

## Russia slams West for double standards

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the West of double standards on terrorism in the wake of his country's bloodiest hostage crisis. Lavrov told yesterday's Vremya Novosti daily that Russia's former Cold War foe had yet to shake off their adversarial mindset and their security services were not fully cooperating with Russia in the fight against terror. Russia is angry that Britain and the United States have given asylum to spokesmen for Chechen separatist leader Aslan Maskhadov, who Moscow blames along with rebel commander Shamil Basayev for the deaths of hundreds of hostages. "I would use a neutral term: It's a double standard," Lavrov told the newspaper. At least 326 hostages -- half of them children -- died in last Friday's chaotic storming of School No.1 in Beslan, southern Russia, after it was seized by rebels demanding Chechen independence. Another 356 are still in hospital.

## 'Removal of Arafat closer than ever'

4 killed as Israel widens Gaza raid

REUTERS, AFP, Jerusalem

Israel threatened again yesterday to "remove" Palestinian President Yasser Arafat. "There is no room for Arafat among us, and the time will come when we will remove him... and that day is closer than ever," Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom said. Israel and the United States have tried to sideline Arafat, a longtime symbol of Palestinian nationalism, accusing him of fomenting violence in the nearly four-year-old Palestinian uprising. Arafat, 75, effectively confined to his battered West Bank headquarters by Israel for more than two years, denies the allegations. Shalom's remarks to his rightist Likud Party, broadcast by Israeli radios, were the second threat

made by Israel this week against the Palestinian leader. Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said on Monday a security cabinet decision made a year ago to expel Arafat was still valid, but hinted that implementation had been delayed to avoid complicating a planned Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Senior Israeli officials have reaffirmed the threat against Arafat several times before, but political sources say such a move is unlikely as long as the United States, Israel's main ally, strongly opposes it. AFP adds: Four Palestinians, including a young boy, were killed Thursday and some 25 wounded as the Israeli army widened a major offensive in the Gaza Strip designed to halt rocket attacks by Hamas fighters. Mohammad Ezzedine, 22, Sami Thabet, 18, and 11-year-old Munir

al-Diqes were killed when soldiers opened fire at a group who were throwing stones in their direction in the Jabalya refugee camp, medical sources and witnesses said. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli army. Mohamad Al-Hadjali, a 24-year-old member of the hardline Islamist movement Hamas' armed wing, was killed earlier, while another three people were wounded in Jabalya in an exchange of fire with soldiers. Twelve other Palestinians were also wounded when Israeli combat aircraft opened fire on targets in the same refugee camp in an overnight air raid, while another 10 suffered injuries on Thursday when soldiers opened fire in a bid to disperse a crowd throwing stones, the sources added.

## Hurricane Ivan pummels Caribbean: 15 killed

AP, St. George's

Hurricane Ivan pummeled Grenada, Barbados and other islands with its devastating winds and rains, causing at least 15 deaths, before setting a direct course for Jamaica, Cuba and the hurricane-weary southern United States. The most powerful hurricane to hit the Caribbean in 10 years damaged 90 percent of the homes in the "spice isle" of Grenada and destroyed a 17th century stone prison that left criminals on the loose as looting erupted, officials said Wednesday. Ivan strengthened early Thursday to become a Category 5 on a scale of 5. It packed sustained winds of 160 mph with higher gusts as it passed north of the Dutch Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. Some escaped convicts included politicians jailed for 20 years for killings in a 1983 left-wing palace coup that led the United States to invade Grenada.



PHOTO: AFP  
Doctors and nurses help a bombing victim at a hospital in Jakarta yesterday following a powerful car bomb blast outside the Australian embassy. At least eight people were killed and nearly 100 injured when the bomb tore through the gates of the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

## Asia, EU condemn attack on Australian embassy

AFP, Jakarta

Australia vowed yesterday not to be intimidated by a bloody car bombing outside its embassy in Jakarta as Asian and EU leaders condemned the blast, which killed at least eight people and injured almost 100. The bomb went off as both Indonesia and Australia prepare for elections and almost three years to the day after the September 11 attacks in the United States. No Australians were harmed in the blast in the Indonesian capital but the country's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the bomb was "clearly a terrorist attack". "... it was outside the Australian embassy, you would have to conclude that it was directed towards Australia," Downer told reporters in Adelaide.

"At this stage we don't know who was responsible for the explosion, it could take a bit of time to establish that, as is often the case. Naturally enough our suspicions turn to Jemaah Islamiyah." The al-Qaeda linked Jemaah Islamiyah group has been blamed for the 2002 Bali bombings in which 88 Australian tourists were among the 202 people killed. It was also blamed for the August 2003 bombing of Jakarta's Marriott Hotel, which killed 12 people, and for a string of other attacks. Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who has been a steadfast supporter of the United States' war in Iraq, insisted his country would not be bullied by the bombing. "This is not a nation that is going to be intimidated by acts of terrorism. We are a strong, robust democ-

racy," Howard said. The attack, which shattered windows of the embassy building and destroyed part of the barrier surrounding it, has prompted fears that Australia could be targeted by terrorists ahead of its October 9 elections. Howard has called an emergency meeting of his top security advisory body for Thursday evening to discuss the security situation. In March an attack on Madrid's railway just before a Spanish election was thought to have swung the result. Spain, like Australia, had allied itself with the United States over Iraq. Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, in Brunei for the wedding of the heir to the oil-rich kingdom's throne, rushed back to Jakarta after the bombing.



