US, major allies differ on response to Israeli attack

Major US allies yesterday condemned the ferocity of Israel's military attack on Lebanon, revealing a clear split with Washington's moderate call

Cries of alarm mounted worldwide after Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert ordered armed forces to intensify the offensive in response to rockets hitting towns in northern Israel, killing two and wounding 50.

As the civilian death toll in Lebanon mounted above 60 and Israeli warplanes hit buildings, roads and Beirut airport, French President Jacques Chirac questioned whether Israel was seeking Lebanon's destruction.

"One may well ask if there isn't today a kind of wish to destroy Lebanon -- its infrastructure, its roads, its communications, its energy, its airport. And for what?

"I find honestly -- as all Europeans do -- that the current reactions are totally disproportionate," he said in a live television interview on France's national Bastille Day.

Chirac's comments, echoed across most of Europe and in much of the rest of the world, conflicted with US President George W. Bush's dogged defence of Israel's right to

Bush has not publicly criticized the scale of the Israeli assault, blaming Lebanese militia group Hezbollah and radical Palestinian Hamas for sparking the crisis.

Hezbollah guerrillas seized two Israeli servicemen Wednesday, leading to Israel's first ground incursion since it ended its occupation of

Nepal arrests

2 Pakistanis.

AFP, Kathmandu

vesterday

probes links to

Mumbai blasts

Police in Nepal are probing possible

links between two Pakistani men

arrested here on explosives charges

and the serial train blasts in Mumbai

that killed 179 people, an official said

The men were arrested at a down-

town hotel Wednesday in connection

with the 2001 discovery in a

Kathmandu flat of 16 kilograms (33

"We will also investigate their

possible links in the Mumbai blasts

during interrogation. We can't say

anything at the moment," said Sharad

Oli, deputy superintendent of

of 15 minutes Tuesday along

Mumbai's western railway line, tearing

open first-class train carriages that

were packed with people travelling

home from work in India's commercial

to make thorough investigations

Nepalese officials pledged Friday

"We will take action as per the

existing law of the state if someone

exploits our territory for operating

violent activities in foreign soil," said

home ministry spokesman Baman

China. Nepal would not be used as a

regional base for terrorists, another

used against any neighbours and we

are committed to curb terrorist infiltra-

tion," said foreign ministry spokesman

Kathmandu district court granted

"The two arrested Pakistani nation-

police five days to interrogate the two

Pakistanis, a police officer said Friday.

als will be kept in police custody for at

least five days for investigation on

possession of 16 kilograms of RDX

people had been arrested from two

hotels in the capital, but on Friday said

The Pakistani Embassy in

Kathmandu said that they had no

"We have not been told officially

We don't know anything about this

issue," said an embassy spokesman

Illegal immigrants

foreign workers in the country, he

crackdowns since 1992 on illegal

Malaysia has launched several

on condition on anonymity.

information about the arrest of the two

On Thursday police said four

explosives back in 2001," said Oli.

only two men had been detained.

Sandwiched between India and

"We don't allow our territory to be

Seven blasts went off in the space

Kathmandu police.

following the arrests

Prasad Neupane

Yadhav Khanal.

pounds) of powerful RDX explosive.

Bush telephoned Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Siniora, however, vowing to push Israel to limit the damage it is wreaking in Lebanon.

"President Bush asserted that he will exert pressure on Israel to limit damage inflicted on Lebanon through the ongoing military operation," said a statement from Siniora's office.

Around the rest of world, however leaders bluntly condemned Israel's

"In my view, Israel is making a mistake," said Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. "It will only lead to an escalation of the violence.

In Italy, Prime Minister Romano Prodi said he recognized Israel's legitimate concerns and condemning the kidnapping of the soldiers.

But "we deplore the escalation in the use of force, the serious damage to Lebanese infrastructure and the civilian casualties of the raids." the Italian leader added.

