

'Arafat will be expelled if terrorism goes on'

Israel takes control of Hebron

AFP, Jerusalem

If Palestinian terrorism continues then their leader Yasser Arafat will be expelled from their territories and his regime ousted, Israeli Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday.

"I have explained that if the terrorism continues, Arafat will be expelled and that his regime will be ended," Netanyahu said on Israeli public radio in the aftermath of a mass shooting of Israelis in the West Bank town of Hebron.

"The right moment for his expulsion will be decided by a select group," added the hawkish Netanyahu, who plans to stand for the prime minister's post against the incumbent, and fellow Likud party member Ariel Sharon.

The Hebron attack, dubbed the "Sabbath massacre," left 12 Israelis dead and 14 injured, four seriously. Three of the assailants were killed in an exchange of fire.

"All the accords agreed by Israel (with the Palestinians) have been annulled by Arafat himself. I have always believed that the application of accords requires reciprocity," Netanyahu added.

"I spoke with (US) Secretary of State Colin Powell and told him that Israel had pulled out (on October 25) of the Hebron sector where the Palestinian Authority had promised to maintain order. In fact the opposite has happened because Arafat is the problem and not the solution."

"We have to adopt an offensive policy and eradicate terrorism or at least marginalise it."

"We are going to cleanse the whole area and do the work ourselves," he

added.

Netanyahu made the comments before a meeting due later in the day with members of the diplomatic corps in Israel.

Reuters adds: Israel took control of the entire West Bank city of Hebron in the first of a series of measures intended to crack down on Palestinian militants after a shooting attack that killed 12 Israelis.

Israel decided on a military response to Friday's ambush in Hebron although tensions over the attack and any retaliation threaten to set off a new round of violence despite U.S. calls for restraint ahead of possible military action in Iraq.

"We cannot let this go without responding," security sources quoted Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz as telling Secretary of State Colin Powell Saturday. "I have given the order."

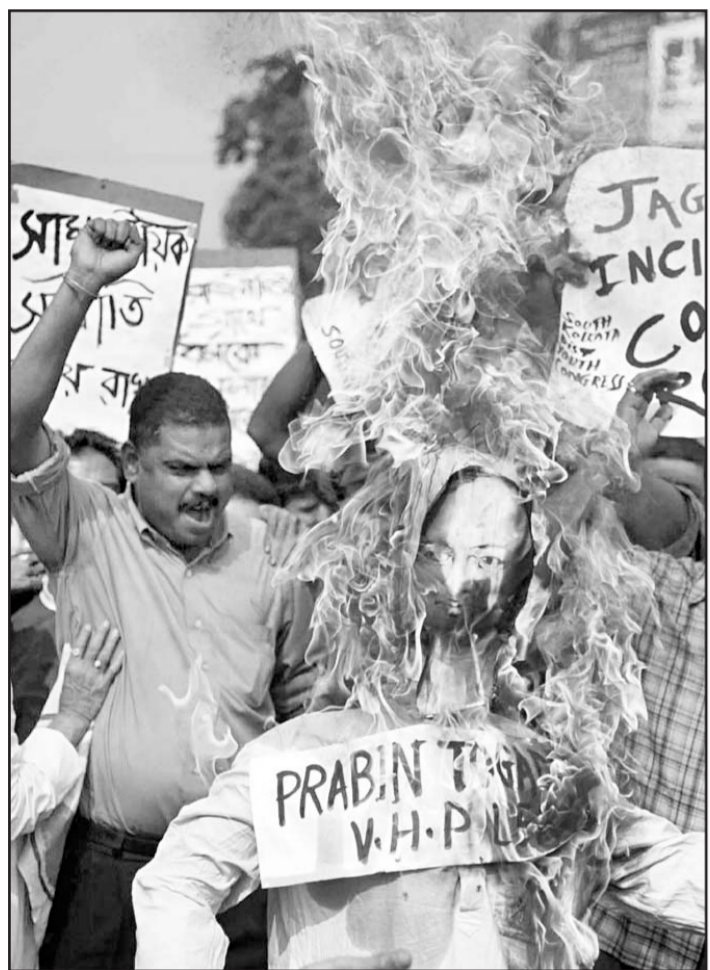
In the southern Gaza Strip, Israeli helicopter gunships fired missiles Sunday into a metal workshop, which the army said was used by Palestinian militants to make weapons.

Witnesses said six missiles slammed into the workshop in Khan Younis, setting it ablaze. They said no one was hurt in the attack, the second on the workshop in the last three months.

