

# Australian Muslims under pressure as terror fears grow

AFP, Sydney

The Australian government pressured local Muslims at the weekend to denounce terrorism, learn English and accept women as equals, as fears grew of a first attack on home soil.

Prime Minister John Howard led with calls for the country's 300,000 Muslims to integrate fully into Australian society and adopt its values, sparking warnings that he was inciting racial violence.

Howard's remarks came at the end of a week, which saw 11 local Muslim men committed for trial on terrorism charges and a Muslim convert subjected to the first control order issued under controversial new anti-terror laws.

They also coincided with the arrest of 14 terror suspects in Britain, where the July 7, 2005 suicide attacks by young British Muslims killed 56 people prompted Howard to express the fear that the same thing could happen in Australia.

"Fully integrating means accepting Australian values, it means learning as rapidly as you can the English language if you don't already speak it," Howard said in a radio interview.

"People who come from societies where women are treated in an inferior fashion have got to learn very quickly that that is not the case in Australia."

The head of the government's own moderate Muslim advisory committee, Ameer Ali, said Howard risked inflaming tensions seen in rioting between white youths and Arab-Australians in Sydney last December.

But the prime minister refused to apologise and repeated his comments in an article written for Sydney's Daily Telegraph tabloid on Saturday.

On Sunday, his heir-apparent, Treasurer Peter Costello joined the attack, saying Islamic leaders needed "to make it clear that terrorism is never justified under the cover of religion".

A minority in the Islamic community had been radicalised and was

preying upon young people with dangerous ideologies, he said.

"It is very, very important that the leadership of Australia are very clear and very precise that this is not real Islam, that terrorism is always wrong."

The leader of the Islamic Friendship Association, Keysar Brad, told AFP the government was engaging in "gratuitous Islam bashing".

"On the radicalism issue, they have acknowledged that it is a small fraction of less than one percent," he told AFP.

But Attorney-General Philip Ruddock said Sunday the government believes Australia is vulnerable to terrorist attacks similar to those in Britain.

"What we're seeing in the United Kingdom is that there are numbers of groups, who it is believed, are intent on carrying out terrorist attacks in the United Kingdom," Ruddock said.

"This is of course the situation that we face. I think we became very complacent about these matters because we've not had on our own soil terrorist attacks."

Like Britain, Australia contributed troops to the US-led invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq, but Ruddock denied that was a reason the country was a target.

On Friday, a Melbourne court ruled there was sufficient evidence to put on trial 11 Australian Muslim men arrested last November in Australia's biggest-ever counterterrorism operation.

The court heard they were inspired by Osama Bin Laden, had formed a terror cell and had been preparing a terrorist attack.

Earlier in the week the government used controversial new anti-terror laws for the first time to place a "control order" on a Muslim convert freed after his conviction on terrorism charges was quashed.

The order restricts the movements of Joseph "Jihad Jack" Thomas, 33, who had been convicted and sentenced to five years in jail for receiving money and an air ticket from Bin Laden's al-Qaeda.

# BNP march turns

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by the four-party ruling alliance.

The massive procession, one of the largest political programmes by BNP in recent times, apparently was a show of strength. It started at about 4:20pm from Naya Bazar, at the southern part of the city and touched on its way at least 20 important points of five constituencies out of eight in the city before ending at Gabtoli, the northern part of the city, at 7:15pm.

Beating drums, waving multicoloured placards, banners, festoons, the party and national flags, and portraits of late president Ziaur Rahman, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and their son Tarique Rahman, enthusiastic supporters of BNP from different parts of the city joined the procession.

Thousands of cheerful people marched in the several kilometres long procession chanting slogans. Clad in multicoloured outfits a few supporters enacted the process of rice cultivation on mock paddy fields to express their support to the sheaf of paddy, the electoral symbol of BNP.

Thick rows of people were standing on both sides of the 15-kilometer route and many of them were dancing and chanting slogans, while many others were seen standing on rooftops to have a glimpse of the prime minister.

