

Bush urges Arafat to halt violence

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush Thursday urged Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to help break the latest cycle of Middle East violence...

adviser Nabil Abu Rudeina told AFP in Gaza City. The White House later condemned the attack, which sent tremors through Israel two days after hawkish leader Ariel Sharon was elected prime minister...

tion for any other course of action other than 100 percent effort against terrorism. Boucher said US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who spoke to the Palestinian leader after the bombing, told him of the need to counsel caution and prudence.



Israeli security men ask ultra-Orthodox Jews to stay away from the scene of the car bomb which exploded in the west Jerusalem neighbourhood of Beit Israel on Thursday. One woman was lightly injured in the explosion, just two days after the election of Ariel Sharon as Israel's prime minister.

Collapse of thousands of buildings in Gujarat quake India vows to get tough with corrupt architects, engineers

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Urban Development Minister Jagmohan is promising to get tough with the corrupt architects and engineers blamed for the collapse of thousands of buildings in the Gujarat earthquake. The straight-talking politician, a former administrator of the troubled state of Kashmir now dubbed "demolition man", has forged a reputation for ruthlessness by tearing down illegally-built houses in New Delhi.

norms," he said. Government sources said Jagmohan decided to take on India's powerful construction lobby after most state administrations did not respond to his orders to change local municipal laws and continued flouting existing laws.

CIA sees 'high risk' of an Indo-Pak war

AFP, Washington

US intelligence chiefs warned on Wednesday, they could not rule out new nuclear tests by India and Pakistan and pointed to an "unacceptably high" risk of war between the two neighbours.

Taliban repeats offer to try Laden in Islamic country

AFP, Islamabad

Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia has reiterated its willingness to discuss sending indicted terrorist Osama bin Laden for trial by Muslim clerics in an Islamic country, a Pakistani official said Friday.

country ... if they are convinced that he will be given a fair trial," spokesman Tahir Khushnood told AFP. "They are prepared to talk if the US is prepared to talk."

India begins census

AFP, New Delhi

India Friday launched one of the world's biggest administrative exercises -- counting and charting the lifestyles of its billion-strong population. More than two million counters and administrators fanned out across India's 650,000 villages and 5,500 towns and cities to carry out the first census for nearly a decade.

Thai parliament elects Thaksin as PM

AFP, Bangkok

Billionaire businessman Thaksin Shinawatra was installed as Thailand's 23rd prime minister Friday more than a month after national elections that handed him an unprecedented parliamentary majority.

China to link Tibet by train

AP, Beijing

China will move forward with a decades-old plan to link mountainous Tibet with the rest of China by train, building what state media on Friday claimed would be the world's highest railroad.

Humanitarian disaster looming in Afghanistan: UN

AFP, Geneva

A major humanitarian disaster is looming in Afghanistan with more people dying from hunger after decades of conflict and the worst drought in memory, UN officials warned on Thursday.

media briefing. "It's really shaping up to be a potential major disaster," he added. Donations were falling well short of what is required to stave off disaster in a country where half the estimated population, or about 12 million people, are being affected by drought, the United Nations said.

for Afghanistan for 2001, it said. "It's one of the world's forgotten crises," said Antonio Donini, head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan.

India, China move to end hostility

AFP, New Delhi

India and China Thursday concluded a second round of security talks here by sharing "anxieties and worries" on a range of issues including regional security and nuclear proliferation, an official said.



Supporters of Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid try to hit anti-riot policemen with a stick in front of former president Suharto's Golkar party office in Lamongan 40 kilometres west of Surabaya on Thursday. Thousands of Wahid supporters took to the street as legislators said they were trying to gather enough petition signatures to call for an emergency parliamentary session.

Indonesia is in worst condition since 1945: Megawati

10 'big' people to be arrested: Wahid

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesian Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri on Friday said the country was in its worst condition since independence in 1945 and lamented the growing climate of violence.

Abdurrahman travelled to his supporters' heartland in East Java Friday and told them confidently he would live to fight another day and that efforts to impeach him in Jakarta would flop.

Victory of Sharon poses major challenges for Bush

IPS, Washington

Israeli rightwing leader Ariel Sharon's smashing defeat of Prime Minister Ehud Barak in Monday's elections poses major challenges to the new administration in Washington DC which has not even assembled its Mideast policy team.

region and make it far more difficult for Bush to persuade Washington's Arab allies to co-operate in maintaining, let alone tightening, the 10-year-old sanctions against Iraq. "In order to do that, they need Arab co-operation of a time when Arab public opinion is going in the opposite direction," according to Shibley Telhami, a Mideast specialist at the Brookings Institution here.

infighting in the Labour Party which is likely to be touched off by Barak's resignation. "A national unity government is unlikely," according to Philip Gordon, another analyst at Brookings who worked on Middle East policy in Clinton's National Security Council.

since last summer's failed negotiations at the US presidential retreat at Camp David. And if Sharon, whose nickname is "the bulldozer," responds with severe repression, or worse, orders Israeli troops back into towns which have been handed over to the Palestinian Authority under the Oslo Accords, the reaction in Arab countries could be extremely harmful to US interests in the region generally.