

# Syria is 'not behaving in wise manner': Rumsfeld

## Bolton warns Tehran, Damascus over Iraq attacks

REUTERS, Beverly Hills/ United Nations

Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Thursday criticised Syria's leaders for "not behaving in a wise manner" by aiding Iraqi insurgents and warned that such conduct could come back to haunt them.

"The United States and the world obviously has to create a better clarity in the minds of leaders of Syria that what they are doing is harmful ultimately to themselves," Rumsfeld said after a speech in Beverly Hills at which he was twice heckled.

In the early days after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks the United States praised Syria for its cooperation in combating terrorism but more recently cooperation with Syria has

come to an end, with Washington accusing the government in Damascus of not doing enough to stop insurgents crossing into Iraq.

Rumsfeld said he was referring to Syria's refusal to return Iraqi funds, housing of Baathists from Saddam Hussein's fallen regime and the flow of insurgents across the border. He said Syria was also "undoubtedly financing" some of the Iraqi insurgency.

"(Syria is) going to have to live in that neighbourhood and Iraq doesn't like what Syria's doing," Rumsfeld said in a question-and-answer session following his speech to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

"Iraq is going to be in that neighbourhood for a very long time. It's a bigger country and a richer country

and will be a more powerful country," he said. "(In my view) the Syrians are not behaving in a wise manner at the present time."

He added that "other countries and the United States are simply going to have to continue to try and put pressure on them so that they understand the disadvantages that accrue to them by their behaviour."

Though Rumsfeld got a warm reception from the World Affairs Council, some two dozen anti-war protesters gathered outside.

His speech was interrupted at one point by a woman who stood up and shouted: "Rumsfeld, you lied to us!"

Meanwhile, US Ambassador John Bolton, in his debut in the UN Security Council, pressed Syria and

Iran on Thursday to do more to stem the flow of terrorists, arms and funding into neighbouring Iraq.

His comments came as the 15-nation council unanimously adopted a US-drafted resolution condemning a recent surge in violence in Iraq that has killed hundreds, including Algerian diplomats, US Marines and a Sunni Arab helping to draft a new Iraqi constitution.

Russia used the vote to criticise the media for glorifying terrorists after Moscow said it would bar ABC News from working in Russia when the US television network aired an interview with Chechen rebel leader Shamil Basayev.

Bolton urged all nations "to meet their obligations to stop the flow of terrorist financing and weapons, and particularly on Iran and Syria."



Environmental group Greenpeace members fly dove shaped paper balloons in the sky in front of the A-bomb Dome at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park yesterday as part of its the anti-nuclear protest. The 60th anniversary memorial service for the two hundreds thousands A-bomb victims will be held here today.

## Witnesses recount Hiroshima horror

AFP, Hiroshima

A day before the United States dropped the world's first nuclear weapon on Hiroshima, Akie Yoshikawa remembered the sky was full of American B-29 bombers and they were flying like "swallows." But she was not particularly concerned. There was a war going on and she was more concerned that her brother-in-law was about to go on a suicidal kamikaze mission.

On the fateful morning of August 6, 1945, Yoshikawa, then 21, was walking along with her mother just four km from the centre of the blast.

"It was a very hot day. Just when I was about to open my parasol, I saw a huge flash," Yoshikawa said.

At 8:15 am, the nuclear bomb exploded 580 meters (1,900 feet) above Hiroshima, killing more than 140,000 people. The surface temperature near the hypocentre reached as high as 4,000 degrees Celsius (7,200 degrees Fahrenheit).



Indian Additional Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs Meera Shankar (L) shakes hands with her Pakistani counterpart Tariq Osman Hyder prior to their meeting on Indo-Pak nuclear confidence building measures in New Delhi yesterday.

## Govt proposes increase in LS, assembly seats for Indian women

PTI, New Delhi

In a bid to break the deadlock on the issue of reservation of seats for women in Parliament and Legislatures, government yesterday came out with a new proposal for an increase of number of seats by one-third of the present strength to accommodate women.

Home Minister Shivraj Patil Friday held consultations with various parties on the issue when he suggested that the increase in the strength of Lok Sabha and Assemblies could be a method by which the nearly-decade long stalemate could be broken.

