Babar regrets police

were sent to jail on Monday, were

released on bail yesterday.

Lutfozzaman Babar, while talkng to BBC Bangla Service yesterday, regretted the police attack on the shooters but defended the police action.

"It is impossible that police will remain inactive when some people assault policemen in uniform,"

Asif's physicians yesterday said the gold-medallist is likely to miss any competition in the next six

"I cannot walk due to the beating I received on my soles," Asif said, lying in the bed at Metropolitan Hospital.

Quoting doctors, he said the plaster on his hand would be taken off after a month while it would take at least three to four months to heal the injuries to his whole body. "It will take six to seven months for total recovery," he added. Asif said his left arm is very weak

"Since I put the weight of the rifle on my left arm, I feel I'll not be able to hold a rifle," he added. Meanwhile, shooter Ali Hossain.

cook Jahangir and an Ansar member Zannatul Ferdous received bail yesterday.

The charges brought against them had no relevance to the Monday's incident and no particular allegation was brought against the arrestees, their lawyer said.

The National Shooting Federation at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity said they want judicial inquiry into the matter to find out the 'truth'

The version of the witnesses totally differs from the police officials' version. Only a fair investigation would reveal the truth and hence the motive behind the attack would come out, the federation officials said.

Vice-president of the federation Kashem Humayun, General Secretary Nazimuddin Chowdhury and other officials except its presi dent were present during the brief

They said the employees of the federation closed the main gate of the complex during the attack and police got inside by jumping over the wall when several policemen injured themselves. They claimed the policemen were not injured due to a

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday condemned the police atrocities on the national players and demanded punishment of the responsible people.

Different human rights organisa tions, political parties, sports association. lawvers' association and socio-cultural organisations also condemned and protested the police atrocities.

Terming Monday's police attack 'lunacy' and 'bestial', Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association yesterday demanded punishment of the policemen who were involved in the attack and withdrawal of the case filed against the shooters.

The organisations that protested against the attack and demanded compensation are: Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights, Bangladesh Communist Party, Bangladesh Workers Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Bangladesh Jubo Moitree, Sammilito Krira Paribar, Alumni Association of BKSP and Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh.

US embassy

to the news agency's query about BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's rejection of dialogue at the US ambassador's

"The US Embassy has long supported direct contacts between the main ruling and opposition parties to reduce tensions and strengthen prospects for a successful election," said the spokesman.

'We do not support or oppose any party, and it is not our role or desire to mediate any [political] process between the parties," he

"Like many Bangladeshis we hope that political parties will use democratic means to resolve their

disputes, and we believe that dialogue, not violence, is the best way to build consensus for broad participation in the election," the spokes-

tea but have reservations to sit for a

dialogue over there. We are sorry

we could not respond to your

request--it is not possible for us,"

are mature enough political parties

and I think we can sit to resolve our

problems ourselves," he told the

development about the proposed

dialogue with Jalil, especially after

Butenis' invitation for tea, Bhuiyan

said it seems that the AL does not

Criticising the AL he said, "I think

they tried to blackmail us by giving

the proposal to sit at dialogue at the

US ambassador's house. They

thought America will be angry with

us if we refuse to sit there. But I want

to say it clearly that America is our

development partner and a close

friend of our government and party.

several days] and it will not be

possible to sit at the US ambassa-

dor's residence several times,'

ambassador's interference in the

country's internal politics. Bhuivan

said he would like to thank the envoy

for taking the initiative to hold the

US ambassador's invitation to have

tea at her residence, the BNP high

command decided that its secretary

general will not go there to sit for the

will formally disclose the time and

date for the talks after consulting

Bhuiyan to hold the dialogue at the

state guesthouse Padma at

11:00am on Wednesday, Jalil said,

"It was a proposal. I told him that I

will talk to him after discussing with

my party and alliance. Now I am

again proposing the Jatiya Sangsad

Asked if the dialogue process

On the US envoy's invitation,

Prior to the press briefing, senior

The 14-party opposition partners

leaders of the 14-party opposition

combine discussed the latest situa-

earlier rejected the idea of holding

the talks at the US ambassador's

residence. Workers Party President

Rashed Khan Menon told reporters

that interference in the country's

politics by any "third party" is not

On Monday's proposal from

with Mannan Bhuiyan.

