INTERNATIONAL

Lankan military moves to take Tiger capital

Govt holds local polls

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka staged local elections under tight security vesterday as troops pushed deeper into Tamil Tiger territory, closing in on the rebel capital in the war-ravaged north, officials said.

Two out of the country's nine provinces cast ballots to elect new top local officials, without any incidents of violence reported,

incident," a police official said.

The provinces which went to the polls -- North Central and Sabaragamuwa -- are not hit by fighting between troops and Tiger rebels, but the government had turned the vote into an unofficial referendum on its military strategy.

Election officials put turnout at about 60 to 65 percent of the 2.16 million eligible voters.

On Friday, the defence ministry announced troops had captured "We deployed about 25,000 men two strategic towns from the Tigers to guard polling booths and the as they closed within just 12 kiloreports so far suggest that the metres (7.5 miles) of the rebels' voting went off without any major political capital of Kilinochchi in

The ministry said Saturday a total of 28 rebels and two soldiers were killed in clashes since Friday across the island's north, where the military is keeping up pressure on the guerrillas along at least four

Tens of thousands have died on both sides since the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) began fighting in 1972 for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the majority Sinhalese island.

There was no immediate comment from the Tigers about the military push and the casualties

claimed by the security forces, but the guerrillas earlier this week tacitly admitted the military was advancing into their areas.

The few international aid agencies operating inside rebel-held territory reported that over 112,000 people had been driven out of their homes as a result of fighting over the past two months.

President Mahinda Rajapakse announced Tuesday that troops were on a final push to dismantle the LTTE's defacto state in the north after the military ejected the rebels from the east in July 2007.

Iraqi court sentences ex-minister to death

AFP, Baghdad

An Iraqi court has condemned to death in abstentia a Sunni Arab former minister for his role in the murder of a fellow Sunni politician's two sons, the court's spokesman told AFP on Saturday.

Abdul Sattar al-Byrakdar said the Central Criminal Court of Iraq had on Wednesday handed down the verdict against Assad Kamal al-Hashemi, former Iraqi minister for culture, for assassinating Mithal Alusi's sons in 2005.

Hashemi, a lawmaker with the main Sunni bloc the National Concord Front was tried in abstentia. His whereabouts have been unknown since he fled Baghdad in June last year.



Georgians protest next to trenches left by Russian soldiers during a pro-Georgian demonstration near the port town of Poti yesterday. Russian forces were still deployed deep inside Georgia but Moscow brushed aside Western accusations it was failing to obey the terms of a ceasefire agreement.

Russia aims to keep control of Georgian port city

AP, Gori

A top Russian general yesterday said his country's forces will continue to patrol a main Georgian Black Sea port city even though it lies outside the 'security zones" where Russia claims it has the right to station

soldiers on Georgian territory. The statement by deputy head of the general staff Col-Gen Anatoly Nogovitsyn, reported by Russian news agencies, came a day after Russia said it had pulled back forces from Georgia in accordance with a cease-fire agreement that

Russia interprets as allowing it a substantial military presence.

On Saturday afternoon, several thousand protesters waving Georgian flags approached the Russian position on the outskirts of the strategic city of Gori. Some soldiers came out of their trenches, but there was no immediate sign of unrest.

Gori residents to begin returning Georgian police tried to control the mass return by setting up make- piece of scrap metal.

shift checkpoints an ironic echo of the Russian checkpoints that had ringed the city a day earlier.

Those who were let through came back to find a city battered by bombs, suffering from food shortages and gripped by anguish.

Surman Kekashvili, 37, stayed in Gori, taking shelter in a basement The Russian pullback allowed after his apartment was destroyed by a Russian bomb. Several days two weeks after they fled Russian ago, he tried to give a decent burial air attacks and advancing troops. to three relatives killed by the Chaotic crowds of people and cars bomb, placing what body parts he were jammed outside the city as could find in a shallow grave covered by a burnt log, a rock and a



File photo shows Democratic vice presidential hopeful US Senator Joe Biden shakes hands with Gwyneth Navey, 8, of Florence, South Carolina on April 28, 2007, at the South Carolina Democratic Party Convention in Columbia, South Carolina. Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama yesterday named Biden as his vice presidential choice.

