



Sarah Palin

Palin blames Bush policies for defeat

AP, Wasilla, Alaska

Alaska Gov Sarah Palin, amid speculation she'll run for president in four years, blamed Bush administration policies for the defeat last week of the GOP ticket and opened her door to her next political opportunity.

Obama plans US terror trials to close Guantanamo

AP, Washington

President-elect Obama's advisers are crafting plans to close the Guantanamo Bay prison and prosecute terrorism suspects in the US, a plan the Bush administration said Monday was easier said than done.

But, underscoring the difficult decisions Obama must make to fulfill his pledge of shutting down Guantanamo, the plan could require the creation of a new legal system to handle the classified information inherent in some of the most sensitive cases.

Many of the about 250 Guantanamo detainees are cleared for release, but the Bush administration has not been able to find a country willing to take them.

Advisers participating directly in the planning spoke on condition of anonymity because the plans aren't final.

The plan being developed by Obama's team has been championed by legal scholars from both major political parties. But as details

surfaced Monday, it drew criticism from Democrats who oppose creating a new legal system and from Republicans who oppose bringing terrorism suspects to the US mainland.

Obama foreign policy adviser Denis McDonough said the president-elect wants Guantanamo closed, but no decision has been made "about how and where to try the detainees, and there is no process in place to make that decision until his national security and legal teams are assembled."

Obama seeks a break from the Bush administration, which established military tribunals to prosecute detainees at the Navy base in Cuba and strongly opposes bringing prisoners to the United States. At the White House, spokeswoman Dana Perino said Monday that President Bush has faced many challenges in trying to close the prison.

"We've tried very hard to explain to people how complicated it is. When you pick up people off the battlefield that have a terrorist background, it's not just so easy to let them go," Perino said. "These issues are complicated, and we have put forward a process that we think would work in order to put them on trial through military tribunals."

But Obama has been critical of that process and his legal advisers said finding an alternative will be a top priority. One of those advisers, Harvard law professor Laurence Tribe, acknowledges that bringing detainees to the US would be controversial but said it could be accomplished.

"I think the answer is going to be, they can be as securely guarded on US soil as anywhere else," Tribe said. "We can't put people in a dungeon forever without processing whether they deserve to be there."

The tougher challenge will be allaying fears by Democrats who believe the Bush administration's military commissions were a fiasco and dislike the idea of giving detainees anything less than the full constitutional rights normally enjoyed by everyone on US soil.

"I think that creating a new alternative court system in response to the abject failure of Guantanamo would be a profound mistake," Jonathan Hafetz, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney who represents detainees, said Monday. "We do not need a new court system. The last eight years are a testament to the problems of trying to create new systems."

Looking at regional strategy in Afghan war

AFP, Washington

Barack Obama's incoming administration is considering a regional strategy to the war in Afghanistan that could include talks with Iran, the Washington Post reported yesterday.

The newspaper, citing unnamed Obama national security officials, also said the incoming US officials support talks between the Afghan government of Hamid Karzai and "reconcilable" members of the Taliban.

Once he takes over as president on January 20 Obama intends to renew the US focus on hunting Osama bin Laden, responsible for the deadly September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States, the Obama advisers told the Post.

The administration of George W. Bush "has been hampered by ideological and diplomatic constraints and an unrealistic commitment to the goal of building a modern democracy" in Afghanistan, the newspaper said.



This picture released by the White House shows US President George W. Bush (L) and president-elect Barack Obama meeting in the Oval Office of the White House on Monday. Obama, gearing up for his historic January 20 swearing-in, held his first face-to-face talks with Bush and got his first look at the Oval Office.

"I did not order the clothes. Did not ask for the clothes," Palin said. "I would have been happy to have worn my own clothes from Day One. But that is kind of an odd issue, an odd campaign issue as things were wrapping up there as to who ordered what and who demanded what."

"It's amazing that we did as well as we did," Palin, who was Sen John McCain's running mate, said of the election in a separate interview with the Anchorage Daily News.

