

Bush criticises Clinton's foreign, domestic policies

CHICAGO, Aug 16: Former President George Bush sniped at President Clinton's foreign and domestic policies Monday, urging him not to invade Haiti and accusing him of "vacillating" on issues, reports Reuter.

In a paid address to the National Hardware Association's annual show, Bush repeatedly criticised Clinton

for having an uncertain foreign policy and pushing government deeper into Americans' lives at home.

"With the Soviet Union gone, we must continue to lead. And we can't neglect our overseas obligations. And we can't forego our leadership role," Bush said. "You have to stick to a plan, you can't vacillate, whether it's Haiti or Korea."

The current administration's biggest problem is that it doesn't seem to have a plan," he added.

Bush said Clinton ought not to use troops in Haiti because there is no foreseeable plan for their withdrawal, and because it would "reawaken fears of gunboat diplomacy" among American allies in South and Central America.

And Bush said the US should not return to power Haiti's democratically elected President, Jean Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted in a military coup.



BRIEFLY

Ghali welcomes US-DPRK accord:

Secretary General Boutros Ghali Monday welcomed a weekend accord between the United States and North Korea on nuclear issues and said he looked forward to further progress when talks resume next month. Reuter reports from United Nations.

Benazir in Qatar: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto arrived Monday on a three-day visit for talks with the Qatari leadership on bilateral ties and regional issues, AP reports from Doha.

The official Qatar News Agency said Crown Prince and Defence Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani was on hand at the airport to accord the visiting Pakistani premier a ceremonious reception.

Hezbollah kills 3 in S Lebanon: Three pro-Israeli militiamen were killed by guerrillas Tuesday in attacks on two outposts in Israel's self-proclaimed "security zone" in south Lebanon, security sources reported, says AP from Marjayoun.

The radical Shiite Muslim group Hezbollah claimed responsibility for the raids.

100 Buddhists held in Vietnam: Vietnamese police arrested more than 100 Buddhist dissidents protesting for religious freedom in the former South Vietnamese capital of Saigon. Buddhist human rights group said on Tuesday. AP reports from Hanoi.

The protesters were holding a spontaneous hunger strike in front of the former city hall, now the headquarters of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee.

Blast kills Thai army officer: A Thai army sergeant was killed and his wife injured when a bomb exploded in their garage, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

The explosion, in the Kengkay district of Saraburi Province about 120 km (74 miles) north of Bangkok on Monday, killed Sergeant Thongpoon Nuanchan, police said.

Syrian special forces chief fired: Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad has sacked the head of his elite special forces, General Ali Haidar, informed sources said on Monday. AFP reports from Nicosia.

Assad replaced him with General Ali Habib, who headed Syrian units which fought in the US international force which rescued Iraq from Kuwait in the Gulf War of 1991, the sources said.

6 slain in Frankfurt brothel: Police on Monday discovered the bodies of five prostitutes and the brothel operator inside their building in a fashionable Frankfurt neighbourhood. All six were apparently strangled. AP reports from Frankfurt.

The body of the slain man and two of the women were found in the basement. Two other bodies on the first floor. The sixth body was on the top floor of the three-story building that had been a high-class brothel for about 10 years, police said.

Bolivian truck mishap kills 16: Sixteen people were killed and four seriously injured when a truck plunged off the road between the Andean cities of Oruro and Cochabamba, police said on Monday. AFP reports from Oruro, Bolivia.

Blasts damage bldgs in Chechnya: Three explosions damaged government buildings early Monday in the breakaway southern republic of Chechnya and officials immediately blamed the main opposition group, AP reports from Moscow.

The blasts, apparently caused by mines, rocked the civil defence headquarters, the prosecutor general's office and a drama theater at around 4 am in the Chechen capital of Grozny, Chechnya's Interior Minister Ayub Satuiev told the ITAR-Tass news agency.

50,000 Filipinos infected with AIDS virus

MANILA, Aug 16: An estimated 50,000 Filipinos are infected with the virus that causes AIDS, but an epidemic is still preventable if the authorities act immediately, Health Secretary Juan Flavier said here today, reports AFP.

"This is the very time when we still have a fighting chance to prevent it," Flavier said, adding that the government had budgeted 40 million pesos

Kukis storm police station, kill 2

NEW DELHI, Aug 16: Outlawed tribal guerrillas stormed a police station overnight and killed two policemen in the far-eastern Indian state of Manipur, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said on Tuesday. reports AFP.

Twenty tribal gunmen staged the attack on the complex in Manipur's Chandel district, bordering Myanmar, and killed the two personnel and injured three others. PTI said.

The raiders from Manipur's dominant Kuki tribe also stole three light machine-guns and a large quantity of ammunition.

1.5 million dollars) for its anti-AIDS campaign.

The drive was also receiving financial assistance from the United States and Australia, while the authorities were negotiating for similar assistance from Japan, he said.

He noted that about 92 per cent of the population was aware of AIDS, up from 12 per cent in 1992, but that most people still did not know the disease was spread, which indicated a need for a broader information campaign, he said.

Flavier said that so far, only 531 people in the Philippines had tested positive for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the precursor to AIDS, of whom 150 had actually developed AIDS, and 86 had died.

But he said they believed that for every one person they found, as many as 100 went undetected.

Flavier, who has come under fire from the Roman Catholic Church leadership in recent months for his population control programme and the promotion of anti-AIDS measures, said the health authorities were focusing their attention on five "high-risk groups."

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International

Tigers blow up navy ship as Lankans go to polls

COLOMBO, Aug 16: Tamil rebels blew up a navy ship in Sri Lanka on Tuesday as tens of thousands of voters lined up at polling stations across the nation to elect a new parliament, reports AP.

