



Palestinian gunmen kill Israeli ahead of talks

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Palestinians gunned down an Israeli motorist in the West Bank yesterday ahead of U.S.-mediated security talks between the sides to push forward a new American effort to end eight months of violence.

An Israeli army spokesman said the gunmen shot an Israeli man as he travelled a West Bank road close to the Jewish settlement of Kedumim, near Palestinian-ruled Nablus.

The spokeswoman said the man's name and further details were not immediately available. Israeli Radio said he died of his wounds on the way to hospital.

In the Gaza Strip, Palestinian police said an Israeli tank wounded five policemen when it fired three shells at their post near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim.

"There was no justification or apparent reason for the Israeli assault," a police spokesman said.

The Israeli army countered that Palestinians had set an explosive device near an army post in near Netzarim and troops opened fire at them in response, also detonating the bomb.

In a fresh effort to quell the violence, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat agreed to send representatives to the U.S.-hosted meetings after a second round of talks on Monday with new U.S. Middle East envoy William Burns. Burns met Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon later.

Arafat arrived in Moscow early on Tuesday for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.

The Palestinian leader brought forward the visit, originally planned for early June, after the United States gingerly resumed its Middle East peace efforts.

"Urgent measures have to be taken, otherwise there will be an explosion across the region," Arafat told reporters in Moscow.

Senior Israeli and Palestinians officials said a security meeting - the first since late April - would be later held on Tuesday. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told Israel Radio the meeting would be the first of two, with the second taking place on Wednesday.

The two sides have held security talks from time to time since the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation erupted in September but they have failed to end the violence.

Burns, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, was trying to convince the sides to adopt the recommendations of an international committee led by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, which looked into the violence.

In Washington, Richard Roth, acting assistant secretary for Near Eastern affairs, said the United States supported Israeli-Palestinian security talks.

Beatification of Mother Teresa before year-end likely

AFP, Kolkata

The late Mother Teresa could be beatified by the Pope before the end of the year, the Archbishop of Calcutta Henry D'Souza said yesterday.

The archbishop, who is part of a papal inquiry regarding Mother Teresa's possible elevation to Roman Catholic sainthood, said the beatification process might be speeded up as she was "an extraordinary person."

"The diocesan inquiry into the virtues and reputation of the servant of God, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, is complete to place her on the path to sainthood," D'Souza told AFP.

The inquiry will be formally concluded at a ceremony in Calcutta's St Mary's Church on August 15, when its findings will be forwarded to the congregation for the causes of saints in the Vatican.

"The next step is to beatify her and I hope it will take a few months more," the archbishop said.

Mother Teresa, who set up her Missionaries of Charity order here in 1950, died in 1997 at the age of 87, after a life that has been held up as a model of Christian service.

Her work among the poor and dying in Calcutta earned her the title "Saint of the Gutters," and her selfless devotion to the ailing and suffering around the world won her a Nobel prize and millions of admirers.

Sister Lynn of the Missionaries of Charity said the panel appointed by Pope John Paul II as a part of the canonisation process had collected more than 100 testimonies to miracles involving Mother Teresa.

Minister escapes grenade attack in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Indian junior commerce minister Omar Abdullah, the son of Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, escaped an apparent assassination attempt by Muslim militants yesterday.

Abdullah was driving back after opening a computer centre in a college in the Kashmiri summer capital Srinagar when suspected militants fired three rifle grenades at his motorcade, police officials said.

All the grenades missed their targets. Three civilian passers-by were wounded.

The dominant Kashmiri Hizbul Mujahideen militant outfit claimed responsibility for the attack.

Omar's father Farooq Abdullah has been the target of several assassination attempts.

The attack came as New Delhi's chief negotiator on Kashmir, K.C. Pant, was visiting the troubled region for talks with local leaders.



Supporters of embattled Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid shout "Long live Wahid" during a pro-Wahid rally at the National Monument park in Jakarta yesterday. Thousands of Wahid supporters flexed their muscles in the capital on the eve of a key parliamentary session expected to call for his impeachment.

Filipino rebels threaten to kill hostages, if attacked

REUTERS, Zamboanga

Muslim rebels holding 20 hostages in the Philippines threatened yesterday to kill them if the army attacked, prompting the government to impose a news blackout on military operations.

The military, under orders from President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to use force against the Abu Sayyaf rebels following Sunday's abductions, said they had yet to pinpoint their location and that of the hostages, who include three Americans.

