

# France has no intention to veto new Iraq resolution

## Chirac pushes for quick power transfer to Iraqis, timetable for sovereignty

AFP, New York

France does not intend to veto US proposals for a new UN resolution on Iraq, but will only vote in favor if it includes a prompt transfer of sovereignty to Iraqis, French President Jacques Chirac told the New York Times in an interview yesterday.

"We don't have the intention to oppose. If we oppose it, that would mean voting no, that is to say, to use the veto. I am not in that mindset at all," Chirac said ahead of the start of the UN General Assembly in New York Tuesday.

But he said France would only support the resolution if it included a deadline and timetable for transferring sovereignty in Iraq as well as a "key role" for the United Nations in the oil-rich country.

If these provisions were not included, France would abstain, Chirac said.

A transfer of sovereignty should occur "right now", followed by a "transfer of responsibility" within six to nine months, he insisted.

"We can either abstain or vote yes. To vote yes, we need a clear long-range political vision and a key role for the UN."

"A clear long-range political vision is one that sets out first, a precise deadline for a transfer of sovereignty, and second, a timetable for transferring responsibility," he said.

"What I propose resembles to some degree what we're doing in Afghanistan,"

where international involvement continued after a relatively rapid transfer of power to Afghanis, Chirac said.

"We believe that there will be no concrete solution unless sovereignty is transferred to Iraq as quickly as possible."

The United States is seeking approval for a UN Security Council resolution that would authorize the deployment of a multinational force in Iraq, thus lightening Washington's financial and military burden in the unstable country.

The resolution proposed by Washington also affords international acceptance of the US-appointed Iraqi Governing Council and asks the Iraqis to suggest a clear timetable for the creation of democratic institutions.

Chirac ruled out for the moment sending French combat troops to Iraq but said France could be willing to train Iraqi soldiers and police.

In an interview with Fox News television Monday US President George W. Bush referred to a seven-step US plan for restoring Iraqi sovereignty that reserves hand-over of power until last.

"The key on any (UN) resolution ... is not to get in the way of an orderly transfer of sovereignty based upon a logical series of steps," he said. "And that's constitution, elections and then the transfer of authority."

Asked if he was willing to grant a larger role to the United Nations in Iraq's political development, Bush replied: "I'm not so sure we have to."

# Arafat calls for total truce

## Sharon vows no compromise, Israeli troops kill Hamas militant

REUTERS, AFP, Ramallah

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat expressed commitment to reaching a total cease-fire with Israel in talks with envoys of the "Quartet" of international peacemakers, Palestinian officials said on yesterday.

Senior Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat told Reuters that Arafat, in a meeting on Sunday, cited conditions, including the sending of international monitors to encourage implementation of the "road map" peace plan.

Israel has rejected such a condition in the past.

The United States is the dominant member of the Quartet and has cut off contacts with Arafat, accusing him of fomenting anti-Israel violence during a three-year-old Palestinian uprising for independence. Arafat denies the accusation.

Erekat said Arafat gave the three other Quartet members, the European Union, United Nations and Russia, a letter in which he "reiterated his full commitment to implementing the road map and the rule of law in Palestinian areas."

