



PHOTO: INTERNET
Israeli policemen search the scene of a suicide bombing in the Israeli city of Netanya on Sunday. A suicide bomber blew himself up in the Israeli market, killing 2 others and shattering a lull in attacks on Israeli civilians.

Euphoria sweeps E Timor on first day of freedom

Warm welcome for world's newest nation

AFP, Dili

Exultant East Timorese thronged the streets of their seaside capital Dili Monday, revelling in the long-awaited dawn of their bitterly-won independence after centuries of foreign rule.

Xanana Gusmao, the adored hero of the bloody 24-year guerrilla war against Indonesian rule, took his place as president on a stage before the colonial-era government headquarters and swore in the new country's first prime minister and cabinet.

Children waving East Timor's black, red and gold flag packed the

lawns in front of the building, as foreign dignitaries including United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, former US president Bill Clinton and Australian Prime Minister John Howard looked on.

Hundreds of ex-guerrilla fighters who now make up the East Timor Defence Force (ETDF) marched out at the head of a grand ceremonial parade, saluting their former commander Gusmao.

Cheering crowds surged forward at the sight of the uniformed freedom fighters, now soldiers of their own land.

Veteran guerrilla fighters who have not joined the embryonic 600-

strong military followed, red bandanas wrapped around their long hair.

Meanwhile, China claimed first place in the race to forge diplomatic ties with East Timor on Monday as the world's 192nd nation was given a warm welcome by its regional neighbours.

Japan, Australia, the Philippines and Singapore were all quick to congratulate East Timor on formally throwing off the shackles of 450 years of colonial rule in a ceremony attended by world leaders late Sunday.

Many Britons believe their society is racist: poll

AP, London

More than half of Britons think they live in a racist society, according to a poll released yesterday.

The ICM survey commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corp also found that 44 per cent believe immigration has damaged Britain over the past 50 years.

However, 55 per cent of whites, South Asians and blacks agree that British society is more racially tolerant than it was a decade ago.

The poll, which broke the results into white, black and South Asian groups, found widespread support for government proposals to introduce citizenship classes and English-language lessons for

people applying to live in the United Kingdom.

Home Secretary David Blunkett has said ethnic groups must try harder to adopt the language and cultural norms of Britain.

According to the poll, 78 per cent of respondents thought anyone not familiar with the British way of life and living full time in Britain should have to learn English and attend citizenship classes.

This view was shared by 81 per cent of whites, 75 per cent of blacks and 68 per cent of Asians.

The finding was similar to a Mori Social Research Institute poll published earlier this month, which found that 77 per cent of whites and 76 per cent of ethnic minority com-

munities believed that immigrants who do not speak English should be made to learn the language.

The ICM poll said 51 per cent of the respondents thought Britain was a racist society. That view was shared by 52 per cent of whites, 53 per cent of blacks and 41 per cent of South Asians.

However, 28 per cent of whites thought immigration had benefited society, compared with 43 per cent of blacks and 50 per cent of South Asians.

Fifty-three per cent of respondents said their immediate circle of friends includes people from a different ethnic background, while 46 per cent did not.

PFLP leader's son killed in Beirut car bomb blast

AFP, Beirut

A son of Palestinian militant Ahmad Jibril, head of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), was killed Monday when his car exploded in Beirut, a spokesman for the Syrian-backed PFLP-GC told AFP.

Spokesman Abu Rushtid told AFP that the victim was Jihad, one of the two sons of Ahmad Jibril, who was resident in Lebanon.

"The explosion happened when the driver started his car," a police officer said earlier. The man, who was blown to pieces, had not been immediately identified, he added.

Initial inquiries indicated that some two kilos (4.4 pounds) of explosives had been placed in the car, an elderly Peugeot 504.

LTTE to lodge complain to Norway on govt's actions

PTI, Colombo

Sri Lanka's tenuous peace process may face a stiff test this week with the LTTE saying that it will raise objections with Norway about some of the Lankan government's recent actions which it alleged were shattering peace prospects.

Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen and peace envoy Erik Solheim are due to meet LTTE representative Anton Balasingham in London on Wednesday to discuss progress of peace efforts.

"Far from strengthening our belief that talks will take place, the problem of Tamils will be solved and peace will dawn soon, the government's actions seem to shatter that belief," Balasingham was quoted as saying by Colombo-based Tamil daily 'Sudar Oli' on Monday.

