INTERNATIONAL



Israeli Foreign Minister Tsipi Livini (L) and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas (R) attend a meeting of Middle East peace sponsors in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Shiekh yesterday. The Middle East Quartet was meeting in Egypt to take stock of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, with no sign that a long-elusive deal will be reached this year.

Quartet pushes Israel-PA to stick with peace talks

AFP, Sharm el-Sheikh

The Middle East Quartet called on Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) yesterday to press on with peace negotiations despite domestic political turmoil, which has added to doubts they will be able to seal a deal this year.

It also called for a halt to Jewish settlement activity on occupied Palestinian land, one of the thorniest issues in the peace talks, and for the dismantling of "terrorist infrastructure."

"The Quartet called for the continuing of the peace process in the framework of Annapolis," UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said after a meeting of the Quartet in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

He was referring to the US city where negotiations were revived in November 2007 after near sevendeal by the end of this year.

But with Israel now counting down to early elections in February and rival Palestinian groups still locked in a damaging political feud, there is little hope of the target being met.

"Without minimising the gaps and obstacles that remain the representatives of the parties shared their assessment that the present negotiations are substantial and promising," the final statement said.

the parties to fully implement their obligations under phase one of the road map including in relation to freezing settlement activity and dismantlement of the infrastructure ofterrorism."

European Union, Russia, the United Nations and the United States -- met to discuss progress in resolving core

Palestinian state and refugees.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni she would not sign "any agreement that does not serve Israel's interest and that is not detailed enough to be put into effect. We are not there yet and it could take time."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in Egypt after visiting Israel and the West Bank on what may be her last trip to the region, has tacitly admitted that a deal is unlikely by the time US "The Quartet reiterated its call to President George W. Bush leaves office in January.

"The distance to peace has been narrowed although peace has not been achieved," she said after meeting Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas on Friday during The Quartet -- which groups the her 19th visit to the Middle East in

In the absence of a full accord, Rice is pushing the two sides to year hiatus, with both sides com- problems such as the status of define the outlines of a deal before February.

mitting to reaching a long-elusive Jerusalem, the borders of a future she hands over the dossier to the administration of president-elect Barack Obama.

The Quartet has long backed a peace deal that would see the establishment of an independent Palestinian state living side by side in peace with Israel based on a socalled roadmap drafted in 2003.

But peace talks have been complicated by the ongoing feud between the Islamist Hamas movement, which seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, and Abbas's Fatah party, which has held on to the West Bank.

Reconciliation talks between the rival groups due to begin on Monday in Cairo were cancelled after Hamas announced a boycott.

The peace process has been also clouded by the resignation of Israel's scandal-plagued Prime Minister Ehud Olmert that led to the scheduling of snap elections for

Collapsed Haiti school owner arrested

Death toll rises to 88 AP, Petionville

Haitian police on Sunday were holding the owner of a school that collapsed, killing at least 88 people and setting off a desperate search for

survivors trapped in tons of rubble. Fortin Augustin, the preacher who owns and built College La Promesse in suburban Port-au-Prince, was arrested late Saturday and charged with involuntary manslaughter, said police spokes-

man Garry Desrosier. Augustin was being held at a police station in Haiti's capital, while a US rescue crew searched overnight for survivors of Friday's collapse of the three-story building, which normally holds 500 students and teachers.

In a rare moment of joy in a grim task, Haitian rescuers pulled four children alive Saturday from the rubble and cradled them in their arms as they ran toward ambulances, said UN police spokesman Andre Leclerc.

Rebels and army in fresh al-Qaeda planning clashes in DR Congo: UN

AFP, Kinshasa

Fresh fighting broke out between rebels and government troops in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo Sunday, United Nations sources said, as Angola denied

government troops (FARDC) and the rebels of the CNDP led by renegade general Laurent Nkunda, the Congo (MONUC) Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Paul Dietrich told

"There have been heavy weap-GMT) this morning," said Dietrich.

at Ngungu, some 60 kilometres (35 capital of Nord-Kivu, which is on

"Thousands of people are arriving at the MONUC base at Ngungu"

to take shelter from the fighting, he

Bertrand Bisima, spokesman for the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), said he did not know of the clashes.

The fighting that has flared up reports it had deployed troops to since August between rebel and government forces, in violation of a The latest clashes involved January ceasefire, has so far been limited to Nord-Kivu.