Early in the morning, Bhuiyan

Sources said after receiving the

"The dialogue may continue [for

Asked if he thought it was the US

want the dialogue.

Bhuivan said.

dialoque.

dialogue.

Briefing the press on the latest

"Both BNP and Awami League

Bhuiyan told the US ambassador.

Talks at Sangsad Bhaban

FROM PAGE 1 reporters last night

Complexities arose over settling the venue for the talks following the

US ambassador's sudden proposal on Monday night to sit in dialogue at her residence. Jalil accepted the US ambassa-

dor's invitation while Bhuivan refused to sit with Jalil at the US ambassador's residence "over a cup of tea". Amid this situation, the US ambassador yesterday cancelled the invitation. "We earlier proposed the Jativa

Sangsad Bhaban as the venue because we think it is the most prestigious place in the country. Once again. I am proposing to Mannan Bhuiyan that we hold the dialogue at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban," Jalil told reporters yesterday after a meeting of the 14-party opposition alliance at his Mercantile Bank office.

At a press briefing, Bhuiyan also expressed his preference for the Sangsad Bhaban as the venue for the talks.

"I think the dialogue can be held at a state guesthouse or the parliament building where both Jalil and I are members, or at any other place they like," Bhuiyan, also LGRD and cooperatives minister, told reporters at his official residence at 12:30pm yesterday.

On Sunday, Bhuiyan proposed Jalil about holding the dialogue at 11:00am on Tuesday at the Padma state guesthouse.

The AL general secretary, however, did not make any immediate response to Bhuiyan's proposal and the AL Presidium held an emergency meeting on Monday night to discuss Bhuiyan's proposal.

In a sudden move the same discussed the matter with BNP night. US Ambassador in Dhaka Senior Joint Secretary General Patricia A Butenis invited the BNP Tarique Rahman and decided not to secretary general and the AL genjoin the tea party, sources added. eral secretary to her official resi-JALIL'S BRIEFING dence at 8:00pm yesterday. The AL general secretary said he

Accepting the invitation, Jalil phoned Bhuiyan at about 11:00pm on Monday urging him to attend the invitation at the US envoy's residence to settle the venue and time

for the dialogue. But Bhuiyan remained silent over the invitation and at a press briefing yesterday declined to accept the

"We will not sit for the secretarylevel talks with Awami League at the US ambassador's residence. But we are ready to talk at any other

Bhaban as the venue for the talks." place like the parliament building or state guesthouses," Bhuiyan said. could break, Jalil said the AL is About the US envoy's invitation hopeful about the talks. "We want Jalil however said an invitation for a the dialogue to break the political

tea and one for dialogue are separate things. "I will accept the invitation for courtesy," Jalil said. Jalil said, "We do not think that there was any motive behind the invita-

"What is wrong if any foreign country wants to assist us in holding the talks when we take assistance and consultation from foreign countries for our state activities," Jalil told reporters while emerging from parliament yesterday. "However, we do not want anybody as mediator,'

BHUIYAN'S BREIFING

The BNP secretary general at his press briefing yesterday said he made a phone call to the US ambassador at 10:00am and conveyed his

Hijacked **Turkish** plane lands in Italy

AP, Ankara, Turkey

A Turkish Airlines plane carrying more than 100 passengers from Tirana. Albania. to Istanbul. was hijacked yesterday and landed at Itály's Brindisi airport, company spokesman Ali Genc said.

The plane was hijacked in Greek air space, Genc said. News reports said the plane was a Boeing 737-

Candan Karlitekin, chairman of Turkish Airlines' board of director confirmed Turkish news reports that the aircraft was hijacked by two Turks in protest of Pope Benedict XVI visit to Turkev next month.

The hijackers had told authorities they were prepared to turn themselves in, Karlitekin said.

'The passengers are not under any threat. They will surrender. They have declared that they will surrender the moment they hijacked the plane," Karlitekin said.

'There is no loss of life or any iniuries." he said.