The Vatican secretary of state Angelo Sodano, said: "The Holy See deplores the attack on Lebanon, a free and sovereign country," adding that he felt for the people "who had already suffered in defence of their independence."

Germany called on Israel to consider the longer term impact of its strike on Lebanon.

"On the one hand, Israel has the internationally recognised right to self defence. But at the same time we ask our Israeli friends and partners not to lose sight of the long-term consequences when they exercise this right," German deputy government spokesman Jens Ploetner said.

William, Harry

'saddened'

by Italian

photos of

Diana death

Britain's Prince William and Prince

Harry expressed regret yesterday at

the publication in Italy of a picture of

such a low has been reached," William

and Harry said in a statement issued

by Clarence House, the official London

residence of their father Prince

and our mothers memory by so many

people over the last eight years, we

feel that, as her sons, we would be failing in our duty to her now if we did

Italy, has published the image of Diana

being given oxygen at the scene of the crash in a Paris road tunnel in August

1997 that took her life and those of her

lover Dodi Fayed and driver Henri

said the photo comes from a just-

published book in France by crime

vriter Jean-Michel Caradec'h, titled

"Lady Diana: The Criminal

embarked on military careers, urged

other publications to refrain from

throughout the world to appreciate

fully that publishing such material

causes great hurt to us, our father, our

mothers family and all those who so

loved and respected her," they said.

Freedom fighter

and a host of well wishers to mourn

his death. During the Liberation War, he fought under sector 2.

allegedly committed suicide by

hanging herself from a ceiling fan at

his house in Lalkuthi area of Mirpur

Akhter, was being brought up by her aunt and killed herself following a

spat with her (aunt), family mem-

recovered body of Nasima Begum,

from her house at Bhuiyanpara

from a ceiling fan. Police suspect

she killed herself following a feud

Boundary talks

through the Third Amendment to the

constitution on November 28, 1974, the Indian government has not yet

The last meeting of the Joint Boundary Working Group was held in New Delhi March 26-27 in 2002.

two revolvers, a pistol with eight

bullets, a private car and Tk 74,000

from the possession of the

the two .32 revolvers belongs to

Biltu's father and another revolver

and pistol were left by two others

Both Dipu and Azad said one of

Dipu, Azad

Meanwhile, an eight-year-old girl

A class three student, Tania

In Meradia, Khilgaon police

The body was found suspended

reprinting the photo.

FROM PAGE 16

on Thursday night.

hursday night.

within the family.

FROM PAGE 1

FROM PAGE 1

William and Harry, who have both

"We appeal to all forms of media

Umberto Brindani, Chi's editor, has

Chi, a weekly newsmagazine in

not protect her -- as she once did us.'

"Despite the support shown to us

their mother Princess Diana in the

eckage of the car crash that took her

"We feel deeply saddened that

taken about the situation in Lebanon. which is a fragile entity as a state and could be further destabilised." he

Already, Israel has imposed an air and sea blockade on Lebanon, shut the only international airport by bombing its runways and damaged the main Beirut-Damascus highway.

Iran, which with Syria is a sponsor of Hezbollah, called on the United Nations to step in. "The international community and the UN must intervene to stop this crime," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said during a visit to Greece.

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim state, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was quoted by the state news agency Antara as saying: "Indonesia repeats its call for Israel to stop its military action."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair called for restraint on all sides but kept closer to the US line.

"I totally understand the desire and the need for Israel to defend itself properly and I also understand the plight of Lebanon and the Lebanese government, not to say the many Palestinians that are suffering as well." Blair said in London.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was meeting with Bush before hosting a summit of Group of Eight powers in Saint Petersburg, said he would formally place the Middle East crisis on the agenda.

"I consider that all sides implicated in this conflict should immediately stop military action," Putin said.

