



PHOTO: AFP

Picture shows *Philautus femoralis*, a rare species of tree frog from Sri Lanka's Horton Plains National Park.

## Lanka finds 35 new species of frogs

AFP, Colombo

Conservationists in Sri Lanka, the world's top spot for frogs, have discovered 35 new species of the amphibians -- only to find that another 19 species have died out.

Sri Lanka's Wildlife Heritage Trust (WHT), in a report published today, blames habitat loss on the tropical island for the die-off.

"The ravages of habitat loss in Sri Lanka's once rain-forested wet zone have been severe, and there is a compelling argument for intensive conservation management of the surviving forest," the Trust's Rohan Pethiyagoda said.

# India, US ink 10-year defence pact

## Washington may lift sanctions on military tech export

AFP, Washington

Defence ministers of the United States and India signed a 10-year agreement Tuesday paving the way for joint weapons production, cooperation on missile defence and possible lifting of US export controls for sensitive military technologies.

"The United States and India have entered a new era," a statement said after the signing by US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his Indian counterpart, Pranab Mukherjee, who is on a visit to Washington.

"We are transforming our relationship to reflect our common principles and shared national interests," it said of the so-called New framework for the US-India defence relationship signed at the

Pentagon.

The ministers agreed to set up a "defence procurement and production group" to oversee defence trade, as well as prospects for co-production and technology collaboration" and sign deals on military "research, development, testing and evaluation" as well as naval pilot training.

"Today, we agree on a new framework that builds on past successes, seizes new opportunities and charts a course for the US-India defence relationship for the next 10 years," the statement said.

The military pact came three months after the United States unveiled plans to help India become a "major world power in the 21st century" and ahead of a visit by

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the invitation of President George W. Bush from July 18 to 20.

Singh is scheduled to address a joint meeting of Congress.

House of Representatives Speaker Dennis Hastert said Tuesday that he looked forward to hearing from the visitor "how our two countries can help grow the global economy and make our world safe from those who seek to do us harm."

Washington's move to boost relations between the world's oldest and largest democracies which were on the opposite sides in the Cold War is seen by analysts as part of a strategy to counter the growing influence of China, India's immediate neighbour.

The United States may back

India's bid to become a permanent member in the UN Security Council, aside from its already pledged support for Japan, some analysts say.

Mukherjee said the United States could also end its policy of restricting supply of dual use nuclear and space technologies to India, sanctions imposed after India became an undeclared nuclear power.

"I feel there is a possibility of a change," he told reporters.

He said specific areas for cooperation under the new agreement would be subject to negotiations but urged defence companies to study the different defence procurement procedures of the two countries to achieve quick results.

## Nixon called Indira Gandhi an 'old witch'

AP, Washington

President Nixon referred privately to Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as an "old witch" and national security adviser Henry Kissinger insulted Indians in general, according to transcripts of Oval Office tapes and newly declassified documents released Tuesday.

Nixon and Kissinger met in the Oval Office on the morning of Nov. 5, 1971, to discuss Nixon's conversation with Gandhi the day before.

"We really slobbered over the old witch," Nixon told Kissinger, according to a transcript of their conversation released as part of a State Department compilation of significant documents involving American foreign policy.



PHOTO: AFP

A female resident peeks out into an alley at Indonesian police investigating the site of a blast in Jakarta yesterday, where a low-explosive bomb was detonated causing no injuries.

# Iraq war worth it: Bush

## President slammed for linking Iraq war with Sept 11

REUTERS, Fort Bragg

President Bush acknowledged American doubts about his Iraq strategy but argued it was worth it in a major address on Tuesday night that sought to connect Iraq's violent insurgency to Osama bin Laden and the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

"Iraq is where they are making their stand. So we will fight them there, and we will stay in the fight until the fight is won," Bush said.

Democrats immediately charged Bush failed to offer a clear plan for

success in Iraq. "It is not enough for the president to say 'stay the course' and make a few minor adjustments. The president needs to lay out a concrete plan," said New York Democratic Sen. Charles Schumer.

Bush, whose approval ratings have fallen to the lowest levels of his presidency in part because of growing fears about Iraq, invoked the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, repeatedly and cited al-Qaeda leader bin Laden as a reason for continuing the effort in Iraq.

No connection between Saddam Hussein and the Sept. 11 attacks was ever established, but Bush said

Iraq is a central front in the war on terrorism in part because the insurgency is led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who has sworn allegiance to bin Laden.

"The only way our enemies can succeed is if we forget the lessons of September 11, if we abandon the Iraqi people to men like Zarqawi and if we yield the future of the Middle East to men like bin Laden," Bush said.

Bush also argued against setting a deadline for a US withdrawal as some members of the US Congress have demanded.



PHOTO: AFP

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri (L) and his Bangladeshi counterpart Morshed Khan (R) confer with a member of the Saudi delegation at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Foreign Ministers' meeting yesterday in Sanaa.

# OIC ministers focus on reform, Iraq

AFP, Sanaa

Iraq called on its neighbours yesterday to make a bigger contribution to restoring security in the face of a raging insurgency that has seen daily bombings and shootings.

