

## Naked politics gets US debate watchers hot and bothered

AFP, New York

The debate was intense, titillating, raw, even perverse -- at least for those watching Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama on screens in New York's Museum of Sex.

Debate parties are a dime-a-dozen in New York, but this must have been the only such event Wednesday where viewers' attention wandered so easily.

The session of naked politics took place in a hall where dozens of TV screens only minutes earlier had been filled with quite a different kind of nudity.

To one side was an exhibition devoted to the sex lives of animals, including X-rated action from panda bears and the sexual cannibalism of the whiptail lizard.

To the other side ranged a display of the more peculiar inventions devoted to human sex habits, ranging from whips to what could have been a dentist's chair, except for the life-like penis.

Meanwhile, on the multiple TV screens, McCain the Republican and Democrat Obama argued

about energy resources and tax policy.

The 200 or so New Yorkers present seemed to think the mix just right.

"What better than to combine sex and politics, the two things you're not meant to talk about in public?" giggled Simon Betz, 37, as she scrutinized the non-dentist's chair.

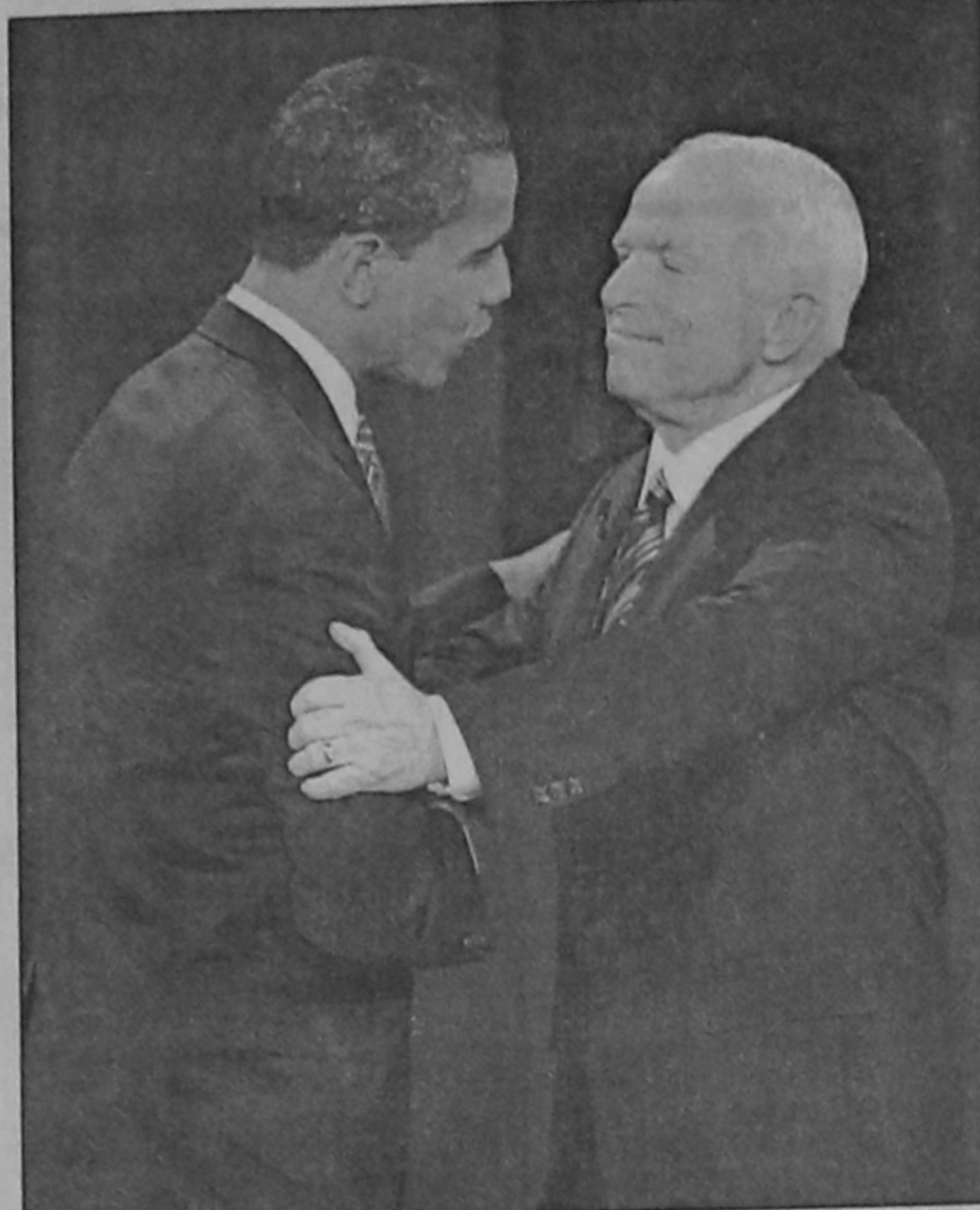
"Everything is so messed up in our country that it's good we go and have fun and think about sex. Hey, it's better than thinking about the collapsing economy and how poor we're all going to be."