Iron trader

Hospital (MMCH) morgue for

Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIGP) Mazharul Haque Gazi, Superintendent of Police of Mymensingh Abdullahel Baki, officials of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) held a meeting at Bhaluka Rest House yesterday regarding the investigation of the

Baki said they were investigating to find out the culprits and the investigation would be a lot easier to conduct after the victims had been

Muzaffer

allegation straightaway. Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club on July 12, he said he was never a minister, rather an adviser of Ziaur Rahman.

"I resigned due to a difference of opinion with Ziaur Rahman. And there was no corruption allegation against me," he told the newsmen.

On the allegation, BNP standing committee member and one of its founding figures Col (retired) Oli Ahmed said, "I think Dr Muzaffer Ahmad is a good person. He was not thrown out of the cabinet."

Another adviser and colleague of Ziaur Rahman, Dr Fasihuddin Mahtab yesterday told The Daily Star. "He (Muzaffer Ahmad) had resigned because of differing views

with Ziaur Rahman.' About the graft allegation against Muzaffer, BNP standing committee member KM Obaidur Rahman told The Daily Star, "Though I was a member of Ziaur Rahman's cabinet. never heard of such allegation and I don't know anything in this regard."

Sources said, "Muzaffer Ahmad stood down at the end of 1977. Following his lead, two other advisers left Ziaur Rahman after a few months.'

New organogram

inspector and field officer in the new organogram is between Tk 3.500 and Tk 7,500 whereas the officers of the same rank had a salary structure of Tk 3,700-8,060 at the Bac.

"The government service cannot have demotion. Then, how are we going to appoint people by demoting them salary- or status-wise?" said an ACC official.

With the organogram, the last ray of hope of the ACC officials to see the commission function properly in the near future has vanished.

The ACC is also facing a High Court stay order on its screening of the 743 Bac officials. Sources said the ACC will move to vacate the stay

"We are considering writing a letter to the Cabinet Division urging it to amend the approved structure," said ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan.

"We wish to retain all 743 officials selected. Until the structure is amended, we will ask the government to allow the ACC retain the staffs who do not fit in as a temporary solution," he added.

who fled away. When contacted, Biltu's family enied having any .32 revolver.

Dipu said he hired the private car from Kalabagan a few days back. Police said both Dipu and Biltu were

The Cabinet Division notification on the new structure suggested that the ACC can gradually increase its manpower, but initially, it should run with 650 posts and gather experi-

Pakistani Shia leader

Turabi's nephew Ali and the bomber were killed instantly while the cleric died of his iniuries in hospital, Mughal said. The bodyguards were all seriously injured.

"Hassan Turabi is dead, we tried to save his life," a doctor at the city's Patel Hospital who gave his name as Eiaz said. An AFP correspondent saw the white-bearded cleric's bloodstained body at the hospital.

His nephew's corpse, in a striped t-shirt, could be seen shortly after the blast lying in a narrow whitewashed allevway outside the house.

Next to him was the bomber's severed head with its eyes still open, along with an unexploded hand grenade. "There was a huge bomb blast

outside our home and a cousin of mine has died while my father is being treated in hospital," the cleric's son. Murtaza Turabi, said before his father died. Turabi escaped another assassi-

nation attempt without injury on April 6 when a bomb hidden under a fruit cart exploded as he was getting into his car outside his home. Two bodyguards and a passerby were hurt in A crowd of 300 people, many of

them crying, shouted slogans outside the hospital after Turabi's Hundreds more waited for his

body to be brought back to his house in an area which has seen frequent sectarian attacks blamed on militants from the majority Sunni Muslim community. "We have contacted elders and

Shia leaders, who themselves are appealing to their people for restraint and to remain peaceful."

Nayan's family

Banu, the accused police officer was suspended.

The SI along with three other nolicemen went to Nayan Banu's house on July 2 to arrest Badsha Mia, an accused in an abduction case. Failing to arrest Badsha. Mukhles booted and beat Nayan to

Karachi police chief Niaz Siddiqui

Turabi's party is a member of the country's main alliance of religious parties, the Muttahida Majlis-e-

Thousands of people have died in more than a decade of sectarian violence in Pakistan, although Sunnis and Shias generally live peacefully together.

