



US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (R) meets with former Chinese president Jiang Zemin at the Zhongnanhai leadership compound in Beijing yesterday. Rice discussed efforts to persuade North Korea to dismantle its nuclear programme during talks with Chinese leaders.

Rice calls for more talks with China

AFP, Beijing

US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice cited the need for higher level dialogue with China yesterday as she met with the country's top leaders on the East Asian hotspots of North Korea and Taiwan.

Rice arrived from Tokyo to hold talks with ageing military strongman Jiang Zemin, Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and President Hu Jintao. She leaves for Seoul Friday.

"China is an important power in Asia and globally and we have an excellent relationship with China," Rice said before departing Tokyo.

She said she would discuss a "full range of issues in US-China relations," including "the need for higher-level dialogue between the United States and China" and the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

Her visit coincided with a call from North Korea's defence chief for soldiers to step up combat preparations, denouncing the United States for plotting an attack on the Stalinist country.

Defence Minister Kim Il-Chol accused Washington of stepping up preparations for a war "behind the curtain of the six-party talks" in a

speech to mark the 10th anniversary of the death of former North Korean president Kim Il-Sung.

The two sides have been involved in long-winded six-party talks hosted by China and including South Korea, Japan and Russia to resolve Pyongyang's security concerns and meet its demands for energy and food aid.

In exchange Washington wants a complete dismantling of the North's nuclear weapons program.

In talks with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in Tokyo, Rice called the North Korean issue "urgent."

Her visit follows a trip to Beijing by Vice President Dick Cheney in April that was also dominated by North Korea and Taiwan.

Beijing has urged Washington to soften its tone on North Korea and has indicated displeasure over the deployment this month of 10 F-117 Nighthawk stealth fighters to South Korea, one of the United States most advanced fighter jets.

"The move is hard pressed to be considered a routine reposition, especially when taking into account the current complicated security situation," the official China Daily said in an editorial.

New German immigration act to tighten checks

AFP, Berlin

The German parliament is to ratify today a new immigration act that will tighten checks on foreigners and close loopholes the government claims are being exploited by extremists.

The act, which is also aimed at meeting a demand for skilled workers, tries to tackle the security conundrum of how to deal efficiently with terror suspects since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

Three of the suicide hijackers lived and studied in Germany without drawing much police attention, and two Moroccans suspected of complicity have since walked free from prison after lengthy and costly trials here.

The new laws, drawn up after four years of debate, are the culmination of a campaign by Berlin, and particularly Interior Minister Otto Schily, to ensure that suspected militants can be rapidly expelled.

It is a process that critics say has given more power to the interior ministry and so breaks with a tradition of decentralising power to ensure there is no repeat of the abuses perpetrated by Adolf Hitler's Third Reich.

Afghan agents talk with Mullah Omar

AFP, Kabul

Afghan intelligence agents have spoken with fugitive Taliban founder Mullah Mohammed Omar after commandeering a satellite phone being used by his top aide, an Afghan official claimed yesterday.

Mullah Omar, along with al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, has escaped a US-led dragnet which now numbers some 20,000 coalition soldiers since the ousting of his Islamic fundamentalist regime in late 2001.

A man believed to be Omar's aide, Mullah Sakhi Dad Mujahid, was captured Tuesday while carrying a satellite telephone containing the phone numbers of top members of the ousted fundamentalist regime, Kandahar intelligence chief Abdullah Laghmanai told AFP.

"We contacted Mullah Omar by Mullah Mujahid's phone," he said.

"But when he (Omar) realized it was not his man, he cut off the phone."

Mullah Mujahid, as he is locally known, was arrested during a raid in Dara-i-Noor, some 70km north of southern Kandahar city.

US urged to take lead against trafficking

About 17,500 people being trafficked into America a year

AFP, Washington

The illicit trade in people for sex and forced labour is a fast-growing multibillion-dollar business aided by official neglect, corruption, lust and greed, activists told US lawmakers Wednesday, urging Washington to push harder to stamp it out.

US officials estimate that between 600,000 and 800,000 people are forced into slavery each year across the world, including between 14,500 and 17,500 in the United States.

The victims -- many of them women and children kidnapped or lured into prostitution or forced labour -- often go unnoticed by authorities in the massive illegal flow of migrants and refugees worldwide.

"Trafficking in persons is in many ways a quintessential 21st-century crime problem. In an era of globalisation and enhanced technology, small networks of criminals can operate internationally, preying on those who would migrate in search of

work or a better life and subjecting them to horrible abuse," said Wendy Patten, US advocacy director for Human Rights Watch told the Senate Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on the Constitution, civil rights and human rights.

Some 62 countries -- including most African and Middle Eastern nations -- lack laws criminalising the trade, and only 117 have signed a UN treaty calling for international cooperation to end the practice.

Since 2000, the United States has adopted tough new laws against human trafficking and barred US citizens from engaging in sex tourism. Washington also has threatened sanctions against nations, which tolerate the trade or fail to take adequate efforts to stop it.