Not surprisingly, this was not Republican territory.

Boos at McCain and cheers for Obama punctuated the debate -- almost as loud as the recordings of moans and cries that had filled the same room just before.

"Obama put sex back into politics," said a dreamy Jennifer Wright, 22, wearing a long red dress and black nail polish.

Artist Molly Crabapple, with a huge orange butterfly hairpin and a low-cut dress, used the occasion to unveil her painting "Politics."



Republican John McCain (R) and Democrat Barack Obama (L) stand on stage together following their third and final presidential debate at Hofstra University on Wednesday in Hempstead, New York.

## North Korea threatens to freeze ties with South

AP, Seoul

North Korea threatened yesterday to cut all ties with South Korea, saying the new conservative government is engaged in reckless confrontation with its neighbour.

North Korea has been unhappy with South Korea's new President Lee Myung-bak, who took office in February with a pledge to get tough on the rival state. By contrast, Lee's two liberal predecessors had aggressively sought reconciliation by providing massive aid to the impoverished nation.

The North's warning, issued in a commentary carried in the North's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper, said if the South "keeps to the road of reckless confrontation with the (North), defaming its dignity despite its repeated warnings, this will compel it to make a crucial decision including the total freeze of the North-South relations."

That means Pyongyang could terminate civilian exchanges with the South, including a tourism programme and a joint factory park.

North Korea already has suspended all government-level dialogue and exchanges, though the sides met as part of broader international negotiations on Pyongyang's nuclear programmes. It has also rejected a food aid proposal and dialogue offers from the South, saying those offers lacked sincerity.

The North made a similar threat during military talks with the South earlier this month, saying it would expel South Koreans from the tourism and industrial projects if propaganda leaflets critical of Pyongyang keep arriving over the border.

South Korea played down the threat.

"It does not mean the North will take steps immediately," said Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Ho-nyeon. "We will monitor the situation regarding this, and there is no change in the government's intention to improve South-North relations through dialogue."

North Korea has branded the

South's president a "traitor," "pro-American sycophant" and "despicable human scum."

"The Lee group is becoming more frantic in its racket of confrontation with the (North) in league with outside forces," Thursday's commentary said, calling Lee "so hell-bent on sycophancy towards the US and confrontation with fellow countrymen."

The warning came days after North Korea resumed a stalled nuclear disarmament process after the United States removed it from a terrorism blacklist, and amid lingering questions about the health of the North's leader Kim Jong-il.

"The North is putting strong pressure on our government as its relations with the United States are improving and its negotiating power is gaining strength," said Hong Hyun-ik, an expert at the security think tank Sejong Institute. "It's a sort of brinkmanship strategy."

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at

Seoul's University of North Korean Studies, said the North is trying to show that its warning made earlier this month "was not empty language."

South Korea suspended a tour programme to the North's Diamond Mountain after a South Korean woman was shot dead by a North Korean soldier in July during a tour. Other civilian exchanges have proceeded, including another tour programme to the North's ancient border city of Kaesong and a joint factory park nearby.

The three programmes have been considered prominent symbols of inter-Korean reconciliation. But they have also been criticised for providing hard currency to North Korea that could be used for its nuclear programme.

The two sides fought the 1950-53 Korean War that ended in a truce, not a peace treaty, leaving the peninsula technically still at war. Their ties had warmed significantly since the first-ever 2000 summit of their leaders before freezing again this year.

## Thailand-Cambodia agree to joint border patrols

AP, Bangkok/Preah Vihear

A Thai military official says Cambodia and Thailand have agreed to joint patrols at a disputed border to reduce the tension that a day earlier erupted into a gunbattle.

