

## 3 Pak parties name Speaker candidates

AFP, Islamabad

Islamists, former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's party and the chief pro-government party on Monday formally nominated candidates for the post of speaker of Pakistan's first parliament in three years, officials said.

The 334-member national assembly, sworn in on Saturday five weeks after elections, will choose a speaker and deputy speaker on Tuesday.

Elections for the powerful speaker's post are being seen as a litmus test for prime ministerial elections later this week.

Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) put forward former interior minister Aitzaz Ahsan as its nominee for speaker, secretary general Raza Rabbani told AFP. Former Sindh provincial MP Nabli Gabol was nominated to the deputy speaker's post.

## Italian ex-PM Andreotti gets 24-yr term for murder

AFP, Rome

An Italian court sentenced seven-time prime minister Giulio Andreotti to 24 years in prison on Sunday for complicity in the 1979 murder of a journalist, provoking stunned reactions from senior politicians.

"Andreotti is the victim of mad justice," fumed Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

But as a senator for life since 1991, the 83-year-old Andreotti is protected by parliamentary immunity, and judicial sources said his advanced age would in any event spare him from going to jail. They said at the most he would be placed under house arrest.

The appeals court in Perugia, central Italy, accepted prosecutors' arguments about Andreotti's complicity in the murder of Mino Pecorelli, a journalist who had been about to publish a book criticising him.

## Lankan foes begin talks to rebuild war-hit areas

AFP, Colombo

The Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger guerrillas Monday opened direct talks on rebuilding areas hit by three decades of ethnic conflict, officials and diplomats said.

The two sides started the first round of discussions on "immediate humanitarian and rehabilitation needs" in the island's embattled northern and eastern regions.

The talks were set up as part of the ongoing Norwegian-backed peace process between the Colombo government and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who held the second round of peace talks in Thailand earlier this month.

## Fiery debate on Gujarat Yatra in parliament

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian parliament reconvened for its winter session on Monday and immediately launched into a fiery debate on ongoing sectarian violence in the riot-torn western Indian state of Gujarat.

Opposition parties in the lower house returned from the three-month recess in fighting mood, going straight into the attack by accusing the Hindu rightwing-led government of failing to curb bloodshed in Gujarat, which goes to polls on December 12.

## Turks question hijacker from El Al flight

AFP, Ankara

Turkish police were questioning a suspect Monday after security guards abroad an El-Al flight from Tel Aviv to Istanbul foiled a hijacking attempt, Turkish officials said.

The would-be hijacker, apparently an Israeli Arab, tried to enter the cockpit with a knife, but was swiftly overpowered by El Al guards on Flight 581 with 170 passengers on board, Israeli public radio reported.

The plane landed safely at Istanbul's Ataturk airport where the suspected hijacker was taken into custody.

"One person was overpowered on board and is now in questioning at the airport's police station," an airport spokesman told AFP.



Demonstrators hold banners reading anti-war slogans, during the protest march towards the US embassy in Athens, marking the 29th anniversary of the 1973 students uprising against the military junta on Sunday in Athens.

## Musharraf promulgates tough anti-terror law

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf has promulgated a tough anti-terrorism law which allows police to detain terror suspects for up to one year without charges, official media reported on Sunday.

The amendment ordinance was approved by Musharraf's cabinet last month but was only issued overnight and came into effect immediately.

The amended law empowers the government to order the arrest of a suspect and extend their period of detention from time to time without charging the suspect "for a total period not exceeding 12 months," the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) reported.

Previously authorities could detain suspects for up to three months without filing any charges.

Under the amended law police and other security agencies can also probe the assets and bank accounts of their spouses, children and parents.

Even after their release on bail, the suspects would be prohibited from visiting public places such as movie theatres, airports, parks, train stations or hotels.

The Anti-Terrorism Ordinance 2002 would also give police the right to pick up any person suspected of ties to groups involved in terrorism or sectarianism, whether or not they are banned, and jail them for up to a year.

However, suspects have the right to challenge their detention in court which would then have to decide the matter within 30 days, APP said.

President Musharraf, who took power in a military coup in October 1999, has made cracking down on

extremists a priority for his administration.

The law has come under criticism by the human rights activists.

Asked last month whether the government feared such criticism, spokesman Anwar Mehmood said: "If you want to fight terrorism, you have to have these kinds of tools".

