

Babri Mosque demolition: SC issues notices to Advani

PTI, New Delhi

The Supreme Court yesterday issued notices to Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani, Human Resources Development Minister Muri Manohar Joshi, CBI, and other BJP and VHP leaders on a petition seeking quashing of May 30 charge sheet filed by the investigating agency before a Rae Bareilly court in the Ayodhya case dropping conspiracy charge against them.

A Bench comprising Justice S Rajendra Babu, Justice KG Balakrishnan and Justice Arun Kumar, while issuing the notices, adjourned hearing on another petition filed by Mohammad Aslam alias Bhure seeking review of apex court's earlier order upholding the transfer of Ayodhya case trial from Lucknow to Rae Bareilly.

Iraqis get new govt as US, UK feel the heat

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's transitional Governing Council named a new 25-member post-war government as the United States and Britain faced increased public pressure to start bringing some of their troops home.

Meanwhile, thousands of mourners from across Iraq and neighbouring, mostly-Shiite Iran paid their final respects to slain Muslim Shiite leader Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer al-Hakim, who was assassinated Friday in Najaf.

Iraqi police have questioned 19 suspects, two of them Saudis, over the car bomb massacre, that killed at least another 82 people and wounded 125.

Iraq's Governing Council announced the names of the 24 men and one woman who will act as ministers in an interim government until elections are held next year.

The new cabinet is divided up among the country's various communities, with 13 ministries going to Muslim Shiites, five to Sunnis, one to Kurds, one to Turkmen and one to the Christians.

It will not have defence and intelligence ministries nor will a prime minister be appointed, as that role will be filled out by the council's rotating chairmen.

The key oil ministry goes to Shiite Ibrahim Mohammad Bahr al-Ulum, and the interior minister post will be held by another Shiite, Nuri

Badran, a council source told AFP. The foreign affairs portfolio will go to a Kurd, Hoshiar al-Zibari, while finance goes to a Sunni, Kamel al-Kailani, said a governing council member, Nasseer al-Shadershi.

US President George Bush faced growing calls from within his own party and from candidates to unseat him in next year's election to bring more international troops into the country. At the same time, a poll in Britain revealed a public that wants a scaled-down British troop presence in Iraq.

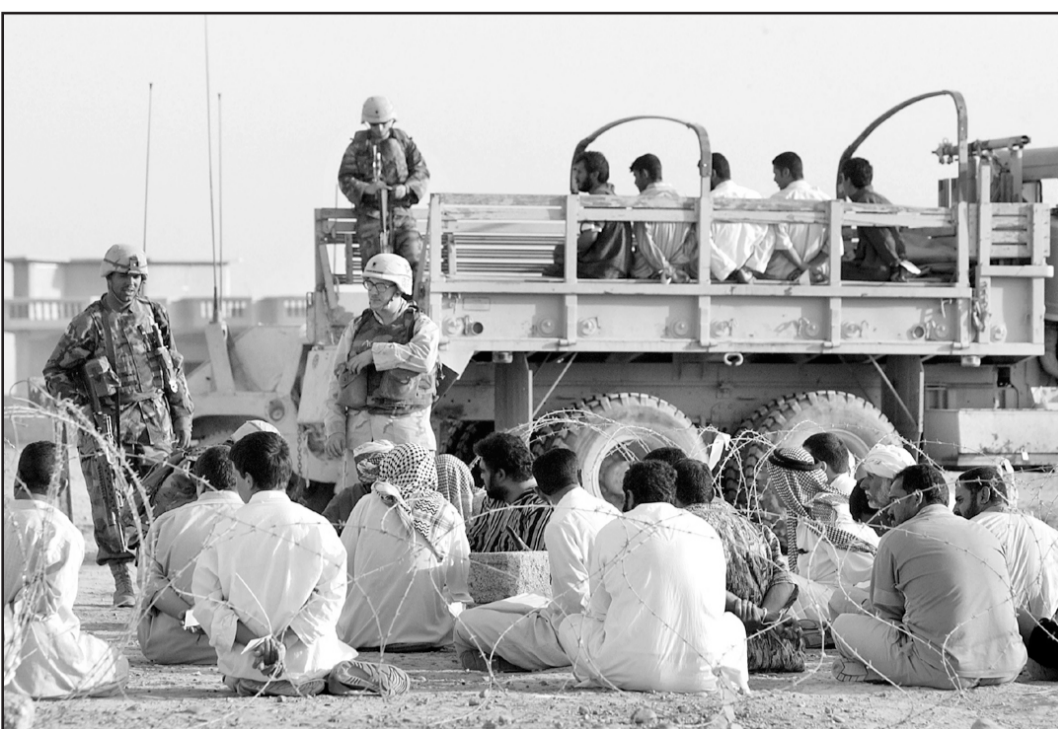
US troops Sunday moved in force into a district of the northern city of Mosul -- where American forces killed Saddam Hussein's son Uday and Qusay on July 22 --

amid reports Saddam might be hiding there.

