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Poison probe into Arafat's death

Arab doctors to examine allegations after five years

AMMAN (Jordan): Nearly five years after Yasser Arafat died from what French doctors called a massive brain haemorrhage, Arab doctors will meet in Jordan to look into lingering suspicions the Palestinian leader was poisoned.

Arafat's death at a military hospital outside Paris quickly spawned speculation he'd been killed by Israel, which viewed him as an obstacle to a peace treaty.

The 75-year-old Arafat, who led the Palestinian movement for almost 40 years, fell violently ill in October 2004 at his West Bank compound in Ramallah. He was moved to a French hospital where he died on Nov 11, 2004.

At the time, French doctors



ARAFAT: Israel denies killing him

bound by strict privacy rules were tight-lipped about Arafat's condition, and his widow refused an autopsy. Palestinian leaders have

never given a definitive cause of his death.

French doctors who treated Arafat concluded in a report that he died of a "massive brain haemorrhage" after suffering intestinal inflammation, jaundice and a blood condition known as disseminated intravascular coagulation, or DIC.

What brought on the DIC was not explained. The condition has numerous causes, ranging from infections to colitis to liver disease.

"Consultation with experts and laboratory tests could not help to find a cause that would explain ... the group of syndromes," his French doctors wrote at the time. The report made no mention of poison or another popular

theory, AIDS.

Israel strongly denied any role in Arafat's death. French doctors declined to comment on the speculation.

Jordanian heart surgeon Abdullah al-Bashir said the meeting today involving seven to eight doctors — many who treated Arafat when he fell ill — will try to determine whether he was poisoned.

The Palestinian leader battled Israel for years before signing peace treaties in the 1990s. But Israel blamed him for the failure of further peace talks, and he spent his last two years under siege in his West Bank compound, after Israel accused him of being behind a wave of suicide bombings. — AP