

# BRIEFLY

**Nobel peace laureate held in US**  
Mairiad Corrigan Macguire, the 1976 Nobel Peace Prize winner, was arrested and jailed after refusing to leave a US federal prison in a show of support for a jailed peace activist, AP reports from Richmond.

Macguire on Monday visited Philip Berrigan, who is serving two years in the Petersburg Federal Correctional Institution for vandalizing a US Navy destroyer. When she refused to leave, she was escorted from the prison by FBI agents and taken to the Richmond City Jail, according to federal and city officials. A US District Court judge dismissed a trespassing charge against Macguire and she was released.

**Train mishap kills 3 in Pakistan:**  
Three men were crushed by a train in which they were riding when the floor of their car collapsed and they fell through, the English-language daily newspaper the News reported Wednesday, AP says from Islamabad.

Two others were wounded when the worn-out cabin floor caved in Tuesday near Attock, 80 kilometres (48 miles) northwest of the Pakistani capital Islamabad, the report said. The train was on its way from Pakistan's northwest frontier city of Peshawar to the port city Karachi more than 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) to the south, the report said.

**Fire ruins 100 houses in Indonesia:**  
Fire raced through a slum in an Indonesian city on Borneo island, gutting a hotel, a local government office and at least 100 houses, according to a report Wednesday, AP says from Jakarta.

There were no reports of injuries in the blaze Tuesday night in Martapura in South Kalimantan province, 900 kilometres (562 miles) northeast of Jakarta. The official Antara news agency said the fire spread rapidly in the slum, where tightly packed buildings have wooden and shingle roofs. Authorities were investigating.

**Cabinet reshuffled in Jordan:** King Hussein on Tuesday swore in six ministers in a minor cabinet reshuffle to give Prime Minister Abdul Salam al-Majali's government a vote of confidence to carry on with its mandate at a time of international tension, officials said, Reuters reports from Amman.

A cabinet minister told Reuters on condition of anonymity that six cabinet portfolios were reshuffled foreign affairs, transport and telecommunications, education, labour, information culture and youth.

**31 executed in Belarus:** Thirty-one people sentenced to death for various crimes were executed in the former Soviet republic of Belarus last year, officials said Tuesday, AP reports from Minsk.

A total of 45 people were sentenced to death in Belarus in 1997, said Prosecutor General Oleg Bozhelko. In 1996, 38 convicts were executed in the country, he said.

## Left cannot seek post-poll alliance with Cong, says Vajpayee

LUCKNOW, Feb 18: Senior BJP leader A B Vajpayee Tuesday said the left cannot seek a post-poll alliance with Congress after publicly criticising the party and calling it unfit to rule, reports PTI.

The people are no longer willing to accept the left's duplicity, he said in a statement issued here after his tour of West Bengal where he addressed election rallies at Raiganj, Malda and Dum Dum.

Claiming that the people in the state were looking for an alternative to both CPI-M-led left front and Congress, which lay in the BJP-Trinamool Congress alliance, he said any seat in West Bengal this time will mark the beginning of the end of left monopoly and Congress anarchy.

## DPRK executed dozens of officials in '97

SEOUL, Feb 18: North Korea executed dozens of officials last year, including a top party secretary in charge of agriculture, a former North Korean diplomat said Wednesday, reports AP.

Kim Dong Su, who defected earlier this month in Italy, said most of those executed were from a youth league under the umbrella of the ruling Workers' Party and had been charged with spying.

The defector said that Suh Kwan Hee, 72, a party secretary in charge of agriculture, was among those executed, but it was unclear from Kim's remarks whether Suh had been accused of spying.

# Fresh voting in 599 Indian polling centres ordered

NEW DELHI, Feb 18: Hundreds of thousands of Indians will have to vote again after election commissioners ordered a re-run of polling in nearly 600 stations following violence in which at least two dozen people died, reports Reuters.

The Independent Election Commission on Tuesday ordered re-polling at 599 of the estimated 350,000 stations involved in the first phase of general elections in the vast Asian nation, which has 605 million eligible voters.

Acrimony raged over the bloodshed of the first day of voting on Monday in which at least 25 people were killed and dozens injured with politicians blaming both the authorities and their rivals.

The casualty toll was highest in the crime-plagued eastern state of Bihar where gun-toting activists battled over, ballot papers and Maoists opposed to the election detonated landmines.