Standing on an open-roof sports utility vehicle, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia with sunglasses on, led the procession to Gabtoli while other leaders including Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Tarique Rahman sometimes walked with the marchers and sometimes stood on cars.

While inaugurating the procession at Naya Bazar, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia urged the people to vote for BNP in the next election. "The election of 2007 is very important for the country. I hope you will help to continue the development of the country by voting for BNP in the next election," she said.

"Bangladesh cannot be run by the will of any individual or any party but the constitution. The next election will be held in accordance with the constitution under a neutral caretaker government," she said firmly.

"The caretaker government will take over in line with the constitution and after conducting the election it will handover the power to elected representatives," Khaleda said adding that the BNP-led alliance government will handover power to a caretaker government on expiry of the ruling alliance's tenure in two months.

The BNP chairperson asked her party leaders and activists to remain alert against any conspiracy to split and weaken the party and said conspiracies are still being hatched against the country and BNP.

Criticising the previous government Khaleda Zia said the country

## Dahagram people

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The Deputy Commissioner today and announce greater action programme from a rally at Bangerbari on Tuesday.

The protesters also staged a sit-in demonstration in front of Dahagram BDR camp.

## Abu Solaiman

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"Solaiman Chowdhury played an important role in bringing the remains of the martyred Pti Lt Bishreshtha Matfir Rahman from Pakistan," said a Bangabhaban release.

Meanwhile, Abdul Halim President of the courtesy call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday.

## 6 fishermen

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Bakkhali river 1.5km west of Cox's Bazar beach and talked with the surviving fisherman.

Jono Majhi said the pirates in the guise of fishermen accompanied them in caching fish in the Bay.

He named the pirates as Robin, 35, Razzak, 38, Shani, 28, Kalam, 22, Horathi, 30, and Nonoyea, 25.

## JCD forces

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Sources said the JCD gathered around 3,500 students from different dormitories of DU to join the procession from Naya Bazar to Gabtoli.

A number of students said the JCD men launched a room-to-room campaign on the eve of the procession and told first, second and third year students to join the procession.

They said the JCD men took them to their dormitory guestrooms and threatened that they would be driven out of the dormitory, if they failed to join the procession.

General Secretary of JCD DU unit told The Daily Star that nobody was forced to join the procession and the students joined because they were either invited, loved JCD or had friendship with JCD leaders.

## Six peacekeepers

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upazila under Jhalakathi district, lance corporal M Abdus Sattar (6 Field Regiment, Artillery) hailing from village Dariapur in Chapainawabganj upazila under the district, soldier Abdul Halim (27 Field Regiment, Artillery) hailing from village Bara Chaisuti in Kuliarchar upazila under Kishoreganj district, soldier Mohammad Kamruzzaman Khan (36 Air Defence Regiment, Artillery) of village Ramutia in Chandina upazila under Comilla district, soldier Mohammad Shahid Mia (32 Field Regiment, Artillery) of village Shatra in Kaulaura upazila under Moulvibazar district and soldier M Mizanur Rahman (24 Field Regiment, Artillery) of village Bhakutia under Jessore district.

On the way, the driver of one of the trucks lost control and the accident occurred, killing five on the spot, while another succumbed to his injuries at a local hospital.

A group of 80 Bangladeshi peacekeepers including the six left the country on August 25 and reached the former French colony the same day to join a UN peace-keeping mission. In four military trucks, they started from Yamoussoukro for Abidjan, 250km away.

Nearly 3,000 Bangladeshi soldiers are working with the UN peacekeeping mission in Ivory Coast, sources in Bangladesh Army said, adding that around 10,000 Bangladeshis are working in 22 UN missions worldwide.

## Ctg port deadlock

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the service providers, not the exporters or importers, he added.

The misunderstanding arose when the CFTC imposed \$130 for each twenty-equivalent-unit container as congestion surcharge from June 5 and realised around Tk 210 crore.

