



PHOTO: AFP

View of the Palestinian police headquarters after Israeli fighter jets launched two attacks on Friday in the centre of Gaza City. Eighteen people were wounded according to hospital sources.

## Israeli plane pounds police HQs in Gaza

AFP, Gaza City

An Israeli F-16 war plane bombed the Palestinian police headquarters in Gaza City early Friday, completely destroying two buildings and wounding 18 people in an air strike that shockwaves through the city.

The fighter bomber dropped a large bomb on the police compound in the southern part of the city at around 3:00 am (0100 GMT) and returned five minutes later for a second strike.

A senior Palestinian police source told AFP that two four-storey buildings inside the compound -- the offices of the riot police and an administration building -- were engulfed in flames and completely destroyed.

Four other buildings were also damaged by the massive explosions, he said.

The women's police center, the police school, and a medical building had holes blown open in their concrete walls, while the windows and doors of the office of the commander of the Gaza police were smashed to pieces.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat accused "extremist elements in Israel" of wanting to destroy the Middle East peace process, speaking in an interview with Egyptian television broadcast Friday.

"I launch an appeal to my Arab nation, to the Muslim countries, to the non-aligned (world) and to the international powers to save the peace (process) that extremist elements in Israel are trying to destroy," Arafat said.

## Bush asked to make Iraq next target

REUTERS, Washington

Ten leading members of Congress have urged President George W. Bush to make Iraq the next target in the US war on terrorism, saying it has reinvigorated its weapons programmes in the three years since UN inspectors left.

"As we work to clean up Afghanistan, it is imperative that we plan to eliminate the threat from Iraq," said the letter, dated Wednesday.

"This December will mark three years since United Nations inspectors last visited Iraq. There is no

doubt that since that time, Saddam Hussein has reinvigorated his weapons programmes.

Among those signing the letter were Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott, House International Relations Committee Chairman Henry Hyde, the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Jesse Helms, former presidential candidate Sen. John McCain and former Democratic vice presidential candidate Sen. Joseph Lieberman.

The letter is the latest in a string of calls for a renewed offensive against Iraq and President Saddam Hussein once the Afghanistan

campaign ends.

The US launched its war on Afghanistan after its ruling Taliban refused to give up Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network, blamed for the Sept. 11 attack on the United States that killed nearly 4,000 people.

Sen. Helms acknowledged in a speech on Wednesday that the United States does not know if Saddam was directly involved with the Sept. 11 attacks. Still, he said, "there is a mountain of evidence linking him to international terrorism generally and to bin Laden's terrorist network specifically."

## Strike against anti-terror law cripples Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Life in several parts of Indian-administered Kashmir came to a standstill Friday as residents responded to a strike call by an Islamic militant group to protest against a new anti-terror ordinance by New Delhi.

Shops, schools, banks, post offices, businesses and government offices remained closed in Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar in response to the strike called by Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group.

## 2 killed in US shooting rampage

AFP, Goshen

An apparently disgruntled employee armed with a shotgun killed one person and wounded six others at a factory before apparently shooting himself, officials said Thursday.

Police found the body of the shooter lying on top of a shotgun at the Nu-Wood Decorative Millwork factory along with the body of one of his victims.

Preliminary evidence indicates the shooter "died of self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head," Goshen police said.

## Harrison song to be released for charity

AFP, London

Record chiefs are to re-release George Harrison's 'My Sweet Lord' as a tribute to the late Beatle, a record industry source said late Thursday.

The song is expected to be rushed into shops following the death of the Liverpool music star a week ago, although no date has been set for its release.

The song became the first solo number one hit for any of the former Beatles when it originally topped the charts in January 1971.

It was one of the most successful releases of Harrison's career, taken from his successful triple-album 'All Things Must Pass'.

# Looting in Kandahar as Taliban flee

## Omar yet to renounce terrorism, US raids claim 10,000

AFP, Islamabad

Looting has broken out in Kandahar following the surrender of Taliban fighters under a deal in which they will be granted amnesty in return for handing over their weapons, new Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai said Friday.

"It began last night when the Taliban began to flee," he told American television network CNN.

He said he hoped tribal forces moving into the Taliban's southern stronghold would get the situation under control "as soon as possible."

"I hope (they) will get there soon to take care of the security and law and order situation," Karzai said.

CNN, quoting sources on the ground, described the situation in Kandahar as chaotic, with the streets flooded with Taliban and Arab fighters, tribal forces and armed bandits.

It said bandits were looting stores as well as storehouses of international aid agencies. Markets were deserted and gunfire could

be heard in the streets, it added.

Meanwhile, US air raids killed some 10,000 people, mostly Taliban soldiers, in the southern city of Kandahar over the past two months, a Taliban official said Friday as surviving militia fighters surrendered.