National officials said guerrilla divers probably placed mines under the 4,000-ton surveillance vessel berthed in Kankesanthurai harbour in northern Sri Lanka. The ship and a nearby tug boat sank.

Two sailors were missing, and others swam to safety after the explosion at dawn, a navy official said on condition of anonymity.

The harbour is controlled by the government, but located in the rebel-held Jaffna Peninsula, and few people will be voting there.

The guerrillas oppose the election, and they have told

the nation's Tamil minority to stay away from the polls.

In Colombo, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe said he was not surprised by the attack because the government had intercepted guerrilla walkie-talkie messages about a major attack Tuesday.

His United National Party, which has been in power for 17 years, is expected to face a tough challenge in the vote from a five-party opposition coalition, the Socialist Peoples' Alliance.

If the coalition wins, it has promised to choose its leader, Chandrika Kumaratunga, as prime minister, restructure the government to make her the president, the most powerful official, and hold unconditional talks with the rebels, who have been fighting for a Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka

for 11 years.

The centrist United National Party controls the powerful presidency, and it has refused to negotiate with the rebels. So it could struggle with the opposition if it wins the election.

Tension between the governing party and the Peoples' Alliance was high throughout the month-long election campaign, and about 3,400 clashes and 20 killings were reported.

More than 40,000 police

men and thousands of gun-toting soldiers patrolled the streets Tuesday to prevent more violence.

Four hours after the polls

opened, 35 per cent of the estimated 11 million voters had cast ballots in 10,000 polling stations, said AD de Silva, the deputy election commissioner.

Forty-five international

election observers from countries such as the United States, Britain, France and India are monitoring the polls in 22 districts.

Despite the clashes during the campaign, and the fact that past ballots have been marked by fraud and voter intimidation, many people lined up outside polling stations in schools and government offices at dawn Tuesday to cast their ballots.

"I came here early because I didn't want someone else to cast my vote. ... It happened last time," said Nainer Mohammad Ghani in Colombo.

Like all voters, Ghani walked out with his left little finger

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Assam will hire Muslim cops to check riots

GUWAHATI, Aug 16: The Indian state of Assam, reviving an old British colonial practice, has decided to hire more Muslim policemen to check rising violence against the minority group, officials said today, reports Reuter.

Authorities said the north-eastern state's government had issued a circular increasing Muslim representation in the state's police force.

Before granting India independence in 1974, Britain promoted the hiring of Muslims to avert possible discrimination by majority Hindus.

Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia told Reuters the government would now raise the proportion of Muslims in the police force by requiring one in three new recruits, and on of two top officers, to be from the religious minority.

And now, just as the feminists thought they were starting to get their message across, comes another poster, this time from the construction industry, using a cartoon of a busty, scantily clad woman to persuade workers to take care on the job.

"Women are insulted by these sexually suggestive posters," said Linda To, coordinator of the Hong Kong Women Workers Association.

"Clearly, male workers are the target audience and women are used to attract their attention."

The women say that the Labour Department posters, in English and Cantonese, are sexist because they feature women in alluring poses, and misleading because the women are shown as welders and construction workers, clad in hardhats and overalls.

"We have few women working on construction sites," said Tsang Gar-yin of the Association for the Advancement of Feminism.

Sexist, misleading ads anger feminists

HONG KONG: At first glance it looks like a poster of a pretty woman promoting safe sex: "Before you go all the way, take precautions," reports AP.

In fact, it's a government ad for industrial safety, and women's groups are in uproar, calling it sexist and misleading.

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Man haunted by memory of murder confesses

ADELAIDE, Australia: A man confessed to the rape and murder of a woman 18 years ago because he was haunted by the memory of the crime, reports AP.

The South Australian state Supreme Court sentenced Gordon Walker to life in prison Tuesday after he pleaded guilty.

Prosecutors said Walker, who was 16 at the time, held a knife to the throat of the 20-year-old victim while his older brother drove to a secluded spot where they raped her and shot her dead.

Walker last year confessed to a priest that he had been haunted ever since. He then surrendered to police who had been baffled by the 1978 crime.

His brother committed suicide several years ago.

Actor Mickey Rourke charged with spousal battery

LOS ANGELES: Actor Mickey Rourke was charged Monday with misdemeanor spousal battery for allegedly slapping his wife, knocking her down and kicking her last month at Hollywood office, reports AP.

Rourke was charged with beating Carrie Otis, an actress who appeared with him in the movie "Wild Orchid," a city attorney spokesman said.

If convicted, the actor could be sentenced to one year in jail.

The volatile Rourke was arrested in January outside his nightclub in Miami Beach, Florida and charged with verbally abusing police. The charges were dropped after the actor agreed to hold a boxing clinic for poor children.

Dushanbe urged to help UN peace process

ISLAMABAD, Aug 16: Turkmenistan and Pakistan Monday jointly urged Dushanbe to help the United Nations peace process in Tajikistan, reports AP.

The call was made in a joint communiqué at the end of Turkmenistan President Saparmurat Niyazov's three-day official visit to Pakistan.

Niyazov and his host, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, agreed that "recent measures" announced in Dushanbe could "jeopardize" the UN peace process and other efforts for peace in Tajikistan.

The communiqué, which did not detail the measures, said political differences could only be resolved through negotiations between the Tajik government and opposition.

On Afghanistan, the two countries warned that the continuing fratricidal conflict there would have "serious consequences" for the peace and security of neighbouring states.

They called for a just and equitable political settlement in Afghanistan in line with the aspirations of its people. Turkmenistan agreed to work with Pakistan to achieve national reconciliation in the war-torn country.

Off the Record



Undated recent file photo of Indian actors Sheeba (top) and Sunjoy Mukherjee performing in a sexually explicit song sequence from the recently released Hindi movie 'Hum Hain Kamal'.

— AFP photo