

Saddam questioned on Shia revolt

Baghdad, July 29

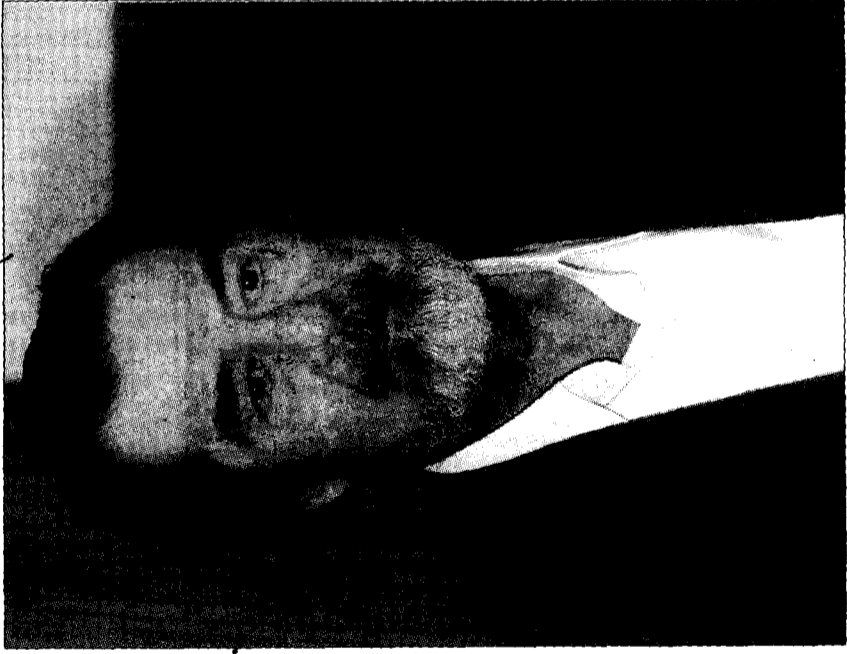
SADDAM HUSSEIN was called to a hearing where he was questioned about the repression of the Shia uprising in 1991, which erupted after US-led forces drove the Iraqi army out of Kuwait, the chief investigative judge said on Friday.

Saddam was summoned on Thursday and answered questions alone during the 45-minute hearing, said Judge Raid Juhi of the Iraqi Special Tribunal, set up to try the former dictator.

Juhi said he expects to conclude the criminal investigation into Saddam's alleged crackdown against Shias in southern Iraq, as well as his campaign in the late 1980s to force Iraqi Kurds from wide areas of the north. A trial date for the former dictator will be announced in the coming days, Juhi said.

Saddam is expected to stand trial in September this year for his alleged role in the 1982 massacre of Shia Muslims in Dujail, north of Baghdad. The killings happened after a failed assassination attempt on Saddam in the area. It will be the first of what are expected to be about a dozen trials involving Saddam and his key henchmen.

AP



Saddam Hussein at the Iraqi Special Tribunal hearing in Baghdad.

Suicide attacker kills 25 recruits

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Baghdad, July 29

A SUICIDE attacker detonated an explosives belt in a crowd of Iraqi army recruits in the town of Rabiiah near the Syrian border, killing at least 25 and wounding 35, a police general said. Officials said the attack occurred in the midst of recruits who were training in a security-controlled area and that some of the guards may have knowingly allowed the attacker to enter. The US has placed new urgency on training Iraqi soldiers and police to assume greater security responsibilities so US and other foreign troops can begin going home next year.

In Baghdad, a car bomb exploded near a joint US-Iraqi patrol in the dangerous Dora neighborhood, the police reported. At least three civilians were wounded but casualty reports were incomplete, police Lt. Thaeer Mahmoud said.

A US statement said that two Marines belonging to Regimental Combat Team-2 of the 2nd Marine Division were killed on Thursday by small arms and rocket-propelled grenade fire in a village about 170 miles west of Baghdad. The Marines reported killing nine insurgents, five believed to be Syrians. Jets dropped three laser-guided bombs and one GPS-guided bomb on buildings used by the insurgents as firing positions, destroying all three of them.

Move to rename Iraq opposed

west side - ①
Iraq

President Talabani says the country will never become an Islamic state

HD-12

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Michael Howard

BAGHDAD: Iraq President Jalal Talabani is trying to calm anxiety among liberals and secular figures that the Constitution, which is being considered by the Shia-dominated legislature, will give undue prominence to Islamic law.

Adding to the alarm of secularists, as well as Iraq's non-Muslim minorities, conservative Shia members on the drafting committee are pressing for the country to be renamed the "Islamic Republic of Iraq".

Mr. Talabani said that Iraq would never become an Islamic state, but would enshrine federalism, democracy and pluralism. "Human rights and individual liberties, including religious freedom, will be at the heart of the new Iraq," the President said at his residence in Baghdad. "They are the principles we have been fighting for all our lives. There is no way that we will accept anything less."

He added: "Even if we [Iraqi politicians] do, the Iraqi people won't accept it when it comes to the referendum on the new Constitution." A senior presidential aide said there was "no way" that Mr Talabani would allow the

country to be renamed.

The proposal was made by Amar al Hakim, the son of Abdul Aziz al Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq, and head of the Shia bloc in Parliament.

Ali al Dabagh, a prominent Shia politician, said: "Why not? Our country is an Islamic country. Our identity is Islamic."

Secular Kurds have suggested the country be named the Federal Republic of Iraq, while Sunni Arabs have suggested the Arab Republic of Iraq.

No direct role

The Iraqi President does not have a direct role in drafting the Constitution, but as head of the Kurdish bloc in the National Assembly, the junior partner in the Shia-led coalition Government, he has an effective veto.

A referendum on the new Constitution, which is supposed to be ready by August 15, is scheduled for October 15. If the document is approved, there will be a general election on December 15.

But under a controversial clause in Iraq's Transitional Administrative Law [TAL], the referendum on the permanent Constitution will fail if two-

• **Shia leader wants country named Islamic republic**

• **Secularists, minorities concerned over move**

• **Talabani for role of religion within Constitution framework**

• **Hardliners pushing for Shia law as source of legislation**

thirds of the population in any three provinces reject it – even if it gains a majority nationwide.

The Kurds, who control Iraq's three northern provinces, inserted the clause to guard against encroachment on their self-rule.

Mr Talabani said he believed the role of religion in Iraq should remain as set out in the country's interim Constitution.

That document, drawn up in spring 2004, states that "Islam is the official religion of the state and is to be considered a source of legislation".

In the new Constitution, Shia hardliners have been pushing for

Sharia law to be considered as the "primary" source of legislation, and for inheritance, marriage and divorce to be subject to religious authorities.

Mr Talabani said it took "long hours of discussion and debate to reach the TAL, a document that enshrines many good principles that the Iraqi people have longed for for years".

Controversial issues

He said: "These controversial issues [the relation between Islam and the state] were settled in the TAL in an acceptable way. If we allow that door to open again, nobody knows how it would get closed."

With three weeks until the deadline, discussions remained in limbo on Sunday as committee members waited to see if Sunni Arabs would rejoin the process. They walked out last week after the assassination of Mijbil Issa, a Sunni member of the drafting council.

Sunni Arabs form the backbone of the militancy and their participation in drafting the Constitution is regarded as essential to prevent the further alienation of the once-dominant minority. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

Sweden turns down Saddam trial request

Stockholm, July 25

DEPOSED IRAQI leader Saddam Hussein, who faces trial on charges of crimes against humanity, will not be permitted to stand trial or serve his sentence in Sweden, a Swedish official said today.

"We have said no," justice ministry director, Ann Marie Bolin Pennegaard said, referring to a request from one of Hussein's lawyers for him to either await trial, stand trial or serve his sentence in Sweden. Pennegaard on Friday sent the Swedish government's answer to Hussein's attorney, Giovanni di Stefano. "Sweden has no intention of filing a request to the competent authorities in Iraq for a transfer of Saddam Hussein to Sweden before his trial," Pennegaard wrote in the fax. "Nor has Sweden considered the issue of establishing a seat of the Iraqi Special Tribunal in Sweden. It is also to be noted that there is no possibility under present Swedish legislation. To let Saddam Hussein serve any possible sentence in a Swedish prison after his trial."

According to a report in Swedish daily *Aftonbladet* today, Di Stefano is now planning to ask Iraq and the UN to file an official request for Sweden to accept Hussein before, during or after the trial. "If Iraq or the UN sends a request to Sweden this could still happen," he told the paper, insisting that holding a trial in Baghdad would be too dangerous for Hussein.

In Iraq, twin suicide car bombs hit the capital on Monday and killed at least eight people, even as Australian Prime Minister John Howard made a surprise visit. Iraqi Sunni Arab representatives and parliamentary leaders announced a deal had been reached on ending a Sunni Arab boycott of talks on drafting a post-Saddam constitution. Sunni leaders said they might announce an end to the boycott at a meeting on Tuesday.

The boycott was called in the wake of Tuesday's murder of two of their representatives on the constitutional committee and Sunnis had demanded better protection for their representatives and a full enquiry.

AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Power Shift

Iran-Iraq rapprochement is
changing Gulf geopolitics

THE holding of elections in Iraq has led to political churning which is changing the balance of power in the region. Through much of the eighties, Iran and Iraq slugged it out in a devastating war estimated to have cost a million dead. All that, however, became history when Iraq's newly elected premier, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, took to Teheran a high-powered delegation for a very amicable visit. Al-Jaafari, who had been a political refugee in Iran for more than a decade during President Saddam Hussein's rule, has long-standing ties with the Iranian leadership. The possibility of close Iran-Iraq ties has led to fears among Sunni Arab leaders, including Jordan's King Abdullah II, of the emergence of a 'Shia crescent' in the Gulf region. It must also look threatening to American neoconservatives who had ironically pushed the Iraqi invasion with the notion of changing the balance of power in the Middle East. This is not quite the change they had bargained for.

But American claims that Iran is sheltering Al-Qaida elements are exaggerated. Al-Qaida sees Shias as heretics and is unlikely to have much truck with Teheran. Washington is not making much headway in defeating Iraq's Sunni-led insurgency, but both President Mohammad Khatami and Supreme Jurisprudent Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have expressed a desire in seeing a united and stable Iraq. Washington and Teheran are the two closest allies of the current Iraqi government. Baghdad could thus act as a bridge between Teheran and Washington, much as Islamabad once acted as go-between in a historic rapprochement between Beijing and Washington. Iran's clerical regime has some democratic elements and is popularly rooted; the current American policy of containment is likely to entrench it further. Washington should take a leaf out of New Delhi's book by engaging Teheran, which would strengthen moderates and reformists and ultimately fulfil American objectives. It would also help in defeating Iraq's insurgency, currently a high priority with the Bush administration.

2005

Cloud over Iraq law panel

Baghdad ^{W. Amri} blast kills 40 ^{09/20/01}

Baghdad, July 24 (Reuters): A suicide bomber in a truck blew himself up outside a Baghdad police station today, killing at least 40 people and wounding 25, police and interior ministry sources said.

The bloodshed came amid growing tensions over a committee drafting a constitution that is seen as a vital mechanism for drawing Arab Sunnis, who form the bulk of the insurgency, into a peaceful political process.

The blast in the Mashtal area of eastern Baghdad killed and wounded both policemen and civilians, the police sources said. Television pictures showed a deep crater in the road as ambulances and firefighters attended the scene. The wreckage of a vehicle smouldered more than an hour after the blast.

"This is a very cowardly act carried out by criminals, not mujahideen," said a police major who gave his name as Kasim.

Militants have stepped up suicide bombings in the last two weeks in a campaign designed to topple the US-backed Iraqi government. There have been more than 20 suicide attacks in the past 10 days alone.

Today's attack was the deadliest since a suicide bomber blew himself up next to a fuel truck on July 16, causing a huge conflagration that killed 98 people in a town

^{25/77} south of Baghdad. ^{7.23}

Sunni officials on the constitution-drafting committee, who walked out after a Sunni member and an observer were shot dead last week, say they will not return unless their demands, including an international investigation, are met.

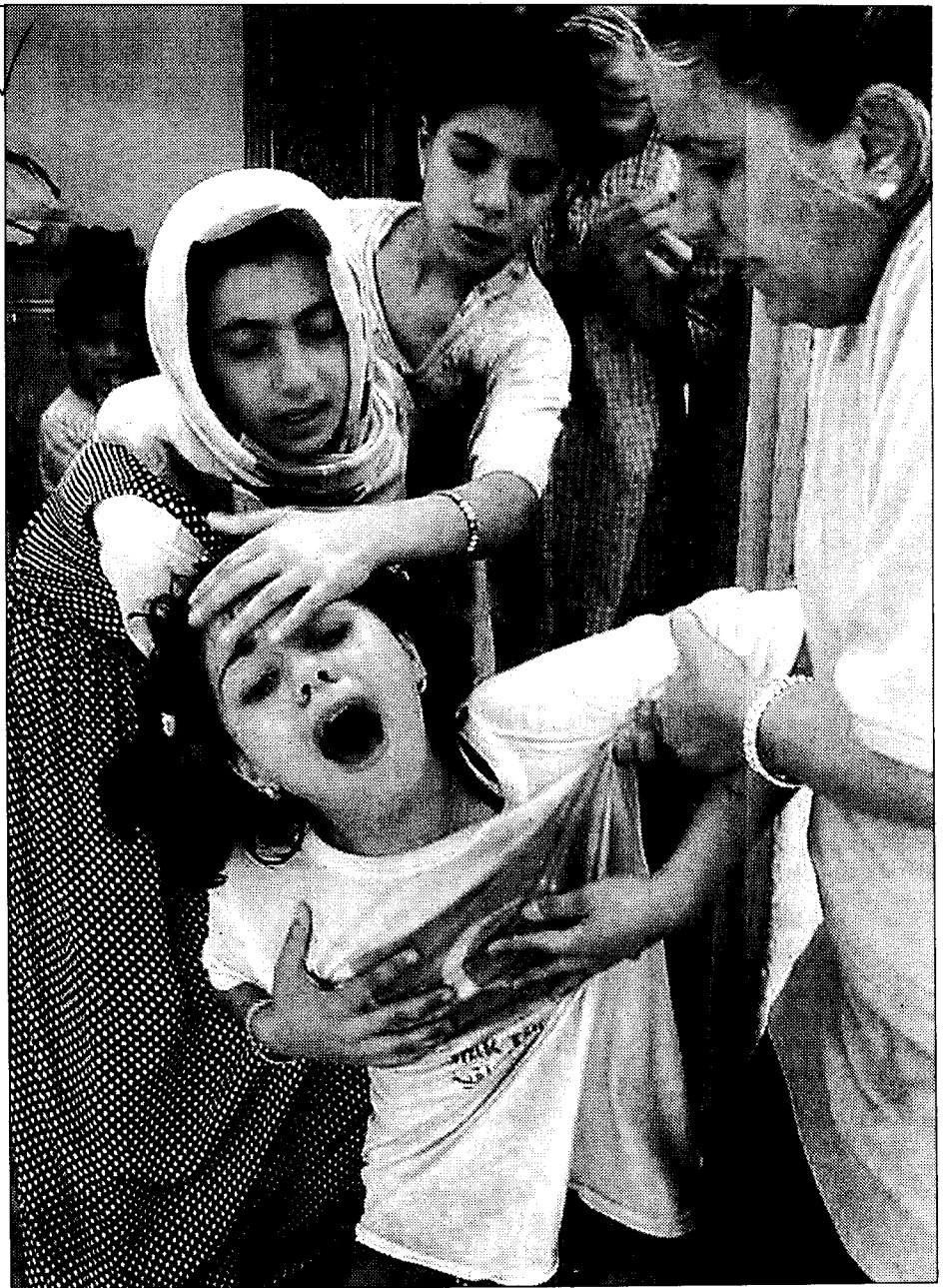
In Amman, Iraqi foreign minister Hoshiyar Zebari said Iraq would finish writing the constitution and hold elections at the end of the year, even if the country's once dominant Sunni minority continued to boycott the process.

"It is in the interest of the Sunnis to participate without making excuses," Zebari said.

"If they do not take part, the constitution will not reflect their hopes and ambitions and the process will not stop. There is a timetable and Iraq has to honour international commitments according to UN resolutions," said Zebari, who chaired a meeting of senior Iraqi diplomats in the Jordanian capital.

Saleh al-Mutlaq, a spokesman for the Sunni National Dialogue Council, said the Iraqi government could not afford to move ahead with the political process without Sunnis.

"My message to brother Zebari is that we are not Sunni members, we are sons of Iraq, we represent a wide proportion of the Iraqi people," he told a news conference.



Eleven-year-old Noor is consoled by relatives as the coffin of her father, an Iraqi soldier gunned down in Kirkuk, is taken for burial on Sunday. (AFP)

Secular Shias seek autonomy

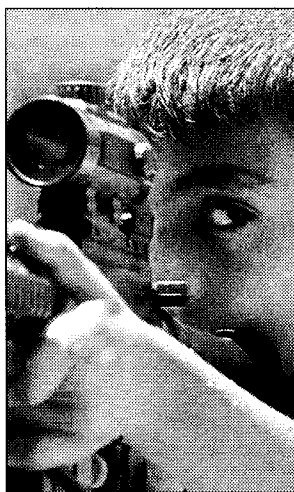
EDWARD WONG

Basra (Iraq), June 30: With the August 15 deadline for writing a new constitution bearing down, a cadre of powerful, mostly secular Shia politicians is pushing for the creation of an autonomous region in the oil-rich south of Iraq, posing a direct challenge to the nation's central authority.

The politicians argue that the long-impoverished south has never got its fair share of the country's oil money, even though the bulk of Iraqi oil reserves lie near Basra, at the head of the Persian Gulf. They also say they cannot trust anyone holding power in Baghdad because of the decades of harsh oppression under the Sunni government of Saddam Hussein.

"We want to destroy the central system that connects the entire country to the capital," said Bakr al-Yasseen, a former foe of Hussein who spent years in exile in Syria. He is one of the chief organisers of the autonomy campaign, which is supported by Ahmad Chalabi, the one-time Pentagon favourite and scion of a prominent Shia family from the south, among others.

Yasseen, who has ties to Jalal Talabani, the Iraqi President and a Kurd, is demanding for the south the same broad powers that the Kurds now have, including an independent parliament, ministries



A boy in Baghdad plays with a toy gun which is a replica of the rifles used by US forces in Iraq. (AFP)

and regional military force.

The Kurds have long demanded a strong measure of autonomy in a future Iraqi state. But the issue of an autonomous south is new, and complicates the already heated discussions on federalism in the new constitution. The religious Shia parties and the Sunnis have generally opposed Kurdish autonomy, but the emergence of a southern drive for greater regional independence could lend important support to the Kurds' quest.

Here in Basra, Iraq's second-largest city, banners have appeared on the streets in recent weeks calling for an au-

tonomous region similar to Iraqi Kurdistan.

Academics and local politicians are holding meetings at night to try to define their demands. Some are talking on the phone to members of the constitutional committee in Baghdad on an almost daily basis.

While religious Shia parties now dominate the national government, many people here fear that the parties may not adequately defend the rights of the south and worry about the rise of another authoritarian government, perhaps a conservative Islamic one.

"There's no democracy in Iraq," Yasseen said, expressing the deep suspicions of moderate and secular Shias. "Anyone who says there's democracy has a little Saddam in his head. He wants to become a Saddam."

Chalabi and Sheik Abdul Kareem al-Muhammadawi, a prominent member of the National Assembly, are planning to propose a regional vote on the question of southern autonomy in October, at the same time as a national referendum on the constitution.

Bodies recovered

The bodies of 13 US troops have been recovered from the crash of a US helicopter in eastern Afghanistan, but seven more soldiers are unaccounted for and some may have been captured.

01 JUL 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Truck bomb claims 98

Three more suicide-bombers strike Baghdad

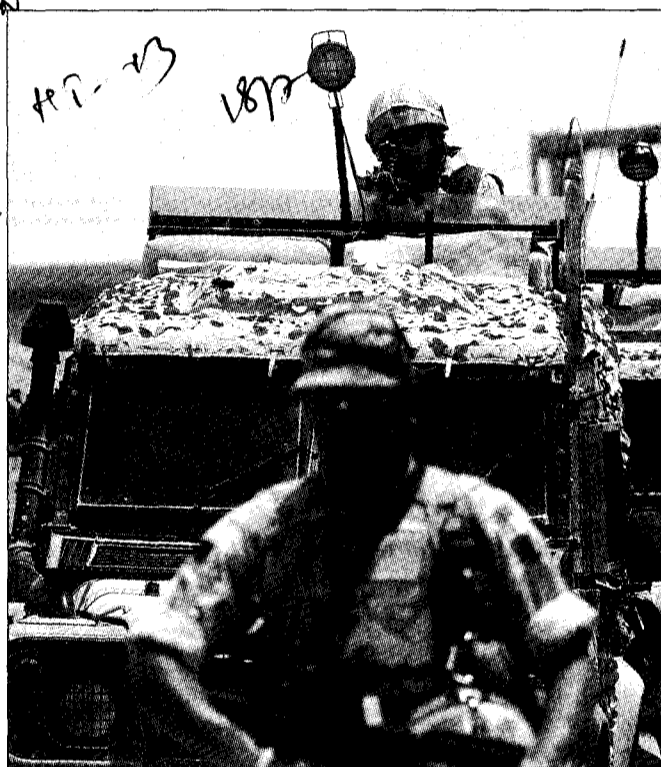
Reuters

Musayyib, July 17

STRICKEN TOWNSPEOPLE swept away the wreckage of a fuel truck bomb that killed 98 people south of Baghdad as three more suicide car bombers struck the Iraqi capital on Sunday in a relentless new campaign. The overnight attack which devastated the highway town of Musayyib was the deadliest since the new Iraqi government took power in April and the highest death toll from a single car bomb since 125 people were killed in February in Hilla, also south of Baghdad. Saturday's bombing prompted denunciations of the authorities in parliament and calls for local militia to take up arms.