The BGMEA termed this "irrational" and sought refund of the money. It filed a writ against imposition of the surcharge on June 9 and a contempt petition on August 31.

Meanwhile, sources said a huge congestion will occur at the Chittagong Port as the overseas operators, who ship around 65 per cent containers, will continue suspension of loading and unloading containers until Tuesday.

Sources said a total of ten container vessels were berthing at different jetties of Chittagong Port while four departed with exported goods and four others took berthing at the port yesterday. Another five vessels were in the outer anchorage waiting for berthing.

Around 2,000 containers loaded with mainly readymade garments have stockpiled at the Chittagong Port during the last two days, port sources said.

Around 1,100 twenty-equivalent-unit containers usually leave for Singapore through five feeder vessel operators to join the Main Line Operators to reach destinations in Europe and America.

Around 35 feeder vessels--of them 20 owned by the three foreign companies--carry around eight lakh containers to and from Chittagong Port.

# New EC commissioner

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just a courtesy call and it is not irregular."

The newly appointed election commissioner, who left the secretariat premises after spending about two hours there, said, "It is just a casual visit. Nothing significant was discussed during the courtesy call. We only exchanged pleasantries."

Former election commissioner Justice Naimuddin Ahmed said there is nothing wrong with the visit to the EC Secretariat before taking the oath. "After being appointed as an election commissioner, he or she can make courtesy calls, but cannot assume the office before taking the oath," Naimuddin told The Daily Star.

A former adviser to a caretaker government however on condition of anonymity said Mansur should have visited the EC Secretariat after taking the oath. "There may not be any legal problem about the visit, but it does look odd," he told The Daily Star.

After arriving at the secretariat yesterday, Mansur entered the office of EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar and stayed there for 45 minutes. Election Commissioner SM Zakaria also entered the secretary's room and after a few minutes came out with the newly appointed election commissioner.

Then they entered the office

room of the CEC where Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman was talking to the chief.

CEC MA Aziz, and election commissioners -- Justice Mahfuzur, Zakaria and Hasan Mansur -- talked for over half an hour. "It was just a courtesy visit," CEC MA Aziz said.

While leaving the EC Secretariat premises, Mansur declined to comment on the visit. He also refused to comment on the present situation of the EC.

Talking to reporters, the EC secretary said the newly appointed election commissioner was his colleague before. He said the secretariat sent a letter to the Supreme Court's registrar for arranging an oath-taking ceremony that will be conducted by the chief justice.

The newly appointed election commissioner has been giving interviews to private satellite channels since last Friday. On Saturday, in an interview with a private satellite television channel, Mansur said the present EC is able to conduct the next parliamentary election in a free and fair manner.

His remarks apparently ensured that he will support the CEC in lock step with the other two election commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur and Zakaria, who backed MA Aziz on the issue of preparing the controversial fresh voter list.

# Commuters suffer

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Commuters and vehicles were seen waiting for hours at different intersections including Gulistan, Malibagh, Mouchak, Bangla Motor, Sonargah, Farmgate, Asadgate and Shaymoli while the drivers and vehicle owners were advised to take alternative roads.

Thousands of city-dwellers were stranded in the public and private vehicles and rickshaws for hours and the commuters had to wait at the bus stops for a long time.

Even after 9:00pm, many people were seen walking to their destinations while many others were waiting for transport to get back home.

"After remaining stranded on the jam-packed Airport Road for over an hour, I got down from the bus near the Shaheen College and walked to Karwan Bazar to attend my evening office," said a commuter.

Asma Akhter, who left her office near Farmgate at 5:00pm, took one hour and a half to reach her Green Road residence.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia was present at the procession and security was beefed up on the unusually clean procession routes.

The city corporation removed all the garbage containers from the procession routes and a large number of cleaners were employed

to sweep the roads.