"The Iraqi request is clear. We believe that our neighbours can play an influential role in helping to stabilise Iraq," Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari told counterparts on the sidelines of a meeting of Islamic foreign ministers in Yemen.

"Until now, we have not received such support. We hope that there will be a new trend towards cooperation in security matters, as well as in economic and commercial affairs."

Iraq's neighbours last held a meeting on April 30 in Istanbul during which they pledged support to Baghdad authorities and vowed to increase security cooperation.

The United States has blamed Syria in particular for allowing foreign militants to cross into Iraq, while Zebari has said Iraq was holding hundreds of foreign Arab militants.

The minister called on Islamic countries to "condemn explicitly acts of terrorism in Iraq and the attempt to sow sedition between the

different religious communities".

Recent months have seen a spate of killings of Shiite civilians by Sunni Arab insurgents, prompting occasional tit-for-tat killings and growing talk of retaliation.

Zebari also demanded a higher diplomatic representation of Islamic countries in Iraq, where few have posted full ambassadors.

In their second day of talks, ministers of the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference were expected to discuss proposals for internal reform of a bloc originally established in 1969 to try to preserve the Islamic character of Jerusalem, but now with a much broader brief.

"I want to push for real reform in the organisation, not just a superficial one ... to enhance capabilities and improve performance," said secretary general Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu of Turkey.

He also proposed finding a new name for the organisation that would reflect what he called "its reality".

Ministers were also expected to discuss ways of securing a greater role for Muslim countries in world affairs and a permanent representation on the UN Security Council.

# A key ally deserts Arroyo

## Impeachment process is underway

AFP, AP, Manila

A key ally of Philippine leader Gloria Arroyo broke away from the ruling coalition yesterday as opposition efforts mounted to topple the embattled president over claims she stole the 2004 election.

With the country's second impeachment process under way five years after a similar move led to the ouster of Arroyo predecessor Joseph Estrada, Congress resumed a public inquiry over Arroyo calling an election official in last year's vote.

House of Representatives member Rolo Golez, Arroyo's former national security adviser, rocked his former boss by turning in his "irrevocable resignation" as head of the House defence committee, one of several congressional bodies holding the congressional probe.

The inquiry sprang from taped conversations in which a woman sounding like Arroyo appears to ask



a man believed to be an elections commissioner to ensure she came out with a one million-vote margin in the May 2004 vote.

Golez, as head of the House defence committee, plays a key role in the inquiry and observers expect his departure to lead to the tapes being publicly aired.

"I am saddened by this parting of ways. My loyalty to the party ends, where my loyalty to the country begins," Golez told colleagues

before the inquiry resumed.

Arroyo on Monday admitted she called an unnamed election official, but denied she cheated. At worst, it was a "lapse of judgment" on her part, she said.

The admission has triggered calls for the president to quit, with one congressman endorsing an impeachment complaint against her for "betraying public trust."

The armed forces meanwhile pledged its support to the embattled leader, vowing to remain "apolitical" despite public outrage over her apology.

"The AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) will remain loyal to the duly-constituted authority and to adhere to the chain of command," military chief General Efren Abu said.

The widow of Arroyo's defeated presidential rival Fernando Poe also on Wednesday joined calls for Arroyo to quit. Poe widow Susan Roces said she was prepared to lead street protests if the president tried to cling to power.

## 'Prince Harry had blood test to prove Charles was father'

AFP, London

Britain's royal family forced the late Princess Diana to blood test her younger son, Prince Harry, to prove he was not the offspring of an affair with an army officer, according to a newspaper report yesterday.

Diana, who died in 1997, did not tell Harry why his blood was being taken, the Sun newspaper said in extracts from a book by Simone Simmons, an "energy healer" billed as a former close friend and confidante of the princess.

Senior royals, notably Queen Elizabeth's husband Prince Philip, feared that their son, Prince Charles, who was married to Diana, might not have been the real father of Harry, who was born in September 1984.

Diana had previously had a passionate affair with army officer Major James Hewitt, and there had been rumours that Harry -- who, like Hewitt, has red hair -- was the product of that relationship.

# AMNESTY SAYS Australia's mandatory detention system violates HR

AFP, London

Amnesty International said Australia's policy of indefinitely locking up asylum seekers who arrive in the country illegally was a violation of human rights, in a report published yesterday. The rights group said the asylum policy was exacting "an appalling human cost, with children being kept behind razor wire for many months".

It called for urgent changes to the mandatory detention policy that go beyond measures announced by Prime Minister John Howard earlier this month to release children and their families from detention and allow long-term detainees to live in the community.

Amnesty said the recent changes were a positive step towards a more human policy on asylum seekers but did not go far

enough.

"They still leave Australia in clear breach of its international human rights obligations in the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees," it said.

Amnesty estimated that at the end of May, at least 150 asylum seekers had been held in immigration camps for three years or longer.

The figure included about 50 people in an Australian-funded detention centre on the island nation of Nauru under Canberra's so-called "Pacific Solution" designed to keep would-be refugees off Australian soil.

"People seeking asylum in Australia from human rights abuses in other countries are currently met with a system that further violates their human rights. These violations include administrative detention for a prolonged and potentially indefinite period of time," the report said.