



India's South Central Railways officials inspect the charred wreck of carriages of the Gautam Express at Warangal District some 150km from Hyderabad yesterday after a fire engulfed a train in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. At least 20 people died and four were injured when fire spread quickly through a packed train in southern India early yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US not neglecting Asia

Says President Bush

AP, Bangkok

President Bush has countered critics who claim his global war on terrorism has lessened Washington's role in Asia and allowed China's influence to grow in the region, news reports said yesterday.

Preparing to embark on a three-country Asian trip, Bush said in interviews with senior Asian editors in Washington on Thursday that "our foreign policy has been robust in the Far East." His remarks were carried in Bangkok newspapers Friday.

The president, on a farewell tour of Asia, will visit Thailand, South Korea and China Aug. 5-11.

While in Thailand, he is to deliver a "comprehensive" policy speech on Asia stressing that the United States has strategic inter-

ests in the region and "must stay engaged," Thailand's English-language The Nation said Friday.

Another theme of his trip will be human rights. He is to meet with activists opposed to the military regime in Myanmar during his Bangkok stay and will raise human rights and religious issues when he meets President Hu Jintao of China during the Olympic Games.

"I am going to China this time as the US president who happens to be a sports fan," The Nation quoted him as saying.

Bush countered critics of his Asia policy, the Bangkok Post said in its report of the interview.

"In terms of foreign policy in the Far East, it is mistaken if someone were to say that my preoccupation was on the war on terror," he said. "Our relations with your country (Thailand), South Korea, with Japan and China have never been

stronger.

"And it took a lot of work to get bilateral relations as strong as they are," he added.

Bush said he viewed the growth of China and India as positive.

"India and China and the US will provide great opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses throughout the region," he said. "It'll provide opportunities to work collaboratively on strong strategic areas, security areas... on the environment."

Bush stressed the need for the US to work through multilateral efforts like the six-party talks on North Korea.

"Our vision is, once that issue gets solved, if North Korea verifiably gives up its weapons, programmes, ambitions, then the six-party talks can serve as another (multilateral) mechanism," he said.

US wants me dead, says Karadzic

AFP, The Hague

Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said yesterday the United States wanted him dead and accused it of reneging on a deal to shield him from trial by the UN war crimes court.

In a submission to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Karadzic said the United States' Bosnian peace negotiator Richard Holbrooke had promised he would avoid a trial if he withdrew from public life.

"Mr Holbrooke undertook on behalf of the USA that I would not be tried before this tribunal..." Karadzic said in the written submission made public by the ICTY.

Holbrooke strongly denied any such deal was struck after Karadzic, who was captured on July 21, first made the claims when he made his initial appearance before the UN tribunal on Thursday.

Karadzic said in the documents that the offer was made in 1996 to "the statesmen and ministers who were my authorised representatives".

Weekend deadline for Iran in nuclear showdown

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday set the weekend as a deadline for Iran to reply to the latest international offer of incentives for a freeze in its nuclear drive.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said Thursday that there was no deadline and that his country had already replied. The US State Department had been vague about the deadline but narrowed it down on Friday.

"We expect a response this weekend," Gonzalo Gallegos, a State Department spokesman, told AFP without specifying Saturday or Sunday.

A diplomatic source in Brussels said an Iranian response could come in the next few days but insisted that the international community wanted an answer from Iran.

US Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice had given Iran two weeks to come up with a "serious" reply after an international meeting in Geneva on July 19, which saw Tehran broadly accused of stonewalling.

Washington broke with past policy by sending top diplomat William Burns to the talks in Geneva.

US officials said they wanted to encourage those in Iran who want to cooperate with the West to ease the economic and financial pressure caused by UN sanctions.

Gary Sick of Columbia University, an Iran expert who was interviewed after the July 19 meeting, said Washington and Tehran were both showing an increased desire to end the showdown that has raised fears of a military conflict.

"Neither side wants to show that it is losing face, or that it is caving in or appealing the other side, but both sides are interested in finding

a way out of this conundrum," Sick told the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), a US think-tank.

Sick said another "change on both sides" is Washington's willingness to look at opening an interests section in Iran -- a first step toward restoring diplomatic ties cut three decades ago -- and Tehran's openness to the idea.

The expert said that Washington had learned that its past desire to isolate Iran with increasingly stiff sanctions had failed to stop Iran enriching uranium -- a key stage in efforts to make a nuclear bomb.

Along with the four other permanent UN Security Council members -- Britain, France, China, and Russia -- as well as Germany, the United States has taken a more conciliatory approach lately.

The so-called P5-plus-1 has offered Iran benefits in civil nuclear energy, trade, finance, agriculture and high technology if it freezes

uranium enrichment.

