INTERNATIONAL

Russian parliament backs independence for Georgian separatists

AFP, Moscow

The Russian parliament voted overwhelmingly yesterday to recognise the independence of two breakaway Georgian regions -while President Dmitry Medvedev linked the Georgia conflict to tensions over another separatist

The European Union, which has nition. criticised Russia's military intervention, called a special summit on the Georgia crisis. Many European nations expressed concern at the Russian parliament vote to recognise South Ossetia and Abkhazia as

Georgia and tensions heightened saved his region from "genocide." by the arrival in a Georgian port of a US warship carrying aid, Russia's two parliament chambers approved a resolution calling on Medvedev formally to recognise the two regions.

The Duma and Federation backing. Council held special sessions to debate the region's calls for recog-

The two regions are internationally recognised as part of Georgia, where Russian troops rolled in on August 8 to fight off a Georgian offensive to retake South Ossetia.

Addressing the Federation Medvedev. Council, South Ossetian leader The Russian president has With Russian troops still inside Eduard Kokoity said Russia had signalled his support for independ- Georgia.

He asserted there was more political and legal legitimacy to recognising South Ossetia's independence than there had been for Kosovo, the Serbian province, which broke free with EU and US

The Abkhaz separatist leader, Sergei Bagapsh, said: "Neither Abkhazia nor South Ossetia will ever again live in one state with

The parliament appeal was not binding and a final decision on Russian recognition rests with

ence and on Monday he mentioned the South Ossetia case when he said a dispute with Moldova over the Transdniestr region could

"It's reasonable to discuss already today the Transdniestr problem. I see good chances for solving it," Medvedev told Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin at a meeting at the Russian leader's Black Sea coastal residence at Sochi.

He said Transdniestr, which lies on Moldova's eastern edge adjoining Ukraine, should be viewed in the context of the battle with

AP, Beituniya Checkpoint

her latest peace mission.

Nearly 200 Palestinian prisoners freed

Monday by Israel walked into

Palestinian-controlled territory to

cheers and applause, just hours

before US Secretary of State

Condoleezza Rice was due to arrive on

The prisoners arrived at Beitunia,

near the West Bank city of Ramallah,

after a short drive from Ofer prison

outside Jerusalem. The prisoners,

some waving black-and-white check-

ered keffiyeh headdresses as they got

out of Israeli buses, kissed the ground

Israel said the release is a gesture

meant to bolster moderate

Palestinian President Mahmoud

Abbas and give a boost to the slow-

moving peace talks with the moderate

prisoners. Some of the individuals

being released today are guilty of

direct involvement in the murder of

innocent civilians," government

Palestinian leader.

before boarding Palestinian vehicles.

in gesture to Abbas

goodwill.'

large-scale release.

"It's not easy for Israel to release as a symbol of all the prisoners.

spokesman Mark Regev said. "But we inghim on both cheeks."

Iraqi suicide bombing kills 30

AFP, Fallujah

The death toll from a suicide bombing at a banquet attended by police and members of an anti-Qaeda group west of Baghdad has risen to 30, a medic told AFP yesterday.

Another 42 people were wounded in Sunday evening's attack in Al-Zaidan village in Abu Ghraib district, the doctor from the public hospital in nearby Fallujah said.

The suicide bomber blew up his explosives-laden vest as police sat down to dinner with the anti-Qaeda group in the home of one of its commanders, Aziz Moklif Ghatha al-Zubai.

Zubai was among the dead, an interior ministry official said on Sunday.

Residents said the village used to be an al-Qaeda stronghold until the US military began sponsoring the formation of so-called Awakening groups among Sunni tribesmen and former rebels opposed to the jihadists.

