

## Asian nations slam Israel for Qana carnage

AFP, Jakarta

Muslim nations around Asia led furious regional condemnation yesterday of the bloody Israeli attack on the southern Lebanese town of Qana, with unified calls for an immediate ceasefire.

Israeli planes blitzed Qana early Sunday, killing at least 52 people, including 30 children. It was the single most deadly incident in the 19-day-old offensive, originally triggered by the kidnapping of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah militants.

Israel has halted its airstrikes for 48 hours pending an investigation. Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, branded Israel's attack a criminal act that violated international and humanitarian laws.

"The Indonesian government

strongly condemns this criminal act, which goes beyond humanity," a government statement read by foreign affairs spokesman Desra Percaya said.

Indonesia, which does not have diplomatic ties with Israel, urged the UN Security Council to enforce an unconditional ceasefire. The 15-member body has said it "strongly deplores" the deaths and called for an end to the violence.

Pakistan also denounced the attack as thousands of its Muslims protested.

"Pakistani government and people strongly condemn this sad incident, which is clearly unwarranted aggression," Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz told reporters on Sunday.

He appealed to the world community to come forward and help find "an immediate and peaceful

settlement" to the conflict.

Around 3,000 people braved rain to rally in the port city of Karachi over the attack, vowing to support the Lebanese people. The minority Shia Muslim community also held a separate rally in Karachi attended by more than 1,000 people.

The call for a ceasefire was echoed in Afghanistan, where foreign ministry spokesman Sultan Ahmad Baheem said Kabul "strongly condemned" the latest attack.

"We want an end to the fighting. We want an urgent ceasefire," he said.

The outrage reverberated right across Asia.

China said it strongly condemned the attack as it pushed for a ceasefire.

"China strongly urges the two sides involved in the conflict to cease fire immediately to avoid

further disaster," Xinhua news agency quoted foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao as saying.

In Japan, the government's top spokesman Shinzo Abe said it was "extremely regrettable that this kind of incident occurred amid international calls on Israel to exercise self-restraint," according to Kyodo News. Tokyo also called on both sides to implement a ceasefire.

Singapore said it was "deeply shocked and saddened by the loss of innocent lives" as it too backed the UN call, saying it would be "an important first step to pave the way for a solution that would secure security for all parties and peace and stability in the region."

India labelled the air raid "outrageous" and added its voice to the chorus of calls for an unconditional ceasefire, along with Thailand, which said it was "deeply shocked".



PHOTO: AFP  
Syrian women wave Hezbollah flags and mourn over symbolic coffins during a demonstration in Damascus yesterday to show solidarity with the Lebanese people and condemn the Israeli carnage in Qana where at least 57 civilians, including 30 children, were killed on Sunday.

## Naga rebels extend truce by one year

REUTERS, Guwahati

A powerful separatist group in Nagaland agreed yesterday to extend a ceasefire with the government by one year and continue with peace talks, a senior rebel leader said.

More than 20,000 people have died in a nearly six-decade struggle for an independent homeland for the mainly the Christian Naga people on India's far eastern border with Myanmar, but violence has diminished since a ceasefire was agreed in 1997.

"The ceasefire has been extended by one year," Phunthing Shimray of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Issac-Muiwah) told Reuters by telephone after three days of talks with Indian negotiators in Bangkok.

In January the rebels extended the truce for only six months, instead of a year, as there was little progress on the central rebel demands - unification of Naga-dominated areas in northeast India and ultimately independence.



PHOTO: AFP  
Lebanese civilians carry their luggage as they walk through rubble yesterday at the Masnaa border crossing between Lebanon and Syria, after it was closed to cars following Israeli air strikes over the weekend.

## UN fails to censure Israel for killings

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council expressed Sunday "extreme shock and distress" at an Israeli air strike that killed 57 people, mostly children, and called for an end to the violence.

The United States, in an emergency meeting of the Security Council, forced the 15-member body to water down its official statement so that Israel was not openly criticised. But many countries hailed the statement as a sign that the Security Council is starting to take the Lebanon crisis seriously.

"The Security Council expresses its extreme shock and distress at the shelling by the Israeli Defence Forces of a residential building in Qana, southern Lebanon, which has caused the killing of dozens of civilians, mostly children, and injured many others," said the

statement.