"We are at a very sensitive stage at this moment," Arroyo told a news conference, after a spokesman for the Abu Sayyaf told a radio station that the rebels would conduct "mass killing" should the military attack them.

"It is better to have a news blackout. When there is a war, you know where the priorities are, and there is a war going on in that part of the Philippines," she said.

"To the Abu Sayyaf, it's better for you to free the hostages you abducted while there is still time. Otherwise, bullets will rain on you," she added.

Exercise may extend life for chronically ill: Study

REUTERS, New York

Adults who suffer from chronic health problems such as high blood pressure or heart disease can lower their short-term risk of death by exercising for at least 30 minutes a week, results of a study suggest.

During a 3-year study, patients aged 40 and older with at least two chronic diseases who exercised less than 30 minutes each week had nearly triple the risk of dying as their peers who exercised for at least a half-hour weekly. The protective effect of exercise remained regardless of age, gender, smoking and additional diseases, according to the report published in the May 14th issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine.

Smoking was also a risk factor for death. Current smokers were nearly twice as likely to die during the study period as nonsmokers.

The findings point to the benefits of even a minor commitment to exercise. The study did not specifically address whether health insurance plans could save money by covering the costs of exercise programs. But the results suggest that "offsetting some of the costs of being physically active might be one way that health insurance plans

could encourage their members to lead more active lives," lead author Dr. Brian C. Martinson of HealthPartners Research Foundation in Minneapolis, Minnesota, said in an interview.

However, Martinson noted that lack of physical activity may indicate physical limitations related to illnesses that independently increase a person's risk of dying.

If this were the case, "a simple question about lack of physical activity in the past week might help clinicians to identify which of their patients with multiple chronic conditions are at increased risk of dying in the short term," Martinson told Reuters Health.

Exercise has been shown to lower blood pressure, improve insulin sensitivity and reduce blood clots, which can lead to strokes, the researchers explain. They suggest that walking a dog daily, walking in malls or around the block can reduce the risk of death in older adults with chronic disease.

Martinson and colleagues interviewed more than 2,300 patients 40 and older with at least two chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or high blood pressure.

Interview with BBC

Musharraf optimistic about Indo-Pak summit

The military leader of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, has said he is cautiously optimistic about the planned summit meeting with the Indian prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in Delhi.

In his first interview since Vajpayee made his offer for talks on Wednesday, General Musharraf told the BBC he was willing to be flexible on the agenda of the talks.

General Musharraf, who will send his official acceptance in the next day or two, praised Vajpayee for what he called his vision and courage.

General Musharraf said they would co-ordinate a date for the visit, but he believed it could be in late June or early July.

General Musharraf said he wanted to make his meeting with the Indian prime minister an historic one, and would go to Delhi with an open mind.

The Indian move came as a surprise and General Musharraf, who has consistently called for talks, said he could not explain

India's unconditional offer of a dialogue, but he applauded it: "I would give credit to Prime Minister Vajpayee for his statesmanship, and his vision and his courage and boldness towards accepting a reality and starting to address an issue which has bedevilled relations between our two countries," he said.

The meeting will be the first formal contact between the neighboring countries for two years.

There were high hopes of a reconciliation during Mr Vajpayee's landmark visit to Lahore in February 1999.

But they were dashed a few months later by fighting in Kargil in Indian-administered Kashmir.

General Musharraf said his government would be willing to exert its influence on militants active in Kashmir if the dialogue made progress.

He also suggested he would not be too rigid about the agenda of the summit.

One of the key problems in previous talks has been



Islamabad's focus on the Kashmir dispute, while Delhi wants to examine a whole range of issues.

However, General Musharraf would not be drawn on widespread speculation that he could become Pakistan's next president.

He said no decision had been taken, but that he wanted to ensure his reforms were not reversed by a civilian government.

He said he would have no problem with one of the two main political parties winning the elections, but said he could not see either of the two former prime ministers - Nawaz Sharif, who is currently in exile in Saudi Arabia, or Benazir Bhutto, who is also abroad - taking power.

He defended his decision to ban political meetings and detain activists planning to demonstrate, saying he wanted to prevent hooliganism and lawlessness.

But the activities of the political parties have been completely overshadowed by General Musharraf's impending visit to Delhi, and hopes that the elusive peace process can be revived once again.

Source: INTERNET

Megawati's party backs move to impeach Wahid

AFP, Jakarta

The party of Indonesian Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri has formally decided to call for impeachment hearings against President Abdurrahman Wahid, party officials announced Tuesday.

