

Grenade sparks alert at Jakarta Hilton hotel

AFP, Jakarta

Bomb squads were rushed to Jakarta's Hilton hotel yesterday after a grenade was found there just days after foreign governments warned that extremists were planning to attack the chain's Indonesian outlets.

The discovery of the grenade by a gardener working in the hotel's grounds sparked a major alert, but police a spokesman later said tests on the device revealed it was badly corroded and probably inactive.

Security has been tightened at Indonesia's three Hiltons after the Australian government last week said it had credible intelligence militants were planning an imminent strike, possibly targeting a branch of the hotel.

The world's largest Muslim-populated country has suffered a series of attacks blamed on Islamic extremists in the past few years, the deadliest being the October 2002 Bali bombings which killed 202 people, 88 of them Australian.

Jakarta's Marriott hotel was hit by a suicide bomb attack in August 2003 in which 12 people were killed. On September 9 this year another explosion killed 11 people outside the Australian embassy in the city.

Saddam urges Iraqis to unite against US

7 killed in attacks, 51 people detained after Najaf bombing

REUTERS, AFP, Amman/Samarra

Former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein appealed to Iraqis from his prison cell to unite against what he called US efforts to sow sectarian divisions, his lawyers said on Sunday.

Ziad Khasawneh, a Jordanian lawyer and spokesman for Saddam's defence team, told reporters: "President Saddam Hussein urged the unity of his Iraqi people, regardless of their religious and ethnic creed, to confront US plans to divide their country on sectarian grounds."

Saddam relayed his messages through Khalid Dulaimi, an Iraqi lawyer and member of the defence counsel who met the ousted leader for more than four hours on Thursday - Saddam's first access to lawyers since he was arrested a year ago.

Dulaimi's identity was until Sunday kept secret by Saddam's Amman-based legal team for fears over his life after he escaped an assassination attempt two weeks ago, defence lawyers said.

Saddam, who is denied access to news, was eager to know what had happened in Iraq since his captivity, Khasawneh said.

Saddam said Iraqis had to be cautious after Dulaimi told him US-backed elections would take place next month, said Lebanese lawyer Bushra al-Khalil, who is on the defence team.

But the former strongman was as defiant as ever and high-spirited in captivity, his lawyers said.

"If my commitment to my principles was 90 percent before the US invasion then after what happened to me it's 100 percent firm," Khasawneh quoted Saddam as saying.

Saddam sent a plea to Iraq's men of religion from all persuasions to

"shoulder a historic responsibility" in rallying people in Iraq's difficult times, the lawyers said.

War crimes trials against Saddam Hussein and his closest lieutenants moved forward when his feared cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid and a former defence minister were questioned by an investigating judge on Saturday.

Meanwhile, four men, three of them believed to be foreigners, were killed in a roadside ambush north of Baghdad yesterday, an Iraqi police officer told AFP.

Elsewhere, three Iraqis, including a woman, were killed in a string of attacks, police said.

In Najaf, Iraqi security forces have detained 51 suspects after the car bombing in the Shia holy city, governor Adnan al-Zorfi said yesterday, adding that a link has been found to the near-simultaneous strike in Karbala.



Ziad Khasawneh (L), spokesman for the legal defence team of deposed dictator Saddam Hussein, and Lebanese lawyer Bushra al-Khalil speak to reporters in Amman after Saddam met with a member of his Jordanian-based legal team for the first time Sunday in Amman. The former Iraqi leader has urged the Iraqi people from his prison cell to be united and cautioned them to be wary of the elections slated for January 30, his lawyers said.

Cabinet secy says he knows when Arafat was poisoned

AFP, Cairo

Yasser Arafat was poisoned over a year ago when he received a delegation of supposed supporters in his Ramallah compound, the late Palestinian leader's cabinet secretary was quoted as saying in yesterday's Al-Hayat daily.

"Something strange happened to Arafat around a year ago. It was on September 25, 2003," Ahmed Abdelrahman told the London-based newspaper.

"The president shook hands with around 30 people before leaving to vomit. It was from that moment that the president's health started slowly deteriorating," he explained.

Since Arafat died in a French hospital of a mysterious illness on November 11, several leading Palestinian officials have suggested the veteran leader had been poisoned, although French doctors have insisted there was no medical basis for such allegations.