The groups have become a fre quent target for al-Qaeda reprisals.

understand the importance of the

prisoner issue for Palestinian society .. We believe this action can support

the negotiation process and create

Palestinians in Israeli jails is highly

emotional, since many Palestinians

either know someone in prison or

have served time themselves. Abbas

who is struggling to show his people

the fruits of the peace talks, has

repeatedly urged Israel to carry out a

the release last week. Among the 198

men freed Monday was Said al-Atba

who has served 32 years of a life sen-

tence for carrying out a deadly market

ing inmate held by Israel and he is

widely seen by the Palestinian public

Balding, with a moustache, he made a

victory sign toward cameras as two

Palestinian officials escorted him to a

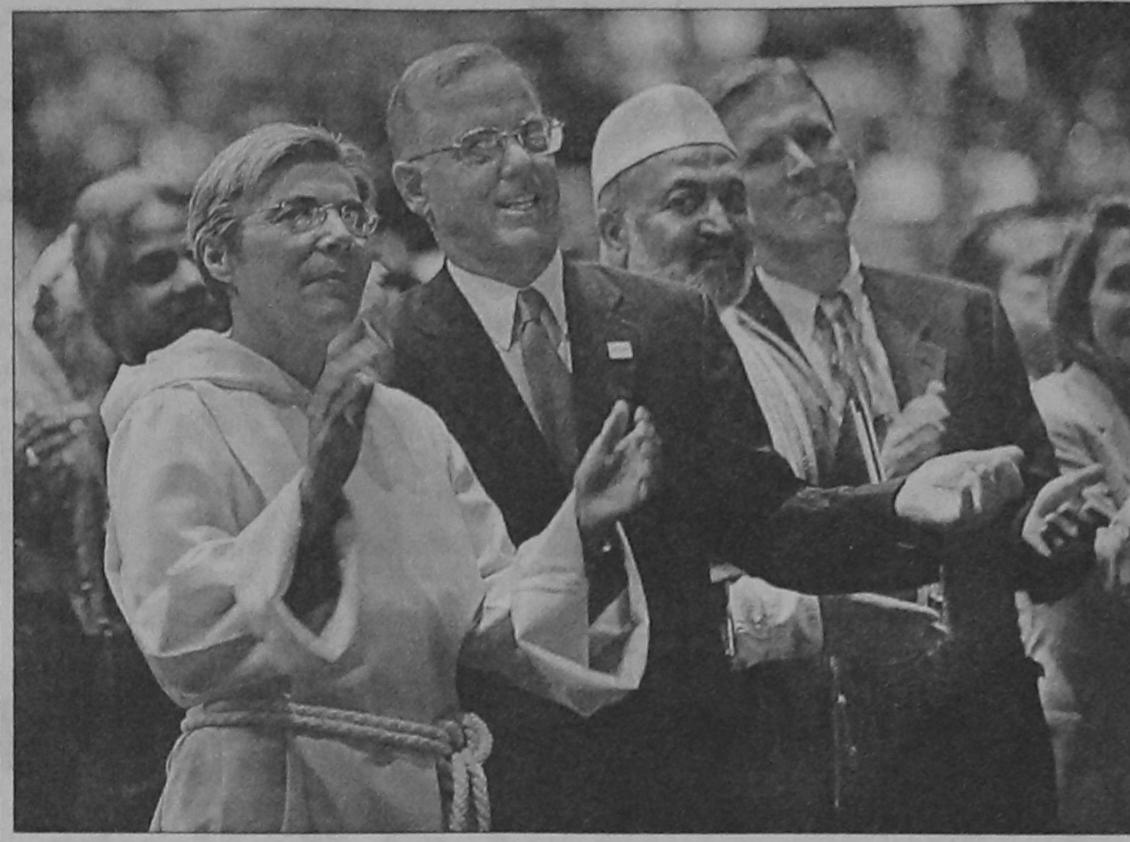
car. Others rushed to greet him, kiss-

Al-Atba, 57, was the longest serv-

bombing three decades ago.

