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**50 YEARS OF
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**TERCENTENARY
CELEBRATIONS**

WORLD

Omar, 3 others plead not guilty to Pearl murder

Karachi, April 22

A Pakistani court today formally charged British-born Islamic militant Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and three other men with the murder of U.S. reporter Daniel Pearl, who was kidnapped in Karachi in January.

Sheikh Ahmed Saeed (R), father of Sheikh Omar, accompanied by defence lawyer Rai Bashir Ahmed, leaves the Central Jail, Karachi, on Monday.
— Reuters photo

SC can decide on Pak referendum

Islamabad, April 22

Amid mounting criticism against President Pervez Musharraf's attempts to get elected through a referendum, the Pakistan Supreme Court today asserted that it was very much the competent authority to decide over the merits and the legality of the referendum.

Israel to try Fatah leader

Jerusalem/Gaza/Bethlehem, April 22

Israeli soldiers shot dead five armed Palestinians in the Gaza Strip before dawn today Israeli media reports said. Troops entered the Gaza Strip's El-Bureij refugee camp, sparking gunbattles with armed Palestinians and killing two policemen, the reports said.



A masked Hamas fighter carries an anti-tank weapon as fighters take up positions around Gaza City early on Monday.
— Reuters photo

New US rules 'not realistic'

If there is any doubt that the recent significant changes announced by the US Immigration and Naturalisation

WORLD BRIEFS



American pop star Britney Spears waves to her fans during her appearance before the preview of her coming-of-age movie "Crossroads" in Tokyo on Monday. — AP/PTI

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Service curtailing the period of stay for visitors on tourist and business visas were the result of American paranoia about terrorists, the confirmation comes from the INS Commissioner James Ziglar.

▶ **Powell fails to move Sharon on pullout**
April 13, 2002

Le Pen forces Jospin into exile

Paris, April 22

Far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen stormed into the second round of France's Presidential election on Sunday, ending Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's career in a stunning disavowal of mainstream politics.

French National Front President candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen raises his arms after signing the French National Anthem at his campaign headquarters in Saint Cloud, near Paris, on Sunday. — AP/PTI photo



Pak ultras 'being trained' in J&K

Dubai, April 22

Pakistan-based militant outfits, including the Lashkar-e-Toiba, the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, are believed to be sending volunteers to Kashmir for training before pushing them into Afghanistan, 'Gulf News' reported.



Omar, 3 others plead not guilty to Pearl murder **Aamir Ashraf**

Karachi, April 22

A Pakistani court today formally charged British-born Islamic militant Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh and three other men with the murder of U.S. reporter Daniel Pearl, who was kidnapped in Karachi in January.

A court official said the four men all pleaded not guilty to charges of terrorism, kidnapping and murder — which carry the death penalty — at a closed door session of a special anti-terrorism court inside Karachi's Central Jail. "The court has formally charged all the four arrested suspects and they pleaded not guilty," the official said.

Pearl, the South Asia bureau chief of the Wall Street Journal, disappeared while pursuing a story on Islamic militants and investigating possible links between alleged shoe-bomber Richard Reid and Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida network.

Almost a month later, a gruesome video surfaced showing Pearl had been murdered. It was a huge embarrassment to the Pakistani government as it tried to establish itself as a key partner in the U.S.-led war on terror.

Several hours before the charges were laid, Sheikh Omar's father and a defence lawyer arrived at the jail. The brother and mother of co-defendant Sheikh Adil, a former policeman, were also admitted.

The police says the other two alleged accomplices, Salman Saquib and Fahad

Naseem, have confessed to their role in the kidnap, although a defence lawyer said earlier this month Saquib had complained he had been tortured in police custody.

The case has been dogged by controversy and delays. Last week, the judge was replaced after the Sindh High Court upheld an application that Judge Arshad Noor Khan could be called as a prosecution witness, as he had heard statements made by Sheikh Omar while not under oath at a remand hearing.