Ukraine rivals face off in debate ahead of polls rerun

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine's presidential rivals were preparing from their sole debate yesterday in a lightning campaign ahead of a rerun election set after a disputed vote sparked a political crisis in the former Soviet republic.

Western-leaning opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko was due to hold a two-hour debate late Monday with his pro-Russia rival Viktor Yanukovich, who has gone on leave from his duties as prime minister to fight the campaign.

The debate, which will be the only one ahead of their December 26 rematch at the voting booths, is due to begin at 7:00 pm (1700 GMT) and will be broadcast live on television.

Hu takes a swipe at HK leadership

AFP, Macau

Chinese President Hu Jintao Monday gave an unprecedented public dressing down to Hong Kong's leaders, a day after the territory's government was forced to postpone a major public property sale.

At ceremonies to mark the fifth anniversary of the return of the former Portuguese colony of Macau to Chinese rule, Hu told Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa and his cabinet their performance must improve.

"Our hopes are that officials of Hong Kong will put Hong Kong's interests and the long-term national interests first. You must be more united and cooperative and supportive of each other," said Hu.

'Mullah Omar alive & active'

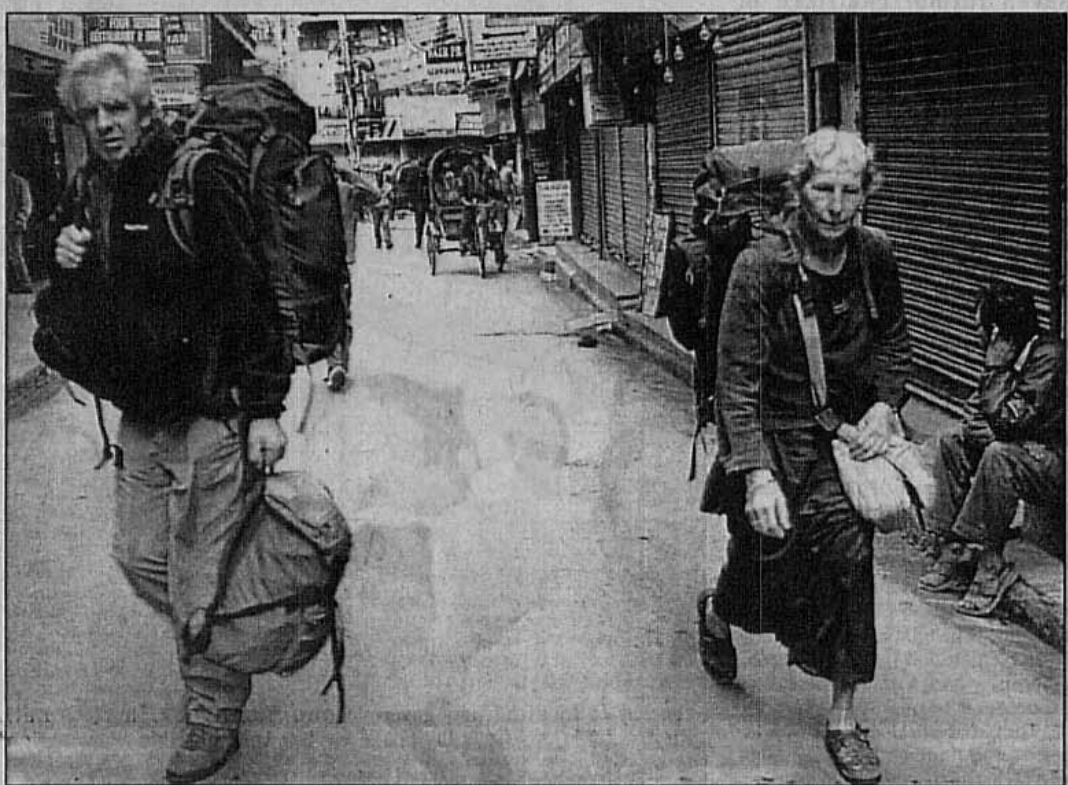
PTI, New York

Mullah Omar, the elusive one-eyed head of Taliban, is not only alive, but fully in charge of his hard-pressed guerrilla movement, a media report said in New York yesterday.

However, despite his efforts, the Taliban's three-year-old guerrilla campaign against some 18,000 American troops and Kabul's ragtag military may be in danger of collapsing, the Newsweek magazine said.