AFP adds: Prime Minister Ariel

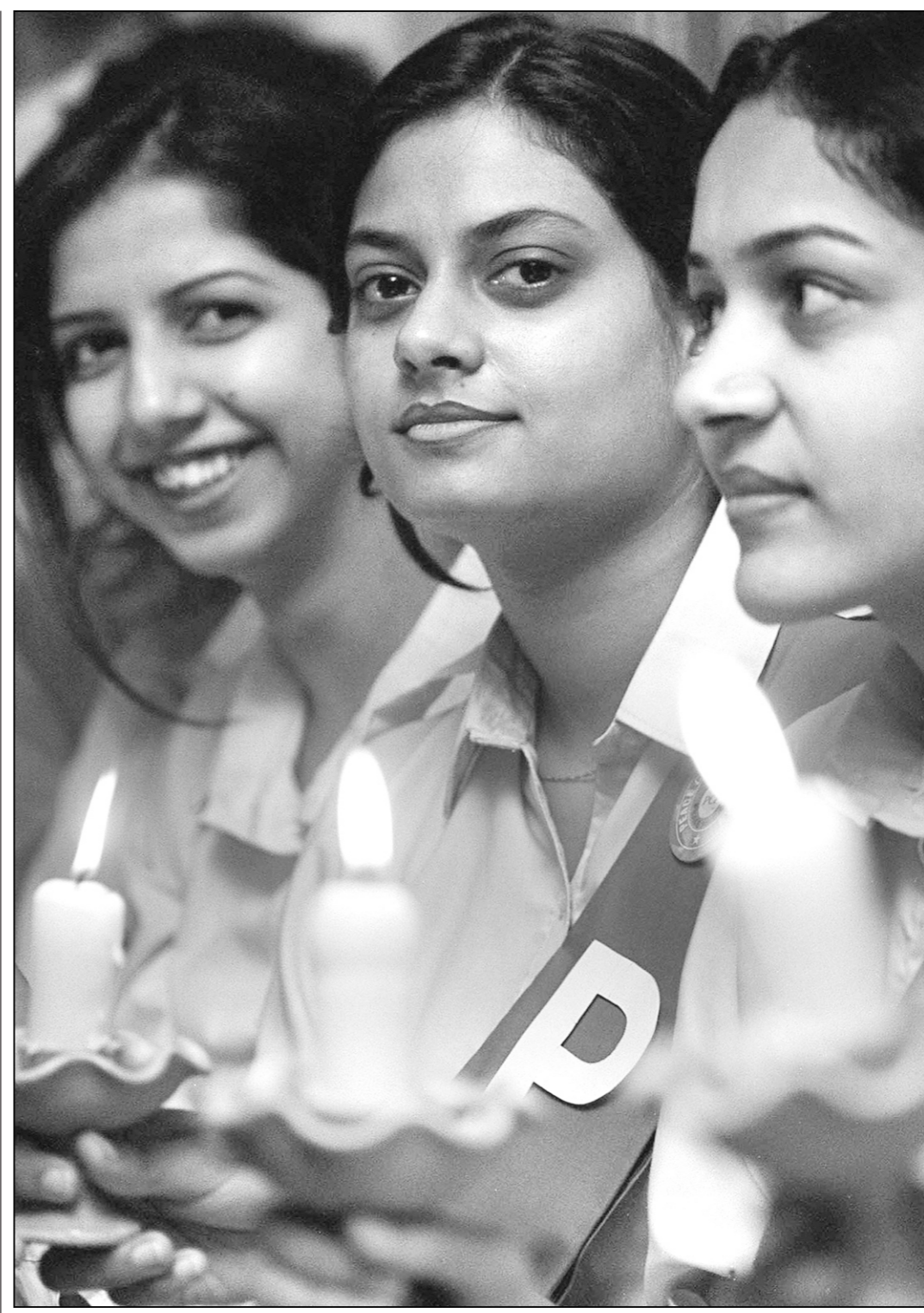
Sharon vowed not to compromise on Israel's security, as his top aide headed to Washington in a bid to seal approval for a controversial West Bank barrier.

Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom was also travelling to New York to attend the annual meeting of the UN General Assembly, two days after Israel was almost universally condemned over its threats to remove Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Israel has insisted it regarded the vote as irrelevant. A total of 133 countries voted for the non-binding resolution on Friday while four voted against, including the United States.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces killed a Palestinian Islamic militant on Monday after besieging and then demolishing a house where he had taken shelter in the West Bank city of Hebron.

A Reuters reporter saw a body pulled from the rubble with a machinegun next to it and Palestinian security sources said the dead man was a member of the militant Hamas group.

Palestinian witnesses said troops surrounded the house with 15 jeeps and two tanks. They said there was an exchange of fire before troops brought up a bulldozer to demolish the house.



Unidentified Pakistani schoolgirls smile as they hold candles during a peace ceremony organised by the United Nations in Islamabad on Sunday. Pakistan joined the world in commemorating International Peace Day reaffirming its commitment to the UN Charter and its principles of peace, development and non-violence.

PHOTO: AFP

## Vajpayee asks world to combat roots of terror

PTI, New York

Declaring that India is capable of fighting and winning its war against terrorism aided and abetted from across the border, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee yesterday asked the international community to combat the menace whose roots are not only in Afghanistan but in some other countries also.

"India is trying to have peace with its neighbours. We are confronting terrorism aided and abetted from across the border... We are capable of fighting the war against terrorism and we will definitely win it," Vajpayee said without naming Pakistan.

"We want to remind the world that roots of terrorism are in some other countries also apart from Afghanistan," he said, addressing about 5,000 members of the Indian community in New York.