There were 107 passengers and six crew members aboard, Karlitekin said. Only five of the passengers were Turks. A spokesman for the Greek

military's general staff told The Associated Press that four Greek fighter iets had been scrambled to shadow the plane after it issued a distress signal over Greek airspace. The plane contacted Italian air

traffic controllers about 5:25 p.m. and asked to land in Brindisi, according to Nicoletta Tomiselli, a spokeswoman for the Italian air raffic agency ENAV. She said the aircraft, carrying

13 people, was escorted to the ground by two Italian military "We don't know what the situa-

tion is vet." she said. Private NTV television said Brindisi airport had been closed to

It said the Turks were reportedly negotiating with Italian authorities to make a protest statement against

Condemned

Though four of the six appeals were not filed using the prescribed forms, it is up to the highest court whether it would accept the petitions or not," said Deputy Attorney General Helal Uddin Molla, who stood for the state in the case in the High Court.

Senior assistant judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohel Ahmed were killed in a suicide bomb attack at Purba Chadkati in Jhalakathi town on November 14 last year in the wake of a series of violent militant attacks across the

Additional District and Sessions Judge of Jhalakathi Reza Tarik Ahmed on May 29 awarded death sentences to Rahman, Bangla Bhai, Mamun and Asadul Islam alias Arif.

Ukil Abdus Sattar

FROM PAGE 1

severe power crisis and violent agitation for power all over the country, particularly in the capital.

Kabir was given the stewardship of power ministry only three months back after his predecessor, lobal Hassan Mahmood, was removed following mass demonstrations at different places including Kansat in Chapainawabgani and at Demra in the capital.

Morshed shocked

FROM PAGE 16 ambassador has initiated it ... I think some of us might have approached her to discuss the issue at her

place." Khan said. He went on to add, "Because I found her a responsible diplomat; she knows diplomatic norms and she knows that political issues cannot be discussed in the domain of another country."

Morshed said the foreign ministry took exception to conceiving the idea of holding dialogue at a foreign embassy, and "I am blaming our political parties, whoever they are. This is atrocious."

He said the proposed dialogue is so important for Bangladesh that political parties should do it out of their own concern and responsibili-

The foreign minister said if any party did not like state guesthouses, a property of Bangladesh, they could sit in any committee room of the parliament whereof both Mannan Bhuiyan and Abdul Jalil are members.

In reply to a question, Morshed said they are not blaming the US ambassador, adding that, "If somebody approached her that they would go to her place to have a cup of tea, how she could ignore it?"

"Disregarding party affiliation, being a responsible citizen of Bangladesh, I am telling you this is extremely unfortunate," he said, adding political leadership must understand their limitations.

To another question, he said there is no alternative to dialogue between BNP and Awami League to resolve the issues. "It needs domestic prescription to cure this local disease, foreign prescription will not work here," he observed.

Terrorists to take

British cabinet minister was wrapping

up his three-day visit.

Timms said the talks should be the top priority now and his government is

ready to help in the process Praising the country for its initia-tives to reduce poverty and attain the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, he said the UK government will increase its aids to different sectors in Bangladesh.

Replying to a query, the minister said there would be no room for the losing side to reject the election results if the BNP and Awami League (AL) arrive at a consensus over the electoral process at the planned dialogue. Asked about apprehension that if

the dialogue does not get underway the military may take over, he replied "I'm optimistic that the dialogue would take place... and it would be success-"We're ready to provide whatever

help we can or they (political parties) would like from us," he said adding that here should be a series of discussions instead of a one-off. At the press briefing, Timms was

accompanied by among others British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, DFID Bangladesh Representative David Wood and British Council Director in Bangladesh Dr June Rollinson.

The visiting UK minister, who will devise the UK spending plan on returning home, indicated that the

British aid to Bangladesh might be doubled to support its economic development and poverty reduction. He said the UK government will

provide assistance mainly in primary education diversification of microfinance, poverty alleviation, skills development in English language, and launch of a diaspora bond by the expatriate Bangladeshis in the UK. He stressed the need for close collaboration between the countries in

counter terrorism. Asked about corruption and the role of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) here, the Labour Party member

of parliament for East Ham said the efforts should be redoubled to make the ACC effective.

He said both the prime minister and the leader of the opposition have told him that they attach paramount importance to graft containment.