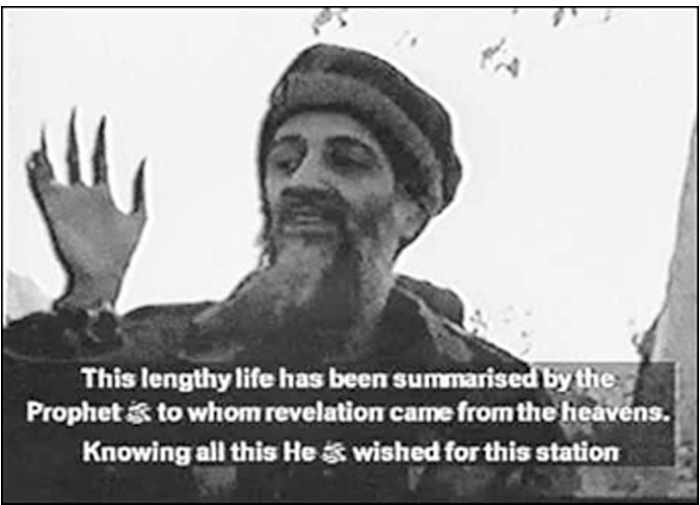


PHOTO: INTERNET
Footage from a video shows a man identified as Osama bin Laden speaking into a camera. The source who provided the video to Reuters and a British Sunday newspaper said the pictures were filmed in March 2002. If genuine, the film would provide the first proof that Bin Laden survived the US-led onslaught on his militant al-Qaida network and Afghanistan's former Taliban rulers after the Sept. 11 suicide attacks in the United States.

Question raised about latest Bin Laden video

REUTERS, London

A British-based Islamic news agency released video footage of Saudi-born dissident Osama bin Laden Sunday which it said was filmed just two months ago.

But the independent Arab satellite news network al-Jazeera said it had seen the tape three or four months ago and believed it was recorded in October.

The 100-second clip showed bin Laden seated outside a stone building in a camouflage smock as he spoke to unseen supporters, extolling the merits of martyrdom.

If the film were just two months old it would be the first proof that bin Laden survived the U.S. onslaught on his militant al-Qaida network and Afghanistan's former Taliban rulers after the Sept. 11 suicide attacks in the United States.

Neither bin Laden's comments nor the setting of the film -- under a tree against a backdrop of hills -- appeared to shed light on when it

was filmed.

The Ansaar news agency said Pakistani intelligence officers who supplied the video said it was shot in March. "We can't verify or confirm it," said Ansaar journalist Imran Khan. "But bin Laden looks gaunt, thinner and paler." He said he believed it was filmed in the southern Afghan border town of Spin Boldak.

He said the footage was part of a 40-minute film which the agency obtained in Pakistan four weeks ago. It was brought to Britain on an encrypted CD-ROM which was only decoded and transcribed last week, Khan said.

"Concerning the situation that we are in, we must praise Allah that he has allowed us to follow the path of (men who are among) the best of creation," bin Laden said.

"We ask Allah for victory, and we ask Allah to grant us martyrdom," added Washington's chief suspect for the September 11 suicide plane attacks in the United States.

US soldier killed in ambush in Afghanistan

AFP, Bagram Air Base

A US special forces soldier killed in eastern Afghanistan was shot dead in an ambush by suspected al-Qaeda and Taliban forces, a military spokesman said Monday.

Major Bryan Hilferty refused to identify the soldier, who is understood to be the first special forces member to be killed in combat here since the massive Operation Anaconda which ended in March.

"A United States special forces patrol near Shkin came under fire from enemy forces at approximately 5:00 pm local time yesterday," Hilferty said.

"We returned fire, killing one enemy. Unfortunately one American was killed and one of our Afghan allies was wounded."

It is understood that the American, who was part of a small patrol operating in a mountainous area of eastern Paktia province, died some time after being shot despite receiving treatment at the scene.

Pakistan urges world to make India 'see reason'

Border skirmishes displace thousands

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan called Monday for increased international efforts to make India "see reason" and begin negotiations as war clouds gathered over the two countries.

"We hope the international community will increase further its efforts considering the hostile postures adopted by India and convince India to see reason and come to the negotiating table for discussions and dialogue," said foreign ministry spokesman Aziz Ahmed Khan.

Asked at a news conference whether he thought war was imminent between the nuclear-armed neighbours, he said he was not in the business of "fortune telling".

Khan's comments came as Indian and Pakistani troops fought artillery duels on the border in the disputed state of Kashmir.

The skirmishes erupted after India blamed Pakistan-based guerrillas for an attack last week in Jammu, the Kashmiri winter capital, that killed 35 people, mostly wives and children of soldiers.

At least 10 people have been killed and more than 50 injured on the Pakistani side of the border since Friday.

