



Palestinian scholar Edward Said dies

AP, AFP, New York

Columbia University literary scholar Edward W. Said, the nation's foremost Arab intellectual and advocate for the Palestinian cause, has died after a bout with leukemia. He was 67.

Said was a leading member of the Palestinian parliament-in-exile for 14 years, stepping down in 1991. The university said Said died Thursday, but his publisher said he died late Wednesday.

He wrote passionately about the Palestinian cause and a variety of other subjects, including English literature, his academic specialty as well as music and culture.

Said was born in 1935 in Jerusalem, then part of British-ruled Palestine, but spent most of his adult life in the United States.

AFP adds: The Palestinian leadership paid tribute to Palestinian-American intellectual Edward Said, saying humanity had lost "its eminent genius" with his death.

"With his departure, humanity has lost its eminent genius who had actively contributed to every cultural, intellectual and creative fields," said Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) executive committee in a joint statement.

Several 'terror attacks' against London foiled

AFP, London

Britain's police and security services have prevented several potential terrorist attacks from being carried out in London over the past 18 months, the country's top officer said Thursday.

For one year and a half "the activities undertaken by the (police) anti-terrorist branch specifically in relation to London and nationally with the security services has prevented in some instances a possible terrorist attack on this city", Scotland Yard commissioner Sir John Stevens told a meeting of London's top officers.

Stevens said he could not go into details but said possible attacks had been foiled more than once.

London has been on a high state of alert since the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States.

Pakistan calls on Canada to help resume talks with India

AFP, Ottawa

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf asked Canada to help persuade India to resume talks to try to solve the two nuclear-armed nations' dispute over Kashmir.

At a state dinner, hosted by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Musharraf said: "We stand ready to revive dialogue with India (over Kashmir) through a sustained process of negotiations."

"Unfortunately, we are denied the very forum of dialogue."

Earlier, in an address to the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, Musharraf, who has fought in Kashmir, said "there must be no (new) war. We must settle our dispute peacefully."

He said the Kashmir dispute was largely uncovered in the West, even though "we are fighting every day, killing people every day."

SC asks Gujarat CID to 'keep off' riot victim

THE STATESMAN/ANN, New Delhi

The Supreme Court Thursday asked the Gujarat CID to "keep off" Bilkis Yakoub Rasool, who has sought the apex court's intervention in reopening investigation into the rape and murder of several women of the minority community at Limkheda in Dahod district during the post-Godhra riots.

"We direct the Gujarat CID to keep off the petitioner till this court decides on her application seeking a CBI investigation into the case," Justice Rajendra Babu said after hearing an interim application filed by her counsel, Harish Salve and Shobha, alleging police harassment of the petitioner, who was also gangraped in the incident.

'Israel to consider US concerns over Arafat'

Gloom, low expectations for ME talks at UN

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said in an interview yesterday that Israel would take US objections into account before deciding whether to carry out its threat to "remove" Palestinian President Yasser Arafat.

In his comments to the Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, Sharon also indicated he had bowed to US pressure to reroute the West Bank security barrier Israel is building to stop Palestinian suicide bombers from reaching its cities.

"You must realize that it is very difficult to promise that once you grab (Arafat) and take him, he will not be hurt," Sharon said about a possible operation to spirit the Palestinian leader out of his West Bank headquarters in Ramallah.

"In any case, we will have to take US considerations into account," he said. "It is possible they are correct in their assessment that (Arafat's removal) will cause them problems

in the Middle East. They are mainly concerned about Iraq."

Following a wave of suicide bombings Israel decided in principle this month to "remove" Arafat, calling him an obstacle to peace. It did not say how or when.

A senior US official said Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom promised during talks in New York on Thursday with Secretary of State Colin Powell that Israel would consult with the United States before making any move against Arafat.

Israel, the official said, also made it clear it did not intend to take action against him right away.

Washington refuses to deal with Arafat, accusing him of fomenting bloodshed in a three-year-old uprising for statehood. But it opposes his expulsion from the Palestinian territories, saying he would only gain popularity in exile.

Arafat denies encouraging anti-Israeli attacks.

Commenting on a security barrier Palestinians describe as a "Berlin Wall" through land they claim for their future state, Sharon said it would not loop around Ariel, a major Jewish settlement about 12 miles inside the West Bank.

"There will be a gap," Sharon said, adding the break will be patrolled by Israeli troops. "In the meantime, we will build the fence. There will be another discussion with the Americans when we want to close the gap."

The White House told Israel on Monday the barrier -- an electronic sensor fence in most sections and a cement wall in others -- ran counter to US goals in the region.

Washington said steps should be taken to minimize the barrier's impact on the Palestinian people and the peace process. It wants its route to stick as closely as possible to the pre-1967 war that divided Israel and the West Bank.

Palestinians and human rights groups say the barrier blocks farmers from their fields and tightens already tough restrictions on Palestinian movement within the West Bank.

Meanwhile, gloom and low expectations cast a shadow over a meeting of Middle East mediators in New York yesterday because of uncertainty in Palestinian politics and a preoccupation with Iraq.

