



PHOTO: AFP  
A combo shows pictures made available by the Sunni Committee of Muslim Scholars yesterday of Iraqi prisoners who were allegedly tortured by the Iraqi police in May 2005. The pictures were released as the Iraqi government faced calls for an international inquiry into abuse at a clandestine Baghdad prison where inmates were reportedly tortured, beaten and starved.

## Iraq reviews prison controls after 'torture den' found

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's deputy interior minister called yesterday for unified command over detention centres to prevent future cases of abuse after allegations prisoners were beaten, tortured and starved in a secret prison.

"What happened there was an isolated incident" that would be fully investigated by the government, said Major General Hussein Kamal, responsible for intelligence at the ministry.

"All those responsible will be punished whatever their rank," he said, adding: "We want to gather all security departments under the wing of the interior ministry."

Sunni Arab groups have called for an international probe after US forces

on Sunday discovered 173 mostly Sunni prisoners at an interior ministry lockup in Baghdad, the latest prison abuse scandal to emerge in the war-torn country.

Graphic pictures released by the Committee of Muslim Scholars, the main Sunni religious organisation in Iraq, showed the some detainees with massive bruising and welts on their bodies, and one man with severe burns on one arm.

Deputy minister for police affairs Ali Kalib Khadher blamed the ill-treatment of detainees on policemen trained under ousted dictator Saddam Hussein "who have a heritage of violence".

The case has prompted sharp domestic and international criticism. British Defence Minister John Reid

described the abuse of detainees as "totally unacceptable", UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he was "deeply concerned", and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said such abuse would not help stabilize the country.

Kamal earlier this week told CNN he saw "signs of physical abuse by brutal beating. One or two detainees were paralyzed. And some had their skin peeled off various parts of their body."

CNN also showed a film given to them by the deputy governor of Diyala province showing evidence of alleged abuse of prisoners at the hands of police and dating from August.

The footage showed a group of three or four men, each with handcuffs dangling from one hand, with severe

bruising over their backs, shoulders and thighs, along with lacerations apparently caused by beatings.

The Committee of Muslim Scholars has accused "interior ministry services of resorting to torture and ransoming prisoners."

Committee spokesman Sheikh Abdel Salam al-Kubaisi said his organisation had "filmed testimony of released detainees who had been tortured," and that the videos were handed over to Arab League chief Amr Mussa when he visited Baghdad last month.

The sheikh also accused "interior ministry services of detaining people at night in their homes on terrorist charges and then torturing them into making confessions, parts of which are then broadcast on television".

Two US soldiers face court-martial for Afghan detainee abuse

AFP, Kabul

Two US soldiers in Afghanistan will face a court martial for several charges related to the abuse of detainees arrested for suspected links to militants, the US military said yesterday.

The two were charged with "conspiracy to maltreat, dereliction of duty, maltreatment of detainees and assault consummated by battery," the military said in a statement.

It announced in October that two soldiers were being investigated for allegedly assaulting detainees in their custody in the southern province of Uruzgan, including by punching them in the chest, shoulders and stomach.

## Bush, Roh call for Korean armistice talks

Nuclear North Korea won't be tolerated

REUTERS, Kyongju

US President George W. Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun agreed yesterday talks should be held to replace the 1950-53 Korea War truce with a peace treaty and said a nuclear North Korea will not be tolerated.

As part of a diplomatic dance aimed at advancing the long-running North Korea nuclear issue, Bush and

Roh said they hoped parallel talks on the nuclear crisis and peace treaty would complement each other.

"There's a real possibility that by working together, at some point in time the peninsula will be united and at peace," Bush said.

The two Koreas remain technically at war because they have never signed a peace treaty.

In a joint news conference in the ancient Korean capital of Kyongju,

Roh said he and Bush agreed on the fundamental principle that North Korea must disarm, with the next round of the often stalled talks scheduled for December at the earliest.

