

## Police mobilise to block Jewish rally in Jerusalem

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli police were out in force yesterday in Jerusalem's Old City, a day ahead of a banned protest by Jewish extremists at a holy site that could inflame the Palestinians and shatter a fragile ceasefire.

Internal Security Minister Gideon Ezra reiterated that the gathering would be blocked, saying the "Israeli government will not permit under any circumstances any provocation that could disturb the peace."

Ezra, speaking on public radio, was referring to Revava, a recently formed group dedicated to building a third Jewish temple on the site now occupied by the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, which is known by the Jews as Temple Mount.

Earlier this week, the group said the aim of Sunday's demonstration was to bring some "10,000 Jews to the heavily restricted Temple Mount to spark Israeli dialogue about reclaiming the holy site from its Muslim custodians."

"Revava has called on its supporters to converge in force on Temple Mount, with Muslims organising to protect the site," Ezra said. "That would cause trouble not only in Jerusalem but in the entire Middle East."

"They will not enter Temple Mount, nor will we allow them to assemble at the Kotel," the adjacent structure known as the Wailing Wall.

## ANNIVERSARY OF BAGHDAD'S FALL

# Iraqis demand US exit

## 15 Iraqi soldiers killed in bombing

AFP, Baghdad

Tens of thousands of protesters poured into central Baghdad Saturday, on the second anniversary of the fall of the capital, to demand that US troops leave the country, as 15 Iraqi soldiers were killed in a roadside bombing.

Chanting "No, no, USA," protesters converged on Firdus Square, where US troops helped Iraqis pull down a huge statue of ousted president Saddam Hussein two years ago — an act televised around the world that symbolised the end of the old regime.

The rally, organized by radical anti-US Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, is believed to be the largest demonstration since US troops entered the country.

"O God, cut off their necks, the way they are cutting off our necks and terrorising us," said Sadr representative Sheikh Nasir al-Saaidi, reading a speech from his boss. "There will be no peace, no security, until the occupation leaves."

Iraqi flags fluttered in the sea of demonstrators, many of whom were dressed in black, the uniform of Sadr's Mehdi Army militia. Many

wore green and black Islamic headbands.

Sadr followers said the rally was the first of many to pressure the new Iraqi government to demand that US troops withdraw, but they stressed Sadr was not calling for a resumption of armed struggle against the US military.

"We've organised ourselves now to continue these demonstrations until we force the government and national assembly to take our demands seriously and carry them out," Moayad al-Khazrajy, a senior aide to Sadr, told AFP.

"We've received strict orders from Sadr Moqtada not to carry weapons and even if we're fired at by occupation forces not to respond. For the time being, our position is peaceful."

Khazrajy read Sadr's demands to the crowd. They included a quick trial for Saddam; the Iraqi government making Thursday the second day off in the week not Saturday, due its association with the Jewish Sabbath; the Iraqi government strengthening border security and the government respecting the resistance and bringing it into the political process.

Some waved the notorious picture of a hooded naked Iraqi

detainee, with wires attached to his body. It was released during the Abu Ghraib prison scandal last year that blemished the US record in Iraq.

Sunni clerics from the Committee of Muslim Scholars, which organised a boycott of historic January elections, also urged followers to join the protest.

"The war has been finished for two years. What did we get? Nothing. Our country has become the centre of terrorism," said Ali Hussein, 30, from Sadr City, who was dressed all in black. "There is no electricity, no services, no nothing."

A shopkeeper from Sadr City, Baqr Mussa, vented frustration at the continuing US presence and the failure by the Americans to execute Saddam. He was dressed in white religious robes, symbolic of martyrdom.

"We are very angry. We don't believe we've just lived two years since the war. All the buildings are still burnt and destroyed," Mussa said. "Saddam is still in the prison and they have not even judged him yet for all his crimes. We are very angry, and we want all the world to hear our voice."

Sadr rocketed to prominence in

the power vacuum after the fall of Saddam two years ago. He quickly founded his thousands-strong Mehdi Army militia and delivered vitriolic sermons demanding US forces exit the country.

In continued violence Saturday morning, a roadside bomb killed 15 Iraqi soldiers and wounded several others in Latifiyah, 40km south of Baghdad, a defence ministry official said.

