



PHOTO: AFP  
Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) delivers his speech during the World Climate Change Conference in Moscow yesterday. Putin said the Russian government was studying the ratification of the Kyoto protocol on global warming but gave no indication of when the country might give its approval.

## Russia still undecided on ratifying Kyoto protocol

### Climate conference begins in Moscow

AFP, Moscow

Russia has yet to decide whether it will ratify the Kyoto treaty on greenhouse gases, President Vladimir Putin said yesterday at the opening of an international conference on climate change in Moscow.

Kyoto supporters had been hoping to convince Russia, whose agreement is necessary to bring Kyoto into force, to ratify the 1997 treaty during the World Conference on Climate Change that Moscow is organising.

"The Russian government is meticulously examining this question and is studying all of the difficult problems associated with it," Putin said as he opened the five-day conference.

"The decision will be taken at the end of this work and in conformity with Russia's national interests," he told the gathering of some 1,200 experts from 43 countries.

Putin said that "restrictions should not be enacted that would restrict economic growth and social development."

In the days before the event, Russian and foreign experts said that Moscow would make its decision on the Kyoto treaty on economic and political criteria, rather than purely ecological considerations.

An official in the presidential administration said last week that Russia would only ratify Kyoto if it received firm guarantees on investment and on the sale of emission rights.

European officials have already ruled out such a prospect as unrealistic.

The Kyoto protocol, signed in 1997, provides for a worldwide reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases held responsible for global warming, notably carbon dioxide.

To come into force it requires the ratification of countries representing

at least 55 percent of the global total of carbon dioxide emissions. With the United States refusing to ratify the treaty, Russia's signature is needed to pass the threshold.

Experts agree that the treaty is beneficial to Russia since it allows countries to buy or sell pollution quotas and Russia, following the post-Soviet collapse of much of its antiquated industry, would have quotas for sale.

Even by 2010 its CO2 emissions will be between 11 and 25 percent below their benchmark 1990 levels, according to the last Russian report to the United Nations.

Russia can also benefit from the Kyoto treaty by modernising its energy sector under a clause that allows an industrialised country to avoid a forced reduction in its own emissions in exchange for a "clean" investment abroad, a leading pro-Kyoto deputy, Alexander Kosarikov said.

## Bomb blast kills 11 in Colombia

REUTERS, Bogota

A remote-control bomb killed 11 people and wounded at least 40 in southern Colombia on Sunday when it ripped through a crowded street lined with restaurants and discos, authorities said.

The government blamed the blast on leftist rebels. The roughly 10-pound bomb, attached to a motorcycle, exploded at about 3 a.m. in the Zona Rosa district in Florencia, 210 miles south of Bogota, as revelers were leaving bars to go home, Gen. Luis Ardila, commander of the 12th Army Brigade in Florencia, told Reuters.

Two patrolling police officers were among the dead. The blast also killed a 12-year-old boy who sold candies on the street, and a 15-year-old girl had a leg amputated in hospital, doctors and military officials said.

The attack was a blow to President Alvaro Uribe's efforts to rein in indiscriminate violence in a four-decade guerrilla war that kills thousands of people every year.

## World's oldest man dies

REUTERS, Tokyo

The world's oldest man, retired Japanese silkworm breeder Yukichi Chuganji, died in his home at the age of 114, local government officials said yesterday.

Family members found him dead in his futon sleeping mattress on Sunday evening, the officials on the southern island of Kyushu said.

Born on March 23, 1889, Chuganji worked as a silkworm breeder and bank employee after leaving school. He also served as a community welfare officer.

He had been in good health, talking daily with his daughter's family with whom he lived, but had not ventured from his bed very often in recent years and had poor eyesight.

With Chuganji's death, Kamen Nakamura becomes Japan's oldest man at 108. It was not immediately known whether he had inherited the mantle of world's oldest man.

Japan boasts the world's longest life expectancy - 78 years for men and 80 for women - and the oldest living person is Kamato Hongo, a 116-year-old Japanese woman who also lives on Kyushu.

# China, India eye non-aggression pact with SE Asian nations

### Russia may also follow

AFP, Manila

Nuclear powers China and India and possibly Russia are to sign a non-aggression pact with Southeast Asia, laying the ground for managing potential conflicts in the region, ASEAN officials say.

They will be the first foreign powers to adhere to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) at the leaders meeting of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Indonesia's Bali resort next week.

"Right now, only China and India are sure to accede to the Treaty while Russia, which also wants to sign up, is awaiting approval from its parliament," ASEAN spokesman M.C. Abad told AFP.

The United States, which is stamping its influence on the region through its fight against terrorism, is unlikely to follow suit as its activities may be constrained by the treaty, analysts say.

Sundram Pushpanathan, ASEAN's head of external relations, said that by signing up to the TAC, "China and India will come into the inner circle of ASEAN," grouping Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

"This reflects the high level of commitment by China and India to the peace and security of the region and it will pave the way for greater engagements by them in regional political and security matters," he said.