High-level representatives of the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations will meet at UN headquarters to take stock of the stalemate in carrying out the Middle East peace plan they floated in April.

The plan has bogged down over Israeli demands that the Palestinian Authority crack down on militants and Palestinian suspicions that Israel would give nothing in return even if the authority dismantles militant groups like Hamas.



Black smoke and flame raise from an oil tanker at the oil refinery plant in Tomakomai city, central Hokkaido Island yesterday after a massive earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale attacked northern Japan.

Muslim nations can become strong if they unite: Mahathir

BERNAMA, New York

Muslim nations can become strong once again if they set aside their differences and unite, Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Thursday.

"Muslim nations have their strengths, not military, but lack of unity has paralyzed them. Until they achieve unity, there is no hope," he said at a news conference after delivering his final speech as a head of government at the 58th United Nations General Assembly. He is stepping down from office at the end of next month.

"Muslims are very weak -- there is no doubt about that. They are divided by their beliefs and interpretation of Islam, and their political convictions -- further they are not united on anything," he said.

Dr Mahathir believed that members of the Organisation of the Islamic Organisation (OIC), if united even on one particular issue, could exert a very great influence on the situation faced by Muslims and the situation in Iraq.

Malaysia will take over the chairmanship of the organisation from Qatar when it holds the 10th session of the Islamic summit conference in Kuala Lumpur next month.



Fathmath Shereen, a member of the Maldives parliament, the Majlis, casts her vote to elect a presidential candidate in Male Thursday. Maldives President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom won a landslide in parliament Thursday that is likely to give him a sixth five-year term leading the most expensive tourist destination in the Indian ocean.

Pakistan's fight against terror a sham: India

PTI, United Nations

In the first major clash in the current session of the United Nations General Assembly, India told Islamabad that Pakistan's combat against international terrorism is based on one per cent intentions and 99 per pretensions.

"This ratio needs to be reversed if Pakistan expects us to take its commitment to end cross-border terrorism against India seriously," India's Political Counsellor Harsh Vardhan Shringla asserted.

Stung by some plane speaking by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his address to the General Assembly about Pakistan sponsoring terrorism, Islamabad's United Nations Ambassador Munir Akram described India as "mother of terrorism" and accused it of sponsoring terrorism against "each one of its neighbours."

India had sponsored terrorism in Sri Lanka and its intelligence agencies directed groups of Kashmiris to "perpetrate" terrorist actions in "Indian occupied Kashmir as a means of intimidating Kashmiris," he alleged while exercising the right of reply at the end of Thursday.

Powell suggests Iraqi constitution in 6-month

Sept 11 attacks changed US strategy on Iraq: Bush

AFP, Washington

The United States intends to set a six month deadline for an Iraqi constitution that would lead to elections and a new government for the war-torn country next year, Secretary of State Colin Powell told The New York Times.

"We would like to put a deadline on them," he said in an interview published Friday. "They've got six months. It'll be a difficult deadline to meet, but we've got to get them going."

He raised the possibility that the Iraqis themselves could set a timetable in the near future, adding that the US government has asked Iraqi leaders to estimate how long it would take them to write a constitution and conduct elections.

"Now, if they take forever to give us the answer to that question, then we've got a problem," Powell said. "But I think they'll give us an answer fairly quickly."

Powell's comments followed US contacts this week with fellow

United Nations Security Council members on a new US-backed UN resolution to muster international help, both financial and military, to stabilize post-war Iraq.

The comments also come as the UN's annual General Assembly is under way, amid widespread doubts about the world body's future role in Iraq.

The administration of US President George W. Bush is at loggerheads with France, Germany and Russia -- who opposed the April war to oust Iraqi President Saddam Hussein -- over a timeline for the transfer of Iraqi sovereignty.

Powell said the constitution drafted by Iraqi leaders would spell out whether Iraq should be governed by a presidential or parliamentary system and clear the way for elections and the installation of a new government in 2004.

Not until then, Powell stressed, would the United States transfer authority from the US-led occupation to Iraq itself.

Powell said it was unlikely that the new UN resolution on Iraq sought by the United States would include the idea of a timetable, which is being negotiated.

However, the resolution could include the general principle of events such as the writing of a constitution, elections and the installation of a new leadership in Iraq, he added.

Powell said the United States would consult with Britain and other close allies on all the discussions he had this week, to redraft the US resolution, adding that a new draft would be "shopped" to Council members.

He said he was sure the resolution would be approved.

Meanwhile, the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington changed US strategy, necessitating action against Iraq because of the danger it posed, President George W. Bush said Thursday.

"Nine-11 changed my calculation," he told reporters.



Prosecutors favor dropping Moussaoui case

AP, Alexandria

Federal prosecutors urged a judge to dismiss charges against Zacarias Moussaoui, saying it was the quickest way to resolve a dispute over the terrorism defendant's right to question fellow al-Qaeda witnesses.

A government motion agreed with Moussaoui's lawyers that dismissal was an appropriate punishment for the Bush administration's defiance of two court orders that granted Moussaoui the right to question three captives.

