

## Pakistan offers to fence Afghan border

### Karzai urges US to rethink anti-terror strategy

REUTERS, AFP, New York/Kabul

Fed up with accusations it allows Taliban fighters to cross into Afghanistan, Pakistan offered on Monday to erect a fence between the two countries to prevent incursions from either side.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf made the offer during talks in New York with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said after the 75-minute meeting.

Musharraf and Rice are among scores of foreign leaders and ministers in New York for a UN summit. Musharraf is expected to meet US President George W. Bush later this week.

"Pakistan is prepared to raise a fence so that we can put an end to these allegations," Kasuri told reporters, without specifying exactly where and when a fence could be erected, how long it would be, or who would pay for it.

"Pakistan can do nothing more than that to prevent incursions," he said of proposals for a fence, add-

ing: "We are fed up of people who say we have to do more."

Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been strained because of complaints from the government in Kabul that Islamabad could do more to stop Taliban fighters infiltrating from Pakistan's tribal areas.

The United States has also wanted to see Pakistan act against Taliban insurgents harassing US forces in Afghanistan in the run up to parliamentary elections on September 18, which are being held nearly four years after US-led troops toppled the Taliban government for giving refuge to Osama bin Laden.

Kasuri said Rice "heard out the offer" to erect a fence, adding that she had been "very appreciative" of the role played by Pakistan before the elections in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has sent thousands of troops to its western border to choke off a Taliban-led insurgency in the weeks before the poll.

Meanwhile, Afghan President Hamid Karzai in an interview broadcast yesterday called upon the

United States and the international community to reconsider the strategy for fighting terrorism in the war-torn country.

Speaking less than a week

before milestone legislative elections that Taliban rebels have threatened to derail, Karzai told the BBC that there should be a focus on the "sources of terrorism".



PHOTO: AFP  
US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (L) shakes hands with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf (R) Monday, just before their meeting in New York.

## 11 children found caged in Ohio

AP, Wakeman, Ohio

Sheriff's deputies removed 11 children from a home where they were locked in cages less than 3 and a half feet high, authorities said.

The children's adoptive and foster parents, Mike and Sharen Gravelle, denied that they'd abused or neglected the children during a custody hearing Monday in Huron County. No charges had been filed as of Monday night.

"The impression that we got was that they felt it was OK," said Lt. Randy Sommers of the Huron County Sheriff's Office.

The Gravelles said a psychiatrist recommended they make the children ages 1 to 14, with conditions that included autism and foetal alcohol syndrome sleep in the cages at night. The cages were stacked in bedrooms on the second floor of their house, said prosecutor Russell Leffler, who was reviewing the case.

The children were found by a children's services investigator on Friday when he stopped by the Gravelles' home outside Wakeman, about 50 miles west of Cleveland. Deputies returned to the house that evening.

Some of the cages were rigged with alarms, Sommers said; others had heavy furniture blocking their doors. The children didn't have blankets or pillows.

## US WARNS SYRIA

# All options are open

AFP, Washington

The US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, fired a strong warning to Syria on Monday over help that Washington accuses the Damascus government of giving to radical groups in Iraq.

"Our patience is running out with Syria," Khalilzad told a press conference. When asked how the United States could respond, he said "all options are on the table", including military.

"I would not like to elaborate more, they should understand what I mean," he added.

The United States believes that Iraqi Sunnis are refusing to agree a proposed constitution because of threats from Sunni extremists who have infiltrated Iraq from Syria, where they have training camps, Khalilzad said.

"Syria has to decide what price

it's willing to pay in making Iraq success difficult. And time is running out for Damascus to decide on this issue," the ambassador warned.

"It simply must close the training camps," he said. "It should not allow youngsters misguided by al-Qaeda, from Saudi Arabia, from Yemen, from North Africa, to fly into Damascus international airport."

"It shouldn't be that hard, if you see young men between the ages of 18 and 28, who are coming without a return ticket, landing in Damascus airport to control that."

The former US ambassador to Kabul also warned that Iraq could become worse than Afghanistan under the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban if extremists like Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda's frontman in Iraq, were to prevail.

"If people like Zarqawi were to dominate Iraq, it will make Afghanistan under the Taliban look

like a picnic, given the resources of Iraq, the location of Iraq," Khalilzad said.

