Pull out Iraq troops or face attacks

Top militant tells Japan

REUTERS, Dubai

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, an Islamic militant with suspected ties to al-Qaeda, has demanded that Japan pull its troops out of Iraq or face attacks, according to a statement posted on an IslamistWebsite.

"This message is directed to the Japanese government. Do what the Philippines has done because no one else can help you ... Your fate will be like that of the Americans and others," read the statement by Zarqawi's al Tawhid and Jihad group, posted on a Web site that has carried previous

messages of his.
"We will not tolerate anyone who did not come to help the Iraqi people but to protect the Americans," added

the statement dated Tuesday. Japan has 550 non-combat troops

The warning coincided with the release in Iraq of Filipino truck driver Angelo de la Cruz a day after Manila withdrew its small contingent of troops a month early in response to demands from kidnappers who had threatened to behead him. Zarqawi also warned Muslim and

Arab states against sending troops to Iraq or supporting the U.S.-led coalition and Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's government. He issued the same warning to Arab and Muslim companies operating in Iraq.

This message is especially directed to Pakistan, Jordan, Turkey Iran, Gulf Arab and Middle East states to Indonesia, Malaysia and all Muslim countries ... We warn you for the last time that we will strike with an iron fist nyone who backs the Americans and awi and his gang," it said.

Jordanian-born Zarqawi has offered a reward of \$282,000 (179,700 pounds) this week for the killing of Iraq's premier who he described in a atement as an "American agent".

He also urged Arab and Muslim ldiers to reject orders to serve in Iraq

if their governments ask them.
"To the soldiers of Arab and Muslim states we advise you to revolt if you are sent to Iraq. If you do not comply then olumns of cars rigged with explosives ill be awaiting you. The list of people ready to become martyrs is full and will not deplete, God willing," Zarqawi said in his statement.

The Jordanian-born militant's group has claimed deadly suicide bombings, assassinations of Iraqi officials and the kidnapping, behead-ing and killings of a Bulgarian, South Korean and American hostage.

At least 60 people have been kidnapped in Iraq and reported freed since April.

Business strike

FROM PAGE 1 on Monday made some decisions to help the traders, the shop owners should not stick to the strike.

"The FBCCI would further negotiate with the NBR to resolve the issues. In running our businesses, we have already been facing hartals and other disruptions from the political parties too often. It therefore is unfortunate if businesspeople themselves enforce strike at a time when most of their demands are already met and we are still in negotiation," Mintoo said.

The BSOP at a press conference Monday called a daylong strike for today in Dhaka and a half-day one in Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna

Zia's instructions, the NBR on Monday withdrew the arrest power vested with Vat inspectors, while retaining that of assistant commis-

Following protest from businesses, the NBR at the meeting with the FBCCI Monday also exempted importers with outstanding VAT from

paying the arrears at one go.
The NBR also decided to allow the importers to clear their goods seized at ports upon payment of 30 percent of the arrears. The rest 70 percent of the arrears could be paid in installments

by March 31 next year. The NBR said the country's importers owe Tk 400 crore in VAT to

extended the deadline for selfassessed VAT return by retail-level taxpayers to August 31 this year from July 31, considering the current flood

Talking to The Daily Star last night BSOP Convenor M Helal Uddin said the NBR negotiations with the FBCCI taskforce had failed to meet their core demands to stop collection of 1.5percent VAT at import level and introduction of package system for VAT paymentatretaillevel.

So, we have decided to go ahead with the strike programme. We appreciate the prime minister's instructions to curtail the arrest power of VAT inspectors and hope she will also fulfil the rest of our reasonable demands,"

However, President of Bangladesh Dokan Malik Samity (shop owners association of Bangladesh) Amir Hossain Khan said, "Our association has nothing to do with the strike. It is entirely a programme of the BSOF which involves importers, indentors assemblers, retailers, wholesalers and others."

The minimum annual VAT for shops in the capital is Tk 4,200 and an additional 15 percent for higher income. The FBCCI gave a list of only 7.500 shops of the city, while the shop owners' organisation estimate there are 200,000 shops.