Defence Minister and Leader of the House in Lok Sabha Pranab Mukherjee and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad were also present in the discussions held with leaders of BJP, CPI(M) and CPI.

The parties were also told that there has been a phenomenal increase in the population resulting in several constituencies becoming unwieldy with voters strength going

up to 20 to 25 lakh in some and there was need to rightsize them. Also there was need to raise the number of seats in accordance with population growth.

Sources said the parties told the government side that they needed time to think over the new proposal on women but made it clear that they were keen on reservation of seats for them even in its present form.

The BJP team was led by its President and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha LK Advani.

The CPI team included Gurdas Dasgupta and S Sudhakar Reddy (both MPs) and D Raja, National Council Member.

The CPI delegation told the ministers that while issues like rightsizing constituencies and raising the number of constituencies would require defreezing the present bar on raising the strength of the Houses, the party was keen that as of now the one-third reservation for women in Lok Sabha and Assemblies should be carried through.

## Discovery crew starts pack up for return

REUTERS, Houston

Discovery astronauts started packing up yesterday for their departure from the International Space Station after Nasa finally said the shuttle was safe enough to come home from the first flight since the 2003 Columbia disaster.

The crew finished loading an Italian-built cargo unit with more than three tonnes of trash and unneeded equipment from the station for the return to Earth and stowed gear that included space suits used on three spacewalks by astronauts Steve Robinson and Soichi Noguchi.

Late on Friday, the Discovery crew was to say goodbye to station crewmembers Sergei Krikalev and John Phillips, close the hatch and get ready to undock early today.

The shuttle was scheduled to land in Florida on Monday.

Because of safety measures put in place after Columbia fell from the sky over Texas, Discovery has been videotaped, photographed, laser-inspected and, in a shuttle program first, repaired by the spacewalking Robinson.

## Iran rejects EU nuclear offer

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday rejected a broad package of trade and technology incentives offered by the European Union if it agreed to abandon all nuclear fuel work, risking an international crisis.

"The proposals are unacceptable," nuclear negotiator Hossein Moussavian said, describing them as a "clear violation" of agreements between Iran and the European Union.

"They negate Iran's inalienable right," he said.

EU negotiators have called for an emergency meeting of the UN watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, which could refer Iran's nuclear dossier to the Security Council for possible sanctions.

But a defiant Iran said it would also stick by its plans to resume uranium conversion, a preliminary stage in the nuclear fuel cycle, despite warnings that it would trigger an international crisis.

The European Union said Tehran, accused by arch-enemy the United States of seeking to build an atomic bomb, must commit "not to pursue

fuel cycle activities" if it wants to benefit from the EU incentives.

The package, submitted by ambassadors from Britain, France and Germany, covers nuclear issues, political and security concerns, and offers economic and technological cooperation for Iran to give up uranium enrichment work.

It follows nine months of tortuous negotiations between the so-called EU-3 and Iran, which in November agreed to suspend enrichment and conversion work for the duration of the talks.

The processes make fuel which can be used for reactors or the explosive core of atom bombs.

The offer comes just days after Iran's new ultra-conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took office, raising international concerns about the future policies of the Islamic republic.

French foreign ministry spokeswoman Cecile Pozzo di Borgo said the EU recognises "the inalienable right of Iran to the peaceful use of nuclear energy in conformity with the NPT and within the framework of a global accord."

## Lanka seeks truce review

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's president has called for a review of the Oslo-brokered truce, the government said yesterday as a top Norwegian envoy made another attempt to salvage the island's troubled peace process.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga said she was seeking new measures to fill gaps in the ceasefire agreement with rebels that went into effect in February 2002 but did not give details.

Kumaratunga held talks Thursday with Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen, who went in for another round of discussions with the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the rebel-held north yesterday, diplomats said.

"The president expressed the government's readiness to a 'review' of the ceasefire agreement (CFA) as proposed by the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission and as distinct

from a 'renegotiation' of the CFA," her office said in a statement.

It called for "ancillary arrangements" to remedy what she called current gaps in the ceasefire and build confidence.