Khalilzad said he had accompanied Iraqi President Jalal Talabani to Washington. Talabani will meet President George W. Bush on Tuesday before heading to New York for a summit of world leaders at the United Nations.

Khalilzad, who is the former US ambassador to Afghanistan, compared the war on terrorism to the Cold War and World War II.

"As during the Soviet era, Soviet communism was the defining of our time, now it's terrorism and extremism that's the defining challenge of our time," he said.

Meanwhile, Syria rejected on Monday US accusations that it allows extremists to sneak into Iraq, saying Washington's "threat" of using force was part of relentless pressure on Damascus.

## SLOW KATRINA RESPONSE

# Disaster agency chief quits

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush toured storm-wrecked New Orleans for the first time Monday, as the head of the US disaster agency quit, yielding to intense criticism over the hurricane relief effort.

Two weeks after Hurricane Katrina turned the city into a festering swamp, the gruesome job of recovering bodies gathered pace and the confirmed death toll rose above 500 in the Gulf Coast states hit by the storm.

Seeking to counter criticism of his handling of the disaster, Bush toured the flooded city by motorcade, open military truck and helicopter to see the disaster zone for himself.

Bush had previously flown over New Orleans but not seen the devastation from the ground. He later went to a suburb that was badly hit by the

August 29 storm and to Gulfport, Mississippi.

The mounting criticism has seen Bush's approval ratings slump to their worst levels since he took office in January 2001.

Under intense pressure and a torrent of criticism over the Federal Emergency Management Agency's sluggish response to Katrina, Michael Brown announced he was quitting as head of the agency.

"It is important that I leave now to avoid further distraction from the ongoing mission of FEMA," Brown said in a statement.

Reports have accused Brown of lacking emergency relief experience before he joined the agency as a Bush appointee in 2001 and said there were discrepancies in his official resume and a White House press release from 2001.

David Paulison, a former Miami fire chief with 30 years in the emer-

gency services and experience of Florida's devastation in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew in 1992, was announced as Brown's replacement.

Bush appeared initially not to know about the resignation. Critics were delighted.

"Michael Brown's departure from FEMA is long overdue, and his resignation is the right thing for the country and for the people of the Gulf Coast states," said Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic leader in the House of Representatives.

Brown had been called back to Washington on Friday and replaced as pointman on the ground by Coast Guard Vice Admiral Thad Allen. Bush had stood up for Brown in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, telling him: "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job."

## Failure in UNSC reforms dashes African hopes

AFP, Johannesburg

A failure to find consensus on proposed reforms of the United Nations Security Council has snuffed Africa's hopes of having its voice heard louder within the international organisation, analysts said yesterday.

"The UN Security Council reform is over. There are a lot of losers, there is Africa," said Tom Wheeler of the South African Institute for International Affairs in Johannesburg.

Meant to be the centrepiece of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's ambitious plan to reform the world body as it opens a major summit in New York on Wednesday, UN Security Council reforms have become a victim of competing egos and the interests of rival nations.

Annan is hoping for results on the subject "by the end of the year," but admitted that if significant reform of the UN could not be achieved this year, one might have to wait several years.

After lengthy talks, Africa's final proposal made in Addis Ababa in early August pushed for two permanent Security Council seats -- with

the right to veto resolutions -- as well as five non-permanent council seats of which two should go to Africa.

This stance quashed any possible agreement with a proposal made by the so-called G4 nations: Brazil, Germany, India and Japan who had called for boosting council membership to 25 with six new permanent non-veto-wielding seats.

Africa has been divided on the issue with Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo saying at the opening of the Addis Ababa summit: "We need to negotiate with other groups, unless our objective is to prevent any decision."

But a group of countries driven by Algeria have considered that the continent must stick to its first demand and would not be associated with the G4 initiative.

John Daniel, of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) said the discord within Africa highlighted the limitations of an "African position."

"It highlights the fact that there are more things that divide the continent than unify it," Daniel told AFP.

## UK lawmakers grill London top cop

AFP, London

A shoot-to-kill policy for suspected suicide bombers was reviewed following the death of an innocent Brazilian man in London but remains in place, Britain's top police officer said yesterday.

Ian Blair, head of London's Metropolitan Police, came face to face with relatives of electrician Jean Charles de Menezes as he appeared before an influential panel of lawmakers at the House of Commons.