The government introduced VAT in 1991 for different businesses, which the national exchequer. It also in 1997 was extended to retail level.

about 100 other villagers became ill

with the waterborne disease. Locals

found the bodies, one covered with

funeral clothes, floating in flood-

food controller of Gowainghat, who

was missing in a boat-capsize on

Thousands of embankment sabotage

victims in Dhunat upazila in Bogra did

not get any relief since the July 14

officials distributed 44 tonnes of rice

among the people in Bhandarbari and

The police arrested Goshaibari

Union Parishad (UP) member Shah

Jalal on Tuesday for his alleged roles in

misappropriation of relief.

Although WDB officials filed a

general diary with Dhunat Police

Station accusing unnamed saboteurs

of cutting the dam, local lawmaker

Golam Mohammad Siraj accused

some newspapers of publishing 'false'

reports linking some people to the

said: At least 13 people drowned in floodwaters in five upazilas in the

district in a week. All roads including

Modhumoti erosion has turned

The floods in Barisal, Bhola and

Our Moulvibazar correspondent

Patuakhali worsened in the last 24

Harirampur upazila, our Manikganj

1,31,648 hectares were damaged and

diarrhoea and other waterborne

diseases have broken out in the areas

Our Pabna correspondent

reported that 40 unions in eight

upazilas went under water in the last

24 hours. Officials said the floods

damaged 6,500 houses and parts of

adds: Three more people have

drowned in floodwaters since Sunday

as the flood situation deteriorated in

A correspondent from Sherpur

affecting about 300 people.

35,000 houses.

About 62,000 houses and crops on

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent

Goshaibari, still under water.

The local administration said

Sunday, was retrieved on Monday.

The body of Abdur Rashid, upazila

Our Bogra correspondent reports:

Sylhet airport remains

FROM PAGE 1 Some contingents from Jalalabad Cantonment joined the relief operation in Chhatak upazila and some more from Comilla Cantonment were on the way to Sylhet to join them to carry out relief work in Companyganj, Kanaighat, Gowainghat and Sadar upazilas in Sylhet.

Rail links between Sylhet and other districts remain snapped since Monday night as the rail stations went underknee-deep water.

Train service up to Kulaura junction was on and all intercity and express trains in and out of Dhaka and Chittagong are now running up to Kulaura

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre said the floods in the north and northeast are likely to worsen as different rivers surged because of downpour twinned with

upstream overspills Hundreds of people living on Rajshahi shoals started moving to town or other places for safety as the surging Padma flooded a vast tract of lowlands and shoals.

Floodwaters inundated an exploratory gas field of state-run Bapex at Srikail in Muradnagar upazila in Comilla, seriously damaging the

drilling equipment. Officials said the gas structure would not be affected by the waters,

the Dhaka-Agartala Road have gone underfloodwater. without giving details on the extent of damage to the costly rig and other serious leaving 1,500 people homeless and threatening to displace about drilling machinery.

Thousands of people in the floodhit districts are living with a little or no food and relief is yet to reach them.

Torrential rains added to their woes. hours, our Barisal correspondent said. Rushing waters blasted eight holes in the 10-kilometere DND (Dhakareported that all six upazilas in the Narayanganj-Demra) flood control embankment on Monday, as driving district are submerged and the water level in the rivers is going up.
The floods hit 58 of 65 unions in rains and upstream overspills sent most rivers around the capital surging Manikganj and all 13 unions in above the danger mark.

The Water Development Board (WDB), Wasa and Roads and Highways officials along with locals plugged the holes at Bamoil, Konapara, Deilla, Matuail and Karim **Jute Mill points**

DEATHBYWATER

According to news dispatches from the flood-ravaged districts, at least 23 more people died in the last one week in different places, taking the death toll to 93 since the beginning of monsoon, blamed for the deluge in two other South Asian countries India and

Papiya, 3, Fatema, 5, and Osman Ali, 55, of Agatalukandi village in Sylhet died of diarrhoea yesterday and

Sarbahara leader held, 7 surrender after gunfight with police

UNB, Rajshahi

A leader of the outlawed sarbahara Party was arrested after gunfight with police at Pochamaria village in Charghat upazila in the early hours

Jalal, injured with bullets in the leg, was arrested with a loaded pistol. After his arrest, seven operatives of the underground outfit named Gafur, Mobin, Rabiul, Fazal, Salam, Khaleq and Kader surrendered, while others fled away, police

Tipped-off, police surrounded the house of one Abdus Salam at the village at 3:00am where the Sarbahara men were holding a

Sensing presence of the police, the outlaws opened fire. Police returned fire, leading to a shootout between the two sides for half an

Pakistan vows to pursue peace with India

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's new prime minister has vowed to pursue peace with rival India and resolve their decades-old dispute over Kashmir, at the heart of hostilities between the nucleararmed South Asian neighbours.