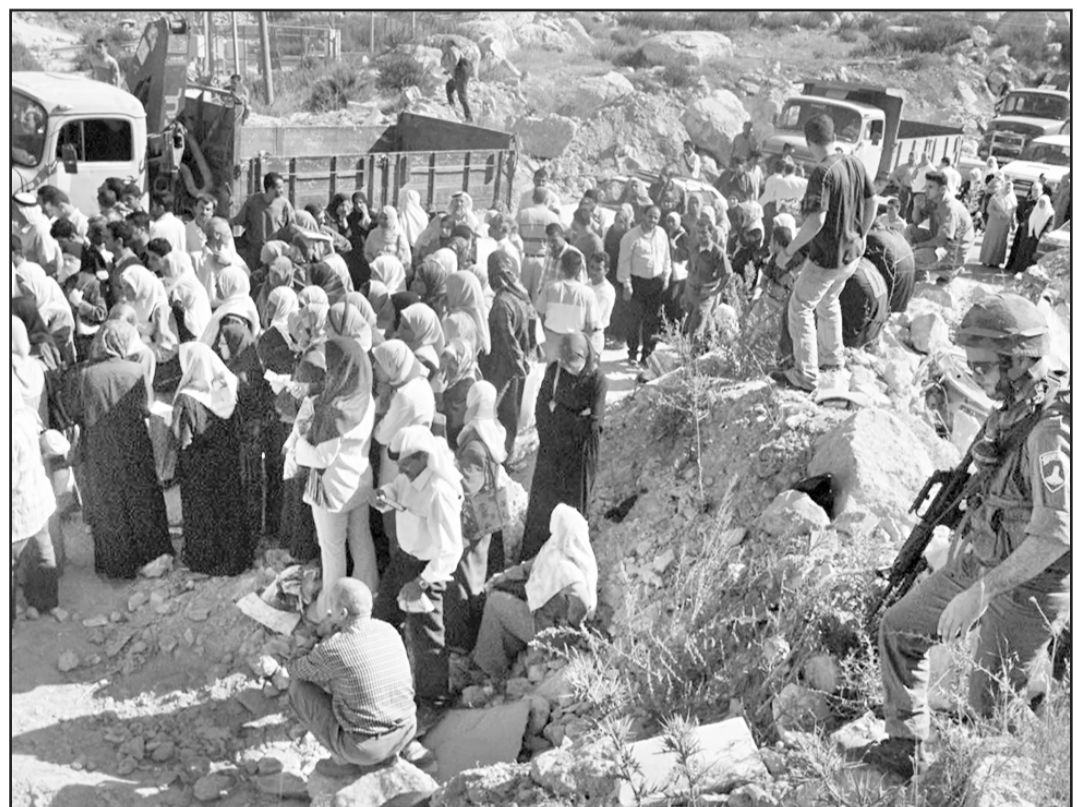
Friday's bombing in Najaf, along with the deadly attacks on the UN headquarters in Baghdad on August 19 and the Jordanian Embassy on August 7, have fuelled fears that Iraq is spinning out of control five months after major combat operations were declared over.

It has fuelled the anger of Iraq's Shiite community, who make up about 60 percent of the population but who were systematically oppressed by Saddam's Sunni elite.

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation said it will investigate links between the Najaf bombing and the other two.



Members of the 4th Infantry Division, 1st Brigade Combat Team 42 Field Artillery keeps watch over detainees on Sunday during an early morning raid in Tal Kasep. The raid in the town 25 km northeast of Tikrit netted 6 people and a cache of guns and money.



Palestinians wait to cross a checkpoint at the entrance of the West Bank City of Hebron yesterday. Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz said Sunday that the army was considering moving into Gaza if the radical Islamic group Hamas was not brought under control by the Palestinian Authority.

Israel threatens to send troops to snub Hamas

One killed by Israeli missiles in Gaza

AP, Jerusalem

Israel is prepared to send an infantry brigade into the Gaza Strip to stop Hamas rocket fire, Israel's army chief was quoted as saying yesterday as troops critically wounded a 15-year-old Palestinian in a clash with stone-throwing youngsters.

