leaders rush to open trial with low-key case

JOHN F Burns
Baghdad, October 18

ON WEDNESDAY, 22 months after he was dragged from his hiding place in an underground bunker, Saddam Hussein will appear in an Iraqi court to answer for the brutalities he inflicted on his fellow Iraqis. But what should be a moment of triumph for his victims is instead stirring concern about the fairness and competence of the court itself.

The special Iraqi tribunal established to conduct the trial has chosen a case that many Iraqis believe to be too narrow to answer the widespread yearning for Mr. Hussein to be held to account for the most savage of his crimes. And the political pressure to hasten the trial has forced the tribunal to accel-

erate some of the work needed to prepare for other cases involving tens of thousands of victims, nearly 300 mass graves and about 40 tons of documents gathered from the government agencies that oversaw his repression.

While many Iraqis are eager for the moment when they see Mr. Hussein in the dock, Western human rights groups and legal experts have warned that the former dictator is unlikely to get a fair trial, and that the probable outcome, a death sentence, will be what the tribunal's harshest critics have described as "victor's justice."

Saddam, along with seven other defendants, will begin the accounting for his past in a case centring on the execution of more than 140 men and teenage boys in Dujail, a mostly Shiite market town 35 miles

north of Baghdad. The victims were seized by the secret police after an assassination attempt against Saddam there in 1982.

The concern that the tribunal will not first take up the most heinous of Saddam's crimes runs strongest among the Shiites and Kurds. Human rights groups estimate that at least 300,000 Iraqis, mostly Shiites and Kurds, were killed by Saddam's ruthless machinery of repression.

Iraqi officials say they chose to begin with the Dujail case because it would be relatively straightforward to prosecute.

Iraqi leaders have forced the appointment and later dismissal of a succession of tribunal officials in the past 15 months, including three men who served as the tribunal's administrative director.

Perhaps the most serious interference has involved the pressure that Iraqi politicians have placed on the tribunal to fast-forward Saddam's first trial and to impose a quick death sentence.

The most egregious example came last month, when the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, and one of three men in Iraq's presidential council who would have to ratify a death sentence against Saddam, told the state-run Iraqiya television network that tribunal officials had told him that Saddam had admitted to ordering the massacres of Kurds during an Iraqi military offensive in the closing stages of the 1980's Iran-Iraq war, known to Iraqis as the Anfal campaign. "Saddam should be executed 20 times," Talabani said.

The New York Times

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Iraq's new charter

Now Baghdad needs a credible economic

and security plan

ALTHOUGH it might not immediately end the bloody insurgency, the popular approval of a new charter puts the Iraqi nation on a sound footing to become a full-fledged constitutional republic. While the final tally is awaited, initial trends point to a strong "yes" vote on the draft Iraqi constitution in Saturday's referendum. Given the circumstances under which the referendum was held and the larger democracy deficit in the Middle East, the political significance of the outcome should not be downplayed. The elections slated for mid-December will end the transitional phase in the Iraqi political evolution after the ouster of Saddam Hussein.

When a regular government takes charge in Baghdad in the new year, a historic moment would have arrived, not just for Iraq but for the entire region. Saturday's high turnout was in itself a shot in the arm for the Iraqi political process. Even more important was the fact that the Sunnis, who had boycotted the elections in January, chose to participate in large numbers this time. Expectedly, a majority of the Sunnis have voted "no". But the fact that some of them voted "yes"

is tribute to the politics of compromise — central to any democratic process — in the form of amendments to the constitution pushed through just days before the referendum. That the Sunni minority which dominated Iraqi political structure all these decades has begun to move away from rejectionist politics is a good augury.

However, the constitution alone will not put an end to countless Iraqi troubles. Many issues that have been finessed in the Constitution — the relationship between Islam and the state, the question of federalism and the problem of dividing oil revenues — will continue to haunt it. The emergence of democratic structures does not necessarily mean the sources of Iraqi insurgency have been effectively tackled. While US military presence might be necessary for the survival of the Iraqi state, it would be unwise for Washington to ignore the potential resentment that could gather against it. To ensure that the fragile republic survives, both the US and the international community need to come up with a credible plan to provide solid security and economic assistance to Baghdad.

SUNNIS URGED NOT TO BE FRUSTRATED

Iraq charter assured of passage

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Oct. 16. — Iraq's Constitution seemed assured of passage today, despite strong opposition from Sunni Arabs, who voted in surprisingly high numbers in an effort to stop it. The US military announced that five American soldiers were killed by a bomb blast on referendum day.

Iraq's foreign minister today urged minority Sunnis not to be frustrated by a constitutional referendum, saying they'll get another chance to make their voices heard during December elections.

In London, US secretary of state Ms Condoleezza Rice predicted the charter was likely to pass, although she stressed she did not know the outcome for certain.

Initial estimates of overall turnout yesterday were 61 per cent, election officials said. The Constitution's apparent victory was muted, though, by the prospect that the result might divide the country further. US President Mr Bush congratulated Iraqis on the vote and said the new Constitution was as a victory for opponents of terrorism. "The vote today in Iraq is in stark contrast to the attitude, the philosophy and strategy of Al-Qaida, their terrorist friends and killers," Mr Bush said. Rejection appeared highly unlikely after initial vote counts showed that a majority supported the Constitution in two of the four provinces that Sunni Arab opponents were relying on to defeat it. Opponents needed to get a two-thirds "no" vote in three of those provinces. They may have reached the threshold in Anbar and Salahuddin, but Diyala and Ninevah provinces appeared to have supported the document by a wide margin.

Bush lauds vote

WASHINGTON, Oct. 16. — President George W Bush today said Iraqis' vote on a new Constitution was as a victory for opponents of terrorism. "The vote today in Iraq is in stark contrast to the attitude, the philosophy and strategy of Al-Qaida, their terrorist friends and killers," Mr Bush said as he arrived at the White House after a weekend at the Camp David retreat. Mr Bush congratulated Iraqis for successfully completing the balloting, saying that by all indications the turnout and Sunni participation was greater than in the last election earlier this year, and that there was less violence. — AP

The latter three have Sunni majorities but also powerful Shi'ite and Kurdish communities, which made them focal points for the political battle.

In Diyala, 70 per cent supported the referendum, 20 per cent opposed it, said Mr Adil Abdel-Latif, the head of the election commission in Diyala. The result came from a first count of the approximately 400,000 votes cast. At least one more count was being conducted to confirm the votes, which would then be sent to Baghdad, where results from all provinces are being collected for final confirmation. According to a vote count from 275 of Ninevah's 300 polling stations, about 326,000 people supported the constitution and 90,000 opposed it, said Mr Abdul-Ghani Ali Yehya, spokesman for the election commission in the province's capital, Mosul. Ballots from the remaining 25 stations were still being brought to the central counting centre, he said. A nationwide majority "yes" vote is assured by the widespread support of the Shi'ites, who make up 60 per cent of Iraq's estimated 27 million people.

61 per cent vote in referendum

Six civilians injured in attack on polling stations; three Iraqi soldiers die in blast

Atul Aneja

MANAMA: More than 61 per cent of Iraqis who were registered to vote in Saturday's constitutional referendum cast their ballots, Electoral Commission sources said in Baghdad on Saturday. Voters thronged polling stations throughout the day amid tight security and a virtual ban on vehicular traffic. An estimated 15.5 million voted on the charter, according to the sources.

Even though a large section of the country's Sunni community opposed the draft Constitution, significant numbers from the community voted on the charter, according to reports. The community can reject the Constitution if it musters a two-thirds majority against it in any three provinces of Iraq. Sunnis are in majority in four provinces.

Sistani call

Leading Sunni leader Saleh al Mutlaq was quoted as saying that Sunnis should reject the draft Constitution as it would lead to the country's partition. On the contrary, the majority Shias and Kurds are hoping to have the Constitution approved. Iraq's top Shia spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani on Friday asked voters to participate and declared voting a religious duty.

Three Iraqi soldiers were killed when a roadside bomb went off north of Baghdad. Guerrillas targeted an Iraqi military

convoy near the Iranian border east of Baqouba. Six civilians were injured when polling stations in Baghdad were attacked. A four-day public holiday has been declared and Government offices and schools have been closed. Iraq's borders have been closed to non-essential traffic.

The Election Commission declared that it had set up 6,000 polling stations across the country, including the troubled Anbar province.

AFP reports:

Celebratory gunfire broke out in several Baghdad neighbourhoods after polls closed.

"I think the majority (of all Iraqis) will vote yes," President Jalal Talabani had said after casting his ballot inside Baghdad's heavily-protected Green Zone.

In the country's second national vote since Saddam Hussein was toppled by U.S.-led invasion forces in April 2003, Iraqis were asked a single question: "Do you approve the draft Constitution of Iraq?"

However, under a deal hammered out on Wednesday, voters decided on what is effectively a partial Constitution since political leaders agreed that further revisions could be considered after new elections in December, in a bid to bring disaffected Sunnis on board. "Today we are in transition, we are about to attain political stability built on a constitutional foundation," Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari said.



SHADOW OF VIOLENCE: The shadows of Iraqi security forces are cast on a wall of referendum posters at a polling station in Kirkuk on Saturday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

Iraq votes amid eerie calm

Baghdad: In unexpected calm, millions of Iraqis voted on Saturday in a referendum on a new constitution that is designed to reshape the country after Saddam Hussein but which many fear may tear it further apart. Insurgents fought gunbattles with Iraqi and US forces in Ramadi, west of Baghdad, but throughout the capital and much of the rest of the country, voting appeared to go smoothly and securely, with polls set to close at 5 pm.

More than 15.5 million Iraqis were eligible to vote in the referendum, which asked them to say "Yes" or "No" to a new draft constitution proposed by parliament, a body dominated by Shi'ite Muslims and ethnic Kurds. Most Sunni Arabs shunned the ballot in January that elected the assembly.

Many Sunnis were turning out this time, however. Sunni insurgents threatened to attack the vote, but while mortars landed near a polling station in Baghdad, and several roadside bombs went off around the city and elsewhere, there was much less violence than the U.S. military said might be possible. It was in marked contrast to the elections in January, when guerrillas carried out more than a hundred attacks on the day, including suicide bombings, killing at least 40 people.

The run-up to the referendum saw a deepening of divisions among Iraq's ethnic and sectarian groups, leading some analysts to fear the constitution will reinforce the split between Sunni Arabs on one side and Shi'ites and Kurds on the other.



An Iraqi boy shows an ink-stained finger near a polling station in Baghdad

Most Sunni Arabs, the politically dominant community under Saddam, oppose the constitution, saying it provides too much power and influence to the Shi'ites and Kurds, giving them control over Iraq's rich oil reserves in the north and south. Others argue the constitution could bring the nation closer together, if more Sunni Arabs can be brought on board. Reuters

'Bush wanted to go beyond Iraq'

Washington: Two months before the invasion of Iraq, President George W Bush told Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain that he "wanted to go beyond Iraq" in dealing with the spread of illicit weapons and mentioned Saudi Arabia and Pakistan on a list of countries posing particular problems, according to notes taken by one of Blair's advisers cited in a new book.

Bush's comment, in a private telephone conversation on January 30, 2003, could be significant because it appeared to add Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to a list that previously had included public mentions only of Iraq, Iran and North Korea, which the president had called the "axis of evil". NYT News Service

France, USA warn UN action for Iran

Associated Press 15/10

PARIS, Oct. 14. — France and the USA urged Iran today to restart talks over its nuclear programme and warned that the option of referring Teheran to the UN Security Council for possible punishment remains open. US secretary of state Ms Condoleezza Rice said: "we strongly encourage Iran" to seek a diplomatic solution with France, Britain and Germany, which led European negotiations with Iran until it effectively broke off the talks in August. "The Iranians need to get involved in negotiations and restore the confidence of the international community that they are not trying to build a nuclear weapon," Ms Rice said after meetings with French President Mr Jacques Chirac and his foreign minister. The French leader and Rice agreed that for both Europe and the United States, the prospect of a nuclear-armed Iran is "unacceptable," Mr Chirac's spokesman Mr Jerome Bonafont said. Their meeting lasted 90 minutes. Mr Chirac said talks with Iran should continue, in close cooperation with Russia and the USA.

Pinter to continue anti-war campaign

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: Ignoring concerns about his health and making light of the bruises he suffered on his forehead in a fall earlier this week, Nobel laureate Harold Pinter on Friday vowed to continue his campaign against the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

Speaking hours after being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, the British playwright, his head still bandaged, called the invasion a "symbol of the attitude of Western democracies to the rest of the world", and warned that the world would "go down the drain" if policy-makers in Britain and America were allowed to get away with it.

Mr Pinter, who has been an outspoken critic of the British and U.S. foreign policies, especially in relation to Latin America, Afghanistan and Iraq, announced that he would use his acceptance speech at the Nobel Prize ceremony in Stockholm in December to speak out on the issue.

In his 45-minute speech, which he said would be the "longest" he has ever made, Mr Pinter proposed to deal with the "state of the world" as he saw it in the light of recent events in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"I intend to say whatever it is I think. I may well address the state of the world," he said.

Critics hailed the Nobel Academy's choice of Mr Pinter as

Acceptance speech to deal with the "state of the world" in the light of Iraq and Afghanistan

tribute to the global anti-war campaign of which he has been so much a part in recent years. He was in the forefront of the million-strong anti-war "march" held in London in February 2003 and has written several poems, articles and delivered lectures denouncing the invasion as a "bandit" act.

He has consistently attacked what he has described as the "free world's" contempt for freedoms of other peoples.

In a speech earlier this year after winning a prestigious literary award, Mr Pinter called the military attack on Iraq as "an act of blatant terrorism, demonstrating absolute contempt for the concept of international law.

"We have brought torture, cluster bombs, depleted uranium, innumerable acts of random murder, misery and degradation to the Iraqi people and call it 'bringing freedom and democracy to Middle East'. What we have unleashed is a ferocious and unremitting resistance, mayhem and chaos," Mr Pinter said after winning the Wilfred Owen award.

Saddam trial affords chance for easy conviction

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Oct. 14. — Iraqi authorities have chosen a little-known case to launch the prosecution of Saddam Hussein because it affords the best chance for a speedy conviction and because it gives the long-suppressed Shiite majority a first crack at the former Iraqi dictator. But the decision to push ahead with the trial, due to start on Wednesday in the capital's heavily guarded Green Zone, also carries some high risks for Iraq. The timing, four days after the contentious constitutional referendum, and the case itself may fuel fears among Sunni Arabs that the Shiite Muslims who now control Iraq are more interested in settling scores than in providing justice.

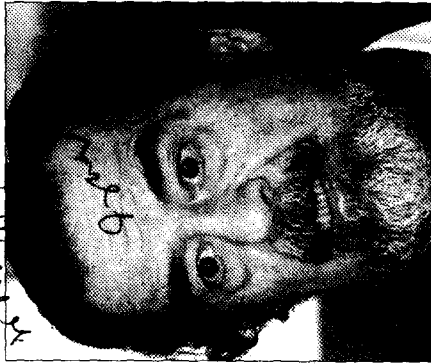
The trial focuses on the role of Saddam and seven allies in a 1982 massacre in Dujail, a heavily Shiite town 50 miles north of Baghdad. About 150 people were executed and up to 1,500 others imprisoned and tortured after Shiite militants there failed

to assassinate Saddam.