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, who became prime minister last month for an interim period only, told a seven-nation regional meeting of foreign ministers yesterday that the resumption of dialogue between Pakistan and India augured well.

Pakistani and Indian diplomats have had informal talks on the sidelines of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) economic forum being held in Islamabad.

"I want to assure all members of Saarc and indeed the world that Pakistan is committed to pursuing peace with India," Hussain said.

"I am happy to report that with the vision and the will Pakistan has under the leadership of President (Pervez) Musharraf, we have embarked upon a meaningful effort to resolve all differences and disputes with India including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir."

Despite positive official state

ments, there is little tangible sign of how India and Pakistan intend to bridge their differences over Kashmir, which they both claim.

Tens of thousands of people have died in a 15-year rebellion in Indian Kashmir that New Delhi blames on Pakistani militants but which Islamabad says is a struggle against Indian rule in the Muslim-majority

In the latest violence, suspected Muslim insurgents killed a retired soldier and four members of his family, including his five-year-old son, on Tuesday.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) said everyone it interviewed in a recent mission to Pakistan-controlled Kashmir called for a greater say for Kashmiris in the peace dialogue, an idea Pakistan supports but India opposes for the time being.

"We also found a convergence amongst all shades of Kashmiris that there should be an intra-Kashmir dialogue," HRCP's chairman Tahir Mohammad Khan told a news conference after the four-day mission, which concluded on Monday.

A total of around 14 million people live in the whole of Kashmir. Pakistani Foreign Minister

Khursheed Mehmood Kasuri said peace with India was key to unlocking the region's economic potential. The Saarc countries, with a popu-

lation of around 1.4 billion, form one of the world's poorest regions. Besides India and Pakistan, the group includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Bandarban

FROM PAGE 12 wounded persons were undergoing treatment, he added.

Locals said some concrete buildings were partially damaged due to the slide in Balaghat hill in Bandarban.

Met office recorded 102ml of rain in Bandarban from Monday night to Tuesday afternoon.

Drive next month

FROM PAGE 1 Star more than 500 shops in the Old Dhaka were recently fined Tk 20,000 to Tk 30,000 for not making the VAT

registration as well as defaulting on VAT payments for the last fiscal. He said a process is currently underway to register the remaining 150,000 shops in the capital and district officials across the country will start the same process next month to bring businesses in their

respective districts under the VAT A monitoring cell to supervise strict enforcement of the drive will also be set up under the aegis of the finance ministry headed by State Minister for Finance Shah M Abul Hussain. "The state minister will personally monitor the day to day operations of the drive," the NBR high official said.

Auditor general's

As the auditor general's office launched departmental action against the officer, the Public Accounts Committee of the Jatiya Sangsad did not discuss the issue in

detailyesterday.

The auditor general lodged an appeal with the parliamentary body on July 7 seeking its protection against violation of constitutional rights of his office by the railway

Asif has already sent a letter to Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman expressing his concern over the issue The office of the auditor general

has prepared a list of alleged corrup-

tion by Rokeya who is now deputy comptroller and auditor general Rokeya violated the constitution as she herself disposed of four audit reports ignoring the approval of the

Public Accounts Committee and the

auditor general, the allegations say.

The constitution has empowered the parliamentary body to dispose of all pending audit objections, but Rokeya as the director general of post and telecommunications (audit) exercised their power without legal Rokeva as the senior finance

controller (army) released 13 officials for not rebating vat amounting to Tk 66 lakh to contractors.