Fresh violence

FROM PAGE 16

were found, apparently the latest victims of a mass kidnapping that took place in the nearby town of Mugdadivah on Wednesday.

The bodies were found in a field handcuffed, blindfolded and shot in the head. Twenty-four bodies had already been found on Wednesday.

An Iraqi contractor working with the US forces was shot dead by aunmen close to the northern city of Tikrit, hometown of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein, police said. The contractor's 18-year-old son

was also wounded in the attack when gunmen ambushed the car in which they were travelling. Also in the restive northern city of

Mosul, a policeman and a bodyguard of a judge were shot dead in separate attacks by gunmen, police

Meanwhile, the US military said it successfully targeted and captured an al-Qaeda in Iraq "terrorist and two other suspects during a raid in the vicinity of Baghdad" on Friday.

"The targeted individual is reported to be an Omar Brigade member and recruiter with control of several terrorist fighting cells," the military said.

It said the group is an al-Qaeda in Iraq created and sponsored Iraqi insurgent group "known to target Shias and specifically designed to incite sectarian violence."

The military also said that in another raid in the Abu Ghraib area on the western outskirts of Baghdad, its forces killed one suspected rebel and captured

SMEs in 7 dists

was chief guest at the seminar held at Sheraton Hotel.

Wahiduddidn Mahmud observed. "We should have a conscious policy for developing rural economy.'

Kamal Siddiqui said finance is a serious problem for the SMEs and there should be multiple sources of funds for them. "We have to devise something innovative for developing SMEs, and local government bodies should be engaged in developing local business." he said

Establishment of an SME foundation and formulation of a policy for the SMFs will further vitalise local economy, he hoped.

Mir Nasir Hossain, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said, "We have to develop an SME sector if we really like to have a balanced economy."

One of the major problems the SMEs are facing is that they do not have duer access to bank finance. he said. Moreover, rural people pay more for electricity but they do not get adequate power.

MA Momen, president of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said business bodies should play a more active role in promoting SMEs.

Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury, executive director of Brac, suggested immediate establishment of an SME foundation. Enterprises can grow across the country if infrastructure and other services are availSMEs get uninterrupted power supply, he said. "Unless infrastructure is provided, it is very difficult for the SMEs to survive. We need to think seriously also about licensing authorities. He said banks can lend more to

It has to be ensured that the

the SMEs if they have insurance coverage but unfortunately banks are not financing the SMEs adequately. And the government should not crush the SMEs by imposing high taxes before they grow. Hua Du, country director of Asian Development Bank (ADB),

stressed bank finance for small businesses and said there should be an SME foundation to channel credit to them so that they can run Regulatory burden on the SMFs

needs to be looked into seriously, she felt. The government should come up with fiscal incentives so that the SMEs in remote areas can grow and expand.

Hossain Zillur Rahman noted that an 'entrepreneurship culture' is growing at local level. This was evident from their study that found 41 percent of the entrepreneurs were fresh in business.

Other speakers included Md Abdul Karim. chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and Prashant Rana, general man-

Japanese FM

Bangladesh, Taro Aso will make a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and hold official talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart.

Taro Aso belongs to the Liberal Democratic Party and he is a Member of the House of Representatives. He was elected nine times from Fukuoka Prefecture constituency. He was elected Member of the House of Representatives for the first time in October 1979.

A graduate in Politics and Economics, Taro Aso was appointed as Minister for Foreign Affairs in October 2005. He previously held the positions of Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications. Chairman of Policy Research Council, Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy, Chairman of Special Committee on Fiscal Structure Reform, Minister of State, Economic Planning Agency, Chairman of Standing Committee on Foreign

for Education, Sports, Science and Foreign ministry officials consider the meetings with the Japanese foreign minister very

Affairs, Chairman of Special

Committee on Coal Issues, House

important as huge range of bilateral issues will be discussed during his meeting with Bangladeshi leaders. Besides, regional and international issues will also be discussed at the The issue of South Asian

Association For Regional Cooperation (Saarc) will also come up in the discussion as Japan was granted observer status of Saarc at its 13th summit held in Dhaka in November last year.