The UK would look ahead at the next elections in Bangladesh because a political stability is much needed for the growing economy and its 150 million people, noted Timms. Asked if the US ambassador's

inviting the secretaries general of AL and BNP for tea at her residence amounts to interference in the domestic politics, he said, "What I can say is that the dialogue in Bangladesh is At this point, Anwar Choudhury

supplemented the minister saying,

What is important is the dialogue

takes place in a place where both the

sides are comfortable... it's not impor-

tant whether foreign diplomats or friends of this country are there or not." "I don't think the people of Bangladesh could say the friends of Bangladesh are interfering... they would say that we're to help the dialogue to be held," Anwar said adding that the diplomats will respond only

when they will be asked for help.

Opposition

261-meter-long Arial Khan Bridge at Belabo of Narsingdi on Akdoria-Poradia-Agorpara regional high-

At Monohordi, she inaugurated Monohordi Dak Bungalow and the newly constricted Poura Bhaban laid foundation stones of upgrading of the 31-bed upazila hospital to a 50-bed one and upazila

Speaker's new sense

FROM PAGE 1 Wealth Games Gold Medallist Asif Hossain Khan.

AL lawmaker Mohammad Nasim on a point of order started blasting the government for its failure to apprehend the perpetrators of August 21 grenade attack on an Al rally and the killing of former AL lawmaker Kibria, but the speaker interrupted him terming the issues old.
The speaker switched off

Nasim's microphone prompting the AL lawmakers to stage a walkout for a brief period. In response to the opposition lawmakers' accusations, ruling BNP lawmakers Ebadur Rahman

Chowdhury, Prof Shahidul Islam and Shahidul Islam blasted previous AL governments. "The last Awami League government established a reign of killings across the country when it was in power. It is Awami League which killed democracy," Ebadur said

taking the floor on a point of order after the AL walkout.

Prof Shahidul said Rakkhi Bahini during the AL government just after the independence killed 30,000

punished for the killings.

Another BNP lawmaker also named Shahidul Islam said family members of Mohammad Nasim took bribes from the police during

the last AL government. Prior to staging the walkout, taking the floor on a points of order, AL lawmakers Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Faruk Khan and Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid hurriedly blasted the home ministry for the police atrocities on the shooters and accused the government of using the police as party cadres.

They also rejected the inquiry

committee formed by the home ministry comprising police officials to investigate the incident.

During the news briefing after the walkout. AL lawmakers blasted the speaker and the government for not allowing any discussion in parlia-

"We wanted to cooperate with the government in running the country by identifying the problems. But the government did not allow us to have any discussion in parliament," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said.

The current parliament has frustrated the people by ignoring all demands for discussions on different important issues, Jalil added.

"Discussions on different important issues were held in parliament even during the military rule. But the current parliament has failed to hold discussions on any issue," AL lawmaker Selim said

Ex-cabinet

FROM PAGE 16 activities also created rifts in the local BNP and there were clashes between the two sides on several

Halim was the first to get contractual appointment twice to the government's topmost administrative

The four-party alliance government appointed him the cabinet secretary on November 24, 2005 replacing Dr Saadat Hussain. Later, he was given a fresh contract as cabinet secretary until August 31,

The prime minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury and State Minister for Labour and Employment Amanullah Aman were present among others at the time of

Tk 596cr siphoned

voucher," an official said. A BB investigation officer noted, 'In the past we unearthed many kinds of irregularities and forgeries in the private banks of the country But the magnitude of corruption in this case beats all of those past

A managing director of a different private bank said, "How can a managing director of a bank commit such blatant corruption? No banker would do such a thing unless he is a stakeholder in such corruption."

An executive of another private bank pointed out, "When these corrupt practices were going on, the Oriental Bank was under scrutiny of the central bank. What kind of scrutiny was it? How can a bank commit such forgery right under the nose of the central bank? The central bank should investigate that too, and also try to find out if there are similar practices going on in other private banks.