One of the most important principles of TAC, adopted in 1976 by the core Southeast Asian countries worried then by the rise of communism, is the renunciation of the

threat of use of force.

The other key principles are respect among member nations for their sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in each other's affairs and peaceful settlement of disputes.

Under the TAC, a so-called High Council is in charge of resolving conflicts among signatories bound by a code of conduct in inter-state relations.

"The council, composed of representatives of all the contracting parties at the ministerial level, will take cognizance of disputes likely to disturb peace in the region," Abad said.

"It can also constitute itself as a process for mediation and recommend measures to the parties in dispute," he said.

But the council has not been convened since TAC came into

force.

Indonesia, the current chairman of the ASEAN standing committee, the grouping's policy-making body, may propose to give the council more teeth as an efficient dispute-resolving mechanism.

China, which has overlapping claims over the Spratly islands in the South China Sea with some ASEAN states, particularly may want to test the effectiveness of the TAC in resolving disputes.

Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam, as well as China and Taiwan claim the Spratly Islands, a potentially oil-rich archipelago.

The ASEAN states last year signed a treaty with China aimed at preventing an escalation of tensions over the Spratlys.



PHOTO: AFP  
French President Jacques Chirac kisses the hand of US First Lady Laura Bush yesterday at the Elysee Palace in Paris. After a meeting with Jacques Chirac, Laura Bush was set to address the UN cultural organisation Unesco on the occasion of America's return to the body after nearly two decades.

## Egypt frees plotter of Anwar Sadat killing

AP, Cairo

An Islamic militant group leader who helped plot the assassination of President Anwar Sadat but later expressed regret for the Egyptian leader's killing has been released from prison after nearly 22 years, officials said Sunday.

Karam Zohdy, 51, one of the leaders of Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, or Islamic Group, was serving a life sentence for being among those who ordered Sadat's assassination in October, 1981. Zohdy was released Thursday and returned to his hometown of Minya, 140 miles south of Cairo, police officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

In a July interview with the London-based daily Asharq Al-Awsat, Zohdy called Sadat a martyr and said he believed the assassination was wrong. He said if he could turn back time, "I would interfere to prevent it." Zohdy and the group have also renounced violence entirely.

## 'Much of Iraqi defectors' information unusable'

REUTERS, New York

A Defence Intelligence Agency internal review determined that much of the information Iraqi defectors gave to US officials could not be substantiated or was otherwise unusable, the New York Times reported yesterday, citing federal sources.

Also, some defectors from Iraq that the Iraqi National Congress had introduced to US intelligence officials gave false information about their credentials and misled interviewers about how much they knew about the Iraqi government's weapons programme, said the paper.

Other Defence Department officials, who defended the arrangement between the exile group and defense intelligence agents to the Times, said US officials had already met the information with skepticism but it still helped improve awareness

and helped confirm what agents already knew.

No more than one-third of the information gained from the defectors was potentially useful and many leads did not pan out, officials told the daily.

Some of the intelligence in question includes information on Iraq's suspected program for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Data provided about the Iraqi government is also doubted, the officials informed the Times.

The arrangement between the United States and the exile group, which was funded by taxpayers, may have wasted more than \$1 million, officials informed the Times, adding that they and others now question the credibility of the group's leader, Ahmad Chalabi, as well as doubt the Iraqi National Congress.

## Pak leaders unimpressed with al-Qaeda appeals to oust Musharraf

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan Muslim and militant leaders rejected yesterday calls attributed to the al-Qaeda terror network's number two to overthrow President Pervez Musharraf for betraying Islam.

The Islamic republic's largest Muslim party, Jamaat-ul-Islami (JI), which campaigns fervently against Musharraf's unelected presidency and sweeping powers, dismissed the calls attributed to Ayman al-Zawahiri as violent.

"We do not subscribe to Zawahiri's or anyone else's views," JI senator Khurshid Ahmed told AFP.

"We have strong differences with Musharraf's policies and are democratically trying to influence him to bring a change.

"We have our own strategy of Islamic restructuring and it is through power of the ballot and a democratic struggle," he said.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party leader Fazlur Rehman - once openly supportive of the hardline Islamic Taliban regime that was

ousted from neighbouring Afghanistan in late 2001 - also rejected the calls.

"We don't need guidelines from al-Zawahiri or any other leaders from outside," he said.

The calls were made in tapes broadcast by Arab TV channels Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera in which the speaker, purportedly al-Zawahiri, called Musharraf a "traitor" for helping US-led forces topple the Taliban, considering sending troops to Iraq and considering recognising of Israel.

"Muslims in Pakistan must unite and cooperate to topple this traitor and install a sincere leadership that would defend Islam and Muslims," the speaker said.