Violence continued on Tuesday in Combarote a textile city in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, where 56 people were killed by a series of bomb blast at the weekend.

Police said four boys were killed in Combarote by another bomb which went off while they were playing street-cricket.

A senior police officer told Reuters that a second bomb had been found in a school playground elsewhere in the city. India's election chief came under attack today after it was

announced new counts could be held in 1,000 polling stations following violence and fraud in the first phase of national elections.

The Election Commission which had declared the first day of the four phase elections on Monday a huge success was criticised in several newspapers here today for failing to provide adequate security.

The autonomous commission late Tuesday ordered re-polling in around 600 areas across nine states with more than 500 areas in the eastern state of Bihar the country's most lawless region, still being investigated.

Around 300,000 polling centres and more than 125 million voters were involved in Monday's voting.

Around 30 people died in poll related incidents the elections end early next month.

The Asian Age said the re-polling particularly in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Assam and Uttar Pradesh showed Indian elections were still the victim of "needless shedding of innocent blood."

AP says, fresh voting was peaceful but early turnout was low Wednesday at nine polling stations in eastern India where national parliamentary elections were disrupted earlier this week by separatist violence, domestic news agencies reported.

Only 10 per cent of the electorate had voted in the first four hours of polling in Nagaon, Koliabur and Jorhat in remote

eastern Assam state, the Press Trust of India said.

The first six phases of voting Monday in India's staggered general elections was marked by bombings, killings, ballot snatching and threats of violence. At least 22 people were killed in election related violence.

Vote counting begins March 2 and a new parliament is to be seated by mid-March.

The Election Commission has ordered new polls in 599 polling booths spread over the

country over the next month. The majority of these are in Assam, northern Uttar Pradesh and southeastern Andhra Pradesh in the east.

In Bihar in the east, where most of the violence took place and 20 people were killed during voting, the Election Commission ordered in inquiry into allegations of large-scale vote rigging in three high profile constituencies. Authorities have yet to announce dates for new polls in Bihar.

## US knew of Iraq's chemical weapons in 1980s!

CAIRO, Feb 18: The United States was aware of Iraq's chemical weapons programme back in the 1980s but couldn't do much to curb it, a former US ambassador to Iraq said Tuesday, reports AP.

The United States openly supported Iraq during its 1980-88 war with Iran, which at the time was seen as the bigger threat after the 1979 Islamic revolution had toppled Tehran's pro-West monarchy.

"We were very concerned at the time that Iran was in a militant expansionist mood, intent to conquer Iraq and to dominate the Gulf states," David Newton, who was ambassador in Baghdad from 1984 to 1988, told reporters Tuesday.

Newton was in Cairo as a special envoy of the US State Department to garner public support in the region for a US military strike against Iraq to destroy or diminish its ability to produce weapons of mass destruction including chemical and biological weapons.

Although Saddam Hussein's regime has long been known to have possessed such weapons, US officials have rarely spoken out about their role in giving him a free hand.