According to the magazine, interviews with Taliban fighters, commanders and officials show that the mysterious Emir is alive and touring the countryside on a motorcycle in a bid to resuscitate his ebbing movement.

"Mullah Omar has never been more active," Taliban spokesman Mufti Lutfullah Hakimi told Newsweek in a secret meeting along the Pakistani-Afghan border. "Any-one who thinks he's isolated, hiding in a cave and fearing for his life couldn't be more wrong."



A couple of tourists make their way on foot carrying their luggage to reach an airport bus stop, passing by closed shops on the first day of a general strike called by a pro-Maoist group in Kathmandu yesterday. A strike called by a pro-Maoist group in Nepal closed shops, schools and slowed transport in the Kathmandu valley as the capital's streets were largely deserted.

Time selects Bush as Person of the Year

AP, New York

After winning re-election and "reshaping the rules of politics to fit his 10-gallon-hat leadership style," President George Bush for the second time was chosen as Time magazine's Person of the Year.

The magazine's editors tapped Bush "for sharpening the debate until the choices bled, for reframing reality to match his design, for gambling his fortunes and ours on his faith in the power of leadership."

Time's 2004 Person of the Year package, on newsstands Monday, includes an Oval Office interview with Bush, an interview with his father, former President George H.W. Bush, and a profile of Bush's chief political adviser, Karl Rove.

In an interview with the magazine, Bush attributed his victory over Democratic candidate John Kerry to his foreign policy and the wars he began in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The election was about the use of American influence," Bush said.

After a grueling campaign, Bush remains a polarizing figure in America and around the world, and that's part of the reason the magazine selected him, said Managing Editor Jim Kelly.

Washington mulls fate of embattled Rumsfeld

AFP, Washington

Policymakers in Washington Sunday debated whether embattled Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld should hold onto his job, as controversy continued to mount over his leadership of US military efforts in Iraq.

US Senator Chuck Hagel became the latest in a steady stream of leading Republicans to express a lack of confidence in the Pentagon's top civilian official.

"I have no confidence in Rumsfeld," the Nebraska Republican and decorated Vietnam war hero told CBS television, although he stopped short of calling for the defence secretary's resignation, saying US President George W. Bush must make that call.

Hagel called the US military's continued travails "a manifestation of a clear lack of cogent, clear, straight-talking planning in a post-Saddam Iraq," he said.

"We're in here now 21 months. Things are worse than they've ever

been," said Hagel.

Rumsfeld has come in for a barrage of fresh criticism after admitting that he had not personally signed Pentagon condolence letters to families of soldiers killed in Iraq. But he has vowed to do so in the future, according to a Washington Post report Sunday.

"I wrote and approved the now more than 1,000 letters sent to family members and next of kin of each of the servicemen and women killed in military action," Rumsfeld said in a statement to the military newspaper Stars and Stripes.

"While I have not individually signed each one, in the interest of ensuring expeditious contact with grieving family members, I have directed that in the future I sign each letter," the defence chief said, according to the Post.

An outcry ensued after the Stars and Stripes reported in late November that the Pentagon was using a device to stamp Rumsfeld's signature on the letters, and quoted recipients who said they were insulted.

In recent days, several top Republicans, including senator and former presidential candidate John McCain, have recently criticized Rumsfeld, whom Bush has asked to stay on amid a cabinet re-shuffle following his November election victory.

Rumsfeld has drawn fire since seeming to dismiss the concerns of a US soldier at a "town hall" meeting in Kuwait who asked him about the lack of armor for US military vehicles in Iraq.

In widely broadcast and published remarks, Rumsfeld responded: "You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want or wish to have at a later time."

Numerous Democrats in the US legislature also have called on Rumsfeld to step aside, including Rhode Island Senator Jack Reed, who told CBS on Sunday: "I believe that the country will be better served by Secretary Rumsfeld's departure."

ME ROADMAP SPONSORS SAY Gaza pullout must not stall larger withdrawal

AFP, Gaza City

Sponsors of the roadmap peace plan for the Middle East insisted yesterday that they would not allow Israel's planned withdrawal of soldiers and settlers from Gaza to thwart a more comprehensive settlement.

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has vowed to pull 8,000 settlers from all 21 settlements in Gaza and four isolated enclaves in the northern West Bank by the end of 2005.

"We are supporting disengagement on the condition that it is consistent with the roadmap, that it leads to the two-state solution, that it is negotiated and coordinated with the Palestinian Authority and that Israel helps with reconstruction," the EU envoy to the Middle East peace process, Marc Otte, told a conference in Gaza.