The all-party Home Affairs Select Committee quizzed Blair, as well as interior minister Charles Clarke, at length about the official response to the London bombings in July.

On July 22, de Menezes was shot repeatedly in the head by police officers at a London Underground subway station in circumstances which are still being investigated.

The incident came a day after a seemingly failed wave of suicide bomb attacks on subway trains and a bus. Two weeks before, 52 people and four suicide bombers were killed in a near-identical set of attacks.

## NEPALI MAOISTS SAY

# Rebel arms shouldn't be seen as stumbling block to peace

AFP, New Delhi

The weapons being toted by Nepal's Maoists should not be seen as a stumbling block to peace in the violence-torn Himalayan kingdom, rebel leader Prachanda said in a rare interview published here yesterday.

Speaking to a Times of India reporter at a secret jungle location in Nepal, Prachanda, or "the fierce one", also repeated a call for United Nations mediation in the conflict.

More than 12,000 people have been killed since the rebels in 1996 launched a bid to overthrow the monarchy and install a communist republic in Nepal.

"We want the involvement of the United Nations to create an atmosphere of confidence so that the possession of weapons by us does not become a stumbling block in the peace process," said Prachanda, whose real name is Pushpa Kamal Dahal.

"As proof of this we have already declared a unilateral ceasefire now," Prachanda on September 3 declared a three-month unilateral truce in what he said was a bid to pave the way for talks with political parties on forming a united front against February's seizure of power by King Gyanendra.

The monarch sacked a four-party government on February 1, accusing it of failing to tackle the rebellion.

Nepal has been in turmoil since Gyanendra seized power, cracked down on dissidents, rounded up hundreds of activists and clamped down on the media.

Asked why he now wanted to resolve the conflict through negotiations, Prachanda replied: "Ours is not a dogmatic party. We chalk out our action plan after analysing a subject in the context of the prevailing situation."

## Lankan polls billed as referendum on peace

AFP, Colombo

Nationalist political parties in Sri Lanka said yesterday that an upcoming presidential election had become a referendum on the peace process as talks remained on hold with Tamil Tiger rebels. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapakse earlier in the week signed agreements with two nationalist parties for their support in the election in return for a raft of commitments which included the redrafting of a ceasefire with the Tigers.

The deals by Rajapakse, who is the ruling Freedom Party nominee for presidential elections due by the end of 2005, threaten to upset a Norwegian-backed peace bid aimed at ending three decades of ethnic bloodshed.

A spokesman for one of the parties, the all-monk National Heritage, said the agreements were squarely aimed at getting voters to focus on what all three parties view as the failure of the peace process.

"The election is a referendum on the unitary state, it is a referendum on the role of Norway, it is a referendum against terrorism," said

spokesman Udaya Gammanpila. Rajapakse's agreements with the National Heritage and the main Marxist parties include the renegotiation of a truce with the Tamil Tigers and the abandoning of tsunami aid and federal power-sharing deals with the rebels.

The power-sharing deals were reached under Norway's mediation, but the parties say they were "biased towards Tigers."

"I will protect the unitary character of the country," Rajapakse said Tuesday at one of Buddhism's holiest shrines, the Temple of the Tooth, in the hill town of Kandy.

Analysts said the agreements by the nationalist parties have sharpened the election focus in the majority-Buddhist and majority Sinhalese nation of 19.5 million people.

"The prime minister has turned the election into a referendum on the peace process," said Sunanda Deshapriya, a director at the private Centre for Policy Alternatives think-tank.

"The PM's deal with the Marxists actually helps the Tigers to show the rest of the world that Sinhalese politicians are not willing to concede anything."



PHOTO: AFP  
Palestinians take items from the burned synagogue of the former Gaza Strip settlement of Neve Dekalim yesterday. Palestinians were in control of the Gaza Strip yesterday for the first time in their history following Israeli pullout Monday.



PHOTO: AFP  
Indian parents look after their child who is suffering from Japanese Encephalitis in a ward of the B.R.D. Medical College in Gorakhpur, some 300kms east of Lucknow, yesterday. The death toll from an outbreak of Japanese encephalitis in northern India has risen to 664 with 18 more deaths as doctors appealed for more ventilators to save the lives of young patients.