As the additional director general of the railway division, she gave approval for the purchase of two vehicles violating her legal jurisdic-On the non-cooperation of the

ADG of the railway division, Communications Secretary Shafique Islam told the meeting that they had nothing to do with the officer. "We don't have administrative control over officials coming from

the audit cadre," a meeting source quoted the secretary as saying.
The parliamentary body urged all ministries to cooperate with the auditor general's office and give

them access to necessary docu-"The committee will send its resolution to all ministries asking for cooperation to the auditor general's office," Advocate Harun Al Rashid, chairman of the committee, told The

The committee also discussed some audit objections to the railway

Tigers' trial by India

FROM PAGE 1 West Indies in the Caribbean last

The Tigers' management however surprised many by resting pace spearhead Tapash Baisya and deciding to give Tareq Aziz the new ball along with left-arm spinner Abdur

"Don't get surprised if we do something different tomorrow. Tareq will open the attack and I won't hesitate to give Razzak a chance to bowl at the other end inside the first ten overs," said Bangladesh captain Habibul Bashar on his first-choice Razzak was on Sunday reported

by match referee Roshan Mahanama for a suspect action against Pakistan. But Bashar was unperturbed by the controversy surrounding the 22-"I've told him to go on with his

normal style of bowling. If he changes his action now, he will never know what was wrong. "Our plan remains the same. We can't go for runs early on these wickets. So we will try to keep wickets intact and slog later," said the Bangladesh captain adding that Javed's loss was a big blow for the

"These things can happen. He was in form but now we'll have to do

Javed scored back-to-back halfcenturies before damaging a hamstring against Pakistan on Saturday.

However, neither Bashar nor coach Day Whatmore wanted to explain why Tapash needed a break ahead of such an important match.

"We are at a stage where we are able to have a look at the other boys. Playing against India is a good chance to give others a go," said the Sri Lankan-born Australian coach. The inclusion of left-handed

Manzarul not only means the team will have four orthodox left-arm spinners, there will also be a left-right combination at the top of the India on the other hand will be

missing their fast bowler Zaheer

Khan due to injury but Whatmore thinks his absence will not make much difference in the end. They (India) have been winning matches without him. They are a hard to team to beat but they have lost to Sri Lanka. Still, they are very

strong on these types of surfaces," he

BANGLADESH: Mohammad Ashraful, Manzarul Islam, Habibul Bashar, Rajin Saleh, Alok Kapali, Faisal Hossain, Khaled Mashud, Mohammad Rafique, Khaled Mahmud, Abdur Razzak and Tareq

Saarc FMs talk

confrontation that almost erupted into their fourth war.

"Pakistan has under the leadership of President Musharraf embarked on making meaningful efforts to overcome all differences and disputes with India including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir, Shujaat said.

Let us resolve that Saarc must become a symbol of peace and progress, not only to ensure stability in South Asia but to win the hearts and minds of the people of this region."

Exploratory talks among senior officials since the January summit have brought new momentum to the normally sluggish 19-year old forum, which also groups Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

Saarc has started to exude new confidence and its international profile has enhanced," Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri said in his opening address.

The seven nations represent onefifth of humanity and one of the world's poorest regions.

Tensions between South Asia's giants India and Pakistan have been blamed for crippling trade and development among South Asia's poverty-stricken 1.4 billion people, who earn an average 450 dollars a

The two-day meeting is focussed on reducing poverty by freeing up trade, sharing energy, promoting investment and jointly developing information technology and tele-

communications. The foreign ministers will also push forward a free trade agreement, under which barriers will start being broken down from January

"We are encouraged by the efforts that are being made to operationalise the South Asia Free Trade Area (Safta)," Kasuri said.

"The huge market potential of South Asia would bring benefits to all member states, and would also enable us to attract investments and help accelerate our economic

Most attention will be on sideline talks between Kasuri and his Indian

SP Baten

FROM PAGE 12 Kamruzzaman, the state minister's personal secretary, lodged a case with Ramna police the same night accusing Baten of offering bribe to Babar at his secretariat office.

Dr Kamal Hossain and Barrister Sara Hossain moved for SP Baten in

hiatus and the 2002 counterpart Natwar Singh today

Saarc Award Meanwhile, South Asian foreign ministers at a meeting in Islamabad vesteday introduced Saarc Award and unanimously decided to confer the first one on late president Ziaur Rahman.