## India to build 2 nuclear-proof bunkers for top leaders

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian government has decided to build two nuclear-proof bunkers to protect top leaders including Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in case of an atomic strike, a report said yesterday.

The first shelter would be built in central New Delhi at South Block, a 1931 complex next to the presidential palace that houses the prime minister's office and the foreign and defence ministries, the Hindustan Times reported.

It said the second bunker would be set up within a 400-kilometre (250-mile) radius of the capital.

Potential locations in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and in the central province of Madhya Pradesh were being studied by the head of the air force, Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy, and the chief of the nuclear forces, Air Marshal Teja Mohan Asthana, the daily said.



Shimon Peres (L), Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and former US president Bill Clinton take part in Peres' 80th birthday festivities in Tel Aviv on Sunday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Arafat deserved Nobel Peace prize: Peres

AFP, Tel Aviv

Former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres said yesterday that beleaguered Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat deserved to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The current Israeli government has deemed Arafat an obstacle to peace, and agreed in principle to remove the 74-year-old from his West Bank headquarters.

But Peres, speaking in Tel Aviv at a special conference to mark his 80th birthday, said that Arafat should be given credit for offering an unprecedented hand of peace to Israel.

"I believe it was right to give (Arafat) the Nobel peace prize because he did three things that no other Palestinian leader did," Peres told a round-table discussion which

featured three other Nobel laureates here.

"He declared publicly that he recognised the state of Israel -- no other Palestinian leader dared do that so publicly.

"Second, he said he would abandon terrorism, and third he agreed that peace would be based on the borders of 1967 and not 1948."

Peres, Arafat and the late Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin were awarded the Nobel prize in 1994 for their work towards the 1993 Oslo peace accords.

Former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, ex-South African leader FW de Klerk, and David Trimble, leader of Northern Ireland's Ulster Unionist party, were other Nobel prize winners who also took part in the debate.

# Congress party dumps 'politics of alliance'

THE STATESMAN/ANN, New Delhi

After having tested the waters on "politics of coalition and alliances", the central leadership of the Congress has dumped the move at least for now.

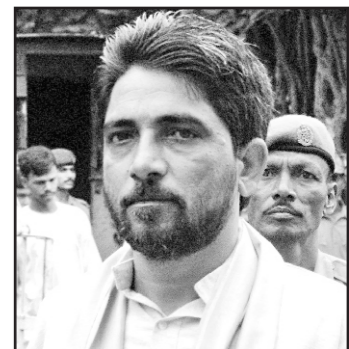
According to senior Congress leaders, the party's declaration at its Srinagar and Shimla conventions that it was ready for an alliance of secular forces opposed to the BJP, the initial response has not been very encouraging from some major forces in the opposition.

The Samajwadi Party has maintained an ambiguous position on accepting Sonia Gandhi as the opposition's consensus Prime Ministerial candidate before the Lok Sabha elections and the CPI (M), the other major opposition force, stands divided on the issue. There are not many takers for Jyoti Basu's unequivocal commitment to Sonia.

The Congress has decided to go slow on embracing the Bahujan Samaj Party after Mayavati's wholesome praise for Sonia and a friendly gesture shown by her to the Congress.

The Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh is not keen on an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party but would not oppose the proposal of some seat sharing-arrangement with the BSP in the state to make up for the anti-incumbency factor that goes against the Congress. Sources in the Congress said that the party would work out some sort of understanding with Mayawati on a limited scale which could be confined to only Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan where the BSP has some support base of the Dalits.

In Chhattisgarh, Ajit Jogi is confident of returning to power in the forthcoming Assembly elections due in November.



Dara Singh

## Killer of Australian missionary to walk gallows

AFP, Bhubaneswar

An Indian court yesterday sentenced a right-wing Hindu activist to death for the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons in 1999 in the eastern state of Orissa.

The court in Orissa's capital Bhubaneswar sentenced Dara Singh to death and jailed 12 others for life in the killing of Graham Staines and his sons aged eight and 10.

Staines, a 57-year-old Baptist who had worked in India with leprosy patients since 1965, was sleeping in his station wagon in the remote village of Manoharpur on January 23, 1999 when he was surrounded by a mob shouting anti-Christian slogans.

## Koizumi keeps reformers in cabinet shake-up

AFP, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi kept Heizo Takenaka as Japan's economic czar in a cabinet shake-up yesterday hailed as a bolstering of the premier's reform program.