The security personnel allowed only the BNP supporters holding flags and festoons to wait beside the roads while the commuters had to stand far away from the streets and bus stops. At noon, there was no public transport at the city's busy Farmgate intersection, as it fell on the procession routes.

Hundreds of ruling party supporters were waiting on the street at different points including Shantinagar, Maghbazar, Bangla Motor, Green Road, Asadgate and Shaymoli from noon while lanes of the adjoining areas became packed with vehicles and rickshaws.

As the procession was passing the Mouchak intersection, Gulistan-bound vehicles from Rampura were stranded for around one hour, causing a three-kilometre long traffic tailback from Mouchak to Badda.

MANNAN BHUIYAN STATEMENT BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement last night asked the city dwellers to excuse the ruling party and its front organisations for yesterday's traffic jams resulting from the procession.

Besides, he expressed gratitude to the partymen for their efforts to make the anniversary programs successful.

# British police

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training regime, designed to indoctrinate recruits into the extremist Islamic cause. The Observer newspaper said police were investigating a network of terror training camps across Britain, which have been operating in isolated rural areas.

Police said the arrests were not linked to the July 2005 London bombings, which killed 56 people, including the four British Islamist extremist suicide bombers.

Nor were they connected to the massive August 10 counter-terrorism operation against an alleged plot to blow up US-bound aircraft.

That ongoing investigation led to more than two dozen arrests, unprecedented security measures at airports worldwide and brought the likelihood of further terror atrocities sharply back into public focus.

Searches were taking place at unspecified locations across London, but one at the Jameah Islamiyah school in the rural village of Mark Cross in Sussex, south of London, was attracting particular attention.

It was reported that the site, with large grounds, was once booked for a weekend by radical Muslim cleric Abu Hamza and his followers for training.

Egyptian-born Hamza, the one-eyed, hook-handed former imam of the once-extremist Finsbury Park mosque in north London, was jailed for eight years earlier this year for soliciting to murder and race-hate crimes.

The 900-pound (1,300-euro, 1700-dollar) a year school is independently run and provides an Islamic education for Muslim boys aged 11 to 15.

Sussex Police said no arrests had been made there but the search could take "days, possibly weeks".

The Sunday Times newspaper, which ran an interview last weekend with Abu Abdullah -- considered Hamza's deputy -- said his home was one of those raided.

He had boasted how he would "love" to kill British troops in Afghanistan and how the London bombers were his "honourable brothers in Islam".

According to the BBC, 12 of the suspects were detained in the Borough area of inner south London at a halal Chinese restaurant, The Bridge to China Town, which is popular with local Muslims.

Of the two others, one was arrested in east London while the location of the last was not specified.

An unnamed security source quoted by PA said there was no evidence of any imminent attack and it was not yet clear if the men were part of one group or a number.

Police have not revealed what prompted them to act.

In an interview to be broadcast Sunday, the head of the Met's Anti-Terrorist Branch said thousands of British Muslims were under surveillance for direct or indirect involvement in terrorism.

## N Korea

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strained after North Korea's missile tests in July.

China is the North's main benefactor. Beijing voted in support of a UN Security Council resolution chastising Pyongyang for the missile tests.

Beijing was expected to convey its formal invitation to Kim early this week when its new ambassador to Pyongyang takes office, Yonhap reported, citing unnamed diplomatic sources in Seoul and Beijing.

South Korean and the US intelligence authorities have detected suspicious vehicle movement in and out of North Korea's major missile test site, Yonhap quoted a government source in Seoul as saying in a separate report on Sunday.

"Military intelligence officials have spotted movements by several large vehicles in the North's Gttdaeryeong area," Yonhap cited the unidentified source as saying.

"They don't rule out the possibility that it is part of preparations for additional missile tests."

The area was used in the test-firing of seven missiles by the North on July 5. These included the North's Taepodong-2 missile, which fizzled out soon after the launch but one day may have a range to hit parts of US territory, experts said.

A government official in Seoul played down the Yonhap report.