Indian officials said Monday that the four-day artillery duel has left two people dead, 20 injured and more than 12,000 people displaced in Indian Kashmir.

India has blamed Pakistani militants for the Jammu massacre and on Saturday ordered Pakistan to withdraw its high commissioner (ambassador) in New Delhi, a move that has heightened tensions between the nuclear-armed rivals.

Pakistan has denied the charge and demanded an impartial investigation into the attack.

Kashmir, divided between India and Pakistan and claimed by both, has caused two of their three wars since independence from Britain in 1947.

Moreover, four days of cross-border shelling between the Indian and Pakistani armies has left two people dead, 20 injured and more than 12,000 people displaced in Kashmir, officials said Monday.

Indian and Pakistani troops traded small arms fire on Monday for the fourth day running, but there were no reports of any casualties.

The border skirmishes erupted on Friday, after India blamed Pakistan-based guerrillas for an attack last week in Jammu, the Kashmiri winter capital, that left 35 dead, mostly wives and children of soldiers.

Kashmiris shellshocked by cross border firing

AFP, Uri

Residents of this Kashmir border township were praying for peace Monday after raging artillery battles between Indian and Pakistani troops over the weekend left them shell-shocked and fearing an outbreak of war.

Four days of shelling across the border have left two people dead and 20 injured in Kashmir.

One of the dead and eight of the injured came from the town of Uri and surrounding villages, around 100 kilometres (62 miles) north of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.

The bustling town, nestled in the mountains and situated on the edges of the river Jehlum, which

flows into the Pakistani side of Kashmir, is located on the Line of Control (LoC) -- the de facto border that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan. Panic gripped the area on Saturday morning when the Pakistani shells began landing.

Residents say they are slowly growing used to cross-border exchanges between the armies of the two hostile nuclear neighbours, but the looming fear of war keeps them awake nights.

"We have been living with cross-border exchanges over the past many years now," said Mohammad Nazir who lives in Kamalkote village, one of the worst hit on Saturday.

China sees moon landing as its 1st step to Mars mission

AFP, Beijing

China may be planning to go to the moon in the course of the next decade, but an exhibition here Monday suggested it has far more ambitious goals -- Mars.

A model at the exhibition, organized for the country's National Science Week, showed China's vision of a permanent settlement on the red planet, a sci-fi fantasy replete with shiny domes and large greenhouses.

"From a long-term perspective, it is a historical necessity for man to travel into space," a poster at the exhibition proclaimed.

Chinese media reported last month that scientists were developing a new family of rockets that supposedly could send explorers to Mars.

While most Chinese scientists admit that a Mars mission is still a distant prospect, some have argued that the relevant technologies might as well be developed now.

One such device, a six-wheel robotic detector which could become China's first representative on the planet, was unveiled at the exhibition, which opened as China renewed vows to push ahead with its fledgling but ambitious space program.

China has yet to even put a man into orbit but official media claim, amid great official secrecy, that great strides are being made.

Another terror attack on US almost a certainty: Cheney

AFP, Washington

Vice President Dick Cheney said Sunday that a future September 11-style terror attack on the United States was "almost a certainty," but said available intelligence was too vague to merit specific warnings.

"I think that the prospects of a future attack on the US are almost a certainty. It could happen tomorrow, it could happen next week, it could happen next year, but they will keep trying. And we have to be prepared," Cheney told Fox News Sunday.

Top Bush administration officials made the rounds of the Sunday television talk shows to stress the need to thwart anticipated terrorist attacks and to deflect calls for an inquiry into the handling of intelligence reports received prior to September 11.

Asked if Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network, which has claimed responsibility for the brutal September 11 attacks, could be planning to strike the United States again, Cheney answered: "We assume they are."

Intelligence analysts have reported increased communications among al-Qaeda cells around

the world, which they said could be an indication that preparations for a new terrorist attack against the United States could be under way.

Cheney said potential targets included modes of transportation, trains, and so on.

"There is information collected or that comes to our attention that suggests every imaginable conveyance, type of facility, building, geographic location," he said, adding: "A lot of it turns out to be false reporting."

"A lot of it, I think, may be attributed to efforts to deliberately obfuscate. In other cases, it's nuts."