PTI adds: Terming as "unconstitutional", the swearing in of military ruler Pervez Musharraf as president for another five years, Pakistan's main political and religious parties have demanded fresh presidential elections as per the constitution of 1973, which involves approval by the parliament and the provincial assemblies.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman, prime ministerial candidate of the six-party religious alliance, Muttahida Majlis Amal, questioned the legality of Musharraf's swearing in on Saturday.

## Pak coalition talks fail

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistani Islamist parties said Monday efforts to form a coalition government with a pro-military party have failed because of differences over how much power President Pervez Musharraf should wield.

The news comes a day before the National Assembly, or lower house of parliament, is due to elect its speaker and deputy speaker, a key step toward the election of a prime minister and a return to civilian rule after Musharraf's October 1999 coup.

The six-party right-wing alliance, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), said the two sides were unable to agree on the powers General Musharraf should have over a civilian parliament, powers the Islamic parties would like to limit.

"We have to say this with disappointment that our efforts were not successful," the MMA said in a statement.

It had held talks late Sunday night with the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-QA).

The right-wing Islamists, who won a surprising 60 seats in an October election riding a wave of anti-US sentiment, hold the balance of power. The pro-Musharraf PML-QA, despite winning 118 seats, needs to win their support to form a strong alliance.

But the parties have failed to form a government more than a month after the October 10 poll, because of haggling over the prime minister's post and future roles for the military and Musharraf.

These issues include Musharraf's constitutional amend-

ments that give him power to dismiss parliament, the role of a national security council comprising military chiefs, the appointment of provincial governors, and the general's new five-year presidential term through the controversial referendum in April.

"The contacts with the PML-QA have not completely ended but I think we could not convince each other on our respective points of view," senior MMA official Hafiz Hussain Ahmed told reporters outside parliament.

The MMA said it had decided to nominate Maulana Fazlur Rehman as its candidate for prime minister and Laiqueel Baluch as its candidate for the speakership. If it does not get what it wants, the MMA says it is willing to sit in the opposition.

# US prepares diplomatic, military groundwork for Iraq invasion

## UN launches do-or-die disarmament process

AFP, Washington

The White House is initiating a series of diplomatic and military steps that must be completed before the United States could go to war in Iraq, the New York Times reported Monday, quoting US and allied officials.

The tasks, some of which could take weeks or even months to carry out, include formalising allies' roles in any offensive, discouraging neighbouring countries like Turkey and Israel from taking their own action, and deciding whether to seek United Nations support for an attack, the newspaper reported.

American officials have privately secured informal assurances of basing and overflight rights in several Central Asian and Persian Gulf countries, including Kuwait and Qatar, although those commitments have yet to be formalised, the Times reported.

Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is expected to consult with allies this week at the NATO summit meeting in Prague on how they might fill in for American forces currently in Europe that the United States would likely move to the Gulf region in case of a military operation.

The United States also has stockpiled tanks and heavy equipment for more than 30,000 troops in several Gulf states and on nearby ships, the daily wrote.

Failure to accomplish many of these objectives could delay or complicate the onset of war, the newspaper wrote.

American diplomats also have intensified talks with two important allies, Turkey and Israel, to persuade them to remain on the sidelines during an invasion.

And, through informal channels, Washington has also broached discussions with Iran about preventing Iraq's Shiite majority from trying to seize control of Baghdad or form a separate state if Hussein falls, the Times reported.

Meanwhile, an advance team of United Nations experts headed for Baghdad Monday with unprecedented powers to disarm Iraq amid threats of a US-led attack, as Saddam Hussein's regime continued to protest its innocence.

Chief UN weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei were due to fly into the capital at 1010 GMT from Cyprus, four years after their predecessors pulled out of Iraq after being prevented from carrying out their mission.

"We're going to do a thorough and independent inspection," ElBaradei vowed at Cyprus's Larnaca airport Sunday.

The inspectors were unimpressed by Iraq's repeated assurances that it possesses no weapons of mass destruction.

"We do not take 'no' for an answer," ElBaradei said.

Blix, who heads up the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will meet senior Iraqi officials and lay the groundwork for the start of inspections set for November 27.

They spearhead a group of 24 inspectors -- 14 from UNMOVIC and 10 from the IAEA -- who are in charge of logistics and communications.

They will modernise a laboratory left over from the previous UN mission, UNSCOM, which was withdrawn in 1998 ahead of a US-British aerial blitz.

Iraq's official media pleaded Monday for the weapons inspectors to respect the country they will be working in as under the UN charter and international law.