The army said the workshop was used to make weapons such as rockets and mortar shells for use in a Palestinian uprising for independence in the West Bank and Gaza, and described the attack as part of military "actions against terror."



Palatians walk in front of the demolished houses of Mohammed and Yusuf Attala near the northern city of Nablus in the West Bank on Sunday. The Israeli army destroyed seven houses of suspected Palestinian militants in overnight operations in the West Bank, Palestinian security sources and witnesses said.



Youth Congress supporters burn an effigy of Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) General Secretary Praveen Togadia in Kolkata during a demonstration against the proposed VHP march from Ahmedabad to Godhra in Gujarat state. The march was foiled when police broke up the rally and arrested Togadia.

Cops foil VHP march in Gujarat

Leaders detained

REUTERS, Ahmedabad

Indian police arrested two leaders of a hard-line Hindu group Sunday, preventing a march officials feared could reignite violence between Hindus and Muslims in a western state seething with religious tension.

Pravin Togadia, the firebrand general secretary of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, appealed for calm as he and an associate were taken by police outside a temple in Ahmedabad, the main city of Gujarat state, where hundreds of activists had gathered for the march.

"We will decide our future course of action at a meeting tomorrow," Togadia told Reuters at a police station.

The VHP, linked to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist party, had earlier vowed to go ahead with the march, despite a ban by the independent election commission and an appeal by Vajpayee not to violate law and order.

The fortnight-long march planned by Hindu nationalists aimed to re-awaken Hindu consciousness and was to begin in the flashpoint town of Godhra, where a

February attack on a train carrying Hindus triggered India's worst religious riots in a decade.

More than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, died in a wave of revenge attacks in Gujarat after a suspected Muslim mob burned alive 59 Hindu activists in the train.

The state has remained tense ever since and clashes periodically occur between the two religious groups.

Muslims, who form 10 percent of Gujarat's 50 million population, shrugged off the drama over the Hindu march, saying they had seen worse.

"We do not fear violence anymore, it cannot be worse than it was in March," said Khurshid Syed, who owns a grocery shop.

The independent election commission charged with holding elections in Gujarat next month had banned the Hindu procession, saying it could reignite tensions and affect the vote.

Before the arrests, paramilitary and riot police sealed entry points to Godhra.

"This is not a fight against the administration or the police, I appeal to you to be peaceful even if we are arrested," Togadia told his followers earlier.

Police identify 6 more Bali suspects

AFP, Denpasar

Indonesian police Sunday identified six more suspects in the Bali bombing case, including the mastermind who authorities have previously identified as a leading member of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) regional terror group.

All the new suspects are Indonesians aged in their thirties and none of them have been detained so far, chief Indonesian police investigator I Made Mangku Pastika told a press conference here with Australian police.

Pastika said a man known as Imam Samudra masterminded the October 12 car bombing which killed more than 190 people, around a half of whom were Australian.

"His role in the Bali bombing is as leader in the field, in the planning, and carrying out of the bombing, and he is capable of making bombs," Pastika said.

Indonesia's top security minister, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, has previously described Samudra as one of the leaders of the Islamic militant JI network.

But Pastika said investigators could not yet tie the plot to JI or the al-Qaida network.

"Before there is any concrete proof to relate to Jemaah Islamiyah and al-Qaida we will not bring a conclusion on that," Pastika said.

War or peace depends on arms inspectors: Iraq

War is not inevitable: Blix

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq, insisting it has no weapons of mass destruction, said Sunday the fate of the Iraqi people and the region at large depends on the UN arms inspectors.

"We hope and pray that the teams of inspectors and their chiefs will act objectively as UN officials, since they bear a huge responsibility on which the fate and future of the Iraqi people, as well as the region's security and stability, depend," wrote the Babel newspaper, which is run by President Saddam Hussein's elder son, Uday.

Chief UN arms inspector Hans Blix and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director general Mohamed El Baradei are due in Baghdad on Monday to kick-start the process of resuming weapons inspections in Iraq after a four-year break.

Repeating that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction, Babel said the burden of proof to show the contrary was on the inspectors.

"How can Iraq prove that it has no mass destruction weapons? How can it prove the non-existence of what it does not possess?" Babel

asked. UN Security Council Resolution 1441, which imposed harsh arms inspection terms on Iraq, put Baghdad in the dock, "like an accused who must prove his innocence in court."

Resolution 1441 "charges that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction, which means the onus is on the Security Council to prove this. Hence the sweeping and unfair powers given to the inspectors," the paper said.