PHOTO: AFP

An Iraqi boy takes part in a protest in Baghdad yesterday against the abduction of two Italian women working for a charity organisation in Iraq. The protestors appealed for the kidnappers to free Simona Pari and Simona Torretta, from the Italian Non Governmental Organisation "Un Ponte Per Baghdad" and two Iraqis also working with them.

## 'Most Asians prefer Kerry to Bush'

AFP, Washington

A majority of Asians want Democratic party senator John Kerry at the White House, according to a global poll in which incumbent President George W. Bush was rebuffed by traditional US allies. Of seven Asian nations which took part in the survey, China, Japan and Indonesia gave solid backing for Kerry while the Philippines stood behind Bush. India and Thailand were however largely divided in the poll by global research firm GlobeScan Inc and the University of Maryland, a local institution. Some 35 countries from all regions in the world took part in the survey covering a total of 34,330 people and conducted mainly in July and August. Kerry emerged favourite in 30 countries and on average, beat his Republican rival by more than a two-

to-one margin -- 46 percent to 20 percent. "Only one in five want to see Bush reelected," said Steven Kull, the director of the university's program on international policy attitudes. "Though he is not as well known, Kerry would win handily if the people of the world were to elect the US president." The only countries where Bush was preferred in the poll were the Philippines, Nigeria and Poland. The margin of error in the survey ranged from 2.3 percentage points to five percentage points. In Japan, regarded as America's best friend in Asia, Kerry was favored among 43 percent of those polled compared with 23 percent for Bush. The presidential aspirant was also preferred by clear majorities in China (52 percent to Bush's 12 percent) and Indonesia (57 percent to 34 percent).

## FALLOUT OF SEPT 11 ATTACKS Mounting anti-Muslim sentiment in Britain

AFP, Luton

The September 11 attacks in the United States have left Britain's Muslim community feeling "under siege" and increasingly the target of racist incidents, Muslim leaders around the country say. "Things have turned upside down," said Akbar Dad Khan, a member of the Muslim association Building Bridges in Luton, north of London and home to a large Muslim population. "The community is feeling that it's under siege." "Racism, aggressive behaviour, insulting remarks towards Muslim-looking women and men have increased and have destabilized the Muslim community. According to a study conducted by experts and university professors who examined relations between the country's various racial groups, anti-Muslim sentiment has increased in Britain since the September 11, 2001 attacks. The study found that Muslims were subjected to verbal and physi-

cal attacks and were discriminated against in the workplace. Britain has an estimated two million Muslims, the majority of whom trace their roots to former British colonies in South Asia. Khan said that the wearing of the headscarf has also become a controversial issue. "The issue of hijab (headscarf) has become central as it is in France," he said. "Before 9/11 nobody bothered." He lamented the fact that the Muslim community was now seen as suspect and as supportive of terrorism, when, in fact, he said it was very integrated. In the face of this backlash, several associations have been created in various cities, including Luton, where the majority of Muslims living there are from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh. Mosques are also providing legal assistance and offering counseling to parents or children in need of help.

## Transatlantic rift hardening

REUTERS, Brussels

The United States and Europe are drifting further apart on security issues and the use of force in the aftermath of the Iraq war, a major transatlantic opinion survey released yesterday showed. The Transatlantic Trends 2004 opinion poll of 11,000 Americans and Europeans, conducted in June and issued two months before a crucial US presidential election, suggested a fundamental change in transatlantic relations may be under way. A growing majority of Europeans seek a more independent role from the United States and three-quarters say they disapprove of President Bush's international policies, the survey found. Some 58 percent of Europeans said strong US leadership in the world was undesirable, an increase of nine percentage points from a similar poll last year. Only in Britain and the Netherlands do a majority desire strong US leadership. By contrast, 79 percent of Americans say they support strong European Union leadership in world affairs and look to Europe as their preferred partner for solving global problems, even though 51 percent of them approve of Bush's foreign policy.

## 6 British soldiers killed in Czech chopper crash

AFP, Prague

A military Lynx helicopter crashed near the city of Brno in the Czech Republic yesterday, killing six British soldiers, the head of the regional emergency service said. "At the moment it looks like the six dead were all of the people on board but we are not yet ruling out that there were others," Jan Sedlak told AFP. The accident happened around 1 pm local time (1100 GMT) at Kuroslepy, around 30 kilometres (19 miles) west of Brno, and burst into flames, killing those on board. The helicopter can carry up to nine people. In London, the defence ministry confirmed that a British army helicopter had crashed in the Czech Republic but could not

immediately confirm any details of casualties. The soldiers had been taking part in a Czech-British military exercise called Flying Rhino. At the time of the crash, the helicopter was flying close to the ground. "I can confirm that the tragic accident happened two kilometres south of the airport but can give no further information until later," Sabina Introvicova, spokeswoman for the joint exercise, told Czech Radio. Czech military specialists from Namesti nad Oslavou, Caslav and Pardubice were taking part in the exercise along with British instructors, training in searching for ground targets and simulating air attacks. The exercise had been due to run until September 17 but it is not yet clear whether it will be cancelled.