Japan is the largest donor to Bangladesh and one of the major development partners of Bangladesh. Japan continued both loan and aid to Bangladesh since the establishment of diplomatic relations in February 1972.

Talking to The Daily Star, a high official of the foreign ministry noted the four-day visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to Japan on July 11-14 last year had opened a new chapter of friendship and bilateral cooperation between the two countries and it contributed to raise the level of existing bilateral relations to new heights.

of Representatives, Vice-minister Officials said the relations between Bangladesh and Japan is deepening with the visits of a number of high officials from Japan to Bangladesh.

Quality education

teaching as a profession and bright students do not want the profession due to its poor salary.

AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Kader said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government has destroyed the quality of education as they have employed their political activists in teaching who lack the quality to teach students.

Prof Harun-ur Rashid, dean of Social Science Faculty of Dhaka University, said every teacher has to think about easier and effective method of teaching, so that students can understand the lessons better.

"The future of Bangladesh will be bright if better quality education could be ensured," he added. Prof Abdul Mannan Chowdhurv

and leaders of AL and different teachers' association also participated in the roundtable.

8 bombs tound

12:30pm. They recovered the bombs and kept them in a bucket filled with water at Sadar Police

Explosives experts have been called in to defuse the bombs. Security has been tightened in the district town

Our Satkhira correspondent reported that Kolaroa police recovered five bombs from a house at Chandanpur village at around 8:00pm on Thursday

Acting on a tip-off, the law enforcers raided the house of Rafigul Islam and retrieved the bombs from a heap of straw. Police picked up Rafiq, son of

Akher Sardar, for quizzing.

Top outlaw FROM PAGE 1 bullets while trying to escape from

spot. Rab said. The law enforcers rushed the dead bodies to Pabna General Hospital where the doctors confirmed their death.

the Rab custody and died on the

The Rab recovered two pipeguns and three bullets from the spot. Kamrul Master, son of Hamid Sardar of Daspara village of Pabna sadar upazila, was accused in numerous cases, including 15 for murder, and was on the "most wanted" list of criminals.

Jhunu was accused of five

murder charges, Rab sources said. Kamrul's political career started with his involvement with the Naxal Movement. Later, he formed the PBCP Lalpataka and became famous as an intellectual leader. Kamrul was general secretary of the PBCP five years ago and later

became its chief adviser. He had been involved in underground politics since the Liberation

US vetoes

US Ambassador John Bolton said the veto was because of the "unbalanced" nature of the draft text which he argued laid a disproportionate amount of blame on Israel for the current crisis in the region. The text had also condemned the firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel and Shalit's abduction.

What has become the worst Israeli-Palestinian crisis in months was sparked when the 19-vear-old was snatched by Palestinian militants, including members of the armed wing of Hamas, on the Gaza Faced with twin Israeli offensives

in Gaza and Lebanon, following Wednesday's abduction of two soldiers by Hezbollah, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas issued a stark warning against the eruption of 'regional war'

Shalit's captors have, like Hezbollah, demanded the release of prisoners in exchange for their hostage.

But Israel has refused any talks with the Islamist movement that advocates the destruction of the Jewish state, or to engage in a prisoner swap, vowing the assault will continue "in places, in time, in measures" at its convenience.

Pakistan

FROM PAGE 16

'I assure (Indian) Prime Minister Manmohan Singh that the Pakistan government and I myself are with him in any investigation he wants to carry out", Musharraf said in an interview with Business Plus Television.