"It is up to Mr. Blix and his men to prove this accusation through the inspections, which the accused, that is Iraq, has accepted in order to prove its innocence," Babel said.

"Asking Iraq to prove its innocence, which is virtually impossible in the conditions that have been imposed on it, aims at (eventually) accusing (Baghdad) of failing to cooperate with the resolution, with the consequences that this would entail," meaning a resort to force.

Ath-Thawra, mouthpiece of the ruling Baath Party, also urged the arms inspectors to "perform their task professionally, impartially and fairly."

"That would be the only way of

demonstrating that the international community is striving for world peace and stability," the paper wrote.

Meanwhile, United Nations arms inspections in Iraq are a chance for Baghdad to avoid a war that is not inevitable, UN arms inspection agency chief Hans Blix said Sunday.

"Inspections are a chance for the Iraqi government and that's what the Security Council has said," said Blix before departing for Cyprus on his last stop before arriving in the Iraqi capital on Monday with an advance team of inspectors.

Asked whether a war against Iraq was inevitable, Blix replied: "No, it's not."

"We know what we have to do in Baghdad and we prepared ourselves for it," said the head of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

He said he hoped to meet with members of the Iraqi government on Monday after he arrives in Baghdad with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director general Mohamed El Baradei.

PPP refuses to accept amended constitution

AFP, Islamabad

The opposition party of former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto insisted Sunday it would not recognise controversial amendments introduced by the military regime ahead of October's elections.

President Pervez Musharraf suspended the constitution in the wake of his 1999 coup and later introduced 29 amendments, several of which leave parliament under the thumb of the president and the military, under a directive known as the Legal Framework Order (LFO).

Hours ahead of parliament's inaugural session on Saturday, Musharraf "revived" the constitution, replete with most of his 29 amendments.

"Our position is abundantly clear. We believe that the constitution has been revived as of what it was prior to 12 October 1999, that is, minus the LFO," secretary general of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Raza Rabbani told AFP.

"We believe that in law there is no provision that allows for the amendments to become part and parcel of the constitution without being ratified by parliament."

The most contentious amendments hand the president power to sack parliament, and establish a military-dominated National Security Council to oversee government.

The PPP and other opposition parties had said they would refuse to take the oath under the revised constitution during parliament's inaugural sitting Saturday. But when the administrator of the oath assured them it was exactly the same, the swearing-in went ahead.

Afterwards the opposition parties insisted they had been sworn in under the original constitution.

Broadly half of the national assembly members support Musharraf and his amendments. The issue has been a sticking point in forming a governing coalition in the hung parliament.



A United Nations' vehicle leaves the UN headquarters in Baghdad on Sunday. President Saddam Hussein has clearly set out a new high-stakes strategy for dealing with disarmament, defying UN arms inspectors to find any of the prohibited weapons Washington says Iraq is developing.

Chandrika baffles observers again

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga has performed her third U-turn in five days on the Tamil Tigers peace bid, baffling observers by pledging her "deep commitment" to the process, diplomats said on Sunday.

Kumaratunga, in a banquet speech Saturday in honour of visiting Croatian President Stipe Mesic, said a truce between the government, which is led by a rival party, and Tamil Tiger rebels was aimed at building confidence.

The comments, in sharp contrast to her party's position on the Norwegian-sponsored peace process aimed at ending decades of ethnic bloodshed in the island, once

again left diplomats scratching their heads.

In an address to the nation on Tuesday, Kumaratunga had noted "satisfactory progress" in the truce brokered by Norway since February 22.

But on Friday her party, in a policy document endorsed by her, slammed the Norwegians.

Kumaratunga's party virtually declared war on the process, accusing the Norwegians as well as United States and Britain of supporting Tamil Tiger guerrillas, and warned that the country was headed for separation.

However, Kumaratunga was again conciliatory at Saturday's banquet, officials and diplomats said.

Al-Qaida issues chilling new manifesto

AFP, London

Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network has issued a new manifesto setting out the strategy of the organisation and making a series of chilling threats, a British paper said Sunday, quoting an Al-Jazeera reporter.

Yosri Fouda, a London-based journalist for Al-Jazeera TV who in May interviewed two militants who planned the September 11 attacks, said he was sent the untitled document which he believes is from a senior al-Qaida source.

"It is the closest the organisation has come to setting out a strategy for its war against the 'Jews and Crusaders,'" Fouda told the Sunday Times.