



A Palestinian man helps his daughter to jump over concrete blocks in the West Bank village of Abu Dis on the edge of Jerusalem yesterday. The UN's top court has declared the barrier illegal.

### Two killed in Lebanon clash involving relatives of US Marine

AFP, Tripoli

Two people were killed and two wounded when a relative of a US marine who resurfaced in Beirut after 18 days' missing in Iraq opened fire close to the family home, security sources said yesterday. The clash took place Thursday in Lebanon's main northern city of Tripoli, hometown of marine Corporal Wassef Ali Hassoun who had been feared beheaded by Islamist hostage-takers in Iraq. The security sources identified the casualties as members of the Halkuni clan, whom they said had a longrunning vendetta with the Hassouns. But news reports cited by the New York Times said the clashes involved close relatives of Hassoun and members of his wider clan who accused them of being US collaborators because they had emigrated to the United States and he signed up for the marines.

# 'Terrorism' holding Muslim world hostage: Musharraf

AFP, Baku

Islamic "terrorism" is holding the Muslim world hostage, Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf said yesterday a visit to the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan. But the West must also change its attitude to the Islamic world -- and in particular persuade Israel to withdraw from Palestinian territory -- if global terrorism is to be defeated, he said. The Pakistani leader made the remarks in a wide-ranging speech about the challenges facing the Islamic world during his state visit to Azerbaijan, a mainly Muslim state which has forged close links with Islamabad. Unfortunately the Islamic world is faced with many problems. It is as if the Islamic world is facing a storm," the 60-year-old president,

speaking through an interpreter, told a special session of the Azeri parliament. "It is also unfortunate that terrorism does harm to Muslim countries... The tactics they use, terrorism, car bombs, executions and other dirty methods, damage our great religion. Today they are holding our societies hostage." "They must understand that they cannot solve the problems of the Islamic world this way... I call on them to return to the true path." But he said the West, and particularly the United States, had to assist the Islamic world in stamping out terrorism. Western nations could do this by helping Islamic countries develop their economies. The West should also help resolve a series of conflicts in which Muslim communities have found their territory under occupa-

tion, he said. He listed Pakistan's dispute with India over Kashmir, Azerbaijan's lingering conflict with its neighbour Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. "The Palestinian problem must be resolved in a just way," the Pakistani leader said. "Israel must accept reality and return to the framework of its 1967 borders." "If we are able to put this into practise, then the world will be able to root out extremism, militarism and terrorism," Musharraf added. "If the status quo remains, then that will not lead to the resolution of these problems." Musharraf, an army chief who came to power in a bloodless coup five years ago, is himself walking a delicate tightrope on Islamic issues. After the September 11, 2001

terrorist attacks on the United States, he supported the US-led operation to overthrow the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and root out terrorist groups. But that support for Washington has made him a villain in the eyes of many Muslim radicals. He has since been the target of several near-miss assassination attempts. Musharraf was speaking on the second day of his visit to Azerbaijan, a country of eight million mostly Shia Muslims bordering Russia and Iran. On Thursday, Musharraf signed a package of documents on trade and security cooperation between the two countries. He said that in Azerbaijan, Islamabad had found a steadfast international ally. Later Friday, Musharraf is due to go on a walkabout in the Azeri capital, Baku, and attend a concert in his honour at the State Philharmonic Hall.

### 'Bush's military service files were destroyed'

REUTERS, New York

The Pentagon says military records related to President Bush's service in the National Guard more than 30 years ago were inadvertently destroyed. The New York Times reported yesterday. Payroll records of "numerous service members," including Bush, were ruined in 1996 and 1997 during a project to salvage deteriorating microfilm by the Defence Finance and Accounting Service, the newspaper said, citing the Pentagon. Bush's whereabouts during his service in the National Guard during the Vietnam War have become an election-year issue, with some Democrats accusing him of shirking his duty. The destroyed files cover three months of a period in 1972 and 1973 when Bush's claims of service in Alabama are in question, the newspaper said. No back-up paper copies of the records could be found, the Pentagon said in notices dated June 25, according to the Times.

### US asks Tigers to give up 'terrorism'

AFP, Colombo

The United States yesterday asked Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers to give up "terrorism," saying a suicide bombing in the capital Colombo had the hallmarks of the rebels despite their denial. Four policemen and the woman bomber were killed Wednesday in the first suicide attack in Colombo since the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) reached a truce in February 2002. "Although no one has claimed responsibility for the bombing, the incident bears the hallmarks of an LTTE attack," the US embassy said in a statement. "The US has consistently called on the Tigers to renounce terrorism and cease terrorist acts, including political assassinations, and to comply with the terms of the ceasefire agreement that they

signed," the embassy said. The United States said it would not lift its October 1997 ban on the Tigers as a terrorist group until the rebels completely renounced the use of violence and entered the democratic mainstream. Officials said the suicide attack was aimed at Douglas Devananda, a Tamil government minister who fiercely opposes the LTTE's campaign to set up a separate homeland for the minority. Police said Friday they arrested a woman accomplice of the suicide bomber. The 29-year-old woman, who was remanded in custody, had earlier worked for Devananda, police said. "This woman had been tasked with taking the suicide bomber up to minister Devananda's office," a police spokesman said. "But security guards did not allow her (the bomber) in without subjecting her to a body search."