Sharon unveiled the outlines of his disengagement plan last year

when he said that Israel would unilaterally withdraw from parts of the occupied territories in the absence of a Palestinian partner for peace.

But since the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Sharon has said he is ready to involve the new Palestinian leadership under PLO chief Mahmud Abbas in the process.

"From the outset we have emphasised that withdrawal does not constitute a replacement for the roadmap," said Russian envoy Alexander Kalugin.

"The steps taken by Israel must come within the context of the roadmap," he added.

Sharon's top aide Dov Weisglass caused a storm in October when he suggested that the Gaza pullout was a deliberate attempt to undermine the roadmap's promise of a Palestinian statehood next year.

"The significance of the disengagement plan is the freezing of the peace process," Weisglass was

quoted as saying by Israel's Haaretz newspaper.

Kalugin said Monday that on the contrary, the withdrawal from Gaza must "only be an initial step towards a comprehensive settlement for the establishment of a Palestinian state."

"After the withdrawal from Gaza there should be withdrawals from the West Bank as well," he added.

Rawhi Fattuh, acting president of the Palestinian Authority until a replacement to Arafat is elected in January, voiced deep suspicion about Sharon's plan.

"No one knows how it is related to the roadmap or how it is going to be implemented. It looks like a secret, clandestine plan," he said.

The internationally drafted roadmap, drawn up by diplomats from the European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States aims at putting an end to the bloodshed in region and establishing a Palestinian state by 2005.

N Korea threatens to strengthen deterrent against US

AFP, Seoul

North Korea, which says it deserves nuclear weapons for self-defence, vowed yesterday to strengthen its deterrent if the United States holds on to a "hostile" policy on the communist country.

A North Korean foreign ministry spokesman condemned the recent US legislation of a human rights law on North Korea as part of the US policy to bring down the communist regime.

Stalinist North Korea has been locked in a standoff with the United States and its allies for years over its nuclear weapons drive. Negotiations are deadlocked.

"If the United States... pursues its hostile policy to isolate and stifle (North Korea) under the pretext of the 'nuclear issue' and 'human rights issue'... the latter will react to it by further increasing its self-defensive deterrent force," the spokesman said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

"It is deplorable for the US to style

itself an international 'judge of human rights,' unaware of its position. By nature the US is the worst human rights graveyard in the world."

The United States passed a law in October to "help promote human rights and freedom" in North Korea, according to a White House statement at the time. Pyongyang said the legislation aimed to topple the communist leadership.

Washington denies seeking to bring down the reclusive Pyongyang regime.

North Korea has been under growing pressure to return to multilateral negotiations on curbing its nuclear weapons drive.

The two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States have held three rounds of talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear ambitions since the standoff erupted in October 2002.

North Korea boycotted a fourth round of the talks scheduled for Beijing in September, citing what it called the hostile US policy and other issues.



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (R) gestures as he talks to Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi during a welcoming ceremony at the presidential palace in New Delhi yesterday. Badawi is on a five-day visit to discuss wider business ties in his first visit to India since becoming premier last October.

Legal Notice IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH HIGH COURT DIVISION (STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION) MATTER NO 153 OF 1994 IN THE MATTER OF: AMA MAHMUD Petitioner. VERSUS 1. Uttara Motors Ltd, 39, Dilkusha C/A, P.S Motijheel, Dhaka-1000. 2. Matur Rahman, Managing Director, Uttara Motors Ltd; 39, Dilkusha C/A, P.S. Motijheel, Dhaka-1000. 3. The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies & Firms, 24-25 Dilkusha C/A, P.S. Motijheel, Dhaka. Respondents. Please be notified that Mr. AMA Mahmud as petitioner has filed an application under Section 43 of the Companies Act, 1994 before the High Court Division of the Hon'ble Supreme Court for rectification of the share register of the company. His Lordship Mr. Justice Md. Imman Ali, the Hon'ble Company Judge upon hearing the learned Advocate for the petitioner has admitted the application by order dated 01.12.2004 and fixed 07.01.05 for hearing of the said matter. If any person has any objection to the aforesaid application the said person personally or through his duly authorised lawyer may do so on the date of hearing and may submit his affidavit in opposition before the Hon'ble Court. Copy of the application may be collected from the Chamber of the undersigned on payment of costs. MK Rahman Advocate Room No 99 (Old) Supreme Court Bar, Ramna, Dhaka

UK lawyers to resign protesting anti-terror legislation

AFP, London

Lawyers representing foreign suspects detained under Britain's anti-terrorism law are to resign in protest against the legislation, a few days after Britain's highest court said it was illegal, newspapers reported here yesterday.

