



BULLIT MARQUEZ Associated Press

Gathering the Victims

Philippine soldiers line up bodies unearthed from a massive mudslide that buried the village of Guinsaogon on Leyte island. The slide can be seen in the background, right. U.S. Marines have joined the search at the site where as many as 1,400 people are feared dead. **A3**

Israel Will Halt Tax Transfers to Palestinians

The Jewish state turns up pressure on Hamas, but sets aside harsher sanctions against the incoming government, at least for now.

By KEN ELLINGWOOD
Times Staff Writer

JERUSALEM — Israel announced Sunday that it would withhold millions of dollars in taxes and customs duties from the Palestinian Authority but stopped short of harsher sanctions against a new government and Hamas-dominated parliament.

A day after Hamas assumed control of the Palestinian parliament, the movement formally nominated one of its best-known figures, Ismail Haniya, to be prime minister. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was expected to ask Haniya, who is considered a pragmatist, to form a government.

Israel said it would try to dissuade foreign governments from providing economic aid to the Palestinian Authority and would tighten security checks at the Gaza Strip border in an attempt to reduce the flow of Palestinian workers and goods into Israel. Israel also will try to stop other countries from supplying weapons and other military equipment, which the Palestinians have sought for their security forces.

Israeli leaders set aside more sweeping sanctions recommended last week by the defense establishment that in effect would have cut the Gaza Strip off from Israel and the West Bank by halting the passage of people and cargo. Among the options were to stop allowing workers into Israel and rescind permission for construction of a Gaza

seaport. Israeli media characterized Sunday's measures as part of a strategy to gradually increase pressure on the Palestinian Authority after Hamas' surprising victory in parliamentary elections last month. Israel could tighten the restrictions later.

"This is a measured response. We will respond to what happens on their side and leave as many options open as possible," said Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Mark Regev.

Israeli leaders hope to isolate the Palestinian government internationally if Hamas does not recognize Israel, renounce violence and acknowledge past agreements, such as the 1993 Oslo peace accords. The U.S., Russia, the European Union and

[See Mideast, Page A5]

COLUMN ONE

The Biographers' Hail to the Chief

The tide of books about presidents has been surging. Many of the briskly selling volumes are aimed at a popular audience hungry for heroes.

By RONALD BROWNSTEIN
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — As a young historian, Douglas Brinkley published back-to-back biographies of two prominent Cold War diplomats, Dean Acheson and James Forrestal. After the books appeared in the early 1990s, Brinkley was taken aside by Stephen E. Ambrose, a colleague at the University of New Orleans who had gained acclaim for biographies of Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon.

"Why are you screwing around with those people?" Brinkley said Ambrose asked him. "Do a book on presidents. People don't care about secretaries of State. People care about presidents."

Increasingly, writers of popular history are following Ambrose's advice. In bookstores, it sometimes seems as if every day is Presidents Day.

Over the last 15 years or so, a tide of presidential biographies aimed at a popular rather than scholarly audience has surged onto bestseller lists.

Presidential biographers such as David McCullough (Harry S. Truman and John Adams), Joseph J. Ellis (Adams, Thomas Jefferson and George Washington) and Doris Kearns Goodwin (Franklin D. Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln) have attracted large audiences and won Pulitzer Prizes for fresh character studies of some of the most familiar names in U.S. history.

Richard Reeves mined previously unreleased records for a detailed portrait of President Reagan published in December; Robert Dallek did the same for his 2003 biography of President Kennedy. And Robert A. Caro's monumental series on Lyndon B. Johnson has tracked its subject to the edge of the presidency; the fourth and last volume, in progress, will follow him into the Oval Office.

A dozen presidential books by these six authors and Edmund Morris, the biographer of Theodore Roosevelt, have spent about 300 weeks combined on the USA Today list of 150 bestselling hardcover and paperback books.

In one of the most ambitious recent projects, under the direction of leading presidential historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., Times Books is halfway through a publishing marathon producing bite-sized (200 pages or fewer) biographies of all 42 presidents — from titans like Lincoln and Washington to afterthoughts such as Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan.

"The number of presidential biographies that make it on [bestseller lists] is astonishing," Dallek said. "My Kennedy book [published in 2003] was on there for eight weeks. I'm an academic; I've never had anything like that before."

America's reading list always offers insights into the coun- [See Presidents, Page A16]

L.A. Workers Join Fierce Debate Over Immigration

Jobs are a key issue in an area with a large Latino population and high black unemployment.

By TERESA WATANABE
Times Staff Writer

Drexel Johnson and his Young Black Contractors of South Central Inc. are hungry for work — and when polite requests for an opportunity are rebuffed, they're not afraid to raise a ruckus.