### India struggles to fight floods

Death toll climbs to 73

AFP, Guwahati

India struggled yesterday to contain floods which have claimed at least 73 lives since the onset of the monsoon in mid-June, officials said. Six people drowned Thursday in the northeastern state of Assam in separate incidents as their wooden row boats were swept away in the Brahmaputra river which is flowing dangerously high, a police spokesman said. "In some places, the Brahmaputra river is flowing more than 2.45 meters (eight feet) above the danger level," warned a bulletin flashed by the Central Water Commission. Up to 1.2 million people are reported to be displaced in floods

in northeastern India where the death toll reached 50. Six new deaths were reported Friday from the eastern state of Bihar taking its flood death toll to 17, a state disaster control official said. The official said four women drowned when their wooden row boat capsized in the swollen Saryaman River and that two villagers were swept away in the eastern Champaran district. Six people were killed earlier this week when their vehicle was hit by a landslide and fell into a deep gorge in West Bengal state, police said. India last year recorded more than 1,000 deaths from floods, which are triggered annually by monsoon rains and melting snows from the Himalayas.



Indian villagers ferry salvaged household goods on a raft through floodwaters at Kamalpur in Kamrup district some 35km from Guwahati, the capital of Assam yesterday. India struggled to contain floods which have claimed at least 73 lives since the onset of the monsoon in mid-June.

### Tenet leaves behind crisis of confidence in intelligence

AFP, Washington

George Tenet, whose seven-year run as head of the CIA comes to a stormy end this week, leaves behind a crisis of confidence in US intelligence as the United States struggles with Muslim insurgents and the threat of catastrophic attacks. A farewell tribute by his staff on Friday, a day ahead of his formal resignation, coincides with the unveiling of a Senate Intelligence Committee report unsparingly critical of CIA failures from the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States to its pre-war estimates of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that so far have failed to pan out. Republicans in the House Intelligence Committee for their part warned last month that the agency for too long has been ignoring "its core mission activities," notably clandestine operations to recruit spies and penetrate organizations like al-Qaeda. CIA, it said, "continues down a road leading over a proverbial cliff." It has been a brusque turnaround for Tenet who for seven years rode out past crises with swagger and charm and timely support from the two presidents he served, Democrat Bill Clinton and Republican George W. Bush.



Filipino demonstrators rally outside the Manila convention center demanding the pullout of US and Philippine troops from Iraq to save a Filipino hostage where Philippine President Gloria Arroyo spoke before a convention of Filipino overseas workers yesterday.

### Kidnappers threaten to behead Bulgarians, Filipino in Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

Militants in Iraq held a Filipino and two Bulgarians under death threat yesterday to press demands for Manila's troops to go home and for prisoners to be freed. The kidnappings have increased pressure on Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's government, trying to assert its authority after taking over from US-led occupiers on June 28, but still dependent for security on 160,000 mainly American troops. Bulgaria, which has contributed 470 troops to the US-led multinational force in Iraq, vowed not to bow to demands by the kidnappers of its nationals, identified by state radio as civilian truck drivers Ivalio Kepov and Georgi Lazov. Private television channel BTV said the two, working for a Bulgarian company, had unloaded cars from their trucks in the northern city of Mosul and had been on the way home when seized. "Bulgaria is a stable state with a predictable foreign policy and we cannot expect it would change its foreign policy because of one or another group," Foreign Minister Solomon Passy told state radio in Sofia. He was speaking the day after a

group led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, which has already beheaded an American and a South Korean in Iraq, said it would kill the Bulgarians within 24 hours unless US-led forces released prisoners. The family of Filipino driver Angelo de la Cruz appealed to the Manila government to bring him home as diplomats tried to contact the militants threatening to decapitate him. Gunmen holding de la Cruz said on Wednesday they would kill him unless the Philippines, a staunch US ally, pulls its force of about 50 humanitarian workers out of Iraq within 72 hours. Arabic Al Jazeera television showed a tape from Zarqawi's Tawhid and Jihad group in which the two Bulgarians were seen sitting in front of masked and armed captors. "The group said the Bulgarian government bore responsibility for the safety of its citizens because it has sent troops to Iraq," the Qatar-based satellite channel said. The United States has branded Zarqawi an al Qaeda ally and its top target in Iraq with a \$25 million bounty, blaming him for much of the violence rolling the country.