The bankers and finance ministry officials believe that the government should immediately file criminal cases against the top manage ment and shareholders of the Oriental Bank, recover the money, and punish the criminals. The BB interim investigation

report also gave a grim picture of the Oriental Bank. When the BB took over the bank in June, the Oriental Bank's outstanding loan was Tk 1.830 crore. The bank claimed to the BB that Tk 540 crore of this was classified. The investigators, however, found out that the bank's classified loan stood at Tk 1,100 crore or 62 per cent of the outstand-The adjusted capital shortfall of

the bank stood at Tk 1,800 crore and its cumulative loss at Tk 490 crore. The bank was supposed to maintain a provision margin of Tk the corrupt politically-blessed

taining that of only Tk 6 crore. Finance ministry sources said shareholders have now become desperate to take over the bank before the end of the government's tenure late this October.

would let the central bank act independently on the matter regarding the Oriental Bank. BB sources on the other hand opined that the financial health of the bank is so poor that even if the government gave the bank to the

shareholders, they would not be

The sources added that the PMO

has so far taken the stand that it

able to run it. It would again have to be sent back to the government along with fresh liabilities. A previous primary investigation showed that the family of Obaedul Karim of Orion Group, who took over the majority shares of the bank in 2005, have obtained loans illegally on the basis of verbal approval. Obaedul Karim is very close to the

BNP high-ups and has received

many large projects in the last four

vears. Mosaddek Ali, an influential leader of the ruling BNP, has also taken loans illegally for his television channel ntv. Records show that he has taken more than the approved amount of loans and that he took loans using false names.

Mosaddek, however, later rescheduled the loans under the name of his organisation and made some down payments. Accused of corruption and irregularities, Oriental Bank's man-

aging director Kais Sami was

removed from his post for one year

as a primary punishment.

October 27. The previous parliaments have failed to witness the presence of the main opposition parties at the end of

UN rights FROM PAGE 16

Geneva, Scheinin noted. Algeria, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Africa and Tunisia all sit on the Council, which was created earlier this year.

"Some of them are currently introducing new legislation while others are planning to amend or introduce new laws in the near future," said Scheinin, who has repeatedly spotlighted what he says are human rights failings in antiterror rules around the world.

These states, as members or participants of the Council, can play a proactive role in supporting the work" of UN human rights experts. he said in a statement

Scheinin said that he hoped they would set an example by extending official invitations to visit. "I believe states can combat

terrorism while respecting interna-

tional human rights law. In fact, this is the only effective approach," he "To fall short of internationally recognised standards opens states up to being controlled by terror

rather than by the rule of law. "My mandate promotes and encourages constructive dialogue and cooperation with states, including the identification of best practices, as a means to implementing counter terrorism measures and policies while also promoting and protecting human rights. I encourage states to use this United Nations mechanism.

Nobel Physics

FROM PAGE 16 Flight Centre in Maryland, while Smoot, 61, is a professor of physics at the University of California at

Mather and Smoot worked on the COBE satellite launched by Nasa in 1989, whose results provided increased support for the Big Bang scenario, as this is the only scenario that predicts the kind of cosmic microwave background radiation measured by COBE.

'These measurements also marked the inception of cosmology as a precise science," the Nobel jury

Mather coordinated the entire

process and had responsibility for the experiment that revealed the blackbody form of the microwave background radiation measured by Smoot meanwhile had the main responsibility for measuring the

small variations in the temperature of the radiation. Last year, the Physic Prize went to Americans Roy Glauber and John Hall and German Theodor Haensch for groundbreaking work on under-

standing light and optics. The 2006 laureates will each receive a gold medal and a diploma and will share a cheque for 10 million Swedish kronor (1.07 million euros, 1.37 million dollars) at the formal prize ceremony held, as tradition dictates, on December 10. the anniversary of the death in 1896

of the prize's creator Alfred Nobel. The Nobel prizes, founded by Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel the inventor of dynamite, were first

awarded in 1901 On Monday, the Nobel Medicine Prize went to US research duo Andrew Fire and Craig Mello for their discovery of how to silence malfunctioning genes, a breakthrough, which could lead to an era of new therapies to reverse crippling

The Chemistry Prize will be announced on Wednesday. The Economics Prize is scheduled for Monday, October 9, and the Peace Prize on Friday, October 13.

The date for the Literature Prize has yet to be announced but it is traditionally on a Thursday, and could fall on October 5 or October 12.

