

Pakistan, India spar over prisoner swap

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan and India accused each other yesterday of not releasing enough prisoners under an exchange agreement concluded earlier this year.

statement Friday the number of Indian prisoners released by Pakistan fell far short of what it expected.

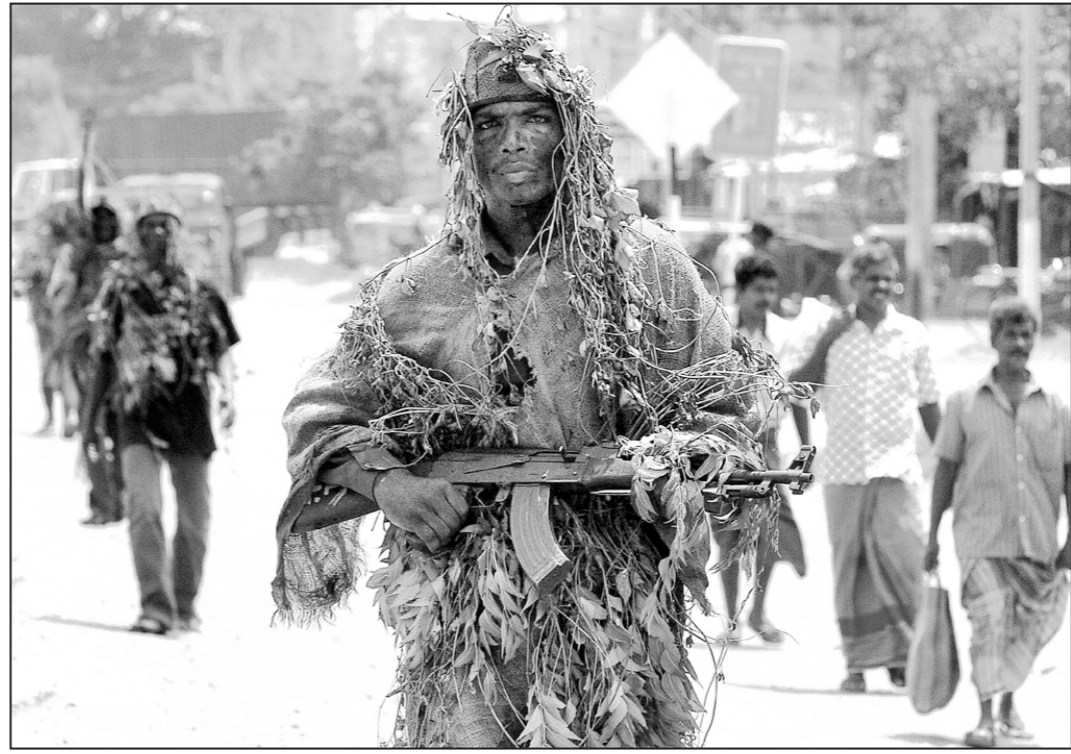
"In our view, a large number of Pakistani prisoners have qualified for release but the Indians claim otherwise," Aslam said.

Thai election could be delayed

Says Thaksin

AFP, Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra said yesterday that the country's election, tentatively set for October 15, could be delayed due to the political crisis facing his party and its rival.

