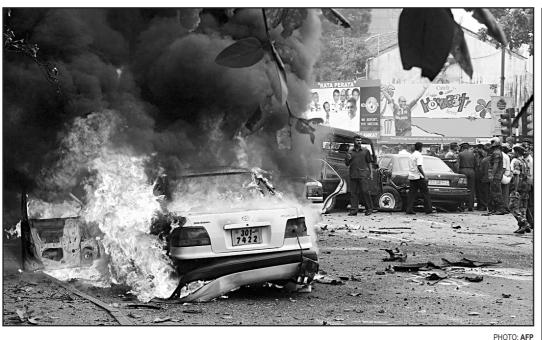
The Daily Star

INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 2, 2006



A Sri Lankan vehicle is engulfed by flames near the convoy of Sri Lankan Defence Ministry Secretary Gotabaya Rajapakse after a suicide bomb attack in Colombo yesterday. A suspected Tamil suicide bomber attacked a defence ministry convoy carrying the president's brother, killing at least one soldier, police said.

truce for moment

an official said.

Bank

concerned that the six-day-old

nity for armed groups to regroup,

official, quoted by public radio,

called the risk of armed groups

Israeli military operations by pre-

paring suicide bombings, far dead-

lier than rocket attacks, and more

easily staged against Israel from

ceasefire to be implemented in the

At least one senior security

rearm and plot further attacks.

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel has ruled out any immediate blanket truce with the Palestinians, despite US calls for a comprehensive ceasefire, and yesterday demanded a complete halt to Palestinian rocket fire from Gaza.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Thursday pressed Israeli and Palestinian leaders to expand a fledgling truce as a step towards reviving the moribund peace process and easing conditions for millions of Palestinians.

But while Palestinian president taking advantage of an end to Mahmud Abbas joined her by calling for the ceasefire to be extended from the Gaza Strip to the far larger Palestinian territory of the West Bank, Israel has taken no the West Bank than Gaza. "For a mmediate decision.

The influential security cabinet, West Bank, they must stop preparchaired by Prime Minister Ehud ing for attacks." another defence official told AFP. Olmert, will discuss the matter on

Israel rules out blanket Bush sees no 'graceful exit' from Iraq Sunday after the Jewish sabbath, Israeli authorities are deeply

Study Group.

for days.

exit strategy are being placed

on a bipartisan commission

created by the US Congress

and officially known as the Iraq

the president to overhaul his policy

as Iraq, even though the recom-

led by former US secretary of state

James Baker, have written a report

that is to be delivered to the presi-

dent on December 6. Details how-

ever have been leaking to the press

The report will call for a with-

drawal of US combat troops from

Iraq by early 2008, while leaving

behind soldiers for training and

The 10 "wise men" on the panel

mendations are nonbinding.

The panel is a major chance for

truce, violated by rocket fire from AFP, Washington the Gaza Strip on Friday for the

fourth time, is merely an opportu-US President George W Bush warned against expectations he will lay out plans for "a graceful exit" from Iraq, as news reports yesterday said the independent commismade clear his opposition to sion looking into Iraq policy will call extending the ceasefire to the West for a 2008 withdrawal of US combat He warned against what he troops.

The White House has ordered a sweeping government-wide reassessment of US policy in Iraq, amid soaring sectarian violence, fears of all-out civil war, and mounting domestic pressure to bring US troops back after opposition Democrats took control of the US Congress in the November 7 elections

support, the Washington Post High hopes for designing an

reported Friday

The date is not firm, but rather a goal based on circumstances on the ground, according to the Post, citing sources familiar with the proposal

"It's really about transitioning from a combat to a support role, and basically making very clear that this is no longer an open-ended commitment and we're going to get this done whether the Iragis like it or not," one of the sources told the Post. "Everybody understands that

we're at the end of the road here." The Post also said the document calls for embedding US soldiers directly with Iraqi security units as early as January to improve their efficiency

India frees Nepali Maoist leaders

nationality.

ernment and the rebels.

be returning to Nepal.

The two leaders were believed to

helping to organise Maoist fighters

say is a fight on behalf of poor

labourers and landless peasants

REUTERS, Malda

Two senior leaders of Nepal's Maoist rebels were released from jail in West Bengal on Thursday, prison officials said, after all charges

against them were dropped. Chandra Prakash Gajurel and Mohan Baidya -- both of whom are close to Maoist supremo Prachanda -- were freed from Jalpaiguri central jail, 600 km north of Kolkata, as part of peace moves between Nepal's coalition government and the guerrillas

"We have released thirteen (Maoist) activists, including Nepali Maoist leaders," Debasis

Fiji military extends coup deadline **REUTERS**, Suva Mukhopadhayay, jail superinten-dent told Reuters. The others

Fiji's military has extended its deadfreed were Maoists of Indian line to Monday for the government to meet its demands or be toppled, Officials in West Bengal said the embattled Prime Minister Laisenia state government had ordered their Qarase said as he and his ministers release. citing a recent peace went into hiding. agreement between Nepal's gov-"The deadline has now passed. I

have been informed that the new deadline is Monday midday," Qarase told Reuters in a telephone interview on Friday.

Their lawyer said they had been arrested in 2004 on charges of Military Commander Frank Bainimarama gave Qarase a 24-hour in India, engaged in what the rebels ultimatum on Thursday to clean up his government or face a coup, despite winning a series of concessions from the prime minister.

Iraqi PM faces revolt within govt

AP, Baghdad

Iragi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki faced a widening revolt within his divided government as two senior

Sunni politicians joined prominent Shia lawmakers and Cabinet members in criticising his policies. Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi said he wanted to see al-Maliki's government gone and another 'understanding" for a new coalition put in place with guarantees that ensure collective decision making.

