# INTERNÂTIONAL

#### US to train Pak airport staff

The United States has invited Pakistani airport staff to attend a crisis management training programme to help them cope with hijack situations, a senior aviation official said Saturday.

The Pakistani government has nominated four air traffic controllers to attend the programme in the United States, Civil Aviation Authority deputy director general Air Vice Marshall Arshad Rashid Sethi told AFP.

"We have received the US offer through our federal interior ministry and nominated four of our senior traffic controllers to proceed to the US," he said.

"Since tower communication staff at airports are the first who come into contact with hijackers their training will work effectively to meet any such untoward event.

#### **Explosions** rock Kabul airport

Kabul's international airport has been hit by three explosions in what was believed to be a series of rocket attacks, military officials said Saturday.

"There were three explosions at the airport last night (Friday). There were no injuries," said Major Karen Daly, a British spokeswoman for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

ISAF spokesman Captain Steve Abbott said the explosions were likely to have been caused by rockets launched close to the airport.

"I suspect there were three rockets fired. One rocket landed on the edge of the runway but there was no damage to the airfield. The impact points of the two other rock ets have not been found yet."

#### 1 more killed in Gujarat

AFP, Ahmedabad

One person was killed and five others injured overnight as sectarian violence that has already claimed at least 900 lives continued to rage in India's western state of Gujarat, police said Saturday.

A person was killed late Friday when police opened fire to disperse an unruly mob in the Baroda district, 150 kilometres (93 miles) from Gujarat's commercial capital Ahmedabad, a police spokesman

Four others were injured in the incident, while another man was injured in a bomb explosion in

Mobs also set fire to houses and threw stones and acid, he said.

Police fired live rounds and tear gas to disperse crowds in several areas, he added.

### Gunmen kill 2 ethnic leaders

in S Pakistan

AFP, Karachi

Two powerful ethnic party leaders were killed here Saturday in an attack by two unknown gunman a day ahead of a visit by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, police

Ex-National Assembly member Nishat Mallick and former senator Mustafa Kamal were driving from the Karachi offices of their Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) when they were ambushed, city police chief Asad Jehangir said.

"Kamal was on the driving seat when they were attacked and both received multiple bullet injuries," he told AFP.

MQM, which represents an Urdu-speaking community which migrated from India after the Britishled partition of the subcontinent, condemned the incident and demanded the arrest of the killers



Australian popstar Kylie Minogue performs at her European tour opening concert in Cardiff on Friday.

Activists from opposition parties of Pakistan make final preparations for a public meeting against the President General Pervez Musharraf's referendum in Lahore on Saturday. A group of opposition party Alliance of Restoration of Democracy (ARD) is holding a public meeting to mobilise people against the forthcoming presidential referendum.

# Pak SC gives green light to Musharraf referendum

Pakistan's Supreme Court on Saturday gave military ruler Pervez Musharraf the green light to hold a referendum on extending his presidency for five

The court, which has already validated Musharraf's 1999 coup, unanimously dismissed several petitions from political and religious opposition parties challenging the referendum as unconstitutional

In an order issued by Chief Justice Riaz Sheikh after more than three hours of deliberation, the court said the referendum was valid and any challenge was "premature".

"We therefore hold that the chief executive's order (to hold the referendum) has been validly issued," he said in his judgement. "The grounds of the challenge ... are purely academic, hypothetical in

The judgement said the court's ruling on the 1999 coup had granted Musharraf sufficient powers to call the referendum, which is scheduled to take place Tuesday

nature and are not capable of being determined at this juncture.

"Suffice (to) say that it has been issued by the chief executive and the president of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in exercise of the powers

Faroog Hassan, lawver for one of the main petitioners, the fundamentalist Jamaat-i-Islami party, condemned the verdict.

"The ruling has undermined the rights of the Pakistani nation. It will have serious implications for the future of democracy in Pakistan," he told AFF outside the court

Earlier Reuters says Pakistan's Supreme Court on Saturday rejected an opposition plea to halt an April 30 referendum on extending military President Pervez Musharraf's rule for another five years.

The judges unanimously rejected three petitions from opposition parties and a lawyers' association which had argued the referendum was unconstitutional. Musharraf, who seized power in a bloodless coup in October 1999. will ask the nation on Tuesday to allow him another five years as president to continue his economic, political and social reforms, a move rejected by al the main opposition parties.