"I think the Republican ticket represented too much of the status quo, too much of what had gone on in these last eight years, that Americans were kind of shaking their heads like going, wait a minute, how did we run up a \$10 trillion debt in a Republican administration? How have there been blunders with war strategy under a Republican administration? If we're talking change, we want to get far away from what it was that the present administration represented and that is to a great degree what the Republican Party at the time had been representing," Palin said in a story published Sunday.

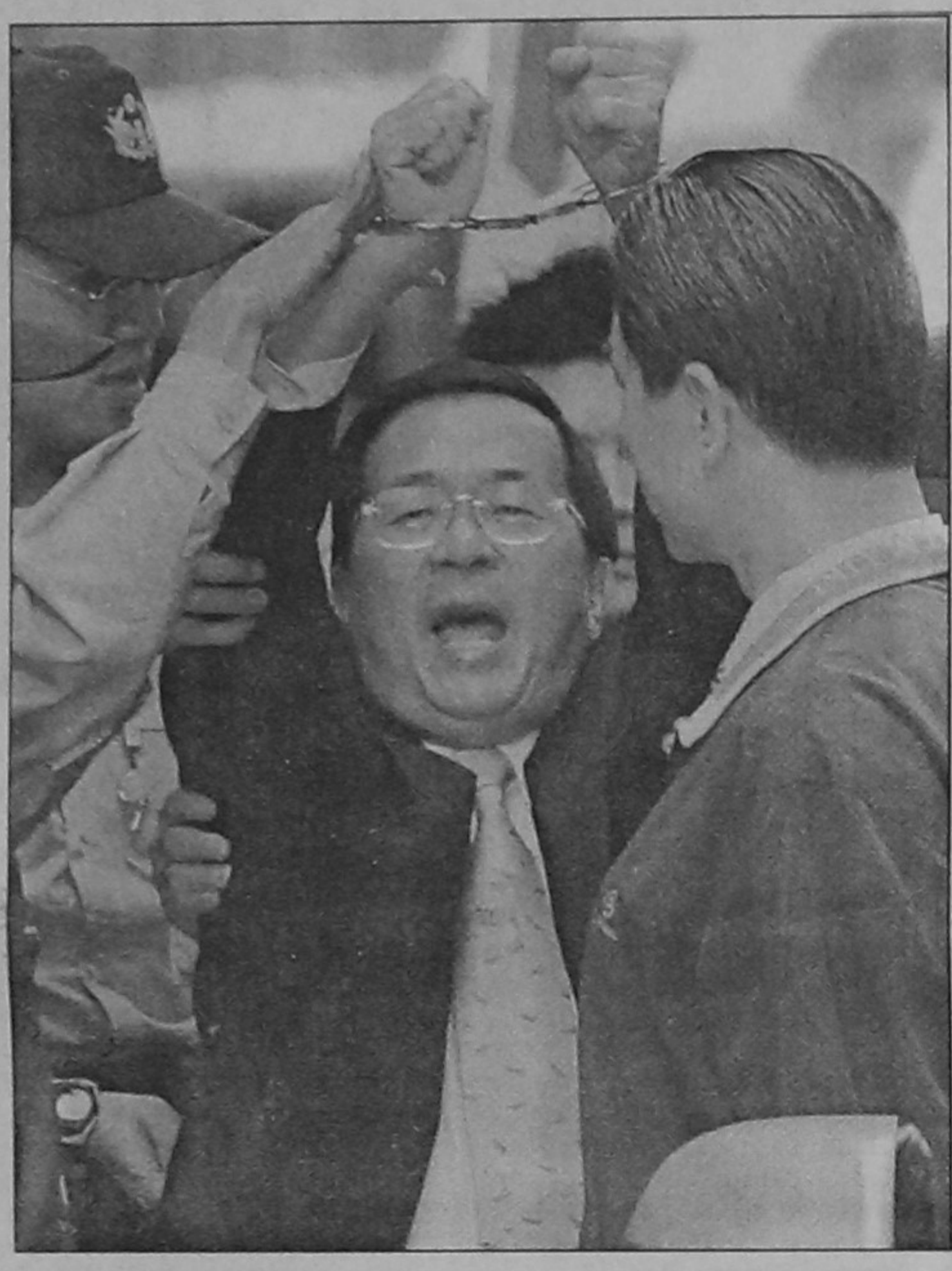


PHOTO: AFP

Former Taiwan's president Chen Shui-bian (C) raises his hand with handcuffs at the prosecutor's office in Taipei yesterday. Chen Shui-bian was arrested as prosecutors sought formal approval to detain him in connection with a corruption probe, officials said.

