



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian policemen inspect the remains of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat's helicopter at Arafat's heliport in Gaza City on Tuesday after it was attacked by Israeli army Apache helicopters on Monday night. Israeli forces launched attacks on key Palestinian symbols of autonomy, including Gaza International airport, as the authorities announced they were stepping up military operations against Arafat's Palestinian Authority, as part of Israel's reprisals against the Palestinians for last weekend's suicide bombings. An Israeli tank drives on the main road between Beitunia and Ramallah in the West Bank.

## Israel launches 'war on terror' against Palestinian targets

Tel Aviv confirms partial reoccupation of West Bank cities

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli forces on Tuesday launched attacks on key Palestinian symbols of autonomy, including Gaza International Airport, as Prime Minister Ariel Sharon declared a "war on terrorism". Israel announced early Tuesday that it would step up military operations against Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, which it branded an organisation "supporting terrorism". The decision was taken in a five-hour marathon session of Israel's national unity government led by right-wing hardliner Sharon. The suicide bombings in Israel on Saturday and Sunday, in which 25 Israelis died, were the result of the Palestinian Authority's failure to arrest militants "and require a wider scope of activity against Palestinian terrorism", the cabinet said in a statement. The government said military, political and economic measures would be stepped up against the Palestinian Authority, until the leadership took action to dismantle its "terror base," comments echoing the US argument for attacking targets in Afghanistan. Israel's government also placed the Force-17 in charge of Arafat's pro-

tection as well as the Tanzim military groups of his Fatah faction on its list of terrorist organisations.

A senior Israeli official, who asked not to be named, said that Labour party ministers, in an apparent rift, had walked out of the Israeli Cabinet meeting before the vote on the tough security measures was passed by 18 for to one against.

Israeli forces wasted no time in putting the cabinet threat into effect, making a series of incursions and air strikes in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

The latest casualty was a member of the militant wing of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah party who was shot dead by Israeli fire in the West Bank town of Nablus, Palestinian security sources said.

Meanwhile, the Israeli army confirmed Tuesday its partial reoccupation of the autonomous Palestinian cities of Nablus, Ramallah and Beitunia in the West Bank overnight, as part of Israel's reprisals against the Palestinians for last weekend's suicide bombings.

Armoured units penetrated areas which agreements had placed entirely under Palestinian control around Ramallah and in nearby Beitunia, a military spokesman said.

## Aid carrot spurs Afghan peace plan

Anti-Taliban forces mass outside Kandahar

AFP, Islamabad

Agreement in Bonn over a new broad-based government in Afghanistan has turned the key on a potentially massive reconstruction package for the war-shattered country.

But the multi-billion-dollar treasure chest in the offing by the international community will not be fully unlocked until a legitimate and peaceful administration is in place, analysts said Tuesday.

Afghanistan also will need to have its financial institutions rebuilt from the ground up before the aid -- estimated at up to 10 billion dollars -- can flow in, according to officials involved in the discussions.

"Once we have a semblance of a government in place and a semblance of some counterpart institutions with which the international community can communicate, that is the point at which the money and people can start to come in," an official with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) told AFP.

"We would need a ministry of finance to be in place and a central bank. In some ways the political institutions will have to be developed in tandem."

Some run down are Afghanistan's financial institutions after more than 20 years of civil chaos that most international economic surveys no longer publish information about the country.

Coupled with the question of how to pump billions of dollars worth of aid into a state with no financial institutions are the issues of political legitimacy and security.

Donors will be wary about pouring massive sums into a country which

already has a reputation as a black hole for development assistance, unless they are sure that the money is going to a credible leadership which will not break down into factional infighting.

The key step towards that legitimacy was made Tuesday when the four Afghan groups meeting in Germany agreed to the creation of a post-Taliban interim administration supported by an international security force.

The Afghan factions have agreed to a detailed UN blueprint that provides for a six-month interim authority, followed by an 18-month transitional government, as well as the deployment of foreign troops or police.

Meanwhile, US-backed forces amassed outside Kandahar and US bombs pounded Osama bin Laden's suspected mountain hideout, as talks in Bonn settled on a post-Taliban interim government but snagged on who will be its leader.