Defence lawyer Abdul Waheed Katpar said the court was also likely to make a final decision on what to do about seven other men still wanted in connection with the case.

"Today the court will decide about the seven people who are on the run, whether to try them in absentia or not," he said. The previous hearing in the case was adjourned to give police more time to find the seven.

Washington has also indicted Sheikh Omar for hostage-taking and requested his extradition — a move Islamabad has resisted, saying the case must first be resolved under Pakistani law. Defence lawyers have also filed a contempt of court application against military ruler, Gen Pervez Musharraf. In the application, Katpar said Gen Musharraf told German magazine Der Spiegel he wanted to see Sheikh Omar sentenced to death.

In previous hearings, Sheikh Omar, the well-educated son of a wholesale cloth merchant from Wanstead in northeast London, has rejected the court's authority and asked to be tried in an Islamic court under Sharia law, lawyers say.

The special court is supposed to reach a verdict within seven days once the case begins, but domestic and international human rights groups say anti-terrorism courts often seem designed to convict rather than find justice.

They have also expressed concerns the government could be pushing for a quick verdict to prevent the trial generating more embarrassing headlines, especially about possible links between Islamic militants and Pakistan's powerful intelligence agencies. **Reuters**



SC can decide on Pak referendum

Islamabad, April 22

Amid mounting criticism against President Pervez Musharraf's attempts to get elected through a referendum, the Pakistan Supreme Court today asserted that it was very much the competent authority to decide over the merits and the legality of the referendum.

As the nine-member Bench of the court, specially constituted to hear the spate of petitions opposing the referendum, began the hearing Chief Justice Sheikh Riaz Ahmed announced that the apex court was the competent authority to hear the petitions and decide its legality.

His remarks assume significance as the referendum order issued by General Musharraf in his capacity as the Chief Executive said the outcome of the referendum could not be questioned in any court of law.

President Musharraf subsequently clarified that he would abide by the Supreme

Court's verdict over the issue.

Justice Ahmed said the authority of the judiciary could not be abrogated in as much as democracy could not be established without political parties.

The apex court today took up identical petitions filed by mainstream political parties as well as the Supreme Court Bar Association challenging the referendum to be held on April 30 for extension of President Musharraf's term in office for five years.

The petitions were filed by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, chief of the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy — an umbrella group consisting of mainstream political parties and others.

Questioning the legality of the referendum, Farooq Hasan, a petitioner's lawyer, in his opening arguments told the court that the system of referendum for election of the President was not in accordance with the Constitution.

Mr Hasan submitted that the referendum was also violative of the Supreme Court order which confirmed a limited legitimacy on the Musharraf government.

The court order, while endorsing the military coup of October 1999, asked President Musharraf to hand over power to an elected government by October 2002.

Mr Hasan argued that President Musharraf had not complied with the Supreme Court order by assuming presidency by ousting Rafiq Tarar last year. He said the President did not qualify for the office of the President under Article 41 of the Constitution as he was not democratically elected.

"President Musharraf is now demanding five years' extension in his rule which is completely unconstitutional," he said adding the President could only be elected by an elected Parliament and provincial Assemblies and not through a referendum.

He also said President Musharraf was the Chief of the Army, Chief Executive and the President at the same time, which was ultra vires to the Constitutional provisions.

During the course of proceedings, the Chief Justice asked Mr Hasan whether the Chief Executive order to hold referendum amounted to an amendment to the Constitution, to which Mr Hasan responded in affirmative.

The proceedings were adjourned till tomorrow. The court was expected to conduct the hearings on day-to-day basis to reach an early verdict. **PTI**



Israel to try Fatah leader

Jerusalem/Gaza/Bethlehem, April 22

Israeli soldiers shot dead five armed Palestinians in the Gaza Strip before dawn today Israeli media reports said.