The toll pales against the thousands of Kurds who were gassed to death in Halabja in 1988 or with the thousands of Shi'ites slaughtered after a 1991 uprising or even with the countless Iraqis whose lives were ruined by Saddam's regime.

But a comprehensive trial covering all of Saddam's alleged crimes could take years to complete, especially in the midst of a bloody insurgency being waged largely by the ousted president's fellow Sunni Arabs. So Iraqi leaders and their American advisers who seem keen to avoid a repeat of the UN trial of former Yugoslav President Mr Slobodan Milosevic that has dragged on since 2002 chose this case. Mr Milosevic has skillfully manipulated his proceedings to win back a measure of support among his fellow Serbs, many of whom believe the trial is unfair.

Iraqi officials hope to avoid that, and are aiming for a speedy conviction likely followed by a death sentence. For months, Iraqi officials have hinted they



Saddam Hussein

have seized documents tying Saddam directly to the massacre. "The Dujail case is the easiest to put together as far as evidence-gathering and preparation is concerned," one of the judges on the Iraqi Special Tribunal said. "There are documents that have been seized and verified concerning the case." His identity, and those of others on the tribunal, are being kept secret to deter reprisals by Saddam loyalists or other insurgents.

Defence team to challenge tribunal

LONDON, Oct. 14. — Saddam Hussein's lawyers plan to challenge the legitimacy of the tribunal set to try him in Iraq and argue that he is immune from prosecution for alleged crimes he committed as president, one of his lawyers said. The tribunal "was drafted by an occupying power," said Abdel-Haq Alani, an Iraqi-born lawyer involved in Saddam's defense. "It has no right under international law to change the legal system of the occupied land." Saddam was feeling "upbeat" and "very defiant" about the trial, Mr Alani told the British Broadcasting Corp. in an interview aired yesterday night. The trial is scheduled to start next Wednesday in the heavily guarded Green Zone in Iraq's capital, Baghdad. The case centres on the role he and his co-defendants played in a 1982 massacre of 143 people in Dujail, a mainly Shiite Muslim town north of Baghdad, after a failed assassination attempt on Saddam. Mr Alani showed the BBC a list, signed by Saddam, of the 143 people killed, and said the leader had simply signed off on sentences handed down by the court system. "These people were tried and found guilty and sentenced to death according to the Iraqi criminal court then the president signed the death sentence," he said. The BBC said the legal team compared the signatures to US President Mr George W Bush's affirmations of criminals' death sentences when he was governor of Texas. Mr Alani told the network that the defense team also planned to argue that Saddam should be immune from prosecution. "He has full immunity under the prevailing Iraqi constitution," the lawyer said. "You can't have retroactive legislation that removes that immunity." The office of Mr Anthony Scrivener, a leading British lawyer, said today that he had been asked to help defend Saddam. Mr Scrivener, who once helped free four men wrongfully imprisoned as Irish Republican Army bombers, had not yet decided whether to take the job, said Mr Martin Hart, senior clerk in Scrivener's office. He was part of the legal team that freed the "Guildford Four," jailed for two 1975 pub bombings. — AP

Iraq amends charter, but sees no harmony

9B-8
15/10
WALEED IBRAHIM

BAGHDAD, OCTOBER 12

IRAQI leaders agreed to an amended draft constitution on Wednesday, but many Sunnis refused the compromise, three days before the text is put to a nation-wide referendum.

As ruling Shi'ites and Kurds formally announced concessions that persuaded a prominent Sunni political group to back the draft, a suicide bomber blew himself up among a crowd of army recruits at a base at Tal Afar, killing at least 30 people.

It was the second Al Qaeda attack in as many days in a town where US and Iraqi forces said they had flushed out insurgents in a major offensive last month. At least 24 people died on Tuesday.

In Baghdad, rebel groups and Islamist militants joined Sunni politicians to condemn the charter deal, partly brokered by US ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, that promises minor amendments to the constitution now and a broader review in the new year. Key issues for the Sunni Arabs were a clause emphasising the "unity" of Iraq, another its place in the Arab world and the use of Arabic in broadly autonomous Kurdistan.

The changes won the support of the Iraqi Islamic Party, one of several claiming to speak for the Sunni Arabs, who largely boycotted January's election for the current interim government.

"We agreed Iraqis should say 'Yes'," the party's general secretary Tareq al-Hashimi told a news conference. Sunni Vice-President Ghazi al-

Iran training Iraq bombers, says Britain

► LONDON: Britain has accused Iran's Revolutionary Guard of running training camps to teach Shi'ite militants in Iraq how to carry out roadside bomb attacks and make armour-piercing devices, according to newspaper reports. An unnamed defence source told the *Daily Mail* that "up to 10 Iraqis at a time are being taught their trade" in camps in Iran, Lebanon and perhaps Syria, "before returning and teaching a further 50 similar minded people." The source also said that British soldiers in Iraq have for the first time found two similar unexploded roadside bombs and are checking them for forensic evidence. REUTERS

Yawar also urged people to vote. "It was done in haste but it's the best we can do," he said.

It is unclear how the split in the ranks of their leaders will affect Sunni voters—about 20 per cent of the population.

One Islamist militant group declared al-Hashimi an "apostate". Abdul Salam al-Kubaisi of the powerful Muslim Clerics Association said, "Anyone supporting this constitution is merely ruining his reputation."

Few believe the charter's opponents can muster a blocking two-thirds majority against it. There have been complaints about delays that have prevented many from seeing the text; in Mosul, where a big Sunni "No" vote is possible, the governor's spokesman said: "Even the governorate has not received a copy. That seems a deliberate move to stop people reading the constitution." —Reuters

If Iran went nuclear...

SOME in India may raise the question why Iran should not go nuclear as Pakistan has done. Would its consequences be worse than in the case of Pakistan? After all, Iran is the only country which was attacked by weapons of mass destruction (poison gas) during the 1981-88 war and the entire international community sat on its hands without condemning Saddam Hussein. Iran also happens to be the only Shia country (till a Shia Iraq emerges) surrounded by Sunni countries on both sides. Shia-Sunni hostility goes back to the martyrdom of Imam Hussein 12 centuries ago. Saudi Arabia has already got long range Chinese missiles acquired in the mid-'80s and Iran had reason to fear that Pakistani nuclear warheads could be mated with Saudi missiles and pose a threat to it. In the last few years, Pakistan itself had acquired long range missiles from North Korea and China. There has been speculation that A.Q. Khan's proliferation included a fourth country believed to be an Arab one. Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been considered among the possibilities.

Therefore Iran could make a plausible case for nuclear weapons on the basis of security. It does not do so but protests strongly its fuel cycle programme is solely intended for peaceful purposes. The question then arises, in that case why did it not proceed on it openly, after notifying the IAEA? Iran persisted in its clandestine uranium enrichment efforts for 16 long years before they were discovered due to the disclosures of a defector. Therefore the Iranian assertions do not generate much credibility elsewhere in the world. The recent IAEA resolution of September 24 had only Venezuela voting against it, 34 out of 35 governors of the IAEA board either voted for the resolution or abstained.

What would be the consequences of Iran going nuclear? There are fears that Iran may fol-



It's the last thing India needs in an already nasty neighbourhood

K. SUBRAHMANYAM

low the Pakistani example. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto called the bomb the "Islamic bomb" and collected money for the programme from various Arab states. A.Q. Khan, in his confessional statement, said that he carried out only his Islamic obligation when proliferating to Iran and Libya. The newly elected Iranian President, Mohammad Ahmedinejad, during his visit to Turkey, talked of Iran making available enrichment technology to other Islamic countries.

Therefore there are two kinds of concerns among the international community arising out of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. The first is that Iran may become an Islamic proliferator. Second is that

the US military presence in the Gulf area to keep the Shia populations under control. A resource poor, nuclear Pakistan could only challenge the American and Western powers through jihadi terrorism. It would be a different story in the case of a nuclear Iran which is resource rich, especially in terms of hydrocarbons. Therefore the US and Middle East rulers have real concerns about the authority and influence which the Ayatollahs from Tehran could exercise over the entire Gulf area. Whether this is a real or imaginary fear, it is hard to tell. During Saddam Hussein's war on Iran, even the Shias of Iran fought loyally on Saddam Hussein's side and the Shias in the Gulf states did not stage any up-

Iranian nuclear weapons, besides stoking Saudi Arabian proliferation and an Israeli strategic countervailing response, may bring Tehran into conflict with Islamabad

nuclear weapon acquisition by Shia Iran will unleash a Sunni Arab backlash, particularly from Saudi Arabia. A nuclear Iran, if it ever manages to become one, will have a totally destabilising effect over West Asia. Already the US worries about the effect of a second Shia state emerging in Iraq and the impact of Iran on that state. Eastern Saudi Arabia, where the oil fields are located, and many of the Gulf States have a majority Shia population, although they all have Sunni rulers. The Sunni rulers of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states have kept a tight control over resentful Shia populations. They have depended upon the Gulf Cooperation Council and

rising — not even when Saddam Hussein brutally suppressed the Shias in Southern Iraq.

The Americans and westerners have not overlooked the fact that Pakistan was able to Talibanise Afghanistan, provide sanctuary for the Al-Qaida and carry on a campaign of terror in Kashmir only when it acquired a nuclear shield. At least in American and western memories, Iran's image as a state sponsoring terrorism goes back to 1979. Memories of Hizbullah and hostage taking in Lebanon strongly influence the Western perceptions. Israelis are confident that while the Pakistani bomb could be amenable to US influence and control, they

have mortal fear of Iranian nuclear capability. Perhaps, as highlighted by recent Pakistani attempts to woo Israel, the Israelis may feel justified in entertaining greater fears about Iran than of Pakistan.

There would also be fears that a nuclear Iran, with its expanded influence over Shia Gulf states, might exercise increased control over the Gulf oil even as the role of the Gulf oil in the energy security of major nations becomes more crucial. A nuclear Iran would be considered as being more capable of influencing the Islamic Central Asian republics. In a sense, Iran is the centre of gravity of a vaster oil resource base than Saudi Arabia has so far been.

Iranian nuclear weapons, besides stoking Saudi Arabian proliferation reaction and an Israeli strategic countervailing response, may bring Tehran into conflict with Islamabad. The anti-Shia sectarianism in Pakistan is notorious, with Shias being mowed down frequently at prayer meetings in mosques. On Afghanistan, there is Iran-Pakistan rivalry. Pakistan would lose much of its utility for the US and the West if a nuclear armed Iran were to dominate the Gulf.

This analysis will be valid only if Iran were to become nuclear. After 16 years of Pakistani assistance, Iran is reported to have produced uranium with 1.52 per cent enrichment. A.Q. Khan, in his confessional statement, revealed that Zia-ul-Haq, while permitting him to deal with Iran, instructed him to be cautious. The IAEA report would appear to indicate that Iran has spent a lot of time and effort for very limited results. If the US and IAEA were to insist on getting the evidence of A.Q. Khan, the level of expertise Iran has been able to build in regard to enrichment can be easily determined. The US appears to be less concerned about Iran's present nuclear capability than about subduing it politically. Otherwise it is difficult to explain their casual approach to getting A.Q. Khan's testimony before the IAEA.

Lawyer deaths cause Saddam trial delay

Mortar fire near venue

ASSOCIATED Press
Baghdad, November 28

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S trial resumed on Monday in a heavily guarded courtroom to the sound of mortar fire, with the former Iraqi President angrily complaining about having to walk up four flights of stairs in shackles under foreign guard. Former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark sat with the defence team.

After a short session in which the first testimony was read into the record, Chief Judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin adjourned the trial until December 5 to allow time to find replacements for two defence lawyers who were slain and another who fled Iraq after he was wounded.

Dressed in black trousers and a gray jacket, Saddam was the last of eight defendants to enter the courtroom, walking with a swagger. Once inside, Saddam had a heated exchange with

Amin, complaining of having to walk up the stairs in shackles. The judge said he would tell the police not to let that happen again. Saddam snapped: "You are the chief judge. I want you to order them. They are in our country. They are invaders."

Afterward, the videotaped testimony of former Intelligence officer Wadah Ismael al-Sheik, who investigated the assassination attempt and died of cancer on October 27, was shown. He said about 400 people were detained in Dujail, although only between seven and 12 gunmen took active part in the ambush of Saddam's convoy.

In Dujail, where Saddam is accused of ordering the killing of hundreds of Shiites in 1982, about 200 people took to the streets to denounce him. "A curse on Saddam and Baathism," said one banner as demonstrators held aloft pictures of their loved ones who were taken away and never seen again.



Saddam Hussein



AFP
An Iraqi boy protests with the picture of his brother who was allegedly killed on Saddam Hussein's orders in al-Dujail in 1982.

Foreign aid staff abducted

ASSOCIATED Press
Baghdad, November 28

AN AMERICAN citizen and two Britons were among four humanitarian workers reported kidnapped in Iraq on Sunday. Late night reports suggested the two British citizens could have been killed. The workers were snatched during an armed raid on a bus carrying Shiite Muslim pilgrims near a checkpoint south of Baghdad.

Four men and one woman, apparently of South Asian heritage and carrying United Kingdom passports, were later taken to Baghdad's Yarmouk hospital. Z Jafferti, the injured British woman, said, "We were just coming and all of a sudden heard shots and immediately got down." She said she had been ill and had come to Iraq to pray at the shrines to Imam Ali and Imam Hussein.

Briton Norman Kember is among the four aid workers abducted, the British government said on Sunday. His wife said he was representing a number of groups in the country and was a longtime peace activist.

Those close to the campaigner, who

is believed to be in his 70s, have reacted with shock at news of his abduction. An official at one of the peace groups where Kember sometimes works said he was unaware he was in Iraq, adding that he believed it was his first visit to the country. Hundreds of foreigners and Iraqis have been seized in Iraq in the past 18 months, prompting many aid agencies to leave the country.

Western diplomats have launched a hunt for the aid workers, but there is still no clue as to who had seized them or why. British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw stressed the British government would not pay a ransom if demanded. "We are working on the basis that it is indeed a kidnapping but we have no further confirmation," he told reporters at a Euro-Med summit in Barcelona after discussing the incident with his Iraqi counterpart Hoshiyar Zebari. "He has pledged every assistance from the Iraqi government," Straw said of Zebari.

This is the first kidnapping of foreigners in Iraq since Irish journalist Rory Carroll was abducted in October. Carroll was released after 36 hours.

Court hears first testimony as Saddam trial resumes

Case adjourned till December 5; Ramsey Clark joins defence team

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: The trial of former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and seven co-defendants resumed in Baghdad on Monday amid concerns about the security and fairness of the proceedings.

At least four defence attorneys failed to show up, though it was not clear which of the defendants they represent.

Mr. Hussein and his aides have been accused of ordering a massacre of Shias in the town of Dujail in 1982. They could be executed if found guilty. All the eight accused have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Defiant stance

Wearing a black suit and white shirt, the former President was the last to be called. All the eight defendants were seated behind specially prepared enclosures. As during his earlier appearances, Mr. Hussein expressed defiance.

He brought to the judge's attention that he had to climb four floors to the courtroom because the elevator was not working. He objected to the presence of "foreign guards" who escorted him up the stairs.

