

## 28 more killed in deadly Iraqi violence Five more GIs slain

AFP, Baghdad

Around 28 Iraqis were killed yesterday as violence continued to wrack a country in the grip of a deadly sectarian conflict and a brutal revolt against the US-backed government.

In the deadliest single incident, a car bomb exploded outside a bank in the small town of Suweira, on the banks of the Tigris southeast of the capital in an area plagued by tit-for-tat killings between Sunnis and Shias.

Major Mohammed Hassan of the Suweira police said 15 civilians had been killed in the massive blast outside the Rafidain Bank and 35 wounded.

In Baghdad, two explosions almost an hour apart rolled across the centre of the city. One bomb killed a policeman and wounded

four others. Three more policemen and a civilian were wounded when a second device detonated nearby.

Police also reported clashes between gunmen and units of the Iraqi army in central Baghdad's Fadel neighbourhood that killed three civilians and wounded five.

Earlier five more US troops have been killed in action in Iraq, their headquarters said yesterday, bringing the number of American troops to have died this month to 53.

A statement from the US-led coalition in Iraq said that two marines from Regimental Combat Team 5, which is based in Fallujah in western Iraq, died on Sunday following unspecified "enemy action".

## SC splits province claimed by Tigers

### Japan envoy in talks with govt to salvage truce

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court yesterday ordered the breakup of the restive Northeastern Province, a massive administrative region claimed by Tamil Tiger rebels as a separate state.

The creation of the province was a key Tamil demand accepted by a 1987 peace accord that gave limited authority to minority Tamils in the northeast of the island.

Its division back into two smaller provinces will likely inflame political tensions ahead of scheduled peace talks later this month between the government and the Liberation

Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), which say they cannot expect any autonomy under the current constitution.

Chief Justice Sarath N. de Silva overturned the 1987 presidential decree creating the Northeastern Province, saying there were no executive powers to merge the two provinces.

The court's review was sparked by complaints from Sri Lanka's main Marxist party, the JVP, or People's Liberation Front.

The JVP opposes any concessions made to the Tigers, as well as the presence of Norwegian peace brokers on the island.

Meanwhile, a Japanese peace envoy opened talks with Sri Lankan

leaders yesterday as the international community stepped up pressure to salvage peace talks many fear have been doomed by an upsurge in violence.

Yasushi Akashi, who arrived in Colombo late Sunday, began his peace bid amid continued shelling overnight between the government and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

He first met with Sri Lanka's former chief peace negotiator Nimal Siripala de Silva, and was to hold talks with other Colombo-based political parties later in the day, government officials said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Japanese Peace Envoy to Sri Lanka Yasushi Akashi (L) shakes hands with Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa prior to a meeting in Colombo yesterday.

## 7 Thais shot dead in south

AFP, Yala

Suspected separatist insurgents have killed seven people in a spate of shootings in Thailand's Muslim-majority south, police said yesterday.

A couple was shot dead as they rode their bicycles to their rubber plantation in Yala, one of three provinces bordering Malaysia that has been plagued by separatist violence and other unrest for more than two years.

The wife was killed instantly, while the husband died later in hospital, police said.

Also in Yala, an engineer with the provincial electricity authority was shot dead as he drove his pick-up truck to work, and another rubber worker, who was also a national defence volunteer, was shot and killed at his plantation.

All four were killed in the same district. Police Colonel Anurut Im-Ab said the police and army presence in the area had been stepped up after rumours of yet more attacks Monday.



PHOTO: AFP  
Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (L) greets Minister of State for Rural Affairs Suryakanta Patil during the inauguration of the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDA) conference in New Delhi yesterday. Seeking to push the ambitious Bharat Nirman (Building India) programme to improve rural infrastructure, Singh encouraged district administrators to focus on improving the economy of agriculture to alleviate the rural distress on a sustainable basis.

## 30 new countries could acquire nuclear arms Says IAEA chief

AFP, Vienna

Up to 30 new countries could have the capability to build a nuclear weapon, on top of the nine current nuclear powers, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency warned Monday.

"We need to develop a new system of international approach (or we will not) end up with nine (nuclear-weapon states) only, but with another 20 or 30 states which have the capacity to develop nuclear weapons in a short time," IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei said in Vienna.

He said these "virtual nuclear weapon states" had the means and know-how to enrich uranium or reprocess plutonium, at the opening of a symposium bringing together

some 500 experts to discuss ways to improve safeguards to ensure peaceful nuclear programmes are not used for military purposes.

"Unfortunately the political environment is not a very secure one... there are a lot of temptations" to seek nuclear weapons, ElBaradei added, in reference to Iraq and Libya's now-halted military programmes and to Iran's secret nuclear activities, which have been on-going for almost 20 years.

Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States are declared military nuclear powers, along with India and Pakistan, while Israel is also believed to have weapons.

North Korea also announced on October 9 that it had conducted an underground nuclear test.

## US looks to China, Japan to act on N Korea ban

### Beijing erects fence along DPRK border

REUTERS, AP, Tokyo/Beijing

The United States said yesterday it expected China to implement UN sanctions against North Korea despite misgivings, and warned Pyongyang that merely returning to nuclear talks would not be enough to halt the punitive steps.

The UN Security Council unanimously approved on Saturday a US-drafted package of financial and weapons sanctions against North Korea, which - defying international pressure - said last week that it had conducted a nuclear test.

"A return to six-party talks kind of doesn't do it," US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer told a small group of journalists. "You have to come to the six-party talks and agree on how you are going to

implement the September 19 agreement."

"If that implementation could then be verified by the international community, I think you would see walking back from the sanctions regime."

