

3 in 4 Iraqi Sunnis won't vote today

AFP, Washington
Three out of four Sunni Arabs will not vote in Iraq's weekend elections...



Independent Electoral Commission workers prepare ballot boxes at a polling station in central Baghdad yesterday. Security was heightened across Iraq on the eve of today's landmark elections...

US, UK OFFICIALS SAY

Iraqi polls won't end violence

REUTERS, Baghdad
Violence in Iraq is unlikely to subside after today's election and may well get worse before it gets better...

Either way, it may not be long before those opposed to Sunday's vote launch an onslaught to make their hostility clear...

"If the election goes well, the insurgents are going to be angry, they're going to want to get their own back," Zayed Ahmed, a security guard in Baghdad, said Saturday.

There are signs suicide car bombers are losing their edge. Wednesday, seven car bomb blasts killed just 13 people...

Zarqawi fear haunts Iraqi voters

AFP, Baghdad
The shadow of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's deadly acts and threats overshadow memories of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship as Iraqis go to vote in a historic election today.

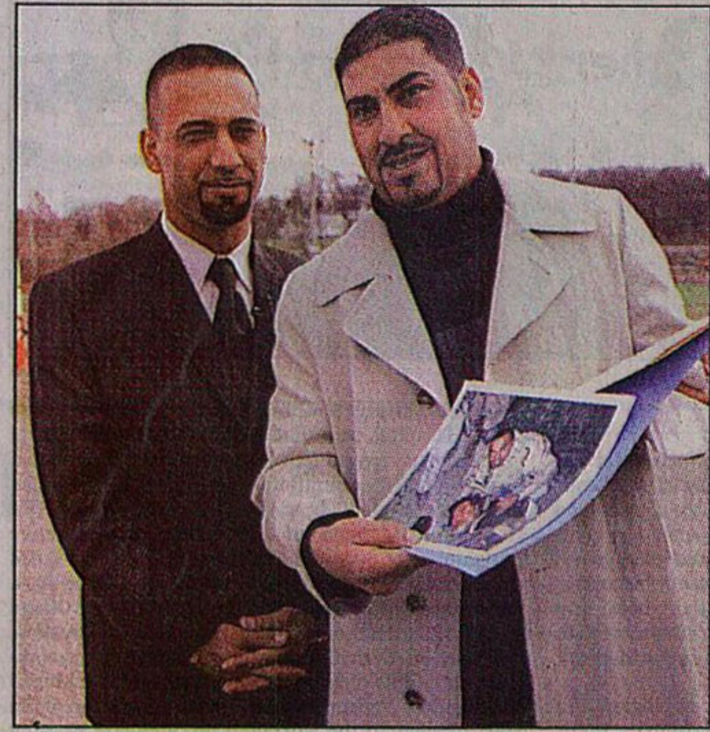
of Jihad in the Land of Two Rivers", the militant leader has brought the horror of slow, grisly, beheadings to world attention through video recordings posted on the Internet.

Zarqawi supporters on Sunday released a video of the killing of an election candidate from the party of Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

BUSH WARNS AHEAD OF TODAY'S POLLS Terrors to do everything to thwart Iraqi polls

AFP, Washington
US President George W. Bush said yesterday terrorists will do everything in their power to thwart Sunday's elections in Iraq...

"Our nation has always been more secure when freedom is on the march. As hope and freedom spread, the appeal of terror and hate will fade.