The move kept unelected Takenaka as both chief financial system regulator and economic and fiscal policy minister, and ignored calls from within the ruling party to remove him.

Koizumi also surprised commentators by retaining Yoriko Kawaguchi, 62, another unelected politician, as foreign minister, and elevating Sadakazu Tanigaki, 58, to the finance minister's post to replace the ailing Masajuro Shiokawa, 81.

"I think this shows the prime minister's strong expectations with regard to structural reforms," Takenaka told a post-appointment news conference.

# 'Sept 11 plot started with 10 planes in '96'

AP, Washington

Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, told US officials the plot was five years in the making and that a wave of suicide attacks was supposed to follow, say interrogation reports reviewed by The Associated Press.

Khalid said the plan, first developed in 1996, called for hijacking five planes on each American coast, but was changed several times as al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden sought to improve the chances that the attacks could be pulled off simultaneously.

Khalid, a key captive in the US war on terrorism, also addressed one of the questions raised by congressional investigators in their Sept. 11 review. He said he never heard of a Saudi man named Omar al-Bayoumi who provided rent money and assistance to two airliner hijackers when they arrived in California.

Congressional investigators have suggested Bayoumi could have aided the hijackers or been a Saudi intelligence agent, charges the Saudi government vehemently deny. The FBI also has cast doubt on that theory after extensive investigation.

In fact, Khalid claims he did not arrange for anyone on US soil to assist hijackers Khalid al-Mihdhar and Nawaf al-Hazmi when they arrived in California. Mohammed said there "were no al-Qaeda operatives or facilitators in the United States to help al-Mihdhar or al-Hazmi settle in the United States,"

one report says.

Al-Mihdhar and al-Hazmi were on the plane that was flown into the Pentagon.

Khalid portrays those two as central to the plot, and even more important than Mohammed Atta, initially identified as the likely hijacking ringleader. Mohammed said he communicated with al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar while they were in the United States by using Internet chat software, the reports say.

Khalid said al-Hazmi and al-Mihdhar were among the four original operatives bin Laden assigned to him for the plot, a significant revelation because they were the only two whom US authorities were seeking for terrorist ties just before Sept. 11.

US authorities continue to investigate the many statements that Khalid has made in interrogations, seeking to eliminate deliberate misinformation. But they have been able to corroborate with other captives and evidence much of his account of the Sept. 11 planning.

Khalid told his interrogators the hijacking teams were originally made up of members from different countries where al-Qaeda had recruited, but that in the final stages bin Laden chose instead to use a large group of young Saudi men.

As the plot came closer to fruition, Khalid learned "there was a large group of Saudi operatives that would be available to participate as the muscle in the plot to hijack planes in the United States," one report says Khalid told his captors.

# Galileo mission ends with dive into Jupiter

REUTERS, Washington

NASA's Galileo space probe made a controlled, fiery crash into Jupiter on Sunday, ending a 14-year mission that yielded dramatic discoveries about the largest planet and its moons.

The space agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California received the final signal from the spacecraft at 3:43 p.m. EDT, the laboratory said in a statement.

"We learned mind-boggling things. This mission was worth its weight in gold," said Galileo project manager Claudia Alexander.

More than 1,000 people who worked on the Galileo program gathered at the laboratory to celebrate the end of the mission.

Team member Rosaly Lopes described the farewell celebration as bittersweet. "It was very emotional. We had people coming here today who worked on Galileo many years ago. Some had retired. Some had left for other jobs and it was like a big family reunion," she said.

At the same time, it was like saying goodbye to an old friend, Lopes said in a telephone interview.

Galileo was low on propellant and six years past its original end date. Launched from space shuttle Atlantis in 1989, Galileo traveled about 2.8 billion miles before it disintegrated in Jupiter's dense atmosphere on Sunday.

Galileo orbited Jupiter 34 times and obtained the first direct measurements of its atmosphere by sending a probe parachuting down toward the planet in 1995.

It detected evidence of underground salt water oceans beneath the icy crusts of Jupiter's moon Europa. Data also showed that the moons Ganymede and Callisto may have a liquid saltwater layer.

Lopes called the Europa finding a major highlight of the mission. "We had never thought of Europa as a place that could possibly harbor life, so that was a really major discovery," she said.