Some 15 suicide bombers have struck within just over 48 hours in the capital and along the highway heading south in what al-Qaida's Iraq wing has declared is a new campaign to seize control of Baghdad.

By far the worst incident was the blast near a Shia mosque, which caused devastation in the mixed Sunni and Shia town, in the centre of a violent area dubbed by US forces the "triangle of death". A suicide bomber blew up a fuel truck near a crowded vegetable market outside the mosque. In addition to the 98 killed, hospital sources said 75 wounded were being treated,



British soldiers patrol Basra. Three of them were killed on Saturday in a suspected roadside bomb attack.

including 19 who were critical.

"This is a black day in the history of the town," Musayyib police chief Yas Khudayr said. "After the bomb I went over there and found my son's head. I could not find his body," said Mohsen Jassim of his 18-year-old son.

On Sunday, angry crowds railed against the authorities outside buildings gutted by flame, while bulldozers swept aside the burned-out wreckage of cars. "The police banned trucks from entering Musayyib, yet they let in a fuel tanker. This is a crime! The police are

all agents (of the insurgency)," shouted one man.

At a tense session in parliament, politicians assailed the government for failing to maintain security and called for local militia to be formed to replace failed police and soldiers. "The plans of the interior and defence ministries to impose security in Iraq have failed to stop the terrorists. We need to bring back popular militias," senior parliamentarian Khudair al-Khuzai told the chamber.

Al-Qaida in Iraq, which has urged hundreds of suicide bombers from across the Arab world to come to Iraq to wage holy war, has claimed responsibility for the latest bombing campaign and said more violence would follow, although it did not explicitly claim the Musayyib attack.

"The operation is continuing as planned and we warn the enemies of God of more to come. We ask our Muslim brothers around the world to pray for God to grant us victory," said an al-Qaida Internet statement on Saturday.

Sunday began with three more suicide car bombs in the capital, the police sources said. One attack, at a police checkpoint, killed three and wounded 14. The second, also at a checkpoint, killed one and wounded three. The third, near the former election commission headquarters, killed three and wounded two.

18 Jul 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 US soldiers charged with abusing detainees

7-13
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Baghdad: Eleven US soldiers have been charged with violation of military law in connection with alleged assaults on suspected insurgents captured in the Baghdad area, the US command announced on Saturday.

A US statement said the charges, which were filed on Wednesday, followed a complaint by a soldier assigned to Task Force Baghdad that "other soldiers had allegedly assaulted some suspected terrorists".

"None of the insurgents required med-

ical treatment for injuries related to the alleged assault," the statement added. "Only one of the suspected terrorists remains in custody of coalition forces at this time."

Names of the soldiers and their unit were not released, and the statement gave no further details of the alleged assaults.

US and Iraqi soldiers have been in-

der the soldiers to stand trial.

"All Task Force Baghdad soldiers are expected to act appropriately and to treat all persons under their control with dignity and respect. Allegations of illegal activities will always be thoroughly investigated," said Lt Col Clifford Kent, a Task Force Baghdad spokesman. "The unit involved

has been pulled off line to complete the inquiry and retraining."

US commanders have been especially sensitive to alleged mistreatment of detainees since the abuse of inmates at Abu Ghraib prison triggered a major scandal involving America's handling of prisoners both here and in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Agencies



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Three British soldiers killed in Iraq

London: A roadside bomb killed three British soldiers and injured two others on Saturday in southern Iraq, the British ministry of defence said. The bomb went off as the troops were patrolling the Risaala district of the southern city of Amarah, located in the Maysan province north of Basra, where most British troops in Iraq are based, a spokesman for the ministry said. The fatalities brought to 92 the number of British servicemen who have died since the start of the Iraq war in March 2003. Agencies

Memo shows US, UK plans of Iraq pullout

Baghdad, July 10

A LEAKED British memo outlining plans to bring more than half of the US troops home from Iraq within a year gives the clearest picture yet of how quickly Washington hopes Iraqi forces can take over.

The British government document, published by the Mail on Sunday newspaper, said Washington is discussing plans to cut its force — now nearly 140,000 — to just 66,000 by the middle of next year. Britain would cut its own force to 3,000 from 8,500.

“Emerging US plans assume 14 out of 18 provinces could be handed over to Iraqi control by early 2006,” the memo said, although it made clear the US military’s tempo for troop cuts is not set in stone, with commanders still divided: “There is, however, a debate between the Pentagon/Centcom, who favour a relatively bold reduction in force numbers and the multinational force in Iraq, whose approach is more cautious.”

British defence secretary John Reid did not deny that the memo was genuine, although he said it represented only “prudent planning” for one possible scenario.

But for the first time it puts a

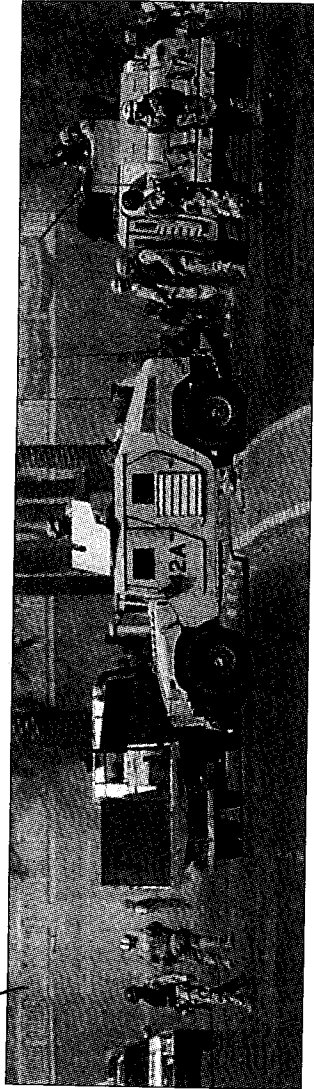
tentative timeline on the strategy President George W. Bush described in a keynote speech last month: “As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down.”

Although the memo comes from across the Atlantic, there is little reason to doubt it gives a fair view of US thinking. Washington’s closest ally has been well appraised of US strategy since Britain sent 45,000 troops to back the invasion.

As it stands, the current US-led multinational force in Iraq is made up of six divisions totalling 160,000 troops. Poland and Britain command one each in the mainly Shia south, which has been comparatively quiet since an uprising was put down in August last year. The British memo says London would turn over its territory to Iraqis early next year.

Washington now has four divisions of its own, one in Baghdad and three in restive areas of the west, northeast and centre of the country. Cutting back to 66,000 troops would leave manpower for just two full US divisions. Enough, probably, to prevent Iraqi militia from contemplating all-out sectarian war, but not enough to participate in day-to-day patrolling of most of the country.

Reuters



US troops and Iraqi soldiers block the site where a suicide bomber blew himself up in Baghdad.

Suicide bombers kill 32 in Baghdad, Mosul

Baghdad, July 10

SUICIDE BOMBERS struck Iraq on Sunday, killing at least 32 people and wounding dozens more in three attacks on an army recruiting centre, a police convoy and civilians, authorities said.

The attacks pushed the death count to over 1,500 people killed in violence since April 28, when Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari announced his government.

In the deadliest blast, a man strapped with explosives blew himself up at an Iraqi military recruiting center at Muthana

airfield near central Baghdad, killing 25 and wounding 47, police and hospital officials said.

A suicide car bomber rammed into a police convoy near the northern city of Mosul, killing four policemen and wounding three, police said. The convoy was carrying Brig. Gen. Salim Salih Meshaal, who escaped injury.

In a third attack, a suicide car bomb exploded in Kirkuk, killing at least three civilians and wounding 16, police said. The attack occurred on a highway near a hospital and municipal building. The bomber used a Mercedes Benz

and the target appeared to be civilians because there were no military or police convoys nearby, authorities said. Most of the casualties were people headed to Kirkuk General Hospital, the police said. Three of the wounded were hospital employees.

US troops carried out a controlled explosion on a parked car rigged with a bomb less than 100 meters away from the first blast in Kirkuk. The second car was intended to cause more casualties as security forces arrived at the scene, police said.

AP

ইরানে উদারপন্থার হার মানুষকে দোষ দেবেন না

সেমন্তী ঘোষ

পারস্য দেশে প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচন হয়ে গেল জুন মাসের শেষে। আট বছরের রাজ্যপাট ছেড়ে প্রাক্তন প্রেসিডেন্ট মহম্মদ খাতামি চলে গেলেন। তাঁর দল রিফর্মিস্ট বা সংস্কারবাদীরা বিম্বিত হয়ে দেখলেন দেশের রায়— মানুষ আর তাঁদের চান না, চান গোঁড়া দক্ষিণপন্থী রক্ষণশীল গোষ্ঠীদের, যাদের নেতা মাহমুদ আহমদিনেজাদ (ছবিতে)। গোটা পৃথিবীকে রীতিমতো চমকে দিয়েছে ইরানি জনগণের এই রায়।

ভোট শেষ পর্যন্ত কত জন দিয়েছেন, তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন অবশ্যই থেকে যায়। সংখ্যাতত্ত্ব বলছে, ৪৯% মানুষ ভোট দিতে বেরিয়েছিলেন; ৭০% মানুষ হয় ভোট দেননি, নয় আহমদিনেজাদের বিপক্ষ প্রার্থীকে ভোট দিয়েছেন; যা ভোট পড়েছে তার ৬১.৭% পকেটে পুরেছেন আহমদিনেজাদ। ছবিটা তাতে যা দাঁড়াচ্ছে, তাতে তাঁর এই জয়কে এক কথায় 'ল্যান্ডস্লাইড ভিকটরি' বলে বর্ণনা করা যাবে না। কথটা তা নয়। 'ল্যান্ডস্লাইড' না হলেও এ জয় বিপুল, সন্দেহ নেই।

কিন্তু কেন এই চমক? কেন মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ও ইউরোপে ইরানের প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের ফলাফল নিয়ে এত ত্রস্ত প্রতিক্রিয়া? ভারতের মতো দেশেরই বা কী এসে যায় ইরানে রক্ষণশীল রাজত্ব প্রতিষ্ঠিত হলে? চমকের আসল কারণ আহমদিনেজাদের সামাজিক বা রাজনৈতিক মতাদর্শ। ইসলাম ধর্মের অনুশাসন সমাজে অক্ষরে অক্ষরে প্রতিষ্ঠা করতে চান তিনি। অর্থাৎ সে দেশের মেয়েদের পক্ষে আবার বড় দুঃসময়। সমাজের রক্তে রক্তে ইসলামি রাষ্ট্রের নজরদারি চান তিনি। অর্থাৎ দেশের মুক্তিকামী লিবারেলদের পক্ষেও বড় দুঃসময়। পশ্চিম-বিরোধিতা, বিশেষত মার্কিন-বিরোধিতার ধ্বজা নবোদ্যমে তুলে ধরতে চান তিনি। তাই অর্থনৈতিক উদারনীতিতে বিশ্বাসী যারা, তাঁদেরও নিরাশ হওয়ার সময় এটা। সবচেয়ে বড় কথা, পশ্চিম এশিয়ায় যে ইসলামি অক্ষের ভয়ে ইজরায়েল তথা আমেরিকা ধরহরিকম্প, ইরানে মৌলবাদী রাষ্ট্র যে সেই অক্ষের পথ প্রশস্ত করবে, ইরাকি ও প্যালেষ্টিনীয়দের যথাসাধ্য সাহস জোগাবে, তা দিনের আলোর মতো নিশ্চিত। আর ভারত? 'ঘর হতে শুধু দুই পা ফেলিয়া' প্রায়-প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলিতে কটর ইসলামি শক্তির উত্থানে যে ভারতের প্রফুল্লতা বা নিরাপত্তা বোধ করবার কোনও কারণ নেই, তাও কি আর বিস্তারিত ব্যাখ্যা করে বলতে হয়?

কিন্তু কেন এমন হল? এই যে আমরা কাগজে-পত্রিকায় সারাক্ষণ পড়ছি, পশ্চিম এশিয়ার দমননীতিবাদী রক্ষণশীল রাষ্ট্রের বিরুদ্ধে অসহায় মুক্তিকামী জনতা হটফট করছে, যন্ত্রণায় দীর্ঘ হয়ে নিষ্ফল মাথা কুটে চলেছে, সেগুলো কি তা হলে সব মিথ্যে, সব ভুল? জনগণই সাধ করে ডেকে আনল প্রগতির বিরুদ্ধে গোঁড়ামিকে, সংস্কারপন্থার বদলে রক্ষণশীলতাকে, মুক্তির বদলে বন্দিত্বকে?

আসলে সংস্কার বা প্রগতির নামে কী চলছে দুনিয়া জুড়ে, সেটাও একটু খতিয়ে দেখা দরকার আমাদের। কোন 'সংস্কার'-এর ওপর ভর করে গণতন্ত্রের-পথে-পিছিয়ে-থাকা এই দেশগুলো সম্পর্কে পশ্চিম দুনিয়া এবং তাদের দেখাদেখি আমরা নিজেদের তুলিয়ে রাখি, সেটা বোঝা দরকার। মনে রাখা দরকার, গত প্রায় এক দশক জুড়ে সংস্কারের নামে কী অসম্ভব গোষ্ঠী-দুর্নীতি চলেছে গোটা ইরান জুড়ে, সামনের সারির নেতা-কর্তা-কর্মীরা কী ভাবে সম্পূর্ণ অবজ্ঞা করেছেন সাধারণ মানুষের চাওয়া-পাওয়ার বাস্তবকে। এত দুর্নীতিগ্রস্ত এবং অসংবেদনশীল একটা সরকার যে টুকতে পারাই

মুশকিল, তা-ও বিস্মৃত হওয়া গিয়েছিল 'সংস্কার'-এর এই আশ্বগরিমার নেশায়।

কোন 'সংস্কার'-এর কথা বলছি আমরা, সেটাও যেন ভুলে না যাই। সংস্কারের এই সময়কালে ইরানিরা দেখেছেন ছ-ছ করে বাড়তে থাকা বাজারদর আর সামাজিক ওলটপালট। পাশাপাশি, গত একটি বছরে (মার্চ ২০০৫ অবধি) ইরানের আমদানির বার্ষিক বৃদ্ধি ২৬ শতাংশ। পশ্চিমি ভোগ্যপণ্য আর বড়লোক 'আপটাইন' সংস্কৃতি ছেয়ে ফেলেছে এক একটা অঞ্চল, যাতে অংশগ্রহণ করতে সম্পূর্ণ অপারগ থেকেছে আশি শতাংশেরও বেশি মানুষ। কুড়ি থেকে তিরিশের মধ্যে যাদের বয়স, সেই ইরানিদের এক-তৃতীয়াংশ আজ চাকরিহীন বেকার। এবং, এই অসাম্য সবচেয়ে বেশি নজরে পড়ে সেই সব বড় বড় শহরে যেখানে নাকি সংস্কার আর উন্নয়নের ঝাঁক-চকচকে চেহারা সবচেয়ে



বেশি স্পষ্ট। তাই গরিব লোকের কথা ছেড়েই দিন, ইরানি মধ্যবিত্তের প্রতিক্রিয়াতেও অবাক লাগার কারণ আছে কি কোনও? দিন গুজরান করতেই যেখানে জেরবার, সময় কোথায় প্রেসিডেন্ট খাতামির নতুন সংস্কার নিয়ে মাথা ঘামাবার, সময় কোথায় মেয়েদের 'ড্রেস-কোড' পরিহার বা পুরুষের চলাফেরার নতুন স্বাধীনতা নিয়ে আশ্বহারা হওয়ার!

না, আমরা জানি, পোশাক কিংবা চলাফেরার ওপর রাষ্ট্রের বন্ধন না থাকার মুক্তিকে ছোট করে দেখাটা কত বড় ভুল হতে পারে। কিন্তু হায় সংস্কার, মানুষের জীবন যে তারও আগে চায় খেয়ে-পারে বাঁচতে, এবং নিরাপদ বোধ করতে, এ

সত্যটা ভুলে গেলে কোথায় গতি তোমার? রাজনৈতিক নেতাদের হাতে যাদের প্রত্যহ জীবন সঁপে দিতে হয়, বিশেষত পশ্চিম এশিয়ার মতো ফুটন্ত অনিশ্চয়ের দুনিয়ায়, তাঁরা কেন অর্থলোলুপ, ক্ষমতাপাগল সংস্কারবাদীদের দেখে দেখে বীতশ্রদ্ধ হয়ে কিছু স্ববিরোধমুক্ত, মৌলবাদী নেতৃত্বকে চাইতে পারেন, তা বোঝা কি এতই দুষ্কর? গত জমানার অসংবেদনশীলতায় তিস্তবিরক্ত মানুষ যখন শোনের কটর ইসলামি আহমদিনেজাদের নির্বাচনী অঙ্গীকার, 'আমরা প্রত্যেকে প্রত্যেকের কাছে পৌঁছব, কেননা আমরা সবাই এক পরিবারেরই অংশ,' তখন সেই আশ্বাস যদি মানুষের মনকে ছুঁয়ে যায়, খুব অবাক হওয়ার কিছু আছে কি? ঘরের কাছেও কি আমরা দেখিনি এই বিভ্রম? ১৯৯৮ সালের আগে স্থিতাবস্থায় বিরক্ত মানুষ কি ভাবেননি দুর্নীতিতে ডুবে থাকা নেতাদের দেখে যে, বিজেপি নেতৃত্ব ধর্ম নিয়ে যতই গোঁড়ামি দেখান, তাঁরা অন্তত স্পষ্টভাষী, সোজা কথার মানুষ? বিজেপি শাসনের পাঁচ বছর নিশ্চয়ই মানুষকে আরও জ্ঞানী করেছে, সততার এই বিভ্রম ভেঙে দিয়েছে। ইরানি সাধারণের জন্যেও হয়তো সেই অভিজ্ঞতা তোলা আছে। হয়তো তারই জন্যে অপেক্ষা।

আসলে প্রগতি আর সংস্কারের এই এক বিরাট দোষ, ইতিহাস থেকে কিছুতেই শিক্ষা নিতে পারে না তারা। না হলে এত যে বার বার 'রিচিং আউট' বা মানুষের পাশে গিয়ে দাঁড়ানোর দৌড়ে তাদের হার হয় মৌলবাদী শক্তির কাছে, কেন তবু চেতনা জাগে না? ঘরের কাছেও একই ঘটনা ঘটতে দেখেছি আমরা। সে ১৯৪৭ সালের আগে অবিভক্ত বঙ্গভূমিতেই হোক, আর একুশ শতকের বাংলাদেশেই হোক, বার বার দেখেছি মৌলবাদ কী ভাবে রাজনৈতিক সাফল্যের তাড়নায় ছুটে গিয়েছে মানুষের কাছে, সাধারণ খেটে-খাওয়া মানুষের দৈনন্দিনতার সঙ্গে মিশে গিয়ে নিজেকে আরও গ্রহণযোগ্য করে তুলেছে, আর প্রগতিবাদ কিছুতেই তার সঙ্গে পাল্লা দিয়ে এঁটে উঠতে পারেনি। হয়তো প্রয়োজনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে জনমুখিতার প্রকরণও মৌলবাদের হাতেই তুলনায় বেশি। নইলে আমাদের দেশেই বা কেমন করে রাম এত সহজে ঘরে ঘরে পৌঁছে যান, আর মার্ক্স পৌঁছতে পারেন না?

Egypt's Iraq envoy abducted

Reuters
Baghdad, July 3

EGYPT'S ENVOY to Iraq has been kidnapped in Baghdad, possibly in response to reports he was to become the first full-ranking Arab ambassador to the US-backed Iraqi government, diplomats and police sources said on Sunday. Ihab el-Sherif, the head of mission, was cornered by gunmen in cars while on a short trip to buy a newspaper near his home on Saturday evening and had not been heard from since, an Egyptian diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

"The motives are believed to be political," he said, noting that Iraq's foreign minister had said just last week that Egypt would become the first Arab state to appoint a full-ranking ambassador to Baghdad since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

The Egyptian foreign ministry, which said it was "checking reports" Sherif had "disappeared," has yet to confirm it plans to upgrade his post. The Baghdad mission had no comment. Iraqi police sources said they had found the envoy's white four-wheel drive car undamaged not far from his home.

An upgrade to full ambassadorial status for Sherif on the part of Egypt, the most populous and traditionally most powerful Arab state, could enhance the standing of a new Iraqi government many Arabs view with suspicion because of its backing from the US and sectarian ties to Shia Iran.

"He was buying a newspaper on Saturday evening when two BMWs full of gunmen blocked his way and kidnapped him," the diplomat said, adding there had been no word from the kidnapers. It appeared the envoy had been on his own.

More than 200 foreigners and thousands of Iraqis have been kidnapped following the US invasion. Many have been released after the payment of ransoms.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

More allegations against new Iran Prez

in Austria (1) 9/28

ASSOCIATED Press
Vienna, July 2

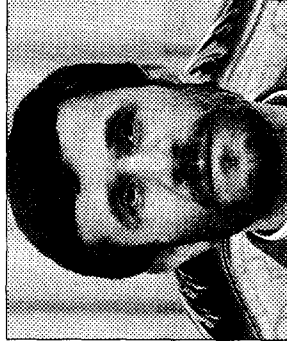
AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES have classified documents suggesting that Iran's president-elect may have played a key role in the 1989 execution-style slayings of an Iranian Kurdish leader and two associates in Vienna, a newspaper reported on Saturday. Austria's interior ministry and the public prosecutor's office are investigating alleged evidence pointing to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's possible involvement in the attack, the daily Der Standard reported. Officials were not immediately available to comment on the report.

