



A Palestinian man pulls out his children's clothes on Wednesday from the rubble of his house in the Jenin refugee camp, which the Israeli army has occupied for the past two weeks. Israeli tanks left the centre of Jenin in the northern West Bank but were still occupying the outer fringes of the town and the adjacent refugee camp, which was reduced to ruins in a fierce week-long battle, a Palestinian official said.

Jenin camp 'horrific beyond belief', says UN envoy

AFP, Jenin Refugee Camp
The devastation of Jenin refugee camp, invaded by the Israeli army, is "horrific beyond belief," UN special envoy Terje Roed-Larsen said Thursday, slamming Israel for not allowing rescue teams in after the battle. "It is totally destroyed, it looks like an earthquake has hit it," said Roed-Larsen, visiting the northern West Bank camp with Red Cross and UN workers. "It is totally unacceptable and horrific beyond belief," he told AFP. "It is totally unacceptable that the government of Israel for 11 days did not allow search and rescue teams to come. This is morally repugnant," said Roed-Larsen, the UN Special Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territories. Israel declared the camp -- which it said was a hotbed of Palestinian militancy -- a closed military zone when it invaded on April 3, and refused to allow aid groups or media in afterwards, except for in small groups accompanied by the army. It said that unexploded bombs and booby traps made

Maoists stage bomb attacks in Kathmandu

AFP, Kathmandu
Several people were injured Thursday when Maoist rebels staged bomb attacks in parts of Nepal's capital, a home ministry official said. "A few persons were injured when the Maoists bombed several localities in Kathmandu on Thursday morning but no one was killed," the official said without specifying how many casualties resulted. Among the places the extreme-leftists targeted was the house of the prime minister's political advisor Prakash Sharan Mahat in the outskirts of Kathmandu, he said. "But no one was killed nor injured in the incident at Mr. Mahat's house," the official said. A policeman and a civilian were killed late Wednesday when the Maoists staged a bomb attack at a police post in Kathmandu.

'Powell's failure gives Sharon nod for more aggression'

AFP, Amman
Jordanian newspapers on Thursday warned that failure by US Secretary of State Colin Powell to succeed in his peace mission gives Israel the green light to step up its onslaught against Yasser Arafat. "Powell began his mission as an envoy of President Bush and ended it as an envoy of Sharon and in this quality he met with Arafat to submit (Israeli) demands," Al Arab Al Yawm newspaper said in an editorial. "Powell came to the region riding high on the wave" of calls by US President George Bush to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for an immediate Israeli pullout from Palestinian territories. "But Bush had to swallow his orders and bow his head after the Zionist-Jewish lobby (in the US) managed to twist his arm," the newspaper said. An editorial in the pro-government Al Rai said Powell came to the region on a mission "of support to give additional American legitimacy to the massacres of Palestinian people and in order to bring President Arafat to his knees. "From the moment that Powell left the region the brutality of the Israeli military operation will increase and this time the situation will be more dangerous because Sharon now has the green light to harm Arafat by

assassinating him or expelling him," it said. For Al Dostour the mission failed because "Powell tried to sell the Palestinians old American merchandise. "He only made vague pledges to the Palestinians while leaving Sharon, his army and his herd of settlers the chance to pursue the killings, the destruction, the arrests and the occupation," Al Dostour said. Moreover, Gulf and Iraqi newspapers lashed out at the United States on Thursday following Secretary of State Colin Powell's failure to force Israel to pull out of Palestinian territories it has reoccupied, charging that Washington was in cahoots with the Jewish state. Saudi papers led the chorus of condemnation, with one daily accusing Powell of having acted "like a Jewish rabbi" during his just-concluded Middle East trip. "Since he set off from Washington to the region over a week ago, the secretary appeared to be ... carrying instructions, not proposals," to the Palestinians, Al-Watan said in an editorial. "He acted more like a Jewish rabbi, or the head of a Zionist organization, than like an American diplomat trying to find a solution" to the crisis between Israel and the Palestinians, it added.

Muslim students boycott school exams in Gujarat

AFP, Ahmedabad
Some 5,000 Muslim students boycotted school examinations on Thursday in India's riot-hit western state of Gujarat, where sectarian riots have claimed more than 850 lives, principals said. School leaders and relief worker said the students staged the boycott to protest against the government's decision to set up their examination centres in Hindu-dominated neighbourhoods where they considered themselves vulnerable to mob attacks. "Only half the Muslim students in our school turned up to take the examinations even though we had arranged for transportation from the school to the exam centre," said one principal of a local school in Ahmedabad's Jamalpur area. School examinations in Ahmedabad have been postponed twice since the Hindu-Muslim killings began in late February. "We simply felt uncomfortable and unsafe asking our children to go and sit for exams," said one parent, Nafisa Ahmed. Mohsin Kadri, co-ordinator of the Shah Alam relief camp for Muslims, said they had requested school authorities and the government makes new arrangements to help the homeless students, but their pleas were ignored. "We had asked for some of the exam centres to be shifted to Muslim majority areas but since this was not done Muslim parents had no choice but to stop their children from taking the exams," Kadri said. At least 850 people, mostly Muslims have been killed in rioting between majority Hindus and minority Muslims in Gujarat.



