



PHOTO: AFP  
Palestinian children in Gaza attending UNRWA's (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) Summer Games attempt to smash their own world record for the number of kites flown simultaneously on the beach in Gaza City yesterday.

## Emergency to be lifted in six provinces

Says Thai PM

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's premier said yesterday he would end emergency rule in six provinces but maintain the strict laws in Bangkok, where a weekend bomb blast rekindled tensions in the wake of deadly street protests.

The emergency decree, which bans public gatherings of more than five people and gives security forces the right to detain suspects for 30 days without charge, will remain in place in 10 provinces, out of a total of 76.

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said he would revoke the laws in Chonburi, Ayutthaya, Nong Bua Lam Phu, Maha Sarakham, Mukdahan and Chaiyaphum in central and northeastern Thailand on the advice of security officials.

Abhisit has pledged to roll back the state of emergency gradually, saying it is still needed in the capital after a weekend bomb attack at a Bangkok bus stop killed one person and wounded 10.

Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan told AFP yesterday that security officials were confident they could handle the situation in the areas where the state of emergency has been lifted.

"All of the state security agencies... said there is little political movement in these provinces," he said.

The government has come under pressure from the United States and rights groups to end emergency rule to help the country recover

from deadly civil unrest that has left it deeply divided.

Authorities have used the powers -- introduced in Bangkok on April 7 -- to arrest hundreds of Red Shirt suspects and silence anti-government media.

The protests by the Reds, many of whom back fugitive ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, attracted up to 100,000 people demanding immediate elections but were crushed by the army in a bloody crackdown in May.

About 90 people died and some 1,900 were injured in a series of street clashes between armed troops and demonstrators.

Critics say the government may in effect be fanning the crisis as it clamps down and censors the protest movement rather than addressing its grievances.

Thailand's Department of Special Investigation said yesterday it had forwarded cases against 25 people linked to the Red Shirt protests, including Thaksin, to the attorney general, recommending they be indicted for terrorism.

The Supreme Court meanwhile issued a new arrest warrant for Thaksin in connection with allegations he presented false asset declarations to an anti-corruption agency while in office.

Thai courts have issued a series of warrants for Thaksin for charges including terrorism. The government has accused the ex-premier of inciting the unrest.

## Iran to reduce uranium enrichment for nuke fuel

AFP, Tehran

Iran will suspend uranium enrichment to 20 percent if it acquires nuclear fuel for a research reactor, the country's atomic chief said on an Iranian television channel yesterday.

"We will not need to enrich to 20 percent if our needs are met" for fuel to power the Tehran reactor, Ali Akbar Salehi said, quoted by Al-Alam Arabic-language channel.

"We started enriching to 20 percent to meet our needs. We have no wish to draw on our reserves" of 3.5-percent enriched uranium (low-enriched uranium, or LEU) to produce 20-percent enriched uranium, he added.

The UN Security Council has imposed four rounds of sanctions against the Islamic republic, demanding it stop enriching uranium in a programme which Western powers fear conceals efforts to make a nuclear weapon.

## China urges change in US policy to avoid friction

REUTERS, Beijing

The United States should alter policy to take account of China's role as a major player on the world stage if it wants to avoid friction and instability, a major state newspaper said yesterday.

The commentary in ruling Communist Party mouthpiece the People's Daily followed the latest spat in Sino-US ties, over what China views as unwarranted US interference in a territorial dispute in the South China Sea.

While senior officials, including US President Barack Obama, say they welcome a prosperous, flourishing China, good words must be backed up by actions, the newspaper said.

"If the United States cannot find a way of recognizing and accepting China's entrance on the world stage as a big player, relations will

swerve up and down like a roller coaster," it said.

"This instability in relations will have a negative effect not only on bilateral ties but on the world, and that is not something anyone wants to see."

Obama started out well, it said, with his visit to China last year, but arguments over US arms sales to Taiwan, Google Inc. and the value of the Chinese currency showed nothing has really changed in the United States.

"On the issue of how to co-exist with a rapidly developing China, Washington has in fact not thought things through in a calm manner."

It was wrong to think, as some experts in the United States believe, that China will be flexible on certain issues as relations between the two sides deepen, the commentary said, suggesting more discord to come.

"On cardinal questions of

right and wrong, China has flinched neither in the past nor the present, and will not do so in the future," the newspaper said.

"It is impossible that when China's bottom line is reached there will not be a response. The state of Sino-US relations directly impacts upon or even decides global peace and stability, especially in the Asia-Pacific region... Future ties to a large degree hinge upon whether Washington can control its 'impulses'."

China, it said, was simply pushing back in the same way as the United States.

"It is impolite not to reciprocate," it added, quoting a classic Confucian text. "There is no lack of China experts in Washington who should fully understand the meaning of this."

## Japanese near US base win aircraft noise damages suit

AFP, Tokyo

A Japanese appeals court yesterday ordered the government to pay 4.2 million dollars to residents living near a US base on Okinawa island to compensate them for military aircraft noise.

The ruling, which more than doubled the amount awarded earlier to 369 million yen, was a victory for the 387 plaintiffs living near the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, which has long been unpopular with local residents.

Presiding judge Kawabe Yoshinori said the intense noise pollution, including low-frequency sound waves from helicopters, made it difficult for plaintiffs to have normal conversations and sleep at night.

But the Fukuoka High Court rejected the residents' demand for military jet and helicopter flights to be suspended between 7pm and 7am, saying the government cannot restrict the activities of US Armed forces in Japan.

Okinawans have been the reluctant hosts of Japan's largest concentration of US forces for decades and have frequently complained about noise pollution and safety risks from low-flying US military jets near the airbase.

Tokyo and Washington in 2006 agreed to move the Futenma airbase from its current position in the densely populated area of Ginowan to a quieter coastal stretch of the southern subtropical island by 2014.

## S Korea PM offers to resign

AFP, Seoul

South Korean Prime Minister Chung Un-Chan offered to quit yesterday to take responsibility for the government's failure to win parliamentary approval for a key development project.

"I'm quitting the post of prime minister, taking all the responsibility," he said in a televised statement.

President Lee Myung-Bak, who effectively wields power under the South Korean system, expressed regret at Chung's offer, the president's office said in a statement.

However Lee is "very likely" to accept Chung's resignation after rejecting three previous offers, a presidential official told AFP.

Lee suffered a blow last month when parliament rejected his attempt to scrap his predecessor's plan to relocate half the government ministries to a new city south of Seoul.

The prime minister had drawn up Lee's alternative plan for Sejong City, which the government hoped to develop as a science, business and education hub.

But Lee secured a major political boost late Wednesday when his conservative ruling party, recovering from a humiliating defeat in last month's local elections, unexpectedly won five of eight parliamentary by-elections.

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