Israeli leaders have repeatedly threatened tougher action to stop rocket fire from Gaza. Fighting has escalated there in the past two weeks, with Israel killing 10 Hamas operatives and a bystander in five missile attacks, and Hamas firing mortars and rockets toward Israeli communities.

Also Monday, more than 1 million Palestinian youngsters in the West Bank and Gaza returned to classes. The Israeli military eased restrictions in some of the reoccupied West Bank towns to allow students to get to school.

In the city of Nablus, hundreds of students threw stones at tanks and jeeps in several locations. Troops fired tear gas, rubber bullets and also live rounds to disperse the crowds, witnesses said.

In one incident, a Palestinian threw a firebomb at a tank near the main square, where about 70 stone throwers were assembled. The top of the tank caught fire, said Palestinian rescue worker Ala Aratut, who witnessed the incident. "A soldier from inside the tank began shooting randomly. The top of the tank was going round while the shooting went on," Aratut said.

A teenage boy fell to the ground after being shot in the head, the rescue worker said. Doctors said the boy, age 15, was in critical condition.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

Israel's Cabinet convened

Monday, and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told ministers that there will be no letup in the campaign against Hamas and other militant groups.

"We are continuing our operations against Hamas and other terror groups to prevent them from harming Israel's citizens," he said.

Meanwhile, Israeli helicopters fired at least four missiles at a car in Gaza City on Monday, killing one person and wounding at least 14 in the sixth such attack in two weeks, paramedics and witnesses said.

The target of the attack was not immediately known, but Israel has been waging war on the Islamic militant group Hamas in retaliation for a deadly suicide bombing that killed 21 people on a Jerusalem bus Aug. 19. Fourteen Palestinians, including at least 10 Hamas members, have now been killed in missile strikes.

Senators press Bush to slap price tag on Iraq

REUTERS, Washington

Lawmakers pressed President Bush on Sunday to spell out the cost to Americans of the occupation of Iraq, which a leading Republican said would top \$30 billion over five years for operations alone.

Sen. Richard Lugar, an Indiana Republican and chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the \$30 billion was in addition to military costs that have been running about \$4 billion a month.

"That's the target," Lugar told "Fox News Sunday." "That's about what the budget was ... during the Saddam days, just to run the country."

Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican and member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote in The Washington Post that the administration had to be explicit about what is going to be required.

"America's mission in Iraq is too important to fail. Given the stakes, we cannot launch this 'generational commitment' to changing the Middle East on the cheap," McCain wrote in an editorial.

"The administration should level with the American people about the cost and commitment required to transform Iraq."

The demands on Bush intensified as he returned to Washington from a month-long stay at his Texas ranch. The vacation was marred by violence in Iraq including Friday's car bombing in Najaf, which killed a top Shiite Muslim leader, and the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

Administration officials have said Bush may ask the US Congress to provide \$2 billion to \$3 billion over the short term for Iraq and some congressional sources are expecting a push for an emergency spending bill of \$20 billion or more this year.

Congress passed a \$60 billion emergency spending bill in April for US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The US civil administrator in Iraq, Paul Bremer, said last week he needed tens of billions of dollars for the next year alone, citing \$16 billion to deal with water problems and \$13 billion for electrical power.

Suu Kyi on hunger strike : US

AFP, Washington

The United States said Sunday that Myanmar's detained democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi had launched a hunger strike, and warned its foes in the country's junta they were responsible for her health.

Washington said it was "deeply concerned" for the Nobel laureate, in a bombshell announcement just a day after Myanmar's new prime minister laid out a "roadmap for democracy" greeted with intense scepticism in Yangon.

"The United States has learned that Burma's pro-democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, is on a hunger strike to protest her illegal detention by that country's military regime," said State Department deputy spokesman Philip Reeker.

"This courageous leader of the National League for Democracy and proponent of non-violent political change, has placed herself at risk on many occasions in pursuit of democracy and respect for basic human rights in Burma," Reeker said, using Myanmar's former name, which is preferred by the opposition.

Libya, French families clinch deal: Gaddafi

AP, Tripoli

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi said Sunday a second agreement over compensation has been reached between his country and the families of 170 victims of a French airliner that exploded in 1989.

"The Gaddafi charitable organizations have been dealing with the families to reach an agreement, and they have reached an agreement," Gadhafi said during a speech broadcast live on state-run television on the eve of the anniversary of the 1969 coup that brought him to power.

The Libyan leader was referring to the Gaddafi International Association for Charitable Organizations, a body headed by one of his sons.

He did not reveal any other details about the compensation package.