Game over

mass anti-cronyism protests in the

capital. Nine months later with the country divided between city and countryside, the army executed its 18th coup in 74 years of democracy to root out what it called "rampant

corruption.' The swift appointment of antigraft probes signalled a clear attempt to remove Thaksin from politics by tarnishing his reputation before elections scheduled for a year's time under a new constitu-

But it remains to be seen what mud the graft-busters can dig up -and whether it will stick.

"The anti-corruption effort is off to a rather confusing start," said John Stuermer, a fixed income analyst for Bear Stearns in Singapore

"If these organs do not find any legally compelling evidence against Thaksin in the next six to nine months, the junta will find it difficult to exclude him from the new elec-

Khaleda-Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

and AL chief Hasina had another confrontation over the electoral reforms issue last February. Hasina placed the reforms proposal in parliament on February 12 and Khaleda responded on February 28 proposing to form a committee to deal with it. Personal officials of the two

leaders have been preparing their speech in consultation with them. sources said. The current parliament began its ourney on October 28, 2001 amid

boycott by the main opposition AL. It is, however, going to witness the presence of the main opposition party at its twilight. The tenure of the current parliament will expire on

Russia warns US

between Russia and Poland -- with its sophisticated S-300 anti-aircraft

defence system. The United States has for years been planning and testing elements of a new global anti-missile defence system that would combine spacebased elements capable of detecting hostile missile launches with ground-based rockets that would

track and destroy those missiles. Washington has consistently stated that the objective of the planned system is to protect the United States and allies from ballistic missile launches from what it terms "roque" states such as North Korea or Iran, and has insisted that it s not aimed against any other party.

With equal consistency however, Moscow has made clear its deep unease at the planned US system. Most recently, the chief of staff of Russia's armed forces, General Yuri

Butenis' tea

FROM PAGE 1 The much talked about tea for three

was supposed to be served at 8:00pm following the iftar party. Butenis told me sorry my invitation for tea is cancelled," Abdul Jalil

told reporters after the iftar party. AL Presidium Member Zafarullah, Chief Whip of the Opposition in Parliament Abdush Shaheed, and Asaduzzaman Nur MP accompanied him to the iftar

However. Food and Disaster Management Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf and his brother Akmal Ibne Yusuf, who is also a lawmaker from BNP, Expatriate Welfare Minister Qamrul Islam State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, and Zahiruddin Swapan joined the party while Qamaruzzaman, joint secretary general of Jamaat was also present On Monday night Butenis invited Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Abdul

Jalil to her home to have tea with her. Later Abdul jalil told reporters that he would join Butenis to have some tea and said, "I hope he (BNP secretary general) will also join if they want a dialogue." Accepting the invitation for having tea, the BNP secretary

general however refused to sit for a

dialogue with the opposition in the supports Republicans, called or ambassador's residence.

Millions at risk

FROM PAGE 16 than 120 million people in Africa are living "permanently on the edge of emergency" because of the current system, which often provides fund-

By 2020, some 165 million pounds (245 million euros, 310 million dollars) will have been spent on emergencies, some of which could be prevented, the report said. Examples of where money could

ng too late, or inappropriately.

report said. Ethiopia it pointed out has reported itself to be in food crisis 93 percent of the time from 1986-2004. yet US spending on long-term aid for the country is less than one percent of emergency aid.

have been better spent abound, the

In another example, the report said responding early to the emergency in the west African state of Niger in 2005 would have cost one dollar a day to prevent child malnu-

Instead, at the peak of the crisis it cost 80 dollars to save a malnour-

ished child's life. The report says that lack of food s rarely the cause of emergencies; rather it is underlying problems including the AIDS virus HIV, lack of local markets, climate change and lack of cash that make people so

vulnerable to emergencies. "It is these problems that must be addressed in order to end hunger," said CARE.

Fatah faction

FROM PAGE 1 Clashes between rival Hamas and Fatah forces quickly erupted and

January.