Former King of Afghanistan Mohammed Zahir Shah (C) waves upon his arrival at Kabul Airport on Thursday as Afghan Interim Leader Hamid Karzai (L) and Afghan Deputy Defence Minister Abdul Rashid Dostum (R) look on. Zahir Shah returned after 29 years in exile.

Afghan king trades luxury of Rome for crumbling Kabul

AFP, Kabul
Former Afghan king Mohammed Zahir Shah has left his mansion in the European elegance of Rome for a two-storey house in Kabul, where most people do not even have running water or electricity. For 29 years he has lived in relative anonymity, enjoying a European lifestyle and, more recently, European medical care. Now, at the age of 87, he is trading his secluded luxury for life in a war-ravaged city, two thirds of which has been reduced to rubble by decades of conflict in a country where most of the population live in extreme poverty. The contrasts would have been evident to the former monarch from the moment he stepped off an Italian military plane in Kabul's battered international airport. From there he was to be whisked through dust-covered streets, past the crumbling remains of the city he left behind in 1973, to be installed in his heavily protected new home, enigmatically known as "Palace number eight". Although the interior of the house is likely to have been furnished with comforts to accommodate an elderly ex-monarch, outside the building bristles with security worthy of a maximum security prison. As a potent symbolic target for anti-government forces in Afghanistan, protecting the former king is being seen as a crucial test of the fledgling administration's ability to maintain security and stability. Parked in the Zahir Shah's street Thursday morning was an Italian light armoured tank and two armoured patrol vehicles, supplied by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) stationed in Afghanistan.

India signs deal to buy 8 US radars

AFP, Washington
India agreed to its first arms deal with the United States in more than a decade Wednesday, signing an agreement to buy eight US-made Firefinder counterbattery artillery radars. The Pentagon called it "a historic move that further signals improving relations between India and the United States." "Security cooperation between the world's greatest democracy and world's most populous democracy is a natural," said Dave DesRoches, a spokesman for the Pentagon's Defence Security Cooperation Agency.



This frame grab from the Saudi-owned television network MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Centre) shows alleged terror mastermind Osama bin Laden sitting next to his Egyptian lieutenant Ayman al-Zawahiri in an undated videotape broadcast by the Dubai-based MBC on Wednesday.

China urges world not to give up ME peace effort

AFP, Beijing
China urged the international community on Thursday not to give up its peace efforts in the Middle East and made an explicit appeal to Palestinians to stop suicide bombings. The Chinese remark came as US Secretary of State Colin Powell headed home empty-handed from a Middle East peace mission after failing to secure an Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire to end 18 months of bloodshed. "We hope the international community will continue to adopt measures to mediate in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," foreign ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue said at a regular briefing. Pressed by journalists at the briefing, Zhang made an explicit reference to Palestinian suicide bombings, and urged an end to them. "We also condemn any bombings against innocent civilians," she said. "To respond to violence with even more violence will not help solve the problem, but will only make the situation even more complicated."

Australian single women win IVF battle

AFP, Canberra
Australia's High Court on Thursday upheld the rights of single women and lesbians to avail of in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) procedures. The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference had asked the court to reconsider a Federal Court ruling that Victorian state laws restricting access to IVF were overridden by the Federal Sex Discrimination Act. But the full bench of the High Court dismissed the challenge with costs. The case brings to an end a long-running battle by the woman at the centre of the case, Leesa Meldrum, who had been forced to seek IVF treatment outside her home state of Victoria. The 40-year-old said she was overwhelmed by the decision. "Even 10 years ago it was a part of me that I just knew that I had to keep fighting," Meldrum said.

ULFA wants peace talks under UN supervision

AFP, Guwahati
One of India's most powerful armed separatist groups said Thursday it would be willing to hold peace talks with the government, but only under United Nations supervision. "We desperately want a peaceful solution to the ongoing Indo-Assam conflict and so the conditions have been set already to hammer out a peaceful solution through meaningful and scientific dialogue," the ULFA statement said. The group also warned the government against any attempt to lure out its underground cadres with false promises. "We have had bitter experience of the wall between India's sugar-coated words and its heinous deeds. So we do hereby say again not to divert people in the name of bogus offers to the ULFA like safe passage and so forth," it said. The insurgency has claimed more than 10,000 lives. As well as UN supervision, the ULFA insists that any talks should be held in a third country and should address the issue of sovereignty.