The Security Council said it "strongly deplores this loss of innocent lives and the killing of all civilians in the present conflict."

It called on UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to report on the deaths in the Lebanese village of Qana within a week.

Qatar, which proposed the measure, had wanted to call the attack "deliberate" and to call for a ceasefire.

The statement said: "The Security Council expresses its concern at the threat of escalation of violence with further grave consequences for the humanitarian situation, calls for an end to violence, and underscores the urgency of securing a lasting, permanent and sustainable ceasefire."

## Afghan governor survives mosque blast: 8 killed

### 23 Taliban slain in clashes

AFP, Jalalabad/Kandahar

A provincial governor survived a bomb blast that ripped through a parked car near a mosque in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, killing five policemen and three passers-by.

Afghan and coalition forces killed 23 Taliban militants in clashes in a southern district briefly held by the rebels earlier this month.

The car exploded as the anti-Taliban governor of Nangarhar province left the mosque on the outskirts of the provincial capital Jalalabad after prayers for a respected former guerrilla who died this month.

"Five policemen in the car were

martyred," said interior ministry spokesman Yousuf Stanizai. "The bomb, a remote-controlled device, was placed in the car and exploded. Six or seven people were wounded."

Another three passers-by were killed, Nangarhar police chief Basir Salangi said, confirming that five policemen were dead.

He said another five police were wounded, as were seven civilians.

Hospital doctor Mohammad Sami Seen told AFP that 10 wounded people were being treated. "We had 12 people injured. Two of them died in the hospital," he said.

The governor, Gul Agha Sherzai, was 15 metres (50 feet) from the explosion. He was unhurt. The car

carrying the policemen was destroyed while a second car nearby carrying the governor's bodyguards was damaged.

Meanwhile, Afghan and coalition forces killed 23 Taliban militants in clashes in a southern district briefly held by the rebels earlier this month, a district police commander said Monday.

Provincial officials said they were aware of the report and were checking.

Ten were killed on Sunday in a raid in Helmand province's Garmser district on the border with Pakistan, district police commander Ghulam Rasoul Aka told AFP.

## 29 kidnapped in Iraq

### 4GIs, 19 Iraqis killed in attacks

AP, Baghdad

Gunmen kidnapped 29 people in Baghdad yesterday, while Iraq's latest wave of violence killed 19 people, including four Iraqi soldiers in a suicide bombing.

The interior minister faced calls for his dismissal because of the worsening security crisis in Baghdad and surrounding towns, mostly blamed on sectarian conflict between Shias and Sunnis.

Gunmen in military fatigues drove to the main shopping area of Karrada in 15 vehicles and split into two groups, one going into a mobile phone shop and the other into the office next door of the Iraqi-American Chamber of Commerce, said police Lt. Thair Mahmoud.

They kidnapped 15 staff and customers from the shop and 11 from the chamber, he said. All were believed to be Iraqis. No other details were available.

In a second kidnapping, gunmen

in commando uniforms, blocked a car carrying a millionaire businessman and his two sons, seizing the three in southeastern Baghdad, said police Lt. Bilal Ali Majeed.

Kidnappings for ransom have become rampant in recent months. Abductions are believed to be a major source of income not only for criminal gangs but also insurgents fighting US and Iraqi forces.

The suicide bomber detonated a pickup truck near an Iraqi observation post outside the northern city of Mosul, killing four soldiers and wounding six, said an army officer who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release such information.

A day earlier, gunmen ordered four policemen and a lawyer out of their car and beheaded them near the northern town of Hawija, 150 miles north of Baghdad, said police Col. Burhan Tayeb.

Several key Iraqi parliament members are pressing to replace

Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani, who is responsible for police and paramilitary commandos, at the forefront of the fight against extremists in the capital.

Al-Bolani, a Shia, was chosen for the sensitive post after protracted negotiations among the various religious and ethnic parties within the national unity government. The interior and defence posts were filled in June, nearly three weeks after the rest of the Cabinet.

Earlier four US marines were killed in combat in Iraq's restive western province of Anbar, the US military reported on Sunday.

The marines, part of Regimental Combat Team 7, died on Saturday, just two days after four more marines were killed in two incidents in the same province.

## Iran should 'prepare' to fight Israel, US Says top general

AFP, Tehran

The head of Iran's Revolutionary Guards called on his troops Sunday to "prepare themselves to get even" with Israel and the United States, the semi-official Fars news agency reported.

"Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards and Basij should prepare themselves to get even with Zionists and Americans," General Yahya Rahim Safavi was quoted as saying. "The supreme leader will announce the time for this," he said, referring to Iran's top cleric and commander-in-chief Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

It was not clear if the comments represented the latest shot in what Iranian officials describe as an ongoing "psychological war" with Israel and the United States, or the public revelation of an actual order

for Iranian troops to mobilise for war. "We have to keep this sacred hatred of the enemies of Islam alive in our hearts until the time of revenge comes," the general was quoted as saying.

"I hope our nation can one day avenge the blood of innocent people in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan," he said, adding: "I ask God to arouse the dignity of Muslims and destroy America, Israel and their associates."

"I hope the clerical leaders in the Islamic world clarify the duty of Muslims against Israel," he also said.

The Revolutionary Guards Corps was set up in the wake of the 1979 revolution to defend the Islamic republic from "internal and external threats" and played a leading role in the 1980-88 war with Iraq.

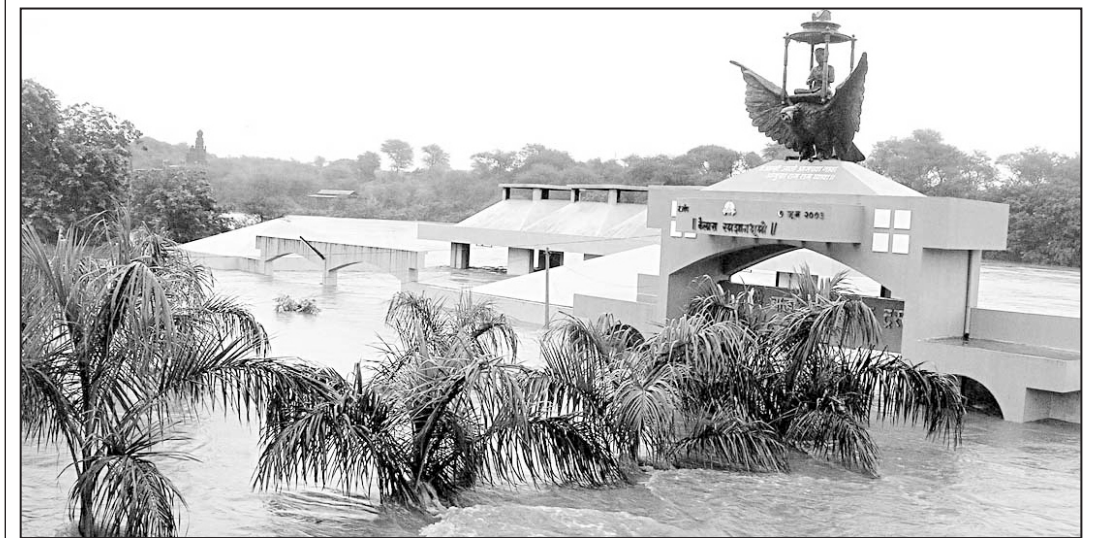


PHOTO: AFP  
Waters of the Krishna-Venna river flow above the danger mark at Satara, about 285km south-east from Mumbai yesterday. The western state of Maharashtra evacuated 65,000 flood-hit people from 35 villages in the southern district of Sangli.

## UN urges Maoists, Nepal govt to agree on arms monitoring

AFP, Kathmandu

A senior UN official yesterday urged Maoist rebels and the Nepal government to agree on a formula for arms management to ensure the success of peace talks to end a decade-old insurgency.

"It is very important to have urgently on the side of all of the Nepalese interlocutors a common understanding, especially regarding the issue of arms management," said Staffan DeMistura, head of a UN mission invited to Nepal to guide

implementation of a ceasefire and peace process started in June.

The UN envoys, experts on elections, police and human rights, arrived Thursday to offer advice to the new government and rebels who joined hands in protests that led to King Gyanendra giving up absolute power in April.

"The United Nations is focusing on Nepal, and Nepal has got a very special moment in order to make the peace process work," DeMistura said in a statement.



PHOTO: AFP  
UN Head of the Mission to Nepal, Staffan de Mistura, speaks with the media after meeting with Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala in Kathmandu yesterday.