Ian Macdonald, one of the "Special Advocates" authorized by the authorities to work on terrorism-related issues, announced his decision to resign in the Mail on Sunday after the Law Lords, a panel of senior judges who act as the ultimate court of appeal in Britain, ruled 8-1 on Thursday that the detention of nine foreigners under the law breached human rights obligations.

"Such a law is an odious blot on our legal landscape and for reasons of conscience I feel that I must resign," Macdonald wrote in the weekly.

African Union sees no end to Darfur violence

REUTERS, Abuja

Fighting between Sudanese government forces and rebels continues in Darfur despite ceasefire promises, the African Union said on Sunday, saying one of its monitoring helicopters had come under fire.

"One of our helicopters has been shot. They are firing on our helicopters. This shows that the cease-fire is not being observed. They did not comply. They have not stopped fighting," AU spokesman Assane Ba told reporters on Sunday evening.

He gave no further details and it was not clear who had shot at the helicopter, or when.

The AU has cease-fire monitors in Sudan's troubled Darfur region and the pan-African body has also been mediating in faltering peace talks in Nigeria between the Sudanese government and the

rebels. Sudan said on Sunday it would immediately and unconditionally cease hostilities in Darfur and asked the United Nations and AU to request that rebel forces do the same.

"Yes, we will inform our forces in Darfur immediately to stop any fighting, so we will not fire unless we will be attacked by the other side," Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail said in Khartoum.

Ba had accused the Sudanese government of failing to comply with a deadline to stop fighting in Darfur, describing fresh helicopter strikes on a village in South Darfur state.

The AU force commander in Darfur, Nigerian General Festus Okonkwo, told mediators government forces attacked the village of Labado on Saturday, Ba reported.

খুলনা শিপইয়ার্ড লিমিটেড বাংলাদেশ নৌ বাহিনী, খুলনা নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি ১। বাংলাদেশ নৌ বাহিনী কর্তৃক পরিচালিত খুলনা শিপইয়ার্ডে নিম্নলিখিত পদনম্নে স্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে নিয়োগের জন্য উপযুক্ত প্রার্থীদের নিকট হইতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাইবে: ক্রম নং পদের নাম বেতন স্কেল পদের সংখ্যা শিক্ষার্তব্যোপাতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা তারিখে বাসনসীমা ৩১-১২-২০০৪ ১। সহকারী/নির্দেশক কর্মকর্তা ২৫২০-৫৫০৫/- ১ (এক) স্নাতক/স্নাতকোত্তর (বাণিজ্য) সহ সার্ভিসিট কাজে ৪ বৎসরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা ৩০ বৎসর ২। পিএ টি এমডি ২২৫০-৪৭৩৫/- ১ (এক) স্নাতকসহ কম্পিউটার, ই-সেইল এবং ফাস্ট পরিচালনার পারদর্শিতাসহ সার্ভিসিট কাজে ৩ বৎসরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা ৩০ বৎসর ২। চাকরীসহ প্রার্থীদেরকে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করিতে হইবে। ৩। আবেদনকারীকে অবশ্যই বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক হইতে হইবে। ৪। অম্মহী প্রার্থীদের সদ্য তোশা ০৩ (তিন) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের সত্যায়িত ছবি, পূর্ণ জীবনবৃত্তান্ত, শিক্ষার্তব্যোপাতা ও অভিজ্ঞতার সন্দর্ভ, ম্যানেজিং ডায়েরির, খুলনা শিপইয়ার্ড লিমিটেড এর অনুকূলে ১০০/- টাকার ব্যাংক ড্রাকটসহ আবেদনপত্র আগামী ১০ জানুয়ারি ২০০৫ তারিখের মধ্যে ম্যানেজিং ডায়েরির, খুলনা শিপইয়ার্ড লিমিটেড, বাংলাদেশ নৌ বাহিনী, খুলনা বরাবরে পৌছাইতে হইবে। তারিখ-৮/০৩