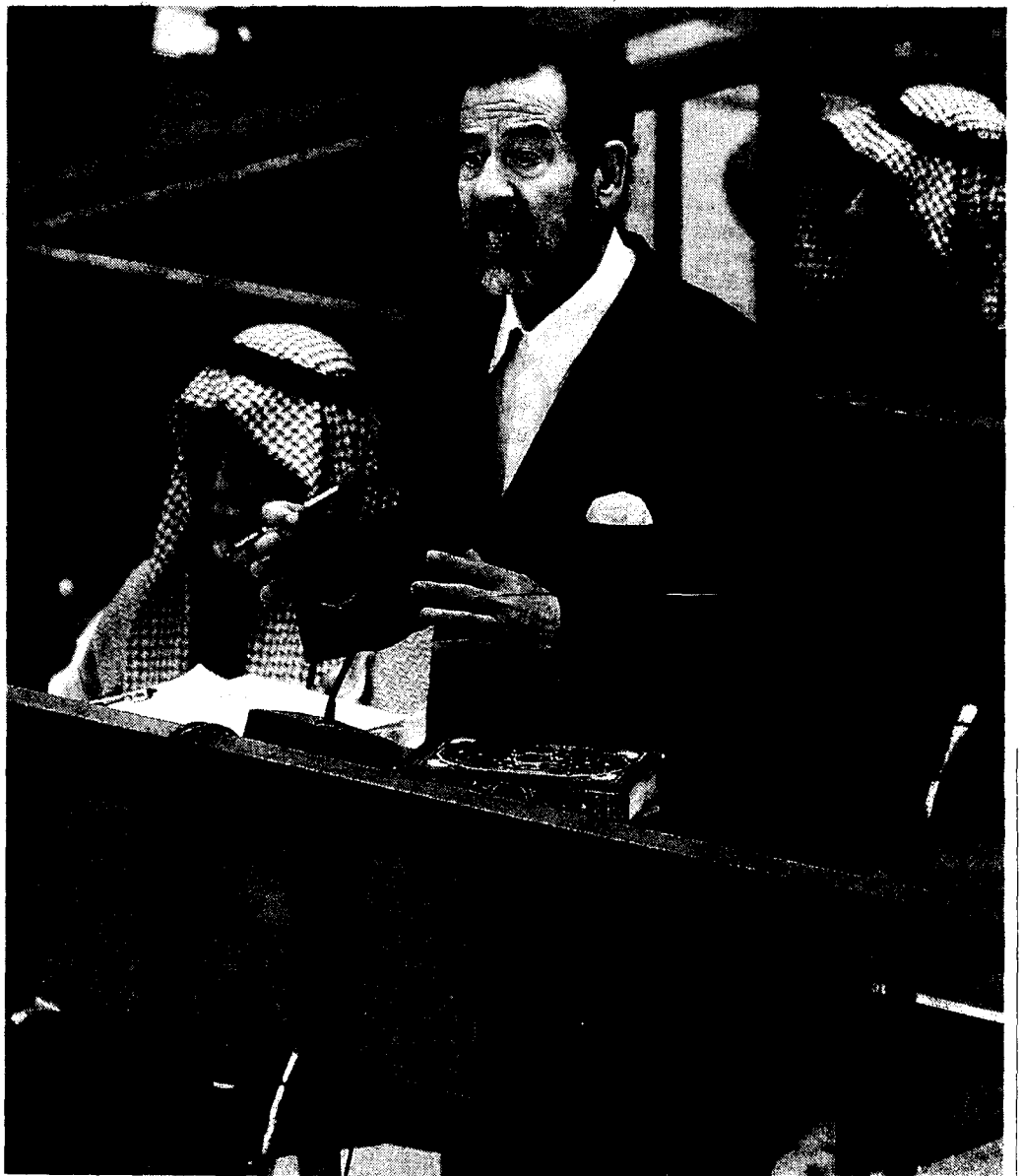
Engaging the judge in a number of heated exchanges, he said that his guards had taken away his pen, resulting in his inability to sign the necessary court papers.

"I will alert them to the problem," Judge Rizgar Mohammed Amin said in response.

Mr. Hussein shot back: "I don't want you to alert them! I want you to order them. They are in our country. You are an Iraqi, you are sovereign and they are foreigners, invaders, and occupiers."

The court also heard its first witness testimony, from a former Iraqi intelligence officer, who has subsequently died, on a pre-recorded video.

Wadah Ismael al-Sheik had investigated the 1982 assassination attempt on Mr. Hussein's life, which led to the alleged massacre in Dujail. In his testimony, which was taped before he died of cancer, Sheikh alleged



IN THE DOCK: Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein at his trial in Baghdad on Monday. Former head of Mr. Hussein's Revolutionary Court Awad Hamed al-Bandar (left) and former Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan are also seen. - PHOTO: REUTERS

that around 400 persons were arrested after the ambush.

Families were rounded up and taken to Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, a day after the attack, and a year later shifted to another detention centre, he said. He also accused former Iraqi Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan of ordering the destruction of orchards where the assailants

had apparently hidden at the time of attack. The trial has been adjourned till December 5.

Meanwhile, the defence team was strengthened with the inclusion of former U.S. Attorney-General Ramsey Clark, who flew in from the Jordanian capital Amman. Regarded as a strong critic of the trial, he said, "A fair trial in this case is absolutely im-

perative for historical truth."

Hours before the trial resumed, Mr. Hussein's supporters and detractors took to the streets.

In the former President's hometown of Tikrit, a large number of people came out in support of Mr. Hussein. But in Dujail, a crowd of around 200 persons called for his execution.

How India ^{H&I} averted IAEA ^{26/11} vote on Iran

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, November 25

THE GOVERNMENT feels the consensus reached in Vienna not to push for a vote on Iran's nuclear issue has opened a "window of opportunity" and provided a vital diplomatic space for the EU 3 and Iran to re-engage in negotiations. Official sources said Iran was "amenable" to suggestions that if its right to enrich fuel was conceded, it could "offshore" or "out-source" some of the actual enrichment process.

This is part of the deal the EU-3 (Britain, France and Germany), with active support from the US, Russia and China, will begin to negotiate with Iran in early December, the sources said on Friday.

"Extremely relieved and very happy" that a vote on Iran's nuclear issue had been averted at the International Atomic Energy Agency, India credited its intense diplomatic efforts as a crucial factor in preventing a "divisive" vote in Vienna on Thursday. Not only has it given the government breathing space vis-à-vis the Left parties, not referring Iran to the UNSC will stabilise the global energy scenario.

Sources said India's "tremendous diplomatic efforts" and a series of meetings had helped stave off the vote and averted a potentially "tense" situation in the neighbourhood. Indian officials met representatives from the US, Russia, the EU-3, Iran, China and South Africa to ensure that no vote was resorted to.

A UNSC referral could have led Iran to walk out of the NPT, expel IAEA inspectors and begin uranium enrichment, adding to proliferation dangers in India's immediate vicinity.



Iran likely to start nuclear enrichment, say diplomats

LOUIS CHARBONNEAU & MARK HEINRICH

VIENNA, NOVEMBER 25

IRAN is pushing ahead with plans to enrich uranium at its underground plant in Natanz in defiance of international pressure to give up sensitive nuclear technology, diplomats and intelligence sources said on the sidelines of this week's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

A four-page confidential intelligence report cited a "senior Iranian foreign ministry source" as saying that on October 24 the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Larijani, called an emergency meeting of current and former members of Iran's nuclear negotiating team.

"One of the cardinal issues raised at the meeting was the timing for activating the centrifuge site at Natanz. Former and current negotiating teams weighed the various options for the timing of the Natanz

Wisdom prevailed at IAEA, says Rafsanjani

TEHRAN: Former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told worshippers at Friday prayers here that the UN nuclear watchdog's latest statement on Iran's disputed atomic programme was a step in the right direction but still had elements of "harassment". "This time a kind of wisdom, precaution, and an avoidance of adventurism prevailed over the IAEA meeting," Rafsanjani said. He, however, made no reference to the Russian proposal. "We will never accept being bullied and it is not worth you bullying us," he said.



REUTERS

operation," the report said.

Such plans could jeopardise a Russian attempt to head off a confrontation over Iran, through a proposal under which Tehran would maintain a civilian nuclear programme but transfer enrichment to Russia under a joint venture.

But a senior diplomat said that the demand that Iran give up enrichment "is on very shaky legal grounds. As far as we can tell, the Iranians are not willing to give up enrichment," he said. "It's a legal activity as

long as it's been declared and we can't just go in there and tell Iran not to do that. We don't hold many cards."

The IAEA board agreed on Thursday it was better to explore Russia's compromise plan than to vote on referring Tehran to the UN Security Council. However, western nations on the IAEA board would be likely to push for an immediate referral to the Council if Iran moved openly toward enriching uranium.

—Reuters

Iran nuke issue blows over as US shifts stand

Left Embarrassed With China's Support For US

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 25 NOVEMBER

PM boss Prakash Karat has reasons to feel relieved. With his pet hate target, the US, opting not to lobby for an immediate referral of Iran's suspicious nuclear activities to the UN Security Council, Mr Karat can now suspend the Left's confrontation with the Manmohan Singh government on the issue.

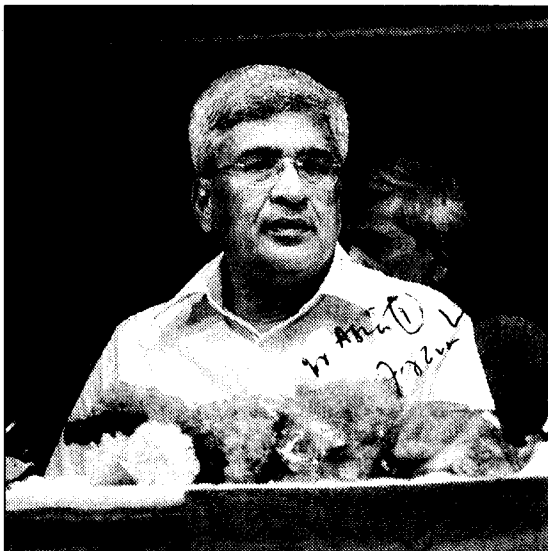
India, which has been opposing the issue being referred to the Security Council, has been maintaining that Tehran will have to meet the non-proliferation obligations. Mr Karat and his friends in the Left, who frowned at the Indian government during the Pokhran tests, have been organising meetings in various parts of the country in support of Tehran's nuclear sovereignty.

The decision at Vienna to give time for new Russian diplomacy must have come as a relief for the Left as they had warned of "dangerous consequences" if India voted against Iran. A vote on the issue would have required Mr Karat to vote the talk.

This would have landed Mr Karat and his friends in trouble as their support for Iran's nuclear ambitions has not been finding support outside the Left-SP circles. Mr Karat has also been under attack for communalising foreign policy. It be recalled that he had attended a Lucknow conference, which

tried to introduce a community angle into the Iran issue.

More embarrassing for Mr Karat and his friends is the success of the US in enlisting China's support for its proposal for hauling Iran before the Security



Council. The US has warned that referral would happen soon if Tehran did not meet its non-proliferation obligations.

Talks on a Russian proposal to allow Iran to conduct uranium enrichment — in Russia and not in Iran in order to keep Tehran from obtaining nuclear technology crucial in making nuclear weapons — will now take centre-stage.

EU-Iran talks collapsed in August when Iran broke a suspension of uranium conversion, the first step in making enriched uranium that is fuel for nuclear power reactors but can also be the explosive core of atom bombs.

EU has warned Iran against making any "unilateral moves" to increase its atomic activities.

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UPA relief follows IAEA move on Iran

W. A. Singh
Newspaper News Service

25/11/05

NEW DELHI, Nov. 24. — Reeling under attacks by its Left allies on the Iran nuclear issue, the Congress-led UPA government today heaved a sigh of relief after a crucial meeting of the IAEA's board of governors in Vienna decided not to go for a vote while agreeing to allow more time for talks and diplomacy with Teheran over a Russian compromise proposal.

The Russian proposal would allow Iran to conduct nuclear enrichment in Russia, instead of doing it at home.

Iran has so far not reacted positively to the proposal — perceived to be a sort of a middle ground between the tough stands taken by Teheran and Washington — but discussions are expected to start in the first week of December on this.

From the UPA's point of view, it was a reprieve for the Manmohan Singh government, given the Left's opposition to the US-led position against Teheran. In the event of a vote on the issue leading to a referral of Iran to the United Nations Security Council for sanctions, the UPA government would have faced a tough task of balancing its foreign policy with its domestic compulsions.

Left parties declared their intention to take on the government in Parliament if it sided with the West on the Iran issue.

Iranian President suffers new rebuff

Tehran, Nov. 23 (Reuters): Iran's parliamentarians threw out President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's third nominee for oil minister today, blowing the world's fourth biggest crude producer into uncharted constitutional waters.

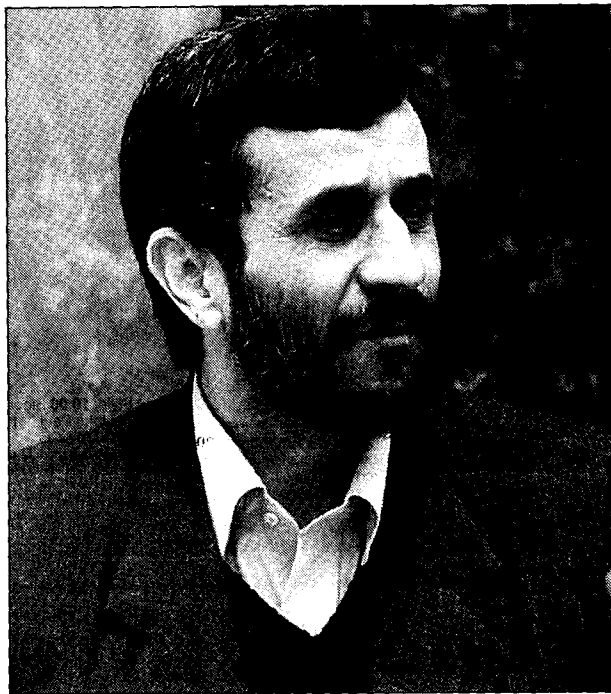
Iran's oil ministry, the mainstay of the economy, has been rudderless since August and parliamentary hostility to the new President has exposed bitter rifts in the conservative camp.

Several analysts and lawmakers have speculated the Guardian Council, Iran's constitutional watchdog, may have to take the helm. The President is also at odds with the UN nuclear watchdog over Iran's uranium conversion programme.

"This vote of no-confidence should carry a message to Ahmadinejad about his method of choosing his oil ministers," conservative lawmaker Ali Riaz said after the vote.

Out of 254 parliamentarians who cast votes, only 77 voted in favour of Mohsen Tasalloti, a veteran of the petrochemicals industry. Lawmakers heartily congratulated each other when the results of the vote were read out. Lawmakers accused Ahmadinejad of only consulting with a small number of his close allies instead of with them.

"Ahmadinejad has a slogan



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks to lawmakers in the parliament in Tehran. (Reuters)

of co-operation between parliament and government, but it would be better if he actually conferred with his lawmakers," Sattar Hedayatkhan said in the debate before the vote.

The failure to select an oil minister has severe economic implications for the second biggest exporter in the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries which derives 80 per cent of its export earnings from hydrocarbons.

"This delay is wasting Iran's huge oil and gas assets and damaging its economy," said Manouchehr Takin from the Centre for Global Energy Studies.

Conservative parliamentarian Kazem Jalali said a competent manager had to be found soon.

"The current situation weakens our stance in Opec and will diminish our chances of co-operation with foreign companies because it indicates instability," he said.

Lawmakers rejected Ahmadinejad's first nominee in August. The second candidate pulled out of the race earlier this month. Ahmadinejad made oil a keystone of his election campaign in June and has, therefore, been keen to appoint an ideologically close comrade as oil minister.