Ngungu was the scene of clashes six weeks ago and is on the spokesman for the UN mission in southwestern edge of the territory controlled by the rebels.

the Angolan delegation at a meeting of the Southern African ons clashes since 5:00 am (0300 Development Community (SADC) denied reports that their troops The fighting was concentrated had been deployed to DR Congo.

On Saturday, a UN peacekeepmiles) west of Goma, the provincial ing officer near the front line in the conflict who requested anonymity the border with Sud-Kivu, he had told AFP that Angolan troops had been seen the previous day fighting beside government forces

But the source with the Angolan delegation told AFP Sunday: "There are no Angolan troops in the

UN spokesman Dietrich had earlier denied there were foreign troops in the country, but did say there was "military cooperation" between Congo and Angola.

"There are perhaps Angolan (military) instructors in country," he said Saturday.

Sunday's renewed fighting is the first since the call for a ceasefire in eastern Congo was made on Friday In Johannesburg, a member of at an international summit in Nairobi.

The summit also called for the creation of humanitarian corridors, as UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned the conflict could

Elsewhere in Nord-Kivu province, Kibati, to the north of Goma, was quiet for the second day running, after clashes Friday. A buffer zone of about a kilometre (1,100 yards) separated the two sides.

terror attacks in UK

Says Intelligence report

PTI, London

al-Qaeda-linked extremists are planning attacks intended to cause mass casualties in the UK, a top British intelligence report has

prepared by the intelligence branch of the British Ministry of Defence, MI5 and Special Branch, warned that secret cells of al-Oaeda extremists based in London, Birmingham and Luton are planning attacks in the UK.

The so-called Government Security Zone (GSZ), an area, which covers the Houses of UK. Parliament, Whitehall, Buckingham and St James' Palaces, is a possible target of the al-Qaeda cells, with threat level in the GSZ described as "severe", the Daily Telegraph reported.

"For the foreseeable future the warned.

UK will continue to be a highpriority target for international terrorists aligned with al-Qaeda. It will face a threat from British nationals, including Muslim converts, and UK-based foreign terrorists, as well as The report, which has been terrorists planning attacks from abroad," the top intelligence report said.

According to the British daily, the report headlined 'International Terrorism' states that "some thousands" of extremists, many believed to have been trained in overseas terrorist camps, are active in the

"The majority of extremists are British nationals of south Asian, mainly Pakistani origin but there are also extremists from north and east Africa, Iraq and the Middle East, and a number of converts," it d in part but claim



Picture shows people gathering at the site of the collapsed College Promesse Evangelique at Petion-ville in Haiti yesterday. At least 88 people were killed when the school collapsed on November 7, with an estimated 700 people inside the building.

NZ enters new era of Like Lincoln and Roosevelt, conservative rule

AP, Wellington

New Zealand entered a new era of conservative rule Sunday, with incoming Prime Minister John Key promising to be a moderate amid fears some of the country's policies on global warming and indigenous people could be rolled back.

Voters on Saturday elected the wealthy former currency market trader to lead them through a recession worsening because of the global financial meltdown, handing long-serving Prime Minister Helen Clark and her central-left Labour Party a crushing defeat.

Key said Sunday he hoped his National Party and coalition partners would be sworn into government within about a week so he can attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit of Pacific Rim leaders in Peru on Nov. 22-23. The financial crisis will top the summit agenda.

In nine years in power, Clark

helped build New Zealand's reputation as one of the world's greenest and most socially progressive societies, based around the South Pacific nation's rugged "Lord of the Rings" landscape and strong indigenous Maori culture. Key campaigned as a moderate,

but his policies include plans to eventually abolish special parliamentary seats for Maori and making the country's greenhouse gas emission trading scheme more favourable to business. On Sunday, he promised to

follow through on tax cuts and probusiness, tough-on-crime policies that include registering the DNA of any suspect arrested for an imprisonable crime. "I don't believe we need to be

radical," Key told the TV One network in one of a round of media appearances Sunday. "I've made it quite clear I want to run a centre-right government, a moderate government."

Obama faces nation in crisis University of North Carolina at threat of a terrorist attack, a resur-

AP, Washington

All presidents are tested. Few walk into the Oval Office when the nation is in the throes of multiple crises. Like Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President-elect Obama is facing a banking emergency.