These new allegations against Ahmadinejad come even as some of the Americans taken hostage in Iran in 1979 claimed the newly elected leader was one of the hostage-takers. Radical Iranian students took over the US Embassy in Teheran and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

In Austria, Green Party leader Peter Pilz told the newspaper he



wants a warrant issued for the arrest of Ahmadinejad, who he alleged "stands under strong suspicion of having been involved." Pilz accused the hard-liner of planning the murders of Kurdish resistance leader Abdul-Rahman Ghassemlou and two of his colleagues, all of whom were shot in the head at a



A file photo of two captors with a US hostage (left). At least two former hostages say they believe the bearded man on the right is Ahmadinejad. The photo on the right is a very recent photo of Ahmadinejad.

evidence that former Iranian President Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani gave the order to have Ghassemlou killed. He did not elaborate.

He said Ahmadinejad, then a high-ranking member of Iran's elite revolutionary guard, allegedly travelled to the Austrian capital a few days before the slay-

ings to deliver the murder weapons to the commandos who carried out the attack. Austrian authorities have said the gunmen apparently entered the alpine country with Iranian diplomatic passports. Pilz said the journalist was contacted in 2001 by one of the alleged gunmen, described as a former revolutionary guard who has since died in a drowning accident.

"The descriptions of the informant contained details of the scene (of the slayings) which could only have come from someone who was there," Pilz said. He said the gunman's account, which included "very convincing" evidence implicating Ahmadinejad, was turned over at the time to Austria's federal counterterrorism agency.

Prague's Pravo newspaper reported similar allegations on Friday, quoting Hossein Jazdan Panah, an exiled Kurdish opposition member, as saying Ahmadinejad "was in charge of hit operations abroad" at the time of the Vienna killings.

Ghassemlou, the gunman's main target, was secretary-general of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan. His delegation was in Vienna for secret talks with envoys from the Teheran regime. The gunmen managed to slip out of Austria after the attack and were never arrested.

Pilz's Green Party pressed unsuccessfully in 1997 for the creation of a special parliamentary inquiry to look into a possible cover-up by Austrian officials, who it believes bowed to pressure from Iran's government and allowed the commandos to leave Austria, allegedly providing them a police escort to Vienna's international airport. Those allegations have never been proven.

On Friday, the US said it would not be surprised if Ahmadinejad turns out to have been a main participant in the holding of American hostages in Tehran a quarter-century ago, although the Bush administration cautioned that it was still trying to determine the facts.

\$52.5 billions compensation for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait

Money to pay to be raised through oil sales

GENEVA: The United Nations panel overseeing compensation for victims of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait has approved its final claims, bringing the total awarded to \$52.5 billions, the world body has said.

The awards by the U.N. Compensation Commission wrap up 12 years of work in which over 2.68 million claims from individuals, governments and companies totalling \$354 billions were processed.

The commission "has completed one of its two major goals, which is dealing with claims processing," spokesman Joe Sills said. But the payments, which have been running well behind the claim approvals, will continue, he said.

The panel awarded more than \$366 millions to successful claimants, including the Govern-

ments of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which were compensated for damage caused by Iraq to their natural resources, the commission said.

Jordan received the biggest award of \$162 millions. A further \$25.9 millions went to Palestinians who lived in Kuwait or owned small businesses there at the time of the invasion, while the remainder was awarded to individuals and governments from other countries.

Money to pay the claims comes from Iraqi oil sales.

The panel is paying out about \$200 millions every three months, with individuals receiving priority. The next payment is scheduled for mid-July.

The overall amount released for individuals, companies and governments is now \$19.2 billions, the commission said. It is

expected to take years to pay all the claims, with big oil companies having to wait until the end.

Only 248 claims will be left unpaid after the July payments, but they are many of the biggest settlements awarded, Mr. Sills said.

The panel consists of the 15 permanent U.N. Security Council members. The Council decided last year that the claims would be funded by 5 per cent of Iraqi oil sales.

Iraqi officials expressed their displeasure this week with the level of the payments, but did not make an official request to lower it, Mr. Sills said.

Iraq suggested that payments be temporarily suspended until an international conference could convene to discuss the matter further, Mr. Sills said. — AP

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Blood hounds Shias in rise to power in Iraq

AGENCE France-Presse
Baghdad, August 31

IRAQ'S MAJORITY Shias have surged to the zenith of political power following the fall of Saddam Hussein's Sunni dominated regime but their newly-found ascendancy has been scarred by bloodshed.

Wednesday's stampede is the latest and deadliest in a line of tragedies to befall the sect since the toppling of Saddam in April 2003.

Their success in winning elections and taking government has earned them the enmity of al-Qaeda's ringleader in Iraq — the Jordanian-born Sunni Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who makes no secret of his hatred for the newly-empowered Shias. Zarqawi has described the Shias in voice messages attributed to him "worse than our crusader enemies" and vowed "to remove the symbols and the members of the brigades of treason".

The deadliest attacks in postwar Iraq have been against Shia targets.

More than 170 people were killed and around 550 wounded in almost simultaneous attacks in Karbala and against a Baghdad mosque in March 2004. In February this year a suicide bomber killed 118 people in the largely Shia city of Hilla.

In August 2003 at least 83 people were killed, including Mohammed Baqr Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), in a car bomb attack in the shrine city of Najaf.

Even more Shias have been killed, sometimes in their dozens, in the daily litany of attacks against their community which are frequently claimed by Zarqawi's group.

Iraq is the crucible of Shia Islam, with six of the 12 imams of the faith buried in the country.

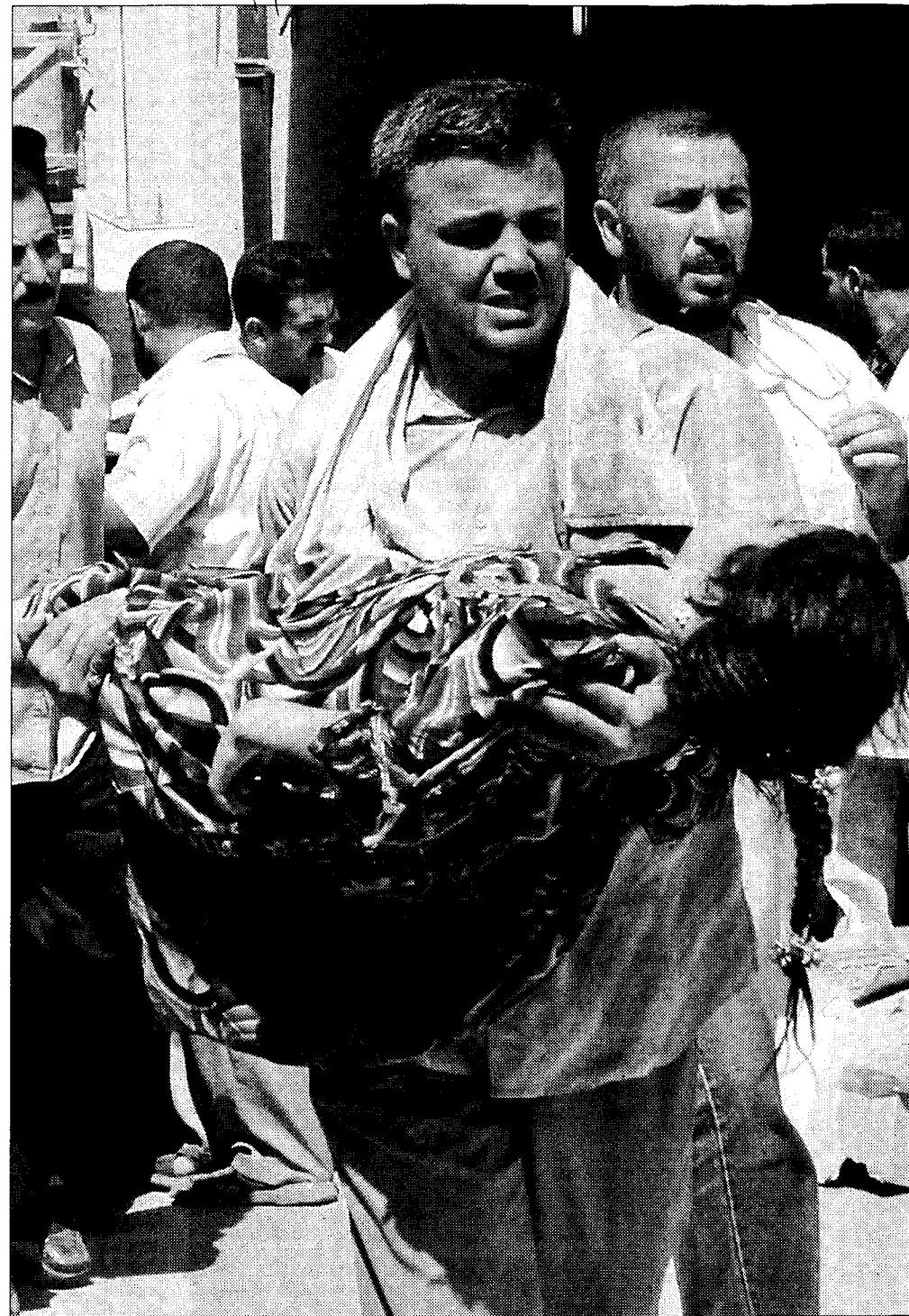
The hundreds killed in Wednesday's stampede were on their way to mark the anniversary of the death of Mussa Kazim, the seventh of the 12 Shia imams, at his mausoleum in the north of the capital. While the Shias make up around 60 per cent of the population, they faced decades of repression dating back to the Ottoman period and their victory in January's elections marked the first time they have won power in Iraq's history.

Along with their Kurdish allies, the Shiites have a crushing majority in Iraq's parliament and hold the powerful post of prime minister, giving them the crucial say over the country's future.

During the 1950s the Shias made up the rank-and-file of the Baath and Communist parties, before being sidelined after the rise to power of Saddam's Sunni clan from Tikrit in the 1970s.

Under Saddam, some Shia religious events such as the public display of grief for the Ashura festival were banned and repression targeted Shiite leaders, including Ayatollah Mohammed Baqer Sadr, who was executed in 1980.

Brutal force was used to put down a Shiite uprising in the aftermath of Iraq's ouster from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf War.



A rescue worker takes the body of a girl to an ambulance.

TRAGEDY TRAIL

Some of the deadliest tragedies that occurred during Islamic religious ceremonies across West Asia

March 10, 2005: Suicide bomber strikes at a Mosul mosque during a funeral, killing at least 47 people and wounding more than 100.

December 19, 2004: Car bombs hit a Najaf funeral procession and Karbala's main bus station, killing 60 and wounding more than 120.

March 2, 2004: Coordinated blasts strike Shia shrines in Karbala and in Baghdad, killing at least 181 and wounding 573.

February 1 2004: 251 pilgrims killed in a stampede in Mina, Saudi Arabia, during the stoning ritual.

August 29, 2003: Car bomb outside a Najaf mosque kills more than 85, including Shia leader Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim.

July 4, 2003: Gunmen storm a Shia mosque in Quetta, Pakistan, killing about 50 and wounding hundreds.

March 5, 2001: 35 pilgrims killed in a stampede during the stoning of the devil ritual at Mina.

April 9, 1998: 180 pilgrims trampled to death after several fell off an overpass during the stoning ritual in Mina.

April 15, 1997: Fire at an overcrowded tent city in Mina kills more than 340 and injures 1,500.

May 23, 1994: 270 killed in a stampede in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, as worshippers surged toward a cavern for the stoning ritual.

July 9, 1990: 1,426 killed in a stampede in an overcrowded pedestrian tunnel in Mecca.

July 31, 1987: 402 people killed and 649 wounded in Mecca when security forces clash with Iranians staging an anti-US demonstration.

August 3, 1980: Pakistani jet carrying Haj pilgrims catches fire soon after takeoff from Jiddah. Aircraft breaks apart after emergency landing, killing 301.



Sea of shoes at stampede site

AGENCE France-Presse
Baghdad, August 31

THOUSANDS OF sandals were littered across a bridge in Baghdad on Wednesday in a chilling reminder of the hundreds of men, women and children who lost their lives in a stampede among crowds of panicked Shia Muslim pilgrims.

A day of Shia religious ceremonies marking the death of a revered imam turned into Iraq's worst nightmare when throngs of pilgrims took fright after a deadly mortar attack on a shrine and rumours of suicide bombers in their midst.

"The crowd started to panic and women and children were being trampled underfoot," said Abdul Walid, 54, lying dazed on the floor of a nearby hospital.

"My son was on my shoulders, I don't know where he is now, everybody was suffocating to death so I eventually had to jump."

In the middle of the bridge, the waist-high concrete barriers designed to foil car bombers were stained with the blood of victims, mostly women and children, crushed to death in the panic.

Covered in bandages and nursing a broken leg, Walid tearfully recounted the tragic events which led to Iraq's deadliest single incident since the 2003 US led invasion. "Even before we heard the rumours, the crowds had come to a standstill, there was no more room to move and people couldn't breathe," said Walid.

Patchwork quilt

Setback at the threshold for Iraq's Constitution

After considerable wrangling and repeated extension of deadlines, Iraq has eventually hammered out a draft Constitution. It has virtually collapsed at the threshold with Sunni Arabs refusing to endorse the document. However much George Bush may welcome the Constitution, the Sunni rejection in Parliament is a major setback to the US strategy to lure this sect away from insurgency and hasten the withdrawal of its troops. The document carries within it the seeds of its own destruction. It is much too brittle. Which raises the awesome prospect that it might push the country further towards the brink. That the Shias and the Kurds have come to an agreement might benefit what the Pentagon colonisers have fashioned as the "exit strategy". But the patchwork quilt has left the Sunnis hopelessly dissatisfied. The loosely-structured federalism that the document envisages has always been anathema to the Sunnis. Ergo, it threatens Iraq's unity. They also stand to lose the oil wealth with the reserves concentrated in the Kurdish north and the Shia south. Islamic law remains an equally prickly issue. The draft refers to Iraq as part of the Islamic world. This too runs counter to the Sunni belief that the country as a whole is part of the Arab world. As one-time rulers, the Sunnis face the demeaning prospect of being ruled by a Constitution they don't accept.

Clearly, Iraq will be in the melting pot for a long while yet. Indeed, the Constitution has placed the country in an acutely critical position. Despite the letdown, the Sunnis are capable of tilting the balance in the referendum on the draft scheduled for mid-October. The Constitution stands nullified in the event of a two-thirds "no" vote in three out of the 18 provinces that make up Iraq. Sunnis are predominant in four provinces. Politically, however, they are unlikely to regain their pre-eminent position as Shias are in a majority overall. The struggle for the mastery of Iraq is fast assuming a sectarian character; a people's rejection of the Constitution in October might well trigger a civil war. In that eventuality, the Sunnis seem destined for still more crippling setbacks. The central portion that they dominate isn't quite a wealth-producing zone. Wracked by poverty and insurgency, the area is bereft of natural resources. Sectarian bloodletting will rule out an equitable distribution of such reserves.

How to avoid civil war in Iraq

49-11 318

Nicaragua and South Africa, not the U.S., should be the inspiration for the people framing Iraq's constitution.

George Monbiot

BETWEEN THE idea and the reality falls the shadow of occupation. Whatever the parliamentarians in Iraq do to try to prevent total meltdown, their efforts are compromised by the fact that their power grows from the barrel of someone else's gun. When George W. Bush picked up the phone last week to urge the negotiators to sign the constitution, he reminded Iraqis that their representatives — though elected — remain the administrators of his protectorate. While American and British troops stay in Iraq, no government there can make an undisputed claim to legitimacy. Nothing can be resolved in that country until our armies leave.

This is by no means the only problem confronting the people who drafted Iraq's constitution. The refusal by the Shias and the Kurds to make serious compromises on federalism, which threatens to deprive the central, Sunni-dominated areas of oil revenues, leaves the Sunnis with little choice but to reject the agreement in October's referendum. The result could be civil war.

Can anything be done? It might be too late. But it seems to me that the transitional assembly has one last throw of the dice. This is to abandon the constitution it has signed, and Mr. Bush's self-serving timetable, and start again with a different democratic design.

The problem with the way the constitution was produced is the problem afflicting almost all the world's democratic processes. The deliberations were back to front. First the members of the constitutional committee, shut inside the green zone, argue over every dot and comma; then they present the whole thing (25 pages in English translation) to the people for a yes or no answer. The question and the answer are meaningless.

All politically conscious people, having particular interests and knowing that perfection in politics is impossible, will, on reading a complex document like this, see that it is good in some places and bad in others. They might recognise some articles as being bad for them but good for society as a whole; they might recognise others as being good or bad for almost everyone. What then does yes or no mean?

Let me be more precise. How, for example, could anyone agree with both these statements, from Articles 2 and 19 respectively? "Islam is the official religion of the state and is a basic source of legislation: no law can be passed that contradicts the undisputed rules of Islam." (In other words, the supreme authority in law is God.) "The judiciary is independent, with no power above it other than the law."

Or both these, from Articles 14 and 148? "Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination because of sex, ethnicity, nationality, origin, colour, religion, sect, belief, opinion or social or economic status"; "Members of the presidential council must ... have left the dissolved party [the Ba'ath] at least 10 years before its fall if they were members in it."

Impossible choice

Faced with such contradictions, no thoughtful elector can wholly endorse or reject this document. Of course, this impossible choice is what we would have confronted (but at 10 times the length and a hundred times the complexity) had we been asked to vote on the European constitution. The yes or no question put to us would have been just as stupid, and just as stupefying. It treats us like idiots and — because we cannot refine our responses — reduces us to idiots. But while it would have merely en-

hanced our sense of alienation from the European project, for the Iraqis the meaninglessness of the question could be a matter of life and death. If there is not a widespread sense of public ownership of the country's political processes, and a widespread sense that political differences can be meaningfully resolved by democratic means, this empowers those who seek to resolve them otherwise.

Last week Mr. Bush compared the drafting process in Baghdad to the construction of the American constitution. If they believe that the comparison commends itself to the people of Iraq, they are plainly even more out of touch than I thought. But it should also be obvious that we now live in more sceptical times. When the United States Constitution was drafted, representative democracy was a radical and thrilling idea. Now it is an object of suspicion and even contempt, as people all over the world recognise that it allows us to change the management but not the firm. And one of the factors that has done most to engender public scepticism is the meaninglessness of the only questions we are ever asked. I read the manifesto of the British Labour Party before the last U.K. election and found good and bad in it. But whether I voted for or against, I had no means to explain what I liked and what I did not.

Does it require much imagination to see the link between our choice of meaningless absolutes and the Manichean worldview our leaders have evolved? We must decide at elections whether they are right or wrong — about everything. Should we then be surprised when they start talking about good and evil, friend and foe, being with them or against them?

Almost two years ago Troy Davis, a democracy-engineering consultant, pointed out that if a constitutional process in Iraq was to engender trust and national commitment, it had to "promote a culture of democratic debate." Like Professor Vivian Hart, of the University of Sussex, England, he argued that it should draw on the experiences of Nicaragua in 1986, where 100,000 people took part in town hall meetings reviewing the draft constitution, and of South Africa, where the public made two million submissions to the drafting process. In both cases, the sense of public ownership this fostered accelerated the process of reconciliation. Not only is your own voice heard in these public discussions, but you must also hear others. Hearing them, you are confronted with the need for compromise.

But when negotiations are confined to the green zone's black box, the Iraqis have no sense that the process belongs to them. Because they are not asked to participate, they are not asked to understand where other people's interests lie and how they might be accommodated. And when the whole thing goes belly up, it will be someone else's responsibility. If Iraq falls apart over the next couple of years, it would not be unfair, among other factors, to blame the fact that Davis and Hart were ignored. For the people who designed Iraq's democratic processes, history stopped in 1787.

Deliberative democracy is not a panacea. You can have fake participatory processes just as you can have fake representative ones. But it is hard to see why representation cannot be tempered by participation. Why should we be forbidden to choose policies, rather than just parties or entire texts? Can we not be trusted? If not, then what is the point of elections?

The age of purely representative democracy is surely over. It is time the people had their say. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

Talabani seeks support for charter

Parliament adjourns without voting on draft; referendum set for October 15

BAGHDAD: Iraqi President Jalal Talabani on Sunday called on Iraqis to support the draft constitution which was signed after weeks of wrangling between politicians.

"We hope that this constitution will be accepted by all Iraqis and that it will be for everybody. We are optimistic ... For sure, there is no book that is perfect and cannot be amended except the holy Koran," he told a news conference.

Mr. Talabani, a former Kurdish guerrilla leader who fought Saddam Hussein, had brought together leaders from across the sectarian and ethnic divide to try to reach consensus on the document.