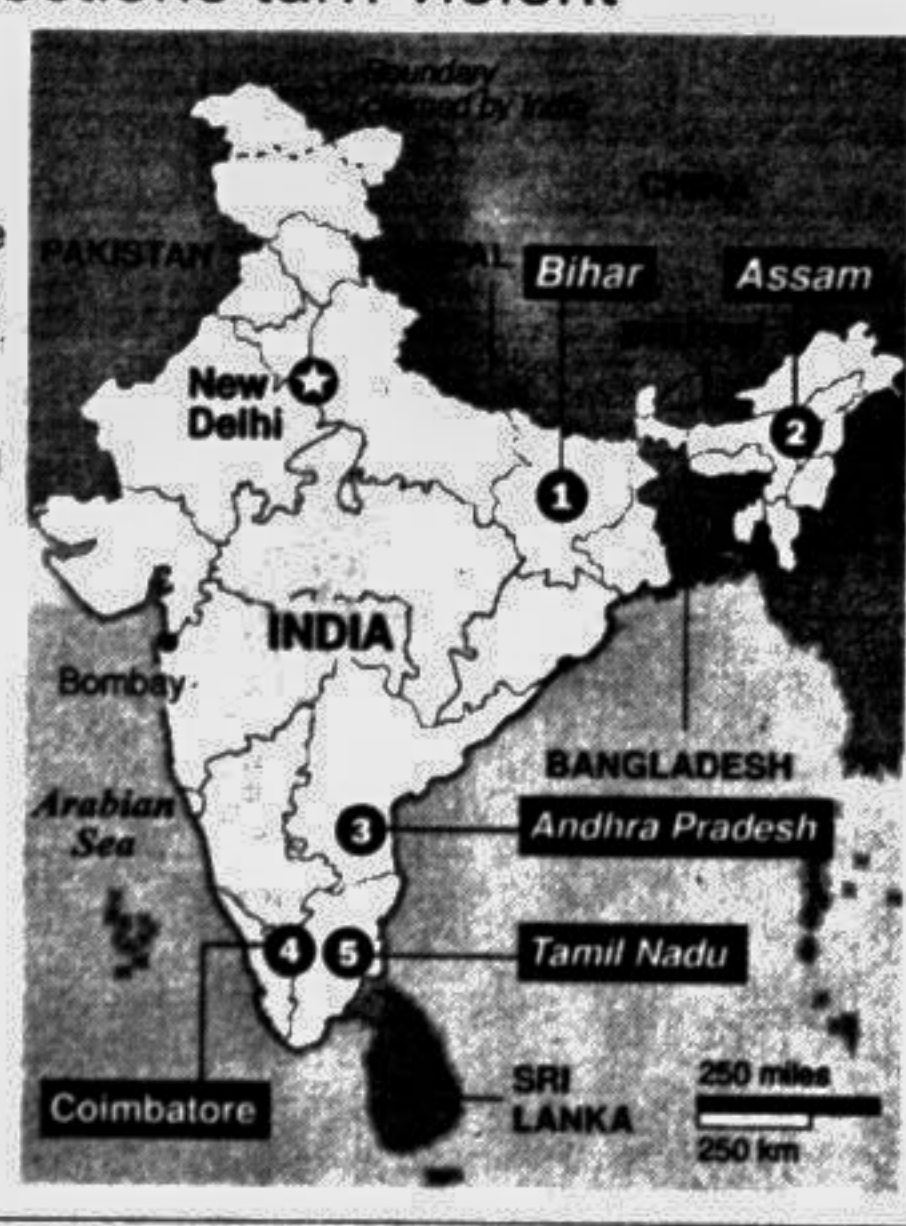
Asked why the United States didn't do anything to stop Saddam in the 1980s Newton said: "I raised the use of chemical weapons with the Iraqis repeatedly both on instructions and on my own, and I can tell you I got absolutely nowhere."

Iraq's worst record for the use of mass destruction weapons occurred in March 1988, when Saddam's forces killed some 5,000 Iraqi Kurds with chemical agents in the northern town of Halabja, five months before the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

## India's elections turn violent

More than 55 percent of India's registered voters participated in the first phase of parliamentary elections Monday, despite bomb explosions, threats of violence and shootings.

- Violent incidents**
- 1 Bihar: Twenty die amid land mine explosions, snatching of ballot papers and intimidation of voters
  - 2 Assam: One dead
  - 3 Andhra Pradesh: One dead
  - 4 Combarote: At least four boys killed Tuesday. Explosions Saturday killed 54 people
  - 5 Tamil Nadu: Bomb blasts Saturday killed 54 people and injured nearly 200



— AP/UNB photo

## Paula Jones case Clinton's lawyer asks judge to dismiss suit

LITTLE ROCK, Feb 18: President Bill Clinton's lawyers have asked a judge to toss out Paula Jones' sexual harassment lawsuit, saying such a move would protect future presidents from frivolous litigation, reports AP.

To support their request, Clinton's lawyers on Tuesday released excerpts of Jones' sworn deposition, including her acknowledgment that she never examined her employment records before filing suit in 1994.

Part of her claim is that Clinton retaliated for rejecting her advances by causing her trouble on the job.

Clinton's lawyer, Robert Bennett, said despite months of gathering evidence, Jones failed to establish her case. He accused her of "using the compulsory processes of the court in an attempt to humiliate and damage the president."

"There's no need even for a trial," he wrote.

Bennett said Jones also failed to prove Clinton conspired with state trooper Danny Ferguson, the president's co-defendant in the case, to deprive her of equal protection rights.

"If the court were to permit such a venerable case of sexual harassment and outrage as this to go forward against a sitting president, it would place future presidents at risk for frivolous and vexatious litigation," Bennett wrote.

In his deposition last month, Clinton said he did not remember meeting Jones and denied sexually harassing her. The trial is scheduled for May 27.