An attack on a truck convoy killed four drivers and wounded four others as they drove from Kut, 172km south of Baghdad, to the capital, an interior ministry source said.

A Sadr deputy was killed and a colleague wounded in Baghdad as they were driving to attend the anti-US protest, a Sadr official said.

Jaafari, meanwhile, continued working formation a new government.

His party, the United Iraqi Alliance, will have the important ministries of finance, interior and oil, said senior aide Jawad al-Maliki. A quarter of the 30 or so cabinet posts will go to women, he added.



PHOTO: AFP  
Holding up the national flag, Iraqis mainly loyal to radical Shia Muslim cleric Moqtada Sadr gather in their thousands calling for the occupying US forces to leave their country yesterday in Firdos Square, central Baghdad. Baghdad was on a knife's edge as tens of thousands of Shiites converged on the centre of the Iraqi capital for an anti-US protest to mark two years since the city fell to coalition troops.

## India rejects contention on vote regarding UNSC expansion

PTI, United Nations

Rejecting the contention that expansion of UN Security Council through a General Assembly vote would lead to dangerous divisions, India has asserted that those giving this argument want to prevent the democratisation of the powerful body.

Branding as recipe for inaction the contention that the Council's expansion awaited evolution of total consensus among the 191-member of the General Assembly, India's UN Ambassador Nirupam Sen pointed out that voting was a democratic procedure and provided for in the charter of the world body.

Intervening in the debate on UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's reforms proposals on Friday, he firmly rejected the suggestion that there should be no deadline for the consensus building process, emphasising that it would just mean delaying giving representation to developing countries indefinitely.

Rejecting arguments of a few countries, including the US and China, that the UNSC expansion through a vote in the General Assembly would lead to dangerous divisions and affect its effectiveness, Sen asserted that these nations fear slightest erosion of dominance of the permanent five members and want to prevent democratisation of the powerful body.

## Charles, Camilla choose chilly Scotland for honeymoon

AFP, Windsor

Britain's Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles, immediately following their wedding in Windsor, will fly to Scotland to spend their honeymoon in the outdoors they both love.

Like the simple wedding itself, the choice of honeymoon will be in marked contrast to the Mediterranean cruise aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia that Charles took with the late Princess Diana after their 1981 wedding.

The couple were due to fly to Aberdeen, northern Scotland, on Saturday evening and then travel to their Highland retreat at Birkhall.

The newlyweds are expected to spend around a week to 10 days at their hideaway but will be breaking off from their honeymoon to carry out their first official engagement as man and wife by opening a nearby children's playground at Ballater.

The couple are said to consider Birkhall their first proper home, and in the past two years Parker Bowles has overseen a "sensitive" renovation, using an interior designer

known for his opulent tartan soft furnishings.

However, memories of Diana, Princess of Wales may still linger at Birkhall, for it was here that the late Queen Mother, Charles's grandmother, introduced Charles to his future bride.

Birkhall has always been a refuge and safe haven for Charles.

It was on the banks of the River Muick's peaty waters, at the bottom of the house's sloping gardens, that he first learned to fish.

It was here, too, that he sought refuge during his unhappy school days, during the fallout from his crumbling first marriage and after his grandmother's death.

And it was at Birkhall that Charles brought Camilla to conduct their passionate affair.

In recent years, the couple have spent time every spring at Birkhall.

## Anglican cleric files legal objection to royal wedding

AFP, Windsor

An Anglican cleric filed a last-minute objection yesterday to Britain's royal wedding, maintaining that Prince Charles, divorced from the late Princess Diana, could not remarry while heir to the British throne.

Father Paul Williamson, 56, a Church of England vicar at St George's Church in west London, was the first person to arrive at civic offices in Windsor which opened specifically to register protests against the marriage.

Prince Charles married Camilla Parker Bowles at 12:30 p.m. (1130 GMT) in a civil ceremony in Windsor, a town west of London used by the royal family as a weekend retreat.

Williamson's objection, along with two others also filed, were later rejected by Dennis Roberts, deputy registrar general of the local council, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

## Records give voice to Guantanamo detainees

AP, Washington

In a development the Bush administration had hoped to avoid, the stories of about 60 detainees imprisoned at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base have spilled out in court papers.