A spate of killings in the island's east and the mob murder of a senior police officer in the island's north Thursday following an army slaying of a local barber have added to concerns about the truce.

LTTE political wing chief S. P. Thamilselvan said Thursday's killings in Jaffna peninsula were unfortunate and called for adherence to truce stipulations relating to the military presence in populated areas.

"He however assured that the LTTE would do the best in the restricted military controlled area to calm the situation," the LTTE said in a statement.

Thamilselvan told Helgesen that the Colombo government should act "more resolutely" to ensure normality

in the island's east where the Tigers faced a split last year and have since battled a breakthrough faction.

He also expressed concern that the blocking by the Supreme Court in July of a joint mechanism to deliver aid to the December 26 tsunami disaster was a blow to humanitarian work.

The LTTE has said it was no longer interested in sharing the three billions dollars of assistance pledged by foreign donors with the Sri Lankan government after the court decision announced on July 15.

The collapse of the aid deal is seen as a major setback to the peace process.

Diplomats had hoped the aid deal signed three weeks ago would become a stepping stone to resume Oslo-brokered peace talks that have been stalled since April 2003.

## Israel braces for clashes after Jew kills 4 Arabs

REUTERS, Shfaram

Israel went on alert yesterday for a possible wave of Arab unrest after a Jewish militant shot dead four Israeli Arabs.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon condemned the gunman, who was beaten to death after the attack by residents in the Arab town of Shfaram, as a "bloodthirsty terrorist."

And he vowed that Israel would begin pulling its settlers and forces out of the occupied Gaza Strip as planned on Aug. 17, no matter what attempts were made to thwart it.

Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres said on Israel Radio: "My God, how this country is vulnerable to the actions of murderers, madmen and fanatics who endanger all our lives, Jews as well as Arabs, peace and hope. These people should be rooted out. I hope this country unites to punish those responsible."

Thousands of Israeli police were redeployed to heavily Arab areas of northern Israel, where Thursday's attack aboard a bus occurred, to pre-empt potential riots before or

after funerals for the four dead.

Another feared hotspot was a Jerusalem shrine sacred to both Muslims and Jews where Islamic Friday prayers were scheduled.

The main Palestinian militant faction Hamas, which with other armed groups adopted a de facto ceasefire with Israel in February, threatened reprisals for the bus shooting.

Security agencies had warned that Jewish militants could target Palestinians or Israeli Arabs to whip up conflict to try to stop the removal of Jewish settlers from occupied Gaza.

Sharon bills his plan as "disengagement" from conflict with the Palestinians. It would be Israel's first dismantling of settlements in territory that Palestinians want for a state.

Israel's army said the gunman, Eden Nathan Zaada, 19, was a soldier who had deserted and was "of a problematic background."

Aside from the four dead, at least 22 people, all but seven of them Arabs, were hurt in the shooting and an ensuing melee.



Sisters (C and CR) of Hazar and Dina Turkey, mourn over their bodies during funeral in the Arab Israeli town of Shfaram yesterday. The two sister were killed Thursday by a 19-year old Israeli settler-soldier. The soldier, a member of the banned anti-Arab Kach organisation, gunned down four passengers in a bus before being lynched by the mob.

## Two sisters charged in London blast probe

AP, London

British police investigating the botched London subway attack of July 21 said Thursday they had charged two sisters for failing to disclose information under anti-terror laws. The city's nerves were further rattled by a message from al-Qaeda warning of more bloodshed, but people made efforts to carry on.

In a show of force, officers armed with submachine guns patrolled uncrowded subway stations and police helicopters hovered over city streets as one of the busiest Underground lines reopened Thursday four weeks to the day after suicide bombers killed 52 people.

Undercover officers mixed with a lighter-than-usual load of subway commuters many Londoners no doubt mindful that terrorists had attempted similar attacks exactly two weeks after the deadly July 7 transit bombings.

"People didn't seem frightened or apprehensive, they were just reading their newspapers and getting on with things, just as the English do," said commuter Pat Wish.