"Around 10,000 people, the majority of them Taliban soldiers, have been killed. During the last two weeks the casualties were so heavy that we were unable to resist the bombing and our defence lines were broken," said the official, who refused to be named.

"Seven times we tried to rebuild our defences in the north and south and every time they were bombed. Rows and rows of Taliban soldiers were killed and we couldn't even find the bodies."

Interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai said his troops entered Kandahar on Friday as Taliban fighters laid down their weapons and surrendered.

The militia fighters had begun disarming in the city after agreeing to a peaceful capitulation in return for a general amnesty.

"My people have been entering the city. Some have already got there, some are on their way," Karzai told AFP.

The surrender of Kandahar comes exactly two months to the day after the United States on October 7 launched a military campaign against the Taliban and the al-Qaeda network of Osama bin Laden, wanted by Washington for the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

Moreover, Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar has not renounced terrorism and will face the consequences, Afghanistan's new interim leader Hamid Karzai said Friday.

"I've been asking him for the past month to renounce terrorism and condemn the brutalities that terrorism committed in Afghanistan, the United States and the rest of the world," Karzai told CNN as Taliban troops surrendered their last stronghold of Kandahar.

"He did not do that. Last night was his last chance before the transfer of power to do that. He did not and he remains to be committed for

his association with terrorism."

It was not clear what Karzai meant by "committed" but he earlier told AFP that Mullah Omar must be brought to justice if evidence is presented of his association with terrorism.

"If there is evidence against him, he must face justice," the leader-in-waiting said.

The United States has demanded Mullah Omar face justice for sheltering alleged terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden.

Karzai said he did not know whether Mullah Omar was in Kandahar but he believed most Taliban fighters and members of Saudi-born bin Laden's Al-Qaida network were leaving the city.

"Well I don't know where he is, we'll have to see how things develop. If he doesn't meet these demands (to renounce terrorism), of course that means he's part of the terrorism, and if he's part of terrorism he must face justice," he said.

## Afghan terror supporters must be tried: Britain

AFP, London

Afghans who have harboured terrorists must be brought to justice, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said Thursday after reports that Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar was preparing to surrender Kandahar to US-backed tribal militias.

"The news from Afghanistan is very good. The fact that Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban, is so weakened and appears to be ready to surrender is a vindication of the firm determination shown by the interna-

tional coalition since 11 September," Straw said in a statement issued by the Foreign Office.

"All those who harbour terrorists and those committed to terrorist acts must be brought to justice. Whether individuals should be tried depends on the evidence against them," he added.

Washington earlier ruled out doing any deals with Omar although they failed to stipulate what should be done with the Taliban leader should he surrender.

## Curfew in Lankan towns amid riots, tension

AFP, Colombo

Curfews were reimposed in central Sri Lanka after a short break Friday as post-election violence escalated in many parts of the island leaving two people dead, police said.

Authorities also announced that a new nationwide curfew would go into effect from 7:00 pm (1300 GMT) amid mounting tension between rival political supporters.

A 33-hour curfew following the general election Wednesday had been eased in most parts of the country.

Two people were shot dead in northern Sri Lanka when members of rival Tamil political parties clashed shortly after election results were announced there, officials said.

They were the first killings since Elections Commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake began releasing results from the parliamentary elections, in which the main opposition United National Party (UNP) has claimed victory with a final result still to be reached.

In the central district of Kandy a curfew was reimposed as mobs set fire to a gasoline station demanding police action against the killers of 10

local residents in election violence.

The curfew was already in place in the Kandy town of Wattegame (Eds: correct) amid sporadic clashes between rival political groups, officials there said.

"Several vehicles had been attacked at Wattegame and a large number of people have taken to the streets despite the curfew," said a local police official in Kandy, 72 miles (112 kilometres) east of Colombo.

Ten Muslims were gunned down in Kandy on election day allegedly by supporters of the ruling party. Police late Thursday seized two vehicles used in the killings and discovered that both were state-owned vehicles.

They said one vehicle belonged to the police Special Task Force unit while the other was owned by the state Ceylon Petroleum Corporation. Police confiscated the abandoned vehicles.

No one has been arrested for the killings. The young men were buried Thursday.

The UNP accused the deputy defence minister of the outgoing government of being behind the murders and demanded his arrest.



## AI calls for Suu Kyi's release

AFP, Bangkok

Human rights watchdog Amnesty International on Friday urged Myanmar to release democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and hundreds of other political prisoners as a confidence-building step.

As more than 30 recipients of the Nobel Peace prize gathered in Oslo to mark the award's centenary, Aung San Suu Kyi, the 1991 Nobel Prize laureate, was still being held under house arrest in the military-led country, Amnesty said.

