

## MY WORLD IN

6  
SECONDSIRAN BOATS  
IN US ROW

ARMED Iranian speedboats swarmed three US warships in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, radioing a threat to blow them up and sending tensions flaring ahead of President George Bush's trip to the Mideast, US officials said yesterday.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described the incident as "provocative" and "dangerous".

- AFP

SUHARTO VERY  
CRITICAL

THE health of former Indonesian president Suharto, who was rushed to hospital in a critical condition last week, deteriorated yesterday as doctors tried to avert multiple organ failure, a member of his medical team said.

- REUTERS

KOREAN POLICE  
PROBE

POLICE questioned contractors of logistics company Korea 2000 yesterday to determine the cause of a blaze at a cold storage warehouse that left 40 people dead and 10 others injured, some with severe burns.

The badly charred bodies were found hours later in the basement, where fire official Kim Jung-geun said some of the workers had been injecting urethane foam into the walls of the facility.

- AP

STUCK IN BILLIARD  
TABLE

TWO Czechs stuck in a billiard table while searching for a ball had to call the fire squad and were freed only when rescuers took the table apart.

At first, the two players in the western Czech city of Karlovy Vary thought it was funny when both of their hands became trapped inside the table. But panic struck when they could not free themselves, daily Lidove Noviny reported yesterday.

- REUTERS



# factors that will influence the security of Asia

In the second of a 2-part report, Rohan Gunaratna says disrupting links between Middle Eastern and Asian groups is the key



COUNTERING THREAT: A Pakistani paramilitary soldier patrolling the streets of Karachi following the assassination of Benazir Bhutto (PHOTO: AFP)

## Threat from tribal Pakistan

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FIRST, Pakistan military dismantling the Al-Qaeda enclave in tribal Pakistan. After the US led coalition intervention in Afghanistan, the ground zero of terrorism moved from Afghanistan to

tribal Pakistan.

The global headquarters of Al-Qaeda embedded in tribal Pakistan not only poses an enduring threat to adjacent Afghanistan and mainland Pakistan but beyond. Operating out of the Federally Administered Tribal Area, Al-Qaeda is also building new and strengthening new alliances with Middle Eastern and Asian groups. The same operational, informational and training structures that existed in Afghanistan have been re-established in tribal Pakistan.

## Iraq the heart of terrorism

2

SECOND, Asian governments working with US and European counterparts detecting and disrupting operational, financial and ideological links between the Middle Eastern and Asian groups.

After the US invasion of Iraq, the centre of gravity of international terrorism has moved to Iraq. The developments in Iraq, especially after the US-led coalition pull out, will lead to greater insecurity of the Middle East and beyond.

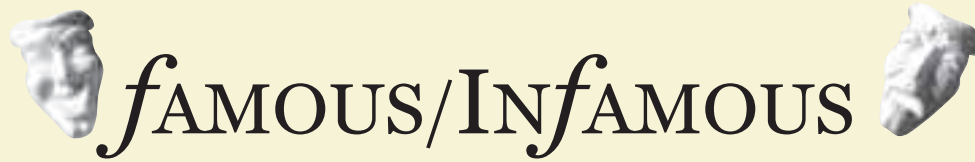
The international spectrum of groups now present in Iraq will use Iraqi soil to plan, prepare and execute attacks in the Middle East and beyond.

Almost all the North African groups with extensive support networks in Europe and North America have established a presence in Iraq.

Unless the threat is contained, at least some of these support networks are likely to mutate into operational networks in the coming months.

Iraq serves both as a magnet and a lightning rod for a range of violent Muslim groups including those in Asia. With frequent print and television reporting of the loss of life in Iraq, the Asian Muslim shares the suffering, resentment, and anger of the Middle Eastern Muslims.

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# fAMOUS/InfAMOUS

A LOOK AT NEWSMAKERS NAUGHTY AND NICE



## Willy the pilot

PRINCE William, 25, is taking flying lessons this week at the start of a four-month assignment with the Royal Air Force, the military announced.

The prince begins his course with around 10

other students at the RAF Cranwell base in eastern England, the air force said.

He will be known as Flying Officer William Wales, and will train on helicopters as well as fixed-wing aircraft.



## Sarkozy to marry

FRENCH President Nicolas Sarkozy, 52 is to marry ex-model Carla Bruni, on Feb 9, it has been reported. The report comes after weeks of a highly publicised courtship between Miss Bruni and Mr Sarkozy who

divorced his second wife Cecilia three months ago. His office declined to comment. The report coincides with an opinion poll showing a seven-point drop from last month in Mr Sarkozy's approval ratings.