Musharraf, who has led a crackdown on Islamic militancy, said he mourned the loss of "precious lives" in the attack on the Indian financial hub's railway network on Tuesday. "We condemn it and we are with

the Indian government to investigate anything," he added. Mumbai police said the seven

coordinated blasts targeting rushhour commuters had the hallmarks of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamic militant group fighting Indian control of part of Kashmir. Pakistan has come under fire from Indian authorities for allegedly

failing to control militant groups operating from its territory. The Indian government has come under strong pressure from the domestic media to adopt a tougher posture toward Pakistan

over the issue of militancy. The two countries came close to a fourth war in 2001 after a militant raid on parliament that New Delhi blamed on Pakistani-based guerrillas. Pakistan denied any involve-

White House sends mixed signals on detainee trials

REUTERS, Washington

The Bush administration is sending Congress conflicting signals on how to try foreign terrorism suspects despite earlier calls for Congress to ratify the current system struck down by the US Supreme Court, senators said on

The White House was grappling with whether to expand legal rights of detainees by basing policies on the US military justice code to satisfy the court. or try to preserve much of President measures. George W. Bush's plan for military commissions that limits access to counsel and evidence, the senators

Sen. John McCain said White House national security adviser Stephen Hadley told him the administration would base its proposal on the Uniform Code of Military Justice, not its commissions system that the Supreme Court said violated US military rules and had not been

authorised by Congress. But administration officials at hearings earlier this week urged Congress to pass legislation enacting Bush's military commissions, with some minor chánges.

"Hadley told us in a meeting face to face that we would use the UCMJ as a basis," McCain, an Arizona Republican, said. "I don't know what to make of this." Congress is crafting a process to

try terrorism suspects -- mostly held at the US naval facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba -- after the Supreme Court slapped down the commissions system Bush established in the wake of the September 11 attacks.

Bush has faced international criticism for the indefinite detention

Oil prices

FROM PAGE 1

York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in August, was quoted at 78.10 dollars per barrel, up 1.40 dollars from its last settlement of 76.70 dollars in New York. Oil pushed higher still to hit an all-

time high of 78.40 dollars in after hours electronic trade before some profittaking took it off the top. Brent North Sea crude for August

delivery was at 77.52 dollars, off its high of 77.76 dollars. "It seems like hitting 80 dollars a barrel is inevitable," said Victor Shum, a Singapore-based analyst with

energy consultancy Purvin and Gertz. "We're in unchartered territory. It is a result of a confluence of a number of geo-political events in a tight market that shows healthy demand growth. "The factors are getting together in

a tight market and we haven't even got our first hurricane in this US hurricane season, so pricing is going to remain Shum said oil at 100 dollars a barrel 'is still quite a bit off from where we are

today (but) there is certainly the potential for it to hit that." Tony Nunan, the Tokyo-based manager for energy risk management at Mitsubishi Corp, agreed 100-dollar

oil is now a possibility. "I don't want to cause panic in the market ... but I think the market has to understand that triple-digit (oil prices) are not a fantasy anymore and are

definitely possible," he said. "We'll definitely be seeing 80 dollars. It could either gradually escalate ... or it could explode."

and allegations of mistreatment of detainees, mostly scooped up in the war in Afghanistan

US military judge advocates general, appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee agreed Congress should not ratify the current system. Most said Congress should base legislation on the military justice code, but with changes to allow interrogations without legal counsel, protect classified information, allow some hearsay testimony and other

That follows the course advocated Democrats and a number of Senate

Sen. John Warner, the committee's chairman, said he was "somewhat perplexed" by administration testimony earlier this week which he said was "not consistent with what the national security adviser told me."

