

## Anti-Syrian protests mark Hariri's funeral

Syria not involved in Hariri murder: Ambassador

REUTERS, Beirut

Tens of thousands of Lebanese, many chanting anti-Syrian slogans, marched Wednesday in the funeral procession of former Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri, killed in a bombing opposition leaders blame on Damascus.

Men wept uncontrollably as the procession wound through Beirut streets plastered with posters of the Sunni Muslim billionaire slain in a suspected suicide car bombing Monday.

"Syria out, Syria out," the mourners shouted as people threw rice from balconies onto an ambulance carrying the body of a man who had joined opposition calls for Syrian troops to leave.

French President Jacques Chirac, a personal friend of Hariri,

was flying to Beirut to present condolences and "pay tribute to the person who always personified Lebanon's will for independence, freedom and democracy," his office said.

Several European and Arab ministers, along with EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Burns and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa, were among foreign dignitaries at the mosque for the burial.

The family had spurned government offers of a state funeral and made clear officials such as Syrian-backed President Emile Lahoud, Prime Minister Omar Karami and Interior Minister Suleiman Franjeh were not welcome to attend.

A security source said at least 120,000 people had joined the march, but other witnesses esti-

ated hundreds of thousands.

Mosques blared prayers and church bells tolled across Beirut. The march, initially silent apart from the ambulance's siren, erupted in shouts of "Allahu Akbar (God is greatest)" and chants against Syria and its allies in Lebanon.

Syria's ambassador to France, Siba Nasser, reaffirmed Wednesday that her country had nothing to do with the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafic Hariri and said Damascus did not fear an international inquiry as called for by Paris.

"We don't fear an international inquiry. Syria had nothing to do with it," she told French radio station Europe 1.

"If the Lebanese government accepts it (the inquiry), we will accept it," she said.

## Pakistan, India agree on Kashmir bus

AFP, Islamabad

India and Pakistan agreed Wednesday to start a long-awaited bus link across the military frontier that divides Kashmir in a breakthrough for the peace process between the nuclear rivals.

Visiting Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh and his Pakistani counterpart Khurshid Kasuri announced the deal at a press conference after talks in Islamabad.

The bus between Srinagar in India's zone of the divided Himalayan territory and Muzaffarabad on the Pakistani side would begin on April 7 and would be run on an entry permit system, they said.

"The governments have agreed to allow travel across the LoC (Line of Control) between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad by bus," said a joint statement by read out Kasuri. The LoC is the de facto border in Kashmir which is divided between

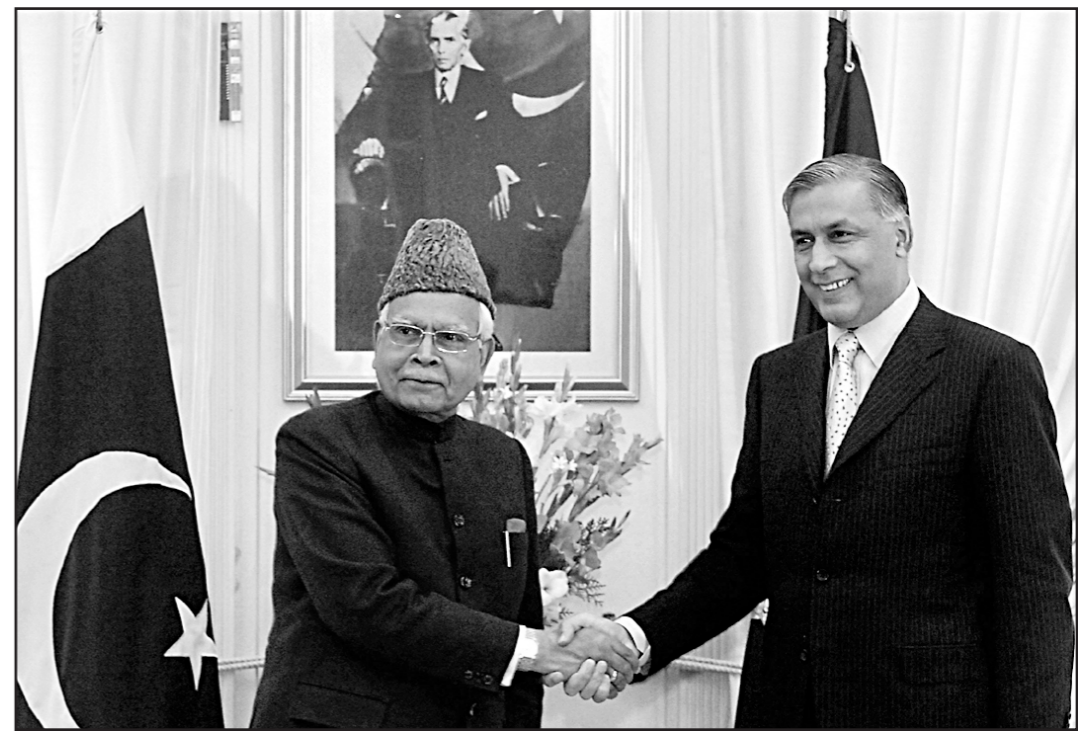
the neighbours and claimed by both.

