

## 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 Isheid, 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.

Isheid'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.

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

Baghdad was developing weapons of mass destruction.

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.



London front pages adorn 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.

## 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 Bareli, 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 said on Saturday.

The charge was dropped in a supplementary charge sheet 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 (no.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 sources 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.

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.



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

## 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 military 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 tiny 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.



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.