Iranian Parliament passes law to curtail U.N. inspections

22/11
H. Aslan
2005

Vote comes days ahead of IAEA meet on Teheran's nuclear programme

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: In a show of defiance, the Iranian Parliament has backed a move to begin uranium enrichment and end surprise inspections by the United Nations if Teheran's case was referred to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

The vote where 183 out of 197 Iranian law makers backed the proposal four days ahead of a crucial meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) where Iran's case would be discussed.

The resolution turns earlier diplomatic statements of defiance by Iranian officials into legislation that the Government would necessarily have to follow.

Pressure campaign

The Council of Guardians — a powerful body that can veto a parliamentary decision, will now review the Parliament's position.

Observers, however, say that it is likely that the Council will formalise its support for the Parliament's vote on Tuesday, two days ahead of the IAEA meeting in Vienna.

The United States has been leading a campaign to pressurise Iran, saying that there were strong suspicions that Teheran was developing nuclear weapons.

Iran has denied the charge, and has stressed that it was harnessing atomic power to augment its energy resources.

Two recent developments have also been cited to arm twist Iran. First, Iran's announcement that it had started the preliminary enrichment of a second batch of uranium at its facility in



FUELLING A CONTROVERSY: Iranian students stage a demonstration to support the country's nuclear programme, in front of the Natanz Uranium Enrichment Facility, 322 km south of Teheran recently. — PHOTO: AP

Isfahan has gone against it. Second, its declaration to the IAEA that it had received unsolicited information from the A.Q. Khan nuclear smuggling network has also had a negative impact.

There has been a spate of media reports suggesting that the information that was received related to the manufacture of the explosive core of a nuclear bomb, thereby indicating Iran's

possible interest in nuclear weapons.

Analysts point out that Iran is being pressurised mainly to endorse a Russian proposal, which would allow it to carry out the

main part of enrichment on Russian soil. The U.S. along with Germany, France and Britain has backed the proposal, and the U.S. has exhorted Iran to accept the compromise deal.

Iraqis' right to rule themselves

110-11 ✓
2/11

The U.S.-led occupation of Iraq is resulting in the murder and torture of civilians – and a broad resistance movement.

Haifa Zangana

THE PHOTOGRAPH of an elderly Iraqi carrying the burned body of a child at Fallujah, widely shown during the chemical weapons controversy of recent days, is almost a copy of an earlier one that Iraqis remember – from Halabja in March 1988. Both children were victims of chemical weapons: the first killed by a dictator who had no respect for democracy and human rights, the second by U.S. troops, assisted by the British, carrying the colourful banner of those principles while sprinkling Iraqis with white phosphorus and depleted uranium.

The Fallujah image is emblematic of an unjust occupation. We read last week that U.S. troops were “stunned by what they found” during a raid on a Ministry of Interior building: more than a hundred prisoners, many of whom “appeared to have been brutally beaten” and to be malnourished. There were also reports of dead bodies showing “signs of severe torture.” Hussein Kamel, the Deputy Interior Minister, was “stunned” too. This feigned surprise is a farce second only to the WMD lie.

While the U.S. and British governments have spent the 30 months of occupation arguing for the legality of chemical weapons and the “usefulness” of torture to extract information, Iraqis have been engaged in a different struggle: to survive the increasingly harsh occupation, and to define democracy and human rights accordingly. Experiences of collective punishment, random arrest and killing are the defining features.

On October 16, for example, a group of adults and children gathered around a burned Humvee on the edge of Ramadi. There was a crater in the road, left by a bomb that had killed five U.S. soldiers and two Iraqi soldiers the previous day. Some of the children were playing hide and seek, and others laughing while pelting the vehicle with stones, when a US F-15 fighter jet fired on the crowd. The U.S. military said subsequently it had killed 70 insurgents in air strikes, and knew of no civilian deaths.

Among the “insurgents” killed were six-year-old Muhammad Salih Ali, who was buried in a plastic bag after relatives collected what they believed to be parts of his body; four-year-old Saad Ahmed Fuad; and his eight-year-old sister, Haifa, who had to be buried without one of her legs as her family were unable to find it.

American forces increasingly use air

strikes to reduce their own casualties. They also work with Iraqi forces on search-and-destroy missions to retaliate after a successful attack on their troops, or to intimidate the population ahead of a U.S.-timetabled political process. Most Iraqis are indifferent to the political timetable imposed by the occupiers – from the nominal handover of sovereignty to the bizarre three months of sectarian and ethnic wrangling about the interim government and the declaration of a “yes” vote on the draft constitution by Condoleezza Rice within hours of the ballot boxes closing. They think the whole process is intended to divert their attention from the main issues: the occupation, corruption, pillaging of Iraq’s resources, and the interim government’s failure on human rights.

Thousands have been kept for more than a year without charge or trial, including the writer Muhsin al-Khafaji, who was arrested in May 2003.

Women are taken as hostages by U.S. soldiers to persuade fugitive male relatives to surrender or confess to terrorist acts. Sarah Taha al-Jumaily, 20, from Fallujah, was arrested twice: on October 8 she was accused of being the daughter of Musab al-Zarqawi, despite her father, a member of a pan-Arab party, having been detained by U.S. troops for more than two months; and on October 19 she was arrested and accused of being a terrorist. Hundreds of people demonstrated, and workers staged a general strike, to demand her release. The Interior Ministry states that 122 women remain detained, charged with the novel crime of being “potential suicide bombers.”

Armed resistance is in accordance with a 1978 U.N. general assembly resolution that reaffirmed “the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence ... from ... foreign occupation by all available means, particularly armed struggle.” The Iraqi National Foundation Congress (INFC), an umbrella group of parties and civil society organisations, is leading political resistance. There is also civil and community resistance, involving mosques, women’s organisations, human-rights groups and unions.

Most Iraqis believe that they have a right to more than a semblance of independence. The lesson history taught us in Vietnam, that stubborn national resistance can wear down the most powerful armies, is now being learned in Iraq. – ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

(Haifa Zangana is a novelist and former prisoner of Saddam’s regime.)

THE HINDU

21 NOV 2005

Increasing pressure to withdraw

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani's assessment that foreign troops could start withdrawing by the middle of 2006 might appear plausible at the surface. The occupation forces could pull out of pockets that have been largely left undisturbed by the insurgency. However, if Mr. Talabani meant that an end to the occupation was in sight, he is likely to be proved wrong. The Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom, which contribute the bulk of the military forces, have not changed their basic position on withdrawal: their troops will leave only when Iraqis are ready to take charge of security. At this point, just one of the 80 battalions the post-Saddam army plans to raise is up to full strength. While soldiers of this army have taken part in counter-insurgency operations, they have never acted independently. In every major action, they have provided little more than marginal support to the foreign forces. Given this situation, it was mystifying that British Prime Minister Tony Blair endorsed Mr. Talabani's assessment. There is no guarantee that, once the foreign forces leave, resistance fighters will not rush into the Shia-dominated southern regions, which have remained relatively quiet. The insurgents, who have held their own against highly skilled military formations, will not hesitate to take on poorly trained and ill-motivated Iraqi troops. Recent revelations that Shia personnel of the Interior Ministry ran a clandestine jail where they tortured Sunnis will further infuriate the resistance fighters. Sunni hatred for the Shias has already manifested itself in several bomb attacks, such as the November 18 strike that killed more than 75 people.

Although critics of President George Bush are aware that civil war could break out in Iraq once foreign forces withdraw, they have ratcheted up the pressure on the administration to take such a course. Senate Democrats were not able to push through a resolution requiring the administration to set a deadline for a withdrawal. That hardly counted as a victory for Mr. Bush since the Republicans blocked their rivals only by passing a resolution of their own. From now on, the administration will have to provide quarterly reports that will help the Senate assess whether conditions are favourable for a withdrawal. With Congressional elections due in 2006, the calls for a pull-out are likely to get stronger — especially as a majority of Americans are now opposed to the war, according to public opinion polls. The Arab League has provided the Bush administration with a faint glimmer of hope: it intends to convene a meeting in Cairo of all the Iraqi factions in a desperate attempt to evolve a consensus. The pan-Arab body pulled off a near miracle 16 years ago when it persuaded all the factions involved in the Lebanon civil war to sign on to the Taif Agreement. However, the ball game in Iraq seems strikingly different.

25 killed in Iraq 244 ambushes

AGENCIES
London, November 20

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A BRITISH soldier was killed in a roadside bomb in Basra, southern Iraq, on Sunday while on Saturday an ambush on a joint US-Iraqi patrol northeast of Baghdad left 15 civilians, eight insurgents and a US Marine dead.

A ministry of defence spokesman in London said they were investigating the circumstances of Sunday's attack and could not give any further details until the next of kin had been informed.

Since the conflict started in 2003, 98 British soldiers have died in Iraq.

Basra has enjoyed relative calm compared to central Iraq where insurgents are waging a campaign of suicide bombings and shootings, but it has seen an increase in violence in the last few months.

Saturday's ambush on a joint US-Iraqi patrol northeast of Baghdad began with an improvised explosive device detonating next to a Marine's vehicle in Haditha, the US command said.

Fifteen Iraqi civilians were also killed by the blast, which was followed by an insurgent attack with small arms fire, the statement said. "Iraqi army soldiers and Marines returned fire killing eight insurgents and wounding another," the statement said.

At a US-backed reconciliation conference in Cairo, Sunni leaders are pressing ahead with demands that the Shia-majority government agree to a timetable for withdrawing all foreign troops. In Washington, US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on ABC's 'This Week' that commanders' assessments will determine the pace of any military drawdown.

US House defeats call to exit Iraq

ASSOCIATED Press
Washington, November 19

'We'll stay till we win'

THE REPUBLICAN-CONTROLLED House spurned calls for an immediate pullout of troops from Iraq in a vote hastily arranged by the GOP that Democrats vociferously denounced as politically motivated.

"To cut and run would invite terrorism into our backyards, and no one wants to see troops fighting terrorism on American soil," Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., said on Friday night after the House, as planned, rejected a GOP-written resolution for immediate withdrawal. The vote, held as lawmakers rushed toward a two-week Thanksgiving break, was 403-3.

Democrats accused Republicans of orchestrating a political stunt that prohibited thoughtful debate on the issue, and nearly all voted against the measure.

That included Rep. John Murtha of Pennsylvania, the Democratic hawk whose call on Thursday for pulling out troops set off a nasty, personal debate over the war. "Our military is suffering. The future of our country is at risk. We cannot continue on our present course," Murtha said.

"Congress in strong, bipartisan fashion rejected the call to cut and run," White House spokesman Scott McClellan, travelling with Bush in Asia, said in a statement. Earlier on Friday, the president called an immediate troop withdrawal "a recipe for disaster."

Murtha, a Marine veteran decorated for combat service in Vietnam and widely respected among his peers, issued his call for a troop withdrawal at a news conference on Thursday. In little more than 24 hours, Hastert and Republicans decided to put the question to the House. Republicans

President Bush vowed on Saturday that US troops will stay there 'until we have achieved the victory that our brave troops have fought for.' Surrounded by troops at this base 48 miles south of the Korean demilitarized zone, Bush said, "America will never run. We will stand and fight and we will in the war on terror."

USA Today, Osan, S Korea

hoped to place Democrats in an unappealing position — either supporting a withdrawal that critics said would be precipitous or opposing it and angering voters who want an end to the conflict. Democrats said it was a sham and quickly decided to vote against the resolution in an attempt to drain it of significance.

At one point in the emotional debate, Rep. Jean Schmidt, R-Ohio, told of a phone call she received from a Marine colonel. "He asked me to send Congress a message — stay the course. He also asked me to send Congressman Murtha a message — that cowards cut and run, Marines never do," Schmidt said. Murtha is a 37-year Marine veteran and ranking Democrat on the defence appropriations sub-committee.

Democrats booed and shouted her down — causing the House to come to a standstill. Rep. Harold Ford, D-Tenn., charged across the chamber's centre aisle screaming that Republicans were making personal attacks. "You guys are pathetic! Pathetic!" yelled Rep. Marty Meehan, D-Mass. Democrats gave Murtha a standing ovation as he entered the chamber and took his seat.

Iran begins processing second batch of uranium

Teheran move may complicate the issue at Vienna meet

Atul Aneja

19/11
DUBAI: As the countdown for the crucial nuclear talks in Vienna begins, Iran has said that it had started processing a second batch of uranium at its facility in Isfahan.

"We had informed the U.N. watchdog that Iran wanted to process a new batch of uranium and we have started it," the semi-official Mehr news agency quoted Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Al Larijani as saying.

Iran's decision to resume the initial phase of uranium enrichment in August halted its comprehensive dialogue with the European Union.

Iran subsequently said that it wished to resume talks with the

E.U. Analysts point out that Iran's latest decision could complicate efforts to defuse tensions over its nuclear enrichment programme.

The United States has led an international campaign suggesting that Iran is seeking atomic weapons under the cover of a civilian nuclear energy programme.

Nuclear feedstock

Prior to Mr. Larijani's statement, the Iranian English daily *Teheran Times* reported that Iran had informed the IAEA about its intent to carry out the enrichment of a second batch of uranium at Isfahan.

The daily, however, said the processing of around 50 tonnes

of uranium would begin only on November 26 — a day after the conclusion of the two-day IAEA board members' meeting in Vienna.

Iran converts uranium into uranium hexafluoride gas at Isfahan, which is the feedstock for producing enriched uranium. Low enriched uranium is used for generating electricity, but the material can be used for weapons when enriched to a high degree of purity.

Meanwhile, diplomacy ahead of the IAEA meeting on November 24 has gathered momentum. Nicholas Burns, the U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, was set to hold a London with officials from France, Britain and

to Aslan
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19-19

55 killed in suicide attack on mosques

Baghdad apartment collapses after car bombs explode outside prominent hotel nearby; six killed

Atul Aneja

DUBAI: At least 55 persons were killed and scores injured when suicide bombers attacked two packed Shia mosques, raising fears about the deepening sectarian divide inside Iraq.

The bombers blew themselves up during Friday prayers when hundreds of worshippers had assembled. The explosions took place in Khanaqin in north-eastern Iraq. The town is close to the Iranian border and has a mixed population of Shias and Kurds. The two communities dominate the new U.S.-backed Iraqi Government, while the Sunnis, who have traditionally held power, have faced political marginalisation.

More casualties feared

"Two suicide bombers wearing explosive belts walked into the Greater and the Smaller Khanaqin mosques and blew themselves up," Diyala Provincial Council leader Ibrahim Hasan al-Bajalan was quoted as saying. Mr. Bajalan said the blast had destroyed the mosques completely and expressed fears that more bodies may be found under the rubble.

Earlier in the day, two car bombs exploded outside a prominent Baghdad hotel that has been popular with westerners. While the first vehicle smashed into the concrete security barrier, it was followed by another truck that tried to enter the hotel compound. While the explosions did not cause much damage to the hotel, they brought down a nearby apartment building where most of the casualties occurred. At least six persons were killed and 40 were injured.

Tensions between Sunnis and Shias have aggravated after U.S. security forces found 173 prisoners, mostly Sunnis, inside a building in an Interior Ministry building. Sunni leader Saleh Mutlaq alleged that the Shia-dominated Government was holding more than 1,100 prisoners at the Ministry, of which several had died due to torture.