UN accuses DR Congo army of looting, abuses 50 civilians killed last week: HRW

AFP, Kinshasa

The UN yesterday accused government forces of widespread looting and human rights abuses against civilians in several towns in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Soldiers of the FARDC (Armed Forces of DR Congo) have been engaged since yesterday (Monday) evening in looting and acts of brutality against the civilian population in the Kanyabayonga area, 175km north of regional capital Goma," MONUC spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Jean-Paul Dietrich said.

Violence against civilians had spread to other towns further north, Kama and Kirumba, and was continuing midday Tuesday, Dietrich said in Kinshasa.

The three towns are strategically located in the north of Nord-Kivu province, where rebels loyal to renegade general Laurent Nkunda control much of the territory following an offensive in recent weeks.

Earlier, the New-York based Human Rights Watch said at least 50 civilians, far more than previously thought, were killed during a battle last week in Kiwanja in Nord-Kivu province, and it warned that the figure could rise.

The group urged the UN Security Council to act on an October 30 appeal from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to "urgently increase the number of peacekeepers" to protect civilians in the east of the country.

"The calls from the secretary-general and the cries of distress from the Congolese people should not continue to fall on deaf ears... Civilians need protection now from the killing and raping," it said.

Meanwhile, at least 50 civilians, far more than previously thought, were killed during a battle last week in the east of Democratic Republic of Congo, Human Rights Watch said Tuesday.

Citing local sources and civilians who had fled Kiwanja in Nord-Kivu province, the group said it had revised its death toll from the figure of 20 it initially reported last Thursday -- and warned the figure could still rise.

The New-York-based group also called on the United Nations to urgently increase the number of peacekeeping troops in the region.

Most of those killed had died at the hands of the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) rebels, led by renegade Tutsi general Laurent Nkunda, "in reprisal against those deemed to be enemy collaborators," it said.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Bush eyes graceful exit

AP, Washington

No matter how people remember President Bush's time in office, let there be no doubt about how he wants to end it gracefully.

Never mind that Democrat Barack Obama spent all that time deriding Bush for "failed policies," or mocking him for hiding in an "undisclosed location" because he was too unpopular to show up with his party's own candidate, John McCain. This is transition time. Outgoing presidents support the new guy.

And on that front, Bush is going well beyond the minimum. He has embraced the role of statesman with such gusto that it has been hard to miss.

The result is that Bush's last image at the White House will be one of a magnanimous leader. Whether it will improve his legacy is another matter.

"This has been a very good moment late in his presidency, and, I think it's fair to say, much appreciated by the nation," said Cal Jillson, a political science professor at Southern Methodist University, the home of Bush's planned presidential library.

On Monday at the White House, Bush warmly welcomed Obama,

whose dominant win last week was largely seen as a referendum on the Bush years.

The two leaders spent more than an hour discussing domestic and foreign policy in the Oval Office. And then Bush gave Obama a personal tour all around.

The world saw video images that were replayed all day and night: Bush and first lady Laura Bush greeting Obama and his wife, Michelle, as if they were old friends; Bush strolling with the president-elect along the famous Colonnade adjacent to the Rose Garden, both men waving and smiling.

Translation: Smooth transition. The scene was the latest in a flurry of moves by Bush, all designed to show he is serious about making Obama's start a success on Jan. 20.

More hours after Obama handily ended eight years of Republican rule, Bush commended Americans for making history. "They chose a president whose journey represents a triumph of the American story a testament to hard work, optimism and faith in the enduring promise of our nation," Bush said.

If that effusiveness wasn't enough, he called Obama's win an inspiring moment and said it will be a "stirring sight" when the whole

Obama family arrives.

Then Bush called together about 1,000 employees on the South Lawn and told them to embrace the transition earnestly. This could have been handled in a press release, or even an internal memo to staff. Instead, it was a big, showy expression of support for Obama, with Bush's Cabinet standing behind him.