Suu Kyi heads for house arrest after surgery

REUTERS, Yangon

Myanmar's detained democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi was to leave hospital for house arrest at her Yangon home yesterday with visitors to be screened by the military government, her doctor said.

"Anybody who wishes to see her once she is home can make arrangement through the authorities," Dr. Tin Myo Win said in a statement he read to reporters.

He was asked if the Nobel peace laureate, kept in isolation at a secret location for more than three months before going into hospital for surgery last week, would be in custody at home.

"Yes," he replied as at least 150 Suu Kyi supporters gathered outside in hopes of seeing her.

There was no immediate com-

ment from the military government.

Myanmar has been under intense pressure to end Suu Kyi's isolation since she was detained on May 30, with two Southeast Asian envoys visiting Yangon this week and a special UN representative due to fly in next week.

Indonesia, current chairman of the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), one of the few groups to allow Myanmar as a member, made clear it wanted the democracy icon freed before its leaders meet in Bali on October 7-8.

"We strongly urge the government of Myanmar to release and halt the restrictions on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi ... as soon as possible," Indonesian envoy Ali Alatas told reporters in Jakarta before the news of Suu Kyi's house arrest.

"They did not indicate that she

would be released after recuperating, but that's another factor. So, she first has to be better again before they make a decision. That's my impression," Alatas said.

Tin Myo Win said the slight, 58-year-old Suu Kyi was making a strong recovery from major surgery -- said by other doctors to have been for gynecological problems -- but would be under his care for up to eight weeks.

There had been speculation the operation offered a face-saving way out for the military government to allow Suu Kyi to return to house arrest, as she has been for more than half of the last 14 years.

"This is a great opportunity for them to save face and show the international community that they are not ignoring humanitarian concerns over her," an Asian diplomat told Reuters.

Indian troops kill 4 along de facto Kashmir border

AFP, Srinagar

Indian troops shot dead four Islamic militants overnight near the de facto border dividing Kashmir between nuclear-rivals India and Pakistan, police said yesterday.

One gunbattle erupted in the southern Poonch district minutes after a group of rebels managed to cross into Indian Kashmir through the Line of Control (LoC) -- the ceasefire line that splits Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Police said the militants were asked to surrender but they ignored the plea and opened fire.

"In the retaliatory fire three of them were killed," a police spokesman said, adding the area was being searched for more militants.

Another rebel was killed by the Indian troops along the LoC in the northern Kashmir district of Kupwara overnight, the spokesman said.



(L-R) US Ambassador to the UN John Negroponte, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing attend a luncheon hosted by Annan in honour of the foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the Security Council at the United Nations headquarters Thursday. Others are unidentified.

Amnesty urges leaders at UN to help pacify Iraq

AFP, Amman

Amnesty International urged world leaders meeting at the United Nations to set aside their political differences to restore law and order in Iraq, blaming the US-led coalition for failing to curb "spiraling" violence, a statement said yesterday.

"World leaders gathering in New York must urgently address the continuing spiralling violence in Iraq. Human rights protection must not be sidelined because of disagreements over the political arrangements in Iraq," it said.

"Whatever the outcome of the ongoing debate on the future of Iraq, the aspirations of the Iraqi people to security, justice and dignity must remain a top priority," the London-based human rights organisation said.

Anti-US troika on Iraq is dead: Russian media

AFP, Moscow

The anti-Iraq-war camp between France, Germany and Russia is dead, Russian media said yesterday in response to President Vladimir Putin's speech at the UN General Assembly.

Putin's address in New York Thursday, in which he pointedly refrained from direct criticism of the US-led campaign to oust president Saddam Hussein, "has shown that the troika of opponents to the war in Iraq is definitively in ruins," the liberal daily Gazeta wrote.

Putin "avoided commenting on American actions in Iraq," the paper noted, adding that his former allies in Berlin and Paris

had failed to convince him to take a "more demanding stand."

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has also adopted a "more moderate tone and shown a warmer approach" in his talks with US President George W. Bush, it said, noting that French President Jacques Chirac remains "the only intransigent party."

For the business daily Kommersant, the meetings in New York mark "important changes in US relations with its main opponents over Iraq."

Moscow, the paper commented in an editorial, has always been at pains not to endanger its good relations with the United States, and

Washington "has made it clear that the differences (over Iraq) are a thing of the past."

Henceforth "there is only France remaining in opposition to the United States," it said.

The other main business daily, Vedomosti, highlighted the very "diplomatic" stance taken by Putin, noting that he had backed "neither Bush nor Chirac" while at the same time avoiding giving offence to either.

Putin's UN address argued for a strong United Nations role in Iraq, in line with European demands, while steering clear of demands -- voiced most strongly by France -- that the US-led occupation forces set a date for handing over power.



The Queen Mary II, reputedly the world's biggest ocean liner, leaves harbour on its first shakedown cruise on Thursday at Saint-Nazaire. The ship was built by French shipmakers Chantiers de l'Atlantique, part of the French industrial group Alstom. The ship was saved from near-certain bankruptcy recently when European Union, French state and banking officials agreed on a 3.2 billion-euro bailout package.