

## Jenin governor abducted by Palestinian militants

REUTERS, Jenin

Masked militants abducted the Palestinian governor of the West Bank City of Jenin on Saturday after beating him in public, witnesses said.

Militants took the governor, Haider Irshaid, to a square in central Jenin and beat him up before a crowd. They then took him to Jenin refugee camp.

It was not immediately clear why he had been abducted and whether he would be released, but negotiations were already under way to secure his release.

Irshaid's name has been linked to a scandal in which money intended for the Palestinian Authority in grants from donor countries went missing, Palestinian sources said.

The Palestinian Authority has been accused in the past of mismanaging financial aid given by donor countries. This month it received a direct grant of \$20 million dollars from the United States, which had faith in the new Palestinian leadership appointed in April.

# UN calls for timeframe to restore Iraq's sovereignty

## US to seek new UNSC mandate for troops

AFP, Washington

The United Nations said Friday it wants to see a timeframe for restoration of Iraqi sovereignty, and Washington said it would consider a new UN mandate for troops in Iraq amid ongoing attacks on US forces.

And the scandal over US and British assertions about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq took a fresh turn Friday as British media said a body found west of London was that of missing ex-UN arms inspector Dr David Kelly.

The furore over the arms expert's death came a day after Blair delivered a key address to the US Congress here, asserting that "history will forgive" the United States and Britain for waging war on Iraq even if, in the end, it remains unproven whether

Baghdad was developing weapons of mass destruction.

But the White House acknowledged Friday that US President George W. Bush had cited a British claim that Iraq had sought uranium from Africa despite the US State Department labeling the charge "highly dubious."

The White House released portions of a top-secret National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq as part of an aggressive effort to counter questions following Bush's inclusion of the uranium from Africa charge in a key January speech to make the case for a US war on Iraq.

In New York, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said that a timeframe must be given for restoration of Iraq's sovereignty.

"I have kept at the forefront of

my thinking the interests of the Iraqi people, especially their demand for the early restoration of Iraqi sovereignty," Annan said in a report, to be presented Tuesday to the Security Council.

"There is a pressing need to set out a clear and specific sequence of events leading to the end of military occupation," Annan said. "It is important that Iraqis are able to see a clear timetable leading to the full restoration of sovereignty."

The secretary general said his special envoy to Iraq Sergio Vieira de Mello had raised UN concerns with the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), headed by the US-appointed administrator Paul Bremer.

"The principal message" is that "democracy could not be imposed from outside" and that it must originate inside Iraq, Annan said in

the 22-page report.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon said it largely agreed with an independent study to assess progress in rebuilding post-war Iraq that sounds the alarm over the desperate need to boost the nation's security situation.

The study, compiled by the Center for Strategic and International Studies at US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and US interim civilian administrator Paul Bremer's request, says that "huge challenges" remain in Iraq.

"We do think the next 12 months will be decisive," said Frederick Barton, the lead author of the report, speaking Friday at a Pentagon press briefing. "We are very worried about the coming three months."



PHOTO: AFP

Iraqi supporters of fallen dictator Saddam Hussein gather around a crater carved out when a roadside bomb blew up and killed a US soldier when his convoy passed Friday in Fallujah. The death brings to at least 34 the number of soldiers killed in attacks since May 1, when the US declared an end to major combat in Iraq.



PHOTO: AFP

London front pages adorning the photographs of missing and presumed dead British arms adviser David Kelly on Saturday. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said the death of David Kelly, an expert at the center of a dispute over Iraq's weapons programmes was a "terrible tragedy", but added an independent inquiry must be allowed to determine the facts.

## Media blasts Blair for turning Kelly into a 'fall guy'

AFP, London

Newspapers said Saturday British Prime Minister Tony Blair faced a major crisis over the apparent suicide of a defence adviser at the centre of a row about the way the government took the country into war against Iraq.

Several papers attacked the government, accusing it of turning microbiologist Dr David Kelly, a weapons expert who worked as a UN inspector in Iraq, into a "fall guy".

The defence ministry is to launch an independent judicial inquiry if it is officially confirmed later Saturday that Kelly, who disappeared on Thursday, is dead.

That would bring a tragic twist to a convoluted tale of whether the government misled the country over its reasons for going to war against Saddam Hussein in March.

Downing Street vigorously denies this claim. Kelly was grilled by a parliamentary committee investigating the affair, and was said to be having been under considerable stress.