'Europeans differ strongly with US over war on terror'

AFP, Paris
A new poll published Thursday shows Europeans differ greatly with Americans over US President George W. Bush's "war on terrorism". Respondents in the four most important EU countries -- Britain, France, Germany and Italy -- found many are against Bush's handling of international policy and that the overwhelming majority believe he is making decisions solely to further US interests. The survey was conducted by the Pew Research Centre, a non-profit opinion tracking group based in Washington, and the International Herald Tribune, a Paris-based newspaper jointly owned by the New York Times and the Washington Post dailies that published its results. The Tribune stressed that public support in Europe for Bush had risen since the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington, and that seven out of 10 Europeans believed the United States was right to be worried about international terrorism. But it noted that less than half actually approved of Bush's international policy, and that significant numbers felt their government had been too supportive of the US anti-terror campaign, particularly in Britain -- Washington's closest EU ally -- where one in three found their country's help had been excessive. "Europeans, like Americans, changed their minds about Bush in a positive direction post September 11," the newspaper quoted Andrew Kohut, the director of the Pew Research Center, as saying. In the European view, Bush has gone from "very bad to improving". The biggest perceived improvement to Bush's image was recorded in Italy, where 44 percent of those surveyed approved of US foreign policy, an increase of 15 percentage points since August 2001. Next was Britain, where 40 percent approved, up 23 points, then Germany with 35 percent, up 12 points, and finally France with 32 percent, up 16 percent. Despite the boost for Bush, it was still clear from the poll that nearly four out of five Europeans believed the US president was using his military and his diplomats entirely for his country's own interests, without considering his European allies. Bush's collective labelling of Iraq, Iran and North Korea in January as an "axis of evil" was particularly scorned by Europeans. Only one German in six supported it, compared to 56 percent of Americans.

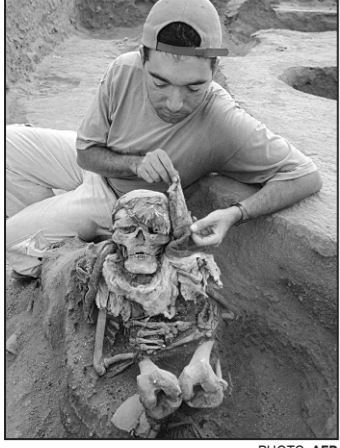


Photo provided by the National Geographic Society shows excavation team member Antonio Gamonal working on a mummy. Swathed in cloth and cotton seeds, a mummy of an Inca man unearthed at Puruchuco, Peru, retains the head-dress feathers that marked him as an individual of high Inca rank.

Canada now invites blue-collar migrants

IPS, Montreal
Think Canada only wants immigrants with PhDs or computer degrees? Think again: Butchers and welders are just two groups that have been admitted into the country recently as one of the world's richest nations deals with a shortage of blue-collar workers. "We've had a lot of people who have come in the trades areas, like welders, carpenters, metal finishers, machinists, mechanics," says Gerry Clement, assistant deputy minister of immigration in the western province of Manitoba. "Our major source countries have been traditional areas of immigration, with the Philippines the highest, followed by Germany, the former Yugoslavia, the Ukraine and China." Immigration is a shared responsibility of the federal government in Ottawa and Canada's 13 provinces and territories. The country has long filled labour shortages with temporary workers, who have been permitted entry only if they already have a job offer and with the understanding that once here they cannot apply for permanent residency. In 2000, more than 70,000 permits were granted to temporary workers, a slight increase over the previous peak a dozen years earlier, says the department of citizenship and immigration. But in recent years, industry has amplified complaints that the temporary worker programme was too slow to meet the demands of a fast-changing economy. Ottawa responded with a pilot project for the booming information technology sector that permits software experts to enter the country without a specific job offer. The Bank of Canada has continued to warn, however, that the shortage of high-tech workers threatens to expand to other industries, including construction, engineering truck transportation and food services and accommodations. While Ottawa works with business to fill temporary needs, Manitoba and seven other provinces and territories have cut deals with the federal government to get more say in choosing the immigrants they bring in for economic reasons. Under Canada's immigration system, this economic class accounts for about two-thirds of newcomers, with family class and refugees making up the rest. The country plans to admit 200,000 immigrants of all types in 2002. Under the provincial nominee programme (PNP), the provinces each create a list of high-demand occupations. For example, the eastern province of New Brunswick is looking for machinists and refrigeration and air-conditioning mechanics, among others. Manitoba is searching for bricklayers and heavy-duty mechanics. All provinces continue to recruit software engineers and other computer experts. The PNP is expected to grow as Canada relies increas-