In her deposition, Jones said she went to the hotel suite because she was excited to meet the governor.

"I had never met the governor before," she said.

She said after a few minutes of small talk about work, Clinton tried to kiss her but she rejected him and tried to turn the discussion toward Hillary Rodham Clinton.

At that point, she said Clinton told her, "I love the way your hair flows down your back."

Eventually, she said, Clinton sat on a couch next to her, exposed himself and asked for oral sex. She said she jumped up from the couch, said "I'm not that kind of girl" and tried to leave.

"He was just red as he could be. You could tell I had embarrassed him so bad," she said.

## Annan announces trip to Iraq to avert military strike

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 18: After several days of intense negotiations to stave off a US military strike, the UN secretary-general announced he will travel to Iraq seeking a peaceful solution to the weapons-inspections standoff, reports AP.

The United States backed Kofi Annan's trip but warned Tuesday that it will not accept any deal that falls short of giving UN inspectors full access to all suspected weapons sites.

"We reserve the right to disagree with the conclusion if the trip is not consistent with Security Council and our own national interest," said US Ambassador Richard Richardson.

President Bill Clinton, laying the groundwork for possible air strikes against Iraq, said in a televised speech that America's military is ready to carry out its mission and "the American people have to be ready as well."

Annan said he made the decision to travel to Iraq on his own, but said he has the support of all five permanent Security Council members. He said he would depart on Thursday and arrive in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, on Friday.

"It is my hope that we can achieve a diplomatic solution that will ensure the full implementation of all Security Council resolutions," Annan told reporters Tuesday after meeting with the permanent members.

The resolutions call for the UN Special Commission, known as UNSCOM, to verify that Iraq has complied with UN orders to destroy all long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

"The weapons must be destroyed before the Security Council will lift punishing economic sanctions imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, touching off the 1991 Gulf War."

Iraq claims it has destroyed all banned weapons and that UNSCOM has deceived the Security Council to keep the sanctions in place.

Annan said he did not ask for a mandate from the permanent members but did seek clear direction from them about what he could discuss with the Iraqis.

"What I wanted was an understanding and a basis that will help my mission and make it successful and that if I come back, that everybody will be on board," Annan said.

Annan's decision to travel came after ambassadors from the United States, France,

Britain, Russia and China met several times in the past week to try to narrow their differences.

Council sources said the five permanent members had agreed on the focus of the trip, but some details appeared to remain unresolved.

Annan said he would meet with the full Security Council on Wednesday.

There is no basic disagreement in the United Nations for the secretary-general to go there," Russian Ambassador Sergey Lavrov said.

China's ambassador, Qin Huasun, said Beijing had full confidence in Annan and that he had the authority "and the right in accordance with the UN Charter to mediate in the crisis."

A major sticking point has been US insistence that the independence and integrity of the inspection team be protected.

"We all agreed on what is consistent with American policy," Richardson said. "The policy is clear: unfettered access to all sites by UNSCOM. The policy is strong: integrity of UNSCOM and the UN inspection teams in accordance with Security Council resolutions."

## Off the Record

### Diplomatic blunders

MOSCOW: Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev once stunned guests at a state dinner by attempting to drink blue water intended for washing his hands. Another time, high-ranking Arab guests were indignant when Kremlin waiters served them pork tongues, reports AP.

Such diplomatic blunders are still fresh in the memory of Akhmet Sattarov, the Kremlin maitre d' from 1959 to 1972, who Komosomol'skaya Pravda.

Sattarov was fresh out of the military when he was recruited for the job by the KGB. He then spent two years studying cooking, foreign language and diplomatic protocol. But soon after this career started, he found out he still had a lot to learn.

"We were silly enough to serve Saudi Arabian guests pork tongues and pork sausages at a Kremlin dinner in 1962," Sattarov recalled. Devout Muslims do not eat pork.

"In another faux pas, the Kremlin lacked red wine for a French delegation, and could offer only Russian vodka. The visitors toasted with empty glasses, he said.

Soviet leaders had frequent problems with etiquette, Sattarov said. Khrushchev constantly used the silverware intended for fish to consume appetizers.

"We felt shame before foreigners," Sattarov told the newspaper.

One of Khrushchev's worst blunders occurred at a White House dinner in 1964, when he picked up lemon slices from a crystal bowl filled with blue water intended for washing one's hands, recalled Sattarov, who traveled with the Soviet leader.

