



PHOTO: STAR  
Singers perform at a cultural programme at Bulbul Lalitakala Academy in the city yesterday marking the 146th birth anniversary of poet Rabindranath Tagore.

Baghdad to push for US support

AP, Washington

Worried Congress' support for Iraq is deteriorating rapidly, Baghdad dispatched senior officials to Capitol Hill this week to warn members one-on-one that pulling out US troops would have disastrous consequences.

The lobbying push targeted Republicans and Democrats alike, but focused primarily on those considered influential on the war debate. On Thursday, hours before the House voted to limit funds for the war, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh met with more than 30

House Republicans and more than a half-dozen senators, including Sens Harry Reid, D-Nevada, John Warner, R-Virginia, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-New York.

"He understands that American patience is waning," said Sen. Norm Coleman, after eating lunch with Saleh, Iraqi Ambassador Samir Shakir al-Sumaidaie and Sen Saxby Chambliss.

Baghdad's ability to sell members like Coleman, R-Minnesota, and Chambliss, R-Georgia, on the war effort is critical if the Iraqi government wants US troops to stay, Coleman in recent months has

become deeply sceptical of the president's decision to send additional troops to Iraq and says patience on the war in general is limited.

Coleman, Chambliss and Sen John Sununu, R-New Hampshire, who met separately with Saleh, will be up for re-election next year facing voters who have grown tired of a war in its fifth year and that has killed more than 3,380 troops. While Republicans have been reluctant to intervene, many say President Bush has until September to tell if the troop buildup in Iraq is working before they demand another approach.

India bus plunge kills 20

AP, Patna

A bus plunged nearly 30 feet into a riverbed in eastern India early yesterday, killing at least 20 people and injuring 12, an official said.

The accident occurred on a highway near Patna, the capital of Bihar state, said BK Singh, a state administrator.

The driver, who was among the dead, lost control of the vehicle as he swerved to avoid hitting a motorbike, Singh told The Associated Press.

"We have recovered 18 bodies," Singh said, adding that two of the 14 people initially reported injured later died in a hospital.

Road accidents caused by reckless driving, aging vehicles and bad roads are common in India.

'Curbing deforestation by half key to global warming battle'

AFP, Washington

Tropical developing nations can help drastically cut greenhouse gas emissions blamed for global warming by reducing the rate of deforestation by half, climate researchers said Thursday.

Reducing tropical deforestation by 50 percent over the next century would help prevent 500 billion tonnes of carbon from going into the atmosphere every year, the researchers said in a policy article published in the journal Science Express.

Such a reduction in emissions would account for 12 percent of the total reductions targeted by the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the

researchers said.

At its current rate, tropical deforestation releases annually 1.5 billion tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere that would otherwise be absorbed by trees, making it a major contributor to global climate change, they said.

The policy article was aimed to give scientific and technological backing to a two-year initiative launched by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, after a group of developing nations asked for a strategy to make forest preservation politically and economically attractive.

The researchers said the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation (RED) initiative faces political challenges as many devel-

Kosovo to become independent by end of month, says US

AFP, Zagreb

Kosovo could be granted independence from Serbia by the end of the month, US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns said here yesterday.

"We will be circulating today with our European allies a resolution in the Security Council that we believe will lead to the independence of Kosovo by the end of this month," Burns told journalists in the Croatian capital Zagreb.

"The United States is strongly supporting the independence of Kosovo."

The UN Security Council is set to begin debate soon on two competing texts -- one Western and one Russian -- that will form the basis of a draft resolution on Kosovo's future status.

Burns, speaking after meeting with Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader, also warned against Serbian ultra-nationalists entering a new government.