Troops entered the Gaza Strip's El-Bureij refugee camp, sparking gunbattles with armed Palestinians and killing two policemen, the reports said.

Three suspected Palestinian militants were killed when they tried to infiltrate two separate Jewish settlements in the northern Gaza Strip. A sixth Palestinian was killed in the northern West Bank city of Tulkarm overnight, when hit by a bullet on the way to his farm, Palestinian sources reported.

The daily Yediot Ahronot, quoted Palestinian officials as saying they feared the Israeli army was planning to storm the compound, which troops have continued to encircle, even after the Israeli army withdrew from parts of Ramallah early yesterday.

US envoy William Burns met Arafat at the leader's beleaguered headquarters, as part of mediation efforts to end the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian violence.

Meanwhile, Israel took its judicial step on Monday towards putting senior Fatah leader Marwan Barghouthi on trial accused on masterminding the killing of scores of Israeli in Palestinian suicide attacks.

Israeli Attorney-General Eliyakim Rubenstein set up a team of senior legal and security specialists to oversee the case of Barghouthi, who was captured by Israeli special forces in Ramallah last week.

The Justice Ministry said statement the team of prosecutors, military officers, police and secret service agents would "oversee the investigation and recommendations down the line on putting him (Barghouthi) on trial."

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was vowed to try Barghouthi, a top official of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction, but Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat has said a trial would violate interim peace accords.

Mohammad Rashid, a senior aide to Arafat, said: "Israel knows full well that Marwan Barghouthi is a political leader and has no relation whatsoever to so-called terrorism. "He had been directly engaged in the political process and the future of peace in the region."

NIAMEY: The Muslim-dominated African country of Niger has announced it was cutting diplomatic relations with Israel, in an official statement broadcast on the radio.

Niger blamed the move on the "intransigence" of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The west African country, where more than 90 per cent of the population is Muslim, resumed diplomatic ties with Israel in 1996 after severing them in 1973. **Reuters, AFP**



A Palestinian girl plays in the destroyed Jenin refugee camp on Sunday. Israeli tanks rumbled out of two West Bank cities on Sunday after a crushing three-week occupation but kept up sieges of Yasser Arafat's headquarters and a Bethlehem church where gunmen are holed up. — Reuters photo



New US rules 'not realistic'

A. Balu

If there is any doubt that the recent significant changes announced by the US

Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) curtailing the period of stay for visitors on tourist and business visas were the result of American paranoia about terrorists, the confirmation comes from the INS Commissioner James Ziglar.

"While we recognise that the overwhelming majority of people who come to the USA as visitors are honest and law-abiding, the events of September 11 remind us that there will always be those who seek to cause us harm," Mr Ziglar said earlier this week, while clarifying the new rules that are bound to affect thousands of Indians visiting their kith and kin in the USA.

The new proposals eliminate the minimum period of six months time for B2 non-immigrant visitors (tourists and businessmen) and instead base the admission period on the amount of time needed to accomplish the purpose of the trip (in many cases 30 days). They also reduce the maximum initial admission period for all B non-immigrant visitors from one year to six months. The new rules also prohibit non-immigrants admitted in B visitor status from changing to student status unless they state an intention to study at the time of admission.

In an open letter to the INS Commissioner, Dr V. Gopal, former president of Indian Association of Minnesota, has said the new rules fly in the face of the very family values that the USA preaches. Although the new regulations are motivated by the desire to curb the influx of terrorists into the USA, from the practical point of view, it would be the relatives, quite often retired parents, and law-abiding, tax-paying immigrants who will be affected.

Dr Gopal adds: "A mother wants to spend a couple of months with her daughter who lives in the USA. Would the INS consider it a compelling reason to grant an extended stay? What yardstick does an immigration inspector use to determine a fair and reasonable time that a mother should spend visiting her daughter? The INS is terribly out of touch with reality".