In the United States, homeland security chief Tom Ridge warned late Monday of new threats of terror attacks, but said they were not specific and did not indicate how or where they would be carried out.

In Bonn, Afghan delegates agreed to a structure for a post-Taliban government, but possible disagreement over an interim leader emerged after the powerful Northern Alliance proposed its own candidate.

Ridge's warning came as an opposition commander in eastern Afghanistan said an operation to flush out members of bin Laden's al-Qaeda network was imminent after US warplanes pounded the area for days.

## CIA chief makes secret visit to Pakistan

AFP, Washington

Central Intelligence Agency director George Tenet visited Islamabad over the weekend to ask for Pakistan's help in locating terror suspect Osama bin Laden, The New York Times said Tuesday.

According to US officials quoted by the daily, Tenet told Pakistan's president, General Pervez Musharraf, that the United States planned to send more intelligence agents to southern Afghanistan to track down the chief suspect in the September 11 terror attacks in the United States.

The CIA operatives are also expected to help track down members of bin Laden's Al-Qaeda organisation and provide more money to entice members of the once-ruling Taliban militia to change sides.

The officials said Tenet urged Pakistan to go further in cracking down on military clerics, other religious extremists, and monitor

pro-Taliban elements inside and outside Pakistan.

The CIA also told Pakistan that the United States needed more help on the ground in the coming weeks, especially information on bases formerly used by anti-Soviet freedom fighters in the mountainous Tora Bora region of eastern Afghanistan, where bin Laden is thought to be hiding.

According to an unidentified senior Pakistani official who was briefed on Tenet's visit, the United States wanted help in blocking possible escape routes from the region, and information on how to penetrate the maze of caves and tunnels believed to be frequented by bin Laden.

Tenet left Islamabad on Saturday and flew on to Germany, where he boarded a plane carrying the remains of Johnny Michael Spann, the CIA operative killed during a prison revolt in Northern Afghanistan.

## Jaya set to return as CM after winning legal battle

AFP, Madras



JAYALALITHA

Former actress Jayaram Jayalalitha -- who was ousted as chief minister of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu over corruption charges -- won two controversial court cases Tuesday, paving the way for her return to the post.

Jayalalitha won the legal battle when the Madras high court acquitted her of all corruption charges in two cases over land and hotel purchases during her earlier tenure as chief minister between 1991 and 1996.

Hundreds of workers for Jayalalitha's AIADMK party set off firecrackers and danced in the street outside the Madras high court to celebrate her acquittal.

In May this year Jayalalitha's party won a landslide majority in assembly elections in the state, despite a special court sentencing her to two and three years in jail over

the two cases.

Jayalalitha appealed the convictions and went ahead to become the chief minister of Tamil Nadu. India's Supreme Court later intervened and annulled her appointment.

The chief minister's post has since been held by her trusted aide O. Panneerselvam.

## Julia Roberts most powerful actress in Hollywood

AFP, Los Angeles

Julia Roberts is the most powerful actress in Hollywood and the third-most powerful woman in the US film industry, according to a list of the 100 most powerful women published Monday by the Hollywood Reporter.

The 10th annual list was bumped from 50 to 100 this year "underscoring the fact that there are many more women in positions of power in Hollywood now than when we started the issue a decade ago," said Paula Parisi, editorial director of special issues for the entertainment industry paper.

Universal Pictures' president of production Stacey Snider took the top spot for taking the studio from last to first in box office market share, "breaking the hex of a years-long slump," the daily wrote.

## Elton John to say good bye to music

REUTERS, London

British pop singer Elton John, whose string of hits has made him one of the richest stars in the music business, has said it's time to let the sun go down on his recording career.

He stunned his audience at a US concert at the weekend by saying his latest album, "Songs From The West Coast," would be his last, his London-based spokesman said.

"I'm fed up with it. I like playing to you guys but I hate the record industry," said John, who has amassed an estimated \$50 million fortune in a career spanning more than three decades.