Restarting the service, which was stopped around 50 years ago, will ease travel for thousands of families separated by the Line of Control, the de facto border in the region.

It will also be a major confidence-building measure. Kashmir was the cause of two of the three wars which India and Pakistan have fought since independence from Britain in 1947.

Singh, making the first visit to Pakistan in 15 years by an Indian foreign minister, met President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz before his formal talks with Kasuri.

"I am convinced that cooperation between our two countries is not just a desired objective, it is in today's context an imperative," Singh told reporters after the meeting.



Indian Foreign Minister Natwar Singh (L) is greeted by Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz prior to a meeting in Islamabad yesterday. Pakistan and India reached an agreement on a bus service across the military frontier dividing Kashmir when Singh holds key peace talks in Islamabad Wednesday, officials said.

PHOTO: AFP



The national flag-draped coffin of Lebanon's slain former prime minister Rafiq Hariri is carried to his final resting place during his funeral in Beirut yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Police hunt for new Diana clues

BBC NEWS ONLINE

British investigators have spent the night using high-tech equipment to map the site where Princess Diana died and to gather information for her inquest.

Police photographers and surveyors used laser equipment to scan the Paris tunnel where Diana, Dodi Al Fayed and their driver died in a crash in 1997.

The move followed a request by the coroner who will carry out the inquest.

A computer model of the scene will be created, which police said would "enhance understanding" of the crash.

Met Police officers were on hand to use the laser equipment, Scotland Yard confirmed.

The three-dimensional model will use new technology that was not available at the time of the accident.

Diana, her partner - Mr Al Fayed - and their chauffeur died after their Mercedes crashed in the Pont d'Alma Tunnel after leaving the Ritz Hotel on the morning of 31 August, 1997.

The subsequent investigation concluded that driver Henri Paul had been drinking and was driving at high speed.

## FETED AND HATED Kyoto Protocol comes into force

REUTERS, Oslo

A world plan to fight global warming went into force on Wednesday, feted by its backers as a lifeline for the planet but rejected as an economic straitjacket by the United States, the world's top polluter.

After years of delays, the Kyoto Protocol on curbing human emissions of heat-trapping gases by 2012 took effect at midnight EST amid muted celebrations including a ceremony in the ancient Japanese city of Kyoto where the pact was signed in 1997.

"Climate change is a global problem. It requires a concerted global response," U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in pre-recorded remarks to be aired in Kyoto.

"I call on the world community to be bold, to adhere to the Kyoto Protocol, and to act quickly in taking the next steps. There is no time to lose," he said.

Environmental group Greenpeace flew a hot air balloon over Kyoto, emblazoned with the message: "New dawn for the climate." It said it held other celebrations from Bonn to Bangalore.