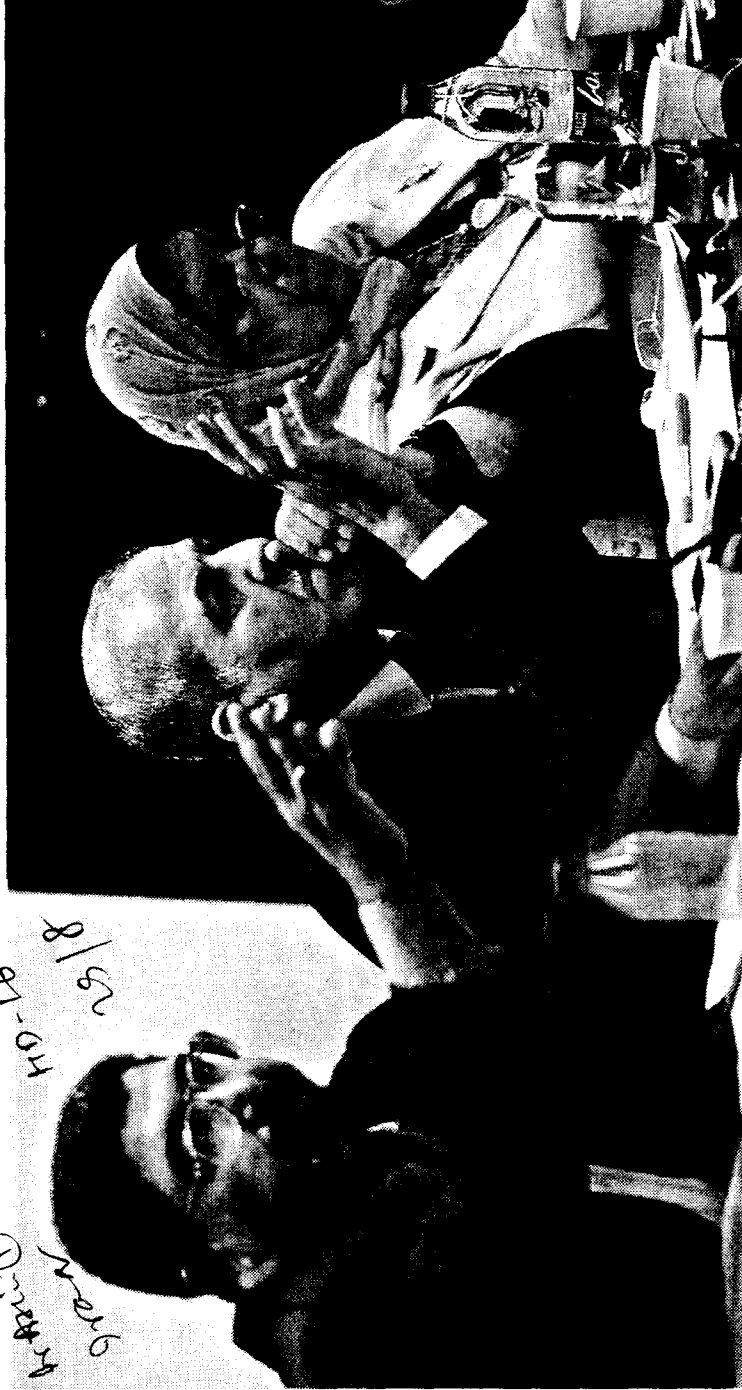
Sunni pledge

Sunni Arabs, whose community is the seat of the militancy, are opposed to the constitution and have vowed to undermine it in a referendum in October.

Mr. Talabani said the draft constitution was ready to be put to the referendum.

"The draft constitution will be presented to the Iraqi people, who are known for their intelligence, to give their verdict on October 15," Mr. Talabani told reporters at a ceremony to mark the end of the drafting process.

"There are objections from our Sunni Arab brothers... but nobody can claim that they represent the whole spectrum of Sunni Arabs," said the President.



CHARTING THE FUTURE: Two members of Iraq's constitution drafting committee raise their hands in support of a point during the panel's meeting in Baghdad on Sunday. — PHOTO: AFP

He said the draft when approved by the people would ensure the "fundamental law" of the nation. "If the nation rejects it, we will write another one".

Special session

Parliament speaker Hajim al-Hasani, a Sunni, who addressed reporters jointly with Mr. Talabani, said the writing of the draft was a "difficult and complicated" process. "Our aim was always to reach a consensus to ensure a victory in the referendum," Mr. Hasani said.

the constitution drafting panel grouping Iraq's majority Shiites with Kurds and Sunni Arabs.

The draft lays down the political system of Iraq as "republican, parliamentary, democratic and federal", and refers to Islam as "a main source of legislation".

The word "party" was omitted from Article 7, referring only to

banning "Saddam's Ba'ath" instead of "Saddam's Ba'ath Party" in an earlier draft.

It did not meet Sunni Arab demands to describe Iraq as being part of the Arab world, sticking to an earlier version, which said that "Arab people in it (Iraq) are part of the Arab nation." — Reuters, AP

Abu Ghraib lets out 1000

Baghdad, Aug. 27 (Reuters): The US military said today it had freed 1,000 detainees from Iraq's notorious Abu Ghraib prison at the Baghdad government's request, in the largest release to date.

It was not clear if the decision was linked to a demand by Arab Sunnis opposed to a draft constitution that authorites release Sunni prisoners so they can participate in a referendum on the text and elections later this year.

"I know this is a big one, but I can't say if it is related to anything that is going on," said US military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Steven Boylan. Whether or not it was part of negotiations on the charter, the release is likely to ease concerns over the estimated 10,000 Iraqi prisoners held in US detention centres in the country.

"This is a good move that we definitely welcome," said Hussein al-Falluji, one of 15 Sunnis on the panel drafting the constitution.

Parliament Speaker Hajem al-Hassani confirmed that a draft constitution with new

proposals on disputed points such as federalism would be reviewed by Arab Sunnis and the chamber would receive a response tomorrow.

Sunnis are fiercely opposed to federalism, fearing it would give Shia and Kurdish leaders dominating the government control over oil resources in northern and southern Iraq.

The plight of prisoners in the US-run Abu Ghraib, once one of Saddam Hussein's most feared prisons, has been one of the most emotional issues for Iraqis since a US-led invasion toppled the former Iraqi President in 2003.

A scandal broke in the facility west of Baghdad last year when leaked photographs of US military guards abusing prisoners and forcing them to simulate sexual acts provoked an international outcry.

"This major release, the largest to date, marks a significant event in Iraq's progress toward democratic governance and the rule of law," said a US military statement.

US military officials say

detainees sent to Abu Ghraib typically spend six months to a year in custody before a decision is made in Iraqi courts on whether to prosecute them.

US military lawyers in Baghdad estimate that 80 to 85 per cent of those arrested by US forces are released without being convicted.

Leaders of the Sunni community, the seat of the insurgency, have complained that lengthy detentions without charge, during which prisoners have no access to lawyers or family, are unfair. The military said the released prisoners were not guilty of serious crimes such as bombings, murder, torture or kidnapping and had renounced violence.

Shia and Kurdish leaders dominating the government, are hoping to get Sunni leaders on board for the constitution in a bid to neutralise the insurgency.

But negotiations over the charter, described as a blueprint for democracy by Shias and Kurds, and a possible trigger for civil war by the Sunnis, have been deadlocked for weeks.



Sergeant Cindy Barrois (left) checks the identity cards of prisoners before their release from the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad. (AFP)

Candid book

New York, Aug. 27 (AP): Iraqi prisoners could lift their cell doors right off their hinges. One senior sergeant whited away his evenings blasting grazing sheep with a guard-tower machine gun.

The only woman commanding general in the war zone, Abu Ghraib prison chief Janis Karpinski, has written a memoir of her fateful year there, a candid portrait of an often dysfunctional US army. The book, *One Woman's Army*, sheds little new light on the prison abuse scandal, in which Karpinski, an army reserve brigadier general, was the highest-ranking officer punished, reprimanded and demoted to colonel.

Shi'ites to submit draft Constitution

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Aug. 27. — Iraq's head of Parliament announced today that Shi'ites and Kurds had agreed to Sunni Arab proposals for the new constitution and were awaiting a response. But Sunni negotiators said the changes fall short of their demands and urged voters to reject the draft in the 15 October referendum.

Speaker Hajim al-Hassani, a Sunni, said the amended text dealing with issues of federalism and former members of Saddam Hussein's Baath Party would be submitted to Parliament tomorrow. The legislature overwhelmingly Shiite and Kurdish, may vote on it or simply refer it to the voters.

Sunnis plan counter-proposals

BAGHDAD, Aug. 27. — Sunni negotiator, Mr Fakhri al-Qaisi said on Saturday that the Sunni constitutional team sees no "essential changes" in a compromise offer made by the Shiites and Kurds and will respond later with their own proposals. He added that the Sunnis "will not abandon our stance", and that the issue of federalism, both in principle and mechanism be postponed for the next parliament to decide.

The Shiites made an offer to delay a decision on the details of how federalism would be implemented until after parliamentary elections in December. The Shiites said that the compromises offered on federalism and the status of Saddam Hussein's Baath party were their final proposals on the issues. AP

Saleh al-Mutlaq said the final draft fails to meet Sunni aspirations.

With nearly 80 percent of the population, the Shiites and their Kurdish allies are gambling that the draft would win approval in the referendum. But if two-thirds of the voters in any three of the eighteen provinces reject the constitution, it will be defeated. Sunnis form a majority in at least four provinces and clerics already have urged them to vote "no" if the draft doesn't serve Sunni interests.

Sunnis fear that federalism demanded by the Shiites and Kurds would establish a giant Shiite state in the south and encourage future bids by the Kurds to expand their region into northern oil-producing areas.

1,000 inmates freed



US Army personnel check ID cards prior to the release of the prisoners. AFP

BAGHDAD, Aug. 27. — The US military has released nearly 1,000 prisoners from Abu Ghraib prison after Iraq authorities requested that they be set free, a military statement said on Saturday.

The move, the largest prisoner release to date, followed appeals by Sunni representatives at the stalled constitutional to the government to start releasing thousands of prisoners who have been languishing in the jail for months without being charged with a crime. After a meeting with President Jalal Talabani on Thursday, Sunni negotiator Saleh al-Mutlaq said the president agreed to release many detainees before the October 15 referendum on the constitution. — AP

Sunnis defiant on Iraq charter

Differences yet to be resolved; U.S. frees 1,000 inmates from Abu Ghraib

Atul Aneja

MANAMA: Abiding by a key Sunni demand, the U.S. military has announced the release of 1,000 prisoners from the notorious Abu Ghraib jail amid on-going negotiations over Iraq's new Constitution.

American officials declined to comment on whether the release of prisoners was meant to soften the Sunni opposition to the draft Constitution, which already has the approval of ethnic Kurds and the country's majority Shias. A Sunni endorsement is seen as necessary for the approval of the charter in a mandatory national referendum in October. Sunnis can defeat the draft during the referendum as they are in majority in four of Iraq's 18 provinces. Under the interim Constitution, a two-thirds majority in three provinces can reject the document.

U.S. pressure

Shia negotiators said an agreement on a final draft had been reached and the text would be put before Parliament within the next two days. Sunni politicians, however, have denied that an agreement had been reached.

With the Americans exerting pressure to rescue the talks, Shias have reportedly made two additional concessions. First, they have agreed to defer a decision on having a federal Iraqi state to the next Parliament, which could convene following fresh elections by early next year. Second, a decision on barring former Ba'ath party members from the Government,



UNITED FRONT: Sunni and Shia Arabs demonstrate for Iraqi unity and against federalism in the northern oil-rich city of Kirkuk on Friday. - PHOTO: AFP

opposed by the Sunnis, could also be similarly postponed.

Sunnis have rejected the "federal principle" in the draft Constitution, as they see it as a cover for denying them revenues generated from exports of oil, which is concentrated in the Kurdish north of the Shia-dominated

south. The show of flexibility from the Shias follows a call by U.S. President George Bush to Abdulaziz Al Hakim, a prominent Shia leader who heads the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI).

Mr. Bush during the conversation had urged the Shia leader to

make concessions in order to get Sunni support. Despite these efforts, prominent Sunni leaders have said that the charter should be defeated in a referendum.

Saleh al-Mutlag, a Sunni negotiator said the referendum offered the best chance for Iraq to escape a "terrifying and dark fu-

ture." Acknowledging differences had not been narrowed down, a Government spokesman told Al-Arabyia television that talks had floundered because, "One group sees Iraq as a single sovereign state while another sees a country made up of two or three parts."

Resistance mounts in Iraq over Constitution



BACK TO THE FUTURE? Iraqis hold the national flag and picture of ousted President Saddam Hussein while protesting against the new Constitution, on the streets of Baquba, on Friday. — AFP

The Independent

BAGHDAD, Aug. 26. — The prolonged attempts to adopt Iraq's new constitution descended into chaos yesterday, while a fresh wave of violence was unleashed across the country as insurgents carried out a devastating assault on Baghdad.

At least 40 people — including 13 policemen

and an American — died after dozens of masked gunmen occupied parts of the capital. President Mr Jalal Talabani escaped an assassination attempt, in which eight of his bodyguards were killed and 15 others were injured.

Yesterday also saw the discovery of the bodies of 36 men — believed to be Kurds — in a dry river bed near the Iranian border at Badrah.

All the victims had been "executed" with bullets in their heads.

Adding a fresh dimension to the ongoing crisis over the constitution, fight broke out between Shia groups divided over the issue, resulting in nine deaths.

Sunni officials have been

vehemently opposed to the federal structure of the draft document, claiming that it was a pretext for Shia and Kurds to carve out the oil-rich north and south of the country between them.

However, the radical Shia cleric, Moqtada al-Sadr and his Mehdi Army, who have their power base in the relatively poor (in resources) central Iraq, are also opposed to federalism and yesterday they clashed with pro-constitution Shias of the Badr group, led by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, in a series of gun battles across the Shia heartland in southern and eastern Iraq.

Meanwhile confusion surrounded the political process, as at one stage, government spokesman

Iran 'not afraid' of UN action

VIENNA, Aug. 26. — Iran hopes talks with Europe on easing tensions over Tehran's nuclear ambitions are not dead, but does not fear the threat of UN Security Council action if it continues activities linked to uranium enrichment, the country's top negotiator said today. "With the power it enjoys in the region, there is no way that Iran can be worried about the threat of the security council," the envoy, Ali Larijani, said. — AP

Laith Kubba declared the changes had been agreed and it would be put to the vote in the national Assembly by the end of the day

ALUMNI REUNION
 On its Centenary Celebration Goenka College of Commerce & Business Administration calls all its cherished alumni for a reunion on 3rd September, 2005. Saturday, at 3-00 p.m., at the college auditorium.
 Govt. of West Bengal
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Iraq draft sparks Shia violence

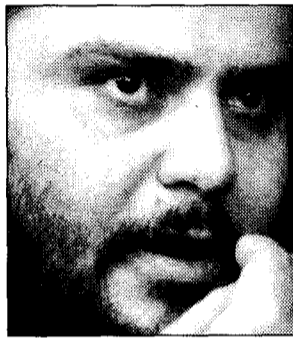
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Baghdad, Aug. 25 (Reuters): Several Iraqis died overnight in Shia clashes in the south, apparently triggered by differences over a constitution draft that parliament was meant to back today.

Supporters of Shia cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who has denounced the draft, clashed with pro-government police and rival Shia militias in the holy city of Najaf and other southern towns. Clashes broke out last night between Sadr's armed followers and a crowd who burned down his offices in Najaf, killing at least six people.

That sparked violence in Baghdad and Shia towns across southern Iraq, as members of the pro-Sadr Mehdi Army militia attacked offices of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution and its



Moqtada al-Sadr in Najaf. (AFP)

"Badr" militia. SCIRI is headed by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, a powerful Shia cleric.

The Shia-dominated parliament was due to sit today to back the charter that has already provoked warnings of civil war from Sunnis.

However, parliamentary

officials said they did not know when — or even if — the National Assembly would convene as a three-day breathing space for final negotiations expires.

Sadr, who led two uprisings last year, demanded that a rival Islamist leader condemn his own followers over the deadly Shia infighting that rocked Najaf. "I demand that brother Abdul Aziz al-Hakim make an official announcement condemning the aggression by his representatives and some extremists," Sadr said.

But the violence, coming on top of a bloody show of force by Sunni insurgents on Baghdad's streets yesterday, may dent government hopes of a smooth passage for the constitution in an October referendum.

Shi'ites now clash over Iraq constitution

ALASTAIR MACDONALD
BAGHDAD, AUGUST 25

A FINAL version of Iraq's constitution has been completed and the document was to be approved later on Thursday, government spokesman Laith Kubba said. He told reporters Parliament did not need to meet formally to approve the charter because it had effectively been passed on Monday.

Sunnis, who have remained fiercely opposed to the charter, say it could lead to civil war.

Meanwhile, Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has joined leaders of the Sunni Arab minority in denouncing the draft constitution as a recipe for Iraq's dissolution. Overnight, Sadr's supporters clashed



A man surveys what used to be his office, destroyed during clashes between rival Shi'ite factions in Najaf. Reuters

with pro-government police and rival Shi'ite militias in Najaf. Six people were killed and dozens wounded.

At a morning news conference in Najaf, Sadr had conciliatory words for Prime Minis-

ter Ibrahim Jaafari. But he was resolute in his dismissal of the constitution, saying it "still falls short and is not acceptable... Federalism in itself is fine, but not in the current circumstances of occupation".

But the violence, coming on top of a bloody show of force by Sunni insurgents on Baghdad's streets on Wednesday, may dent government hopes of a smooth passage for the constitution in an October referendum.

Sunni Arabs insist elections to a new interim Assembly should be held, because of disputes over the document That would mean taking the constitutional process back almost to the beginning, something the US government has made clear it does not want.

Drafting committee member Hussein al-Falluji Sunnis would take the case to an Iraqi court if the charter is passed, claiming that the three-day grace period was a violation of interim regulations.—Reuters

20 AUG 2005 INDIAN EXPRESS

What the IAEA really found in Iran

The best way for the world to satisfy itself that there are no undeclared nuclear activities in Iran is for the IAEA to use its inspection rights under the Additional Protocol. H. Amin
gram
10-11

Siddharth Varadarajan

THE REPORT Mohammed El-Baradei presented to the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors on September 2, 2005 represents the most recent assessment of Iran's nuclear programme made by the watchdog body. In this report, the Director-General sought to quantify the progress made in dealing with a number of adverse findings first brought to the Board's notice on November 15, 2004.

Those findings involved six instances of Iran's "failure to report" certain nuclear activities, mostly concerning enrichment and

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laser experimentation and including the import of uranium from China in 1991; two instances of "failure to declare" enrichment facilities; six instances of "failure to provide design information or updated design information" for certain facilities, and a general charge of "failure on many occasions to cooperate to facilitate the implementation of safeguards, as evidenced by extensive concealment activities."

Dr. El-Baradei then noted that Iran had taken a number of corrective actions as a result of which "the Agency was able by November 2004 to confirm certain aspects of Iran's declarations [related to conversion activities and laser enrichment], which ... would be followed up as matters of routine safeguards implementation." This was a major statement by the IAEA because, in effect, it was saying that much of the "concealment" the Iranians are accused of resorting to in the past had been effectively neutralised and was no longer a source of extra concern for the Agency.

If the IAEA was still not in a position to

declare that Iran had no undeclared nuclear material and undeclared enrichment activities, this was for two sets of reasons. First, it was still assessing Iran's explanations for questions raised by it about the Gchine uranium mines and two long-since abandoned research projects into polonium (Po-210) and plutonium separation. Secondly, questions still remained on two important fronts. In the course of its visits to the not-yet-operational Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant at Natanz and the Kalaye Electric Company in 2004, the IAEA had found trace amounts of highly enriched uranium (HEU) and low enriched uranium (LEU), giving rise to concerns that Iran had already begun enriching uranium — presumably at an undisclosed third location. The Iranians denied producing the HEU and LEU but the IAEA needed to satisfy itself. Moreover, the Agency felt it had yet to learn the full extent of Iranian research work on the P-2 gas centrifuge, the designs for which had been procured from the A.Q. Khan clandestine network.

After analysis of swipe samples, IAEA experts now say the HEU was Pakistani and presumably came to be in Natanz because imported centrifuge components were contaminated. The origin of the LEU contamination has yet to be established but there are some indications it is of Russian provenance. As for the centrifuges themselves, the IAEA wants more documentation to convince itself that Iran is telling the truth about not pursuing any work on the P-2 design between 1995, when it first acquired the technology, and 2002, when it made modifications necessary for composite rotors. This, then, is the main outstanding question Iran needs to answer.

No threat to peace

Not only is Iran's failure in this regard far less dramatic than the American accusations of a "clandestine weapons pro-

gramme" and of "deception," it also cannot conceivably be called a threat to international peace and security. Yes, the IAEA has yet to conclude there are no undeclared nuclear materials or activities in Iran. But, as Dr. El-Baradei himself noted in his September 2 report, "the process of drawing such a conclusion, after an Additional Protocol is in force, under normal circumstances, is a time consuming process." Since the Agency believes Iran has had a "past pattern of concealment," this conclusion "can be expected to take longer than in normal circumstances."

In effect, Dr. El-Baradei was saying that the IAEA's inspectors should be allowed to do their work. For this, "Iran's full transparency is indispensable and overdue." What he did not — and could not — say was that the inspections process should not be short-circuited or politicised by interested parties. A case in point is the polonium-beryllium controversy, which Washington had hoped would emerge as Iran's proverbial smoking gun.

When asked about bismuth irradiation experiments it had conducted at the Teheran Research Reactor (TRR) between 1989 and 1993 to extract polonium, Iran pointed out that it was not required to do so under the safeguards agreement and that "in any case, details of the experiments were in the logbook of the TRR reactor, which has been safeguarded for 30 years." Polonium has many civilian applications but also plays a role, when combined with beryllium, as a neutron initiator in some nuclear weapon designs. Seizing on this, the U.S. insisted Iran had imported beryllium as well. When the IAEA investigated this and ruled out any such imports, U.S. officials planted stories about how Dr. El-Baradei had "succumbed to Iranian pressure." These stories were then used to build a campaign to deny him another term as Director-General, a cam-

paign which ultimately failed.