Khrushchev ate the lemons and then moved to drink the water. The waiter, who realised Khrushchev's intention, promptly took away the bowl, leaving everyone at the table with greasy hands.

The current Russian leadership isn't much better, Sattarov said.

"They are unable to properly hold a glass, and they fill it to the brim, and they wipe sweat off their faces with their hands and gesticulate too energetically," he told the newspaper, without naming names.

Sattarov said he resigned after growing tired of the secretiveness and paranoia surrounding his work.

"In 1966 they nearly executed me on suspicion of poisoning India's prime minister," who died shortly after a Kremlin banquet. Sattarov and his waiters were arrested and spent a day in a prison cell before it became known that the Indian guest died of a heart attack, not poison.

"This story has left me stuttering to this day," Sattarov said.

## Titanic brings big bucks

NEW YORK: The Titanic disaster, which after nearly 86 years is pulling huge audiences into movie houses and a Broadway musical show, brought big bucks to a New York auction house Tuesday, reports AP.

Collectors paid 180,310 dollars on four lots consisting of a letter and numerous wireless messages made before and during the vessel's doomed maiden voyage. The total was about 15 times the top resale estimate set by Christie's auction house.

The centerpiece, bought for 129,500 dollars by an anonymous telephone bidder, was a volume containing 34 signals from or about the Titanic from the radio-room logs of the liners Olympic, Carpathia and other vessels.

Bidding opened at dollars 4,000 advanced in increments of 200 dollars at first and then spiraled headily to dirrs 5,000 a bid before ending at 110,000 dollars. The auction house added a commission of 13,500 dollars.

Christie's specialist James Zemaitis, who relayed the winning telephone bid, said the extraordinary price was spurred by renewed interest in the ship's history.

"It's a great symbiotic relationship in which everyone fed off everyone else's excitement and it went through the roof," he said.

He declined to identify the buyers, saying only that they "were extremely nice and wildly enthusiastic."

The messages they bought were laconic and eerily deadpan as the great drama of the Titanic played out.

"Titanic sending out signals of distress," reads the 11 pm entry in Olympic's radio log on April 14, 1912. "Answered his calls."

Mohammed Abu Atwan, mayor of the town of Dura and the surrounding villages, including Iqfa Ghis, said he is unable to complete projects to bring water or electricity to every house because Israel won't give permission to do such work in Area C.

Abu Atwan said Israeli troops stopped workers from widening the narrow road through Iqfa Ghis, confiscating their bulldozer and detaining the driver.

Moussa, who lives with 10 other people in a three-room, one-storey stone house, said Israel has repeatedly denied him a permit to build a second storey. Meanwhile, new houses and additions spring up down the road in the Palestinian-controlled half of the village.

While some of his neighbours have resorted to illegal building to circumvent Israeli restrictions, Moussa said he had an unauthorised house torn down by the Israelis six years ago, an experience he doesn't want to repeat.

If we build a second floor, maybe they will come and destroy the first and second floor, and we'd lose everything," he said.

## Ranariddh may return to Cambodia next month

PHNOM PENH, Feb 18: Former Co-Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh, deposed in a coup last July, will return to Cambodia next month to help his beleaguered political party prepare for elections, the prince's personal representative said Wednesday, reports AP.

"It is clear he is coming. He will come next month, probably in the middle or third week," said Lu Laysereng, the prince's aide.

Ranariddh, who is now in exile, has on several occasions vowed to come back to Cambodia, but he has been prevented from returning for a variety of reasons, including a wish to pursue diplomatic channels outside the country, Lu Laysereng said.

If Ranariddh does return next month it would provide a boost to his Funcinpec party which is struggling to get back on its feet since the prince's ouster.

## Police asked to probe accusations against writer Arthur C Clarke

COLOMBO, Feb 18: A presidential task force has formally asked Sri Lankan police to investigate accusations of child sexual abuse against science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, one of this island nation's most famed residents, reports AP.

The task force has taken up the matter and asked the police to investigate it to the best of their ability as soon as possible," Maureen Seneviratne told reporters Tuesday. Seneviratne is a member of a task force President Chandrika Kumaratunga convened in 1996 after child rights groups told her that more should be done to protect children from abusers.

Clarke, 80, has denied the accusations, which appeared in the Sunday Mirror, a sensationalist British newspaper, days before Britain's Prince Charles was to have officiated at an investiture ceremony for the knighthood Clarke was granted early this year.

