

# Iran starts uranium tests for nuclear centrifuges

## Tehran will pursue nuke plan, says Khatami

REUTERS, AP, Vienna/ Tehran

Iran has begun tests on a facility that will produce a large amount of material for nuclear centrifuges, a top Iranian nuclear official said yesterday.

Gholamreza Aghazadeh, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, told reporters in Vienna Iran had begun converting 37 tons of raw uranium into material which is fuel for nuclear centrifuges -- the machines that enrich uranium.

One nuclear expert has said that, if enriched, that would be enough material for five nuclear weapons.

"Some of the amount of the 37 tons has been used. The tests have been successful but these tests have to be continued using the rest of the material," said Aghazadeh, who is attending a general confer-

ence of the Vienna-based UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iran had told the IAEA a few weeks ago it intended to run the tests. However, the announcement came after the IAEA board of governors passed a resolution on Saturday calling on Iran to halt all activities linked to uranium enrichment.

AP adds: President Mohammad Khatami said yesterday that Iran will continue its suspect nuclear programme even if that means an end to UN oversight.

"We've made our choice: yes to peaceful nuclear technology, no to atomic weapons," Khatami told a military parade in Tehran.

"We will continue along our path even if it leads to an end to international supervision" of our nuclear

activities, he said.

Iran's uranium enrichment program has been the focus of increased world concern because of suspicions Tehran may not be telling the truth when it says it is interested in the technology only to generate power.

Such suspicions are fed by 18 years of clandestine nuclear activities that were revealed only two years ago, including experiments with possible weapons applications; and some nuclear questions that remain unanswered.

A resolution passed unanimously Saturday by the governing board of the UN nuclear monitoring agency demanded for the first time that Iran freeze all work on uranium enrichment and answer all questions about its nuclear activities within two months.

# Bush scraps trade embargo on Libya

REUTERS, New York

President Bush Monday formally ended the broad US trade embargo on Libya to reward it for giving up weapons of mass destruction but left in place some US terrorism-related sanctions.

The president's action is partly symbolic because it simply makes permanent his April decision to suspend most commercial sanctions and allow US firms to invest in Libya and buy its oil for the first time since 1986.

But the moves, which take effect on Tuesday, will also end remaining restrictions on US-Libyan aviation and the State Department said they will unblock about \$1.3 billion in frozen Libyan and other assets -- steps Bush did not take in April.

# Pakistan tightens US mission's security after terror threats

AFP, Karachi

Pakistani authorities tightened security around the US consulate and other American interests in Karachi yesterday following information about a possible attack by a woman suicide bomber of Central Asian origin, officials said.

"We have increased women security staff after a request from the US authorities over a possible terrorist attack," Tariq Jamil, police chief of the southern city, told AFP.

"Security around other American interests has also been stepped up.

"Fresh security measures are particularly targeted towards women visitors, approaching the consulate for visa or other information," Jamil said.

# Syria starts redeploying forces in Lebanon

REUTERS, Beirut

Syria began redeploying around 3,000 troops from the outskirts of Beirut toward the eastern Syrian-Lebanese border yesterday in an apparent attempt to ease US-led international pressure over its influence on Lebanon.

Lebanese sources said once completed, the two-stage redeployment would leave Syria's troops concentrated in a smaller area of Lebanon and largely restrict them to the strategic eastern Bekaa Valley near the border.

The redeployment followed mounting US-led international pressure on Syria to withdraw its 17,000 troops from Lebanon and stop interfering in its neighbor's internal affairs.

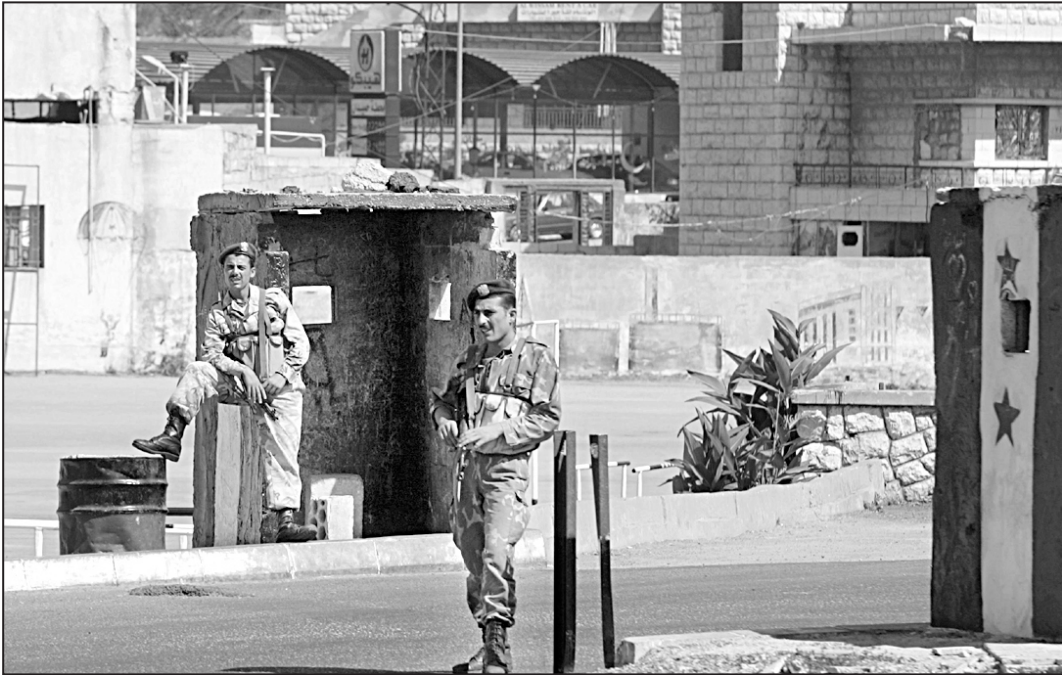
But it is unlikely to loosen Syria's political grip over Lebanon where its allies remain entrenched in the Lebanese government and state bodies.