Regardless of U.S. motivations, however, Iran, at the end of the day still has a responsibility to demonstrate to the world that it is in full compliance with its safeguards obligations. And the world has the right to satisfy itself that Iran is not planning to make nuclear weapons. Earlier this year, Bruno Pellaud, former IAEA Deputy Director-General for safeguards, was asked by Swissinfo whether Iran was intent on building a nuclear bomb. "My impression is not," he replied, adding that "the IAEA says there is no evidence of a weapons programme." Dr. Pellaud then posed a rhetorical question — Is this naiveté? — and elaborated on his assessment: "My view is based on the fact that Iran took a major gamble in December 2003 by allowing a much more intrusive capability to the IAEA. If Iran had had a military programme they would not have allowed the IAEA to come under this Additional Protocol. They did not have to."

As matters stand, the only major unexplained issue is the extent of Iran's research work on the P-2 centrifuge. Even if the Agency's worst fears are true — that Iran actually worked on the P-2 design during that time — this matters only if that knowledge was used to set up another enrichment facility somewhere else in the country. Though this is unlikely, especially given the rather modest achievements on display at Natanz (which itself was supposed to be a "concealed" facility), the Additional Protocol gives the IAEA a broad licence to inspect any facility it wishes. Using those powers — and relying on intelligence inputs from the U.S. — Agency inspectors recently visited military sites at Kolahdouz, Lavisan, and Parchin. Nothing was found. If a secret enrichment plant exists, the enforcement of Iran's safeguards and inspection obligations is a far better way to unearth it than the threat of sanctions.

Iraq: pressure mounts on Blair

Patrick Wintour and
Julian Glover

LONDON: British Cabinet members have admitted that signs of the breakdown of law and order in British-controlled southern Iraq will place extra pressure on Tony Blair ahead of next week's Labour party conference.

Ministers familiar with Iraq suggested it was a worrying development that the Iraqi Government in Baghdad had not had the de facto political authority to force the police in Basra to free the two SAS men. "We don't seem to be building a nation," one Cabinet aide said.

Explicit demand

Liberal Democrats at Blackpool on Tuesday restated their demand for a timetable for British withdrawal to be set as soon as possible, even if it means troops leaving before the security situation improves.

Although Sir Menzies Campbell, the party's foreign affairs spokesman, has argued that troops may have to stay beyond the end of this year, the party's demand for a pullout has become increasingly explicit. The Lib Dem

leader, Charles Kennedy, is expected to make Iraq a substantial feature of his conference address tomorrow.

Labour activists are trying to make Iraq a point of challenge to the leadership at next week's conference in Brighton, but privately are not optimistic. Carol Turner, the Labour CND [Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament] secretary, said: "A number of constituency parties have put in resolutions linking the London bombings with the invasion of Iraq." — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

9 Americans killed

Reuters reports from Baghdad:

Bomb blasts in Iraq have killed nine Americans, including a U.S. State Department security officer, since Monday, U.S. defence officials said.

A bomb blast in Mosul killed Stephen Eric Sullivan and three private security guards on Monday.

The other American deaths included: four soldiers killed in two separate bomb attacks in Ramadi on Monday, and a soldier in a police brigade.

Iran and the invention of a nuclear crisis

Siddharth Varadarajan

BARELY TWO years after the United States invaded Iraq in the name of weapons of mass destruction which never existed, the world is being pushed towards a confrontation with Iran on a similarly flawed premise.

On September 17, Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told the United Nations General Assembly that his country would not give up its sovereign right to produce nuclear power using indigenously enriched uranium. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which Iran signed in 1974, allows Iran to build facilities involving all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle, including enrichment, subject to international safeguards. Given the fact that the U.S. contin-

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ues to impose sanctions on the development of Iran's oil and gas sector (under the extra-territorial 'Iran Libya Sanctions Act'), it is only logical that the Iranians should seek a civilian nuclear energy industry in which they won't have to be dependent on the West for fuel like enriched uranium.

However, as a major concession to Britain, France and Germany – the so-called EU-3 which has sought to prevail upon Iran to abandon enrichment in exchange for guarantees of assured fuel supply – Mr. Ahmadinejad offered

The world has forgotten everything and learned nothing from the charade over weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

to run his country's enrichment plants as joint ventures with private and public sector firms from other countries. Britain and France have rejected this offer, which the Iranians say is a demonstration of their intent to be as transparent as possible. The EU-3 and the U.S. insist Teheran must not work on enrichment because once the technology is mastered, the same facilities could be used to produce not just low enriched uranium (LEU) for energy reactors but highly enriched uranium (HEU) for bombs. Accordingly, they have circulated a resolution in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors meeting – which began Monday – calling for Iran's civilian nuclear programme to be referred to the U.N. Security Council as a potential threat to international peace and security.

It is not difficult for the U.S. and its European allies to get a majority of the 35-nation Board of Governors to recommend referral; however, the board has operated on the basis of consensus for the past 12 years – ever since the forced vote referring North Korea to the UNSC split the IAEA – and the non-aligned group of countries and China remain opposed to taking Iran to the Security Council. If the U.S. is convinced a con-

sensus will elude it for the foreseeable future, it could push for a vote this week rather than wait any longer. Next month, following the annual IAEA General Conference, a new Board of Governors will take over. And with Cuba and Syria entering the Board in place of Peru and Pakistan, the ranks of those firmly opposed to an SC referral are likely to increase.

Although the immediate trigger for the European and American pressure is Teheran's decision last month to end its voluntary suspension of uranium conversion at its Esfahan facility, the Iranian case cannot be referred to the Security Council on this ground.

First, the NPT allows uranium conversion and other processes central to enrichment. Secondly, the Esfahan facility is under IAEA safeguards and as recently as September 2, i.e. nearly a month after Iran resumed uranium conversion there, the Director-General of the Agency, Mohammad El-Baradei, certified that "all the declared nuclear material in Iran has been accounted for and, therefore, such material is not diverted to prohibited activities." Thirdly, the agreement to suspend enrichment, which Iran reached with the EU-3 at Paris last November, clearly states that "the E3/EU recognize

that this suspension is a voluntary confidence building measure and not a legal obligation." In other words, if the voluntary suspension was not a legal obligation, the ending of that suspension can hardly be made the grounds for legal action by either the IAEA or the UN.

Myth of 'concealment'

If at all Iran is to be referred, then, its desire to pursue a complete fuel cycle for its civilian nuclear energy programme cannot be cited as legal grounds. Nor can the hitherto "secret" nature of its fuel cycle facilities currently under construction. Though there has been a surfeit of motivated and ill-informed commentary about how Iran "concealed" its uranium enrichment programme from the IAEA "in violation of the NPT" until it was "caught cheating" in 2002, the fact is that Iran was not obliged to inform the Agency about those facilities at the time. David Albright and Corey Hinderstein – who first provided the international media with satellite imagery and analysis of the unfinished fuel fabrication facility at Natanz and heavy water research reactor at Arak on December 12, 2002 – themselves noted that under the safeguards agreement in force at the time, "Iran is not required to allow IAEA inspections of a new nuclear facility until six months before nuclear material is introduced into it." In fact, it was not even required to inform the IAEA of their existence until then, a point conceded by Britain at the March 2003 Board of Governors meeting. The Arak reactor is planned to go into operation in 2014. As for the pilot fuel enrichment plant (PFEP) at Natanz, it is still not operational today.

This 'six months' clause was a standard part of all IAEA safeguards agreements signed in the 1970s and 1980s. It was only in the 1990s, following the Iraq crisis, that the Agency sought to strengthen itself by asking countries to sign 'subsidiary arrangements' requiring the handing over of design information about any new facility six months prior to the start of construction. Many signed, some did not. Iran accepted this arrangement only in February 2003. Later that year, it signed the highly-intrusive Additional Protocol. Though it has yet to ratify it, Teheran has allowed the IAEA to exercise all its prerogatives under the protocol, including more than 20 "complementary accesses," some with a notice period of two hours or less. Dr. El-Baradei also reported that "Iran has, since October 2003, provided the Agency upon its request, and as a transparency measure, access to certain additional information and locations beyond that required under its Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol."

What Iran has yet to do is provide the IAEA sufficient information on the history of its centrifuge programme for it to satisfy itself that there are no "undeclared nuclear materials or activities." However, this alone can hardly constitute grounds for referring the country to the Security Council under Article III.B.4 of the Agency's Statute since the IAEA, in the past two years, has found discrepancies in the utilisation of nuclear material in as many as 15 countries. Among these are South Korea, Taiwan, and Egypt. In 2002 and 2003, for example, South Korea refused to let the IAEA visit facilities connected to its laser enrichment programme. Subsequently, though Seoul confessed to having secretly enriched uranium to a 77 per cent concentration of U-235 – a grade sufficient for fissile material – neither the U.S. nor EU suggested referring the matter to the UNSC.

In contrast, there is no evidence whatsoever that Iran has produced weapon-grade uranium. Despite intrusive inspections, no facility or plan to produce weapon-grade uranium has been discovered, nor have any weapon designs surfaced.

পরমাণু কর্মসূচি বন্ধ হবে না, জানাল ইরান

নিউ ইয়র্ক, ১৮ সেপ্টেম্বর: রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ সভায় বক্তৃতা দিতে এসে ইরানের প্রেসিডেন্ট মাহমুদ আহমেদিনেজাদ সাফ জানিয়ে দিলেন, ইরান তাদের পরমাণু কর্মসূচি থেকে সরবে না। ইরানের পরমাণু জ্বালানি তৈরির ব্যাপারে পশ্চিমী দুনিয়ার আপত্তিকে উড়িয়ে দিয়ে আহমেদিনেজাদ বলেছেন, জ্বালানি তৈরির লক্ষ্য থেকে ইরান এক পা-ও সরবে না।

ভিয়েনায় আন্তর্জাতিক পরমাণু শক্তি সংস্থা (আই এ ই এ) বৈঠকের আগে ইরানের এই বক্তব্য যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। আহমেদিনেজাদের এই কট্টর অবস্থানের ফলে হতাশ ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নও। ফরাসি বিদেশমন্ত্রী এই প্রসঙ্গে বলেন, আহমেদিনেজাদের এই আক্রমণাত্মক বিবৃতির পরে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে ইরানের বিষয়টি পাঠানোর কথাও ভেবে দেখা হবে। ব্রিটিশ বিদেশমন্ত্রীও বলেছেন ইরানের এই আগ্রাসী মনোভাব রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জকে কড়া ব্যবস্থা নিতে বাধ্য করতে পারে। আমেরিকা প্রথম থেকেই ইরানের পরমাণু কর্মসূচির তীব্র বিরোধিতা করে আসছে। ইরানের এই বক্তব্যের পরে মার্কিন বিরোধিতা আরও বাড়বে। উল্লেখ্য, নিরাপত্তা পরিষদে ইরানের

প্রসঙ্গটি তোলা হলে আন্তর্জাতিক কর্তৃপক্ষ তেহরানের উপর নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করতে পারে।

পরমাণু শক্তির আর একটি প্রতিবেশীর ব্যাপারে ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের আপত্তিকেও উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন প্রেসিডেন্ট আহমেদিনেজাদ।

নিউ ইয়র্কে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ সভায় যোগ দিতে এসে মনমোহন ইরানের পরমাণু কর্মসূচি প্রসঙ্গে বলেছিলেন, আর একটি পরমাণু শক্তির প্রতিবেশী ভারতের কাম্য নয়। এ ব্যাপারে তিনি ইরানকে আন্তর্জাতিক বিধি মেনে চলারও পরামর্শ দিয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু আজ এক সাক্ষাৎকারে আহমেদিনেজাদ বলেন, তেহরানের পরমাণু কর্মসূচি সম্পূর্ণ শান্তিপূর্ণ। নিজেদের তৈলসম্পদকেই হাতিয়ার করে আন্তর্জাতিক মহলের সঙ্গে লড়তে চায় ইরান। একটি মার্কিন পত্রিকাকে দেওয়া এক সাক্ষাৎকারে আহমেদিনেজাদ বলেছেন, “আমেরিকা আর কয়েকটি ইউরোপীয় দেশ নিরাপত্তা পরিষদের ভয় দেখাচ্ছে। কিন্তু জেরুজালেমের দখলদারদের হাতের পরমাণু অস্ত্র নিয়ে একটি কথাও বলা হচ্ছে না।” তাঁর দাবি, ইরানের উপর আন্তর্জাতিক মহলের এই চাপ সম্পূর্ণ উদ্দেশ্যপ্রণোদিত। — রয়টার্স

9 SEP 2005

ANADOLU BAZARI

Iraq approves statute draft

Fr 2 1979 to Amiri J. Suh

Baghdad, Sept. 18 (Reuters): Iraq's parliament finally approved a draft constitution today, just four weeks before the text is put to a referendum, as violence persisted after one of the bloodiest weeks since the US invasion of 2003.

Kurdish parliamentary deputy Faris Hussein was shot dead along with three bodyguards last night as he travelled to Baghdad from the north. Fellow deputy Haider Qassem was wounded.

The shooting as well as a car bomb which killed 30 people in Baghdad yesterday rounded off a week of carnage which saw 250 people killed in the capital and elsewhere.

The Kurdish- and Shia-led government, backed by occupying US forces, is facing a Sunni Arab insurgency aimed at bringing it down, and the US military has said it expected violence to rise before the October 15 constitutional referendum.

The National Assembly only approved a final text of the constitution today, giving little time for the UN to print five

million copies and distribute it nationwide ahead of the referendum.

Hussain al-Shahristani, the deputy speaker of parliament, said it was an absolute final draft of the text, which has been held up repeatedly by last-minute amendments.

"There is no way there will be any changes now," he said. "The draft is being submitted to the United Nations and will be presented to the Iraqi people soon."

The UN official in charge of printing the text, Nicholas Haysom, said his office could get it out on time even though it had come in so late.

He said the first copies would be ready for distribution in about five days' time.

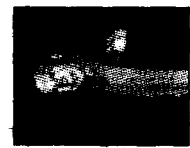
"We're pretty confident that we're going to be able to get it done," he said.

"There's a lot of demand out there from civic groups, political offices and others to get copies of the draft constitution and see it distributed," he added, saying all five million copies would be run off by the end of September.

EU, US to press Iran referral

Paul Taylor

UNITED NATIONS 17 SEPTEMBER



would be to introduce a referral resolution at Monday's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) board of governors but delay a vote for two or three weeks to give Iran another chance to halt uranium conversion, two western diplomats told Reuters.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is expected to set out new proposals on the nuclear issue in a critical speech to the U.N. General Assembly on Saturday.

EU diplomats, however, said

the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany had heard nothing in talks with Iranian leaders on Thursday to suggest a basis for resuming negotiations on EU offers of economic, security and nuclear cooperation.

"They are talking about the modalities of them doing (uranium) enrichment. We are talking about them not doing enrichment," one diplomat said of the meetings with Ahmadinejad.

His foreign minister and national security adviser were also present. — Reuters

Teheran nuclear standoff likely?

Paul Taylor

UNITED NATIONS 17 SEPTEMBER



IRAN'S new president will unveil proposals on Saturday meant to disarm international concern over its nuclear ambitions with Western powers poised to haul Tehran before the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

What President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad tells the U.N. General Assembly may determine whether the world nuclear watchdog moves next week to report Iran's secretive atomic program to the highest U.N. body, the diplomats said.

The United States and Europe suspect Tehran is trying to develop nuclear weapons. — Reuters

ইরানকে হুঁশিয়ারি

কন্ডোলিজারু

রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জ, ১৭ সেপ্টেম্বর: ইরানকে

পরমাণু অস্ত্র তৈরির ক্ষমতা অর্জনের

চেষ্টা ছাড়তে বলল আমেরিকা।

শনিবার রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ সভায়

মার্কিন বিদেশ সচিব কন্ডোলিজা রাইস

বলেন, সম্ভ্রাসে মদতদানকারী

দেশগুলির মধ্যে ইরানই প্রধান। ইরান

গোপনে পরমাণু অস্ত্র তৈরির চেষ্টা

চালাচ্ছে, এমন অভিযোগ দীর্ঘদিন

ধরেই জানাচ্ছে আমেরিকা।

নরমেগরমে তেহরানকে সেই প্রকল্প

থেকে সরিয়ে আনার চেষ্টাও চলছে।

রাইস আজ বলেছেন, কূটনৈতিক চেষ্টা

ব্যর্থ হলে তবেই রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের নিরাপত্তা

পরিষদ এ ব্যাপারে হস্তক্ষেপ করবে।

ইরানের অবশ্য বক্তব্য, তারা শান্তিপূর্ণ

উদ্দেশ্যেই পরমাণু প্রকল্প চালাচ্ছে।

ইরানি প্রেসিডেন্ট মহম্মদ

আহমাদিনেজাদ আজ আমেরিকার

দিকে অভিযোগের আঙুল তুলে

বলেছেন, পরমাণু জ্বালানি তৈরির

অধিকার ইরানের আছে। তাতে বাধা

দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করে আন্তর্জাতিক চুক্তি

ভঙ্গ করছে বুশ সরকার। — রয়টার্স

AL-QAIDA CONTINUES 'RETALIATORY' ATTACKS

Baghdad bleeds as violence spirals

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Sept. 16. — A suicide car bomber struck worshippers leaving a Shi'ite mosque in a northern Iraqi city today, killing at least 10 people and wounding 21 others. Elsewhere, militants killed at least 12 people as the Sunni-dominated insurgency pressed its "all-out war" against the government and the majority Shi'ite population.

The explosion and shootings today, the Muslim day of prayer, extended to a third day an outbreak of violence that began on Wednesday with 14 bombings in Baghdad. In today's mosque attack, a suicide car bomber detonated his vehicle as worshippers left the Hussainiyat al-Rasoul al-Azam mosque in Tuz Khormato, 210 km north of Baghdad, said police Col. Sarhat Qader.

Earlier today, gunmen opened fire on day labourers in Baghdad, killing three and wounding a dozen in a drive-by shooting.

The US military continued attacks on militant strongholds in western Iraq near the Syrian border where insurgents hold many towns and villages along the Euphrates River as it flows south eastward from the Syrian border.

Al-Qaida in Iraq said the brutal bombings in Baghdad and elsewhere were retaliation for the joint Iraqi-US operation that pushed insurgents out of their stronghold in Tal Afar, also near the Syrian border but in the far north of Iraq. The US jets pound-

ed an abandoned school used by Al-Qaida in the town of Karabilah, about 320 km north west of Baghdad yesterday night, killing nine insurgents. A mortar round exploded today inside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone that houses the

Iraqi government and several foreign Embassies. There were no casualties, police said. Meanwhile a US military statement said that a marine was killed in the western Iraq province of al-Anbar in a secondary explosion.



PRAYER FOR PEACE: A Shi'ite Iraqi woman and her daughter touch the door of a mosque prior to the Friday prayer in Kadhimiyah district of Baghdad. — AFP

THE STATESMAN

Move to drag Iran to UN council shelved

in kind of Iran Feb 16/9

United Nations, Sept. 15 (Reuters): Western powers appeared today to back away from an earlier move to refer Iran's nuclear programme to the UN Security Council as Tehran sought to widen backing for its stance by offering to share peaceful nuclear technology with other Islamic nations.

French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin said the three major European powers that have been negotiating with Iran on its nuclear ambitions — Britain, France and Germany — were still giving priority to talks.

"We want to pursue the dialogue. We want Iran to suspend various activities. We think there is still room for negotiations," he said at the UN headquarters. If that failed, there would be no choice but to take the matter to the Security Council, he added.

Earlier, US secretary of



French foreign minister Dominique de Villepin at the United Nations. (Reuters)

state Condoleezza Rice acknowledged that the US and its European allies may lack the votes to haul Iran before the highest UN body next week over its resumption of uranium conversion.

"If we get a referral on Sep-

tember 19, that will be good, but I think the issue of a referral is something that we'll be working for a while," she told Fox News Editorial board.

Foreign ministers of the three European nations and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana were to meet new Iranian foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki on the sidelines of a UN summit, diplomats said. "We want to give the new Iranian authorities every opportunity," an EU diplomat said. "We have never closed the door to negotiation. It always remained our preferred route."

European officials said they were struggling to build a convincing majority on the board of the International Atomic Energy Authority, the world nuclear watchdog, to report Iran to the Security Council.

"We would not like to be in a situation diplomatically where we have so many countries voting against our motion," the diplomat said.

THE TELEGRAPH

Developing world demands more aid

'Poverty Fuelling Regional Conflicts. \$230b Going Out of Poor Countries Every Year'

United Nations: Leaders of developing nations called on Wednesday for more foreign aid and freer trade to help poor countries develop, warning at a UN summit that chronic poverty could fuel regional conflict.

They complained that richer countries have failed to meet commitments to forgive the debts of poor nations and to lower trade barriers to their goods. "The survival of small islands of prosperity surrounded by seas of destitution is not viable," Mexican President Vicente Fox said in a speech to the General Assembly. He said poverty "provokes conflicts which respect no borders, and it threatens peace and security at a regional and global level."

Fox and leaders from Jamaica, Nigeria and other nations said rich nations must make faster progress toward carrying out the Millennium Declaration in 2000, which committed them to spend more on foreign aid and help to improve living standards for the poor.

They were speaking at a meeting on financing development held before the start of a summit marking the 60th anniversary of the

speaking for the Group of 77 developing nations, complained that richer nations have failed to keep promises to stop the outflow of money from poor countries for debt payments.