According to the law office of Rajiv S. Khanna, based in Washington, the new policy does not mean that all visitors will be permitted to stay for 30 days only. It means that INS will carefully consider at the airport how much stay is appropriate. They should still permit six months' stay in appropriate cases.



Le Pen forces Jospin into exile

Paul Holmes

Paris, April 22

Far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen stormed into the second round of France's Presidential election on Sunday, ending Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's career in a stunning disavowal of mainstream politics.

In a showing that sent shockwaves through Europe and triggered a political earthquake in France, the anti-immigrant, anti-Europe campaigner pushed Mr Jospin into third place to face conservative President Jacques Chirac in a runoff on May 5.

Up to 10,000 protesters, many of them young leftists, marched in Paris shouting "Le Pen is a fascist", with smaller demonstrations in at least five other cities.

The police fired tear gas at hundreds of demonstrators in the capital's Place de la Concorde and protesters smashed the window of one of the city's most famous

restaurants, Maxim's.

Mr Jospin, humiliated after a dull campaign that failed to capitalise on his government's economic record, announced he would quit politics after the second round, leaving the Left leaderless in the run-up to parliamentary elections in June.

Mr Chirac, bidding for a second term as he fights a string of corruption allegations, polled just 19.6 per cent of the vote, the lowest of any front runner in a presidential election since the foundation of France's Fifth Republic in 1958.

National Front leader Le Pen took 17 per cent of the vote, one point more than Mr Jospin, according to a count of 97 per cent of the ballot.

A record 27.6 per cent of the electorate abstained from the contest, fought by an unprecedented field of 16 contenders.

With the mainstream left expected to back Mr Chirac for the runoff in a national alliance to beat off Mr Le Pen, opinion pollsters forecast that the Gaullist incumbent, 69, would romp home in the runoff with up to 80 per cent of the vote.

The Left's disarray also raised the odds that Mr Chirac could win a centre-right majority in legislative elections for a new National Assembly on June 9 and 16.

France's Communists, allies in Mr Jospin's coalition government, slumped to their worst showing in history with barely 3.5 per cent of the vote in a contest that highlighted the depths of French disaffection with established parties. **Reuters**



Pak ultras 'being trained' in J&K

Dubai, April 22

Pakistan-based militant outfits, including the Lashkar-e-Toiba, the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, are believed to be sending volunteers to Kashmir for training before pushing them into Afghanistan, 'Gulf News' reported.

They are planning a "new effort" to carry out 'Jehad' aimed mainly at restoring the Taliban to power in some areas, the Lahore-dateline report quoting intelligence sources said. The Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) is believed to be "also carrying out recruitment" in towns of Pakistan's Punjab and despatching volunteers for training to camps based mainly in Kashmir. **UNI**



WORLD BRIEFS

EMERGENCY DECLARED IN PHILIPPINE CITY

MANILA: President Gloria Arroyo today declared a state of emergency in a southern Philippine city where a series of bomb blasts left 14 dead and 60 injured, her National Security Adviser said. He said the state of emergency in General Santos city would be similar to that declared in the southern island of Basilan last year. **AFP**

1,000 REBELS SURRENDER

KAMPALA: More than 1,000 Sudan-based rebels commanded by a former Cabinet Minister in former-Ugandan President Idi Amin's government have surrendered to the Kampala government in the past few days under an amnesty put into effect three years ago, a military spokesman has confirmed. **DPA**

3 DIE IN GRENADE ATTACK

ISLAMABAD: A grenade attack on a wedding party killed three persons, including two children, and wounded 42 others in a village near the Pakistani border city of Peshawar, news reports said on Monday. **DPA**



A Sri Lankan police officer stops Buddhist monks participating in a protest against the government's cease-fire agreement with the Liberation Tamil Tigers of Elam (LTTE), in Colombo on Monday. About 150 monks belonging to an organisation called the National Bhikku Front took part in the march against the cease-fire agreement, which they say virtually hands over rebel-held areas to the LTTE. — Reuters



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