If Iran accepts the package, there would be pre-negotiations during which Tehran would add no more uranium-enriching centrifuges and, in return, face no further sanctions.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana delivered the incentives package to Tehran in June.

In Brussels, the diplomatic source, who asked not to be named, said that for the Europeans "the Iranian reply should come in the next few days," without setting Saturday as a strict deadline.

"The situation today is that we want a clear reply to the question Solana asked in Geneva," the source said. "For the moment, the Iranian response has not been clear enough."

The source declined to speculate about what action the allies would take if Iran's fell short of expectations.

16 female students die in Turkey dorm collapse

AP, Ankara

A three-story dormitory housing female students collapsed in central Turkey yesterday, killing 16 students, injuring at least 27 and setting off a search for a half dozen students believed to be under the rubble, authorities said.

Frantic rescue workers removed debris with shovels, pickaxes and their bare hands in search of any survivors.

"We are hearing voices. I believe, those inside the rubble will be saved," Balçilar Mayor Mehmet Demirgul told Turkey's NTV television. He estimated six more students were trapped in his village in central Konya province.

He initially told reporters a large gas canister explosion is believed to have caused the collapse. However, the state-run Anatolia

news agency and other reports later said the explosion was most likely caused by a leak from a gas installation there.

Besides the fatalities, at least 27 students were brought out of the debris with injuries, said Hasan Kucukkendirci, who heads the local health authority. Galip Sef, an official with the local emergency services, said three of the students sustained severe burns.

Provincial Gov. Osman Aydin said an estimated 40 to 45 girls were staying at the dormitory. The students, between ages eight and 16, were attending Quran courses during the school summer break.

Anatolia news agency quoted one student, Merve Avcı, as saying she had got up to wash before pre-dawn prayers when she and some teachers heard a strange sound and went to the kitchen to investigate.



PHOTO: AFP

Rescuers sift through debris on the collapsed building which housed a school in Taskent, Konya state central Turkey yesterday. At least 16 schoolgirls were killed and 23 others injured as the girls' boarding school collapsed.

Record Afghan unrest hampering aid: NGOs

AFP, Kabul

Insurgent attacks in Afghanistan have hit record highs this year with hundreds of civilians killed, including 19 aid workers, and spreading insecurity cutting back relief work, aid groups said yesterday.

Unrest had spread to once stable areas and welfare agencies were forced to scale back aid delivery even as drought and food price hikes put millions of people in difficulty, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief said.

"So far this year the number of insurgent attacks, bombings and other violent incidents is up by approximately 50 percent on the

same period last year," said ACBAR, a grouping of about 100 Afghan and international non-governmental organisations.

There were 463 insurgent attacks in May and 569 in June, it said in a statement, citing figures from a range of sources including the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office.

This was "greater than the number of such attacks in any other month since the end of major hostilities following the international intervention in 2001," it said.

"This year 2,500 people have reportedly lost their lives in the conflict and whilst exact figures are not yet available, this could include up to 1,000 civilians," the group

added.

Initial estimates were that more than 260 civilians were killed in July, which was higher than any other month in the past six years, it said.

July saw some of the worst violence of an insurgency by Islamic extremists launched after the Taliban were ousted from government in a US-led invasion in late 2001.

A suicide bomb at the Indian embassy in Kabul killed around 60 people and other attacks left dozens more dead. Military action, mostly air strikes on insurgents, killed nearly 80 civilians, according to Afghan and military officials.

UN vote extends Darfur peacekeeping But US abstains

AP, United Nations

The UN Security Council approved another year of peacekeeping in Sudan's bloodied Darfur region Thursday night, but the US abstained from a vote that reflected sharp divisions over genocide charges against the Sudanese president.

The United States, despite support for the struggling peacekeeping mission, did not vote because of its opposition to any delay in efforts to prosecute Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir.

The resolution that was approved 14-0 carried language

that noted an African Union request to freeze the International Criminal Court's prosecution of al-Bashir.

Though the measure does not stop the prosecution, US Deputy Ambassador Alejandro Wolff said that the language "would send the wrong signal" to al-Bashir and "undermine efforts to bring him and others to justice."

Luis Moreno-Ocampo, chief prosecutor of the international court, filed 10 charges against al-Bashir on July 14 related to violence in Darfur that the UN says has claimed 300,000 lives and driven 2.5 million people from their homes.

Nato soldier, 5 Afghan cops killed in violence

AFP, Kabul

A Nato soldier was killed in a bomb explosion in eastern Afghanistan Friday, the force said, as authorities announced that five policemen had died in a similar blast.

The Nato-led International Security Assistance Force did not release the nationality of the dead soldier, who became the 145th international trooper to die in Afghanistan this year.

"An Isaf soldier died in an IED (improvised explosion device) attack in Khost province August 1," the force said in a statement.