"There is a clear deterioration in affront to the Iraqi people. security and everything is moving in the wrong direction," the Sunni leader told The Associated Press. "This

situation must be redressed as soon as possible. If they continue, the country will plunge into civil war.' Al-Maliki's No 2, Deputy Prime

Minister Salam Zikam Ali al-Zubaie, also a Sunni, argued that the president's government failed to curb the spread of sectarian politics.

A boycott by 30 lawmakers and five Cabinet ministers loyal to anti-American Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr was in protest of al-Maliki's meeting with President Bush in Jordan on Thursday. The Sadrists said the meeting amounted to an

Residents gather parts of a destroyed roof at Sarangani village in Quezon province yesterday after super typhoon Durian rampaged eastern Philippines. Heavy rain from super typhoon Durian caused mudslides that smothered dozens of villages in the eastern Philippines Friday killing 388, according to the Red Cross.

US pushes for UN vote on Iran sanctions

Russian, China still oppose move

AFP, Shuneh

The United States said Thursday that it might try to force through a United Nations resolution imposing sanctions on Iran over its suspect nuclear programme despite object tions from Russia and China.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters following talks with Arab officials at this Dead Sea resort that she still hoped to obtain agreement among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany

in favour of a sanctions package against Iran.

The so-called P5-plus-one group -- Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the US -- has been trying for weeks to agree on what sanctions to impose on Iran for its refusal to comply with an earlier UN resolution requiring it to freeze a uranium enrichment program. Washington in particular fears the program is a cover for producing nuclear weapons.

tions until Iran agrees to suspend the enrichment and enter into negotiations on its nuclear program, Russia and China have balked at the terms of a draft resolution drawn up by Britain, France and Germany

Rice indicated Thursday that Washington and its European allies could submit a resolution to the Security Council even without their partners' accord.

"Obviously we'd like to keep the unity of the P5-plus-one, but unity While all six states have agreed is not an end in itself," Rice said. in principle to impose some sancEvery visitor to US to be assessed as 'risk' secretly

AFP, Washington

Starting Monday every person entering and leaving the United States will be evaluated as terrorist threats without their knowledge, and the results will be held for 40 years, according to the US Department of Homeland Security.

A US civil liberties group warned against the plan on Thursday, calling invasive.

The US "government is preparing to give millions of law-abiding citizens 'risk assessment' scores that will follow them throughout their lives,' said David Sobel, of the Electronic Frontier Foundation

"If that wasn't frightening enough none of us will have the ability to know our own score, or to challenge it," he said in a statement. A Homeland Security spokesman confirmed that computers of the Automated Targeting System will do

16 Taliban killed in Afghanistan

AFP, Kandahar

Nato and Afghan troops killed 10 Taliban rebels and captured two suspected militant leaders in a raid on an alleged suicide bomb cell in southern Afghanistan, the alliance said yesterday.

Separately, six Taliban were killed and two other insurgents arrested after a three-hour gunbattle with Afghan police.

Security Assistance Force (Isaf)

One Nato soldier was lightly no civilian casualties Most of the Nato troops stationed wounded in the operation against Helmand are British. the suicide cell carried out early Afghanistan suffered a wave of Thursday in the troubled Sangin district of Helmand province, a spokesman for the International

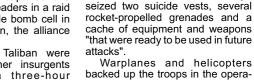
four suicide attacks and a bombing at the start of the week after a rela-tive lull, leaving 22 people dead ncluding four Nato soldiers.

tion, it said, adding that there were

The identity of the suspected

An Isaf statement said troops

commanders captured in the raid



was not revealed.

Pak rape law changes okayed

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf yesterday signed into law a bill amending the country's Islamic rape legislation, despite protests by religious parties, a government minister said.

The bill places rape laws under Pakistan's British-influenced penal code and scraps harsh conditions that required victims to produce four male witnesses and exposed them to prosecution for adultery if they were unable to prove the crime



Activists from India's Trinamool Congress Party shout slogans after their arrest during a statewide strike in Kolkata yesterday. Strike supporters clashed with police, blocked road and rail traffic in the West Bengal during a 12-hour statewide bandh called by the Trinamool Congress.

"We use it to improve the collection, use and analyse intelligence that would help us target and identify potential terrorists or terrorist weapons from entering the US," department spokesman Jarrod Agen told AFP

the screening.

The US government quietly placed notice of the program in the November 2 Federal Register.

"The Automated Targeting System performs screening of both inbound and outbound cargo, travellers and conveyances," the notice said

The foundation calls the system an "invasive and unprecedented PHOTO: AFP data-mining system," in which computers look for suspicious persons and score them as potential risks by trolling information from a multitude of sources

Use carrot & stick on N Korea: ElBaradei

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa

The international community needs to offer incentives to North Korea rather than just apply pressure for it to return to six-party talks aimed at dismantling its nuclear programme, the head of the UN nuclear agency said vesterday.

REUTERS, Tokyo

Korean nuclear crisis.

Mohammed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, also said that North Korea should accept inspections on its nuclear work by the IAEA as a first step toward resolving the

"The international community needs to use both sticks and carrots." ElBaradei told reporters States, North Korea and host following a meeting with Japanese China.

Shiozaki.

"Sanctions alone does not, in my view, resolve security issues. We need them to look into a package of incentives for North Korea to come

back into negotiations." Pyongyang agreed to return to the negotiations -- which involve the two Koreas, the United States, host China, Japan and Russia -- after its

first nuclear test on October 9 triggered UN-backed sanctions. The talks are expected to

resume in mid-December, but no date has been set despite two days of discussions in Beijing this week among envoys from the United