AP reports:

At sunset, dozens of rescuers



ALL-ROUND DESTRUCTION: Rescuers and a U.S. military armoured vehicle gather at the site where two suicide car bombers detonated vehicles in Baghdad on Friday. — PHOTO: AP

were still digging through the rubble of the three-storey Grand Khanaqin Mosque. As the men dug, 12-year-old Sarkhel Akram collected copies of the Koran, then she kissed them and put them away.

The suicide attacker walked into the mosque and detonated himself in the middle of a group of people, said Ali Abdullah who

was in the congregation. He added that the suicide attacker's "flesh could be seen on the walls of the mosque after the explosion."

Troops attacked

Omar Saleh (73), said from his bed at Kalar Hospital that he was bowing in prayer when the bomb exploded. "The roof fell on us

and the place was filled with dead bodies".

Also on Friday, militants attacked U.S. and Iraqi troops in western Iraq, setting off gunbattles that left 32 militants dead, a U.S. military statement said.

One Marine and an Iraqi soldier suffered minor injuries during the attack. Most of the fighting took place around a

mosque in the centre of the town.

America's death toll rose Thursday as the U.S. military reported a U.S. Marine killed the day before in Haditha, 180 km northwest of Baghdad. An army soldier died on Thursday in a traffic accident near Beiji, 190 km north of Baghdad and a second soldier died in another acci-

dent near Balad, the command said.

In another setback for sectarian reconciliation, the leader of Iraq's largest Shia political party will not attend an Arab League meeting set for this weekend in Cairo to set the stage for a reconciliation conference of Iraqi groups, his spokesman said on Friday.

19 NOV 2005

THE HINDU

Iraq dogs Bush as he crosses Asia ^{Asia}

The U.S. President and his aides are busy trying to justify the war on Iraq. ^{new 10-11}

David E. Sanger

UNITED STATES President George W. Bush may have come to Asia determined to show its leaders that his agenda is far broader than Iraq and terrorism, but at every stop, and every day, Mr. Bush and his aides have been fighting a rearguard action to justify how the U.S. got into Iraq and how to get out.

On Friday morning, as Mr. Bush was meeting the leaders of Southeast Asia, his press secretary issued an unusually blistering statement responding to Republican John P. Murtha's call for a pullout from Iraq, declaring that Mr. Murtha, a Pennsylvania Democrat who had often backed Mr. Bush's military initiatives, was "endorsing the policy positions of Michael Moore and the extreme liberal wing of the Democratic Party."

On Thursday, standing with President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea, Mr. Bush leapt on a question about the charges that he had manipulated pre-war intelligence. "I expect there to be criticism, but when Democrats say that I deliberately misled the Congress and the people, that's irresponsible," he said, as Mr. Roh looked on silently.

On Friday morning, Mr. Roh's Defence Minister, Yoon Kwang-ung, announced that South Korea planned to withdraw about a third of its 3,200 troops from northern Iraq next year. While the step has been rumoured for two months, it was unclear why it was

announced while Mr. Bush was still in the country. But if Mr. Bush's aides were surprised about the timing, his hosts, both in South Korea and in Japan, have appeared surprised at Mr. Bush's tone, which has given them an unobstructed window into the growing debate in Washington about how the U.S. got into Iraq, and when it should get out.

"I think it has been a bit of a shock to everyone," said one long-time Japanese diplomat when Mr. Bush was in Kyoto, insisting on anonymity because he was not speaking for the Government. He noted that Mr. Bush had publicly thanked Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi for sending Japanese troops to Iraq in the face of overwhelming opposition in Japan. But he wondered whether "after the president leaves, there will be more and more questions about why we are there, too."

What Mr. Bush's Asian hosts have seen, however, is more than a vigorous defence of Iraq policy. For the first time, Mr. Bush and his aides have taken their critics by name, declared their motives to be entirely political, and suggested that their approach would give aid and comfort to the terrorists.

The statement by the White House spokesman, Scott McClellan, on Friday morning in response to Mr. Murtha, for example, declared that "the eve of an historic democratic election in Iraq is not the time to surrender to the terrorists."

"Nowhere does he explain how retreating from Iraq makes America safer," the statement continued. It did not address, however, the core of Mr. Murtha's argument: that the American troops have become a "catalyst for violence" and that they should be replaced with a "quick reaction force" in the Middle East intended to keep stability without entering the middle of the fray.

Three times so far since Mr. Bush left Washington on Monday, the White House has also issued detailed rebuttals on Iraq issues under the rubric "Setting the Record Straight." One was devoted to answering an editorial in *The New York Times* on pre-war intelligence, and two others responded to Democratic critics, quoting their own words about Iraq back to them, arguing that they, too, believed Saddam Hussein possessed illicit weapons.

Talking to reporters on Thursday, Dan Bartlett, the counsellor to the President who has played a central role in drafting many of the Iraq messages, said that Mr. Bush's decision to fight back — chiefly on the question of how he used pre-war intelligence — arose after he became concerned the debate was now at a tipping point. "In the last couple of weeks it has reached a critical mass, and we felt we had to respond," Mr. Bartlett said in Pusan which, 55 years ago, was a brutal battlefield front of another American war — one that took three years to come to a slogging armistice. "I think it's not only fair game for the

President to correct the record, I think it's his obligation," he said.

Mr. Bartlett insisted that the President was not trying to quash debate about Iraq. "What I think the President is saying is blowing the whistle on the difference between traditional dissent and give and take between two parties on a critical issue such as war and peace, and those that are again wilfully and knowingly saying something that happens not to be true," he said.

"We wouldn't engage in this type of discussion with Democrats if we didn't feel like it's one in which they've overreached," he added. "I do believe they've overreached this time."

But others around Mr. Bush are clearly concerned. One senior official said that inside the White House, there is now an active debate about whether Mr. Bush and his aides erred in not explicitly admitting to mistakes in how they conducted the war, the occupation, and the repeated efforts to train Iraqi troops.

"It's one of those things that get you either way," said the official, who insisted on anonymity because he was discussing internal White House debates. "If you open up a debate about what went right and what went wrong, there's no end of it. But if you take the position that we took — that we're looking to the future — you have to demonstrate progress." — **New York Times News Service**

The New York Times

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Iran Is Reported to Continue Nuclear Activity

By RICHARD BERNSTEIN
Published: November 18, 2005

18/11/05 in Asia (Iran)

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BERLIN, Nov. 17 - Iran has resumed converting uranium despite European requests that it abstain from such work pending a new round of negotiations on its nuclear activities, a diplomat close to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna said Thursday.

The reported resumption of activity, at a nuclear plant in Isfahan, comes days after Iran appeared to rebuff a European proposal that would allow Iran do some converting of uranium into a natural gas at the plant provided the product made there would be sent outside the country, presumably to Russia, for the final processing that would allow it to be used to generate power.

On Saturday, Iran's nuclear chief, Gholamreza Aghazadeh, said in Tehran that "Iran's nuclear fuel must be produced inside the country," according to news agency reports.

The Europeans, who have been trying to ensure that Iran does not produce nuclear weapons, had asked the Iranians to cease conversion work until negotiations about the offer had taken place.

"It's not forbidden," the diplomat close to the atomic energy agency said, meaning that the Iranian converting of uranium does not violate the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The diplomat spoke on condition of anonymity because of the delicacy of the pending negotiations. "It's significant from the point of view of posturing just at the point of getting back to negotiations, and that has antagonized the Europeans."

Iran maintains that it has the right to enrich the uranium it mines for energy-producing purposes. The conversion work at Isfahan produces a precursor of the uranium-fluoride gas

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that is a central part of the process of creating nuclear fuel, which could be used either for building bombs or generating electricity.

Iran says that its nuclear activities are intended only for peaceful uses, but the United States and many European countries contend that its goal is to produce nuclear weapons.

Next week the International Atomic Energy Agency is scheduled to meet and consider an American-supported proposal to refer Iran's nuclear activities to the United Nations Security Council for possible penalties.

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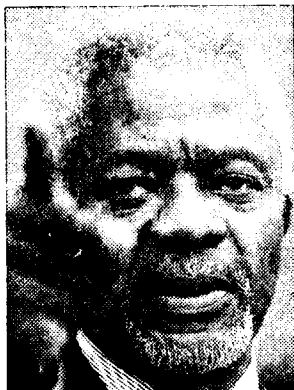


INTERNATIONAL
Where Statecraft Is
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Annan lands in Iraq

ST-91
10/11

Associated Press



The UN chief has given a call for national reconciliation. AFP

BAGHDAD, Nov. 12. — UN chief Mr Kofi Annan called today for national reconciliation, arriving for a surprise visit as a car bomb killed eight weekend shoppers and injured 21 in a Shi'ite neighbourhood of Baghdad. Shi'ite leaders brushed aside calls for including most Sunni insurgents in a reconciliation meeting.

It was Mr Annan's first trip to Iraq since the 2003 US-led invasion and the third by a high-level international official in as many days following visits by US

secretary of state Ms Condoleezza Rice yesterday and British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw the day before. All three encouraged disaffected Sunnis, who form the core of the insurgency, to take part in national elections next month.

The UN leader also endorsed Arab League efforts to organise a conference bringing together Iraq's varied groups to heal the nation's divisions.

However, the leader of the biggest Shi'ite party, Abdul-Azizal-Hakim, told Mr Annan that he was not interested in a conference that included Saddam Hussein loyalists, members of the former regime and Sunni religious fanatics believed responsible for attacks against civilians.

'Saddam aide dead'

The highest ranking leader, Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, still at-large from Saddam regime has died, a Baathist Web site reported today. The Web site run by former top Baath Party members said Al-Douri died at 2:30 a.m. today.

13 NOV 2005

Suicide bombers kill 37 in Iraq

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Attacks in Baghdad restaurant, Tikrit

BAGHDAD: Suicide bombers struck in a Baghdad restaurant and in former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit on Thursday, killing 37 persons and wounding more than 40.

The bodies of 27 persons who had been shot in the head were also discovered in open countryside south of the capital.

Thursday's main attack came in the morning when a suicide bomber wearing a belt of explosives walked into a central Baghdad restaurant, known for serving breakfast to police and security personnel. At least 31 persons were killed and 28 wounded in the attack which devastated the restaurant, located near the Sheraton and Palestine Hotels which were targeted last month, leaving blood spattered all around.

Six more died and 13 were wounded when a suicide driver detonated a car bomb outside an Iraqi army recruitment centre in Tikrit, Mr. Hussein's home town in the north of the country.

Two more civilians were killed an hour later in the same spot when another bomb exploded, police added. The grisly discovery of

27 bodies was made in the region of Jassan, near the town of Kut, according to army Colonel Badr al-Basri, who said the victims, whose hands and feet were bound, were dressed in civilians clothes.

Sunni leader killed

An official from the Sunni Islamic Party, Ahmad Rashid al-Rawi, kidnapped on Tuesday in the restive town of Ramadi, west of Baghdad, was also found murdered, his party said.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Government spokesman Leith Kubba condemned Wednesday's bombings in three hotels in the capital of the neighbouring Jordan, saying they showed that countries in the region had to stand together in the fight against terrorism.

The group of Al-Qaeda's frontman in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, responsible for many of the more grisly attacks, claimed responsibility for the Amman bombings.

"This is a hard blow for Jordan and for Jordanian citizens, but this could wake up Jordan's public opinion to the reality of what is going on in Iraq," he said. — AFP

Jordan bleeds, Bangla in jitters



Jordanian policeman on alert outside Radisson Hotel in Amman on Wednesday night.

Now, Amman too has its 9/11

AGENCIES
London, November 10

THE AL-QAIDA in Iraq on Thursday claimed responsibility for Wednesday's blasts that claimed at least 57 lives and left over a 100 injured when suicide bombers targeted three hotels in the Jordanian capital.

Incidentally, the date of the attack, November 9, would be written as 9/11 everywhere except in the United States and can yet revive dark memories of the twin tower attack. A government spokesman declined to see any connection. But ordinary Jordanians were sending mobile messages that read: "Have you noticed that it's 9-11 today?"

A statement, not yet authenticated, posted on a website used by militant groups said Amman was targeted because it is the "backyard" for US operations. "A group of lions of al-Qaida ... launched a new attack on some of the dens in the land of the Muslims in Amman," the Web posting said. It claimed that despite security measures, "some al-Qaida soldiers were able to reach their targets and carry out their duties."

The claim was signed in the name of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-

Qaida in Iraq. A US counter-terrorism official said the strong suspicion is that al-Zarqawi was involved because of his animosity for Jordan's monarchy.

The Grand Hyatt, Radisson and Days Inn hotels were said to be popular with foreigners and many of the guests were involved in Iraq's reconstruction. Deputy PM Marwan Muasher said most of those killed were Jordanians.

The first blast struck the entrance of

AL-QAIDA CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

the luxury Grand Hyatt Hotel about 8:50 pm local time. Minutes later, an explosion rocked a reception hall in the nearby Radisson SAS Hotel, where a wedding party of about 300 people was in progress. Individuals wearing explosive belts carried out both attacks.

"We thought it was fireworks for the wedding but I saw people falling to the ground," said Ahmed, a wedding guest at the five-star Radisson. "I saw blood. There were people killed. It was ugly."

The explosion at the five-star Grand

Hyatt took place in the lobby and shattered its stone entrance. An American man blurted out in a thick Southern drawl: "My friends are dead."

An Iraqi government spokesman, Laith Kubba, said the attack should warn Jordan that it needed to stop playing host to former members of Saddam Hussein's regime.

"I hope that these attacks will wake up the 'Jordanian street' to end their sympathy with Saddam's remnants ... who exploit the freedom in this country to have a safe shelter to plot their criminal acts against Iraqis," said Kubba. Police held several people overnight, but it is not clear whether they are suspects or witnesses to the attacks. DNA tests are now being carried out to identify the suicide bombers, said police officials.

The attacks have been widely condemned by the international community. British foreign secretary Jack Straw said Britain would give Jordan practical help to fight terrorism. "Jordan's sorrow is our sorrow. Jordan's grief is our grief. Jordan's determination to fight this mindless terrorism is our determination as well," he said from Amman. Tony Blair said he was shocked and saddened by the bombings.



Terror did not spare Iraq

TWO SUICIDE-bombers blew themselves up near a restaurant frequented by Baghdad's policemen, killing at least 33 people and seriously injuring 19, officials said.

The bombers struck at about 9:45 am, when the office-going crowd usually stop by at the restaurant for breakfast. P13

Dhaka sanitised for Saarc heads' meet

ANIRBAN Choudhury
Dhaka, November 10

IT'S DIFFICULT for a layman to say if security could have been tighter for the 13th Saarc summit, beginning here on Saturday. But Wednesday night's serial blasts in Jordan and the al-Qaida statement claiming responsibility seem to have thrown the Bangladesh administration into a state of near paranoia.

The entire city has gone under a thick security blanket, unprecedented since the country became independent. All of Dhaka is under a red alert, buttressed against attacks by terror outfits, including the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen, which is believed to have been responsible for the countrywide serial blasts of August 17.

The security isn't restricted to the city. The home ministry has ordered constant vigil along the 4,300-km India-Bangladesh border to prevent foreign terrorists from sneaking in. The heads of all intelligence agencies are meeting at regular intervals to plug any chance loophole.

Slums have been raided, traffic curbs imposed on roads to the summit venues, sensitive areas cleared of unwanted elements and hotels for VIPs sanitised. Even at other hotels, boarders' antecedents are being checked.