Meanwhile, China has been building a massive barbed wire and concrete fence along parts of its border with North Korea in the most visible sign of Beijing's strained ties with its once-cozy communist neighbour.

Scores of soldiers have descended on farmland near the border-marking Yalu River to erect concrete barriers 8 to 15 feet tall and string barbed wire between them, farmers and visitors to the area said.

Last week, they reached Hushan, a collection of villages 12

miles inland from the border port of Dandong.

"About 100 People's Liberation Army soldiers in camouflage started building the fence four days ago and finished it yesterday," said a farmer, who only gave his surname, Ai. "I assume it was built to prevent smuggling and illegal crossing."

Though the fence-building appears to have picked up in the days following North Korea's claimed nuclear test last week, experts said the project was approved in 2003. Experts and a local Hushan official, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the project, said the military was in charge of the building.

## Nato worried about Pak-Afghan border

AFP, AP, London/Kandahar

Nato's top military commander voiced concern yesterday about the porous Afghan-Pakistan border, which can be used by insurgents involved in deadly fighting with alliance troops in southern Afghanistan.

But, speaking at the opening of a new intelligence-gathering centre for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, General James Jones declined to criticize the

Pakistani government over its management of border security.

"It's clear that the border is not a sealed border," he said, when asked if Pakistan's behaviour was leading indirectly to the deaths of Nato soldiers in Afghanistan.

But he said: "I quite understand the concerns of our troops on the ground... and we are going to be working on this problem assiduously in the weeks and months ahead."

Nato assumed command of

foreign forces throughout Afghanistan this month, taking charge of the east of the country from the US-led coalition that toppled the Taliban regime five years ago.

The Taliban insurgency has worsened dramatically in recent months, with insurgents killing scores of foreign and Afghan troops in mass attacks and also intensifying a vicious campaign of suicide and roadside bombings.

## Republican senators want new Iraq strategy

AP, Washington

Two leading Republican senators called Sunday for a new strategy in Iraq, saying the situation in getting worse and leaving the United States with few options.

Sens Chuck Hagel of Nebraska and John Warner of Virginia are part of the growing list of Republicans who are speaking out against President Bush's current plan for Iraq as US casualties rise.

"The American people are not going to continue to support, sustain a policy that puts American troops in the middle of a civil war," Hagel said

on CNN's "Late Edition."

Hagel said he agreed with Warner, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, who said after a recent visit to Iraq that Iraq was "drifting sideways." Warner has urged consideration of a change of course if the Iraq government fails to restore order over the next two months or three months.

Warner said Sunday he stands by that assessment, and even in the week since his trip to Iraq, there has been an "exponential increase in the killings and the savagery that's going on over there."

## Hamas threatens Israel with 'unforgettable lesson'

AFP, Gaza City

The armed wing of the ruling Palestinian movement Hamas yesterday threatened to teach the Israeli military a "lesson it will not forget" should the army expand an offensive in the Gaza Strip.

The Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades declared it had the "means and arms necessary to confront the Zionist enemy with all our force if it proceeds (further) with military operations in the Gaza Strip".

Israel has threatened to step up

an offensive in the Palestinian territory, where 22 people have been killed since Thursday, in a bid to stop persistent rocket attacks and arms smuggling from Egypt.

Defence Minister Amir Peretz reiterated Monday that if necessary, Israel would extend its military activity in Gaza and vowed to stop Hamas from strengthening itself and to weaken its ability to attack.

"I will not allow the Gaza Strip to turn into south Lebanon. We intend to take all necessary action to prevent Hamas's strengthening. We

intend to act in ways to prevent it from strengthening and to weaken Hamas's ability to carry out attacks," he told reporters.

"We have considerably increased the military activity in Gaza. If we are required to extend it further, we will do so," he added.

Hitting back at accusations of militants amassing stockpiles of smuggled arms, Hamas's armed wing accused Israel of "using such allegations to justify criminal operations it seems to have decided to wage in the Gaza Strip".



PHOTO: AFP  
The South Korean Vice Foreign Minister, Yu Miung-Hwan (L) greets the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alexeyev before a meeting in Seoul yesterday. North Korea still hopes six-party talks on its nuclear programme will continue and it will decide on returning to the negotiating table after studying sanctions set out in a UN resolution, Russian envoy Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Alexeyev said after visiting Pyongyang.

## Quake knocks out power in Hawaii

AFP, Los Angeles

A strong 6.6 magnitude earthquake jolted residents of Hawaii awake Sunday, knocking out power and rattling windows, but officials were quick to say no tsunami was expected.

The US Geological Survey said the quake hit at 7:07 am (1707 GMT) near the island of Hawaii and was followed by at least a dozen aftershocks, the strongest a moderate 5.8 magnitude.

Governor Linda Lingle issued a disaster declaration, local media reported. She said in a radio interview that there had been no reports of deaths from the temblors in the Pacific island chain.

Sunday's quake is believed to be Hawaii's strongest since 1983, when a magnitude 6.7 quake hit Koaiki, according to USGS.

Big Island Mayor Harry Kim said emergency assistance workers knew of no injuries.

He said 2,000 tourists would have to find new lodging.

"Resorts in Kona have to be evacuated because of water damage, as a precaution," he told local television station KITV, whose broadcast was shown on CNN.

Kona Community Hospital in Kona was evacuated, spokeswoman Terry Lewis said, but not because of structural damage.

"A lot of our ceilings in our medical-surgical unit have fallen in," she told CNN.

Extensive road damage on the island of Hawaii had made driving conditions dangerous. Officials called on residents and tourists to stay inside. CNN showed pictures of mudslides and boulders strewn across highways.

"We've had some major-to-heavy earthquake damage" to our infrastructure, Hawaii Civil Defence vice director Ed Teixeira told KITV.