"I've made 40 albums and it is about time for me to get out."

John's spokesman told Reuters he was unsure whether the final curtain had really come down on John's record career.

"He certainly said he would never make another record but whether it was just something he said on the spur of the moment, or whether he meant it, we don't know yet," he said.

## Lankan army urged to make today's polls free, fair

AP, Colombo

Top opposition leader Ranil Wickremesinghe on Tuesday appealed to Sri Lanka's armed forces to ensure free and fair elections by guaranteeing voters' safety during Wednesday's parliamentary elections.

"I call upon the police and the army to use whatever means available to them to ensure that voters are not intimidated," Wickremesinghe, leader of the main opposition United National Party, told reporters.

The government called in the army on Monday to assist 40,000 police after campaigning ended in one of the 53-year-old democracy's

most violent elections.

Police have said that at least 20 officers will be at each of the 9,946 polling stations and have been told to arrest on sight anyone who flouts election laws.

"It is the duty of armed forces to ensure safety of citizens and especially during election," Wickremesinghe said.

"This is a very crucial election, as it will decide which way Sri Lanka will go toward a stable government or chaos," he said.

The government-run Daily News said in an editorial Tuesday said the majority of citizens are peace-loving and non-aggressive and want "a trouble-free poll and postelection."

"The violence affecting this

country is the product of a few volatile and misguided hotheads," said the editorial.

With 41 deaths and more than 2,300 incidents of election related violence recorded since Oct 21, the campaign is the most violent since monitors began counting in 1997, the independent Center for Monitoring Election Violence said Monday.

The main contest is between Wickremesinghe's opposition alliance and President Chandrika Kumaratunga's governing Peoples' Alliance, although other parties are also participating throughout the country of 18.6 million people. Results are expected by Thursday or Friday.

## Indian parties in bitter battle over new anti-terror law

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has called a meeting of leaders from all political parties Tuesday to resolve an unrelenting crisis over his government's proposed new anti-terror law.

Called the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO), the legislation has provoked a political storm with a united opposition unwilling to support its parliamentary passage on the grounds that it

could be misused.

The Indian parliament is in session Tuesday and is due to vote on the new law which would give police and paramilitary forces far-reaching powers to arrest suspected terrorists.

Vajpayee's ruling coalition -- led by the Hindu-nationalist BJP party -- has made a strong case for POTO, saying it is essential in the wake of growing Islamic militancy in India's disputed northern state of Kashmir and the growing number of terrorist

incidents in other parts of the country.

India's main opposition Congress party, which has been leading the protest against POTO, reiterated its stand on Monday.

"We are of the view that the present ordinance is much too flawed to be corrected by mere amendments. Therefore, the legislation should be looked at afresh," said Congress spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy.