"We will tell the (lower house of) parliament tomorrow that we want a special session to be convened to impeach the president," Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) MP Subagio Anam told AFP.

"We reached our final decision this morning at a meeting of the central executive board."

The meeting was led by Megawati, who stands to replace Wahid if he is impeached or replaced. However she left the meeting without commenting to reporters, maintaining her steadfast silence on the leadership crisis.

As the largest party in both houses of parliament, the PDIP vote is pivotal in determining whether Wahid will be forced to face an impeachment hearing in a special session of the upper house (MPR).

There had been disagreement from some party members, PDIP secretary general Sujitno told a media conference after the meeting.

"But members were eventually united in agreeing to call on the DPR (lower house) to ask the MPR to convene a special session," he said.

Anam said Wahid still had until midnight (2300 BST) Tuesday to reverse the PDIP's stance by responding to the second censure motion against him, which the lower house issued on April 30.

"If he gives a reply which explains, to our satisfaction, that he did not violate his oath of office, and did not fail to keep the government free of

corruption, then there will be no need for an impeachment hearing," he said.

However, Anam said it was unlikely Wahid would reply, as he has consistently attacked the two censures as unconstitutional.

Legislators will decide in Wednesday's lower house plenary session whether to call for a special MPR session to conduct impeachment proceedings.

Other major parties in the house have also said they will vote in favour of an impeachment session, defying threats by Wahid to declare a state of emergency and dissolve parliament to halt the moves.

The National Mandate Party's Alvin Lie told AFP his party's decision to support an impeachment hearing was final.

Golkar, the second largest party, will support an impeachment session, said its chairman Akbar Tanjung, who is also house speaker.

The United Development Party (PPP), the third largest party, also reaffirmed its support for an impeachment session, PPP secretary general Alim Marwan Hanan told reporters after a party meeting.

PDIP, Golkar and PPP hold between them 333 of the 500 seats at the parliament.

Wahid's opponents were unconvinced by his last-minute offer in a cabinet meeting on Friday to transfer presidential powers to his deputy Megawati, branding it vague and unconstitutional.

Megawati, the daughter of Indonesia's founding president Sukarno, has not replied to Wahid's offer and has so far refused to meet envoys he sent to discuss it with her.

Sujitno said she "firmly rejected" the offer as it contained no detail.



Australian court orders extradition of Nazi war crimes suspect

AP, Melbourne

A judge yesterday ordered the extradition to Latvia of Nazi war crimes suspect Konrad Kalejs, where he is wanted over alleged World War II atrocities.

Magistrate Lisa Hannan delivered her decision after weeks of hearings involving Latvian officials and defence lawyers. Kalejs, 87, attended Tuesday's hearing in a wheelchair.

Lawyers for Kalejs immediately issued a statement saying they would appeal the ruling, describing it as "inhumane and unjust."

Kalejs is accused of being a guard at the Salaspils concentration camp near Riga, where Jews and Russian prisoners of war were executed, tortured or died of malnutrition.

Kalejs, who emigrated to Australia after the war, denies the charges.

Pakistani dies after setting himself on fire in Australia

AP, Canberra

A Pakistani man has died after setting himself on fire outside parliament after the government refused to allow his disabled daughter into the country, officials said yesterday.

Shahras Kayani, 48, doused himself with an inflammable liquid and set himself alight in early April outside the main public entrance to parliament as visiting schoolchildren stood nearby. He died in a Sydney hospital at the weekend from burns he suffered to 54 per cent of his body.

Kayani was angry that several attempts to bring his wife and three daughters to Australia from Pakistan had been rejected. One application was refused because of the cost to the Australian public health system of treating his youngest daughter's health problems.

Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock on Tuesday extended his sympathy to the man's family, but defended his department's decisions.

Ruddock said Kayani applied for his family to come to Australia under a special humanitarian programme, but they had not been suffering and discriminated in Pakistan.

Kayani originally came to Australia as a visitor, overstayed his visa and successfully obtained refugee status, Ruddock said.

Koizumi to meet Bush June 30

AP, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi will hold his first summit with US President George W. Bush on June 30 at Camp David, the government said yesterday.

Koizumi, who took office in April, agreed with Bush to meet at an early date in a telephone conversation. Koizumi will leave Japan on June 29, said Kazuhiko Koshikawa, Koizumi's spokesman.

Koizumi had said he hoped to visit the United States prior to July's summit of the Group of Eight major nations in Genoa, Italy.

The timing of the meeting will allow Koizumi to