"As far as we know, no new vehicles have moved in that area," the official, who is familiar with defence matters, told Reuters by telephone. The official, who asked not to be identified, said the activity was among vehicles that have been at the site since July.

"Given this, it may be too much of a stretch to say this indicates the possibility of new missile tests by the North."

## Biman employees

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financial crisis," said another BAPA leader adding that a conspiracy is on to introduce foreign airlines in the country at the expense of Biman.

As part of the agitation, the pilots will not operate any flights along the domestic routes from September 6. Biman flights between the capital and Syedpur, Rajshahi, Barisal and Cox's Bazar will remain suspended from August 5.

Meanwhile, the civil aviation and tourism ministry has called a meeting for today to resolve the issue. But as of last night, the BSSP was yet to decide whether they would join the talks to be held at the conference room of the ministry.

Another meeting between Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman and State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir today will also discuss the fund crunch at Biman.

Earlier on Saturday, the Pilots Association at a press conference placed a 14-point demand aimed at removing the financial difficulties and ending different irregularities at the state airliner.

## Phulbari flare-up

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government help soon.

Akram told The Daily Star that around 10 policemen beat him up breaking his leg and hand after he was bullet-hit. He said he did not receive anything from the government yet.

Doctors of the hospital said the victims, who have received bullets in the hand, chest and lower part of their body, should immediately be shifted to Dhaka for better treatment.

The families of the victims told The Daily Star that they are having financial difficulties treating them in Dinajpur and moving them to Dhaka is a proposition they cannot afford. They said they have to spend around Tk 600-700 every day for their treatment.

Duty doctor Abul Kalam Azad said a magistrate on Saturday visited the hospital only to collect information about the victims. However, the victims' families alleged neither government officials nor any members of the Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port have paid them a visit.

Meanwhile, Md Bakul, 20, and Dulal, 14, who were receiving treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, have been shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMU) Hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Phulbari Hasan Sarwar yesterday said they are preparing the list of the injured. He said they would send the list to Dhaka for the allocation of funds for the victims' treatment once it is finalised. Asked when the funds will be available, he said it would take at least 20 to 25 days for the fund to arrive.

## Elderly man

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who owns the shop, said about a month ago an unknown man called on his mobile phone and demanded Tk 5 lakh as toll, which he refused outright.

The criminal might have come to kill him as he refused to meet his demand, but killed his father instead as he was not present there, Harun added.

# Democrats on a roll in battle for US Congress

REUTERS, Washington

Democrats enter the fall campaign with a clear edge in the high-stakes fight for control of the US Congress, riding a wave of momentum that has them positioned to retake the US House of Representatives and make significant gains in the Senate.

President George W Bush's low approval ratings and public dissatisfaction with the Iraq war, gas prices and the country's direction threaten Republican leadership in Congress and put Democrats within reach of victory on November 7, analysts said.

"I don't think the question any longer is can Democrats win control of Congress, it's can Republicans do anything to stop it?" said Amy Walter, House analyst for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report newsletter. "All the factors and issues are pushing so strongly against Republicans."

All 435 House seats, 34 of 100 Senate seats and 36 governorships are at stake in November's election, with Democrats needing to pick up 15 House seats and six Senate seats to reclaim majorities.

Strategists in both parties say the glum public mood has created a strong desire for change and given Democrats a big advantage at the traditional opening of the campaign season on Monday's Labor Day holiday.

"It's too late to fix the national mood -- it's not going to be fixed," said Republican pollster Frank Luntz. "The major issues are not playing well for Republicans this year, and Republicans are not playing well with America this year."

History is also with Democrats -- the party holding the White House traditionally loses seats in a president's sixth year. The modern exception was 1998, when public unhappiness over the Republican-led impeachment of President Bill

Clinton helped Democrats gain five House seats.

"This looks like a classic sixth-year election," said University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato, who called the president's low approval ratings, hovering at about 40 percent, "the single best indicator for any mid-term election."