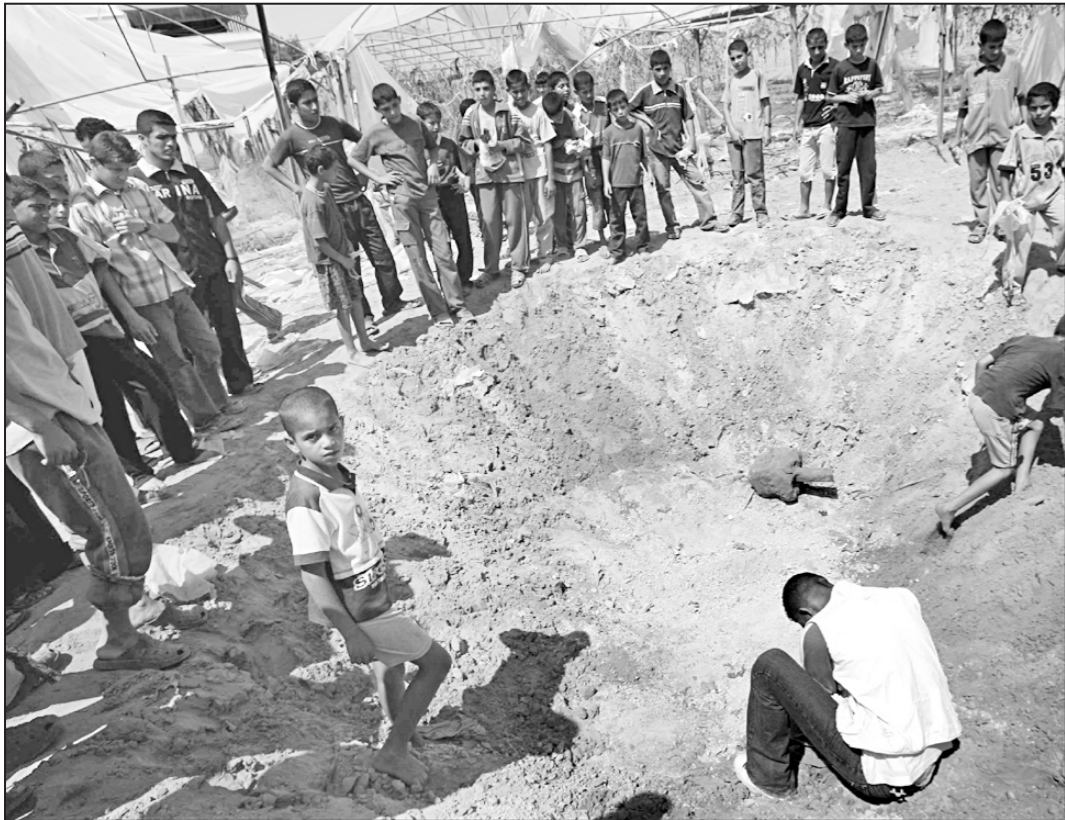


Members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) walk down the main street of rebel-held Kilinochchi town during manoeuvres yesterday.

N Korea ready to counter US aggression

AP, Seoul

North Korea accused the United States of driving tensions on the Korean Peninsula "to the brink of war," and said it is fully prepared to counter any US aggression.



Palestinian children gather yesterday around a crater created by an Israeli missile attack on a main road in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah.

Arabs slam world inaction over Israeli offensive

AFP, Cairo

Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territories drew fierce criticism Friday from Arab countries, which also lambasted world leaders' inaction amid fears of a regional conflict.

and Lebanon," Al-Ahram said. Israel has also threatened to target Palestinian militant leaders in Syria and raised its state of alert along the Lebanese-Israeli border amid fears of an attack by Lebanese Shia militia Hezbollah.

REPLY TO NUCLEAR OFFER US rebuffs Iranian calls for more time

REUTERS, Brussels

The United States rejected on Friday Iranian calls for more time to study an offer of incentives to curb its nuclear fuel programme, insisting Tehran must respond by a G8 deadline next week.

slated July 5 meeting with European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana. "There will be a meeting here in this city next week, where we expect and hope that Larjani will give us an answer ... This is not a complicated offer," Burns said in Brussels.



Ex-Japan PM Hashimoto dies

REUTERS, Tokyo

Former Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, an outspoken politician who jousted with US officials over the auto trade and brought "Big Bang" financial reforms to Tokyo, died on Saturday at the age of 68.

US hints changes in nuke deal with India

State Dept happy with quick nod of Congressional committees

AFP, Washington

The US State Department said Friday it was pleased with two congressional committees' quick approval of a controversial nuclear deal with India, but hinted changes in the law may be made before it takes effect.