The ruling Baath Party daily called on UNMOVIC and the IAEA "to show proof of their independence, professionalism and honesty" and "to respect the dignity of Iraq and its national security."

## Asians make up half of foreign students in US

AFP, Washington

Asians made up more than half of foreign students studying in the United States last year, according to a report to be released Monday by a Washington research institute.

Asians led foreign enrollments, comprising 56 percent of all international students in the United States, with European students in second place representing a considerably smaller 14 percent of international students.

Some 12 percent of international students came from Latin America, followed by seven percent from the Middle East and six percent from Africa, according to a study conducted by the Institute of International Education, a research group based in Washington.

## Interpol issues notices against 3 Maoist leaders in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

The international police agency Interpol has issued notices for the arrest of three Maoist rebel leaders in Nepal, reports said Monday.

"Interpol has issued Red Corner Notices" against three more Maoist leaders including the party's politburo member Krishna Bahadur Mahara, said English daily The Kathmandu Post.

The other Maoist leaders are Matrika Yadav and Post Bahadur Bogati.

In August Interpol issued similar notices against eight Maoist leaders, including chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

The three leaders were included in Interpol's international fugitives' list for alleged involvement in terrorist activities, murder and armed robbery, the newspaper said.

## Israel destroys Palestinian security building

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli tanks and troops attacked and partially destroyed a base of the Palestinian preventive security forces in Gaza City overnight, accusing the organisation of involvement in terrorism, a senior army officer said on Monday.

"Rather than preventing terrorism, the preventive security (force) in the Gaza Strip is involved in terrorism. Interrogation of Palestinians arrested and this overnight raid proved that," Brigadier General Israel Ziv told Israeli public radio.

"Over the last two years, many men who have come out of its ranks have taken part in the production of arms or in attacks alongside terrorists from Hamas or Fatah," Gaza regional commander Ziv said of the Palestinian preventive security force. The Fatah movement is led by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

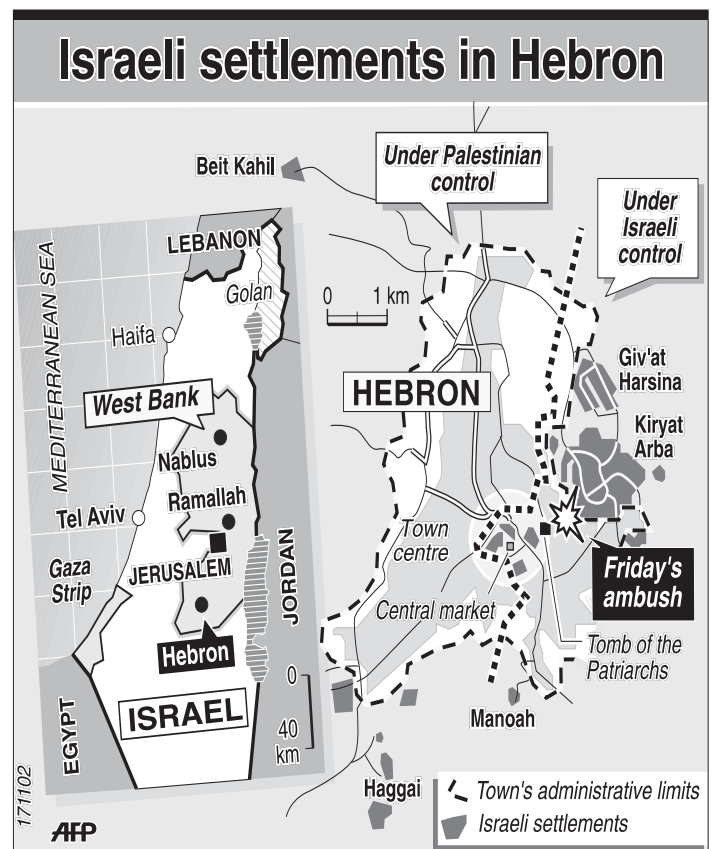
"Overnight, during our brief operation in Gaza, we found many arms at the base of this organisation, including dozens of mortars, grenade launchers, a Qassam missile, a weapons production facility and an enormous amount of subversive material," he added.

Israeli combat helicopters fired with rockets and machine guns on the preventive security building in the southern Tal el-Hawa district of Gaza City, hitting it by rocket at least twice, Palestinian security sources said.

