



Mourners carry the body of Tareq Abed Rabbo, a leader of the militant Islamist group Hamas, through the streets of the West Bank town of Tulkarem during his funeral on Saturday. Abed Rabbo, 23, a wanted member of Hamas' armed wing, was killed by Israeli army on Friday during an incursion into the Nur al-Shams refugee camp.

## Pakistan frees Jaish chief

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani authorities Saturday freed the head of Jaish-e-Mohammad, one of the most militant movements fighting Indian rule in Kashmir which New Delhi has accused of carrying out a string of deadly attacks.

Maulana Masood Azhar was detained in December 2001 shortly after his movement was blamed by New Delhi for an attack on the Indian parliament that sent tensions soaring between New Delhi and Islamabad.

But a court in the eastern city of Lahore rejected on Saturday a government request to extend Azhar's detention on the grounds that Jaish was banned by Pakistan.

## Indian gangster deported to Pakistan

AFP, Dubai

A suspected gangster wanted by Indian police for a series of deadly bomb blasts in 1993 and arrested in Dubai has been deported to Pakistan, a newspaper reported Saturday.

The Khaleej Times quoted Emirati security sources as saying that Anees Ibrahim, younger brother of Indian Muslim underworld boss Dawood Ibrahim, had been sent back to Pakistan.

He was detained at the start of the month in Dubai where he was suspected of being involved in murder and fraud.

However after interrogation by Dubai detectives he was deported to where he arrived from, the daily said.

# EU endorses expansion

## Turkey waits in wings

REUTERS, Copenhagen

The European Union has thrown open its doors to 10 mostly former communist East European countries, ending years of tortuous negotiations and redefining the continent's boundaries.

Even as EU leaders agreed to the largest expansion in the bloc's 45-year history, further radical upheaval lay over the horizon, with mainly Muslim Turkey promising that it would be ready to start formal entry talks by 2004.

The decision to add 10 new members to the present 15 came at the end of an intense two-day summit and means that the EU's population will grow by 20 percent to 450 million people, creating an economic colossus to rival the United States.

"Europe is spreading its wings in freedom, in prosperity and in peace. This is a truly proud moment for the European Union," Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, the summit host, said in an emotional final speech on Friday.

The Big Bang is scheduled for May 2004, giving the newcomers little over a year to secure public backing for their EU entry in a series of referendums and ready their economies for the shock of hooking up to the wealthy western powerhouse.

Friday's deal ended months of haggling over terms, with Poland, the biggest and most demanding candidate, battling until the last minute to win a slightly improved financial package. Champagne flowed to celebrate



(L-R) French President Jacques Chirac, French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin and Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller propose a toast after a final working session at the European Union summit in Copenhagen on Friday.

the accord, but Turkey did not share the general delight, having failed to get a fixed date for kicking off its membership talks, despite energetic lobbying by President Bush on its behalf.

Instead, Ankara was told that the long-awaited talks could start only if it was deemed to have met the bloc's strict standards on human rights and democracy by the end of 2004.

After an initial frisson of anger, Turkish leaders said they would plough ahead with their reform program and would be ready for negotiations within two years.

The countries that were invited to join in May 2004 were Poland,

Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Cyprus and Malta. A summit draft statement backed Bulgaria and Romania's aim of entry in 2007.

Polish Prime Minister Leszek Miller, who irked many EU member states by his uncompromising brinkmanship, waxed lyrical when the deal was finally done.

"Poland has made a great historic step forward. We shake off the burden of Yalta," he said, referring to the 1945 division of Europe into Soviet and Western spheres of influence after World War II. "Our tough negotiations until the end have worked."

EU leaders made minor concessions, but managed to keep the overall cost of paying for the expansion to some 40.8 billion euros — less than was originally budgeted back in 1999.

The United States welcomed the landmark accord.

"...the European Union's decision further unites the new and the established democracies of Europe, and advances the creation of a Europe whole, free, and at peace," said a statement issued by White House spokesman Ari Fleischer.

There were also warm plaudits for the way Denmark, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, handled the negotiations.

"It was stunning in terms of determination, intelligence and finesse," said French President Jacques Chirac.

Diplomats suffered one setback at the summit, failing in their bid to bring Turkish and Greek Cypriots together around a U.N.-brokered peace plan aimed at ending the 27-year division of the Mediterranean island.

The EU agreed to admit just the internationally recognized Greek-Cypriot part of the island in 2004 if necessary, but talks will continue to seek a political settlement next year.

Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş, veteran leader of the breakaway Turkish Cypriot statelet which only Turkey recognises, told reporters in Ankara: "The European Union's interest is to delay Turkey and to take Cyprus, to possess Cyprus and to build something like a Christian fortress around Turkey."

# UN hunts arms, seeks list of Iraqi scientists

REUTERS, Baghdad

The United Nations pressed Iraq for a list of scientists linked to arms programs declared by Baghdad in a dossier that US officials say is deeply flawed.

UN experts, testing Iraq's assertion that it no longer has any banned weapons, pounced on 11 chemical, biological, nuclear and missile sites Saturday, Iraqi officials said.

Chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix has written to Iraqi presidential adviser Amir al-Saadi asking Iraq to name its arms scientists by the end of December, Blix's spokesman said on Friday. An Iraqi official has said the list is in the works.

Under Security Council resolution 1441 of November 8, the inspectors have the right to inter-

view in private anyone who might know details of Iraq's weapons programs, if necessary by taking them and their families out of the country.

The United States wants Blix and his counterpart at the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, to do just that. But some diplomats believe Washington is pushing the issue to provoke a clash between Baghdad and the UN arms experts that could provide a quick pretext for a war on Iraq.

"We are not going to abduct anybody, and we're not serving as a defection agency," Blix said last week.

Washington has threatened to disarm Iraq by force and topple President Saddam Hussein if it does not come clean on its arms program.

In London, Iraqi opposition groups were due to hold a meeting Saturday to try to bury their differences and lay claim to a central role in Iraq if Saddam is ousted.

The meeting, which has been postponed three times, was due to start at 10 a.m. (1000 GMT).

Weapons inspectors, who returned to Iraq last month after a four-year absence, spread their net wide Saturday, sifting through 11 sites suspected of involvement in banned weaponry.

They returned to the Communicable Diseases Control Centre in Baghdad, after failing to gain access to some locked rooms there during an inspection Friday, the Muslim day of rest.

Senior UN and Iraqi officials used their hotline for the first time

since the latest round of inspections began to sort out the snag, agreeing to seal the rooms temporarily.

US officials and UN diplomats have said the 12,000-page weapons declaration Iraq submitted a week ago appears to fall short of the full disclosure demanded by resolution 1441.

The resolution says falsehoods or omissions in the document, coupled with any obstruction of the inspections, would be a "material breach" of Iraq's obligations.

Secretary of State Colin Powell told the London-based Arabic newspaper Al Quds Al Arabi, in an interview to be published Saturday, that Saddam "continues to give us statements that suggest he is not in possession of weapons of mass destruction when we know he is."

## Sea of candles engulfs US embassy in Seoul

AFP, Seoul

Tens of thousands of people carrying candles descended on the US embassy here Saturday to protest what they considered was an inadequate US response to the deaths of two schoolgirls crushed by a US military vehicle in June.

Regular protests have rocked Seoul for a month as the anti-US sentiment sparked by a US court martial's decision to acquit two soldiers on charges of negligent homicide in the incident has reached a near-boiling point.

On Saturday, an intersection near the US embassy was awash in flickering candlelight, the tapers borne aloft by an estimated crowd of 50,000 people who booed and shouted slogans.



South Korean protesters hold a South Korean national flag during an anti-US demonstration in front of city hall in Seoul on Saturday. Tens of thousands of people took to the street in Seoul and many other places on Saturday to mourn the June death of two schoolgirls who were crushed by a heavy US military vehicle.

# Bush, Kim warn N Korea over nuclear plans

## ROK-Japan to cooperate for peaceful solution

AFP, Seoul

US President George W. Bush and South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung ramped up pressure on North Korea Friday to reverse its decision to revive a nuclear program but stressed the escalating dispute must end peacefully.

"The two leaders agreed to continue seeking a peaceful resolution while not allowing business as usual to continue with North Korea," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said after the presidents spoke by telephone.

North Korea said Thursday it was reactivating a plutonium-based

nuclear program after Washington and its allies cut off fuel shipments required under a 1994 deal under which the project was mothballed.

The decision came after Pyongyang admitted to a US envoy in October it was pursuing a separate enriched uranium program.

Kim branded Pyongyang's statement "unacceptable." President Bush said that they needed to continue to seek a peaceful solution while not allowing business as usual to continue with North Korea," Fleischer told reporters.

Meanwhile, the US State Department said US Secretary of

State Colin Powell had lobbied his Russian, Chinese, and European Union counterparts over the past 24 hours to seek a united front on North Korea.

Moreover, South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung and Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Saturday agreed to cooperate closely to defuse the rekindled crisis over North Korea's nuclear programme.