Supporters of the 141-nation pact say it is a first step to slow global warming. Climate experts fear temperature increases could lead to rising sea levels, extreme weather patterns and wipe out thousands of animal and plant species by 2100.

But the United States pulled out in 2001, saying Kyoto was too costly, based on unreliable science and unfairly excluded big developing nations India, China and Brazil, which account for a third of the world's population.

Among major developed nations, only Australia has joined the United States in refusing to cap emissions of gases like carbon dioxide emitted mainly by burning fossil fuels in cars, factories and power plants.

"Climate change is happening already...but we know Kyoto is only a first step," European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said.

He called Kyoto a cause for "sober celebration," noting that the World Health Organization believed climate change was already killing 150,000 people a year.

In Sydney, ice sculptures of kangaroos and koalas melted

during a protest by green groups over Australia's refusal to ratify the pact.

In China, home to 1.3 billion people and one of the world's fastest-growing economies, a man dressed as a gloomy looking polar bear took to Beijing's streets as part of Greenpeace China's campaign to explain the impact of climate change.

And a US conservation group, the Center for Biological Diversity, urged Washington to list the polar bear as an endangered species, saying the Arctic icecap was likely to melt in summertime by 2100.

The Kyoto pact is the first legally binding plan to tackle climate change. It requires developed nations to cut emissions of greenhouse gases, mainly carbon dioxide, by 5.2 percent below 1990 levels by 2008-12.

Its fate beyond 2012 is unclear because of Washington's decision to stay out of the plan President Bush has called fatally flawed. His administration once denounced it as "an unrealistic and ever-tightening regulatory straitjacket."

The United States accounts for almost a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions.

## Italian hostage pleads for troop pullout from Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

Insurgents released a tape on Wednesday showing an Italian journalist seized in Baghdad earlier this month pleading for her life and calling on foreign forces to withdraw.

The undated tape of 57-year-old Giuliana Sgrena, a reporter for Rome-based newspaper Il Manifesto, came as the winners of last month's election, a religious Shia-led alliance, were expected to declare their choice for prime minister.

"I beg you, put an end to the occupation. I beg the Italian government and the Italian people to put pressure on the government to pull out," Sgrena says on the tape, speaking in Italian and holding her hands in front of her in supplication.

It is the first tape of Sgrena since she was snatched on Feb. 4.

The emergence of the tape underlines the dire security situation afflicting Iraq even as the country tries to move forward with the process of forming a new government following its first post-Saddam Hussein election held on Jan. 30.

## Iraq, Afghan war costs may exceed \$300b

AP, Washington

With military costs since Sept. 11, 2001, now expected to exceed \$300 billion, the Pentagon is spending more per soldier to fight in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere than it did during earlier conflicts.

High technology, the costs of paying and protecting a modern soldier, and the worldwide nature of the war on terrorism are all possible reasons, experts say.

"Every facet of military expenditure has skyrocketed since the Gulf War," said Loren B. Thompson, a military expert with the Lexington Institute. "The biggest reason why is because the military is more and more a microcosm of the broader economy."

The all-volunteer force, put in place by President Nixon in 1973 to replace the draft, has forced the military to compete with the private sector for soldiers, and offer better

pay and benefits, he said. Sending those soldiers to war costs still more.

"The bottom-line problem with the all-volunteer force is you have to convince middle-class people to risk their lives for middle-class pay, so of course the price for each soldier keeps going up," he said.

According to government figures, the war in Iraq costs about \$4.3 billion a month, and the war in Afghanistan runs another \$800 million. That money goes for a variety of things, including fuel, ammunition, hazard pay for the soldiers and repair and replacement of weapons and vehicles.

On average, the government spent a similar amount monthly on the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1975, according to figures, adjusted for inflation, from the Congressional Research Service.



A Hindu priest blesses Sri Lanka's "miracle" baby Abilash at a temple in Kalmunai yesterday, where he was taken by his parents after a court formally handed the baby to them ending a seven-week court drama. The baby was separated from its parents following the 26 December 2004 tsunamis that killed nearly 31,000 people.

PHOTO: AFP