Then some 30 Israeli tanks and armoured vehicles, accompanied by a bulldozer, moved in just before midnight and encircled it.

The bulldozer demolished the perimeter wall before the tanks rolled in through the breach and fired at the targeted building, the Palestinian sources said.

The building was partially



destroyed and six nearby buildings were damaged.

Four Palestinians -- three policemen and a foreign cameraman -- were wounded by the Israeli army during the operation, they said, adding that there had been a brief exchange of fire.

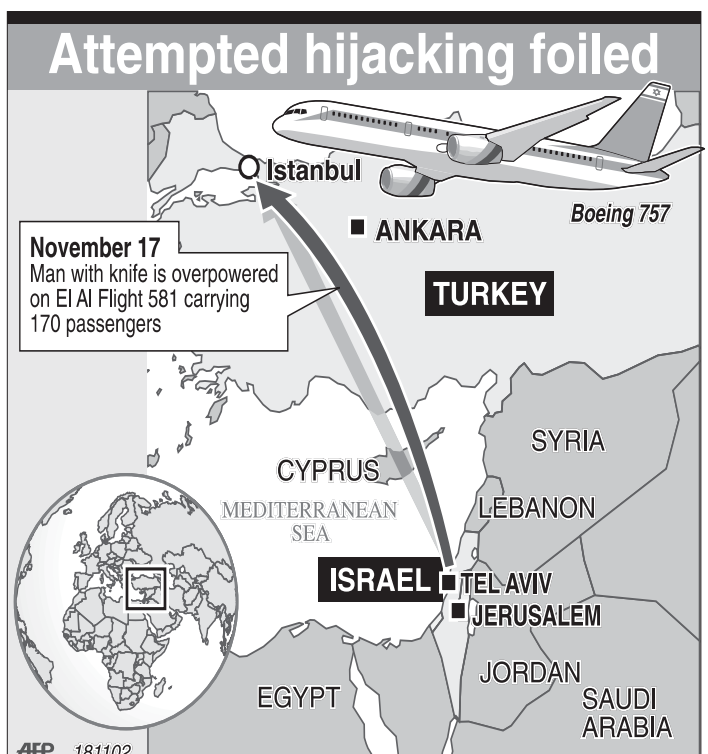
During the raid, which continued throughout Tal al-Hawa until 4 am (0200 GMT), the Israeli army also destroyed the house of a Palestinian they had arrested two days earlier, they said.

Some of the Israel tanks were damaged by explosives laid in their path but none were destroyed, the

Israeli army said. Meanwhile, Israeli troops arrested 12 wanted Palestinians during a security sweep throughout the West Bank overnight, the army said in a statement.

Seven Palestinians were arrested in Doura, near Hebron, three in Nabla, one near Bethlehem and another north of Tulkarem, the statement said.

Following a wave of killings in Israel, the army has reoccupied nearly all of the West Bank since June and has carried out regular searches and arrests.



AFP 181102

## Terror suspect caught after shootout in KSA

### US team interrogates another in Malaysia

AFP, Riyadh

A suspected terrorist was wounded and captured after a shootout with police in the Saudi capital, an interior ministry spokesman said Monday.

"Mohammad al-Sahim, wanted on security charges, tried to flee and shot at security forces who managed to arrest him after shooting him in the right leg," the spokesman said.

He said no policemen were hurt in Saturday's shooting, after an exiled Saudi opposition spokesman told AFP eight policemen were wounded in the firefight in Al-Shifa district, south of Riyadh.

Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, also denied any police were wounded in the several-day hunt for the man who was wanted for terrorism.

Speaking to the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) television channel, Nayef did not specify if the suspect had links with the al-Qaida network run by Saudi-born Osama bin Laden.

"He is in hospital for the moment and will then be interrogated," the minister said.

Meanwhile, United States investigators Monday spent two hours in an isolated Malaysian detention camp where they were due to question a terror suspect over his alleged links to the September 11 attacks, witnesses said.

Three men believed to be Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents were driven in a car with US diplomatic plates into and out of the Kamunting camp, some 300 km north of the capital Kuala Lumpur, without speaking to waiting reporters.



A bird covered with oil sits on the rocks in Camelle, northwestern Spain on Sunday after oil spilled from the Bahamas-flagged tanker "Prestige" washed ashore. The tanker, which is in danger of splitting in two, is now being towed out to sea to avoid an environmental catastrophe.

PHOTO: AFP