Consequently, US officials are keen to ensure their own efforts are above reproach, with Democratic and Republican lawmakers working to craft effective solutions in a rare display of bipartisan cooperation.

"My colleagues and I must continue to vigilantly monitor the situation, and to consider whether further legislation is necessary to bolster the (US Justice) Department's efforts," said the subcommittee's chairman, Republican Senator John Cornyn of Texas.

"Our efforts on this issue show we can work together to protect some of the most endangered people in the world," said Senator Charles Schumer, a Democrat from New York.

"It's clear that there's much more to be done."

Lawmakers invited representatives of groups involved in anti-trafficking efforts to recommend ways the United States could act to further curb the trade.

They called on Washington to do more to help trafficking victims by loosening rules to allow more of them to stay in the United States as their cases are processed, and to give refuge to those who might face persecution or retaliation in their home countries.

US Senate report to detail intelligence flaws on Iraq

REUTERS, Washington

A Senate Intelligence Committee report this week will sharply criticise the CIA for a predisposed mindset that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction before the war, Senate and government officials said on Wednesday.

The report, scheduled for public release on Friday, will say that intelligence analysts did not question the long-held belief that Iraq had banned weapons and saw ambiguous information as supporting that view, a Senate source said.

The report was also expected to criticise intelligence agencies for using unreliable and inadequate sources.

"They used the thinnest sources to justify the grandest conclusions about weapons of mass destruction and other activity in Iraq," Sen. Richard Durbin, an Illinois Democrat on the panel, told Reuters.

Rebels take peacekeepers hostage in Georgia

AFP, Tbilisi

A separatist raid in a village of South Ossetia sharply escalated tensions in the disputed Georgian province yesterday, with Tbilisi vowing to free its peacekeepers who were detained by rebels.

Early yesterday, a group of armed men entered the village of Vanati, populated mostly by ethnic Georgians, and disarmed a group of 30 to 40 Georgian members of a peacekeeping force stationed there, said a deputy commander of the force.

"Our peacekeepers were captured," Mikhail Khabadze said by telephone. "As we were told in the (regional) administration, their documents are being checked. Their arms have been taken away."

South Ossetia declared independence from Tbilisi after it fought a short civil war with Russian support in the early 1990s and since then, peacekeepers from the three sides have patrolled the disputed territory.

Georgi Khaindrava, Georgia's conflicts minister, vowed immediate action.

"Our side will do everything to free our people," he was quoted as saying. "We are above all trying not to raise tensions, even though the security of Georgian villages in the region is at stake."



A Palestinian woman sits on the rubble of a demolished house in the Khan Yunis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip yesterday. At least eight Palestinians were shot dead and an Israeli officer was critically wounded during heavy clashes in this northern Gaza town.

PHOTO: AFP

ICJ RULING TODAY

Israel struggles to put human face on barrier

AFP, Qalqilya

As an army officer outlines how Israel is trying to minimise the impact of its vast West Bank barrier on the civilian population, a Palestinian farmer pulls up on his mule-drawn cart in front of the soldiers guarding one of the gates and tries to cross into his land.

For Colonel Tamir Hayman, the very fact the farmer is able to reach his fields from the nearby city of Qalqilya perfectly illustrates the measures put in place by the army to ease the suffering caused to local Palestinians by the barrier.

But 36-year-old Mutassem Abu Tayyem, a hat shading his head against the burning sun, begs to disagree.

"We are living in a prison. We are being treated like animals in a cage," he told reporters on a guided tour of the barrier organised by the army.

Sitting next to him, his 10-year-old son Samer nods his agreement.

Their home town of Qalqilya in the northern West Bank is totally closed in by the barrier, which in

some places takes the form of a wire fence and in others, a towering cement wall.

Pointing to the gate he has just passed through, Abu Tayyem said it is only open for three hours a day -- first thing in the morning, at midday and at the end of the afternoon.

"If you get here late, you have to wait several hours until they reopen the gate," he grumbled, showing surprise at the interest shown by the heavily-guarded group of journalists.

The simple complaint of a farmer on the way to his field stands in stark contrast to Hayman's lengthy explanation about the "security fence" ahead of Friday's non-binding verdict by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on the barrier's legality.

To ease the situation, the army is about to complete a multi-million-dollar tunnel running from Qalqilya to the nearby village of Hableh, so that villagers can reach the city's shops and medical services upon which they depend.

LAWMAKERS SAY

US reserve forces stretched to limit

AP, Washington

In a bipartisan show of concern that the military is dangerously overworked, lawmakers said Wednesday the Pentagon is stretching troops to their limit and perhaps undermining the nation's future force.

Amid worries the high level of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan could discourage potential new service members, Rep. John McHugh, R-N.Y., said it was not reassuring that most reserve components were falling below their recruiting goals for the year.

As of May 31, the Army National Guard was reported at 88 percent, the Air National Guard at 93 percent and the Air Force Reserve at 91 percent of their goals.

