

Assad forced into key concessions

Syria's embattled president Bashar al-Assad, who inherited power in 2000 after his father's death, is making a series of overtures to try to ease growing unrest, but protesters are dismissing them as either symbolic or coming far too late

STEPS ON ROAD TO REFORM

■ **Jun 20:** In televised speech, Assad says committee on national dialogue will be set up to discuss criteria for constitutional reform – **but warns there can be no reform at time of “sabotage and chaos”**

Assad also says May 31 amnesty may be expanded – **but stresses it is important to differentiate between “saboteurs” and people with legitimate demands**

■ **May 25:** Cabinet cuts diesel price by 25%, “in response to citizens demands” and sets up committee to study economic reform. **Many Syrians believe only small group of crony capitalists are benefitting from reforms**

■ **Apr 21:** State of emergency rule, in place since 1963 and blamed for thousands of human rights violations, lifted. **Activists say move remains symbolic unless accompanied by other measures**

■ **Apr 7:** Syrian nationality granted to Kurds deprived of citizenship as result of 1962 census. **Officials not revealing numbers given citizenship since decree was signed**

■ **Mar 29:** Prime Minister *Naji al-Otari* replaced by reformist *Adel Safar*. **Governors of Deraa and Homs sacked after major unrest in both cities**