The two leaders, speaking by telephone, shared the view that the North's decision to reactivate its mothballed nuclear facilities frozen under a 1994 deal was "extremely regrettable," the presidential Blue House said.

# Rocca pledges US support for Nepal's fight against terror

PTI, Kathmandu

US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca has assured US government's continued support to strengthen democracy in Nepal and its fight against Maoist insurgency.

Rocca, who arrived on Friday on a three-day visit, had talks with King Gyanendra, Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand, Foreign Minister Narendra Bikram Shan and Chief of Army Staff Pyargjung Thapa.

During the high level talks the two countries discussed matters of bilateral relations and US-Nepal cooperation, officials said.

Rocca expressed concern over the escalating Maoist violence and pledged US assistance to combat it, an official at the foreign ministry said.

She is also reported to have shown concern over the slow progress made in the Integrated Development and Security Project (ISDP) being implemented in the Maoist-hit districts by Nepal under the US assistance.

Rocca assured the US government's support for an early settlement of the problem of 100,000 Nepal's refugees.



Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (C) releases the book of India's late movie star and director Raj Kapoor as Bollywood actor Shami Kapoor (L) and the daughter of Raj Kapoor, Nitu Nanda (R), looks on in New Delhi on Saturday. The biographic book was released on the occasion of the 78th birthday of the late star.

# Bush seeks replacement for Sept 11 probe panel as Kissinger resigns

AP, Washington

President Bush is expected to move swiftly to find a replacement for Henry Kissinger as chairman of a commission investigating the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks after the former secretary of state abruptly resigned because of conflict-of-interest concerns.

Kissinger's resignation Friday came two weeks after his appointment and two days after the panel's vice chairman, former Sen. George Mitchell, D-Maine, stepped down. The twin resignations came as the commission hoped to begin its work next month and after disputes about its organisation and its authority to issue subpoenas.

White House aides said the resignation was Kissinger's idea and that the president accepted it with regret. While no replacement was announced, Bush plans to fill

the position soon, the aides said.

The 10-member commission will investigate events surrounding the attacks, examining issues including aviation security, immigration and US diplomacy. It will build on a congressional inquiry, completed this week, into intelligence failures.

Kissinger cited concerns that had been raised about possible conflicts of interests involving his business clients and demands by some Democratic lawmakers that he make public the names of all of his clients. The White House had argued he was not required to make such disclosures because the chairmanship was an unpaid position.

In a letter to Bush, Kissinger said he was willing to submit "all relevant financial information" to the White House and to an independent review to counter allegations of conflict of interest.

# Gujarat Muslims fear fresh violence after polls result

AFP, Ahmedabad

Muslims in India's riot-scarred western Gujarat state were Saturday gearing to move to safer areas, fearing fresh violence once results of assembly elections were declared.

Results of Thursday's vote, in which 61.7 percent of 33 million registered voters cast ballots, were to be announced Sunday.

Muslim-dominated areas were tense Saturday as residents made plans to flee should violence erupt. Others had already departed to safer areas.

"The fear in our heart is deep rooted as we have seen extreme cruelty inflicted on us," said 45-year-old Rehmat Bibi, a resident of Ahmedabad's Naroda Patiya.

"Many of us have already moved to other safe places, to our relatives. I am staying here, but may have to leave if violence breaks out again

tomorrow."

Bibi lost her son-in-law and daughter in sectarian violence that has ravaged the state since February, leaving some 2,000 mostly Muslim dead, human rights groups said.

More than 200 Muslims were killed in Patiya in March alone, making it one of the worst-hit areas.

The violence in Gujarat was triggered February 27 after a train carrying Hindu activists was torched by a mob, believed to be Muslim, killing 58.

Exit polls have indicated the election will be won by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which underpinned its campaigning with a message of headline Hindu nationalism.

But such polls are notoriously unreliable in India and political analysts are predicting a photo-finish, giving the Muslim-backed opposition Congress party a chance

to spring a surprise.

According to some exit polls, more than 44 percent of Hindus are believed to have voted for Congress.

But even with hoped-for success for the opposition party, local Muslim social workers fear a BJP loss could spark further incidents of sectarian violence.

"Whoever wins is not going to make a difference to the life of these affected people. But they fear that a BJP defeat could lead to violence after the results," said Nazeer Khan, a teacher at Patiya.

"The fear is further aggravated as there is no trust after what has happened here. Even the police are not trusted, despite their round the clock presence."

Gujarat's police are widely accused of turning a blind eye during the peak of the riots, and some have alleged that police were even active participants in the killings.