The Council of Ministers took the decision on the first day of a two-day meeting that began in the Pakistan capital to review progress on various agenda of the seven-nation group-

"This is a mark of recognition of the concept of institutionalised regional cooperation in South Asia as envisioned by former president Zia," Director General of External Publicity Zahirul Huq told the UNB over phone in the evening, quoting a essage from Islamabad.

Zia was assassinated in 1980. The posthumous award will be formally conferred during the 13th Saarc summit in Dhaka in January next year, Hug said.

Dhaka fringe people

FROM PAGE 1
premises. The elderly couple had to eave their house at Manda Jaullapara as water level rose fast Monday night and yesterday morning. They waded through waist-deep water and came to the three-storied school for shelter only to be asked by the gatekeeper to go away.

The courtyard of the schools also went under knee-deep water and students of the high school were still attending classes.

Headmaster of the primary school Mohammad Salauddin said they have already provided shelter to about 20 flood-hit families from Manda area. About 50 more families arrived soon at the school gate with their belongings for shelter.

know that flood-hit people were

and we are ready for it. The school

Abdur Rashid, headmaster of the high school, was sitting in his room with Chairman of Manda Union Parishad (UP) Hasan Sayeed Tahen. "We have not yet given shelter to flood victims in our school but we shall have to do it soon," said the headmaster. The UP chairman said he did not tioner, agreed to Kamal's argument,

denied shelter in the school and tion, an investigation should be asked the school authorities to open up the gates for them. A number of families immediately started occupying various rooms. We received a letter from the district administration recently asking us to prepare for the flood,

can accommodate about 10,000 There are about 2,00,000 flood victims in Manda area only, he mentioned.

Injuries led

FROM PAGE 1
A three-member forensic team of Dr Mohammad Salman, Dr Siddiqui Rahman and Dr Shamsul Alam of Gazipur Sadar Hospital submitted the report to Gazipur Civil Surgeon vesterday.

The repot on the death at Tongi Hospital said shock in the internal organs by external injuries caused cardiac arrest to claim his life.

The autopsy report, sent to the Superintendent of Police in Gazipur Atikul Islam in the day, matched with the inquest carried out by Magistrate AKM Sohel on Friday that said Sumon's body wore multiple injury marks all over. Sumon's family claimed he was

subjected to 'inhuman torture' in the Rab custody and died a couple of hours after arrest at his house. Rab, however, claimed he was

nabbed during extortion of protection money in front of a hotel. Both Atikul and Officer-in-Charge of Tongi Police Station Chowdhury Tarikul Islam denied

receiving the report. The main opposition Awami League and its front organisations staged a procession and a rally in Natun Bazar in the morning to

protest Sumon's death. AL wants

FROM PAGE 12 other", Hamid added. He said the dam was protecting people in Dhunat, Sariakandi and Kazipur areas from flood. Abdul Hamid who visited the area recently told the reporters that such incidents will continue to occur if the government fails to punish the criminals who left thousands of

people flood affected. He also expressed his grave concern over the loss of lives, destruction of property and the deteriorating flood situations of many districts.

He said when people in the flood-hit areas are passing their days in misery, the government seems to be reluctant to stand beside the help-

ss people.

Abdul Hamid also described a minister's observation as "foolish" that claimed there was no flood and the newspapers were publishing pictures of flood that occurred

AL leaders Abdul Mannan, Ashim

Kumar Ukil and BM Mozammel

Haque were also present at the press

conference. Man arrested

FROM PAGE 1
Of them, Minar died at Kushtia General Hospital on July 11, sources

Rab officials handed over Anwar and Jumman to police soon after Minar's death. Both were undergoing treatment at the same hospital, police added. Families of Jumman and Minar

claimed that the crackdown force tortured them in a Rab camp and both died due to torture. In another incident in Meherpur Sadar upazila in Kushtia, unknown

criminals abducted a college student on Sunday, locals said. Khalequzzaman Manik, a roommate, told police that a gang picked up Humayan Kabir Pintu, 23, second year honours student of chemistry at Kushtia Government University College, sometime after

2:30pm. A man called Pintu's elder brother Sangram Hossain, an employee of Meherpur Municipality, over his cell phone on Monday and demanded Tk 5 lakh

Sangram filed a case with Kushtia Sadar Police Station.