"The peaceful transfer of power is one of the hallmarks of a true democracy," Bush said. "And ensuring that this transition is as smooth as possible is a priority for the rest of my presidency."

In case anyone missed the point, Bush underscored it in his Saturday radio address. He pledged an "unprecedented effort" to help Obama take power.

Obama's team is noticing. "So far, cooperation has been excellent," said transition chief John Podesta, a veteran of Bill Clinton's White House.

It was Bush's father, the 41st president, who bitterly lost to Clinton in 1992. But George H.W. Bush ordered his top aides to cooperate with Clinton's transition team. He was quoted at the time as saying, "Let us all finish the job with the same class with which we served."

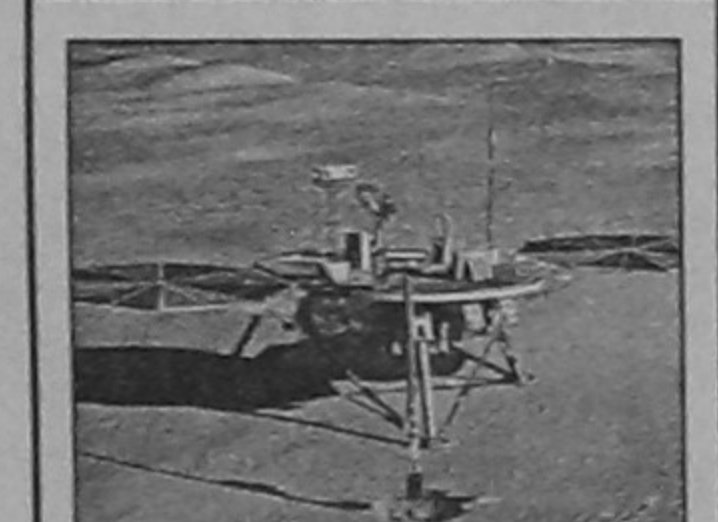


PHOTO: AFP

This filed Nasa artist's conception released on August 4, 2003 shows the "Phoenix" lander on Mars. Nasa scientists said Monday that the Phoenix Mars lander has ceased to operate, because the diminished sunlight resulting from seasonal changes no longer powers the robot's solar arrays.

Phoenix Mars mission has ended: Nasa

AP, Los Angeles

Nasa on Monday declared an end to the Phoenix mission, some five months after the spacecraft became the first to land in Mars' arctic plains and taste water on another planet.

Mission engineers have not heard from the Phoenix lander in over a week. It fell silent shortly after a raging dust storm blocked sunlight from reaching its solar panels.

Although ground controllers will direct two satellites orbiting Mars to listen for Phoenix for several more weeks, the chances that it will respond are slim.

"We are actually ceasing operations, declaring an end of mission operations at this point," said project manager Barry Goldstein of Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, which managed the \$475-million mission.

Phoenix's demise was predicted. Unlike its hardy twin rover cousins Spirit and Opportunity, which are approaching their fifth year near the red planet's more hospitable equatorial region, Phoenix's days were numbered from the outset. With sunlight waning and winter encroaching the arctic plains, scientists had said it was a matter of time before Phoenix would freeze to death.

'Chemicals' in milk

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under the industries ministry could be a reason behind this lack of cooperation between them, sources said.

As the scare of toxic melamine in milk haunts the entire country, the possible presence of toxic substances in the locally marketed pasteurized milk in Sirajganj has now created further fear among locals.

The PHI, in the capital city, has already tested five different sam-

ples of milk from Sirajganj and found them to be adulterated.

However, the health department is unable to test the same samples for presence of toxic materials, as it cannot afford the cost of chemical tests at BSTI.

Sirajganj Civil Surgeon Towhique Islam said, "PHI has confirmed that the milk samples we sent contains less than 2 percent fat whereas pure milk should always have at least 3.5 percent fat in it."

He said a further 35 samples of milk and chhana (curdled milk) from different milk collection centres and dairy farms in the area have been sent to the PHI for tests but the department won't be able to afford the chemical tests at BSTI.

Islam explained that the PHI tests are free and only ascertains water and fat content in milk and not presence of chemicals.