A Democratic majority in even one chamber of Congress would slam the brakes on what is left of Bush's second-term legislative agenda and hasten his descent into lame-duck status in the final two years of his presidency.

## Dhaka jail guard

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about 11:45am on September 1. He was loitering on Nazimuddin Road, adjacent to the jail.

Later, following up the leads obtained from him, the Rab-2 team arrested the other four and found two firearms in their possession. "Faruq had a pistol in his trousers pocket while Delwar had a revolver strapped around his waist," reads the first information report (FIR) filed against them.

The arrestees had been handed over to Kotwali police, who took each of them on a day's remand for quizzing under firearms act.

Investigating Officer Makbul Hossain last night said the quizzing was still going on. He said he was enquiring about backgrounds of the other arrestees but no criminal records have yet been found against them.

"They will be sent to the jail tomorrow [today], and we may seek further remand," Makbul, a sub-inspector, told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the jail authorities said they will have a probe into the matter.

"We are still in the dark as to how he got the arms," said Senior Superintendent of Jail AKM Manjurul Karim adding that departmental actions will be taken against him.

# Iran reaffirms support

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Analysts say Iran may have been emboldened in its nuclear standoff by the Lebanon conflict, which Tehran declared a victory for Hezbollah.

Iran's visit came just days after Tehran failed to meet a UN Security Council deadline to halt sensitive nuclear work which the United States says is aimed at producing a nuclear weapon but which Tehran says is to meet energy needs.

"On the nuclear issue, the president reaffirmed to me Iran's preparedness and determination to negotiate and find a solution to the crisis," Annan told a news conference in Tehran.

Annan added that Ahmadinejad had told him Iran "does not accept suspension (of uranium enrichment) before negotiations," as demanded by the UN Security Council.

UN officials said Annan had also requested to meet Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is the highest authority under the Islamic Republic's system of clerical rule. Khamenei has also said Iran would press ahead with its atomic plans.

UN officials said early on Sunday that no meeting with Khamenei had been scheduled so Annan was expected to leave Iran later on Sunday without seeing him.

Iran has repeatedly shrugged off the threat of sanctions, saying they would hurt industrialized countries more than Iran, the world's fourth largest oil exporter, because such a step would drive already high oil prices higher still.

"I think the issue of sanctions is more like a psychological game," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a news conference. "Right now we should think about

solving the issues through negotiations."

Iran has insisted on holding more talks to resolve the dispute, although some Western diplomats have viewed that as a tactic by Tehran to stall and avoid taking action.

Annan said international peacekeepers were deploying quickly to south Lebanon, joining Lebanese soldiers moving into the region. "That would constitute a credible force," he said, adding that Israeli troops would then be able to withdraw.

More than 500 Italian troops had landed in south Lebanon by mid-morning on Sunday from a force of 800 that had arrived off Lebanon to help keep the peace. Heavy equipment would be flown in later on Sunday, a UN spokesman said.

Italy has pledged 3,000 troops to a UN plan to increase the existing 2,000 peacekeepers in Lebanon to 15,000 to help enforce the truce. Italy's contingent will be the biggest in the force, known as UNIFIL.

"The presence of UNIFIL forces ... and Lebanese forces should accelerate the retreat of the Israeli regime's forces from the land they still have under occupation," Mottaki said. He also called for Israel's "siege" of Lebanon to end quickly.

UN spokesman Ahmad Fawzi earlier told Reuters Annan had raised the issue of the arms embargo with Mottaki when they met on Saturday but he did not give details of the response.

Fawzi also said Ahmadinejad had told Annan in telephone talks prior to his visit that Iran had reservations about some articles of the resolution but would still cooperate in its implementation. He did not say what those reservations were.

# No 2 al-Qaeda leader

FROM PAGE 1

"We believe that al-Qaeda in Iraq suffers from a serious leadership crisis. Our troops have dealt