Like Abraham Lincoln, Obama is trying to patch up national divisions. To ready himself for the job, Obama said Friday he is reading some writings by Lincoln, "who's always an extraordinary inspira-

And like Richard Nixon, George W. Bush and others, Obama will be commander in chief over US troops in combat.

"With two wars and an economic crisis, this is one step away from what Lincoln or FDR faced," said Terry Sullivan, associate professor of political science at the

Chapel Hill. "The question is gent Russia and nuclear prolifera-Which direction is the nation tion in hot spots across the globe. going to go?""

faces are daunting, they also give him the opportunity to shape history in a big way.

"My 88-year-old mother asks me regularly, 'Why would anybody want to be president now?' said Sullivan, who manages the Presidential Transition Project at Rice University. "My answer is 'Every one of them wants to be FDR.' This is their chance. What makes fame in the American presisucceeding." Or, Sullivan added, facing a great challenge and failing.

will inherit not just the economic crisis and the wars in Iraq and fear itself," he said at his inaugura-Afghanistan, but also the ongoing tion in 1933.

"We are in an almost unprece-While the challenges Obama dented situation, at least in modern times," White House chief of staff Joshua Bolten said in a C-SPAN interview Friday.

Knowing his opening moves will be widely scrutinized, Obama tried to roll back expectations on elec-

tion night. "Our climb will be steep," he

said. "We may not get there in one year or even in one term."

Yet he remained upbeat as did Roosevelt, who took the reins of a dency is a great challenge and nation in the depths of the Depression. FDR used his optimism to lift up the downtrodden In fewer than 11 weeks, Obama and refresh the American spirit. "The only thing we have to fear is

File photo dated January 29 shows Omar bin Laden, son of Osama bin Ladan, with his wife Zaina al-Sabah (R) at his apartment on the outskirts of Cairo.

Laden's son in Qatar after being deported by Egypt

AFP, Doha

Osama bin Laden's son Omar arrived in Qatar after being deported from Egypt on Sunday following his return from a failed bid to secure political asylum in Spain, his English-born wife told

Alsabah bin Laden said in a phone call shortly after their flight from Cairo landed in Doha. She did not provide further

details on their status in Qatar. They were barred from entering Egypt on their return from just have cash."

down 27-year-old bin Laden's request for political asylum after he said his life was in danger in the Middle East because he is a pacifist. "The Spanish government

Spain, which on Saturday turned

said that Omar was safe in Egypt and so had a place to go, but when "We're OK. We're in," Zaina we arrived in Egypt they deported us," his wife said earlier by phone from a plane at Cairo airport.

"We're not feeling very good, seeing that everything we have is in Egypt and we can't get anything, can't get (credit) cards, we

Female suicide bomber kills 3 at Iraqi hospital

AP, Baghdad

A female suicide bomber blew herself up at a hospital west of Baghdad yesterday, killing three people and injuring five others, police and hospital officials said.

The officials said two women and a 10-year-old girl were killed in the attack in Amiriyat al-Fallujah near the city of Fallujah, 40 miles west of the capital.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information to the media.

The attack follows a suicide bombing on Saturday that killed eight people and wounded 17 at a police checkpoint near Ramadi. Both Fallujah and Ramadi are

located in Iraq's Anbar province. The violence comes two months after the US handed control of the province over to the Iraqis and shows that militants have not given up the fight despite setbacks at the hands of US and

Iraqi forces. Anbar, a predominantly Sunni Arab expanse stretching from the western edge of the capital to the borders of Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, was long centre stage of the war and a springboard for attacks inside Baghdad.



Balinese relatives of Bali bombings victims pray in Kuta on resort island of Bali yesterday. Three Islamists sentenced to death for the Bali bombings, which killed 202 people, were executed by firing squad early Sunday, after five years of legal challenges.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Sub accident exposes Russian posturing

AFP, Moscow

The loss of 20 people in the Russian military's latest submarine accident is a humiliating blow as the country tries to flex its military muscle on the world stage, analysts States. said vesterday.

military stance and its increasingly ambitious defence industry, analysts said.