Army officer

FROM PAGE 1

gave the exemption orders on a petition by Acting Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of the Armed Forces Division at the Prime Minister's Office Brigadier General Illias Iftekhar Rasul

The army officer and three other top government officials are facing contempt charges for violating the court order. However, Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, Home Secretary Omar Farooque and Defence Secretary KM Ehsanul Huq will appear in court.

On Monday, the army officer went to the High Court and signed court documents before an affidavit

commissioner. In the petition, the army officer prayed for exemption from initial personal appearance in court. He said, "... [I] diligently obeyed the (directive) of the court in letter and spirit and the question of disobedience to (court's) orders was far from [my] mind and I [reiterate] [my] highest respect to the court."

Dr Kamal Hossain, lawyer for BDB candidate Abdul Mannan who filed the contempt petition, opposed the move and told the bench the constitution has given no-one but the president immunity from appearing in court. TH Khan, lawyer of the peti-

initiated before the court appearance of the respondents in question. He cited articles 102 and 108 of the constitution and contended the civil court has no scope to try army men who are governed by the Army Act and Rules.

but said according to the constitu-

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam and Advocate MK Rahman also assisted Dr Kamal and Advocate Khandakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed also moved for the petitioner.

Filipino, Egyptian

Egyptian driver Mohammed al-Gharabawi was freed after the Saudi firm he worked for met kidnappers' demands by promising to stop doingwork in Iraq.

"In the beginning, in the first few days, I was threatened," Gharabawi said at the Egyptian embassy in Baghdad late on Monday. "It was a real threat to me; they were shouting at me and pushing me with guns." A group led by Zarqawi seized

two Bulgarians earlier this month and sent video footage to Al Jazeera television showing one of them being beheaded. Hopes that the second is alive are fading. A Turk may also have been taken

hostage in Iraq, colleagues said Zarqawi, whose group has also claimed responsibility for many of the deadliest bombings in Iraq, is the US military's prime target in the country, with a \$25 million price on

his head. VETERINARIANS

Four veterinarians were killed and three wounded when a roadside bomb exploded yesterday in the path of their bus near the flashpoint town of Baguba, northeast of Baghdad, a hospital official said.

The minibus, which was trans-

porting nine veterinary surgeons, hit the bomb in Ghalabia, 20 km west of Baquba, said Ali Ibrahim, the head of the nearby Al-Khalis hospi-

Three of the vets died on the spot and another en route to a hospital in

two others were in serious condition and a fourth was only slightly hurt. Faycal Yassin, 23, one of those who survived, said two Iraqi

Baquba, Ibrahim said, adding that

national guard vehicles overtook them just prior to the explosion and may have been the intended target. Baquba, 60km from Baghdad, is

an area renowned for anti-US sentiment and is a hotbed of violence against the new Iraqi security ser-

COUNCILMEMBER The Iraqi council member running for governor in the southern port city of Basra was killed as he left for work last morning, along with his driver and bodyguard, an Iraqi

official said. Hazim al-Aynachi was pulling out of his driveway when gunmen opened fire on his car. Another rson was injured, said council head Abdul Bari Faiyek.

Faiyek blamed the killing on opposition to elections for a local governor which were due to occur Tuesday, but were delayed in response to the shooting.

bers nominated to the post," Faiyek said, adding that another councilman escaped an assassination attempt on Monday. The shooting was the latest salvo by insurgents determined to under-

mine the country's post war recon-

(Reuters, AFP and AP)

Many threats have been

directed to the eight council mem-

Palestinian PM

FROM PAGE 12

Arafat had rejected Qurie's resignation as the former guerrilla leader struggled to defuse the sharpest challenge to his authority since he returned from exile a decade ago. Ourie, a veteran moderate, had

said on Saturday he was quitting

over chaos in Gaza. After a cabinet meeting on Monday, he pressed Arafat for security reforms and said his resignation would stand until Arafat gave him a written response. Since being appointed by Arafat

in November, Qurie has chafed at

Arafat's unwillingness to cede secu-AP adds: Israeli missiles twice struck a Gaza militants' safe house, wounding five, a spokesman for a Palestinian group said, the first Israeli airstrikes in Gaza since internal turmoil broke out over the week-

Meanwhile, Israel's moderate Labor Party on Monday demanded legislation to back up Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Gaza pullout plan as part of its price for shoring up his shaky government.