A BSTI official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told The Daily Star that the health department should have talked with higher authorities for tests and made special arrangements to ensure that BSTI carries out the tests for free.

It's a public health concern and something could have been arranged in this regard, he said.

The local health department's actions started after reports published in the media in late October revealed how dishonest businessmen extracted fat from cow milk and mixed it with chemicals or added excess water to milk they sold.

The Sirajganj district department collected milk samples from five milk collection centres in Sirajganj for tests.

Meanwhile, the health department in Sirajganj has been taking steps to sue those involved with production of adulterated milk and ordered the collection centres to stop collection and supply of all kinds of pasteurized milk, Towhique Islam said.

He however did not reveal the names of the traders involved in the marketing of adulterated milk.

Shahzadpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer S M Nazimuddin told The Daily Star their drive against manufacturers of spurious milk would continue.

Meanwhile, consumers are hesitant to buy the adulterated milk and milk products following the PHI findings of adulteration of milk from Sirajganj but are left without choices of alternatives.

Delwar

FROM PAGE 1

government declares today that they've accepted our demands, we'll announce about our participation tomorrow," he told a meeting at the National Press Club auditorium.

Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal organised the meeting to mark the 'National Revolutionary and Solidarity Day'.

Delwar urged the government to give a chance to the BNP-led four-party alliance to take part in the election by meeting its demands and removing all obstacles to the election.

He said, "Many of our prospective leaders won't be able to contest the election if the government meets our demands at the eleventh hour. We'll have nothing to do then."

The BNP leader reiterated that his party will not participate in any "managed" or "staged" election. He also claimed election atmosphere for holding a free and fair election is still absent in the country.

"We're ready for contesting the election and also for movement," he added.

Former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman said those who planned to implement "minus two" formula will themselves be minus from the country and those who are not far away.

Presided over by Principal Sohrabuddin, former lawmaker and president of Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Rizvi Ahmed, Shirin Sultana and Khairul Kabir Khokon.

Earlier in the morning, Delwar exchanged views with BNP Malaysia unit leaders at his Nam flat in the capital.

US left nuke buried under Greenland ice

AFP, London

The United States abandoned a nuclear weapon under the ice in northern Greenland after it was lost following a plane crash in 1968, the BBC reported Monday.

Using testimony of those involved and declassified documents obtained under the US Freedom of Information Act, it said that despite a desperate search of the crash site near a US military base at Thule, the weapon was never found.

Built in the early 1950s, Thule Air Base was of great strategic importance to the United States in its Cold War stand-off with the Soviet Union, allowing a radar to scan the skies for missiles coming over the North Pole.

But Washington feared the Russians might destroy it as a prelude to a nuclear strike against the United States.

As a result the US military deployed nuclear-armed B52 bombers to circle over the base from 1960, so they could head straight to Moscow if it was destroyed, the British broadcaster reported.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinian students hold portraits of their late leader Yasser Arafat as they mark the fourth anniversary of his death in the village of Beit Sahur near the West Bank city of Bethlehem yesterday. A relative of Yasser Arafat insisted Monday that the Palestinian leader who died four years ago this week was poisoned by Israel.

Moment of truth for Shia party over US pact

AP, Baghdad

The fate of an agreement that would keep US troops here for three more years rests with Iraq's largest Shia party, which must choose between its two main partners: the United States and Iran.

Most lawmakers are waiting for that party, the Supreme Islamic Iraq Council, to take a position on the agreement, which parliament must approve by the end of the year. Only then will smaller groups, including Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's own Shia party, commit to the deal or oppose it.

For the moment, all the parties are off the hook. Government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh said Monday that the government is still not satisfied and wants more talks on specifics.

But once both the Iraqi and American governments declare a draft final, it will be the moment of truth for the Supreme Council.

It will have to choose between the Shia-dominated neighbour that nurtured it during Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated regime and a superpower that helped it spearhead the Shia rise to power after ousting the dictator in 2003.

Advertisement for a political party with a logo and text in Bengali: 'আমার ভোট আমি দেবো দেখে শুনে জেনে দেবো' (I will give my vote to the one I see, hear, and know).