2000 and other incidents, the Yezhyednevny Zhurnal, points out to buy Russian weapons?" latest accident "is a severe blow that US military planners have long and shows the kind of problems had few illusions about Russia's many people have been reporting military strength, using such adjectry, its capability of providing tend" in their reports. reliable hardware," said Moscow-Felgenhauer.

oil wealth, Russia's leaders have Golts. tried to revive the defence establishment from its near-terminal collapse in the post-Soviet 1990s, bolstering their message by such stepped-up naval deployments.

awkward time, just before Chatham House.

President Dmitry Medvedev is to preside this month with rine is a sophisticated piece of kit, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez at naval exercises off tained extremely well and even Venezuela's coast seen as sending a then you still have accidents," said report. defiant message to the United Ayers.

And the fact the Akula-class nology route I'm starting to have The accident aboard the submarine - the fastest and most doubts whether they can do that. nuclear-powered attack subma-silent in Russia's navy, capable of The signs are the technology the rine, in which victims were poi- carrying nuclear missiles -- was Russians have now is not somesoned by a fire-fighting system, thought to be destined for lease to thing they can maintain," he said. undermines the country's macho India will prove damaging for the defence industry, experts pre-

Alexander Golts, a commenta- 1940s vintage technology," said Following the Kursk disaster in tor with the on-line magazine

"If we are speaking about the aircraft carrier, the 44,570-tonne based defence analyst Pavel international audience, it's an audience that knows for sure

show is the elusiveness of Russia's tems. goal of building a more hi-tech, sophisticated military rather than they said were systemic in Russia's means as missile tests, long-range one that relies on quantity of men military establishment, including strategic bomber patrols and and firepower as in the Cold War, low morale in a military plagued by said defence analyst Bob Ayers of corruption and hazing and a dwin-The latest accident comes at an the London-based research centre dling number of technical experts

While the Akula-class subma-"such submarines have to be main-"If they try to go down the tech-

As for Russia's foreign weapons exports, "anybody can be a weapons producer if you're producing

Ayers. "The question is who wants Russia's defence industry has already suffered several embarrassments in recent years, includabout the Russian defence indus- tives as "demonstrative" and "pre- ing problems fulfilling an order by India for a refurbished Soviet-era

Admiral Gorshkov. Algeria has also complained Fuelled in recent years by vast Russia is not strong again," said about fighter jets it bought from Russia and has demanded the right What the latest accident does to return them due to faulty sys-

> Analysts pointed to problems in the defence industry.

'World losing war against terror financing'

AP, Washington

The international system for tracking and cutting off terrorist financing has achieved major successes but is fraying seven years after the Sept 11 attacks, two former Treasury Department officials

Some US allies in the fight against terrorism pose the weakest UN countries froze the assets of some 300 al-Qaeda and Taliban members after the 2001 attacks. By early 2004, 112 countries had rati-

fied an international effort to sup-

press terrorist financing. In addition, al-Qaeda is not providing money for operations at past levels. Instead, local cells increasingly are self-funded and send money back to "corporate" al-Qaeda. But international interest in

continuing to comply with UN enforcement rules is waning, according to the former officials, and terrorists have shifted from official financial institutions, frustrating government efforts to cut off their money streams. "Few assets are now being frozen and, in fact, many countries

still have not put in place the legal

framework necessary to take

action," the report states. The arms

embargo and travel ban against

those on the list have not been

enforced.

Donors from Saudi Arabia are the chief sources of support for al-Qaeda groups, according to the report. The research is intended as a

road map for the incoming Obama administration to tighten the system and crack down on evolving terrorist financing schemes. An advance copy of the report, "The Money Trail," was provided to

The Associated Press. The authors,

Matthew Levitt and Michael

Jacobson, are presenting their

findings to government agencies

as well as international organizations and think tanks. Leavitt was deputy assistant treasury secretary for intelligence and analysis from 2005 to early 2007, while Jacobson worked in the department's Office of Terrorism

Both are now at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. They spent 18 months interviewing government and financial executives around the world. The report found that American

ally Kuwait presents a growing

problem, and problems extend

and Financial Intelligence.

through the Gulf states. "Several US officials compared Kuwait's present efforts against terrorist financing to Saudi Arabia's before the May 2003 attack in Riyadh, when the Saudis first realised the extent of the threat on their hands," the report said, citing interviews with unnamed State and Defence Department officials.