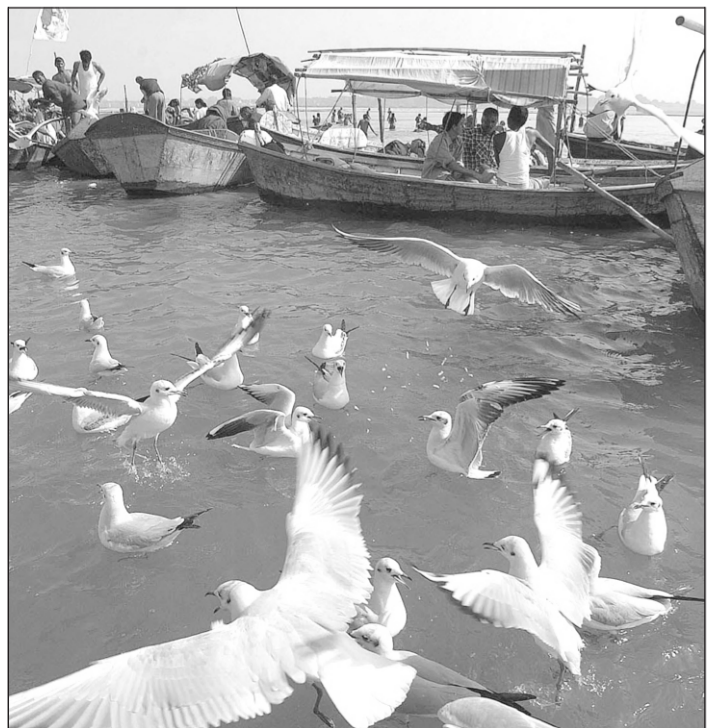


PHOTO: AFP

Seagulls search for food at the Sangam where the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers meet in Allahabad on Tuesday. George Harrison's widow Olivia and his 24-year-old son Dhani are expected to scatter Harrison's ashes here, one of the holiest Hindu sites, according to Hindu ritual.

## Afghan forces deployed around bin Laden lair

AFP, Jalalabad

Afghan militia forces have begun deploying around the mountain lair of Osama bin Laden known as Tora Bora in eastern Afghanistan, the local military commander said Tuesday.

Nangarhar provincial commander Haji Mohammad Zaman earlier said bin Laden, wanted for a range of terrorist attacks against US interests including the September 11 atrocities, was in the remote and rugged area.

Also targeted in the operation are hundreds of bin Laden supporters, mainly Arabs, who were given the chance to depart peacefully but refused, Zaman said.

"We started to move people today," he told reporters here in the Nangarhar capital about 50 kilometres (30 miles) north of the Tora Bora, which lies near the Pakistani border.

"They must surround the place

where the Arabs are living here. We need to send there around four thousand people."

He said that once the area had been surrounded, an attack could be launched in "maybe two, three days".

Zaman, appointed to the post last month following the withdrawal of the Taliban militia from the north of the country, said Monday that US special forces troops had been in Jalalabad for more than a week.

He said US helicopters had also landed on Sunday night.

US warplanes have been hammering the Tora Bora cave complex where bin Laden and his mainly Arab disciples are believed to have an elaborate hideout.

The Tora Bora area was established by the Afghan Mujahedeen guerrillas during the 1979-89 Soviet invasion. It is believed to be well-stocked with supplies and defended by hundreds of fanatical Islamic militants.



PHOTO: AFP

An armed policeman guards election officials loading ballot boxes to a bus in Colombo on Tuesday on their way to the polling booths across the country for the general elections. Sri Lankans will head to the polls Tuesday to elect their 225-seat Parliament.

## 'India, US share common goals on Afghanistan'

AFP, New Delhi

Washington and New Delhi share common goals on the future of Afghanistan where India has always played a strong role, the top US State Department official for Afghanistan said Tuesday.

"What a lot of people do not fully know and quite appreciate is that India has always played a very strong, positive role in Afghanistan. Over the decades, India has been one of the countries most involved in helping Afghanistan," Richard

Haass told a regional economic conference in New Delhi.

"Very quickly after the September 11 terrorist strikes in the United States it became apparent that Washington and New Delhi shared a commonality of views on Afghanistan. Both wanted to replace the Taliban regime with a broad based multi-ethnic government," he said.

Haass said India and the United States also shared "common goals" in Afghanistan.

## US extends high alert amid threat of terror attacks, says Ridge

AFP, Washington

The US government, citing an "increased volume" of new terrorist threats, placed Americans at home and abroad on high alert Monday for the third time since terror strikes on the Pentagon and World Trade Center.

"The further removed we get from September 11, I think the natural tendency is to let down our guard. Unfortunately, we cannot do that. We are a nation at war," Homeland Security chief Tom Ridge told reporters.

"Add your eyes and your ears to our efforts to find and stop those who want to do us harm," Ridge urged at a hastily convened White House briefing, noting the FBI was placing 18,000 law-enforcement agencies on high alert.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation had issued similar warnings on October 11 and October 29.

Ridge, whom Bush swore in as director of the Office of Homeland Security on October 8, said "an increased volume and level of activity involving threats of terrorist attacks" had led to the announcement.

"The information we have does not point to any specific target either in America or abroad, and it does not outline any specific type of attack," said the official.

"The analysts who review this information believe the quantity and level of threats are above the norm and have reached a threshold where we should once again place the public on general alert," he said.