FM Radio journalists march in a rally in the non-restricted area of Tinkune in Kathmandu yesterday. The journalists have been protesting the government ban on news broadcasting over private FM Radio as well as its plan to enforce new laws to muzzle the media. The law will come into effect once it receives the royal assent. Over 1,000 FM radio journalists have been thrown out of work since the FM Radio stations were prohibited from airing news after King Gyanendra's power grab in February.

## India reels from rural floods

### 222,000 villagers evacuated

AFP, Mumbai

Villages in western and southern India were evacuated yesterday with at least 222,000 people moved to higher ground as waters released from near-bursting dams flooded vast rural tracts, officials said.

B. S Prakash, chief of the disaster unit in southern Karnataka state, said 16 more people died overnight due to house collapses and flooding in rural regions.

Overflowing rivers and dams in the western state of Maharashtra, which bore the brunt of a week-long drenching that left more than 1,000 people dead, were emptying waters into neighbouring Karnataka, he said.

"A massive evacuation exercise is underway," Prakash told AFP. "More than 122,000 villagers have been evacuated (in Karnataka) so far and 3,200 villages are hit."

The state authorities had deployed boats and helicopters of the Indian air force to rescue and provide relief to marooned villagers.

"According to the state officials working in these regions, 200 villages have been inundated while 15 villages with a population of 20,000 have been completely marooned," Prakash said.

State government officials said 23,280 houses in the flooded regions had already been destroyed by the swirling waters.

Prakash said 83,000 hectares (205,000 acres) of crops were damaged in Karnataka.

Economic analysts warned the weather damage could shave up to one percentage point from India's estimated gross domestic product growth of seven percent this fiscal year.

"The damage in Karnataka state is estimated to be worth 5.8 billion rupees (129 million dollars) so far," Prakash said. "The whole administration is on alert as more and more waters are being released from Maharashtra."

## BUSH SAYS al-Qaeda threats can't drive US out of ME

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush vowed Thursday that al-Qaeda threats would not drive the United States out of Iraq or the Middle East.

Bush said the fact that Osama bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, had threatened renewed attacks against Britain and the United States unless they left Iraq showed that the country had become the central front in the "war on terror."

"Part of their goal is to drive us out of the broader Middle East," said the US leader making comments after meeting Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe at his Texas ranch.

Bush called Zawahiri's comments "threatening" but declared that "we will stay the course. We will complete the job in Iraq."

Though US generals and officials have indicated that plans for a US troop withdrawal in 2006 are already being made, Bush said "Our troops will come home as soon as possible."

"As soon as possible" means when those Iraqis are prepared to fight. As Iraq stands up, our coalition will stand down."

## UN slams foiled bid to repatriate Bhutanese refugees from Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

The UN refugee agency on Thursday slammed an attempt by a political group to repatriate around 300 of the thousands of Bhutanese refugees living in camps in southern Nepal, saying they were left stranded at the Indian border and put at risk.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said the Bhutan Gorkha National Liberation Front (BGNLF) had on Wednesday taken the 300, more than half of them children, by bus from Beldangi camp in southeastern Nepal to the Indian border at Kakarbhitta.

The BGNLF, a prominent Bhutanese political party in exile, had intended the buses to continue to Bhutan through India.

"They were prevented from crossing into India by security forces," said the UNHCR's representative in Nepal, Abraham Abraham.

"The UNHCR was not involved in this refugee movement in any way," Abraham said in a statement.

"It's deeply unfortunate that

politically motivated individuals feel they can take the lives of refugees into their own hands, giving them false hopes and aspirations," he said.

"Among the group were 160 children, including 40 disabled. Before leaving Beldangi camp, some refugee shelters were destroyed. It appears some refugees had been intimidated to leave the camp," the statement said.

"While we can understand the increasing frustration of Bhutanese refugees about the lack of progress on repatriation made by the governments of Nepal and Bhutan, this attempt to return was bound to fail," Abraham said.

About 100,000 Bhutanese refugees, mostly Hindus of Nepalese origin, are staying in seven camps in southeast Nepal. They left Bhutan in 1990 when the Buddhist kingdom launched cultural reforms encouraging the use of Bhutan's language and national dress.