## Ayumi deaf in ear

AYUMI Hamasaki, 29, has gone deaf in her left ear, Japanese media said on Monday.

"Last year I had a hearing test and found out my left ear was not functioning at all and that there was no way

of curing it," the Sankei Sports newspaper quoted her as saying in her blog.

"But I want to keep singing as long as my right ear holds out," the paper quoted her as adding.



## Jamie lashes out

JAMIE Oliver, 32, has attacked Sainsbury's, whose advertising campaign he fronts, for failing to turn up to a debate on factory farming. The TV chef and school meals campaigner spoke out against the firm after he investigated battery

farming for a documentary.

He said on Monday: "I am really upset. The question is why didn't they come? What is there to hide? It is shocking that the people I work for didn't turn up on the day. I don't know why."



## Bilawal's confession

BENAZIR'S son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, 19, chose Facebook on Monday to make his biggest public statement since her killing. In a message on the networking site — where he has attracted more than 1,200 "friends" — he admitted

that he was "not a born leader" despite having taken on the leadership of Bhutto's party after her death. "I'm merely a student. I do the things that students do, like make mistakes, eat junk food, watch Buffy but most importantly of all... learn," he said.



## Cultist extradited

CHINA'S top court has approved the extradition of Jeong Myeong Seok, who is in his early 60s, a South Korean cult leader accused of raping his female followers, the justice ministry in Seoul said. "It will take several more months until the

extradition is carried out following a final decision by the State Council (cabinet)," a ministry official told AFP.

He fled South Korea in 1999, one day after rape allegations against him were aired on national TV.

## Homegrown cells present sinister threat to the West

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THIRD, ability and willingness of Asian governments to discredit Al-Qaeda and counter its global ideology

that is appealing to segments of Asian Muslims.

As a result of the gigantic investment in propaganda by Al-Qaeda, radicalism is moving from the periphery to the centre of the Muslim community.

Furthermore, the suffering, humiliation and anger of the Muslims by the US invasion of Iraq is being exploited by Al-Qaeda and its associated groups to recruit and generate support.

Both in the territorial and mi-

grant Muslim communities, the scale of radicalisation is on the rise. Driven by virulent propaganda disseminated by Al-Qaeda and its associated groups, these self radicalised cells within the migrant and diaspora as well as territorial communities pose a vibrant threat.

While well structured groups such as Al-Qaeda and its associated groups originating from the global south will pose an enduring threat, the homegrown cells present an equally sinister threat to the West.

Unlike the well structured groups with a leadership, membership and a support base, the homegrown cells are difficult to detect.

Where well structured terrorist groups are not operating, the more significant threat stems

from homegrown cells.

The Singapore case is instructive in how a nation should move forward not only to fight terrorism but the greater threat — extremism.

The Government of Singapore has developed a multi-pronged approach.

To build a norm and an ethic against extremism and terrorism, Singapore leadership has made it a priority to support Muslim community initiatives by the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis), Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), and the Inter-agency Aftercare Committee to reach out to the wider Muslim community.

The model adopted by Singapore is being emulated by other countries.

As it is of the view that no one single country can defeat violence, Singapore has also worked with regional governments building their counter terrorism and counter extremism capacities.

## What now?

ASIA hosts more than half of the world's Muslim population.

In the spectrum of Muslim and non Muslim groups — Al-Qaeda directed and inspired groups — pose the single biggest threat. Al-Qaeda's ideology has taken root both among the Muslim migrants living in the West and in the Muslim World, including in Muslim Asia. The biggest challenge is to protect the Muslim community from violent ideologies disseminated by deviant groups.

Al-Qaeda and its associated groups operating in Asia have been dismantled or disrupted but not its ideology. The western world, in partnership with the Muslim world, has not been successful in waging a sustained and a robust campaign to counter their ideology and propaganda. As such, the traditional threat posed by transnational

terrorist groups is being surpassed by the threat posed by homegrown terrorist groups. While the operational threat of terrorism is serious and immediate, the ideological threat has long term and strategic consequences.

Asian governments spent the last five years building the operational capabilities to fight the tactical structures of terrorist groups. While retaining and sharpening those capabilities, it is now necessary in the next five years to build a set of new capabilities to counter the deviant ideologies seeking to target our region.

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