Biden, a national security veteran

AFP, Washington

Barack Obama's running mate, But the fact that Biden has Senator Joseph Biden, 65, brings spent more than half his life in decades of national security the Senate may however be used White House ticket, an area where the presumptive nominee McCain, with thousands of votes is seen as lacking.

As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee. the new vice presidential nomian outspoken critic of the Bush Washington. administration's foreign policy.

chance to flex his national security muscle in a just completed trip to long winded speaking style -- but Georgia, at the invitation of is a clear candidate for verbal President Mikheil Saakashvili to discuss the still simmering showdown with Russia.

he will also appeal to working class

voters with whom Obama has had

a hard time connecting. experience to the Democratic against him by the campaign of Republican nominee John to mine for controversy.

His presence on the ticket would also seem to somewhat undercut Obama's call for a wave nee has met many of the leading of fundamental change to overactors on the world stage, and is whelm political gridlock in

Biden is also somewhat of an The Delaware Senator took the unknown quantity, he has tried hard to tone down his notoriously gaffes on the campaign trail.

In a presidential debate however last year, he offered a witty A Roman Catholic, with a no rejoineder when asked if he had nonsense style, and an appeal to the self-discipline to cut down traditional grass roots Democrats, on his trademark long-winded perorations simply saying "Yes."

Train catches fire after derailment in Oklahoma

AP, Oklahoma City

A train derailment in central Oklahoma on Friday sent fireballs into the sky but caused no injuries.

Eight cars on the 110-car Burlington Northern Santa Fe train derailed, seven of which were carrying either crude oil or ethanol, company spokesman Joe Faust said. He said he didn't know how many of the derailed cars had caught on fire.

He said only two people an engineer and a conductor were aboard the train, and neither was injured.

The derailment occurred around 3 p.m., about 30 miles northeast of Oklahoma City, close to the town of Luther. The train was traveling less than 40 mph from Tulsa to Temple, Texas, on tracks operated by Stillwater Central Railroad. A call to the railroad's office went unanswered Friday afternoon.

Study finds new quake dangers

for NY City

AP, White Plains

An analysis of recent earthquake activity around New York City has found that many small faults that were believed to be inactive could contribute to a major, disastrous earthquake.

The study also finds that a line of seismic activity comes within two miles of the Indian Point nuclear power plant, about 25 miles north of New York City. Another fault line near the plant was already known, so the findings suggest Indian Point is at an intersection of faults.

The study's authors, who work at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Observatory, acknowledge that the biggest earthquakes in the 6 or 7 magnitude range are rare in the New York City region. They say a quake of magnitude 7 probably comes about every 3,400 years.

Bush to accept Iraq withdrawal timetable led out on Thursday.

AFP, Crawford

After years of denouncing timetables for a US withdrawal from Iraq, US President George W. Bush seemed poised Friday to accept late 2011 as a target date for a complete US troop pull-out.