The Supreme Court, which in 2000 upheld Musharraf's coup but said he had to hand over to a civilian government by October 2002, has rarely ruled against a sitting military ruler since Pakistan gained independence from

# US steps up pressure for Israeli withdrawal

Palestinian gunman Saturday killed five Israelis at a Jewish settlement on the West Bank as Israel came under increased pressure from an impatient United States to wind up its military offensive.

The first deadly Palestinin attack in more than two weeks also came as Israel won a brief delay in the arrival of UN fact-finding team into the bloodshed at the Jenin refugee

in Bethlehem, a Palestinian in the besieged Church of the Nativity was reported seriously wounded by Israeli gunfire as the impasse went into its 26th day and the chief

Palestinian negotiator headed for Ramallah to brief Yasser Arafat.

Five Israelis were killed and at least six others wounded Saturday as Palestinian gunmen went house to house in a killing spree in the Jewish settlement of Adora, the Israeli army and witnesses said.

Some children were reported among the wounded in the morning attack apparently carried out by two gunmen in the settlement of Adora northwest of the city of Hebron. One of the injured was said to be in serious condition.

It was the first deadly Palestinian attack on Israelis since a suicide bomber killed six people near a Secretary of State Colin Powell began a peace mission.

Saturday's shootings were also the first successful attack on a Jewish settlement since March 28, when three Israelis were killed in the community of Elon Moreh in the northern West Bank.

Several other Palestinian attempts have been made to infiltrate Jewish settlements since but the gunmen were intercepted and shot dead by Israeli troops.

The new attack on Israeli civilans came a day after US President George W. Bush told Israel to halt 'now" its nearly month-old military drive to root out Palestinian militants

## Rumsfeld assures US troops of victory in Afghanistan

AFP, Bagram Air Base

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld assured US troops of victory in the war against terrorism during a visit Saturday to this air base north of the Afghan capital Kabul.

But he also called for greater vigilance and urgent action to prevent terrorists getting their hands on weapons of mass destruction and reminded troops that war was not just confined to Afghanistan.

"This coalition stands on the frontline between freedom and fear. You stand against an evil that cannot be appeased, must not be ignored and certainly must be defeated," he told a group of around 300 out of the 3,000 US soldiers

stationed at this former Soviet base. "When this war is won, and it will be won, you will be able to say that 'I fought with the coalition in Afghanistan against terrorism' and you will be remembered for it." Rumsfeld was greeted by Major

General Frank Hagenbeck, the US commander of coalition forces here. and British task force commander Brigadier Roger Lane as he stepped off a US military plane from Kyrgyzstan. Later he later flew to Kabul, some

50 kilometres (31 miles) south of here, for meetings with interim Afghan cabinet leader Hamid Karzai and Defence Minister Mohammad



US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld (L) pats an unidentified member of the allied force at the air base in Bagram on Saturday. Rumsfeld is on a daylong visit to Afghanistan to meet senior Afghan leaders and US troops. This is Rumsfeld's second visit to Afghanistan after the collapse of the Taliban regime under sustained pressure from US bombing and opposition Afghan

# US, Pak troops raid tribal border belt: 5 al-Qaida men detained

US troops have been involved in joint operations in Pakistan's frontier tribal belt in which at least five suspected al-Qaida and Taliban extremists have been detained, official sources said Saturday. Around two dozen US intelligence officials backed by

a small number of uniformed troops were participating in operations in northwestern Pakistan, which started early this week, they said. It is the first time Pakistani officials have confirmed

that US military personnel are operating on Pakistani territory against alleged terrorist cells, although US police have been active here for months. One of the raids targeted a seminary founded by top Taliban commander Jalaluddin Haqqani, one of the

most wanted men on Washington's hit-list for Afghanistan, sources said. Around 10 Americans, two of them in military uniorm, backed by around 200 local police raided the seminary but found it empty, the sources said, adding

however that other raids had been successful. "At least five suspects were taken into custody in a tribal pocket close to the border opposite Afghanistan's Khost region," a local official told AFP on condition of

The Afghan Islamic Press, a Pakistan-based private news agency, also reported that a raid involving a small number of US troops had been carried out at the semi-

Small groups of al-Qaida and Taliban fighters are believed to be active in the mountains of the eastern Afghan provinces of Paktia and Khost, bordering Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal area of South Waziristan