In 1999, Libya provided \$33 million to families of the passengers

killed when a UTA airliner crashed over the Niger desert on Sept. 19, 1989. A French court earlier convicted six Libyans - including Gaddafi's brother-in-law - in absentia over the bombing. However, France wanted to renegotiate for more compensation after Libya recently agreed to pay families of the 270 victims of the 1988 Pan Am bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland, a total of \$2.7 billion - or between \$5 million and \$10 million for each victim.

Gaddafi previously said the UTA "file was closed" after the \$33 million was paid. But he said the French government was pressured by victims' relatives after it became clear that relatives of the Lockerbie victims would receive more money.

Libya, subsequently, came under international pressure to protect the French government from "further embarrassment," Gaddafi said.

Gaddafi spoke earlier Sunday by phone with French President Jacques Chirac. The French

Foreign Ministry released a statement saying the French-Libyan contacts were continuing "in a constructive spirit."

During his speech, Gaddafi said Libya was compelled to agree to the Lockerbie deal so sanctions against his country could be lifted and its name removed from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism.

"What matters to us is honor. We don't care about money," he said. "The case of Lockerbie is now behind our backs. The Libyans have displayed wisdom and courage as well as efficiency in conducting this strategic conflict."

Following Libya's commitment this month to pay the Lockerbie compensation, accept responsibility for the bombing and renounce terrorism, Britain proposed to the UN Security Council to lift sanctions preventing arm sales and air travel to the north African country.



File photo dated September 22, 1989 shows the remains of UTA's DC10 that crashed over Niger on September 19, 1989 killing 170 people. Libya has agreed to a compensation deal with the relatives of those killed in the bombing of a French airliner over Niger in 1989, Tripoli's London ambassador Mohammed al-Zvai told AFP Sunday.

10 killed in fresh wave of Kashmir violence

AFP, Srinagar

Ten people were killed in Indian Kashmir yesterday in a wave of violence which police said was in revenge for the killing by Indian troops two days ago of a top Kashmiri rebel commander.

A bomb disposal expert was killed and three people injured while trying to defuse an explosive near a key road tunnel in south Kashmir, a police spokesman said.

The bomb was placed inside a bag near the Jawahar tunnel -- the 2.5-km link between the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley and the Hindu-dominated southern region of Jammu, the spokesman said.

Three disposal experts were trying to defuse the bomb but it exploded, killing one and injuring the other two, a police source told AFP. A paramilitary trooper standing nearby was also injured.

He said the entire area was sealed off to search for the Islamic rebels suspected to have planted the bomb, with traffic held up on both sides of the tunnel.



Nepalese soldiers stand guard with an armoured vehicle at a busy intersection in Tripureswore, Kathmandu yesterday. Security forces have been put on alert amid fears of trouble ahead of a nationwide strike scheduled for September 18. Maoist rebels have called the strike to press their demands for the abolition of the country's monarchy, the key demand of their seven-year "people's war" which has left more than 7,800 people dead.

Afghan govt opens talks with Taliban in south

AFP, Islamabad

Afghan President Hamid Karzai's government has started negotiations with Taliban officials in several parts of the troubled southeastern province of Zabul, the Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported yesterday.

The negotiations are being conducted by a senior government official, Abdul Rehman Hotak, on the authority of provincial governor Hafizullah, the Pakistan-based private news service said.

Hotak represented his province in the Loya Jirga or traditional tribal assembly held in Kabul last year to endorse Karzai's presidency.

The report came as Afghan forces supported by US troops and aircraft were engaged in a major operation against suspected Taliban and al-Qaeda bases in the mountains of Daychopan district of Zabul province, 300km southwest of Kabul.

At least 13 suspected Taliban were killed in separate fighting in Zabul province over the weekend, Afghan officials said Sunday amid reports that hundreds of Taliban fighters have converged on the mountains of Zabul.

"We have started negotiations because the Karzai government believes in resolving problems through peaceful dialogue," Hotak was quoted as telling the AIP.

Hotak said he recently visited Atghar district in Zabul, scene of recent clashes, to establish contacts with Taliban officials.

Describing the talks as "positive", he said the Taliban in Atghar promised that "in case of a successful dialogue they would not take any step against the government."

"The Taliban are demanding guarantees that they would not be harmed. They are also seeking assurances that they would not be harassed by the coalition forces," he said.

Similar negotiations for a peaceful settlement in Zabul were also underway in other provincial districts of Shenkay, Syori and Naubahar, he said.

Zabul's security chief Khalilullah confirmed the report to AIP. "We want an end of fighting in Zabul so that the people could live in peace," Khalilullah said he would ask the Taliban to drop a fatwa calling for Jihad, and that if the request was accepted the government forces were prepared to offer an amnesty.