Patterson said poor countries are paying some \$230 billion a year to developed nations. He said there has been "no real initiative" to ease the debt burden of low- and middle-income countries. "This burden is far too heavy for many of these countries," he said.

The event comes amid work on a plan to forgive \$40 billion in debts owed by 18 poor countries, mostly in Africa, to the World Bank and other international lenders. Some anti-poverty and other groups want the debt relief expanded to cover more than 60 poor countries.

Chinese President Hu Jintao used the event to unveil initiatives including a promise of \$10 billion in low-interest loans for poor countries, as well as duty-free import status for 39 of the poorest of them. Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf pointed to his own country as an example of what he called the success of a mix of aid, foreign investment and economic reform. AP

20% Brits live in poverty

London: About one-fifth of Britons live below the poverty line, with working-age adults singled out as being particularly vulnerable, research by a British charity revealed on Wednesday. Jonathan welfare, chief executive of Elizabeth Finn Care, said: "A staggering 12.5 million people, in the UK, including 8.8 million adults, live below the poverty line amidst the prosperity of the world's fourth largest economy." The charity, which helps people escape the poverty trap, found that an estimated 3.9 million single people of working age were living in poverty. More than 3,000,000 such people, without dependant children, had fallen below the poverty line since 1996-1997, the charity group's report said. PH



founding of the United Nations. Jamaica's prime minister, Percival James Patterson,

Blasts rip through Baghdad, 150 killed

MARK Oliver and agencies
Baghdad, September 14

MORE THAN 150 people were killed in a wave of attacks targeting Shia Muslims in and around Baghdad today, with around 10 explosions rocking the city.

The deadliest attack killed more than 100 people when a minibus was blown up by a suicide bomber in a crowd of labourers in the mostly Shia-populated district of Kadhimiya.

Dozens of others, including Iraqi soldiers and police, were killed in a series of suicide bombings and shootings across the Iraqi capital. Hundreds of people have been injured.

The Sunni militant group al-Qaida in Iraq claimed responsibility for the violence on a militant website.

In a statement, the organisation, led by the Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, said it was waging a nationwide suicide bombing campaign to avenge a US and Iraqi military offensive against rebels, thought to refer to an ongoing counter-insurgency operation in the north of Iraq.

In the minibus attack, at 6.30 am, the suicide bomber lured labourers looking for work towards the vehicle before triggering his bomb, which contained up to 220kg of explosives.

There were conflicting reports about the death toll from the blast. The Associated Press said the health ministry was reporting that 88 people had been killed, but also cited a doctor saying 108 had died.

Reuters said the toll was 114 and it was the second worst suicide bombing since the US-led

invasion of Iraq in 2003. The worst attack was on February 28, when a suicide car bomber targeted Shia police and Iraqi soldier recruits, killing 125 people in Hilla, 60 miles south of Baghdad.

Reports of the number of people injured in the minibus bombing ranged from around 170 to more than 220. Witnesses described seeing bodies strewn among the burning wreckage of vehicles.

The blast happened in Oruba Square, the same area in which around 950 Shia worshippers were killed during a stampede on a bridge earlier this month. Police said the death toll was likely to rise because some of the injured would not survive.

The victims were taken to four hospitals. At one, dozens of wounded men were lying on stretchers, their bandages and clothes soaked in blood, the Associated Press reported.

Other attacks took place both before and after the minibus bombing. The violence began overnight when 17 men were executed by gunmen in a village north of Baghdad.

Among today's attacks, a suicide car bomber targeted shoppers in the busy Shia district of Shu'la in north-west Baghdad, killing four people and wounding 22 others, CNN reported.

And there were at least three attacks on military convoys by gunmen and bombers.

Police said one of these attacks in western Baghdad had killed three Iraqi soldiers. In another of the attacks, a car bomb hit a US military convoy east of Baghdad, injuring two US soldiers, the US military said.

In the northern district of Az-



REUTERS

Residents look at a car destroyed by a suicide bombing in Baghdad on Wednesday. The Iraqi capital was hit by a series of blasts.

imiya, gunmen opened fire on a police car, killing two top police officials and two officers. Then, as rescuers arrived to help, police said a suicide bomber struck, killing three Iraqi soldiers and four more policemen.

One of the suicide car bomb

attacks on a US convoy was just outside the heavily fortified Green Zone. An exchange of heavy machine-gun fire rattled for about 10 minutes after the blast, which injured 14 Iraqi police officers.

Another big explosion was

heard in an area between the main rail station and the Rashid Hotel, but it was not immediately clear if this blast had caused casualties.

There has been a wave of attacks by Sunni militants on Shia targets since January's elec-

tions, although today's bombings shattered a recent period of relative calm.

Some analysts view the attacks as attempts to provoke a civil war, and fears of such a conflict are growing in the run-up to next month's divisive vote on a

new Iraqi constitution for the post-Saddam Hussein era.

US and Iraqi forces have been sweeping through the northern city of Tal Afar to evict insurgents from their stronghold near the Syrian border.

The Guardian

Iran extends nuke power

TEHERAN, Sept. 11.

Iran is to build two more nuclear power plants, its new foreign minister announced today, warning of "consequences" if his Islamic regime is referred to the UN Security Council for its nuclear fuel-drive.

In his first press conference since taking office, Mr Manouchehr Mottaki reiterated Iran's refusal to resume the full-freeze on uranium processing it observed during talks with the EU earlier this year.

"There is no question of returning to a new suspension at Isfahan," Mr Mottaki told reporters, referring to Iran's uranium-ore conversion plant. —
Agence France Presse

Saddam Hussein has not confessed, says lawyer

to Aneja
Jama
11-9-16

Investigations do not implicate him at all, says attorney

Atul Aneja

9/19

MANAMA: There has been no let up in violence in Iraq with a car bomb killing 16 Iraqis in Basra on Wednesday. This was the biggest post-occupation attack in Basra, which has been relatively peaceful when compared with central Iraq. The bombing took place in a Shia dominated locality where support for cleric Moqtada Al Sadr is well known.

Sectarian tensions involving Shias and Kurds on one side, and Sunnis on the other, have escalated in Iraq in recent weeks. Analysts point out that recent allegation by Iraq's Kurdish origin President Jalal Talabani that the former President, Saddam Hussein, had confessed to ordering executions is likely to deepen the sectarian divide. Mr. Hussein is known to have a strong support base in Central Iraq's Sunni heartland.

Responding to the allegation, Mr. Hussein's lawyer Khalial Dulaimi denied that his client had made any confessions. "There was no confession by the President and all the investigations in this case do not implicate him at all," he said.

Mr. Dulaimi sought the resignation of the investigator who was leaking information about the interrogation as he was prejudicing the trial process.

The attorney also urged Mr. Talabani not to make any statements that could compromise justice. Mr. Hussein's defence team has been angered by the spate of "politically motivated statements" by anonymous offi-

Saddam to face trial in October

The first of several trials of the former Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, begins on October 19, when he and seven aides will be charged with the massacre of almost 150 residents of the village of Dujail after a failed assassination attempt. Mr. Hussein faces the death penalty if convicted

ON THE CHARGE SHEET

1. Execution of five Shia religious leaders, 1974
2. Execution of 20 Ba'ath party leaders after seizing presidency, 1979
3. Killing of 143 Shia men from Dujail village, 1982
4. Killing of over 8,000 members of Kurdish Barzani clan, 1983
5. Gas attack on Halabja, 1988
6. Anfaethnic cleansing campaign against Kurds, 1988
7. Invasion of Kuwait, 1990
8. Repression of Shia rebellion in which 150,000 were killed, 1991
9. Repression of Kurdish rebellion, 1991

Other charges could include use of chemical weapons in 1980-88 war with Iran but prosecutors fear this could expose Iraq to demands for war reparations

Picture: Associated Press © GRAPHIC NEWS

Other defendants include intelligence chief Barzan Ibrahim and former Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan

cial who have talked about a quick execution if Mr. Hussein was found guilty.

Meanwhile, the draft Constitution that the Sunni community has not endorsed will be put to vote in a referendum on October 15. "We studied a decision made by the National Assembly suggesting that October 15 be the

date of the referendum, we agreed on that and the date is set," Hussein al-Hindawi, head of the Electoral Commission said. Copies of the draft that the Sunni negotiators opposed because it proposed a strong federal political system would be circulated among Iraqi voters prior to the vote.

THE HILL

NUCLEAR CRISIS ■ Iran seeks to calm Western unease over n-programme

In Pak, Iran's N-man talks peace

REUTERS

ISLAMABAD, SEPTEMBER 7

IRAN'S top nuclear negotiator sought to soothe international unease over his country's nuclear programme during a visit to Pakistan on Wednesday, days after a UN watchdog confirmed that Tehran had resumed uranium conversion.

Ali Larijani, appointed last month by Iran's new President, has been seeking support from non-Western nations for Iran's plan to pursue what it says is a programme designed for power generation and not atomic weapons.

"Having stated this principle that we are determined to have nuclear technology... we are fully prepared to have any international negotiations, to remove concerns," Larijani said after meeting Pakistan's Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has a fresh initiative that will "facilitate work to assure the international community of the exclusively peaceful (nature) of our activities," Larijani told reporters, without expanding on what that initiative contained.

After a courtesy call on Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, Larijani met for four hours with Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri.

Iran is facing diplomatic pressure after last Friday's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) report confirmed that Tehran had resumed uranium conversion, one of several activities previously suspended under a deal with three European Union nations—France, Britain and Germany.

Larijani said Iran was continuing to discuss its nuclear programme with the UN's nuclear watchdog, and hold negotiations with other countries.



Top Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani (L) with Pakistan Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri in Islamabad on Wednesday. Reuters

But a senior EU diplomat told reporters in Brussels on Tuesday that the negotiating process, begun with Iran in Paris last November, appeared to be at an end.

He said the next logical step was for the IAEA to report Iran's nuclear programme to the UN Security Council, although discussions on sanctions against Iran were a long way off.

The United States and the Europeans are trying to reach a broad consensus for reporting the Iranian case to the Security Council, but Russian and Chinese support are in doubt.

Pakistan, the only Islamic country with nuclear weapons, is opposed to

any use of force against its western neighbour, and Larijani voiced his appreciation of Islamabad's stance.

"We want a peaceful resolution of the issue, and we are willing to play a role between Iran and the international community, if we are asked," Kasuri told journalists.

Iran could develop bomb-making capability in as little as five years, although the International Institute of Strategic Studies reckons a 15-year time frame was more likely.

The assessment is in line with British estimates, although US intelligence reports have been more conservative, with a study last month putting the date for a bomb at 2015.

Pakistan court cancels Asif Zardari's bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, SEPTEMBER 7

A PAKISTANI court has cancelled the bail of Asif Ali Zardari, the spouse of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in connection with a graft case, raising the prospect of his arrest on his return from the United States.

The Accountability Court in Rawalpindi took notice of Zardari's continued absence and cancelled his bail on Tuesday, ignoring the pleas of his lawyer that his client was undergoing treatment in the US.

The judge, Saghir Ahmed Qadri, also ordered the initiation of proceedings to declare the accused a proclaimed offender.

The judge also issued a notice to Zardari's guarantor Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Member of Parliament asking why his surety bonds worth Rs 1 million should not be forfeited. The case was adjourned till October 8.

Last year, the court had granted Zardari bail on the direction of the Supreme Court. Zardari who was released after eight years of detention is undergoing treatment for heart ailment in United States.

Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples' Party has criticised the cancellation of the bail.

Confession by Saddam

Baghdad, Sept. 7 (Reuters): Ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein "confessed" to ordering executions and a campaign against Kurds in which thousands of people are said to have been killed, President Jalal Talabani said.

But Talabani did not say whether Saddam had actually admitted to committing any crimes or merely acknowledged that he was head of state and commander in chief of the army at the time of various military operations.

"I met the investigator who questioned Saddam," he told Iraqiya state television in an interview late yesterday. "He said he had extracted important confessions from Saddam Hussein and he signed them."

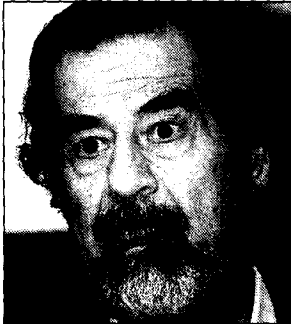
Asked about the confessions, Talabani replied: "About the crimes he committed: he confessed to al-Anfal and the executions," adding that Saddam had said: "The orders were released by me."

Al-Anfal was a campaign against the Kurds between 1986 and 1989 in which over 100,000 people are said to have been killed and many villages destroyed. Talabani is a Kurd.

"Saddam deserves a death sentence 20 times a day because he tried to assassinate me 20 times," he said, recalling his days as a Kurdish rebel leader fighting the Baghdad authorities.

Talabani's comments, on the eve of a visit to the US, appeared to be part of an orchestrated move by the government to prepare Iraqis for Saddam's execution, expected to be carried out by hanging.

The official government spokesman said at the weekend that Saddam's trial, on a



Saddam Hussein (top)
and Jalal Talabani

single charge of mass killings in reprisal for a 1982 assassination attempt, would begin on October 19. He said if Saddam were found guilty in this case, the court could dispense with the need to try him for other crimes — clearing the way for an early execution.

Iraq scrapped the death penalty immediately after the US invasion in March 2003, but has since re-introduced it.

Iraq's Shia and Kurdish-dominated government is trying to draw a line under the Saddam era by trying him and introducing a new constitution in October. Both moves are likely to prove contentious and risk alienating the Sunni Arab minority from which Saddam derived his support.

Iran nuclear issue may be referred to U.N. Council

VIENNA: Iran moved a day closer on Saturday to being referred to the U.N. Security Council as European Union representatives warned Teheran it has less than two weeks to freeze any nuclear work that could be used to make an atomic weapon.

The likelihood of Security Council referral grew after an IAEA report revealed on Friday that Teheran had pumped out about 7 tonnes of the gas it needs for uranium enrichment since restarting the process last month.

On Saturday, E.U. representatives — diplomats from E.U. countries accredited to the International Atomic Energy Agency — said talks will begin Monday in Vienna among members of the 35-nation IAEA board of governors with a goal of finding consensus on referral.

And as a September 19 IAEA board meeting grows closer, Ministers — including U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and E.U. counterparts from France, Germany and Britain — will likely get involved in drafting the language of a resolution demanding that the Security Council deal with Iran's refusal to stop uranium conversion, a precursor to uranium enrichment, diplomats said.

The diplomats, who demanded anonymity because they are not authorised to discuss the Iran game plan with the media, said Teheran still could avoid referral by re-imposing a freeze on such activities before the board meeting. — AP

Poisoning, attack preceded stampede

Sea of victims' shoes on Tigris bridge; hospitals overwhelmed by number of casualties

40-14
M. Amin
11/9

BAGHDAD: Thousands of sandals were littered across a bridge in Baghdad on Wednesday in a chilling reminder of the hundreds of men, women and children who lost their lives in a stampede among crowds of panicked Shia pilgrims.

A day of Shia religious ceremonies marking the death of a revered imam turned into Iraq's worst nightmare when throngs of pilgrims took fright after a deadly mortar attack on a shrine and rumours of suicide bombers in their midst.

A total of 647 persons were drowned, trampled or crushed to death as they surged across Al-Aimmah bridge near the Kadhimiyah mosque in northwest Baghdad, many of them falling into the Tigris river below.

"The crowd started to panic and women and children were being trampled underfoot," said Abdul Walid (54), lying dazed on the floor of a nearby hospital. "My son was on my shoulders, I don't know where he is now, everybody was suffocating to death so I eventually had to jump."

In the middle of the bridge, the waist-high concrete barriers designed to foil car bombers were stained with the blood of victims, mostly women and chil-

dren, crushed to death in the panic.

Covered in bandages and nursing a broken leg, Mr. Walid tearfully recounted the tragic events which led to Iraq's deadliest single incident since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

Tense atmosphere

With the atmosphere already tense after four mortars had slammed into the crowds at the Kadhimiyah mosque, killing seven, the worshippers became terror-stricken by reports of suicide bombers and a much larger tragedy unfolded.

Several cases of criminal poisoning were also reported and witnesses said Shia militia members used loudspeakers to urge people not to drink water they had purchased near the scene.

Baghdad's hospitals were overwhelmed with the sheer numbers of casualties, with doctors losing count of the corpses passing through their wards.

"Most people are suffering from blunt trauma and the majority are women and children," said a doctor.

"We have a shortage of painkillers and we still can't identify most of the bodies," he said. — AFP



GRIM REMINDER: Iraqis walk among shoes left behind during a stampede on a bridge in Baghdad on Wednesday. — PHOTO: AFP

648 killed in Iraq stampede

Rumour of suicide-bomber led to panic

Atul Aneja

MANAMA
MANAMA: At least 648 Shia pilgrims died in Baghdad on Wednesday following a stampede on a bridge while they were on their way to a shrine to participate in an annual religious function. The tragedy occurred when someone in the crowd — estimated at around a million — that was crossing the Aima bridge on the Tigris river screamed that there was a suicide-bomber in their midst.

Panic set in immediately as people ran helter-skelter. Many died of suffocation in the resulting crush, but the majority drowned after a section of the metal bridge gave way due to the mounting pressure.

The majority of those killed were women, children and the elderly. Casualties are likely to rise further as more bodies are yet to be recovered.

Health Minister Abdul-Mutalib Mohammed told the State-run Iraqiya television that there

Iran
were "huge crowds on the bridge and the disaster happened when someone shouted that there is a suicide-bomber on the bridge. This led to a state of panic among the pilgrims and they started to push each other and there were many cases of suffocation."

Thousands of people, including relatives, desperately searched for survivors on the banks of the river. Many young men waded into the water to retrieve bodies that had begun to float. Pilgrims from Baghdad and the neighbouring areas were heading to the Imam Mousa al-Kadim shrine in Baghdad's Kadimiya district to observe the death of the Shia saint.

Analysts point out that the targeting of the Shia pilgrims was planned as mortar shells were first fired at the crowds, two hours before they reached the bridge, killing 16 persons.

More reports on Page 14

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1998

THE HINDU

The complex battlefields of Iraq

Deadly games are in progress in Iraq. The glue that held the state and its civil society together has been washed away by the Occupation and post-Occupation policies.

Hamid Ansari

YEMEN IS the cradle to the Arabs, Iraq their grave. So goes an Arab proverb. Since March 2003 Iraq has certainly been the grave of a great many Arabs — men, women, and children caught in the crossfire of a conflict wantonly unleashed to sustain a misbegotten thesis. It has now run out of control, degenerated into the state of nature visualised by Thomas Hobbes, “a condition of war of everyone against everyone.” Like a black hole in space, it tends to suck in everything within reach.

Another dimension to the conflict has now been added. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal has given vent to concerns about American policy in Iraq. He described the draft constitution as inadequate. He spoke about foreign (read Iranian) interference and said centrifugal forces were tending to succeed.

An Iraqi response, in vintage Arab-cold-war language, came from its Interior Minister, Bayan Jabour Solagh. The inheritors of the Code of the Hammurabi, he said, did not need lessons from a “Bedouin riding a camel.” The Saudi press was quick to remind the Iraqi Minister (himself a Shia) that camel-riding Bedouins had changed history: both Prophet Mohammad and Imam Ali, as well as his sons Hasan and Hussain were camel-riding Bedouins. A few days later the Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari apologised to his Saudi counterpart. The memory of the remark would however rankle in public memory.

The incident is reflective of new tensions creeping into Saudi-Iraqi and Saudi-Iranian relations. Last week Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Muttaki undertook a tour of the Gulf Cooperation Council states and visited Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and UAE. Riyadh and Doha were significant omissions in the itinerary. According to an Iranian news agency report on October 6 the visit to Saudi Arabia, after UAE, “was delayed to a later occasion due to some protocol concerns.” A few hours later the agency reported that the Saudi foreign minister had spoken on telephone to Mr. Muttaki and invited him to visit Saudi Arabia. The visit, it said, will take place “in the near future.” One could read much into this but damage control was achieved.

Deadly games are in progress in Iraq. The glue that held the state and its civil society together has been washed away thanks to the Occupation and post-occupation policies. Individuals and groups that had lived together have turned on each other. Iraq's neighbours protest their innocence, deny interference, and devise newer and cleverer



TRICKY SITUATION: An Iraqi woman in front of a wall adorned with posters urging Iraqis to say “yes” in the October 15 referendum on a new constitution, in the Shia stronghold of Najaf. — PHOTO: AFP

ways of interference.

In this complex scenario, the Jordanians and the Saudis feel handicapped because their primary concern is to deter their own nationals, who have tribal affinities and Islamist inclinations, from joining the Sunni resistance. Syria, under other pressures, is unable to control infiltration across its long borders. Turkey, reluctantly coming to terms with a *de facto* Kurdish state in northern Iraq, is concerned about protecting its own Kurdish areas from ideas creeping across.

This leaves Iran, happy at the decimation of its enemy and sensing a strategic opportunity. Neither the slicing up of Iraq nor the creation of a Shia majority state on its western border is an Iranian idea; Iran can nevertheless benefit from both. Iran does not have to openly ‘interfere’ because some degree of intangible affinity for Iran, intensified by the suffering of Occupation, has seeped through

to the interstices of society in southern Iraq.

Some Saudi commentators now apprehend that if American troops leave Iraq, it would result in Iranian hegemony over Iraq. They urge Iran to support ‘reasonable federalism’ based on 18 governorates rather than one based on three regions.

Foreign Minister Muttaki said after his meetings in Abu Dhabi that Iran has a key role in safeguarding regional security. Interestingly enough, he cited paragraph 8 of Security Council Resolution 598 of July 1987 that led to a ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq War. This requested the Secretary General “to examine, in consultation with Iran and Iraq and with other States of the region, measures to enhance security and stability of the region.”