Troops of the elite Rapid Action Battalion are roaming the streets with surveillance choppers hovering above. The Zia International airport has been placed under an orange alert. The coastguard, too, has been told to watch out for unscheduled movement of vessels along the country's shoreline.

About 40,000 policemen and 1,300 RAB personnel, besides other paramilitary forces and cops in plain clothes, have been deployed at the 12 summit venues.

The Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, with its seven presidential suites for the seven heads of state, is looking like a fortress with closed-circuit cameras placed in every nook and cranny. Some 700 guests are scheduled to check in here by Friday.

Kawran Market, the city's largest retail market for raw materials with a daily turnover of Rs 100 crore, has been the hardest hit. More than 10,000 traders and shop-owners have been asked to keep their shutters down till Monday.

The market is too close to some of the venues. Schools and colleges, too, have been asked to stay shut till Sunday. State minister for home Lufozzaman Babar said the security agencies were ready to meet any threat.

But Indian security personnel, reaching here with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Friday evening, aren't leaving anything to chance. Rejecting the host



Increased security in Dhaka.

Security shield

- All of Dhaka under red alert
- Constant vigil along the 4,300-km Indo-Bangla border
- Zia International airport placed under Orange Alert
- Coast guard told to watch out for suspicious movement of vessels
- Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, with its seven presidential suites for the seven heads of state, has become a veritable fortress with closed-circuit cameras placed in every nook and cranny
- Kawran Market, the city's largest retail market, hardest hit. Over 10,000 traders asked to down shutters till Monday
- Schools and colleges asked to remain closed till Sunday

country's offer to provide foolproof security, they are bringing three bulletproof cars for the Prime Minister.

Yet, in a strange way, the city is looking more beautiful than ever. The roads have been widened, the traffic snarls have disappeared; even the walls have received fresh coats of paint. They display welcome messages for the visiting leaders. Terror has transformed Dhaka into a whole new city.

Another report on P3

United States, Iraqi forces battle militants near Syrian border

Troops meet with sporadic resistance; number of rebels killed unconfirmed

BAGHDAD: United States and Iraqi forces battled militants on Sunday in a town near the border with Syria as part of a military sweep aimed at preventing foreign fighters from entering the country.

The goal of Operation Steel Curtain, launched early on Saturday, "is to restore security along the Iraqi-Syrian border and destroy the Al-Qaeda in Iraq terrorist network operating throughout this area," Brigadier General Donald Alston told reporters on Sunday.

U.S. officials have long held that foreign Al-Qaeda fighters enter Iraq through the border with Syria via the Euphrates valley.

As they entered Husayba, U.S. and Iraqi forces encountered "sporadic resistance" from militants, mainly improvised explosives and gunfire, said Brig. Gen. Alston, a spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq. "We are not meeting what I would term stiff resistance," he said. He cautioned, however, that the operation "has just begun."

At least nine air strikes were called in on strong points in Husayba as well as a strike on a suspected car bomb.

There were no reports of military or civilian casualties, and "the number of terrorists killed in the strikes is unconfirmed," Brig. Gen. Alston said.

The U.S. military is keeping a tight lid on information from the region.

The operation, involving 1,000 Iraqi soldiers as well as 2,500 U.S. marines, sailors and soldiers, is one of the biggest joint military operations in the restive Sunni Arab province of Al-Anbar. Iraqi and U.S. forces

are also housing and feeding some 400 residents, the military said.

U.S. officials are especially proud of locally-recruited Iraqi scouts called "Desert Protectors," men recruited in the region that help point out militant safe houses and gather intelligence about possible attacks.

"Al-Qaeda in Iraq needs to be sustained from outside the country," Brig. Gen. Alston said. The group also "generates the most spectacular attacks and kills the most Iraqis with their attacks. That's why we focus on Al-Qaeda in Iraq as strongly as we do."

Different operation

Steel Curtain follows earlier operations also along the Euphrates valley in Al-Anbar. But this operation is different because it is also designed to set up a joint U.S.-Iraqi permanent presence along the border.

The key difference with previous operations is that the Iraqi army is now trained and equipped well enough to leave enough forces to protect a city.

Meanwhile, in the northern oil town of Kirkuk, 255 km north of Baghdad, a first group of Sunni Arabs were released from prison as part of a programme aimed at lessening tension in the multi-ethnic city.

Eighty Sunni detenus are to be set free over the next three days.

A local official, Khodr Hassan, said the move was an initiative taken by President Jalal Talabani "with the goal of opening a new page in relations between Arabs and Kurds and to create a peaceful climate" for the December 15 general elections. — AFP



RECEIVING GIFT: Orphans receive toys from Ahal al-Iraq (People of Iraq) movement on the occasion of Id in Baghdad, on Saturday. — PHOTO: AP

THE HINDU

7 NOV 2005

Iran: building on the revolutionary agenda

M.K. Bhadrakumar

IN A prescient view, when the region and the world were still sizing up the Iranian President-elect Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a Xinhua despatch from Teheran featured by *People's Daily* in early August reported: "The successful play of the class card and religion card at a critical juncture has brought an unknown mayor to the office of the president. It provokes contemplations over Iran's true situation and the Iranian people's real expectations — a more vivid picture of Iran obfuscated from the world by inaccurate and inadequate media presentation."

The commentary went on: "However, it must be pointed out that the president-elect cannot rely on these two cards (class and religion) after his assumption of power because the image of pauper hero and apologist is far from good enough to be a good president. The lucky man shoulders even greater expectations now."

While the "international community" remains narrowly focussed on Iran's nuclear issue, latching on to every word uttered by Iranian officials, within Iran itself, the attention is centred on what is shaping up into an epic struggle in the overall orientation of Iran's national policies, the economic agenda in particular.

True, there are ominous signs of the dividing lines getting frayed as Mr. Ahmadinejad's recent comments about Israel testify. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had this in mind when he warned last week that the "international community" should be careful not to create "a second North Korea."

Three months into his presidency, Mr. Ahmadinejad has carefully begun to develop his electoral promises. As early as August 3 at the ceremony installing him as Iran's sixth President, Mr. Ahmadinejad said the promotion of 'justice', which was the ideal of the Iranian revolution of 1979, would top his agenda. He explained that by 'justice', he meant a fair social distribution of wealth, eradication of poverty, tackling unemployment, and conducting a pur-

By saying Israel should be wiped off the face of the earth, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has underscored the point that the national consolidation of opinion is his ultimate strength.

positive struggle against all forms of discrimination and corruption. (In fact, he explained Iran's foreign policy too as borne out of similar impulses as "adoption of discriminatory policies and double standards toward other countries and the arrogation of special privileges and concessions in various economic, political and scientific spheres by certain governments, which at the same time deprive other nations of their due rights, too are manifestations of 'injustice'.")

Three weeks later, addressing a special session of the Iranian Majlis on August 21, Mr. Ahmadinejad further elaborated his thinking on what constituted 'justice.' He said 'justice' meant bridging the gap that existed between the common people and the administration by reforming the "bureaucratic system" and promoting "a culture of kindness"; focussing on unemployment and the attendant social problems; "rendering service to deprived classes" (among the "priorities of the government"); and improving public services ("the principle of rendering public service must be co-related to the extent of deprivation among sections of society").

A major plank of Mr. Ahmadinejad's electoral platform has been the redistribution of Iran's oil wealth that is under the control of a handful of interest groups. He had termed the move as his first battle to promote social justice. His battle cry to take on Iran's "oil mafia" and to give more contracts to Iranian firms in the oil sector, apart from redistributing oil wealth, generated enthusiastic support from the poor people.

Last week, Mr. Ahmadinejad nominated a surprise choice as Iran's new Oil Minister — Seyed

Sadeh Mahsouli. Whether the Majlis will ratify the nomination will remain an intriguing question in Iran's politics in the coming days. For, Mr. Mahsouli is the latest in a chain of appointments made by the President from the ranks of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) to key positions in the Government. Mr. Ahmadinejad has evidently turned to the IRGC (to which he has himself belonged since 1980) for providing aides on whom he could rely for the implementation of his agenda.

The IRGC was created originally as the Praetorian guards of the Iranian revolution and was specifically barred by Imam Khomeini in 1989 just before his death, from any involvement in active politics. (Khomeini did not want to risk exposing IRGC to the factionalism that was endemic to Iranian politics — such was the importance the Imam attached to IRGC's role as the main pillar of the revolution.)

However, since end-2003, there were incipient signs that the religious leadership was beginning to depend on IRGC to counter the so-called "reformist" challenge. In the parliamentary elections of 2004, for the first time IRGC had its candidates elected as legislators. Its political profile has been on a steady upward graph since then due to a variety of factors — including geopolitical factors such as the war in Iraq, escalating U.S. hostility, and Iran's nuclear issue — culminating in the victory of Mr. Ahmadinejad. (IRGC also manages Iran's nuclear programme.)

This new force in Iranian politics combines adherence to the ideals and principles of the Iranian revolution such as social justice, and the

special, dominant role of Islam. Sections of the religious leadership see this new force as the last hope for redeeming the ideals of the 1979 revolution, but large sections of the old guard equally view the crusade against corruption and the call for distributive justice with growing unease.

Arguably, a showdown of this kind (common to all revolutions) should have taken place soon after 1979 but for the 8-year Iraq-Iran war (1980-88) and the passing away of Imam Khomeini in 1989. At any rate, under the presidency of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (1989-97), the regime careered away further and further from the revolutionary ideals.

Corruption and political cynicism spread as the regime incessantly sought the complicity of the religious leadership in the misappropriation of state wealth. The *bazaar* interests linked up with the clergy and the upper crust of the (north Teheran) middle class — all in the name of "economic reform", "liberalisation" and "globalisation" — within a system of self-perpetuating crony capitalism.

The 'bonyads' (charitable trusts), corrupt and overstuffed consortium of companies headed by the elite or their cronies, exempt from taxes and answerable only to the Supreme Leader, accounted for nearly half of Iran's GDP by the time the Rafsanjani presidency ended in 1997. Mohammad Khatami promised change and received a huge popular mandate but in the event the old guard frustrated his programme.

Mr. Ahmadinejad has astutely headed for the heart of the matter. He has formed a triumvirate with his key ally, Speaker of the Majlis Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, and the powerful chief of the Judiciary, Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahroudi, and opened up the sensitive issue of "corruption in the economic and administrative sections of society." Last Thursday, the opening salvo was fired when the Majlis met in a closed-door session, which was attended by Ayatollah Shahroudi. To what extent the campaign would be advanced, and with what speed, remains to be seen but the 'bonyads' are bound to come under close scrutiny.

The President's calculation seems to be that the political fight against corruption will throw the old guard off balance — a formidable combination of the religious leadership, *bazaar* interests, cronies and even sections of the Iranian bureaucracy and intelligentsia who parade as "reformists" and "moderates". He seems to calculate that such a "softening up" may facilitate easier passage of his painful economic agenda orientated toward redistribution of wealth and social justice.

Indeed, the old guard can be expected to strike back. In the present context, the old guard has kept extensive links with Western powers as well. (According to details available now, anticipating his victory in the presidential election in June, Mr. Rafsanjani, who was idolised as Iran's 'moderate' par excellence by the Western media, had, in fact, struck a deal with British interlocutors on a compromise over Iran's nuclear issue.) No wonder Mr. Ahmadinejad has decided to recall one third of all Iranian heads of missions in the embassies abroad.

A pragmatic conservative

Iran's nuclear issue is not directly linked to this titanic struggle over the 'soul' of the Iranian revolution, but it is not so peripheral either. Mr. Ahmadinejad is instinctively a pragmatic conservative. He has not sought confrontation over the nuclear issue. His preferred choice will be compromise and cooperation. Even after the IAEA vote of September 24, he did not pull Iran out of the NPT or jettison the Additional Protocol or begin enriching uranium.

The point is Mr. Ahmadinejad (and the IRGC) is acutely conscious that Western powers, especially the U.S., would be keenly watching and would try to fish in troubled waters. Therefore, through statements like the one he made recently about "wiping off" Israel from the face of the earth, he is conveying the message to the enemies of Iran to back off. He is underlining that the national consolidation of opinion is his ultimate strength — and, he is not looking beyond it. (Over 80 per cent of Iranians support the Government's nuclear policy.)

It should not take much effort to understand what it is that has drawn Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, so instinctively close to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in such a short period of time.

CARTOONSCAPE



Iran allows U.N. team to visit secret military site

IAEA inspectors revisit Parchin to scrutinise nuclear programme



REMEMBERING TAKEOVER: A woman holds up a placard reading: "Nuclear [power] for Peace" during a demonstration in front of the former U.S. embassy in Teheran on Tuesday to mark the 26th anniversary of its takeover by Iranians. - PHOTO: AFP

VIENNA: Iran has granted U.N. nuclear inspectors new access to a high-security military site as part of efforts to avoid referral to the Security Council, diplomats said on Wednesday. The diplomats said experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency were allowed to revisit Parchin as they try to establish whether Teheran has a secret nuclear weapons programme.

Links to arms?

Parchin has been linked by the United States and other nations to alleged experiments linked to nuclear arms. The IAEA had for months been trying to follow up on a visit in January for further checks of buildings and areas within the sprawling military complex as it looks for traces of radioactivity.

That visit — which was closely controlled by authorities — revealed no such traces.

But one of the diplomats, who like the others requested anonymity because he was not au-

thorised to talk to the media about the sensitive investigation, said over the past few days IAEA inspectors had "gained access to buildings" previously out of bounds to them. The diplo-

mat, who is close to the agency, said environmental swipes were taken from objects in the buildings and would be analysed at IAEA laboratories.

If those swipes reveal minute amounts of radioactivity, they would strengthen suspicions of nuclear-related work at Parchin.

Because Parchin is run by the armed forces, such a discovery would weaken Iranian arguments that its nuclear programmes are strictly non-military.

That would strengthen sentiment that Teheran be referred to the U.N. Security Council for breaching the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as early as November 24, when the IAEA's 35-nation board of Governors has its next meeting.

The swipe results are expected before then. — AP

Teheran removes 40 envoys

TEHERAN: Iran's Government on Wednesday said it was removing 40 Ambassadors and senior diplomats, including supporters of warmer ties with the West, in a shake-up.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki announced the changes to Parliament, saying "the missions of more than 40

Ambassadors and heads of Iranian diplomatic missions abroad will expire by the end of the year," which is March 20 under the Iranian calendar. The shake-up gives the Government the chance to purge pro-reform figures brought in by his predecessor, Mohammad Khatami, and install its own supporters. — AP

25/8

Riddled with contradictions

HD-10

While the committee mandated to draw up Iraq's constitution submitted its draft minutes before the expiry of the August 22 deadline, the interim parliament decided to wait for another three days before voting on the measure. The political parties that dominate the executive and legislative branches hope they will be able to evolve a consensus during this interval. This hope might prove futile since the draft is riddled with contradictions. For instance, it prohibits legislation that violates democratic norms and the essential rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution; but it also bans legislation that "contradicts Islamic standards." The women and religious minorities of Iraq have cause for concern since there are other provisions that conservatives can exploit to give the state an Islamist character. The family and property rights Muslim women had under the Ba'athist regime are likely to be eroded as the draft stipulates that each community will be governed by its own code on matters such as marriage and inheritance. Religious minorities will not be comfortable with the provision that makes Islam a major source of law. Secular forces in the country believed that the United States, for its own reasons, would not tolerate the emergence of a theocracy. To their dismay, U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad played a major role in persuading the drafting committee to include the Islamist provisions. This was part of an effort to get the support of conservative Shia parties for the draft constitution so that Washington could claim that the transition to a democratic and sovereign Iraq was on schedule.