The calls echoed statements on another audiotape attributed to al-Zawahiri by Al-Jazeera on the eve of the second anniversary of 9/11.

Pakistan's radical Jamaat-ud-Dawa organisation, the political wing of the outlawed Lashkar-e-Taiba militants fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, said the voice on the tape had to be proven.

## Israel lifts WB, Gaza closure as Qorei finalises cabinet

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli army lifted its blockade of the West Bank and Gaza Strip yesterday at the end of a Jewish holiday that saw more bloodshed while incoming Palestinian prime minister Ahmed Qorei put the finishing touches to his cabinet.

The army had sealed off the Palestinian territories on Friday evening at the beginning of the Rosh Hashanah weekend with a view to preventing would-be Palestinian attackers from crossing into Israel.

But the seemingly airtight military blockade failed to prevent the killing of two Israelis, including a seven-month-old baby girl, on Friday night in the Negohot settlement near the West Bank town of Hebron.

The shooting was claimed by the radical Palestinian movement Islamic Jihad.

In the Gaza Strip, the Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) also claimed responsibility for a mortar attack Sunday on the Gush

Katif settlement bloc, inflicting no casualties.

State radio reported Monday that in the internal security service, Shin Beth, had recorded around 40 alerts every day during the Jewish holiday.

The weekend coincided with the third anniversary of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising, that has so far left 3,497 people dead, including 2,612 Palestinians and 822 Israelis, according to an AFP count.

To mark the occasion, militant groups renewed their vows to continue the Intifada while thousands of Palestinians took to the streets to protest against the Israeli occupation.

In Israel, a group of young Arab citizens marked the anniversary by launching a petition urging Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to end the violence, the Maariv daily reported Monday.

"Bus bombs kill just as blindly as missiles," said Samah Abdelrahman, a 17-year-old Bedouin girl from the northern region of Galilee who launched the petition.

She said Israeli Arabs would stage a large pacifist demonstration soon and that the petition would eventually be delivered to Arafat at his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Israel's 1.2-million-strong Israeli Arab community accounts for 19 percent of the Jewish state's total population.

The majority are Palestinians who stayed on their land when the state of Israel was created in 1948, unlike those who fled or were expelled from their homes.

Meanwhile in Ramallah, Qorei was Monday finalizing the composition of his new cabinet by holding meetings with various officials, said his office and Arafat's top aide Nabil Abu Rudeina.

Arafat's Fatah party Central Committee has approved Qorei's cabinet list of 24 names, of which 12 will be filled with new faces and 15 were given to Fatah members.

The key post of security chief and interior minister goes to General Nasser Yussef, a close Arafat associate and long-standing Fatah member.



PHOTO: AFP  
A demonstrator holds a sign as he walks on the streets of Hollywood during a political rally Sunday. Some three thousand people demonstrate to show their discontent against the US occupation of Iraq and to demand the liberation of Palestine among other political issues.

## US troops should be out of Iraq within months: France

### EU calls for 'realistic' timeframe

AFP, Paris

US troops should be withdrawn from Iraq within "months", French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said Sunday.

"We think the timescale should be short," said de Villepin.

"We consider that it is a question of months. We have been thinking that within six to eight months, the transfer of sovereignty should be complete," he told a French radio station.

De Villepin also called for an enlargement of the present governing structures set in place by the US-Britain coalition.

The governing council and the transitional government in Iraq were the basis for action but "their numbers should be enlarged, and that is where the UN (United Nations) plays a central role, in trying to

define the legitimacy" of future authorities, he said.

"As far as we are concerned the Iraqis are the trustees of security," he said.

On Friday the United States pressed ahead with plans to set a six-month deadline for the interim Iraqi government to draft and ratify a constitution, a move seen as a nod to anti-war members of the UN Security Council like France.

Meanwhile, the European Union called yesterday for Iraqis to regain sovereignty from the US-led coalition within a "realistic schedule".

At a meeting in Brussels, EU foreign ministers including a British representative "underlined the importance of the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty and the establishment of a fully representative Iraqi government through democratic elections".

In a statement, the ministers said

they "acknowledged the necessity to reach agreement on a realistic schedule for handing over political responsibility to the Iraqi people".

The United States is set Tuesday to present a new resolution at the United Nations Security Council calling for wider international involvement in Iraq, following the ouster of Saddam Hussein by US-British forces.

EU member France, which fiercely opposed the war against Saddam, said Sunday it wanted sovereignty to be handed over to the Iraqi people within "six to eight months".

"We think the timescale should be short," French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said.

But British Europe Minister Denis MacShane, standing in for Foreign Secretary Jack Straw at the EU meeting, said restoring security in Iraq was the more pressing priority.



PHOTO: AFP  
New York City Police Officers pray Sunday before the start of the annual Muslim Foundation of America Parade in New York City. Hundreds of American Muslims converged in Manhattan for the annual event that coincides with the Muslim Day Festival.