"Death of the dossier fall guy" was the page-one headline of the right-wing Daily Telegraph, which

said that Blair had been plunged into the biggest crisis of his premiership.

In an editorial it called on Alastair Campbell, the government's director of communications and a key aide to Blair, to quit, Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon to be "held to account", while Blair needed to make "some public declaration, backed up with deeds, to show that the era of spin is over."

In a report in May, the BBC claimed Campbell had ordered a claim that Iraq could deploy chemical or biological weapons in as little as 45 minutes, but inserted into its official dossier, despite the reservations of intelligence chiefs.

Campbell launched a furious counter-offensive, with Kelly finding himself at the centre of the controversy.

The right-wing Daily Mail attacked the government over the way it had treated Kelly. On its front page it ran pictures of Blair, Campbell and Hoon, under a headline: "Proud of yourselves?"

The left-wing Daily Mirror tabloid said in an editorial that Kelly had been "hounded to death by the government", adding: "Powerful men lined up to scapegoat Dr

Kelly as part of their no-holds-barred campaign to clear the government of charges of faking dossiers before the Iraq war."

A headline in the Daily Express read simply: "Thrown to the wolves."

The left-wing Guardian estimated that the political fallout from the death of Kelly "may well prove incalculable."

The Financial Times business daily said: "The death of David Kelly is an immense blow to Tony Blair's government as a whole, but if the idea forms that he was in effect 'killed by spin', it will turn into a crisis" with Campbell and Hoon in the firing line.

The Independent said in a front-page report: "Whatever the truth, there can be little doubt that the pressure of events combined to a level intolerable for Dr Kelly -- and that a good man and faithful public servant died as yet more collateral damage of this questionable (Iraq) war and the spin used to distract public attention from the real issues of whether war was justified."

## N Korea poses serious nuke threat: IAEA

AP, Vienna

The UN atomic agency's chief called North Korea "the most serious threat" to nuclear proliferation Friday while urging Iran to let inspectors investigate suspect nuclear facilities.

Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said he was concerned about reports that North Korea is reprocessing fuel rods.

"We are not there," he said. "We would like to be there."

ElBaradei also pressed Iran for "substantial progress without delay" in clarifying aspects of its nuclear program and in signing an agreement that would let UN inspectors conduct in-depth and comprehensive checks of Tehran's nuclear facilities.

Though he said the Vienna-based IAEA has amassed results from its inspections of the Iranian facilities, he denied reports that experts determined that enriched uranium was found in the samples. He described the reports as "pure speculation at this stage."

"There's a lot of analysis we need to discuss, a lot of results with

Iran," ElBaradei told The Associated Press. "We are not in any way ready to come up with a conclusion on that issue before we discuss all the results with the Iranian authorities."

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the United States expects a "full and factual accounting" of the agency's findings in Iran, hopefully "well in advance" of the next scheduled meeting of the IAEA board in early September.

"We have long said that Iran's clandestine nuclear weapon program represents a serious challenge to regional stability, to the entire international community and to the global nonproliferation regime," he said.

Both Iran and North Korea have been characterized by President Bush as part of an "axis of evil," together with Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

The United States wants the agency to declare Iran in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, making it possible to send the matter to the UN Security Council for possible action. The council has so far declined to take any action on North Korea.

## CBI drops conspiracy charge against Advani

### BJP supports law on temple in Ayodhya

PTI, Lucknow

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has dropped the charge of criminal conspiracy against Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, HRD Minister M M Joshi and other BJP leaders in the Ayodhya demolition case in a special CBI court in Rae Bareilly, counsel for one of the accused said on Saturday.

CBI, the investigating agency, did not find any evidence against the eight accused under Section 120-B of the IPC (criminal conspiracy) and therefore it has dropped the charge against them in the case, the counsel for one of the accused Mrudul Rakesh said.

The charge was dropped in a supplementary chargesheet filed by CBI on May 31 against LK Advani, Joshi, Uma Bharti and five others, he said.

Initially, Section 120-B was not included in the case filed against

the eight accused on the basis of FIRs (in 197 and 198/92) registered on December 6, 1992 after the demolition of Babri Mosque. But during the course of its investigations the CBI had included the section in the combined chargesheet.

"Now with the dropping of criminal conspiracy charge from the CBI supplementary chargesheet against the eight accused, the only charges that remain against them are under Sections 153-A, 153-B (spreading communal frenzy 147, 149 (rioting/ committing a crime) and 505 (creating ill will)).