It was not immediately clear how many Syrian troops would remain in the Bekaa Valley and whether others would return home but security sources said around 3,000 soldiers would be relocating from positions around the capital.

Lebanese and Syrian officials have recently said that any redeployment would be the latest in a series of similar moves that almost halved the number of Syrian forces in Lebanon.

Lebanese President Emile Lahoud said the redeployment, the fourth in recent years, was in line with the 1989 Taif Accord which ended the Lebanese 1975-90 civil war and bilateral agreements.

"It aims at consolidating stability and security in Lebanon," he said



Two Syrian soldiers stand guard yesterday in front of their post in the Lebanese village of Aley in the mountains southeast of Beirut. Syria started redeploying about 3,000 troops in Lebanon, with most of them due to return home, according to a high-ranking Lebanese army official.

after talks with Syria's Defence Minister Hasan Turkmani and top officers.

But analysts said the timing was aimed at weathering the international storm and an attempt by Beirut and Damascus to show they were cooperating with the United Nations.

"There is no doubt that the international pressure, the latest tool of which is resolution 1559, has made things take a different course in

Lebanon," Jibran Tweini, editor of Lebanon's An Nahar newspaper, told Reuters.

"The withdrawal is an attempt to please the international community and an attempt to pre-empt Annan's report so that it doesn't take things further than the resolution," he said.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is due to report to the Security Council on compliance with the resolution by Oct. 2.

The United States and France

drafted Security Council Resolution 1559 earlier this month after Syria asked top officials in Lebanon to extend the mandate of its close ally Lahoud despite local opposition.

The Lebanese parliament brushed aside the resolution, which also called for foreign armies to leave Lebanon, and amended the constitution to allow Lahoud to serve three more years.

# US hostage beheaded

## Another American & Briton face death, 18 Iraqi guardsmen freed

REUTERS, AFP, Baghdad

Militants led by Washington's top foe in Iraq said they would kill an American and a Briton unless their demands were met, a day after they released footage showing them severing the head of another US hostage.

The video footage shows US contractor Eugene Armstrong sitting blindfolded on the floor in an orange jumpsuit, with black-clad hooded gunmen standing behind him. Armstrong rocks back and forth as a militant reads a statement yesterday.

Then one of the men grabs him and saws off his head with a knife.

Armstrong was seized in Baghdad on Thursday along with fellow American Jack Hensley and Briton Kenneth Bigley.

President Bush, in comments made before the release of the video on an Islamist Web site on Monday, said the United States

would not negotiate and would stay on the offensive.

"They will behead people in order to shake our will. These people are ideologues of hatred," Bush told a campaign rally.

"You cannot negotiate with these people," he said. "We will stay on the offensive against them."

Negotiations to save the two hostages are made even more unlikely by the very nature of the demands by the Tawhid and Jihad group led by al-Qaeda ally Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The group said in the video of Armstrong's killing it would behead the other two hostages within 24 hours unless female inmates were released from the Abu Ghraib and Umm Qasr jails.

The US military says it does not hold any female prisoners in either of those two jails, and that only two women are in US detention in Iraq. The two, dubbed "Mrs Anthrax" and "Dr Germ" by US forces, are

accused of working on Saddam Hussein's weapons programs and held at a secret high-security camp.

Washington says Zarqawi, a Jordanian, is its number one enemy in Iraq. His group has claimed responsibility for most of the bloodiest suicide attacks in Iraq since Saddam was overthrown. Zarqawi's group also beheaded US telecoms engineer Nicholas Berg in May and South Korean driver Kim Sun-il in June.