Iraq's women and religious minorities might not have the strength to confront the conservatives. However, Sunnis have the incentive and the means to derail the constitution-making exercise. Most members of this community live in four provinces that lack petroleum resources and, not surprisingly, oppose the demand made by Shia and Kurd parties for the grant of extensive autonomy to the provinces. With Iraq's oil fields situated largely in provinces controlled by Shias and Kurds, these communities could have deprived others of their share of the national wealth if the constitution provided for a weak central authority. The draft stipulates that oil revenue should be shared in accordance with the population spread in the country. However, it also appears to grant the provinces and the centre equal authority to administer petroleum products extracted from existing wells. The Sunnis, who have threatened civil war if these provisions are not amended, might not need to resort to such drastic measures. The constitution will not come into force if two thirds of the voters in three provinces say 'no' to it in the referendum scheduled for October 15. Washington, which is desperately keen on showing that its policy is 'on track', has again forced Iraqis to act against their own interests.

Iraqi Sunnis reject Constitution draft

29/8 19
w/ 19
Sunnite
Iraq

Jaafari confident of consensus

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari said on Tuesday that almost all issues dogging the draft Constitution were resolved, but Sunni Arabs warned it was divisive and would be rejected when put to the nation.

"We have agreed on 151 of the 153 articles in the Constitution including the federal status of the government and the status of regions and provinces," Mr. Jaafari told a press conference. He said issues concerning human rights, including women's rights, have also been agreed upon.

"We have made an important stride," said the Shia Prime Minister.

In a nail-biting drama, Parliament on Monday received only an incomplete draft of the first post-Saddam Constitution submitted under intense U.S. pressure but without the approval of the Sunni Arab minority.

The charter's writers beat a midnight deadline by just a few minutes to present the Constitution that will shape the future of 27 million war-battered Iraqis and could pave the way for a withdrawal of foreign troops.

But several issues remained unresolved, including the mechanism for implementing

federalism, the treatment of the Saddam Hussein regime officials, and how to divide authority between the presidency, Parliament and the government.

Negotiations will take place over the next three days to bridge remaining differences over the text, which must be approved in an October referendum ahead of new elections in December. — AFP

Bush defends policy

AP reports from Idaho (U.S.): American President George W. Bush charged on Tuesday that anti-war protesters such as Cindy Sheehan, who want the troops brought home immediately, are "advocating a policy that would weaken the United States."

Mr. Bush gave no indication that he would change his mind and meet Ms. Sheehan, who lost a son in Iraq and has emerged as a harsh critic of the war there, when he returns to his Texas ranch on Wednesday.

On Iraq, Mr. Bush said a democratic constitution "is going to be an important change in the broader Middle East (West Asia)."

Reaching an accord on a constitution after years of dictatorship is not easy, Mr. Bush said.

20 AUG 2002 THE FINCH

Three days not enough for Iraq constitution consensus

ASSOCIATED Press
Baghdad, August 23

THE HEAD of the committee drafting Iraq's constitution said on Tuesday that three days are not enough to win over the Sunni Arabs, and the document they rejected may ultimately have to be approved by parliament as it is and submitted to the Iraqi people in a referendum. On Monday night, Iraqi leaders completed a draft and submitted it to parliament with only minutes to go before a midnight deadline but they delayed a vote to give them time to convince the Sunni negotiators to accept it.

At a news meet, drafting committee chairman Humam Hammoudi acknowledged that three days would probably be too short to win over the Sunnis, who objected to the wording on federal-

ism, Saddam Hussein's Baath Party, the description of Iraq as an Islamic — but not Arab — country, and other parts of the document. Asked about ways to break the impasse, Hammoudi said: "the Iraqi people will rule" and suggested that the elected parliament could debate the issues and take a decision. Shias and Kurds, who accepted the agreement, dominate the assembly.

Approving the draft and submitting it to voters in an October 15 referendum risks a backlash from the Sunnis, who are at the forefront of insurgency. Luring them away from violence and into the political process was a major US goal for the constitution. But Hammoudi noted that unlike the Shia and Kurd negotiators, the Sunnis were not elected parliament members but were appointed to the commit-

tee. Sunnis won only 17 of the 275 parliament seats because so many Sunnis boycotted the January 30 election.

"Those who are representing the brother Sunnis are not elected," Hammoudi said. "Therefore, who can say that they really represent the people on the street ... therefore the Sunnis have to express their opinion."

Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shia, appeared to make an overture to the minority. "Some of the political groups have some reservations and we will study them and try to reach a solution in the next three days," he said in Baghdad on Tuesday.

"Our Sunni brothers faced some circumstances in the past that prevented them from having real representation ... we hope that in the future they will be better represented."

THE AMERICAN TIMES

Baghdadi bumps

Iraq gropes for a Constitution, 16 Apr 09, 7/8

Iraq's attempt to rustle up a draft Constitution has floundered on the twin rocks of Islamic law and federalism. The interests of the three groups — Kurds, Shias and Sunnis — remain divergent. Even if a patchwork quilt is woven after the seven-day extension of the deadline, the country will remain in the melting pot. A rough and ready name-tag — Republic of Iraq — seems to have been agreed upon, though this compromise of sorts has left the contending parties dissatisfied. The respective demands for prefixes have been rejected: the Sunnis had clamoured for Arab; Kurds had pitched for Federal and Shias were intent on Islamic. The degree of autonomy is a major bone of contention. In their quest for self-determination, the Kurds want an autonomous north. The Shias are seeking an equally autonomous region in the south with special status for clerics. This has created another area of friction — the role Islam should play in governing the laws of the country. The fear of the Kurds is valid enough: if the religious leadership becomes predominant, there will be no rule by law or Constitution. Nevertheless, between them the Kurds and the Shias will be controlling the country's strategically important, oil-rich areas. If current trends are any indication, the Sunnis, left with the central portion of the country, will be the losers. It is an area wrecked by poverty and insurgency. They also stand to lose in a loose federal structure based on regional autonomy for that is bound to split the country. Given the oil reserves, economic federalism will further impoverish the Sunnis. An equal distribution of natural resources is, therefore, imperative.

Iraq is much too fractured and violent for a solution through a constitutional framework. A draft may yet be hammered out through the tangled skein of ethnicity, federalism and Islam. As Bush and Blair watch the haggling between the various ethnic and religious groups, their interest in the exercise can at best be academic. The mess today is of their creation.

THE STATESMAN

DRAFTING THE STATUTE

Women fear Iraq Constitution

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14
16/8

The Kurds and moderate Shias want Islam to be one of the main sources of law, rather than the main source. If they fail, it would be a setback for U.S. President George Bush, who has cited women's equality as one of Washington's objectives in Iraq

Rory Carroll

BAGHDAD: Iraqi women's rights advocates mounted an 11th-hour push on Sunday night to dilute the role of Islam and safeguard their freedoms in a draft Constitution.

They mobilised in Baghdad to steel liberal and secular members of the drafting committee for a showdown against religious conservatives.

With crucial parts of the draft still undecided, it was unclear whether Islamic law, or Sharia, would override the civil law that governs areas such as marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

Shia clerics and politicians vowed to make Islam one of the main sources of law, moving Iraq closer to the theocracies of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

If they succeed, the consequences will be dire, said Yonadam Kanna, a Christian member of the drafting committee. "For women it would be a disaster."

Female Members of Parliament and non-governmental organisations lobbied potential allies at the convention centre in Baghdad's green zone, a fortified complex hosting most of the negotiations.

A cluster formed around Wael Latif, a legal adviser to the Constitutional Committee, warning him that negotiators would not be forgiven if this generation of women ended up more oppressed than their mothers.

A 1959 law blending Western legal principles with Sharia law gave Iraq one of West Asia's more enlightened attitudes to family issues. Saddam Hussein kept the law and women enjoyed a measure of equality — even during the 1990s when the secular leader flirted with Islam.

Since the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003, however, conservative Shias, oppressed for decades under Mr. Hussein, have stoked a politically charged religious revival, which is especially strong in the south. Even in the capital it is now rare to see women in public without headscarves, or driving on their own.

Having triumphed in January's elections, the conservative Shia parties have pushed for the new Constitution to let religious courts handle marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance cases. Some negotiators have also sought the recognition of tribal justice and the elimination of the 25 per cent quota for the minimum proportion of women in Parliament.

The largely secular Kurds and moderate Shias want Islam to be one of the main sources of law, rather than the main source. If they fail, it would be a humiliating setback for United States President George Bush, who has cited women's equality as one of Washington's objectives in Iraq.

However, many Iraqi women, especially in rural areas, favour Sharia law, citing religious devotion and loyalty to leaders who braved Mr. Hussein's persecution.

They also say Sharia improves their marriage prospects because it allows husbands to have four wives and obliges them to provide for spouses and offspring.

Fatima Kadhim (30), a Baghdad doctor, approved men inheriting at least twice as much as women because they had greater responsibilities. Dr Kadhim even supported the right of husbands to beat disobedient wives.

"But only as a last resort. And it shouldn't leave any marks on her body,



Holding a portrait of the late Shia leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, Iraqi women voice their demands to have Islamic law be the structure of the new constitution, in front of the local government buildings in Basra on Sunday. -

PHOTO: AP

otherwise he has to pay compensation." About 1,000 women held a rally in the southern city of Basra on Sunday to support Sharia law, after dozens of women belonging to a liberal group with the opposite objective last week held a rally in Baghdad.

Yanar Mohammad, an outspoken liberal advocate, said she was braced for a Constitution of misogyny and inequality. "I am alarmed. It is not going to reflect the aspirations of women in the 21st Century."

The imposition of Islamic law would leave women vulnerable to political and domestic oppression, she said. "Women could be stoned and beaten."

A spokesman for the conservative Shia Prime Minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, said he was baffled by such warnings, saying the Government had repeatedly pledged to uphold women's rights. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

Autonomy focus in Iraq

Baghdad, Aug. 14 (Reuters): Iraq's leaders wrangled over limits on regional autonomy in what could be the final 24 hours of negotiations about a new constitution, with expectations rising that they would meet a Monday deadline to clinch a deal.

Parliament has been summoned to a special sitting tomorrow and several negotiators said it was likely the National Assembly would be able to start reviewing the new charter right away.

"At this meeting (of parliament), we expect the draft constitution will be delivered," Nasser al-Awadi, a Sunni Arab member of the constitutional drafting committee, said.

Bahaa al-Araji, a leading Shia member of the committee, also said the constitution would be ready to be presented to parliament by the August 15 deadline, although talks chaired by President Jalal Talabani continued today.

Prime Minister Ibrahim Jaafari told reporters he was "optimistic" about an agreement tomorrow, while his spokesman and adviser, Laith Kubba, told CNN: "From what I hear, there is an agreement and the document will be submitted on time."

The main sticking point has been arguments over the

extent of regional autonomy, particularly for Kurds and Shias, as well as Shia demands for a bigger role for Islam in the law.

Kurds want guarantees of existing freedoms in the north, some Islamists from the Shia majority are pushing for Islamic law and the prospect of a Shia autonomous region in the south, and Sunni Arabs, dominant under Saddam Hussein, fear losing a share of northern and southern oil fields.

Clinching a timely deal is a key goal for President George W. Bush, who says the process will undermine rebels among the Sunni Arab minority and aid US plans to hand power to Iraqis.

But insurgents struck again, killing five US soldiers in roadside bomb attacks. Protesters at Bush's Texas ranch demanded he bring troops home. Under pressure in opinion polls over his handling of Iraq, Bush rejected such a move as "premature".

"We're never going to let him have another vacation in peace again," said Cindy Sheehan, whose son died in Iraq last year.

Observers expect vague language in the constitution on issues like federalism, leaving it to future negotiation.

Iraq leaders rush to meet Constitution deadline

Baghdad, August 14

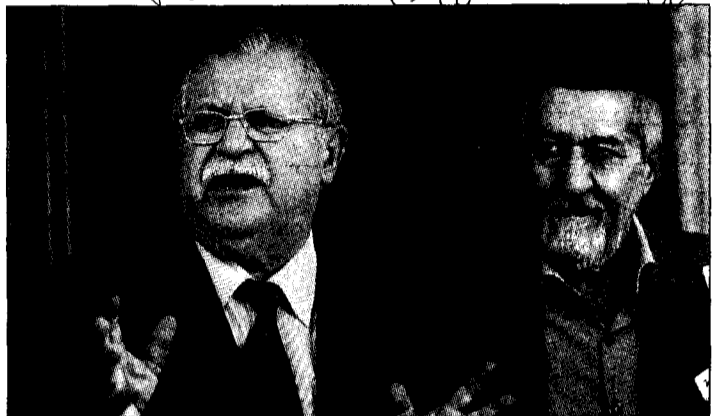
UNDER STRONG pressure from the US, Iraqi leaders held last-minute talks on Sunday as they sought to overcome Sunni objections to key issues in a new constitution with a deadline to approve the charter only a day away.

One lawmaker raised the possibility that Monday's deadline may have to be postponed. However, US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad said the document was on track to be finished on time.

Talks were concentrating on issues like federalism and the role of Islam — obstacles that have for weeks blocked progress on the draft of the charter, which Washington considers a key part of the process to curb a Sunni-dominated insurgency.

A meeting was held on Sunday morning between President Jalal Talabani, Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi and parliament Speaker Hajim al-Hassani, Kurdish legislator Mahmoud Othman said. He added that a session was planned between Sunni politicians and Barzani at noon. In the evening, Kurdish and Shia leaders will meet at the office of Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

Al-Hassani's office issued a statement on Sunday saying that meetings were still going on "to reach satisfactory solutions on all pending points in the draft constitution." The statement added that all leaders were "exerting all their efforts to solve the matters ...



Iraqi President Jalal Talabani (left), and Sunni leader Adnan al-Dulaimi speak to reporters after their meeting on Saturday.

and no final agreement has been reached until this moment."

With little sign of progress, legislator Jawad al-Maliki, a member of al-Jaafari's Dawa Party, told *The Associated Press* on Sunday that "if we don't reach an agreement today, we might amend the interim constitution and extend the deadline by a minimum of two weeks."

But the U.S. ambassador dismissed the suggestion.

"The Iraqis tell me that they can finish it and they will finish it tomorrow," Khalilzad said Sunday on ABC's *This Week*. "There are options, obviously, should they need it, but at this point, my information is — and I've just come from a meeting with the Iraqi leaders — that they intend to finish it tomorrow."

Khalilzad acknowledged the

importance of getting Sunni Arabs to sign off on the document, particularly since the insurgency is dominated by Sunnis. "This constitution can be a national compact bringing Sunnis in, isolating extremists and Baathist hard-liners and setting the stage over time for defeating them," the ambassador said on CNN's *Late Edition*.

The interim constitution states that amendments can be made only with the approval of three-fourths of the 275-member parliament and the unanimous approval of the president and his two deputies.

On Saturday, Talabani predicted a draft constitution will be ready by Monday's deadline, and Othman said the draft would be presented to parliament with or without Sunni approval. AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Discord on eve of ^{14/8} Iraq draft deadline

^{Amman 5-8}
Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Aug. 13.

— Roadside bombs and ambushes killed at least nine people and wounded 11 others today, as Iraqi leaders reported tentative agreements on issues such as distribution of oil-wealth and Islam as the state religion, with only two days to go to finalise the new constitution.