Abbas has been locked in an increasingly bitter power struggle with Prime Minister Ismail Haniveh of Hamas over stalled efforts to form a unity government after Hamas defeated Fatah in elections in

Tension has been fuelled by the government's inability to pay full salaries to its workers, many of them from Fatah, as a result of a Western aid embargo designed to push Hamas to recognise renounce violence and abide by interim deals. A top aide to Abbas said on

considering the possibility of forming an emergency government, an administration of technocrats or calling early elections to end the crisis with Hamas. In a separate incident on Tuesday, an Israeli air strike destroyed a metal foundry in the

Monday the president was seriously

Palestinians, medical staff and residents said. An Israeli army spokesman said the air strike was aimed at a sus-

southern Gaza Strip, wounding two

pected weapons factory. Israel has frequently targeted buildings it believes are used by militants to make or store rockets.

Baluyevsky, warned that the planned US system could ignite a

new Cold War-style arms race. "First of all, we take a critical view of this plan," Kamynin told Interfax.

"On such issues, we cannot be satisfied simply with assurances that 'there are no plans' for US and Nato anti-missile defence in Europe to be directed against Russia," the ministry spokesman added.

Poland, once a close ally of Moscow that has become a key defence partner for Washington over the past decade, has mad no secret of its willingness to consider deployment on its territory of elements of the planned US system.

"Russia has very frankly communicated its unhappiness to us, the prospect of the US planting a missile defence base in Poland," Stars and Stripes, the daily newspaper of the US armed forces, quoted Polish Defence Minister Radoslaw Sikorski as saving last month. "Clearly, we have to take this

makes us even more insistent on a package of measures that would hypothetically come with a missile defence base, if the US asks for it,' the paper quoted him as saying. It said that Poland was one of only two countries -- the other being the Czech Republic -- that has said it

Russian view, a powerful neighbour

of ours, into account. And that

would in theory be open to hosting US missile defence units. The paper noted that a possible deployment of US missile interceptors in Poland "would represent the first permanent US military presence in the country."

Washington

Times calls on House **Speaker** to resign REUTERS, Washington

Tuesday for the resignation of House Speaker Dennis Hastert over his handling of a congressional sex scandal. "House Speaker Dennis Hastert must do the only right thing, and resign his speakership at once," the

newspaper said in an editorial in

The Washington Times, a conserva-

tive newspaper that generally

which it joined conservative leaders in calling for leadership resignations over the handling of matter. The scandal, centering on sexually explicit Internet messages sent former Republican Rep. Mark Foley of Florida to teenage male congressional pages, came to light iust weeks before a close November

7 election to decide control of the U.S. Congress. The Washington Times said the House leader was either grossly negligent for overlooking early "red flag" warnings "or he deliberately looked the other way in hopes that a brewing scandal would simply blow

Foley, a six-term House veteran resigned last week. The FBI, Florida state investigators and House ethics investigators are all looking into his communications with pages who are teenagers assigned to answer telephones, deliver documents and run other errands for

members of Congress.

8 US soldiers FROM PAGE 16

strongholds in the towns of Ramadi. Hit and Haditha. The number of US servicemen that have died since the March 2003 invasion is 2,723 according to an

of increased efforts to quash rebel

Violence targeting ordinary Iraqis has been higher than usual as well with the US military reporting that suicide bombings over the past weeks have been at an all time high. In the southern Baghdad neighbourhood of Saidiyah, a man wear-

ing a belt of explosives blew himself

up in a fish market killing two people

AFP count based on Pentagon

and wounding 19, according to officials in the defence ministry. A bomb exploded near a wellknown Shiite mosque in the middle class neighbourhood of Karrada killing one person and wounding nine, while another bomb claimed two lives in the northern neighbour-

In addition to bombs, Baghdad

Baghdad, while 10 people were

wounded in a mortar attack in

Mussayib, some 60km south of the

residents have to watch out for mortar shells as militants in rival neighbourhoods fire indiscriminately at each other's residents. One person was killed and another wounded in the Abu Chir neighbourhood in southern

hood of Qahira.

In nearby Baquba, capital of Divalah province, the same brutal sectarian-driven violence was manifest with nine people being killed in various incidents around the Police also discovered on a

highway north Baquba seven bodes of a father, his five children and a nephew, bound and shot through the head. The Shiite family had been kidnapped earlier by gunmen. Three bodies also turned up just

south of the northern oil city of

party's stance.

"We have no objection to have