The White House was working through differing views and planned to present a policy soon after Bush eturns from the Group of Eight summit in Russia, the Virginia Republican

Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, speaking to reporters, appeared to back more limited legal rights, saying he believed the best way to try the cases "is through military commissions, and we want to get on

A number of House of Representatives Republicans also indicated they likely would back much of the current system, setting up a potential clash with the Senate. They said the military code, geared to protect US uniformed personnel, would give terrorism suspects too many rights and compromise national

Sen. Jeff Sessions, an Alabama Republican, also was sceptical of using the military code for "unlawful combatants," many of whom he said were "obsessively committed to suicidal destruction of American lives.' Intelligence Committee Chairman

Pat Roberts said Congress must

clarify Geneva Convention language barring inhumane treatment of prisoners that the Supreme Court said applied to US-held detainees. Interrogators who got information leading to last month's killing of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda's leader in Iraq, "could conceivably be

held accountable" for war crimes

under current language, the Kansas

Republican said.

Mob beats up FROM PAGE 1
Road to press him to return the

money, said the victims. Declining to give the money back, the broker engaged in a fracas while his wife Selina Akhter came out of the house and started screaming that robbers had entered

into their house. At this locals rushed in and severely beat up Kamal and his

The injured were later taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Mirpur police arrested Selina

absconding till filing this report at 7:00pm yesterday.

Mohammad Ripon, police said.

A case was filed against

Israel widens attack

Black smoke billowed from a burning fuel depot at the Jiyyeh power plant south of Beirut and from fuel tanks bombed at the capital's airport on Thursday evening. Israeli ships shelled the coastal road near Jiyyeh, witnesses said. Air raids struck several mobile telephone

Israeli jets also struck a Palestinian guerrilla base in eastern Lebanon. The pro-Syrian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command said there were no casualties. Israel holds Lebanon responsible for the actions of Hizbollah, a

Syrian- and Iranian-backed Islamist group, which has members in parliament and in the mainly anti-Syrian cabinet. The fragile Beirut government, too divided to disarm the Shia faction that effectively controls south Lebanon, has urged the UN Security Council to call on Israel to

halt its onslaught when the top world

body meets later on Friday. But Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his security chiefs opted on Thursday evening to ramp up the bombardment. "The decision was made to intensify Israel's operations in Lebanon," Israeli Army Radio quoted political sources as saying.

That followed two unprecedented missile strikes on the port of Haifa, blamed by Israel on Hizbollah, which denied it had fired on the city, 30km from the Lebanese border. No one was hurt in the attack.

cided with an Israeli incursion into

The violence in Lebanon cointhe Gaza Strip launched last month to try to retrieve another captured soldier and halt Palestinian rocket

The army said on Friday it had pulled out of the central Gaza Strip, which it entered as part of the offen-

sive. It said its forces had targeted an office of the ruling Hamas militant group in the northern Gaza Strip and

a bridge overnight. Troops fired a tank shell at a vehicle, killing one Palestinian and wounding another, Palestinian medics said.

Hizbollah confrontation, Lebanese

queued for petrol and hoarded food and drink. Power rationing began and many shops and offices stayed The crisis has helped drive world

Israeli planes dropped leaflets in Beirut suburbs and some southern cities urging residents to stay away from Hizbollah offices, fuelling speculation that the group's charis-

"We will settle the account with him fully somewhere, sometime," Israeli Interior Minister Ronnie Bar-On said.

President Bush has said Israel has the right to defend itself, but should not weaken the Lebanese government. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Israel to exercise restraint and demanded

restrain Israel and push for renewed

States said Washington should

response from the Islamic world. The European Union and Russia

relay stations in eastern Lebanon. Fearing a prolonged Israeli-

oil prices to record highs and has shaken financial markets in Israel

matic leader, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, could be targeted.

that Syria rein in Hizbollah. Syria's ambassador to the United

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said any Israeli attack on Syria would draw a fierce

have criticised Israel's strikes in Lebanon as disproportionate.

illegal immigration -- a pattern, which was apparent after last year's Malaysia is one of the largest importers of foreign labour in Asia. Foreign workers, both legal and illegal, number around 2.6 million of its 10.5 million workforce, officials

workers, most of whom come from impoverished parts of Southeast But each one led to a labour shortage followed by a new wave of