Thai army spokesman Col. Sansern Kaewkumnerd said the two sides agreed that joint patrols could "reduce chances of a misunderstanding that could lead to another clash."

The agreement came during talks between military commanders from both countries a day after the clash between troops at a disputed border killed at least two Cambodian soldiers and wounded 10 from both sides.

Cambodia's army commander said the two sides "agreed to pre-

vent further armed clashes" but that talks would continue over the border dispute.

Earlier Thai and Cambodian troops faced off at a disputed border as military officials held urgent peace talks Thursday, a day after a deadly gunbattle near an 11th-century temple sparked fears of war.

Thousands of Cambodian villagers living near the hilltop Preah Vihear temple fled their homes, fearing more violence. Families packed rice, clothes and chickens into cars, pickup trucks and carts pulled by motorised ploughing machines, forming long convoys heading away from the border zone.

Senior military officials from the two neighbouring Southeast Asian nations met in Thailand's Sisaket province, just across the border

from Cambodia, to discuss the previous day's clash, which killed at least two Cambodian soldiers and wounded 10 from both sides.

Wednesday's clash was the first deadly fighting since July, when Unesco, the United Nations cultural agency, approved Cambodia's bid to make Preah Vihear temple a UN World Heritage site.

The decision flared longstanding tensions between the neighbours, who both claim land around the temple, and prompted the two countries to rush troops to the border.

"The situation on the border is calm, but Thai and Cambodian troops are still facing each other at critical points," said Col. Thanya Kiatsarn, a Thai military official at the border.

## EU leaders adopt vast new immigration plans

AFP, Brussels

European Union leaders adopted yesterday sweeping new immigration guidelines which have angered rights groups for focussing on skilled workers rather than refugees.

This pact was adopted unanimously. Europe now has a real immigration policy," French President Nicolas Sarkozy told reporters, after hosting an EU summit in Brussels.

The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum -- a document of political intent but not binding laws -- sets out principles for managing migration, fighting illegal immigration and forming partnerships with countries people leave or travel through to get to Europe.

It also seeks to make border controls more effective while

building better asylum policy, with refugees increasingly obliged to apply for asylum status from outside the EU.

Some 220,000 people made applications last year.

Immigration will be based on criteria like "Europe's reception capacity in terms of its labour market," with the emphasis on controlling would-be immigrants rather than encouraging people to come.

The pact also insists that nations take the "interests" of their neighbours into account when formulating immigration, integration and asylum policies -- shorthand for avoiding the mass handout of residency permits.

Italy and Spain have angered some of their partners by giving papers to some 700,000 people in recent years.



Protesters prepare to burn a caricature of an American eagle and mock US flag during a protest near the US Embassy in Manila yesterday. The activists blamed Washington for its supposedly neoliberal policies, which cause global hunger and poverty.



Bhutanese refugees line up at the office of International Office for Migration (IOM) in Damak, southeast of Kathmandu on September 12, 2008 as they prepare to leave the refugee camps in a "third country resettlement" programme. The US and six other countries have agreed to take at least 60,000 Bhutanese refugees, and after 16 rounds of fruitless negotiations between Nepal and Bhutan, Nepal has agreed to allow the refugees to resettle.

## Nepalis expelled from Bhutan head for US

AFP, New York

In Zurich's gleaming airport, Bhutanese refugee Dambari Kumari Adhikari was exhausted but amazed.

"Look at this place," she said as she gazed in wonder at the neat roads and sleek modern buildings outside the transit terminal. "I doubt Nepal could ever be a tenth of this place."

The 56-year-old ethnic-Nepali refugee was on her way to start a new life in the United States after more than a decade living in a hut with her family of five adults and three children.

Along with 31 other refugees, Adhikari was embarking on a unique resettlement programme with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

She is one of more than 100,000 refugees of Nepalese origin who left Bhutan in the early 1990s and have been living in United Nations refugee camps in southern Nepal ever since.

"I felt I had to leave Bhutan because I was scared for the safety of my family," said Adhikari who was a widow when she fled, walking six days to Nepal through India in 1991.

Despite her dearest wishes Adhikari is not allowed back to Bhutan, so she has chosen to make

a new start in the US.

"I would rather go to America than stay in camps for the rest of my life where I have already ruined my children's future," said Adhikari, as she travelled to the US with two of her five adult children.

"At least in the States, they can have a second chance."