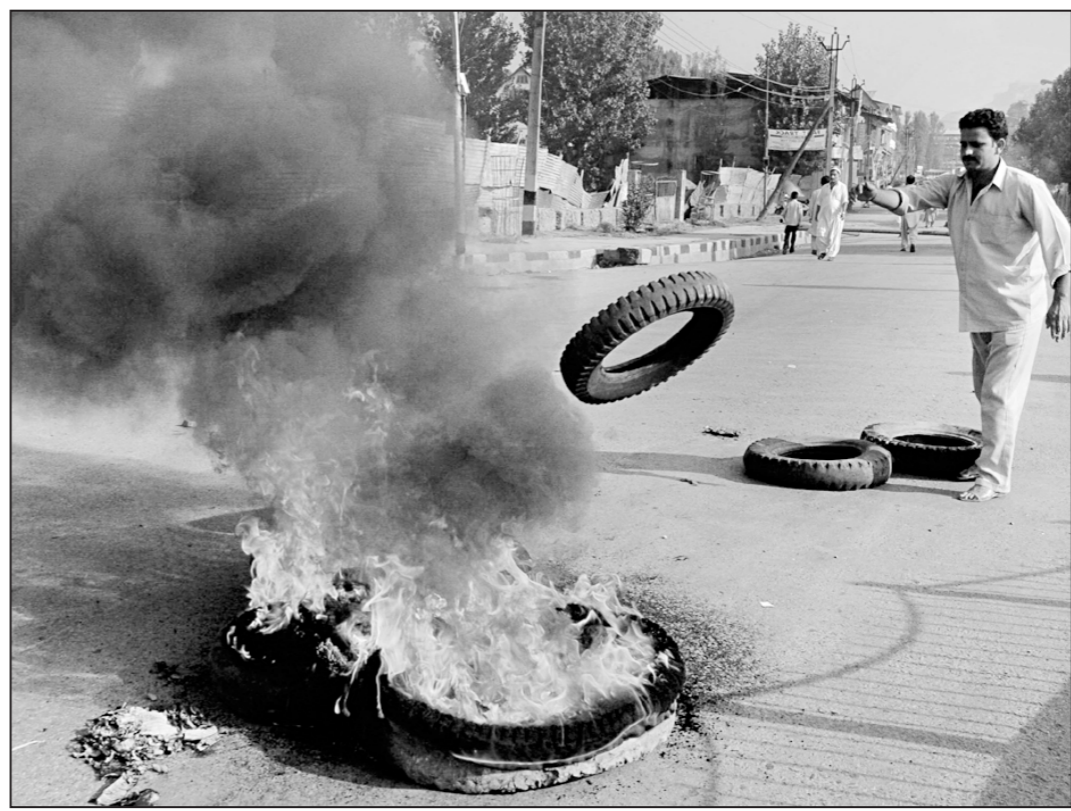
effect. "We will continue to work with Congress as we have in the past to address remaining issues in the legislation in the bill," said State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli.

that without reopening the whole process or changing the path that has been outlined so far," Ereli said.

Saboteurs narrowly miss blowing up Pak train

AFP, Quetta

Saboteurs blew up yesterday part of a railway track in troubled southwestern Pakistan just 20 minutes before the arrival of a train heading for neighbouring Iran, officials said.



A Kashmiri protester burns tyres during a protest in Srinagar yesterday after federal police allegedly shot dead a 31-year-old ailing music composer, Inayatullah Bhat Friday evening.

Japan passes Italy as most elderly nation

AP, Tokyo

Japan said Friday it had surpassed Italy as the world's most elderly nation, fuelling concerns over the effects of a rapidly aging population on the world's second-largest economy.

China opens 1st train service to Tibet

AP, Beijing

The first train service to Tibet opened Saturday on the world's highest railway, an engineering feat protesters say could threaten the restive Himalayan region's environment and Buddhist culture.



A Tibetan passenger waves as she boards yesterday the first train to depart Lhasa railway station on the new China-Tibet rail line in Lhasa, capital of Tibet.

Guantanamo ruling heralds political showdown

REUTERS, Washington

Democrats see the Supreme Court's Guantanamo ruling as repudiation of a power-hungry White House. Republicans say it shows how tough President George W. Bush is on terrorists and voters will eat it up.

US offers \$5m reward for info on al-Qaeda leader

AFP, Washington

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has authorized a reward of up to five million dollars for information leading to wanted al-Qaeda leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri, in Iraq.

US brushes off new Laden tape warning

AFP, Washington

The CIA authenticated a new audiotaped message Friday in which al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden vows to wage holy war in Iraq and Africa, while the White House brushed off the message as old news.

Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Somalia and in Sudan. A Central Intelligence Agency official said the tape had been studied and authenticated, but other US officials played down its significance.