### N Korea to get 'surprise' rewards if it scraps nukes, says Rice

AFP, Seoul

US National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice said yesterday North Korea would be surprised at "how much will be possible" if the Stalinist state abandons its nuclear ambitions, South Korean officials said. The remarks came when Rice met with South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon in Seoul on the final leg of her Asian tour which also brought her to Japan and China, she said. "North Korea will be surprised to see how much will be possible (if it abandons its nuclear programs)," Rice told Ban, according to official Kim Eun-Seok, who attended the 30-minute meeting. "So much is possible if North Korea just does that." A nuclear stand-off erupted in October 2002 when the United States said North Korea acknowledged it was developing nuclear weapons, violating a 1994 international agreement. The third round of six-way

nuclear crisis talks in Beijing last month ended without a breakthrough, although the United States, the two Koreas, China, Japan and Russia agreed to meet again by the end of September. The United States offered at the latest negotiations to give North Korea three months to shut down and seal its nuclear weapons facilities in return for economic and diplomatic rewards. Pyongyang has proposed freezing its nuclear program and pledged to stop building, testing and transferring nuclear weapons, but insisted Washington's rewards for concessions were the only way to resolve the impasse. While meeting with Ban, Rice also thanked South Korea for sending troops to Iraq at the US' request, officials said. Earlier in the day, Rice met with South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun and conveyed US President George W. Bush's letter to the South Korean leader. "President Bush wanted me to visit Seoul and reaffirm the impor-

tance the United States attaches to its relations with the Republic of Korea," Rice was quoted as saying in the pool report. The letter is expected to contain Bush's thanks for Seoul's decision to deploy more than 3,000 troops to Iraq, an aide to Roh was quoted as saying by Yonhap news agency. A group of some 60 activists rallied on a road leading to the presidential Blue House, chanting slogans denouncing the US-led war on Iraq as Rice was meeting with Roh. Rice also meet with her South Korean counterpart, Kwon Jin-Ho, to discuss Washington's plan to realign its troops stationed overseas, officials said. Washington has offered to reduce its 37,500 US troops in South Korea by one third under a global redeployment plan. The US military presence has served as key deterrence against North Korea since the 1950-1953 Korean War, and the planned reduction has prompted security concerns among South Koreans.

# Iraq insurgency larger than thought: US army

AP, Baghdad

Contrary to US government claims, the insurgency in Iraq is led by well-armed Sunnis angry about losing power, not foreign fighters, and is far larger than previously thought, American military officials say. The officials told The Associated Press the guerrillas can call on loyalists to boost their forces to as high as 20,000 and have enough popular support among nationalist Iraqis angered by the presence of US troops that they cannot be militarily defeated. That number is far larger than the 5,000 guerrillas previously thought to be at the insurgency's core. And some insurgents are highly specialized - one Baghdad cell, for instance, has two leaders, one assassin, and two groups of bomb-makers. Although US military analysts disagree over the exact size, the

insurgency is believed to include dozens of regional cells, often led by tribal sheiks and inspired by Sunni Muslim imams. The developing intelligence picture of the insurgency contrasts with the commonly stated view in the Bush administration that the fighting is fueled by foreign warriors intent on creating an Islamic state. "We're not at the forefront of a jihadist war here," said a US military official in Baghdad, speaking on condition of anonymity. The military official, who has logged thousands of miles driving around Iraq to meet with insurgents or their representatives, said a skillful Iraqi government could co-opt some of the guerrillas and reconcile with the leaders instead of fighting them. "I generally like a lot of these guys," he said. "We know who the key people are in all the different cities,

and generally how they operate. The problem is getting actionable information so you can either attack them, arrest them or engage them." Even as Iraqi leaders wrangle over the contentious issue of offering a broad amnesty to guerrilla fighters, the new Iraqi military and intelligence corps have begun gathering and sharing information on the insurgents with the US military, providing a sharper picture of a complex insurgency. "Nobody knows about Iraqis and all the subtleties in culture, appearance, religion and so forth better than Iraqis themselves," said US Army Lt. Col. Daniel Baggio, a military spokesman at Multinational Corps headquarters in Baghdad. "We're very optimistic about the Iraqis' use of their own human intelligence to help root out these insurgents."

### IRAQI EXILE SAYS Defectors' reports on WMD embellished

AFP, Washington

Reports by Iraqi defectors on weapons of mass destruction were embellished to make Saddam Hussein a more attractive target for the United States, an Iraqi exile told The New York Times. Speaking ahead of the release Friday of a US Senate report castigating the CIA for faulty intelligence on Iraq, Muhammad al-Zubaidi said the defectors' accounts were beefed up by members of the Iraqi National Congress led by Ahmad Chalabi. "They intentionally exaggerated all the information so they would drag the United States into war," Zubaidi, an ex-INC member who split with the group in April 2003 and is now exiled in Lebanon, told the daily in an interview. Zubaidi said that after the United

States declared its war on terrorism in the wake of the September 11, 2001 suicide plane attacks in Washington and New York, he was asked by the INC to find evidence of outlawed weapons in Iraq. He said that over three months, he and a team of 75 to 100 people gathered statements from defectors claiming to have knowledge of Iraq's secret weapons programs. Zubaidi said the statements made by the defectors to his team differed from those they later made to US intelligence officials after having met with INC members. He contends that the defectors were prepped by the INC to make some of the most provocative claims on weapons of mass destruction and contacts between Iraqi officials and members of the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization.



The British nuclear submarine HMS Tireless prepares to moor in the port of Gibraltar. The HMS Tireless arrived in Gibraltar yesterday on a controversial visit that has caused howls of discontent from the Spanish government.