



PHOTO: AFP
Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (L) shakes hands with Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Tehran yesterday. Erdogan is on a two-day visit to the Islamic republic for talks on bilateral relations and Tehran's nuclear programme.

Thai PM backs autonomy for troubled south

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's prime minister backed yesterday a suggestion by his Malaysian counterpart to grant autonomy to the insurgency-hit Thai south, as five more people were killed in the Muslim-majority region.

Abhisit Vejjajiva said he would discuss the plan for the restive southern provinces on the Malaysian border when Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak visits Thailand in December.

Razak said in a newspaper interview published on Monday that Thailand should offer "some form" of autonomy to the region, where more than 3,900 people have been killed since separatist violence erupted in January 2004.

In response, Abhisit said: "That's the right approach."

"My government is working to make it materialise and in early December I and my Malaysian counterpart will visit the southern region," he told reporters.

Malaysia's Razak told Thai English-language daily The Nation that "you may not want to call it autonomy but there could at least be some form of involvement".

Simple lifestyle changes can help US cut emission of greenhouse gas

AFP, Washington

The United States could cut greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of France's total annual emissions by getting Americans to make simple lifestyle changes, like regularly maintaining their cars or insulating their attics, a study showed Monday.

If US households took 17 easy-to-implement actions -- like switching to a fuel-efficient vehicle, drying laundry on a clothesline instead of in a dryer, or turning down the thermostat -- carbon emissions could be cut by 123 metric tons a year by the 10th year, the study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences found.

"This amounts to... 7.4 percent of total national emissions -- an amount slightly larger than the total national emissions of France," showed the study led by Thomas Dietz of Michigan State University's department of sociology and environmental science and policy.

"It is greater than reducing to zero all emissions in the United States from the petroleum-refining, iron and steel, and aluminum industries, each of which is among the largest emitters in the industrial sector," the study said.

Volcanoes played pivotal role in ice age mass extinction

ANI, Washington

Scientists have discovered that volcanoes played a pivotal role in a deadly ice age 450 million years ago that ultimately killed two-thirds of all species on the planet.

These volcanoes first caused global warming by releasing massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

When they stopped erupting, Earth's climate was thrown off balance, and the ice age began.

The discovery underscores the importance of carbon in Earth's climate today, said Matthew Saltzman, associate professor of earth sciences at Ohio State University.

Previously, Saltzman and his team linked this same ice age to the rise of the Appalachian Mountains.

As the exposed rock weathered, chemical reactions pulled carbon from Earth's atmosphere, causing a global cooling which ultimately killed two-thirds of all species on the planet.

Now, the researchers have discovered the other half of the story: giant volcanoes that formed during the closing of the proto-Atlantic Ocean -- known as the Iapetus Ocean -- set the stage for the rise of the Appalachians and the ice age that followed.

India, China and Russia to cooperate against terror

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Bangalore

India, China and Russia yesterday agreed to jointly expand their trilateral cooperation in combating international terrorism and called for greater democratisation of international bodies.

External Affairs Minister SM Krishna held talks with his counterparts, Yang Jiechi of China and Sergei Lavrov of Russia, on a wide range of regional and international issues in this Indian IT hub.

A joint declaration said the three ministers discussed ways to expand their trilateral cooperation on issues like international terrorism, the global financial crisis, climate change, energy security and the reform of international bodies.

The resurgence of Taliban-led violence in Afghanistan figured prominently in the dis-

cussions.

This was the ninth trilateral meeting between Foreign Ministers of the three emerging economies that hold the key to an emerging international order.

"We discussed trilateral action against terrorism and transnational crime," Krishna said at a joint press interaction with his counterparts from Russia and China.

Krishna said the three Foreign Ministers identified "common approaches" in addressing a host of regional and international issues.

Yang described the meeting as a "very productive one" and underlined that it marked a "new progress" in trilateral cooperation. He emphasised that the three countries shared "similar approaches" on regional and international issues.



PHOTO: AFP
Indian External Affairs Minister SM Krishna (C) welcomes Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi (R) and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (L) prior to the start of a trilateral meeting in Bangalore yesterday. The foreign ministers of India, China and Russia met Tuesday for a trilateral meeting in Bangalore to boost ties between the emerging market giants.

UNGA to discuss Goldstone report in November

AFP, United Nations

The UN General Assembly is to discuss in early November the Goldstone report that accuses Israel and Palestinian militants of war crimes in Gaza, an Arab diplomat said Monday.

"The Arab group is requesting that the report... be debated in the General Assembly in early November," said Arab League representative Yahya Mahmassi, who was conveying the request in a letter to Assembly president Ali Triki.

Discussions would definitely now go ahead "probably on November 4," Mahmassi told AFP.

He said the Arab League's intention was to propose the General Assembly pass a resolution approving the Goldstone report and "requesting the (UN) Security Council to take it" up in formal debate.

The UN Human Rights Council earlier this month endorsed Richard Goldstone's report, on the 22-day conflict that erupted on December 27, 2008.

When the fighting ended, 1,400 Palestinians and 13 Israelis had been killed.

Goldstone concluded that both Israel and Hamas, Gaza's rulers, committed war crimes and possible crimes against humanity during the conflict that Israel launched in response to rocket fire from the Palestinian enclave.



PHOTO: AFP
Supporters of Myanmar's detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, including Therese Rein (2nd-R), wife of Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, gather on the steps of the Sydney Opera House yesterday. Supporters joined in a "Gather for Democracy and Stand for Freedom" initiative to show solidarity with Suu Kyi and the people of Myanmar.

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'I'm skinny... but tough', says Obama

AFP, Miami

US President Barack Obama on Monday lashed back at critics who fear he lacks the steel to be a successful president, saying "I'm skinny... but I'm tough".

Obama, who is trying to navigate a climate of sharp political partisanship, said he was spoiling for a fight to enact his ambitious agenda.

"There are people saying mean things about me and folks are worried," Obama said, as he headlined a pair of Florida Democratic Party fundraisers that racked up a total of 1.5 million dollars.

"Just 'cause I'm skinny doesn't mean I'm not tough. I don't trample," Obama said, tongue in cheek.

"I'm not going to shrink back, because now is the time for us to continue to push and follow through on those things that we know have to be done but haven't been done for decades."