A Shiite member of the committee writing the constitution, Mr Saad Jawad Kandil, said the draft would be submitted to parliament on Sunday, one day before the deadline for legislative approval.

But a Sunni member, Mr Saleh al-Mutlaq, said he knew nothing about plans to submit the document tomorrow. President Mr Jalal Talabani said he hoped the draft could be finished tomorrow and meetings were underway today to try to meet the deadline.

But no agreement had been reached on the major stumbling block - federalism - as well as the role of the Shiite clergy, dual nationality and a description of Saddam Hussein's Baath party, a Sunni Arab official said.

Wide differences remain on those issues among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. Sunni Arabs consider federalism which they fear will lead to the disintegration of the country, as a deal-breaker. Even the formal name of the country kept going through last minute modifications.

Four civilians died when a roadside bomb exploded near Samarra, 95 kilometers (60 miles) north of Baghdad, police captain Mr Laith Mohammed said. Two Iraqi police were also shot to death in Samarra, police said.

In Baghdad, police major Mr Ahmed Kamil was killed in an ambush in a western neighbourhood, police said.

One Iraqi soldier was shot dead in Dora district of south Baghdad, police said. An unidentified man was found dead in Baghdad's Sadr City neighbourhood. His hands were cuffed and he had been shot in the head and legs, police said.

Seven people - three of them civilians - were hurt in a blast in eastern Baghdad, and four others were injured in separate bombings and shootings in Dora, police said.

Iran in nuclear showdown

A more considered and consensual approach to proliferation problems might be the wisest course.

Simon Tisdall

THE DRUMBEAT of Western disapproval accompanying Iran's decision this week to resume uranium conversion at its nuclear plant in Isfahan looks likely to drown out more-considered approaches to the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation in general and Iran's aspirations in particular.

Largely unremarked by mainstream media, the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Chile, Indonesia, Norway, Romania, South Africa, and the United Kingdom put forward a series of proposals last month to avoid exactly the sort of confrontation that now looms over Teheran. The seven countries affirmed "the inalienable right of all state parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination."

But crucially, they suggested that states wishing to develop nuclear power for civil purposes should be able to do so without first having to develop a domestic fuel cycle capability. It is Iran's insistence on acquiring such a capability that, more than anything, has strengthened American, Israeli and European suspicions that it is trying to build the bomb.

In other words, the Ministers said, the international community "should establish mechanisms to ensure guaranteed access to the market for nuclear fuel and related services for states in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations under the NPT." Internationally approved and monitored supplies of nuclear fuel would reduce the risk of diversion of the enriched product for non-peaceful purposes. Thus some of the suspicions surrounding the current Iranian programme would, in theory at least, be dispelled.

The group of seven also bemoaned the failure of last May's NPT review conference in New York and proposed a series of steps to reinforce the treaty.

Last but not least the seven countries, one of which (Britain) is an acknowledged nuclear weapons state, said the international community "must continue practical, systematic and progressive efforts to advance nuclear disarmament globally ... towards a world free of nuclear weapons." The group said it would pursue its proposals at next month's U.N. summit. Unfortunately, the Bush administration was not party to the initiative, and neither were Russia or China for that matter. And in any case, the initiative by itself cannot stop a Security Council showdown over Iran if the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) decides to refer the Iran "dossier" to New York.

Internationally safeguarded and guaranteed nuclear fuel supplies, for example, were part of the "final offer" put to Teheran last week by the EU3 – France, Germany and Britain. Unfortunately, the atmosphere of distrust and recrimination after two years of protracted negotiations – and following last month's election of a conservative Iranian President – seems to have led Teheran to reject the deal out of hand.

to Aziz *11/18*
"The EU proposal was very insulting and humiliating," said Mohammad Saeedi of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation. Mr. Saeedi appeared to be referring to the widespread Iranian perception that the EU was trying to deny Iran its "inalienable right" to process fuel – a problem that might have been overcome if the group of seven's proposals had been in place. The growing air of crisis over Iran's nuclear programmes is also obscuring other new factors which could (and perhaps should) have a direct bearing on how Western countries, and particularly the U.S., act now. One such factor is the leaked assessment contained in a new Bush administration National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran.

According to American newspaper reports, the NIE concluded that Iran was bent on acquiring the atomic bomb. "It is the judgment of the intelligence community that, left to its own devices, Iran is determined to build nuclear weapons."

But the study also expressed uncertainty that Iran's clerical leaders had actually decided to go ahead. And it threw cold water on repeated Israeli claims that Iran was within six months of gaining a nuclear weapons capability. It estimated that, given Iran's technical limitations, it would probably not deploy an atomic bomb, assuming it wanted to, until 2015.

The NIE's considerably less dramatic conclusions are reminiscent of international weapons survey reports since the Iraq invasion that showed pre-war claims about Iraq's nuclear capabilities and activities had been wildly inaccurate – and politically exaggerated. By leaking the findings, and taking a cautious line, the U.S. intelligence officers may be trying to ensure they do not get caught on that hook again.

And this leads to another largely under-reported and unconsidered nugget of information concerning Iran's activities that emanated from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) this week. It is that key evidence on which the charge of illicit bomb-making against Iran rested may have to be scrapped. Tests performed by the IAEA reportedly indicate that enriched uranium particles found on Iranian nuclear equipment came from Pakistan, from where the equipment was imported, and were not produced in Iran. Teheran has adamantly maintained all along that this was the most likely explanation for the existence of the particles. Now the IAEA appears to agree.

Far from being able to brandish a smoking gun, Iran's accusers hardly have a water pistol to share between them. That does not necessarily mean Teheran is innocent of all charges. It does not disguise the fact that Teheran suspiciously concealed its nuclear activities for many years. But when other factors are also taken into account, it does suggest that a more considered and consensual approach to Iran and other proliferation problems might be the wisest course. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

THE HINDU

Iran breaks UN seals at N-facility

Anne Penketh in London

Aug. 10. — Iran has risked jeopardising its relationship with the West by breaking UN seals at a uranium processing plant to reopen sensitive areas that could be used to develop a nuclear weapon.

A British Foreign Office spokesman said the move at the Isfahan plant violated an agreement reached with Britain, France and Germany in November last year, when Iran suspended all activities related to uranium enrichment. "The removal of seals has been completed. The plant is fully operational now," said Md Saeedi, deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation,

However instead of announcing a breakdown of talks with Iran, the spokesman added that the UN nuclear watchdog, meeting in emergency session in Vienna, would today discuss a resolution urging Iran to resume the voluntary suspension. Diplomats expect a consensus on the resolution.

The three European countries spent today in negotiations with other key members of the 35-nation board of the International Atomic Energy Agency on how to react to Iran's defiance.

Western diplomats said that, despite Iran's violation of its agreement with the Europeans, there was no appetite among some non-nuclear states to refer Iran to the UN Security Council for punitive sanctions. Countries like India and Brazil "don't see why they should be referred for something that they are legally entitled to do," one diplomat said, referring to Iran's right under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to develop peaceful nuclear energy.

The resumption of activities at Isfahan, which had been expected, was under the surveillance of the IAEA.

But Iran appears unlikely to change course, despite IAEA board entreaties. The head of Iran's delegation to the IAEA meeting, Sirus Naseri, said that Iran would not reverse its decision, raising prospects that the crisis could deepen further. "There are no good options here," a diplomat said. In Vienna, the UN nuclear watchdog agency confirmed that its seals at an Iranian nuclear facility were broken today, as it postponed a meeting so diplomats could seek consensus over how to rebuke Iran for resuming activities that could lead to an atomic weapon.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's seals in place at the uranium conversion plant in Isfahan were broken under its supervision to allow Iran to resume conversion activities, spokesman Mr Mark Gwozdecky said. The agency said it had a surveillance system in place at the facility to keep tabs on the work. IAEA board members were discussing how to persuade Iran to resume a voluntary suspension of uranium conversion and enrichment. They have the authority to report Iran to the UN Security Council, which could trigger punitive sanctions, but there was no talk of that at an emergency meeting of the agency's 35-nation board. — **The Independent** (With inputs from agencies)

THE STATESMAN

Iran defies U.S., E.U. on nuclear plan

Teheran move ahead of crucial IAEA meet

Atul Aneja

MANAMA: After a gap of nine months, Iran has resumed work at its nuclear conversion facility at Isfahan, signalling its intent to pursue uranium enrichment despite opposition by the European Union and the United States.

At the Isfahan plant, two masked workers wearing white overalls and hard hats emptied a barrel full of uranium yellow cake into the processing line. "The uranium conversion facility in Isfahan has started its activities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision," Mohammad Saeedi, deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, told reporters at the plant.

Preliminary steps

While resuming work at Isfahan, Iranian officials have stressed that only preliminary steps were underway and uranium enrichment *per se* was not being undertaken. Enriched uranium can be used for generating electricity, and when refined to a high degree of purity, it can be used for making bombs.

The resumption of work at the Isfahan facility is seen as politi-

• Move signals intention to pursue uranium enrichment

• Activity under IAEA supervision

• A politically significant step for Teheran

• Chief nuclear negotiator replaced

cally significant as it follows the election of Mahmoud Ahmadi-nejad to the Iranian Presidency. Iran has argued that as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it has the right to master the nuclear fuel cycle so long as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) monitors its facilities.

Iran has also replaced Hassan Rohani with Ali Larjani as its chief nuclear negotiator. Unlike Mr. Rohani, who was known for his pragmatic disposition, Mr. Larjani — a former head of Iranian state television — is known for hardline views, as well as proximity to his country's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

With Iran earlier stating its

intent to resume work at Isfahan, French Foreign Minister Philippe Douster-Blazy had on Friday urged it to "listen to reason."

He warned, "The international community will surely bring the issue to the Security Council," for possible sanctions, in case Iran chose to revive enrichment processing.

U.N. role dismissed

Iranian officials, however, have been dismissive about the possibility of its case being referred to the Security Council.

The timing of the Iranian decision is significant as it comes a day before the IAEA Board of Governors meet at the request of Britain, France and Germany to dissuade Teheran from starting enrichment at Isfahan.

Earlier on Saturday, Iran had rejected a package of economic and political incentives presented by the three E.U. countries aimed at persuading it from enrichment.

Iranian officials have said that the package included help to develop nuclear energy for civilian purposes as well as accepting Iran as a transit corridor for Central Asian oil.

Mr. Aneja
Iran

9/8

112-14

UN meet on Iran nuke plans called

Reuters
Vienna/Berlin, August 4

THE EUROPEAN Union will call a meeting of the UN nuclear watchdog's governing board early next week to warn Iran against restarting nuclear work that could be used to develop bombs, diplomats said on Thursday. Iran threatened repeatedly to resume uranium processing this week. The EU responded by saying any resumption of nuclear fuel activities would mean an end to two years of talks on Iran's nuclear program. Teheran says it only wants to generate electricity but the West suspects it is trying to make bombs.

"This board meeting is just to warn the Iranians," a diplomat close to negotiations between Teheran and the EU's three biggest powers — France, Britain and Germany — said, adding the meeting was tentatively scheduled for Tuesday. He said the EU was not aiming at this meeting to refer Iran to the UN Security Council, which has the power to impose sanctions. "We want to have a resolution before they can take off the (IAEA) seals. It has nothing to do with the Security Council," the diplomat close to the talks said. A second diplomat confirmed there would be a meeting early next week.

Iran said on Monday it would restart a uranium conversion plant in Isfahan, one of the nuclear activities it agreed to suspend under a November deal with the EU. Conversion is the step before enrichment, which can purify uranium to the level needed to fuel nuclear reactors or bombs. The Islamic republic initially rejected calls by the IAEA to wait until next week for surveillance equipment to be installed before restarting the Isfahan facility. However, in an apparent climbdown, chief Iranian nuclear negotiator Hassan Rohani said on Wednesday that Teheran hoped to restart work at Isfahan early next week.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Tehran, Aug. 1 (Reuters): Iran said it would break UN seals on a nuclear plant and resume work that the West suspects could help it build an atom bomb, defying EU warnings such a step could crush hopes of a negotiated solution.

Two years of hard bargaining over a nuclear programme that Tehran had kept secret for 18 years appeared to be heading towards a crisis that could see Iran's case sent to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

The EU "Big Three" of Britain, France and Germany have been trying to mediate between the US, which insists Iran is trying to produce nuclear weapons, and the Islamic Republic that says it has a right to develop peaceful atomic technology.

"Iran sent a letter to the IAEA (the UN's nuclear watchdog agency). Iran is to remove the seals today," Supreme National Security Council spokesman Ali Aghamohammadi said.

"Iran has decided to re-

Iran to break UN nuke seals

sume the uranium conversion activities at ... Isfahan on August 1," said the letter, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters.

The conversion plant near the central city of Isfahan turns uranium ore into uranium hexafluoride gas. The gas is pumped into centrifuges spinning at supersonic speed to enrich uranium.

Highly enriched uranium can be used for nuclear bombs, if enriched at low levels is used as fuel in nuclear power plants.

Tehran's arch foe Israel estimates Iran will be able to build a nuclear bomb by 2008, a military officer said. Iran says it only wants nuclear power to

generate electricity.

The IAEA urged Iran not to resume its frozen nuclear work. "I call on Iran to continue the negotiation process with the E3/EU and not to take any action that might prejudice the process at this critical stage," IAEA director Mohamed ElBaradei said in a statement, referring to the so-called E3 of Britain, Germany and France.

The EU said if Iran resumed work at Isfahan, it would break an agreement it made in Paris in November last year.

A spokesman for the European Commission told a press briefing: "The commission very much hopes for a negotiated solution. We would also hope that no steps would be taken over the coming days to endanger such a negotiated solution."

"(German) foreign minister (Joschka) Fischer has warned that this is a miscalculation in Tehran," a German foreign ministry spokesman told a news briefing in Berlin.

THE TELEGRAPH

Iran threat to resume nuclear activities

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Tehran, July 31 (Reuters): Iran said today it would resume sensitive nuclear activities at once without waiting for EU compromise proposals, a move that the EU said was "unnecessary and damaging" and could derail their talks.

Iran said it was acting after the EU failed to meet a deadline set by Tehran to deliver an offer to break the impasse.

But the British foreign office said the EU — represented by Britain, France and Germany — had informed Iran that "full and detailed proposals" would be delivered in a week.

The EU plans to offer economic and political incentives in return for Iran's indefinite suspension of uranium enrichment, nuclear fuel reprocessing and related activities.

"We urge them not to take any unilateral step which would contravene the Paris agreement as that would make it very difficult to continue with the ... negotiations," it said.

A senior Iranian nuclear official said: "As we did not receive the EU proposals, natu-

rally we will definitely resume work at the Isfahan plant tomorrow."

The EU and the US suspect Iran is trying to build a nuclear arsenal and say if Iran restarts uranium conversion or enrichment, they will ask the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

Tehran insists its programme is peaceful and it only wants nuclear power to generate electricity.

In Paris last November, Iran committed "on a voluntary basis, to continue and extend its suspension to include all enrichment-related and re-

processing activities" and "all tests or production at any uranium conversion installation".

The agreement also states: "The suspension will be sustained while negotiations proceed on a mutually acceptable agreement on long-term arrangements."

It was unclear whether the EU would now submit its proposals.

"Should the Iranians persist, we will as a first step consult urgently with our partners on the board of the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)," the foreign office said.

THE TELEGRAPH