"On this occasion we renew our calls for her release and for the release of hundreds of other prisoners of conscience there," Amnesty said in a statement received in Bangkok.

## Laden faces final battle

AFP, Kabul

The Taliban's surrender in its last bastion of Kandahar has left Osama bin Laden on his own to fight what may well be the final battle in his holy war against the United States.

As Taliban fighters began laying down their arms Friday, the Saudi-born dissident, held responsible for orchestrating the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, was believed to be holed up along with a group of fighters from his Al-Qaida network in

caves near Tora Bora in eastern Afghanistan.

With US bombers dropping 5,000-pound bombs on the complex and local militia forces closing in, Bin Laden's chances of survival or escape appeared to be slim.

But bin Laden has never hid from the fact that his campaign against the United States was likely to end in premature death. "In our religion there is a special place in the hereafter for those who participate in jihad," he once told an interviewer.

## US helicopter crashes in Afghanistan

AFP, Camp Rhino

A US Marine helicopter burst into flames after it crashed near a US-held airstrip in southern Afghanistan late Thursday, slightly wounding one Marine on board and one on the ground, officers said.

Investigators launched a probe into the cause of the crash of the UH-1N Huey helicopter at the Camp Rhino base but they believed "it was not related to apparent probing of US lines by enemy forces," Marine Captain Stewart Upton said.

## Japan passes bill to beef up role in UN peacekeeping

AFP, Tokyo

Legislation to upgrade Japan's support for UN peacekeeping operations in preparation for a bigger role in Afghanistan's expected reconstruction became law Friday after being passed by the upper house of parliament.

"It was passed in the upper house and became law," a parliamentary official said.

The bill had the support of the three ruling parties and the opposition Democratic Party of Japan, and was voted through by 197 votes to 42 with no abstentions, the official said.

The new law revises a 1992 law that bans monitoring ceasefires and disarming local forces and eases restrictions on the use of weapons.

## Afghan minister set to meet Indian FM

AFP, New Delhi

The interior minister of Afghanistan's incoming interim government, Mohammad Yunus Qanooni, is set to meet Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh later on Friday, an official release said.

Qanooni arrived in New Delhi on Thursday night and is also slated to meet other Indian ministers including Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani.

It will be the first high-level contact between India and the incoming authority in Afghanistan since an agreement in Bonn on Wednesday set up the 30-member interim council in Kabul.

## POCA shelved for now

SAKYASEN MITRA, Kolkata

Buddhadev Bhattacharya has lost his lone battle, at least for now, in the beginning to table his anti-terror legislation, POCA, in the West Bengal State Assembly.

The West Bengal Chief Minister had earlier stated that he would table the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (POCA) bill when the winter session of the West Bengal Assembly begins Friday.

However, on Thursday, he bowed to the pressures from within the party and from the other allies of the CPI-M in the Left Front. Bhattacharya, after a specially convened meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday, announced that the Bill will not be tabled on Friday.

"We will wait and see the effects of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) by the Central Government. Then only we will go ahead with POCA."

It was indeed a bitter pill for the West Bengal Chief Minister to swallow. He had all through been maintaining that irrespective of hindrances POCA would come into existence.

However, Thursday's Cabinet meeting proved that as far as running the government in West Bengal is concerned, the central leaders of the CPI-M have the last say. There was another reason why the CPI-M decided not to go ahead with this bill.

For sometime now, the CPI, the RSP and the Forward Bloc had been lamenting about the high-handed attitude of the CPI-M. They had also expressed their reservations about the bill.

So to pacify them with one masterstroke, the central leaders that included the likes of Sitaram Yetchury, Prakash Karat and Biman Bose, decided to shelve POCA for the time being.

## US puts 39 terror groups on new visa blacklist

AFP, Washington

The United States on Thursday placed 39 alleged terrorist groups and affiliated businesses on a new visa blacklist to eliminate loopholes in previous regulations that enabled members of the organizations to legally enter the country.

The State Department said members of the groups who might already be in the country could be deported under the new sanctions.

The groups -- including many with links to suspected terrorist

mastermind Osama bin Laden -- have been placed on the "Terrorist Exclusion List" mandated by the USA Patriot Act, adopted in October after the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington.

"By designating these groups, (Secretary of State Colin Powell) has strengthened the United States' ability to exclude supporters of terrorism from the country or to deport them if they are found within our borders," the department said in a statement.



PHOTO: AFP

Army personnel in an armored car guard a street in Kathmandu on Friday as schools and major shops were closed for fear of attacks by Maoist rebels, who called a general strike after they resumed attacks on the government. More than 2,000 people have been killed since the Maoist rebels launched their "people's war" in 1996.