Eighteen Iraqi national guardsmen, threatened with death over the weekend in retaliation for the arrest of a top lieutenant of Shiite radical leader Moqtada Sadr, were freed Monday, a Sadr aide told AFP.

"All 18 have been freed at the request of Sayed Moqtada Sadr," said the headline cleric's representative Naim al-Qaabi.

The national guardsmen were released at 5 pm (1100 GMT) in the radicals' Baghdad bastion of Sadr City, Qaabi said.

# Reform panel to push for UNSC expansion

AFP, Washington

A high-level group appointed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to reform the world body is expected to push for the Security Council's expansion based on regional groupings, a panel member said.

It would also recommend a set criteria be used for any military action in interstate and intrastate conflicts, to avert situations such as the controversial US-led military invasion of Iraq.

Gareth Evans, a former Australian Foreign Minister and part of the 16-member panel, told reporters Monday after attending a forum in Washington that the group was discussing a proposal "which would see an additional nine or so members of the Security Council."

The new members would be divided into four-year renewable terms and two-year terms as at present, with some allocation of those seats to a revised set of regional groupings.

The system would be formulated in such a way that would make it possible for the major aspirants for permanent membership of the Security Council to play a much more regular role, Evans said.

At present, the five permanent members -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States -- are supplemented by 10 other nations which are elected to the council for two-year terms.

Many have criticised the Security Council's composition, which they say reflects the political configuration of the world in 1945, not the 21st century.

Brazil, Germany, India and Japan have launched a unified campaign for all four nations to be awarded permanent status.

Japan, the world's second most developed economy, pays more money into the UN coffers than any nation except the United States. India is the world's largest democracy, Germany is a European heavy-weight, while Brazil can make a strong case to represent South America.

"I mean Japan and India each have to wait six, seven years between successive Security Council appearances, that is manifestly not a reflection of the world as it now is," said Evans, President of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, an independent group working to prevent and resolve conflicts.

He said that ideally, the proposed nine or so members would have similar status to the existing permanent five "but what we have to contemplate is that the ideal may not be deliverable any more than it has been deliverable over the last 15 years of negotiations."

He expected some kind of compromise "which is not supposed to be the final answer to the problem of Security Council composition and

legitimacy but which would be seen as significantly better off than what we have at the moment."

On the question of military force, the disposition of the panel is that the rules are very clearly in the UN Charter for such action -- either self defence properly defined or with the authorization of the Security Council, he said.

"The main emphasis of the panel I think will be on trying to (establish) a criteria for making these judgements which would give us a better chance of achieving consensus in the future," he said.

The kind of criteria the panel has in mind for military action is: seriousness of the threat and evidence to justify that, and action as a last resort until options have been properly explored.

The panel, chaired by former Thai Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, is due to report to Annan by December.

The group has only just begun to wrestle with detailed drafting language after meeting as a group on four occasions so far to work through the issues, and is scheduled to meet at least twice more before the deadline, Evans said.

Evans said Annan had made clear he wanted the emphasis to be on the "operationally deliverable rather than the intellectually or emotionally attractive (though he may not have put it in quite these terms)."



PHOTO: AFP

Peace activists hold placards bearing peace messages during a peace rally to mark the 2004 UN International World Peace Day in Kathmandu yesterday. Nepalese peace activists gathered to call for peace in the Himalayan kingdom which has been under the grip of Maoist insurgents fighting for a communist republic since 1996 and the uprising has so far claimed around 10,000 lives.

# MUSHARRAF TELLS US Muslims feel targetted

AFP, New York

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf urged the United States Monday to overcome Muslim perceptions of a Western anti-Islamic bias by helping resolve global political disputes, especially in the Middle East.

Speaking at a dinner hosted by the US Chamber of Commerce in New York, Musharraf also said he remained undecided as to when he may step down as Pakistani army chief, as he had earlier promised to do by year end.

"Muslims today are feeling as if Islam as a religion is being targetted. This needs to be undone," Musharraf said.

"I think the United States has to concentrate on the resolution of political disputes throughout the world," he said, identifying settlement of the Palestinian issue as key to ensuring global stability.

He also stressed the need for US help in combatting poverty and illiteracy, which he described as issues that "form the core of causes of terrorism."

A key US ally in the global war on terror, Musharraf said Pakistan was committed to ridding the country of terrorist groups and their supporters.

"We will end terrorism and the al-Qaeda presence in Pakistan," he pledged.

Questioned as to when he may resign his military post, the president said his top priority was ensuring continuity for crucial policies, including social and economic reforms, as well as the fight against terror.

"What worries me is their future," he said. "And while I haven't decided whether I'm going to remove my uniform or not, it doesn't cause concern. I'll take a decision in a few months. I haven't decided as yet."