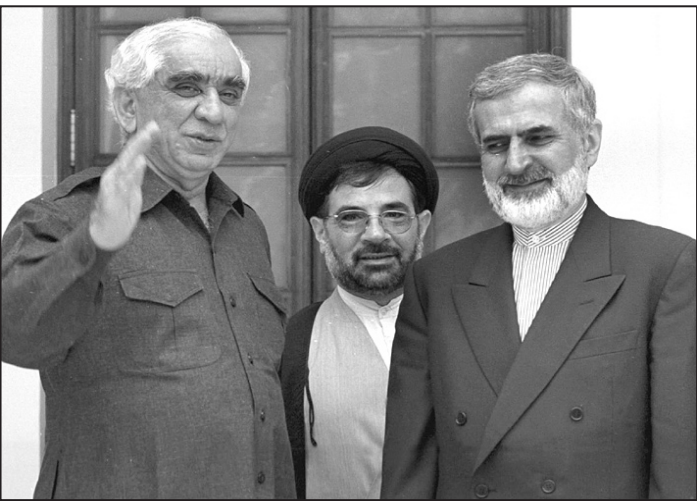


PHOTO: AFP
Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh (L) gestures to photographers prior to talks with his Iranian counterpart Kamal Kharrazi (R) at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Monday. Kharrazi is on a two-day official visit to discuss bilateral relations, including aid to Afghanistan, and the possibility of a gas pipeline from Iran to India's west coast. At centre is an unidentified Iranian official.

Bush a 'criminal imbecile' for his ME policy: Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

US foreign policy, notably in the Middle East, shows President George W. Bush to be a "criminal" and an "imbecile", an official Iraqi newspaper said Monday.

"The American administration of evil is confronted with problems that are about to get bigger because of the clumsy policy of an imbecile (Bush)," said Babel, run by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's elder son, Uday.

Blasting US policy in the Middle East, Babel said Bush and the "criminal" (Israeli Prime Minister Ariel) Sharon are two sides of the same coin.

"Like his father, Bush junior is a criminal by nature who finds pleasure in murder and who satisfies his pleasure through Zionist crimes in Palestine, daily US-British attacks on Iraq and the continuing embargo on this country."

Frequent incidents pit Iraq against US and British planes zooming over two no-fly zones, in the north and south, that were imposed after the 1991 Gulf War when George Bush senior was US president.

But Babel warned US policy "will do nothing to stop our determination because we are sure that victory will come to Iraq," which has been under UN sanctions since invading Kuwait in 1990.

Ath-Thawra, mouthpiece of the ruling Baath party, said UN resolution 1409, adopted last week by the Security Council and accepted by Baghdad two days later, "bypasses Iraq's right to get the unconditional lifting of the embargo."

The revamp of the sanctions regime, which seeks to free up the delivery of humanitarian supplies while maintaining the arms embargo, "blocks the development of Iraq," Ath-Thawra charged.

Al-Jumhuriya said the revision of the 12-year-old embargo was a "new trick which will block Iraq's efforts to develop its scientific and technical capabilities."

Bush, Putin to put last nail in Cold War's coffin

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush heads to Europe Wednesday for the first time since the September 11 attacks to put the Cold War finally to rest with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, and to discuss new perils, including international terrorism.

"We see this trip as historic," a senior administration official said. "The president and President Putin will bring an end to one era and begin a new era."

"The Cold War has been over for a while but it has been a long transition, and Russia is now clearly about to find its place in Europe, in the West. The integration of Russia westward is really a dream of three hundred years."

Bush's week-long visit takes him to Berlin, to Moscow and St Petersburg for a US-Russia summit, to France and finally to Rome for a NATO-Russia summit

His trip will enable him to escape a souring mood in Washington, where opposition Democrats are questioning his handling of intelligence reports of possible al-Qaeda hijackings prior to September 11.

Despite vigorous efforts by Bush and top aides to defend the administration, the debate threatens to eat away at the president's high approval ratings, and could influence mid-term legislative elections in November, which will shape Bush's ability to work with Congress over the next two years.

The Europe trip has been carefully crafted to include symbolic high-points such as the signing, May 24 in Moscow, of a three-page treaty that commits both countries to cutting their nuclear arsenals from about 6,000 today to between 2,200 and 1,700 in 10 years.

But the trip will not be without tensions, especially EU complaints over US protectionist measures on

agriculture and steel, and Russian criticisms of US use of growth hormones in poultry production.

An unprecedented police deployment awaits Bush in Berlin where he will meet Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to talk about the war on terrorism and European-Atlantic relations before giving a major address in the Bundestag.

Various leftist movements have called for demonstrations during the visit, and Schroeder has warned that police will not tolerate violence.

In Russia, the arms accord has displeased military authorities and communists, who believe Washington has the better part of the deal.

It allows the US side to keep some of its nuclear warheads in reserve to reactivate them if needed, whereas Moscow is no longer able to afford an arsenal of much more than 1,500 strategic nuclear weapons.