The Israeli government approved

The fate of the roughly 9,000



Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairman Governor Howard Dean (2nd L) with Rev Lucia Guzman (L), Director of Human Rights/Community Relations in Denver, Imam Mohammad Mardini (2nd L), American Muslim Centre of Dearborn, Michigan and Dr Patrick Whelan, President of Catholic Democrats of Boston, during Democratic National Convention Interfaith Gathering at the Wells Fargo Theater on Sunday in Denver, Colorado.

Israel frees prisoners All eyes on Michelle at Democrats' convention

AP, Denver

The Democratic National Convention opens Monday, a choreographed show of unity more important this year after the roughand-tumble primary contest that put Barack Obama days away from making history as the first black presidential nominee of a major political party.

Opening night at the Pepsi Centre, the main venue for most of the four-day gathering, aims to tell the Illinois senator's personal story to the millions of voters nationwide who will begin tuning in to the contest to replace the unpopular

Republican President Bush. Who better to tell his story than Michelle Obama, his wife of nearly 16 years? The stage Monday night belongs to this potential first lady for a prime-time speech meant to serve a dual purpose: humanize him and show up her critics before

her largest audience yet.

With Democrats and convention delegates streaming to the Mile High City, party officials worked to assure a harmonious

Hillary Rodham Clinton, who concern some voters. lost the nomination to Obama after a bruising five-month contest, was expected by midweek to release the delegates she won in primaries and caucuses and encourage them to support her former rival.

party's credentials committee restored full voting rights to delegates from Florida and Michigan. The party had stripped both states of their voting rights for holding primaries before the rules said they could. The committee vote was taken at Obama's behest, and Democrats hope the goodwill gesture will help improve their

standing in two important states. Obama, slowly making his way

to Denver via a tour of battleground states, said Sunday that one of his goals is for voters to come away from the convention thinking he is one of them. His uncommon name and family background still

"I think what you'll conclude is, 'He's sort of like us,'" Obama said in Eau Claire, Wis. "'He comes from a middle-class background. He went to school on scholarships. He had to pay off student loans. He And by unanimous vote, the and his wife had to worry about child care. They had to figure out how to start a college fund for their

> Republicans seek to portray Obama as an Ivy-leagueeducated elitist. His background white mother from Kansas, black father from Kenya, raised in Hawaii and Indonesia has been grist for the rumor mill, leading some voters to believe he is a Muslim or unpatriotic.

Pilot called in engine trouble before crash

AP, Guatemala City

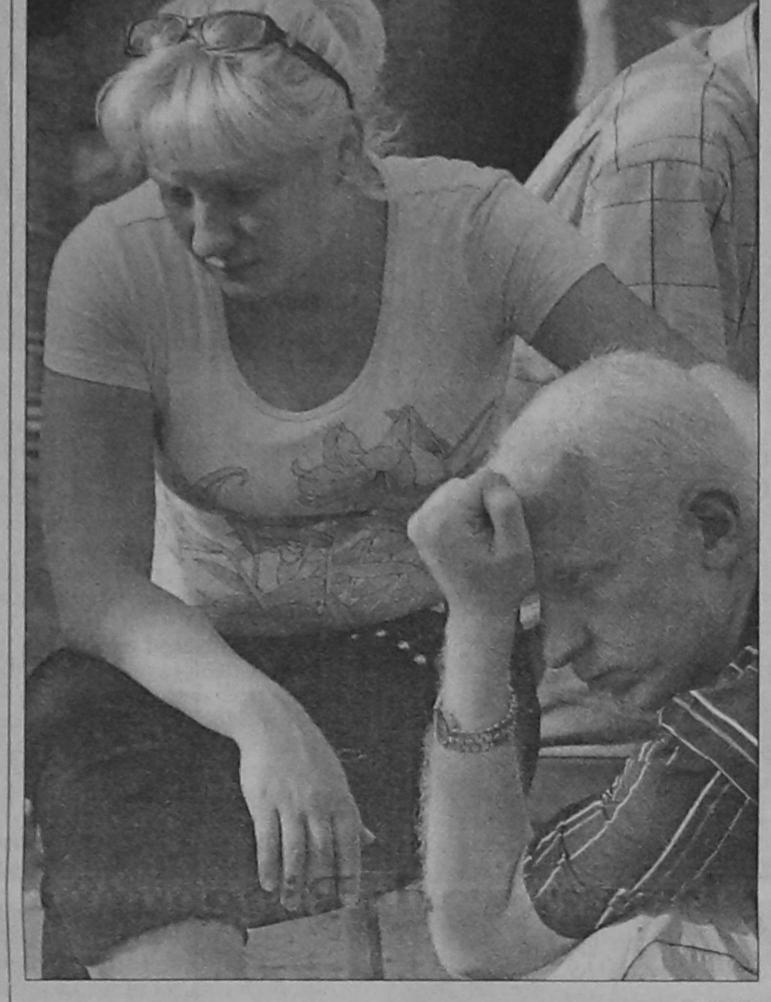
The pilot of a small plane carrying humanitarian workers called in engine trouble about 45 minutes before crashing in a field in eastern Guatemala, killing 10 people, including five Americans.