Meanwhile, the BJP on Saturday supported the Sangh Parivar demand for a legislation to construct Ram temple in Ayodhya but said that its passage would not be possible in Parliament without the support of NDA allies and Congress.

In its much awaited resolution on Ayodhya, adopted on the sec-

ond day of the party's national executive in Raipur, BJP said that even though the common agenda of NDA makes no mention of a legislative initiative to resolve the temple issue, the party was of the view that this alternative should be explored, highly placed party source said.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani and other top party brass were present when the resolution was adopted, the sources said.

The resolution while supporting the legislative option, however, said if it is to be "fruitful", the NDA allies and especially the opposition Congress Party would have to extend their support to it.

While reaffirming the party's view that it favoured construction of a Ram temple at the Ram Janamsthan (disputed site) it said the present arithmetic in Parliament was not in favour of a legislation.

## US holds off military trials of Britons

AFP, Washington

The United States said Friday it will hold off military trials of British and Australian suspected terrorists imprisoned at its base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, pending legal discussions about their fates.

The White House announced the decision as US President George W. Bush began a long weekend at his Texas ranch just a day after discussing the matter here with British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The two leaders have asked legal experts from their respective countries "to discuss a range of options for disposition of the British detainees," Bush spokesman Scott McClellan said in a statement.

"The president and the prime minister are confident that their experts will be able to agree on a solution that satisfies the mutual interests of the US and the UK," said the spokesman.

Britain's attorney general, Lord Peter Goldsmith, will lead a delegation to Washington early next week. The United States and

Australia will hold similar talks next week.

"Pending these discussions, the president has determined not to commence any military commission proceedings against UK nationals," said McClellan.

"Similarly, the United States will not commence military commission proceedings against any Australian nationals."

Britain and Australia have said military tribunals would not be possible under their political and judicial systems.

Blair's spokesman first announced the decision minutes before the prime minister's plane landed in Tokyo on the first leg of an East Asia trip.

"The president listened to the concerns of the prime minister and we believe this is the right way to take this forward," he said.

A total of nine Britons, captured during the US war on terrorism, are among more than 600 detainees from 42 countries being held by the United States under controversial conditions at Guantanamo Bay.



PHOTO: AFP

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, left, and Japanese counterpart Junichiro Koizumi pose prior to their summit talks at a hotel in Hakone, west of Tokyo Saturday. Blair flew in from the United States on Friday night and will leave for South Korea on Sunday afternoon after his three-day visit in Japan.

## Bhutan mulls militia training for all

AFP, New Delhi

Bhutanese parliamentarians have suggested military training for all able-bodied citizens amid fears of conflict with Indian separatists holed up in the south of the Himalayan kingdom, state media reported Saturday.

The Kuensel newspaper reported on its website that numerous members of the national assembly have proposed Swiss-style militia training for Bhutanese so they would be ready to head to sensitive areas or guard vital installations.

It said an assembly representative from the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry recommended a three-month training course for all men and women aged 18 to 50 and offered for the business community to bear the expenses.

"When the country is passing through a crucial time, we cannot wait for a militia to be formed. I suggest that the militia be strengthened," the business delegate was quoted saying.

But Foreign Minister Jigme Thinley was hesitant.

"When it comes to safeguarding our country we have always been ready. There is no need to conscript people for militia. If we are needed, we will all come forward," Thinley said.

At least three ethnic separatist outfits fighting in India keep bases in Bhutan and have ignored repeated warnings by the Buddhist kingdom to leave. The government in Thimphu is reluctant to use its military against the rebels, fearing it would prompt attacks on its own nationals.

## Chinese PM offers support for embattled HK leader

AFP, Beijing

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao expressed support Saturday for Hong Kong's embattled Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa as the territory faces its worst political crisis since its return to China six years ago.

During a meeting with Tung at the Zhongnanhai leadership compound, Wen did not directly respond to questions from reporters on recent huge rallies calling for a controversial security bill to be shelved and for Tung to step down.

"I believe Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-hwa can lead residents out of their current difficulties. I believe Hong Kong people will help to safeguard its interests to maintain its stability," Wen said in remarks carried on Hong Kong television.



PHOTO: AFP

A passenger car of the JR Kyushu's express train rest in a rice field at Isahaya city in Nagasaki city in Japan's southwestern Kyushu Island on Saturday after the train derailed late Friday. More than 60 passengers and railway officials were injured in the accident.