A US college-educated detainee asks plaintively in one: "Is it possible to see the evidence in order to refute it?"

In another transcript, the unidentified president of a US military tribunal bursts out: "I don't care about international law. I don't want to hear the words 'international law' again. We are not concerned with international law."

Expressing defiance in some instances and stoic acceptance of their fate in others, the onetime nameless and still-largely faceless detainees appeared last year before tribunals that, after quick reviews, declared they were unlawful enemy combatants who could be held indefinitely.

## World's press hails pope's 'last miracle'

AFP, Paris

The world's press hailed Pope John Paul II's funeral as a "last miracle" that lured millions, perhaps billions, of believers and non-believers worldwide and brought together historic enemies at the Vatican.

But many of Saturday's papers also cast a more caustic eye at the pomp and ceremony and gloried in the most awkward encounters.

In the Middle East, a handshake between Israeli President Moshe Katzav and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad grabbed the headlines. "Old foes in historic handshake at Vatican," ran the front-page headline in Beirut's The Daily Star.

The Israeli head of state also spoke

briefly to Iranian leader Mohammad Khatami, Israeli public radio said. Khatami however, later "strongly denied" he had either shaken hands or spoken to the Israeli president.

Many front pages displayed French President Jacques Chirac elegantly kissing the hand of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"The world came together in peace around the pope's coffin," blazoned the Austrian tabloid Kroenzeitung.

In Budapest, the left-wing daily Nepszava wrote: "Yesterday, on St Peter's Square everyone was equal. Enemies temporarily forgave each other, forgot the crimes of the other."



PHOTO: AFP  
Chinese protesters demonstrate in front of the Japanese embassy in Beijing waving national flags as thousands gather to protest Japan's handling of its wartime past and Tokyo's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council yesterday. Organisers spread the word of the rally on Internet bulletin boards calling for up to 20,000 people to gather at the Hailong shopping centre in northern Beijing's university district where they then marched to the Japanese embassy.

## Emerging Asian giants edge closer

### Chinese premier begins India trip

AP, Bangalore

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao yesterday began a four-day visit to India — where he was expected to discuss a border dispute and trade cooperation with Indian leaders as the emerging regional powers try to set aside differences and cultivate closer ties.

Wen was also expected to raise the issue of Tibet and the role of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who lives in exile in India, Chinese officials have said.

Wen began his Indian trip by first visiting Bangalore, India's information technology hub. He was received by Dharam Singh, the top elected official of southern Karnataka state. He didn't talk to reporters at the Bangalore airport.

Police prevented Tibetan activists, who oppose Beijing's rule in the Himalayan territory, from holding any protest demonstration against Wen's visit in Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka state.

On Saturday, police detained two Tibetan leaders to prevent them

from organising Tibetans in the city and prevented 50 Tibetan students from leaving their college hostels to join the protest, a police officer said.

"This is preventive custody. Now we don't foresee any protest being organised," said S. Mariswamy, city police chief.

The visit comes as India seeks to improve relations with its larger neighbour, despite four decades of frosty relations, a brief border war, and a nascent rivalry. China is also a longtime ally and the main supplier of military hardware to Pakistan — India's archrival.

"While there are differences between us, there is also an increasingly greater realisation that there is enough space and opportunity in the region for both India and China to prosper," India's External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh said on Friday.

China and India also compete on the economic front, and the Indian finance minister recently urged his country to take Beijing's lead and adopt reforms to attract foreign investment.

On Monday, Wen will hold talks

with his Indian counterpart, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in the Indian capital.

The two leaders are expected to discuss a more than 50-year-old border dispute over their 1,030-kilometer (650-mile) border, parts of which are not demarcated.

Meanwhile, the dispute hasn't interfered with efforts to promote trade and closer economic cooperation between Beijing and New Delhi.

The two countries are readying nearly 30 agreements to promote political, economic and cultural ties. India is also keen that the two countries coordinate in bids for international economic contracts.

China Eastern Airlines is also likely to announce a new direct flight linking the business hubs Bombay and Shanghai. China is also keen on developing a free trade area between the two countries, which with their more than 2 billion population, would make it the biggest FTA in the world.