The Cessna Caravan crashed about 60 miles east of Guatemala City on Sunday and the burned wreckage of the plane was scattered along the edge of a barren field lined with palm trees, an aviation official and a survivor said.

The pilot tried to make an emergency landing, Civil Aviation director Jose Carlos said. Eight passengers were killed, along with the Guatemalan pilot and co-pilot, he

Carlos said five of the passengers killed were Americans, but the nationalities of the other three had not been determined. Four other Americans on board were injured and were being airlifted to a hospital in the capital.

Sarah Jensen, a 19-year-old who survived the crash with minor cuts and bruises, said she and her family were headed to a village in the area of El Estor to build homes for CHOICE Humanitarian, a group based in West Jordan, Utah.



People grieve as an official reads from a list yesterday the distinguishing characteristics found on the bodies of victims who perished when a Boeing 737 bound for Tehran went down a few kilometres from Bishkek airport on Sunday in a bid to help relatives identify their kin.



oypurhat: 62317, 01711302007, Ishwardi: 63057, Pabna: 51813, Brahmanbaria: 52799, Ramgoni

1712258370. Chuadanga: 01712937833, Rangour. 0521-52141, 01199380344, Dinajour. 61087, Chandour

MPs detained as Zimbabwe parliament sworn in

AFP, Harare

Zimbabwe police detained two opposition lawmakers on Monday ahead of the swearing in of parliament, five months after disputed elections, the opposition said.

Two deputies of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) were detained in the parliament building in what the opposition called a manoeuvre to influence the vote for a speaker for the new assembly.

"It's clearly a strategy to eliminate our members and reverse our majority in parliament," MDC spokesman Nelson Chamisam told

He said one lawmaker, Shuah Mudiwa, was "literally pulled" out of the parliament building. "We have been informed they want to arrest 15 MPs. It's all about the vote for the speaker. Nothing to do with thelaw," he said.

"This arrogance has the potential of sinking the ship of our negotiations. We don't need arrogance on the part of any of the parties. We need maturity and harmony and not acrimony," Chimasa told AFP.

Lalu brokers peace, Koda to support Soren for CM

PTI, Ranchi

The way for JMM chief Shibu Soren to become Jharkhand Chief Minister was cleared on Monday after incumbent Madhu Koda and Independent MLA Stephen Marandi agreeed to support him at the intervention of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad.

On the advice of Lalu, Koda and Marandi gave letters of support to Soren before the media.

Koda, who had been reiterating that he would not support Soren and would review whether to continue in the UPA or not

ever since he quit on Saturday, changed his stand and agreed to support Soren to form a ministry after meeting the RJD chief.

"Laluji and Guruji (Soren) came to my residence. As per our traditional values, atithi deva bhava (guests are like God). Moreover, after giving a second thought, I decided to support him in the interest of UPA's unity," Koda told the media.

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