With a hostile Iraq now out of the way, Iran perhaps feels freer to explore new ideas about Persian Gulf security even if its path is momentarily blocked by the U.S. The hap-

penings in southern Iraq thus become part of manoeuvres aimed at generating pressures and counter-pressures. The Iranian objective is to cut a deal with the United States; the American effort is to force Iran to accept a dispensation worked out unilaterally. Vienna and Basra thus become acts in a longer drama.

If the United States inches its way towards exhaustion, many in America would agree with former diplomat Bruce Laingen who, in a letter to *The New York Times* on October 2, stressed the need for a direct relationship with Iran: “Cold, hard American interests make that clear, not to mention geography. Iran matters; let’s recognise reality.”

The battlefields of Iraq may well lead to this.

(M.H. Ansari is a Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.)

THE HINDU

Britain accuses Iran of supplying weapons to militants in Iraq

Teheran calls the charge a lie; holds U.K. responsible for causing instability

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: Britain on Thursday sparked a diplomatic row with Iran after it linked Teheran to the recent bomb attacks on British forces in Iraq, claiming that the devices used in the attack were similar to those used by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and allegedly supplied by them to the Hizbollah in Lebanon.

The claim drew a furious response from Iran with its Foreign Ministry spokesman calling it a lie and, in turn, accusing Britain of causing instability in Iraq.

"This is a lie. The British are the cause of instability and crisis in Iraq," said Hamid Reza-Asefi on Iranian TV adding: "By draft-

ing such scenarios they are trying to find a partner in their crimes."

The Iranian embassy in London also refuted the British allegation saying the stability of Iraq was of "paramount importance" to Iran and it had consistently opposed violence in that coun-

try. Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking at a joint press conference with the visiting Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, warned Iran against interference in Iraq, saying that the British and other foreign troops were there under a United Nations mandate.

"There is no justification for

Iran or any other country's interference," he said.

Mr Talabani rejected calls for withdrawal of foreign troops from his country saying it would only help the "terrorists". Echoing Mr Blair, he said the continued presence of British and American troops was "absolutely vital for us". It would be a "catastrophe" to pull them out at this stage. He also opposed demands for a time-table for withdrawal.

Mr Blair told him: "We intend to stay with you as long as you want us."

Mr Blair said the devices that killed British soldiers were similar to those used by Iran but added that "we cannot be sure of this at the present time".

Saddam trial on October 19

BAGHDAD: Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's trial will start on October 19, Iraq's special tribunal said on Thursday, denying comments by a British official who said it could be put off until

December. "That is not true," a member of the tribunal's media office said. "It will start on October 19."

Mr. Hussein's legal team said they will be in court on October 19. — Reuters

MATTERS OF POLICY: *Iraq's draft Constitution has been devised to wreck its fragile unity*

Occupation hazards

BY A.G. NOORANI

Handwritten notes: "MAY 10 11 10" and "4/10" with a checkmark.

IRAQ IS not a liberated country, but an occupied country... We are the occupiers... and it is an ugly occupation,' Howard Zinn of Boston University wrote recently. The occupation provoked an insurgency in which more than 12,000 people were killed in the last 18 months alone.

On September 13, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani admitted in the presence of his protector, President George W. Bush, that the Arab Sunnis "were not able to participate in the election" in January. In an assembly of 275, the Kurdish alliance led by Talabani and Massoud Barzani, a former guerilla leader, won 238 seats with the United Front of Iraq Shiite Alliance.

The fate of the draft constitution in the referendum on October 15 is less important than the fact that the US has wrecked the fragile unity of Iraq — putting Arab against Kurd, Shia against Sunni and Shia against Shia — undermined its secular set-up and made Iraq a pariah in the Arab world. Zinn recalls how Cuba was "liberated" by the US in 1898; a base was established; US corporations moved in; and a Constitution was imposed "with help from local accomplices".

The only gainers in this sordid game are America's Kurdish clients. The clause about Kurdistan's right to self-determination has been dropped, nominally; but the draft ensures its quasi-independent status. As Dexter Filkins reported in the *New York Times*, Barzani has "quietly secured ... virtually everything the Kurds were asking for, enshrining powers of autonomy that approach those of a sovereign State". The draft ratifies the status they enjoyed under US protection since 1991. Kurdish leaders "leave little doubt that they regard the new Constitution as but a way station on a journey to eventful independence". If Barzani threw broad hints to Filkins of such an intention, Talabani made no secret of it either when he spoke to Raghida Dergham of *Global Viewpoint*. Kurds "have achieved victory" but they still "remain the only ones deprived of their independence".

Uniquely in West Asia, the draft imposes a federal system on Iraq — one in which, uniquely again, the units can override the Centre. Provinces can form 'regions', each with own president, PM — the nomenclature is identical to the ones in Baghdad — security forces, *et al.* Shia



HANDING OUT HORRORS: Iraqi children hold up pro-Constitution placards

leader Muqtada al-Sadr opposes federalism as a US-Kurdish plot.

The draft splits Iraq. Arabs are to be "part of the Arab nation"; and with the rest, "a part of the Islamic world". The Arab character of a founding member of the Arab League was gratuitously diluted. A belated amendment, on September 18, to declare that Iraq "is a founding and effective member of the Arab League" does not repair the damage. Article 12 ordains that "the flag, emblem and national anthem of Iraq shall be fixed by law in a way that symbolises the components of the Iraqi people". Iraq's occupiers calculatedly stress its divisions, not its unity. The preamble rules it in: "The despotic band's sectarian oppression of the majority." Its American provenance cries out in the florid prose and laboured rhythm with which speech-writers ply their presidents: "Terrorism... did not divert us... Sectarianism and racism did not stop us ..." Have you ever read such stuff in the preamble of any Constitution?

The draft binds Iraq to ensure "good neighbourliness", eschew "terrorism", respect the NPT and ban WMDs, which its invaders did not find. The Baath Party "under any name" is banned.

The federal system is devised to facilitate secession. The Centre's powers are confined to foreign affairs, defence, finance, "customs policy", currency, "organising trade policy among regions and provinces", weights and measures, nationality, broadcasting, mail and census. The rest belongs to the units, whether regions or individual provinces. They share some subjects

with the Centre — customs, electricity, planning, health and education.

In all federations, it is the central law which prevails if a unit's law conflicts with it. In Iraq, "priority will be given to the region's law in case of dispute". This shapes the working of Art. 110 which enjoins Baghdad to "administer oil and gas extracted from current fields in co-operation with the governments of the producing regions and provinces on condition that the revenues will be distributed fairly in a manner compatible with the demographical distribution all over the country. A quota should be defined for a specified time for affected regions that were deprived in an unfair way by the former regime or later on, in a way to ensure balanced development in different parts of the country... The federal government and the government of the producing regions and provinces together will draw up the necessary strategic policies"; the regions retaining a veto.

More, an agency will be set up "to guarantee" the right of the units "to fair participation in the administration of the various federal State institutions, missions, fellowships delegations and regional and international conferences" (Art. 103). This agency, comprising representatives of the Centre and the units, reduces the federation to a confederation.

A region's government has the right "to amend" federal laws excepts on matters exclusively in the Union's sphere. Iraqi embassies must have "offices for regions and provinces" to deal with culture, social and "local development affairs". Kurdistan will be represented in Washington.

Article 150 says: "Laws legislated in Kurdistan since 1992 remain in effect, and decisions made by the government of the Kurdistan region — including contracts and court decisions — are effective unless they are voided or amended according to the laws of the Kurdistan region by the concerned body, as long as they are not against the Constitution". Regions can veto any constitutional amendment that curbs their powers. A region that senses that the time is propitious for secession faces few hurdles. "Iraq as we know has ended," an Arab writer remarked.

West Asia is no stranger to this stratagem — enter on false pretexts and install a client State. Iraq was invaded to 'liberate' it and destroy WMDs. A Constitution has been drafted to facilitate Kurdistan's independence. In recent days, significantly, a Kurdistan Airlines has been launched.

Britain took Arab support against the Ottomans in World War I and ended up by dividing Arabs and robbing them of Palestine. Its Foreign Secretary A.J. Balfour's ambiguous declaration of November 8, 1917 promised "a national home for the Jewish people" but without prejudice to the "rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine" who were overwhelmingly in a majority. But he admitted in a confidential memo of August 11, 1919 that the great powers "are committed to Zionism" regardless of "the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit the ancient land". He opposed Jewish immigration into Britain.

One man had the wisdom and courage to warn of the consequences. Arabs "have occupied the country for the best part of 1,500 years. They own the soil... They will not be content either to be expropriated for Jewish immigrants or to act merely as hewers of wood and drawers of water to the latter". This was Curzon at his best in a memo to the cabinet on October 26, 1917. Half a century cannot wipe of memories of a people who were wronged thus.

But Balfour was not completely devoid of integrity. He admitted that "so far as Palestine is concerned, the powers have made no statement of fact that is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate". That is true of US pronouncements on Iraq as well. It has sown seeds of strife that will blight a great and ancient land.

Handwritten text at the bottom left: "THE HINDUSTAN TIMES"

Iran threatens to put oil sales on hold

Handwritten notes: "H. Assad", "Iran 2/10", "HC-13".

Dubai, October 1

IRAN, THE world's fourth biggest oil producer, may hold back on oil sales if its nuclear programme is referred to the UN Security Council, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in an interview published on Saturday.

Iran has failed to convince the United States and the European Union its nuclear programme is peaceful, prompting the UN nuclear watchdog to recommend Tehran be reported to the Security Council for possible sanctions. Diplomats expect a referral is likely in November.

"If Iran's case is sent to the Security Council, we will respond by many ways, for example by holding back on oil sales," Ahmadinejad told the United Arab Emirates' English-language daily, the *Khaleej Times*. He did not specify what he meant. Oil accounts for about 80 per cent of Iran's export earnings.

"We have been extremely cooperative, we have had more than 1,200 man days of inspections, monitoring cameras are everywhere in our facilities," the president added.

Analysts had predicted Iran could use its abundant oil resources as leverage against countries seeking to send it to the Security Council.

It sees politics and its hydrocarbon resources as intimately linked. Nationalist leader Mohammad Mossadegh, who was ousted in a CIA-backed coup in 1953 after nationalising the British-run oilfields, is an enduring symbol of national pride.

Ahmadinejad's remarks are the latest in a series of warnings Iran has made against sending its case to New York.

On Thursday, it reiterated it would resume uranium enrichment and stop allowing UN snap inspections of its atomic facilities



REUTERS

Iranian worshippers burn US and British flags during a rally after Friday's prayer in Tehran.

ties if it was referred.

Iran has restarted nuclear fuel related work but has so far stopped short of actually producing enriched uranium in underground facilities near the central town of Natanz.

Washington says this enriched uranium will be used in warheads but Tehran insists it is only needed for power stations.

Tehran has already threatened to use trade ties to punish countries that voted to report it to the Security Council, possibly endangering major deals with India and Japan.

"So I urge the UN not to bend to US pressure," Ahmadinejad said. "We understand and we know that their (the western powers') intentions are bad. All of our activities have been transparent to the IAEA and we've announced many times that because of our religious and cultural views (we) are against the creation and use of nuclear weapons." **Reuters**

Car bomb attack kills nine in Iraq

Associated Press

BAGHDAD, Sept. 30. — Sunni-led insurgents killed at least nine people with a car bomb in a crowded vegetable market today, on the Muslim day of worship, in the second blast against Shi'ite civilians in as many days, police said. The death toll rose to nearly 100 from the previous day's coordinated string of suicide bombings and mortars in another town.

Elsewhere, in the southern city of Basra, an Iraqi police convoy was ambushed yesterday, killing four policemen and wounding one, said police officer Captain Mushtaq Khazim. The new surge of violence before an 15 October referendum on Iraq's constitution has killed at least 194 people, including 13 US service members, in the past five days. The insurgents have vowed to wreck the referendum, whose passage is crucial to prospects for starting a withdrawal of American troops. Al-Qaida in Iraq, declared an "all-out-war" on the Shi'ite majority that dominates



Iraqis gather at the site of a car bomb explosion in the Shi'ite town of Balad, on Friday. — AFP

Iraq's government. Moderate Sunni Arab leaders have urged their community to reject the constitution, saying it will fragment Iraq and leave them weak compared to Shi'ites

and Kurds. US ambassador Mr Zalmay Khalilzad has been struggling to negotiate changes to the charter in hopes of winning Sunni Arab support, and senior US officials have said they

are confident that Iraq's draft constitution will be approved.

However they feared that if the constitution is defeated, Iraq could descend into anarchy.

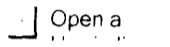
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Half a Step Forward to Rein in Iran

By JOEL BRINKLEY

Published: September 27, 2005

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WASHINGTON,

Sept. 26 - The Bush

administration threatened, cajoled and played every card it held to win the split decision Saturday on Iran's nuclear program before the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Looking ahead, though, that was the easy part.

The agency's board voted by a slim majority to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council because of an "absence of confidence that Iran's nuclear program is exclusively for peaceful purposes," the resolution says. But the actual referral cannot take place until the board votes again. That will not be before November, and the outcome then is far from assured.

Western

diplomats acknowledge that some countries that voted in favor of Saturday's resolution may not vote in favor of the actual referral. A senior diplomat said India, which surprised the West by voting in favor on Saturday, is not promising to vote the same

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Hans Punz/Associated Press
Sirus Naseri, left, Iran's delegate to the International Atomic Energy Agency, with Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general, at the meeting on Saturday in Vienna that criticized Iran's nuclear program.

way next time.

What is more, the composition of the board will change in the weeks ahead, "and not for the better," a European diplomat

acknowledged Monday. At least two members that voted with the United States and its European allies will rotate off the board, to be replaced by two, Cuba and Belarus, that are very unlikely to vote with the present majority.

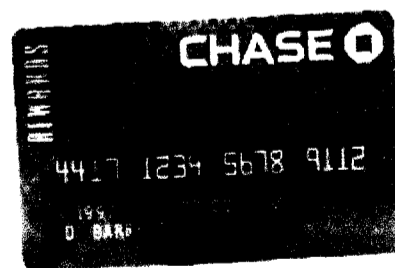
A Western diplomat suggested that the difficulties might not be insurmountable. "Lots of people were saying we might not get a vote in favor of Security Council referral this time, too," the diplomat said.

Still, realizing that the drive to drag Iran before the Security Council is fraught with uncertainties, senior administration officials have begun talking up a new strategy, one they say they can adopt in concert with the Europeans if the current path reaches an unsatisfactory end.

If Iran does not meet the demands of the agency, the United Nations nuclear monitor, Europe has other leverage, a senior administration official said. "If Europe

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exhausts the diplomatic options, it would have the leverage of diplomatic sanctions, and economic sanctions." the official said, given the "commercial and trade relations with Iran that most Europeans have."

But several European diplomats, in interviews on Monday, said they were dubious at best about that idea. Most of their countries buy oil from Iran, and economic sanctions that led to a boycott of Iranian oil would drive record-high oil prices even higher - as Iran has pointedly noted.

One senior European diplomat said he thought it unlikely that Europe would embrace the idea of trade sanctions.

"If you look at North Korea, it's a very poor country, and trade sanctions have not been effective," he said. "How would Iran, a much more rich country, be coerced by trade sanctions?" Besides, he added, "oil is fungible, it is a commodity that you cannot easily keep from markets."

He and other diplomats insisted that they could not be identified by name under the rules of their foreign ministries.

European officials say the United States has raised the sanctions idea with them. But "nobody is ready to talk about that now," another European diplomat said, adding that Iran "is the sort of problem that needs to be dealt with by the Security Council."

American officials readily acknowledge that the vote in favor of referral was in part the result of an unexpected, almost providential, act - a bellicose speech by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran before the

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United Nations General Assembly on Sept. 17.

"It is clear to us that Ahmadinejad's speech at the United Nations last weekend backfired," R. Nicholas Burns, the under secretary of state for political affairs, said in a briefing for reporters on Saturday. "It was seen as excessively harsh and uncompromising, and caught the attention of the international community.

"Before this speech was made," he added, "most people we were talking to thought a vote like this probably wouldn't be possible."

Officials and diplomats acknowledge that they are not likely to be so lucky next time. The senior European diplomat said he and others were pleasantly surprised by Iran's low-key reaction to the vote.

"They didn't come back with a clear condemnation," he said. "They said they were interested in continuing to talk."

That is what the United States and its European allies are hoping - that Iran, startled as it was by Saturday's vote, will back down, stop the uranium processing that was restarted last month and return to talks with the Europeans.

The next few weeks will "give Iran a little space to reflect on its options," the senior administration official said.

That will also give the United States and its allies time to reflect on their own options if Iran does not respond as they hope, because their alternatives do not look so encouraging now.

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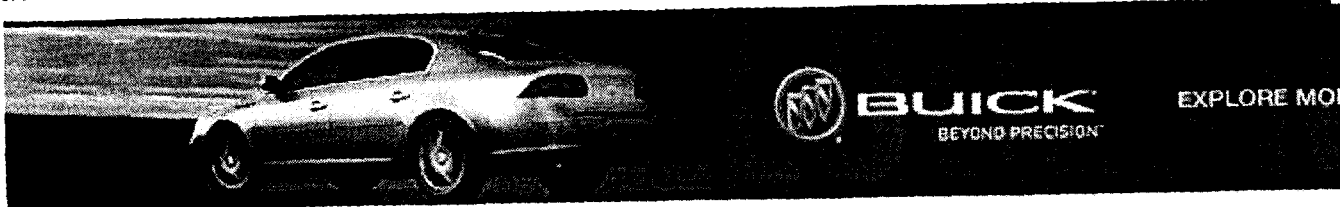


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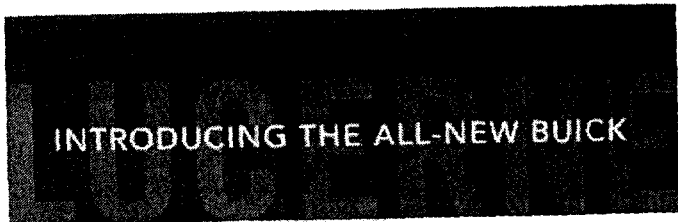
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Iraqis, Including Sunnis, Vote in Large Numbers on Calm Day

Published: December 16, 2005

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A pair of 127-millimeter rockets landed in central Baghdad at about 9 a.m., one of them exploding near a polling station and wounding three civilians. A group of armed men attacked a polling place in the northern city of Kirkuk, opening fire and killing two policemen and wounding three election workers.

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Comments from Sunni voters, though anecdotal, suggested that a good number of them had stayed away from the polls in January not because they were disenchanted with the democratic process, but because they were afraid of being killed.

Indeed, the apparent confusion within the insurgency has prompted American diplomats to say they have succeeded in driving a wedge between the most violent

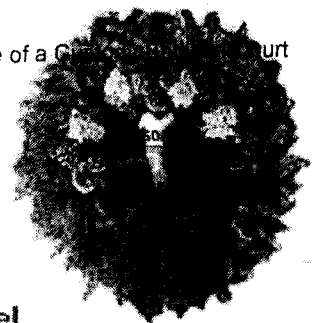
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groups, like Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, and the more nationalist-minded ones, who the Americans and Iraqis believe can probably be accommodated.

One notable change was the relative invisibility of the American military presence, another blueprint of the future. In even the calmest Iraqi neighborhoods, American soldiers, with their heavy weapons and armored vehicles, cause worry and unease. On Thursday, in Baghdad and in other locales, American troops stayed largely behind the scenes, while Iraqi troops took the lead.

The election, carried off by the Iraqis with help from the Americans and the United Nations, was, in a country at war, a logistical wonder. The Iraqis opened 6,048 polling centers, which were attended by about 300,000 election observers. Poll workers tacked up or handed out about five million informational posters.

Voters cast ballots to fill 275 seats in the Iraqi Parliament, called the Council of Representatives, with at least a quarter of the seats reserved for women. The Parliament will select a president, and approve the prime minister and his cabinet.

Election workers began counting ballots shortly after the polling centers closed at 6 p.m. Once they finish, they will send the vote totals to Baghdad, where election workers will add them up. The electoral system now in place should allot the Sunnis representatives in numbers equal to their proportion of the population, which is thought to be between 15 and 20 percent. In the current government, which was chosen under a different electoral system, Sunnis

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have a tiny number of seats.

Polls have indicated that most Iraqi voters were voting along demographic lines; Sunnis for Sunnis, Kurds for Kurds, Shiites for Shiites. In the January election, the Shiite slate captured a slim majority of the parliamentary seats, but is not expected to do so this time around.

Indeed, no single party is expected to claim an outright majority. The leaders of many of Iraq's political parties say the main political parties here will soon begin what is likely to be a protracted period of negotiations to form a coalition government.

This time around, the Shiite alliance is expected to pick up the largest share of votes, if not a majority. Several voters interviewed, including many Sunnis, said they voted for Ayad Allawi, the secular Shiite and former Baathist who has attracted a good deal of Sunni support. Mr. Allawi is hoping to cobble together a coalition of secular parties - including some Kurds and Sunnis - to challenge the dominant Shiite coalition.

Across Iraq, from Mosul and Ramadi to Basra and Kirkuk, the lines of votes hummed with excitement, and with the hope that a permanent Iraqi government could bring change for the better. In the southern city of Basra, voting was peaceful, although election observers reported scattered efforts to intimidate people to vote for the Shiite United Iraqi Alliance, known by its ballot number, 555.

