

Israel can't be given 'licence' to destroy Lebanon: Malaysia

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's foreign minister said yesterday that Israel cannot be given a "licence" to destroy Lebanon, adding that the United States and Britain must be fair in seeking an end to the crisis.

"What is needed now is for the United Nations Security Council to quickly arrive at a decision on the ceasefire to stop Israeli atrocities," Syed Hamid Albar was quoted as saying by the Bernama news agency.

The state agency quoted him as saying Israel cannot be given a "licence" to destroy another country on the excuse that it was to ensure its security.

Mainly Muslim Malaysia, which does not have diplomatic relations with the Jewish state, Friday rejected a call by an Israeli official for dialogue to resolve the Middle East crisis.

Syed Hamid said the United States and Britain should play a fair and responsible role to bring peace to the region.

## Israel detains Palestinian parliament speaker

Five more killed in Gaza offensive

AP, AFP, Ramallah/ Gaza City

Israeli forces arrested the speaker of the Palestinian parliament at his house early yesterday, Palestinian officials said.

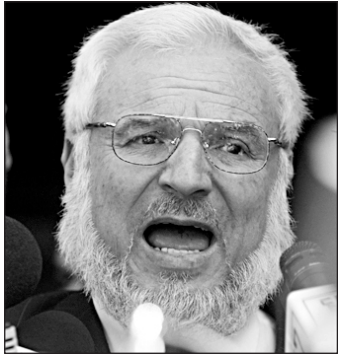
The officials the director of the speaker Abdel Aziz Duaik's office and security officers said about 20 Israeli army vehicles surrounded the house of Duaik, a member of Hamas, and took him into custody.

The Israeli military had no immediate comment.

Three Palestinian children and two militants were killed by Israeli fire in the Gaza Strip on Saturday and early Sunday, as the Israeli military pressed an incursion in the southern city of Rafah.

A Palestinian child was killed by an overnight Israeli air raid, Palestinian hospital sources said Sunday.

Earlier, Omar al-Nuri, 17, and his 15-year-old sister Kiffah were killed



by a missile fired from a drone as they fled an Israeli tank near their house in the Egyptian border town of Rafah, hospital officials said.

Their mother Huda, 45, and another unidentified family member were in critical condition after being wounded in the strike, hospital officials said. A third family member was lightly wounded.

Earlier, two armed militants were

also killed in separate Israeli air strikes in the area, hospital and security officials said.

Mohammed al-Khawajih, 23, belonged to the military wing of the hardline Islamic Jihad group, while Sharif Ayyash, 23, to that of the governing Islamist movement Hamas.

An Israeli army spokesman said that "four armed terrorists were hit by army fire in two separate incidents in the Rafah sector."

The Israeli army has been involved in a major incursion around Rafah since early on Thursday, which has involved dozens of armoured personnel carriers and bulldozers backed up by aviation.

According to an AFP count, a total of 16 Palestinians have been killed in the operation, including a 12-year-old boy and at least 11 militants.

An army spokesman said that "more than 35 Palestinian terrorists

have been eliminated in army operations in the Gaza Strip over the past 48 hours."

The Rafah incursion was aimed at destroying "terrorist infrastructure," an army spokesman said. The Israeli military says that Palestinian militants use tunnels dug between Gaza and Egypt to smuggle arms into the coastal strip.

The Rafah incursion is part of a wider offensive in the coastal strip that Israel launched on June 28, three days after Palestinian militants from Gaza killed two soldiers and seized a third in a cross-border raid.

The military says it aims to recover the soldier and to stop militants from firing rockets from the strip onto Israeli territory.

A hospital source said that a 65-year-old Palestinian, wounded in an Israeli air attack on July 13, died on Saturday.



A Palestinian toddler cries as he stands in front his family home destroyed by Israeli tanks in Rafah town in the southern Gaza strip yesterday. Three Palestinian children and two militants were killed by Israeli fire in the Gaza Strip as the Israeli military pressed an incursion in the southern city of Rafah.



A Lebanese woman carry her belongings yesterday amid the rubble of buildings destroyed in Israeli airstrikes in the southern suburbs of Beirut. Israeli combat jets struck villages across south Lebanon, killing at least nine civilians, hours after the UN Security Council began debating a resolution to bring a halt to the 26-day war.

## ME violence to continue 'for some time': Rice

AFP, Crawford

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned yesterday that there would be violence in the Middle East "for some time to come" even after the adoption of a UN resolution aimed at ending the conflict.

"We're trying to deal with a problem that has been festering and brewing in Lebanon now for years and years and years, and so it's not going to be solved by one resolution in the Security Council," she told reporters.

Rice said she expected the UN Security Council to take up the resolution on Monday or Tuesday, but added: "I want to emphasize it's the first step, not the only step" to halting three weeks of clashes between Israel and Hezbollah.

"I would hope that you would see very early on an end to the kind of large-scale violence, large-scale military operations," allowing for the deployment of an international force in southern Lebanon, she said.

"But I can't say that you should rule out that there could be skirmishes of some kind for some time to come," she said after talks with US President George W. Bush at his nearby Texas ranch. "These things take a while to wind down."