Musharraf, who seized power in a bloodless coup in October 1999, promised last December to leave the army by the end of 2004 as part of a deal with opposition lawmakers that would allow him to remain president through 2007.

Opposition parties campaigning to end military rule have argued that reneging on the promise would amount to a violation of the constitution.

Musharraf was due to meet Wednesday with US President George W. Bush on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York.

During their talks, Musharraf is expected to urge Washington to take a larger behind-the-scenes role in settling Pakistan's bitter dispute with India over the disputed region of Kashmir.

# India rules out territorial concession to Pakistan Musharraf-Manmohan set for talks

AFP, New Delhi

India has ruled out any territorial concessions to Pakistan in disputed Kashmir in a statement issued ahead of a meeting in New York between Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf.

The foreign ministry statement followed a Time magazine article quoting an unnamed Indian official as saying India was willing to "adjust" the so-called Line of Control in Kashmir, a military ceasefire boundary, "by a matter of miles" to "help defuse the situation in Kashmir."

"This is completely and wholly inaccurate. Any suggestion the prime minister will make such an offer is factually wrong," foreign ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna said in the statement e-mailed late Monday to New Delhi from London which Singh visited en route to the United States.

The US newsmagazine in its latest edition reported Singh would propose the boundary shift to Musharraf when the two hold their first talks in New York Friday on the sidelines of a UN General Assembly session.

Sarna said Singh was looking

forward to "discussing all matters of bilateral interest" to Musharraf but "there is no question of any territorial concession being offered by India to Pakistan."

Singh is slated to meet Musharraf as part of an ongoing dialogue between India and Pakistan aimed at ending nearly six decades of hostility over Kashmir, spark of two of three wars between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

The two countries began talks in January on a wide range of issues but have made scant headway over Kashmir where a deadly 15-year revolt against New Delhi's rule has raged since 1989.

India accuses Pakistan of stoking the revolt in the Himalayan territory, a charge Pakistan denies, saying it only gives moral support to what it calls a freedom struggle.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Monday said it hoped President Pervez Musharraf's maiden talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in the United States would spur the peace process between the nuclear-armed rivals.

The two leaders are expected to review the status of the ongoing dialogue and discuss the thorny dispute of Kashmir, foreign office spokesman Masood Khan said.

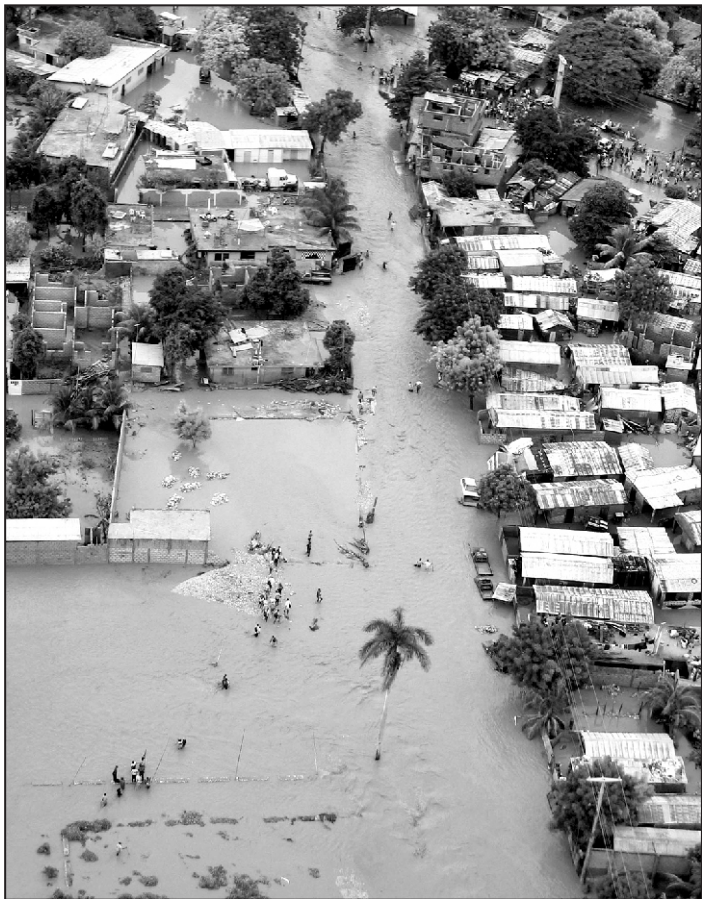


PHOTO: AFP

The United Nations supplied photo shows flooding in Gonaives, Haiti. More than 600 people have died in massive floods that raged across northern Haiti after Tropical Storm Jeanne hit this poor Caribbean nation over the weekend, a UN spokesman said yesterday, while 18 people were killed in other Caribbean islands.