The operations are being conducted with utmost secrecy and senior Pakistani officials have refused to comment publicly, amid concerns of unrest in the tribal areas over the presence of foreign forces. Extremists from the mainly Pashtun Taliban militia

and alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida net-

work are understood to have sought shelter in the area from US-led military action across the border in Extremists from the mainly Pashtun Taliban militia and alleged terrorist Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network are understood to have sought shelter in the area

out raids in Pakistan's central Puniab province, bordering India, and arrested several al-Qaida suspects including senior leader Abu Zubaydah.

from US-led military action across the border in

That operation yielded valuable intelligence which prompted Washington to seek permission from Islamabad to organise more joint operations in the tribal areas, according to a report in the New York Times this

### Troops on alert in Tripura after 10 CPI-M men killed

AFP, Agartala

Federal troops were on high alert in India's northeastern state of Tripura Saturday after tribal separatists killed at least 10 members of the ruling party over the past week "Troops are on a state of high

alert with additional paramilitary soldiers deployed in vulnerable areas to prevent attacks on civilians and other political party workers,' Tripura police chief B.L. Vohra told Heavily armed militants of the

outlawed National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), which is fighting for an independent tribal homeland, shot dead the members of the e ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) in three separate incidents in recent days, police said. The victims included at least two women CPM leaders.

"The militants are on the run after we deployed Tripura State Rifles posts in about nine areas and out of sheer desperation the NLFT have started attacking CPM members,

The CPM, however, blamed its main political rival in the state, the

Congress party "More than 150 CPM workers and leaders were killed by the NLFT during the past one year, with the militants in collaboration with the opposition Congress," CPM chief spokesman Gautam Das said.

"The attack on the CPM is nothing but an act of desperation with an eye on Assembly elections due early next year." The Congress party's Tripura

wing denied any involvement in the killings and in turn accused the CPM of using another tribal rebel group. the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), to eliminate its members. India says the NI

ATTF operate out of wellentrenched bases inside Bangladesh to carry out hit-and-run querrilla strikes in Tripura. angladesh denies the charge.

More than 10,000 people have been killed by insurgency in Tripura during the past two decades.

#### Failure to sack Modi

# **UK Muslims to sue** Vajpayee, Advani

Indian Muslims in the UK are planning to file cases against Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Home Minister LK Advani for their 'failure' to sack Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi in the wake of communal violence in the state.

"It is not only Modi, we are now thinking at of filing cases against Prime Minister Vajpayee and Home Minister Advani as well because by not removing Modi, the Federal Government has become an abetting and patronising party in the continuation of his anti-Muslim pogroms," Council of Indian Muslims (UK) said Friday. In a statement, chairman of the

Council Munaf Zeena said "We are in the process of seeking the counsel's advice. We want to show our concern that in today's world this sort of approach is totally unacceptable and people who perpetrate crime are brought to justice.

He said they were exploring all avenues including filing of cases in India, the Belgian court, the International Court of Justice in the Hague and the US.

Commissioner Dr S Pal here on Monday in connection with the Gujarat events, expressed his "disappointment" at the outcome of the meeting.

was happening should not have happened," Zeena said

On being informed that British futile," the statement said.

### **Thousands mourn Pak** blast victims

Thousands of Shiite Muslims gathered under tight security in central Pakistan Saturday to mourn the deaths of 12 women and children in a bomb attack at a religious meeting.

Hundreds of heavily armed police have been deployed in the remote town of Bhakkar, in central Punjab province, the scene of a massive blast which ripped through a congregation of 10,000 Shiites.

Several processions took to the streets to protest the attack and the government's inability to stop sectarian violence between militant extremists from the majority Sunni and minority Shiite communities

Most shops and markets were closed as Sunni and Shiite traders pulled down their shutters as a mark of respect for the victims, who were buried at a local cemetery late

"The city is tense but police are keeping a tight vigil," local police officer Mohammad Saleem told AFP, adding that the protests had ended

peacefully by the early afternoon. The bomb detonated just before midnight Thursday (1800 GMT) in an area segregated for women and children at a gathering to mourn the death of the Prophet Mohammad's grandson, Imam Hussain

#### **US** military presence in Saudi TURKEY US bases 5 to 6,000 soldiers Incirlik (30 to 40,000 including IRAN **IRAQ** civil personnel JORDAN **QATAR KUWAIT** RIYADH **EGYPT** $(\star)$ ARABIA Al-Khari SUDAN

Thailand emerging as

### Kashmir militants accept hardliner as APHC boss

AFP, Srinagar

Muslim rebels fighting Indian rule in Kashmir have accepted a hardline separatist politician as the "leader of the freedom struggle," the region's most wanted militant said Saturday.