"We're taxing our part-time soldiers, our Guard and Reserves nearly to the breaking point," said Rep. Ike

Skelton of Missouri, top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee. "We have to be aware that the families back home are paying a significant price. We don't want to break the force."

Added Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., the committee chairman: "We're also concerned that insufficient force structure and manpower are leading the services to make decisions that I liken to eating the seed corn. That is, in order to make it through today, we do things that mortgage the future."

The Army recently decided to deploy units that have been used to train other soldiers. Hunter also noted that the ratio of reserves to active duty soldiers in Iraq is increasing and he said he was concerned that troops are not getting enough turnaround time back in the states.



PHOTO: AFP

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry (L) introduces his running mate John Edwards (R) as they hold a rally at Burnham Park in downtown Cleveland, Ohio Wednesday. The candidates pledged Wednesday to make the United States "once again respected and influential in the world" after four years under US President George W. Bush.

LEGAL STATUS OF GUANTANAMO INMATES

US sets up new panels

BBC ONLINE

The US government is setting up new military tribunals to review the legal status of terror suspects held at Guantanamo Bay, the Pentagon says.

The move follows a Supreme Court ruling giving inmates the right to challenge their detention in US courts.

Officials say the 595 prisoners will be notified of this right within 10 days.

The new so-called Combatant Status Review tribunals will consist of three officers, at least one of whom will be a military lawyer.

But the detainees will not have

access to a lawyer themselves for these tribunals - only another military officer to assist them.

The BBC's Nick Childs in Washington says the Bush administration has been under pressure to react to last week's Supreme Court ruling.

Lawyers for nine detainees have already filed writs in the Washington federal court.

Our correspondent says it is unlikely that critics will be satisfied with this response and it probably will not stop court challenges by detainees.

However, he adds, Bush administration officials clearly hope that if

those challenges take place, the tribunals will help the authorities to argue that the detainees have had a proper review of their detentions.

The Pentagon has made clear that the new tribunals are separate from the military commissions being set up to try Guantanamo prisoners.

On that front, the administration on Wednesday designated nine more prisoners as eligible for trial.

The defence department has not revealed their identity.

It says there are ground to believe that they are members of al-Qaeda or otherwise involved in terrorism against the US.

Vacancy Announcement



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION
Country Office-Dhaka

Preparatory Phase of the Time Bound Programme (TBP)

for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) in Bangladesh

Technical assistance to the Government of Bangladesh in partnership with Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNICEF

The ILO hereby seeks applications from interested Bangladeshi nationals (women are especially encouraged to apply) for the following posts:

ADB/ILO Programme Consultant on Poverty Reduction

Key responsibilities:

1. Assist the ADB staff concerned in poverty and social analysis in the context of social protection in the operational program activities in the country with emphasis on child labour concerns;
2. Recommend areas of investment and interventions towards poverty reduction relevant to combat worst forms of child labour;
3. Work closely with the Government and other stakeholders in promoting the integration of child labour concerns, especially about its worst forms, in national and regional development and poverty alleviation plans;
4. Participate in ADB loan/TA processing missions; and assist the mission to identify and conceptualize social protection components particularly child labour issues for inclusion.

Qualifications:

- Advanced university degree in economics, social science or related field with demonstrated expertise in economics and poverty reduction;
- Seven to ten years' experience, including field experience, in development related subjects, including poverty alleviation;
- Experience in working on child labour would be a requirement.

ILO Programme Specialist on Labour Protection

Key responsibilities:

1. Assist key stakeholders, in particular the Government, to identify conceptual and knowledge gaps concerning the relationship between the labour market and child labour with a particular focus on WFCL, and to organize discussion forums on different aspects of labour policy relevant to WFCL that will generate recommendations for action;
2. Together with the Government and other relevant parties, especially employers and workers organizations, analyse existing policies, programmes and potential opportunities regarding adult and youth employment and make recommendations for increased employment opportunities at home and abroad with appropriate measures that, in turn, will reduce the demand for child labour;
3. Work with organizations in the private sector to assess trends, policies and risks facing the private sector and the ways in which the formal private sector could have beneficial impact on informal sector supply chains in which child labour might exist;
4. Organize consultation with private sector/policy makers on means of reducing WFCL through expanded decent work opportunities that leads to recommendations for action.

Qualifications:

- Advanced university degree in law, social science or related field;
- Seven to ten years' experience in development related subjects, including labour law, employment and labour market policies, of which three years in progressively responsible professional work;
- Experience in working on child labour would be an advantage.

Applications:

These are senior professional positions that demand a sound academic background combined with a considerable work experience. Please collect the detailed Terms of Reference for each position from the ILO Office, House 12, Road 12 (new), Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka. Your application should contain one copy of your CV, references and contact telephone number(s). It should reach the ILO Office at the latest by 4:30 p.m. on 25 July 2004. Please write the "Position applied" on the top right corner of the envelope. Only short-listed candidates will be notified for test and interview. Those who had applied before should not apply again.

Any form of canvassing, soliciting or influencing will be treated as a disqualification.

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