Throughout the day, Iraqi police officers could be seen urging people to vote for the Shiite 555 list through loudspeakers

mounted on their patrol cars, in a flagrant violation of election rules. Groups of young men marched through the streets chanting their support for the alliance's candidates and for the Shiite ayatollahs. Indeed, many voters seemed enthusiastic about the Shiite alliance, whose election symbol is a single candle. Some said they had voted for 555 because it had the support of Iraq's leading Shiite ayatollahs. That is not quite true: Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the country's most powerful Shiite leader, has not endorsed any slate of candidates. But the misimpression has spread widely in recent weeks.

"I will vote for 555," said Fatima Habib al-Diyab, 81, as she walked into the Black Gold elementary school to vote at 7:30 a.m. "The candle is alight, and God willing, we will be with them in paradise."

In Ramadi, the violent capital of Anbar Province, voting so exceeded expectations that several polling centers reported that they had exhausted their ballots before noon. At one point in the afternoon, a polling station at the city's northern reaches was forced to turn away a group of voters for lack of ballots. The group rigged a white flag on a stick and waved it in the air a sign of peace, and then carried it across the Euphrates River into central Ramadi where they were allowed to vote.

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Reporting for this article was contributed by John F. Burns in Baghdad, Kirk Semple in Ramadi, Robert F. Worth in Basra and Edward Wong in Kirkuk.

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Iran threat to halt nuke checks

Tehran, Sept. 25 (Reuters): Iran today threatened to halt spot checks of its nuclear sites after the UN watchdog passed a resolution requiring Tehran to be reported to the Security Council over its atomic plans.

Some commentators in the Islamic country expressed surprise over how some countries that had voiced support for its nuclear stance had voted at yesterday's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

China, Russia and South Africa, which had supported Iran, abstained from the vote, while India surprised all by voting for the resolution against traditional ally Iran and backing fellow nuclear powers, the US, France and Britain.

Iranian foreign minister Manouchehr Mottaki rejected as illegal the resolution that called on Iran to suspend uranium enrichment-related activities until it proves they are peaceful and resume talks with France, Britain and Germany.

He said now Iran had no reason to implement the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) that allows the UN to make spot checks of nuclear facilities. The protocol has not yet been ratified by parliament.

"Iran has no legal commitment to continue implementation of the Additional Proto-

col. "We will use all diplomatic measures to preserve our right (to have nuclear technology)," he told ISNA student news agency.

Iran denies it is seeking atomic bombs and says its nuclear programme is only for generating electricity. But it concealed its atomic fuel programme from the IAEA for 18 years.

Mottaki said Iran had no intention to pull out of the NPT if the Islamic Republic falls foul of the Security Council. Iran had expected stronger backing at the IAEA. "Overestimating some countries' verbal support and making a fuss over it was a mistake. It has imposed huge costs on Iran," said the daily *Aftab-e Yazd*.

Russia, which is helping Iran build a nuclear power station, was diplomatic in its assessment, saying it hoped its abstention showed dissatisfaction with some "disputable variants on settling the situation", but that the resolution would lead to further talks to settle questions over Iran's nuclear work.

"Russia abstained from voting together with China, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and a group of other countries. Our decision was prompted by the fact that the resolution contains ambiguous assessments and disputable variants on settling the situation," a foreign ministry statement said.

Missiles in front of a portrait of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at an exhibition near Tehran on Sunday to commemorate the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. (AFP)

ALL GUNS BLAZING



Missiles in front of a portrait of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at an exhibition near Tehran on Sunday to commemorate the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. (AFP)

col." ISNA quoted Mottaki as motivated." Mottaki predicted a rough ride at the next IAEA board of governors meeting on November, when Iran's case could be referred to the Security Council.

IAEA STAND-OFF India's vote a 'great surprise', but 'friendship' to continue, says Tehran

Trade ties may suffer, warns Iran

PARISA HAFEZI

TEHRAN, SEPTEMBER 27

Iran threatened on Tuesday to use trade ties to punish countries that voted against it at the UN atomic watchdog. Officials said they were particularly shocked by India's backing for an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) resolution passed on Saturday requiring that Iran be reported in the future to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

But Tehran reassured New Delhi, hoping to satiate a voracious appetite for energy through deals with the world's second biggest

holder of oil and natural gas, that it would not take any hasty actions against India.

"We will reconsider our economic cooperation with those countries that voted against us," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters at a weekly news conference. "India's vote came as a great surprise to us," he added. India was among the 22 out of 35 delegations that voted against Iran at the IAEA.

But Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said Iran was willing to continue its "friendly" relationship with India. "We should not lose a friend because of one incident," he told reporters. "We will

Washington says it appreciates India's 'support' on IAEA vote

WASHINGTON: The US on Monday welcomed India's vote against Iran at the IAEA. "We appreciate the support," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said. Democrat Congressman Gary Ackerman, who is co-chair of the India Caucus, praised India's decision, saying that "the government of India made the right choice". He added that he looked forward "to continued cooperation between the US and India".

PTI

have talks with India over Iran's nuclear ambitions in the future."

Angered by the IAEA resolution, Tehran has already threatened to resume uranium enrichment—a process which can be used to make bomb-grade material—and curtail short-notice U.N. inspections. Analysts had predicted Iran could also roll out the oil weapon in a bid to prompt a

change of heart among countries seeking to send Iran to the Security Council. But such a move could backfire. Oil accounts for 80 per cent of export earnings and interrupting that flow of hard cash would be politically risky.

India had no immediate reaction to Asefi's remarks but its Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said on Monday New Delhi's stance at

the IAEA should not cause much trouble. "I see no reason why there should be apprehension that there would be any kind of impact on our energy security," he said, adding India had supported Iran by helping to delay an immediate Security Council referral.

France, Germany and Britain, who have drawn most of Iran's ire, are less exposed to attacks on commercial contracts. Iran Khodro, the Middle East's biggest car maker has signed production agreements with France's Renault and Peugeot. France's and Britain have been pursuing major LNG projects, but have made little headway.

—Reuters

Iran threatens to make India pay

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, September 27

IRAN ON Tuesday made it clear that it was upset at the way India voted in Vienna. First, Tehran threatened to review economic ties with those countries that voted against it. Later, Iranian ambassador S.Z. Yaghoubi met foreign secretary Shyam Saran to convey his government's "deep sense of hurt and disappointment".

India on Saturday had voted for a West-sponsored resolution in the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that paves the way for Iran's referral to the UN Security Council. In Delhi, Saran explained to the envoy that India's vote was intended to avert a confrontation between the international community and Iran.

In Tehran, foreign ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi warned the 22 countries that voted for the resolution. "Iran will revise these (economic and trade) relations and these countries will suffer. Our economic and political relations are coordinated with each other." He expressed "surprise" at India's vote against his country.

India has declined to respond to the threats. Saran said he saw no reason for any apprehension as New Delhi had voted to provide Tehran more diplomatic space.

IRAN GAME

Who wins?

For India:
India does not import oil or natural gas from Iran. So, no effect

For Iran:
Iran could crimp India's energy plans by banning Indian investment

For the U.S.:
At best Iran could slow down its present energy talks with India

For the world:
Iran would hurt itself more if it goes ahead and spoils economic ties

Teheran threatens to resume uranium enrichment

Associated Press

TEHERAN, Sept. 27. — Iran today threatened to resume uranium enrichment and block UN inspections of its nuclear facilities unless the UN nuclear agency retracted its moves to refer the country to the Security Council for possible sanctions.

Foreign ministry spokesman

Mr Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters that Iran was giving a "serious warning" to its European negotiating partners and the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN nuclear watchdog.

The IAEA passed a resolution on the weekend that put Iran on the verge of referral to the Security Council unless Teheran eases suspicions about its nuclear activities. Iran has

rejected the resolution, protesting it was politically motivated and without legal foundation.

Mr Asefi said Iran was asking the Europeans — Britain, France and Germany — and the IAEA for two things: "First, they should not insist (on the terms of the resolution). Second, they should correct it. If the other parties' reaction is not along these lines, the Islamic Republic of Iran will take

these measures."

Mr Asefi added that Iran would cease to abide by the "voluntary measures" that it has been implementing as an expression of good will. Effectively, this means that Iran would resume enrichment of uranium and disregard the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which it signed but never ratified, under which it grants IAEA inspectors the right to

unfettered inspections of its nuclear facilities.

Invitation for talks

Iran has called on its European negotiating partners to resume talks over its controversial nuclear activity.

A foreign ministry statement read on state TV yesterday said Iran was "ready to accept constructive and effective propos-

als" on its nuclear programmes. The statement comes two days after the IAEA passed a resolution that put Iran on the verge of referral to the UNSC.

Yesterday's statement repeated a warning that a referral to the Security Council may force Iran to reduce IAEA powers to inspect its nuclear activities under an additional protocol to the NPT, which it has signed but not yet ratified.

EU, US don't have a strong case against Iran

By Jal Taraporevala/TNN

The decision of the US and EU3 (UK, France and Germany) not to immediately press for Iran's nuclear programme to be referred to the Security Council underscores the obstacles these nations will face in their efforts to step-up pressure on the Ahmadinejad administration.

The case against Iran is not as

checking growing US assertiveness on the world stage and the calculation that by most intelligence estimates Iran is at least a decade away from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, China and Russia (which are veto-holding members of the Security Council) will remain opposed to the imposition of international sanctions against Teheran. In any case, limited diplomatic and economic sanctions could prompt



clear-cut as Washington claims. Doubts persist about some aspects of Iran's nuclear activities between 1988 and 2003 and on whether Teheran is providing the IAEA all the requisite information about its current programme (especially in respect of the Parchin plant).

Even so, as a non-nuclear signatory to the NPT, Teheran is legally entitled, under strict IAEA monitoring, to develop an independent fuel cycle (an indigenous uranium conversion and enrichment capability) to the extent needed to produce N-power for civilian uses. The Iranian move to continue uranium conversion at its Isfahan plant—which is at the centre of the present row and a programme the US and EU3 want Teheran to suspend—is being carried out in accordance with IAEA procedures.

Given commercial considerations, the geopolitical objective of

Iran to harden its stand by commencing uranium enrichment activities. The only real pressure that could be exerted on Iran is the imposition of oil sanctions—a proposal which is bound to prove a non-starter. After all, Iran, which is the second largest exporter in OPEC, produces four million barrels of oil per day vis-a-vis a daily surplus spare capacity in the world of only two million barrels.

Moreover, the leadership in Teheran has ideological and tactical reasons not to make substantive concessions at this stage. These factors include the consolidation of power in Iran in the hands of the conservatives, the growing problems facing the Americans in Iraq and Washington's sustained criticism of Teheran's civil liberties record, support for militant groups and nuclear programme. The current impasse will therefore continue for the foreseeable future.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Iran must work to rebuild confidence

The proliferation risks if Iran continues on its current nuclear path are very great.

Philippe Douste-Blazy, Joschka Fischer, Javier Solana, and Jack Straw

IF THERE is one goal in which governments of all kinds have found common purpose, it is halting the spread of nuclear weapons. The bedrock of global efforts to establish a credible system for preventing their proliferation is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). More states have signed this Treaty than any other. Full compliance is essential for international security and the effectiveness of the multilateral system.

Two and a half years ago, Iran was forced to admit to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it was building secret installations to enrich uranium and to produce plutonium, which could be used to produce material for such weapons. It was, and still is, building ballistic missiles that could carry nuclear warheads. Iran appeared to be challenging the non-proliferation system.

Subsequent investigations showed that, in the IAEA's words, "Iran's policy of concealment ... resulted in many breaches of its obligations." They gave rise to serious concern that Iran's nuclear programme may not, as it claims, be for solely peaceful purposes. Under the IAEA's rules, Iran should have been reported to the United Nations Security Council two years ago.

We decided instead to find a way forward that would give Iran an opportunity to dispel concerns and prove that the aims of its nuclear programme were entirely peaceful. The IAEA's Board of Governors agreed to delay a report to the Security Council to give the European initiative a chance.

At the heart of our initiative was a proposal that Iran should restore confidence by suspending all enrichment related and re-

processing activities while we discussed mutually acceptable long-term arrangements. The IAEA Board adopted unanimously six successive resolutions asking Iran to suspend these activities.

In November 2004, Iran finally agreed to move ahead on this basis. The Paris Agreement' set out the framework for talks. It offered the prospect of not just a long-term solution to the nuclear issue, but also a stronger relationship between Europe and Iran, including co-operation on political and security issues and in economic and scientific fields.

The stakes were high then and they still are. If the process succeeds, the non-proliferation system will emerge with its authority enhanced. But if Iran continues on its path, Central Asia and the Middle East, one of the world's most volatile areas, may well be destabilised. Other states would be likely to enhance their own capabilities. The NPT will be badly damaged, as will the goal of creating a WMD free zone in the Middle East, a cause to which we are committed. This helps explain the wide support we have had.

Last month, Iran decided to defy the international community by restarting uranium conversion at its plant in Isfahan, a unilateral step halting our talks. Iran claims it is doing no more than enjoying its right to make peaceful use of nuclear technology, in accordance with the NPT. Iran wants to paint this as a dispute between the developed and developing world.

These arguments do not stand up. No one is trying to stop Iran from generating electricity by nuclear power. We do not question Iran's — or any country's — rights under the NPT. This is why in August we have offered Iran, as part of a long-term agreement, sup-

port for its civil nuclear programme. But with NPT rights go very clear obligations, and there are serious grounds for concern that Iran's nuclear ambitions may not be exclusively peaceful.

For nearly two decades Iran hid enrichment related and reprocessing activities which, if successful, would enable it to produce fissile material for a nuclear weapon. Only since 2002, as the extent of its undeclared activities has been uncovered, has Iran admitted to them, and then only under the pressure of IAEA investigations. Iran initially denied having enriched any nuclear material, but was found to have done so using two separate processes. Iran also claimed it had no outside help for its centrifuge enrichment programme. But it was found to have worked with the same secret network that helped Libya and North Korea develop clandestine nuclear weapons programmes.

There is no economic logic to the facilities at the centre of the dispute, at Isfahan and Natanz, if they are, as Iran claims, solely to produce fuel for nuclear reactors. Iran does not have any nuclear power station in which the fuel it says it wants to produce could be used. It has only one under construction, for which Russia is contracted to supply fuel for ten years and has offered to supply fuel for the lifetime of the reactor, which can only work safely with Russian fuel. Iran has no licence to make the fuel itself, nor is there any economic rationale. We have offered to work with Iran so it has assurances of supply in the event of a procurement problem.

Thirty-one countries in the world have nuclear power reactors — the great majority without developing a fuel cycle industry, demonstrating that this capability is not critical to a civil nuclear industry.

We have pursued talks in good faith. But as well as breaking the Paris Agreement by resuming suspended activities, Iran rejected, without any serious consideration, detailed proposals for a long-term agreement that we presented last month. These were the most far-reaching ideas for relations between Iran and Europe presented since the 1979 Iranian revolution and would provide the foundation for a new relationship based on co-operation.

At the United Nations in New York last week, we publicly and privately restated our willingness to work with Iran in political, economic, scientific, and technological areas and readiness to explore ways to continue negotiations. We went out of our way to avoid public comment which might raise tensions, despite Iran's breach of the Paris agreement. But in his speech to the General Assembly on September 17, President Ahmadinejad gave no hint of flexibility, talking of a 'nuclear apartheid' and insisting that Iran would exercise its right to develop fuel cycle technology, regardless of the concerns of the international community.

The spotlight is now on the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna to respond. Mohammed El-Baradei's latest report concludes that "after two and a half years of intensive inspections and investigation, Iran's full transparency is indispensable and overdue."

The proliferation risks if Iran continues on its current path are very great. We hope all members of the international community will remain united. Collectively, we are responsible for meeting the challenge.

(The writers are respectively the Foreign Ministers of France and Germany, the European Union Security chief, and the British Foreign Secretary.)

The world must stand firm on diplomacy

The 'nuclear crisis' is the product of 15 years of American hostility towards Iran. Any solution that does not deal with this reality is bound to fail.

Siddharth Varadarajan

WHEN BRITAIN, France, and Germany volunteered last year to try and find a diplomatic alternative to the punitive measures the United States was demanding against Iran, the expectation was that the European-3 would have the skill – and the gumption – to craft a solution that would address the legitimate concerns of both Teheran and the 'international community.'

What were these concerns? The world needed assurance that Iran's pursuit of the nuclear fuel cycle, including uranium enrichment, would not lead to nuclear weapons, and Iran needed assurances that it

THE PERSIAN PUZZLE - III

would not be denied access to civilian technologies or subjected to sanctions or the threat of aggression by the U.S. and Israel, both of which possess nuclear weapons. Accordingly, the Paris Agreement signed by Iran and the E3 on November 15, 2004, spoke of a solution that would "provide objective guarantees that Iran's nuclear programme is exclusively for peaceful purposes." In exchange, Iran was to be provided "firm guarantees on nuclear, technological and economic cooperation and firm commitments on security issues." Given this framework, Iran said its voluntary suspension of enrichment-related and reprocessing activities "will be sustained while negotiations proceed on a mutually acceptable agreement on long-term arrangements."

Last month, the E3 slammed the door on the possibility of a "mutually acceptable agreement" by presenting proposals that turned the spirit of the Paris accord upside down. Iran was told permanently to abandon its enrichment and reprocessing facilities and heavy water reactor and provide "a binding commitment not to pursue fuel cycle

activities other than the construction and operation of light water power and research reactors." In other words, the only possible "objective guarantee" the E3 was prepared to accept against misuse of enrichment facilities was for Iran not to have them at all.

As if this was not provocative enough, the E3's proposals on the guaranteed supply of enriched uranium and security assurances were so vague as to make a mockery of the concepts of "firm guarantees" and "firm commitments." For example, far from committing itself to assist whatever remains of the Iranian nuclear programme once fuel cycle-related activity is excluded, all the E3 was willing to promise was "not to impede participation in open competitive bidding." Not surprisingly, the Iranians said this manifest demonstration of bad faith on the E3's part meant negotiations had come to an end. Accordingly, Teheran ended its voluntary suspension and notified the International Atomic Energy Agency of its intention to resume conversion activities at its Esfahan facility. This, in short, is the backstory to the current crisis

In an analysis of the E3 offer, Paul Ingram of the British American Security Information Council (BASIC) – a leading Western arms control think-tank – called it "vague on incentives and heavy on demands" and concluded that the European proposals seemed "designed to fit closely with US requirements." "Even the establishment of a buffer store of nuclear fuel is proposed to be physically located in a third country, rather than in Iran under safeguards," he noted, adding that the E3/EU "do not seem to have had the courage to offer either the substantial, detailed incentives or a creative, compromise solution on enrichment which could reasonably have been expected to receive Iran's endorsement."

Pellaud proposals

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took one step towards a creative solution

when he proposed running Iranian enrichment facilities as joint ventures with private and public sector companies from other countries. Though it has been dismissed out of hand, the latest Iranian offer is a variant of a formula that was proposed in February this year by an IAEA expert group on "multilateral approaches" to the nuclear fuel cycle headed by Bruno Pellaud.

The Pellaud committee had been tasked by the IAEA to recommend measures that could bridge the gap between a country's right – under the NPT – to the nuclear fuel cycle, and the proliferation concerns that would arise from an increase in the worldwide number of facilities capable of uranium enrichment or plutonium separation. The relevance of this issue to the Iran question hardly needs elaboration.

Of the five proposals made by the committee, three concerned different types of international fuel supply guarantees as an incentive for countries to forswear their own enrichment facilities, and two were based on the notion of shared ownership or control. The latter involved "promoting voluntary conversion of existing facilities to multilateral nuclear approaches (MNAs), and pursuing them as confidence-building measures with the participation of non-nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-weapon states, and non-NPT states" – precisely the kind of offer Mr. Ahmadinejad made in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly last week – or "creating, through voluntary agreements and contracts, multinational, and in particular regional, MNAs for new facilities based on joint ownership, drawing rights or co-management."

Could an MNA provide the international community with the kind of assurances it needs that enriched uranium would not be diverted to a clandestine nuclear weapons programme? While releasing his report earlier this year, Dr. Pellaud said he believed it could. "A joint nuclear facility with multinational staff puts all participants under a greater scrutiny from peers and partners, a

fact that strengthens non-proliferation and security ... It's difficult to play games if you have multinationals at a site."

Instead of threatening sanctions, the E3 should engage Iran in a dialogue which can develop the Pellaud-Ahmadinejad proposals to a level where Teheran can provide "objective guarantees" that its programme is entirely peaceful and Europe can give "firm guarantees" and "firm commitments" on the issues which concern the Iranians. The only problem, of course, would be what to do about the Americans.

The fact of the matter is that it is impossible to separate the present "nuclear crisis" from Washington's track record of unremitting hostility towards the Iranian Government. Indeed, any solution that does not bring about a change in U.S. behaviour is unlikely to be acceptable or durable as far as Teheran is concerned. As part of its long-term framework proposals, therefore, the E3 must undertake to get the U.S. to abandon its sanctions against the Iranian oil and gas industry and drop its aim of bringing about 'regime change' in Iran.

Instead of falling in line with Washington's pressure on Iran, Europe and the rest of the world should also ask themselves whether the cause of international peace and security is served by selective concern about 'proliferation.' The NPT allows enrichment but Iran is being told it cannot have a fuel cycle.

The NPT mandates nuclear disarmament but the U.S. is conducting weapons research and formulating military doctrines that will weaponise space and increase the salience of nuclear weapons in its force posture. Britain and France have no conceivable nuclear adversaries yet continue to deploy nuclear weapons. Countries in West Asia are being told they can never walk out of the NPT but nothing is done to denuclearise Israel. These issues too are very much part of the "nuclear crisis" and it is time something were done to address them.

(Concluded)