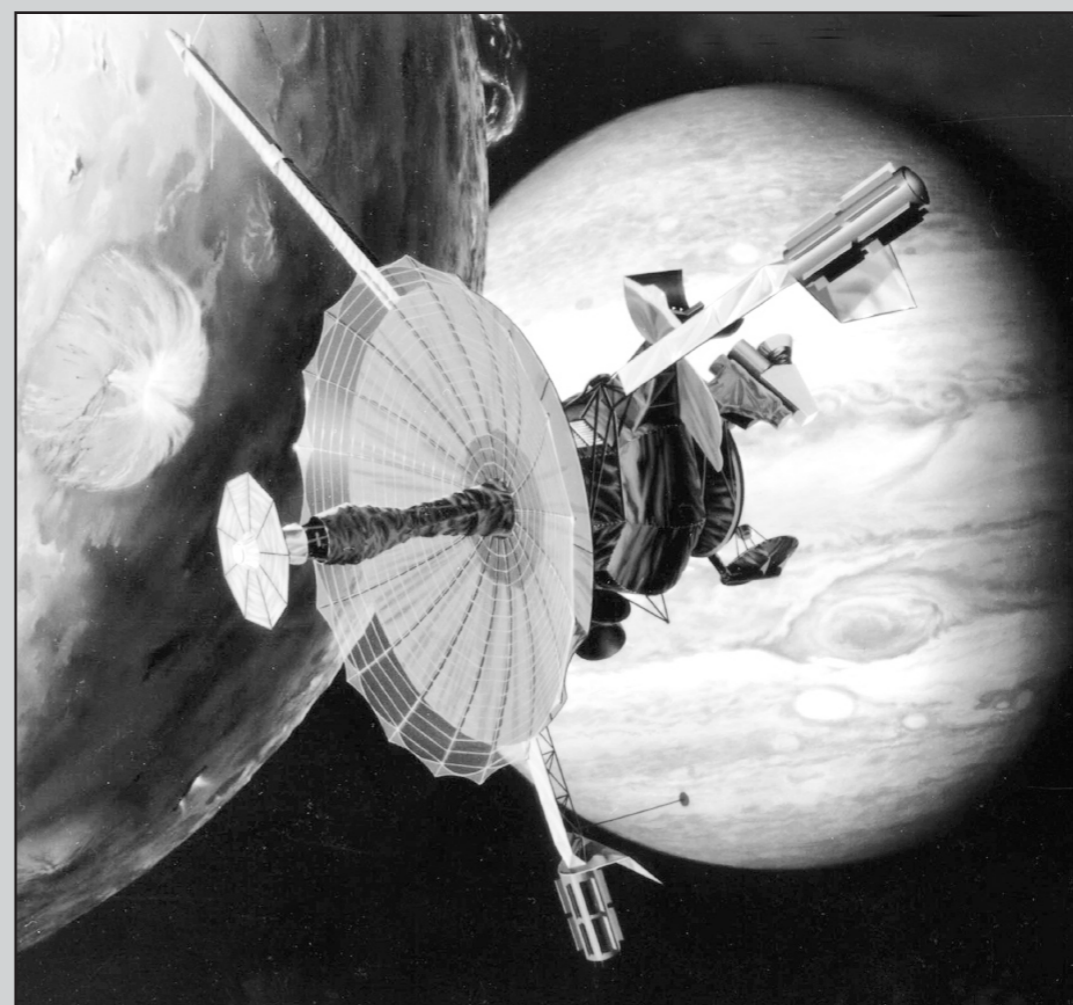
The spacecraft was purposely put on a collision course with Jupiter.

During the mission, Galileo also examined the lively, intensely hot volcanoes on the moon Io.

Astronomers hope to retrieve Galileo's data, but radiation from Jupiter could be a problem. The craft has already weathered more than four times the dose of harmful Jovian radiation it was designed to withstand, and Galileo entered a particularly high-radiation area as it approached the planet.

The spacecraft continued transmitting new information about Jupiter's environment up until the last minute.

"We got the science data until the signal was lost," Lopes said. "It was data about Jupiter's environment fields and particles data."



This NASA artist's concept shows the Galileo spacecraft flying by Jupiter's volcanic moon Io (L) and the gigantic planet (R). Galileo found Io to have a huge iron core that takes up half its diameter. The Galileo spacecraft plunged into Jupiter's crushing atmosphere on Sunday. The spacecraft has been purposely put on a collision course with Jupiter to eliminate any chance of an unwanted impact between the spacecraft and Jupiter's moon Europa, which Galileo discovered.

PHOTO: AFP