The ceremony was cancelled because Clarke said he did not want to cause the prince embarrassment, but he and Charles met at a dinner during the prince's visit celebrating the 50th anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence from British rule.

## Police bar protest rally against Myanmar leader in Philippines

MANILA, Feb 18: Police on Wednesday confiscated protest banners and kept pro-democracy demonstrators away from a senior Myanmar leader before a flower-laying ceremony at the monument of the Philippine national hero, reports AP.

Gen. Than Shwe waited at the near by Manila Hotel until police cleared demonstrators from the Luneta Park where he later laid a wreath at the statue of national hero Jose Rizal.

About a dozen members of the Free Myanmar Coalition carried black banners which said "Respect Myanmar People's Rights" and "We condemn trade union and human rights violations in Myanmar" across a boulevard about 100 metres (yards) away from the monument.

"Police officers first tried to cover the banners with their bodies and then ordered the protesters to leave, before finally confiscating the banners.

The demonstrators did not resist.

Edgar Bilayon, and co-leader of the union of the state-owned railway that supports jailed Myanmar trade union leaders, appealed to the police to allow them to show the banners to Than Shwe.

"It is enough that Gen. Than Shwe sees us so that he can read the message that there is a movement here in the Philippines that supports the pro-democracy movement there in Myanmar," said Bilayon, who wore a traditional Myanmar costume.

Jessica Soto of the Free Myanmar Coalition deplored the police action as a "curtailment of the freedom of speech in a democracy like the Philippines."

"Gen. than Shwe is not welcome in the Philippines," she said, adding that her group will "hound" him during his visit.



A Royal Air Force GR1 Tornado from 15 squadron, takes off from the Ali Al Salem airbase Kuwait, to patrol the no fly zone over Iraq, Tuesday. British and US forces are in place in Kuwait, to deter an attack by Iraq. — AP/UNB photo

## About 100,000 Palestinians still under Israeli occupation in West Bank

IFQA GHIS, West Bank, Feb 18: The patchwork logic of the Israel-Palestinian peace accords cuts right through the olive groves and pink-and-white blossomed almond trees of Iqfa Ghis, reports AP.

The Palestinian authority governs half of this hamlet, set among the sheer, stony valleys of the southern West Bank. The other half remains under Israeli rule.

Four and a half years after the peace agreement, the residents of Area C are still waiting for their first taste of autonomy.

That land, known as Area C is at the heart of the deadlock between Israel and the Palestinians over how to move the peace process forward. At stake are the future borders of Israel and the would-be Palestinian state.

Moussa said the soldiers restrict where he can graze his sheep and don't allow the local school to fly the Palestinian flag.

When an Israeli government official visited the base in early February, soldiers ordered Moussa and his neighbours to stay in their houses for two hours, he said.

More often, Israeli soldiers rumble by in jeeps, heading to their base just 500 yards (metres) farther up the one-lane road that winds steeply through the village. Sometimes, the soldiers stop and search a house, or ask Moussa or his sons to produce their green Israeli-issued identity cards.

Under the peace accords, Israel was supposed to withdraw from all of the West Bank — except for Jewish settlements and

"specified military locations — by May 1998.

But the current Israeli government is defining "military locations" broadly. It wants to keep between 50 per cent and 60 per cent of the West Bank, including broad "security zones" between Israel and the West Bank and between the West Bank and Jordan.

The Palestinians, for their part, seek enough land to link up the territory they control now and create a viable independent state. They want to receive more than 90 per cent of the West Bank before a final peace agreement with Israel.

While the wrangling continues, the deadlines for two of three scheduled West Bank withdrawals by Israeli forces have passed, and frustration in Area C grows.

Abu Atwan said Israeli troops stopped workers from widening the narrow road through Iqfa Ghis, confiscating their bulldozer and detaining the driver.

Moussa, who lives with 10 other people in a three-room, one-storey stone house, said Israel has repeatedly denied him a permit to build a second storey. Meanwhile, new houses and additions spring up down the road in the Palestinian-controlled half of the village.

Israeli officials said housing construction and work on roads and water and power lines is allowed in area C as long as the correct permits are obtained.

"We're interested in encouraging economic activity, including infrastructure work, roads and maintenance," said Moshe Fogel, a government spokesman. "It just has to be done in the proper manner."