After Johnson was cut out of a contract when Staples Center was being built, he drove to the construction site, spinning 360-degree rolls and kicking up doughnuts of dust until, he said, a bulldozer nearly ran him down. In Torrance, his group staged a

mock hanging in front of an automaker's office. And earlier this month, they hauled a makeshift "slave ship" to an Inglewood mall development to symbolize economic injustice.

The tactics may seem outrageous, but they underscore the rage and frustration that Johnson and his cohorts feel about losing out to other workers in the region's construction boom. Their anger is fueled by a 14% unemployment rate among African Americans in Los Angeles, twice as high as among whites.

So the news that President Bush and some members of Congress are pushing to bring more blue-collar guest workers into the country — perhaps 400,000 annually — leaves the contractors indignant.

"Hell, no, don't bring no one in [See Jobs, Page A18]

Privacy Guardian Is Still a Paper Tiger

A year after its creation, the White House civil liberties board has yet to do a single day of work.

By RICHARD B. SCHMITT
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — For Americans troubled by the prospect of federal agents eavesdropping on their phone conversations or combing through their Internet records, there is good news: A little-known board exists in the White House whose purpose is to ensure that privacy and civil liberties are protected in the fight against terrorism. Someday, it might actually

meet. Initially proposed by the bipartisan commission that investigated the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board was created by the intelligence overhaul that President Bush signed into law in December 2004.

More than a year later, it exists only on paper. Foot-dragging, debate over its budget and powers, and concern over the qualifications of some of its members — one was treasurer of Bush's first campaign for Texas governor — has kept the board from doing a single day of work.

On Thursday, after months of delay, the Senate Judiciary Com- [See Liberties, Page A15]



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

LET'S GET LOUD: Cheerleaders rally the crowd at an Olympic venue. Reviews have been mixed.

V-i-c-t-o-r-y, Turin Giving Cheers a Try

Sedately dressed but enthusiastic, Olympic pompom squad adds U.S. flavor to Italian ice.

By ALAN ABRAHAMSON
Times Staff Writer

TURIN, Italy — With gold and orange pompoms fluttering, roving bands of young women, about 100 in all, are serving as cheerleaders here at the speedskating oval, the hockey rinks, even the mountain venues. Two! Four! Six! Eight! Is this

TURIN 2006

Bill Plaschke: Dutch fans offer support to every competitor at the speedskating events. **S1**

Men's hockey: U.S. squanders opportunities and falls again, this time to Sweden, 2-1. **S1**

a turn to appreciate? The cheerleaders, who were recruited by Turin 2006 organizers, provide a more entertainment-style experience at the Olympics, where traditionally

the essence of sport has taken center stage.

The cheerleaders have drawn mixed reviews. "Cute!" said Christian Kies, 24, of Berlin, eyeing about 20 of the cheerleaders one night last week at the speedskating oval.

"In Italy, cheerleading is not very important," said Fabio Monicone, 22, of San Remo, Italy. Soccer "is important. Not cheerleading."

"It could be worse," said Clare Gover, 26, of Sydney, Australia. "At least they're wearing lots of clothes — considerably more [See Cheerleading, Page A8]

INSIDE

Jimmie Johnson Takes Daytona 500 Crown

Questions about an infraction by his crew chief place a cloud over stock-car racer's win. **D1**

A Run With Nature

Trail running is taking off as millions discover the perks of scenery and uneven paths. **F1**

Weather

Partly cloudy, cool and breezy. Areas of morning frost in valleys. L.A. Downtown: 62/44. **B16**

News Summary **A2**

Africa's 'New Generation' Likened to Old

Leaders once lauded by the West are accused of adopting the autocratic ways of predecessors.

By EDMUND SANDERS
Times Staff Writer

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — Like the elephants that roam the East African savannas, this region's Big Men once looked like an endangered species.

Some leaders were toppled by coups d'etat, others by democratic revolutions or interna-

tional pressure. Their replacements — mostly young, former guerrillas who spoke of sweeping reforms — were heralded by then-President Clinton and other Western leaders as the "new generation" of African statesmen. International aid and investment began flooding into the region.

But to the disappointment of many, this new guard is beginning to adopt some of the undemocratic behavior of the dictators it replaced. And resulting tensions with Europe and the U.S. are threatening efforts to combat poverty and build stra-

tegic partnerships against terrorism.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, a onetime favorite of the West, was blamed for a bloody postelection crackdown last year in which police shot to death dozens of students and imprisoned thousands more protesters, including elected opposition leaders.

[See Africa, Page A4]