"With regard to the North Korea nuclear issue, we reiterated that a nuclear-armed North Korea will not be tolerated, and reaffirmed that the issue should be resolved through peaceful and diplomatic means," he said.

## Hooded militant in video warns West of more attacks

REUTERS, Jakarta

A masked man believed to be one of Asia's most wanted militants has warned Western countries, especially Australia, of more attacks in a video found last week by Indonesian anti-terrorist police.

The video was broadcast on Indonesia's Metro TV yesterday.

Vice President Jusuf Kalla, quoted by the Kompas newspaper, said he believed the militant on the tape was Malaysian Noordin M. Top, a senior operative of Jemaah Islamiyah, a Southeast Asian group seen as the regional arm of al-Qaeda.

"We repeat that America, Australia, England and Italy are all our enemies," said the militant, wearing a black

balaklava and constantly pointing his right finger in the air.

"We especially remind Australia that you, Downer and Howard, are killing Australia, leading it into darkness and misfortune and Mujahideen terror," he said, referring to Australia's Prime Minister John Howard and Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.

"Know that as long as you (all) continue to colonize the land of Iraq and Afghanistan and intimidate Muslims then you too will feel our intimidation and terror."

The video marks the first time militant threats have been made on tapes found in the world's most populous Muslim nation, a practice common among radicals in the Middle East.

## China's rise will be peaceful, says Hu

AFP, Busan

President Hu Jintao sought yesterday to ease anxiety about China's emergence as a global power, insisting his country would never threaten world peace and would instead be a force for prosperity.

"China's development will not stand in the way of anyone, nor will it pose any threat to anyone," Hu said in a speech on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) forum in Busan, South Korea.

"Instead, it will only do good to peace, stability and world prosperity."

China's top priority was to concentrate on developing the lives of its own people and for this it needed a peaceful international environment, he told world business leaders.

"Despite great progress in its economic development, China remains the biggest developing country in the world with a large population, weak economic foundation and uneven development," Hu said.

## Iraq invasion a 'big mistake', says Clinton

AP, Dubai

Former president Clinton told Arab students Wednesday the United States made a "big mistake" when it invaded Iraq, stoking the partisan debate back home over the war.

Clinton cited the lack of planning for what would happen after Saddam Hussein was overthrown.

"Saddam is gone. It's a good thing, but I don't agree with what was done," Clinton told students at a forum at the American University of Dubai.

"It was a big mistake. The American government made several errors ... one of which is how easy it would be to get rid of Saddam and how hard it would be to unite the country."

Clinton's remarks came when he was taking questions about the US invasion, which began in 2003. His response drew cheers and a standing ovation at the end of the hour-long session.

## Iran starts converting new uranium batch

REUTERS, Vienna

Iran has begun processing a new batch of uranium despite Western pressure on it to halt sensitive atomic work, possibly harming attempts to defuse a standoff over its nuclear aims, a diplomat said on Wednesday.

Iran had notified the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in late October that it intended to process a new batch of uranium at its Isfahan uranium conversion plant but did not start the work last week as originally planned.

"Conversion has resumed," the diplomat, who is close to the International Atomic Energy Agency, told Reuters.

## Israel set for early polls

REUTERS, Tel Aviv

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and new Labour party leader Amir Peretz agreed at a short meeting on Thursday to hold elections between late February and March, officials from both sides said.

Peretz said that he hoped an exact date would be set by Monday, when parliament is expected to discuss

bringing forward elections, which had originally been scheduled for November 2006.

"I will let him decide the date within the period of the end of February and the end of March," Peretz told reporters after the meeting at Sharon's office in Tel Aviv. "Any date he decides is okay with me."

After being elected Labour party

chief last week, socialist Amir Peretz immediately vowed to pull the faction out of Sharon's shaky coalition in a move that would bring about early elections.

Peretz said he hoped that an agreement on early elections would calm markets concerned at prospects of political turmoil as well as his pledges to roll back free-market reforms.