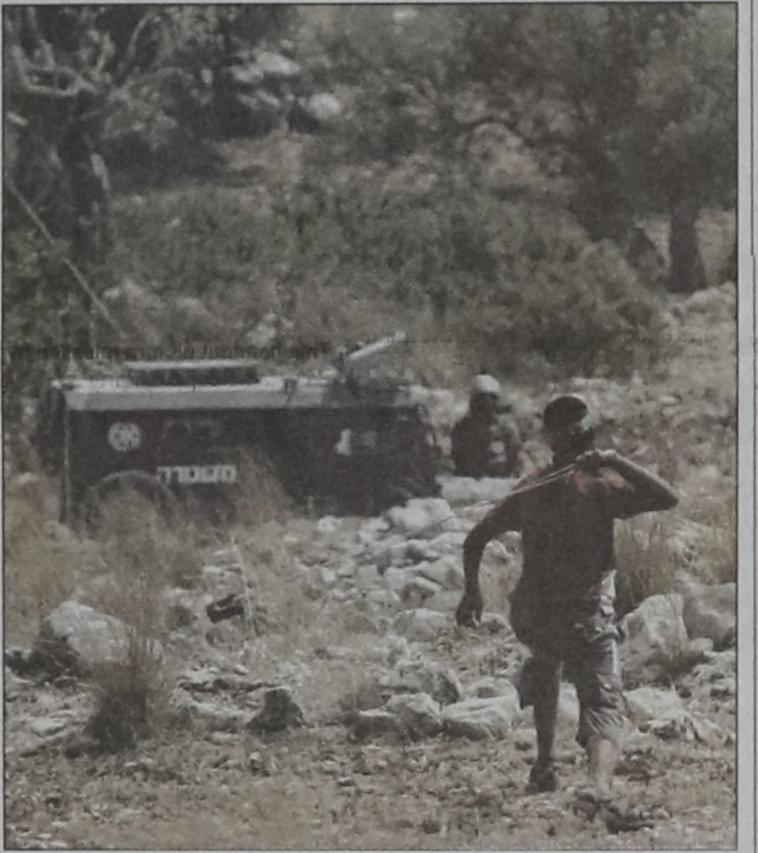
The top Iraqi negotiator told AFP in Baghdad that the tentative accord calls for all US combat troops to be out of Iraqi cities by next June and US forces gone from the war-torn country by the end of 2011.

The White House, which had in the past described setting a firm withdrawal date as a "surrender" to Islamist extremists, rejected any talk of a dramatic policy reversal as the first details of the accord trick-

Talks on ending the US occupation are possible only "because of the security gains that have been realized since the president ordered five additional brigades and Marines into Iraq last January,

said spokesman Gordon Johndroe. And US officials say that the timeframe is a target, not a hardand-fast deadline, and will require sustained progress on the political economic and security fronts.

"The president and every American wants to see American troops come home, but not until the job is done and there is more security, more political progress, and more economic progress inside Iraq," Johndroe said Thursday.



A Palestinian youth uses a sling shot to throw a stone at an Israeli armoured vehicle after clashes broke out between protesters and security forces during a demonstration in the West Bank village of Nilin, near Ramallah, against Israel's separation barrier on Friday.

US, N Korea hold talks to break nuclear impasse

AFP, New York

The United States and North Korea held talks Friday to break a deadlock over measures to verify Pyongyang's nuclear weapons programme that could pave the way for removing the hardline communist state from a terrorism blacklist.

The talks in New York between Sung Kim, the State Department's top Korea expert, and North Korean officials were a follow-up to a meeting held about three weeks ago in Beijing over verification of the North's nuclear programme declared in June, officials said.

"Obviously, they are going to talk about the six-party talks, obviously recent discussions about the verification package, which we have been calling on the North Koreans to produce," said State Department spokesman Robert Wood before the talks.

Asked whether Pyongyang was set to agree on a proposed verification protocol, Wood said Sung Kim was "going to assess where things are with North Korea in his conversations with North Korean officials.

Southeast University **BBA Admission Test Result**

The following students have qualified for admission into the BBA program of Southeast University for Fall 2008 on the basis of results of admission test (held on 20th August 2008):

82049, 82050, 82066, 82043, 82085, 82023, 82058,

82109, 82011, 82051, 82015, 82018, 82020, 82024, 82094, 82098, 82021, 82032, 82033, 82045, 82093, 82113, 82038, 82080, 82101, 82046, 82081, 82086, 82012, 82029, 82039, 82099, 82022, 82041, 82055, 82056, 82065, 82001, 82002, 82035, 82070, 82104, 82110, 82040, 82057, 82075, 82044, 82076, 82097, 82019, 82071, 82112, 82116, 82120, 82005, 82028, 82074, 82092, 82006, 82052, 82073, 82100, 82106, 82117, 82063, 82090, 82091, 82119, 82121, 82126, 82007, 82037, 82072, 82079, 82089, 82017, 82048, 82077, 82102, 82118, 82010, 82030, 82016, 82027, 82061, 82062, 82083, 82088, 82105, 82125, 82069, 82111, 82082, 82095, 82122, 82060, 82068, 82108, 82067, 82124.

Selected students are requested to contact the Admissions Office immediately and complete all formalities by 02nd September, 2008.

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