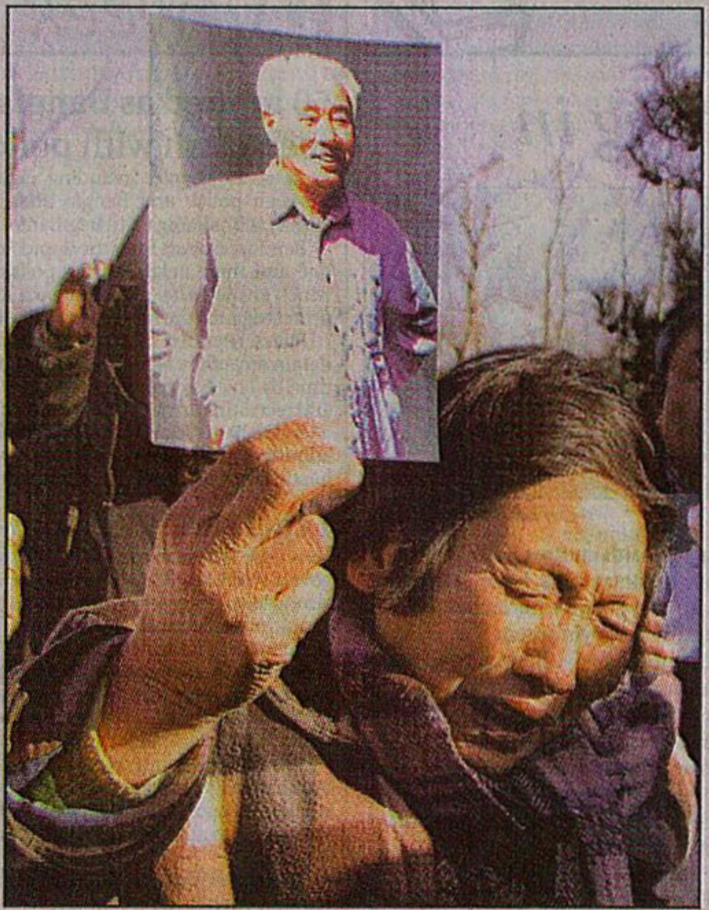
(L-R) Iraqi expatriates Samir and Muhammed show reporters a photo of Samir subduing Saddam Hussein as they prepare to leave an Iraqi polling place Friday in Nashville, Tennessee.

Bombs, bullets turn Baghdad a city on the edge

AFP, Baghdad
A gunbattle yesterday in one of the best-protected parts of Baghdad heightened the tension for the nervous population of the capital on the eve of the landmark election.

Zhao Ziyang cremated in tightly controlled funeral

REUTERS, Beijing
Hundreds of mourners braved police checks on Saturday to attend a low-key invitation-only funeral for Zhao Ziyang, the Chinese Communist Party chief purged for opposing the army crackdown on the 1989 Tiananmen protests.



A Chinese woman cries as she mourns deposed leader Zhao Ziyang outside the Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery in western Beijing yesterday.

Kashmiris vote defying rebel threats

AFP, Srinagar
Defying rebel threats, voters turned out in big numbers yesterday to cast ballots in the first leg of municipal polls to be held in over a quarter of a century in insurgency-hit Indian Kashmir, officials said.

for democracy in Kashmir," said Tourism Minister Ghulam Hassan Mir, a senior leader of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party.

Abbas-Sharon summit in 2nd week of Feb Security talks continue

AFP, Ramallah
Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will meet new Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas in two weeks, a Palestinian official said yesterday, as the two sides prepare to discuss the transfer of security control in parts of the West Bank, fueling real optimism about progress towards peace.

troops were deployed in the south and centre of the territory with orders to halt rocket attacks.

Sharon is also now prepared to coordinate with the Palestinians his plan to pull all troops and 8,000 settlers out of the Gaza Strip this year.

UN to coordinate Asia's tsunami warning centers

REUTERS, Phuket
The United Nations emerged yesterday as a coordinator for a regional tsunami warning center after officials from 43 nations including India, Indonesia and Thailand failed to agree who should run it.

to make a financial commitment after they received the proposal yesterday, Thai Foreign Minister Surakit Sathirathai told reporters when asked how delegates had responded to the proposed fund.

egos appear to be getting in the way of international cooperation. Thailand wanted the system to be built on the existing structure of the UN-backed Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), which has around 30 member countries in Asia and is located in Bangkok.

Italian Mafia trains up kids as killers

AFP, Rome
The Mafia in southeastern Italy is busy training up recruits as young as 10 years of age in how to use firearms to intimidate the public and even kill, according to reports here yesterday.



A group of activists pull down a wall symbolising Israel's separation barrier Friday in Porto Alegre, southern Brazil, during a pro-Palestine demonstration within the framework of the V World Social Forum.

Portugal clears deportation of Mumbai blast suspect

AFP, New Delhi
Indian police said Portugal's Supreme Court has cleared the extradition of one of India's most wanted men, Abu Salem, sought for a string of blasts that killed more than 250 people in 1993, Indian media reported yesterday.