The 36-hours of flights from Nepal's capital Kathmandu to New York was the first international flying experience for all the refugees.

Dressed in traditional bright red sari and with a Buddha necklace around her neck, Adhikari carried a tattered white bag covered in IOM stickers.

"I am more nervous than happy right now. I have no idea how my life in the United States is going to be," she said. "I speak no English and I am too old to learn any new tricks."

-- Between an uncertain future and gloomy past --

Adhikari was joining her two sons and a daughter who have already been resettled in Seattle and found jobs.

"I am just so glad and lucky I will be around my family. I have no one left in Nepal," she said.

The US might be the land of opportunity, but "for an old woman like me, the opportunities will be limited," she said.

## Bush should have been impeached, says Trump

AFP, Washington

Property mogul and diehard Republican Donald Trump told CNN on Wednesday that President George W. Bush misled the US into the Iraq War and should have been impeached when the Democrats took control of Congress in 2006.

"I was surprised that she didn't do more in terms of Bush and going after Bush," Trump said in an interview with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, referring to Democrat House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

"It ... just seemed like she was going to really look to impeach Bush and get him out of office, which personally I think would have been a wonderful thing."

Trump, 62, said Bush misled the United States into waging war on Iraq, a much worse offence than a dalliance with a White House intern his predecessor Bill Clinton was impeached for in 1999.

"He lied. He got us into the war with lies," Trump said about Bush. "And I mean -- look at the trouble Bill Clinton got into with something that was totally unimportant. And they tried to impeach him, which was nonsense."

## Five countries to be elected to join UNSC

AFP, United Nations

The UN General Assembly votes today to choose five new non-permanent members of the powerful Security Council, with all eyes on the contest between Iran and Japan for the lone Asian seat up for grabs.

Iran, which is under UN Security Council sanctions for its refusal to halt sensitive nuclear fuel

work, is widely expected to lose to economic powerhouse Japan, a major contributor to the UN budget, which enjoys broad support, particularly from Western countries.

A Western diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it would be "an embarrassment" for Japan if it did not prevail in the first round of balloting to succeed Indonesia in the seat.

## Graft cases against 11 ex-MPs dropped

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and misappropriation of government funds and materials.

Besides, ACC has prepared a list of the people convicted in its 100 cases by different lower courts as the government has asked for a list of the convicts. The ACC, however, did not reveal the number of the convicts to the press.

The list of the former ministers and lawmakers to be exempted include Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Asadul Habib Dulu, Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Abul Hossain Khan, AKM Selim Reza Habib, AKM Fazlul Haque Milon, Salahuddin Ahmed of BNP, former minister Matia Chowdhury of AL, and former lawmakers Mohammad Abdus Sobhan and Abdullah Mohammad Taher from Jamaat.

Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and businessman Salman F Rahman are also on the list of the accused getting exemption.

As many as 48 local government representatives, 42 government officials and 144 people from other professions are also going to be

exempted.

"Most of the cases were not the commission-initiated and lack evidence and technical requirements," says an ACC source, adding even witnesses made in the cases could not be traced in many cases.

The cases in which ACC has decided to submit final reports were regarding misappropriation of government materials meant for relief and funds, bribery, deception, tax evasion, power abuse, and irregularities regarding VGF and VGD cards, and land grabbing.

The cases against Shah Mohammad Abu Zafar, Abul Hossain Khan, Mohammad Abdus Sobhan, and Asadul Habib Dulu were filed on charge of misappropriating 32, 160, 180, and 201 pieces of corrugated iron sheets.

Matia Chowdhury was accused of misappropriating over Tk 13 crore in the name of importing rice in 1998-1999 through mutual collaboration, while Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain was accused of selling land of a school through

misuse of power.

Earlier, ACC had to submit final reports in 70 other cases for the same reasons.

On a report published in a Bangla newspaper over reinvestigation into wealth statement of former premiers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina, Hanif Iqbal said, "The commission has not taken any such decision."

CHARGE SHEET

Salahuddin Ahmed and 15 others will be charged with occupying land illegally by abusing power, while Reza Ahmed Bachchu will be charged for misappropriating corrugated iron sheets meant for relief.

Jalal Alamgir and Joya Alamgir, son and daughter of former lawmaker Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, will be accused in separate cases for not submitting wealth statement to the commission.

The ACC also decided to issue notices on eight people including Chittagong Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury's wife Hasina Mohiuddin asking them to submit wealth statements.

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