Five Afghan policemen were killed late Thursday when their jeep was struck by another bomb in the southern province of Kandahar, police said.

Two other officers were

wounded in the blast in Panjwayi, deputy district police chief Bismillah Khan told AFP. The policemen were on a patrol in the volatile area when the remote-controlled bomb blew up their vehicle, he said.

The device was similar to those widely used by Taliban insurgents in their attacks against the Western-backed government.

Most of the international and Afghan security forces killed in the country die in bomb blasts, according to security officials.

About 800 Afghan policemen and soldiers have been killed so far this year, according to the interior ministry.

The Taliban launched an insurgency after being ousted from government in a US-led invasion in late 2001. The violence has increased year on year.

Olmert grilled again over graft claims

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli police grilled Prime Minister Ehud Olmert again yesterday over graft allegations that have dogged his term in office, two days after his surprise resignation announcement.

It was the fourth time since May that anti-fraud squad officers have interviewed Olmert, 62, at his official residence in Jerusalem in connection with the allegations of wrongdoing, which he has strongly denied.

Police remained tight-lipped but the questioning was likely to focus on allegations Olmert ille-

gally received electoral and other funding from a wealthy US financier and that he sent out multiple bills for the same overseas trips.

The latest round of questioning came just two days after the premier announced he would step down after a September 17 leadership election in his centrist Kadima party.

His decision to go has cast a shadow over already slow-moving US-backed peace negotiations with the Palestinians and recently revived indirect talks with Syria and raised the spectre of political turmoil in Israel.



PHOTO: AFP

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Mohamed ElBaradei (L) listens to the chairman of the board and head of Chile's delegation Milenko Skoknic yesterday during the board of governors meeting at the agency's headquarters in Vienna. The UN atomic watchdog's board of governors convened for talks with India on safeguards for a controversial nuclear cooperation deal between New Delhi and Washington.

Obama-McCain race turns toxic

AFP, Washington

The White House contest between Barack Obama and John McCain took one of its nastiest lurches yet Thursday as the campaign air filled with accusations of race-baiting and gutter politics.

Top campaign issues such as the economy and the Iraq war took a back-seat, as the Republican McCain responded with fury to Obama's claims that his opponents would exploit his exotic name and appearance for electoral gain.

The Democrat in turn said

McCain, his campaign reinforced by proteges of President George W. Bush's long-time aide Karl Rove, was stooping to the "low road" of politics with a slew of character attacks.

"Barack Obama has played the race card, and he played it from the bottom of the deck. It's divisive, negative, shameful and wrong," said McCain's campaign manager Rick Davis in a statement.

Asked if Davis's criticism was fair, McCain told CNN: "I'm sorry to say that it is. It's legitimate."

There's no place in this campaign for that. There's no place for

it and we shouldn't be doing it," the Arizona senator said at a stop in Wisconsin.

In Missouri on Wednesday, the African-American Obama had said McCain's campaign was mounting personal attacks against him to divert attention from what he said was a dearth of solutions to America's problems.

"You know, he's not patriotic enough, he's got a funny name. You know, he doesn't look like all those other presidents on those dollar bills, you know, he's risky," Obama said, ridiculing supposed attacks against him.

Admission

Applications are invited for admission into the following degree programs in Fall Semester starting in September 2008

Master in Development Studies

A professional program for Development Management

Key Features

- The program is designed to develop human resources suitable for development management.
- Emphasizes on development research, management of development organizations, and efficient project management and evaluation.
- Courses taught by faculty with Ph.D. from abroad and with research and management experiences in Development Organizations
- Weekend classes for working students.
- Evening classes in weekdays to accommodate working students

Eligibility

- A Second Class in a three years' Bachelor degree OR A Second Class in Master degree.
- Degree should be in Economics, Business, Environmental Studies, Social Welfare, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science, Public administration or other related subjects from any recognized university.

MS in Economics

with specialization in • International Economics • Financial Economics & Banking • Development Economics • Environmental & Natural Resources Economics • Econometrics

Key Features

- Courses taught by reputed Ph.D. faculty from home & abroad
- Weekend classes for working students.
- Evening classes in weekdays to accommodate working students
- Financial assistance available to deserving students
- Linked with Ph.D. programs of reputed universities in Canada

Eligibility

- At least a Second Class either in the Bachelor (Hons.) or Master degree in Economics or in relevant disciplines from any recognized university

Last Day for Application: 25th August 2008, Admission test: 27th August 2008
Time : At 10.00 A.M. Venue : SPZ 1000 (SPZ=Sher Plaza)

For detailed information please contact Admission Office or the Department of Economics

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY

12 Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani C/A, Dhaka 1213
Phone: 9885611-20 x196/132 Fax : 8823030 Email: econ@northsouth.edu