'Militants have accepted (Syed Ali) Geelani as the leader of the freedom struggle," Syed Salahudin, the supreme commander of dominant indigenous group Hizbul Mujahedin, told a local news

Syed Ali Geelani is the senior leader of Kashmir's main separatist alliance, the All Party Hurriyat Conference, and represents the pro-Pakistan Jamaat-e-Islami in the 23-party coalition.

The police regard Jamaat as the political wing of the Hizbul guerrilla group. Hizbul and Jamaat, however, deny having any links. Salahudin, who is also the chair-

man of the United Jihad Council, a

conglomerate of over a dozen militant groups, defended Geelani's recent remarks that jihad (holy war) was the "only way to achieve free-

"The jihad will continue (in Kashmir) till the goal of freedom is achieved," said Šalahudin, who is the "most wanted" militant leader in Kashmir and is currently operating from Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

He contested a seat in the Kashmir state assembly in 1987, but lost. He and scores of other political opponents were later jailed by the Kashmir government, and within two years an armed anti-Indian rebellion was launched that has so far claimed more than 35,000 lives. Separatists put the toll at 80,000. The Hizbul chief's remarks came

a day after Jamaat-e-Islami dis-

jihad remarks.

tanced itself from Geelani's pro-

#### new healthcare hub In a gala ceremony on Thursday presided over by Thai Deputy Pitak Intrawitayanunt and attended by senior governmental officials busi-

ness leaders and members of the diplomatic community, Thailand celebrated its emergence as Asia's new healthcare hub. A milestone of this event was the award of Asia's first international accreditation to Bumrungrad Hospital by the USbased Joint Commission on International Accreditation (JCIA), according to a press release issued from Banakok

In his remarks, Khun Pitak highlighted Thailand's progress in the development of healthcare facilities in both public and private sectors over the past twenty years including a doubling of private hospital beds in Bangkok over the past seven years. They also recognised the incred-

ible arowth of people from other

countries who now come to

Thailand for their healthcare ser-

vices. "It has been a combination of excellent, well-educated Tha doctors and nurses, the tradition of Thai hospitality and a very competitive price that has motivated people from around the world to choose Thailand for their healthcare services," Khun Pitak said. The Thai government has

actively supported the development of Thai healthcare as a new "export product". The Export Promotion Board of the Ministry of Commerce has been promoting Thai quality healthcare to neighboring countries in Southeast Asia, Japan, China, the Indian Sub-continent and even the Middle East and northern Europe through road shows and promotional material. Also, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has added healthcare to the world standard attractions that Thailand can help boost the growth of health tourism and related revenues.

#### 2 westerners sentenced to death in KSA

AFP, London

A Briton and a Canadian have been sentenced to death in Saudi Arabia for allegedly being involved in a bombing campaign, while four other British men have been given sentences of up to 18 years in jail, British

newspapers reported Saturday. Britain's Foreign Office issued a statement saying: "We remain deeply concerned about the men's situation." but refused to confirm or

deny reports or details of the cases. The Daily Mail said that Alexander "Sandy" Mitchell, 44, from Scotland, had been sentenced to death and now faced beheading after a summary trial without lawyers in which he admitted planting a car bomb which killed a fellow expatri-

#### Greek court finds British, Dutch plane-spotters guilty of spying

A Greek court found a group of British and Dutch "plane-spotters" guilty of espionage Friday, handing them sentences of between one and three years for snooping on Greek military

In a case which has strained relations between Britain and Greece. Judge Fotoula Fotopoulou sentenced six of Britons and their two Dutch friends to three years in jail for espionage but did not order them behind bars pending an immediate appeal lodged by their lawyers.

The remaining six Britons were sentenced for complicity to the crime, and were each handed one-year suspended sentences in the court in the southern Greek town of Kalamata.

Zeena, who led a three-member delegation to Indian Deputy High

He said the Deputy High Commissioner denied that there were any anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujarat. "However, Dr Pal said what

Indian Muslims were seeking lega advice in bringing Modi to the International Court of Justice, "Dr Pal said that India was not a signatory to the provisions of International Court of Justice and therefore such a move against Modi would be