The two airstrikes, one on Monday afternoon and the second house in the Shati refugee camp next to Gaza City on the Mediterranean beach, said witnesses and a spokesman for the Popular Resistance

The spokesman, Abu Abir, said

the house was used by Abed Quka,

the group's leader in northern Gaza.

Committee.

shops.

He was wounded in the first attack. The Israeli military declined to comment on either air strike. During four years of conflict, Israeli helicopters have targeted dozens of Palestinian buildings and vehicles in Gaza, aiming for militant leaders, headquarters and weapons work-

In other violence Monday, Israeli soldiers shot and killed a 17-yearold Palestinian in a refugee camp next to the West Bank city of Nablus at nightfall. Palestinians said he was throwing rocks at soldiers. The Israeli military said he was holding a The Popular Resistance

Committee is an umbrella group of

militants who left other Palestinian

factions. Its militants do not answer

to outside authorities and often carry out attacks against their Some believe the group was responsible for killing of three American security guards in a diplomatic convoy in the northern Gaza Strip last October. No arrests have been made in the bombing, and the US government has expressed

dissatisfaction with the Palestinian

The airstrike came as Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat moved to defuse three days of tension and violence over his appointment of a relative, Moussa Arafat, as head of security in

investigation.

On Monday, Arafat reinstated the officer his relative replaced Abdel Razek al-Majaide but retained Moussa Arafat in a powerful position, satisfying some of his critics but infuriating others. Palestinian Prime Minister-Ahmed Qureia said Monday he is intent on resigning but made no

said. "It is time to reactivate all our security branches based on the correct principles. It is now time to appoint the right man to the right position. Also Monday, Arafat told a closed door meeting Israel was behind the Gaza unrest and that it paid \$9

move to leave office. He told report-

ers that in a phone call to Arafat, he

undermine his position there, Palestinian officials said. The officials said he offered no evidence to support the claim.

million to anti-Arafat activists to

An Israeli official ridiculed the "Every time Arafat gets into trouble he blames Israel," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "This reminds me of the time he said Israel was using ura-

nium enriched weapons against

Palestinians." Tension in Gaza has also been heightened by Sharon's plan to pull Israeli forces and settlers out of the seaside territory by the end of next year a "unilateral disengagement" plan that has rival Palestinian groups jockeying for position. However, Sharon is having his

is approaching opposition parties to join his coalition, to restore stability. In a second day of talks with Sharon's team, Labor Party representatives said Monday they want the parliament to quickly approve compensation for settlers who are evacuated a sign that Sharon is serious about implementing the

own problems over the pullout plan.

He lost his parliamentary majority

because of opposition in his own

government to the proposal. Now he

most of the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for peace with the Palestinians a position opposed by many members of Sharon's own Likud Party. On Monday, a gunman shot and killed a district court judge in a Tel

Aviv suburb, police said. Israel's

justice minister said it was the first

such killing in Israel's history.

Labour favors giving up all or

damaged. The government has opened 167 shelters for flood victims, the source

Floods so far have completely damaged standing crops on 2.65 lakh acres of land while partially affected those on another 4.7 lakh acres of land. According to the agriculture ministry, the worst affected

plants on 100 acres of land for distributing among the farmers after recession of the floodwaters.

Four government organisations --Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARRI) Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) and Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) would develop and distribute the Amon plants. Sylhet, Sirajganj, Jamalpur,

Chandpur, Hobiganj, Sunamganj,

Food crisis planning to up the area to 200 acres

current floods and the number of livestock killed was 6,277. A total of 704 bridges and culverts were badly

were the early Amon plants, sugarcane, jute and vegetable plants. The Ministry of Agriculture has got an approval from the finance ministry to develop late Amon

Agriculture ministry, however, is

as the flood situation across the country continues to deteriorate.

Sherpur Manikganj, Tangail,

Netrakona, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria, Faridpur, Rajbari, Madaripur Mymensingh, Shariatpur, Pabna, Barisal and Narayanganj are the districts that have so far received government allocations.

cities and the district towns. Acting on Prime Minister Khaleda