Rice also sought to ease Lebanese concerns about the resolution after Beirut signalled that the measure must explicitly call for a full Israeli troop pullout from southern Lebanon.

"No one wants to see Israel permanently in Lebanon. Nobody wants to do

that. The Israelis don't want it, the Lebanese don't want it, so I think there is a basis here for moving forward," she said.

Rice stopped short of predicting unanimous Security Council support for the resolution, but said talks among that body's 15 members had been "good" and that Washington and Paris considered the document a good compromise.

"There are things the Israelis and wanted and Lebanese wanted and not everybody was going get everything that they wanted. This is the international community's effort to bring about an equitable, reasonable basis for cessation of hostilities," she said.

Rice said she would go to the United Nations "when and if necessary" and emphasized: "We will ask everyone who has any influence with all the parties to talk to them about the importance of taking this opportunity."

She said that there would be a second resolution to shape a multinational force to deploy to Lebanon to make it possible for that country's armed forces to secure the southern border with Israel.

"The real situation in Lebanon is that the south has had a vacuum in which Hezbollah has been operating," she said.

"And the solution to this, over the next several months, is going to be to flow the authority of the Lebanese government and Lebanese forces, with the help of international forces into the south so that you don't have that vacuum," she said.

## Floods kill 129 in Ethiopia

AFP, Addis Ababa

At least 129 people were killed overnight in flash floods in eastern Ethiopia after an intense, sudden downpour pounded the region, sweeping away many of the victims in their sleep, police said Sunday.

"So far 129 people are confirmed dead. We are still looking for more on the outskirts of the city and all along the river from the north to south," said Inspector Beniam Fikru, a top police official in Dire Dawa region, about 500 kilometres (300 miles) east of the capital Addis Ababa.

The police said several thousands of people were displaced after the Dire Dawa River, which cuts through the town, broke its banks.

Doctors said they had received bodies from villages which were inundated in the country's Dire Dawa region, about 500 kilometres (300 miles) east of the capital Addis Ababa.

## Lebanon rejects draft UN truce resolution

Iran also trashes it

AP, AFP, Beirut/ Tehran

The Lebanese parliamentary speaker, a prominent Shia who has been negotiating on behalf of Hezbollah, rejected the US-French draft UN ceasefire resolution yesterday because it did not include the government's plan for ending the fighting.

Nabih Berri said Lebanon would not accept any terms that did not include a government plan calling for an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of Israeli troops.

"Lebanon, all of Lebanon, rejects any talks or any draft resolution that does not include the seven-point government framework," Berri said at a news conference in Beirut.

Prime Minister Fuad Saniora first offered the plan, later adopted by his

Cabinet, during the Rome crisis summit July 26.

The seven-point proposal calls for a mutual release of prisoners held by Israeli and Hezbollah and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon. It foresees the Lebanese government taking control of southern Lebanon with the help of an international force.

The US-French proposal, which was expected to go to the floor of the UN Security Council early this week, calls for Hezbollah to stop all military operations and for Israel to stop its offensive drive against Lebanon. The proposal would allow Israel to strike back if Hezbollah were to break a cease-fire.

The draft resolution does not require an immediate Israeli withdrawal to its side of

the common border.

"We always spoke about an immediate cease fire. We never spoke about ending military operations because this is in a way like legitimatising the occupation, as if the war is being legitimatised," Berri said in fiery remarks before opening the floor to questions.

Iran, a supporter of Hezbollah, on Sunday dismissed as one-sided a draft UN Security Council resolution calling for an end to fighting in Lebanon between the Shia Muslim guerrillas and Israel.

The draft resolution, sponsored by permanent council members France and the United States, is "incapable of solving the crisis since it is one-sided," Iran's top security official, Ali Larjani, told reporters.

## 'Shoes with sight' for blind

AFP, Hong Kong

Guide dogs may soon be out of a job thanks to a high-tech pair of glasses and shoes invented by Hong Kong scientists that help blind people navigate the trickiest of terrain, a report said yesterday.

The researchers at Hong Kong Polytechnic University say the glasses and shoes, which have a built-in computer, can detect objects within close proximity through echo location then send a vibrating warning signal to the wearer.

"Ultrasonic waves are sent out and when they bounce back they are interpreted by a receiver."

"Once an obstacle is detected the shoe will vibrate, perhaps increasing in intensity as the obstacle gets closer," Research Institute of Innovative Products and Technologies director Wallace Leung Woon-fong was quoted as telling the Sunday Morning Post.

## US military begins hearing into rape-slaying of Iraqi girl

AP, Baghdad

A US military court began a hearing yesterday to determine if five American soldiers should be tried in the alleged rape-slaying of a 14-year-old Iraqi girl.

Three of the girl's relatives also were killed in the town of Mahmoudiya on March 12, which is among the worst incidents in a series of cases alleging US troops killed or abused Iraqi civilians.

The soldiers Sgt. Paul E. Cortez, Spc. James P. Barker, Pfc. Jesse V. Spielman and Pfc. Bryan L. Howard are charged with conspiring to rape the girl along with former Pfc. Steven D. Green, who was arrested in North Carolina in June.

A fifth soldier from the same unit, Sgt. Anthony W. Yribe, is charged with failing to report the attack but is not alleged to have been a direct participant.