

National and World News

Mumbai attacks spark accusations

JERUSALEM (MCT) — Israel buried six Jews killed in last week's Mumbai siege that claimed at least 173 lives.

Israel has been jarred by the attacks on Mumbai and buffeted by the fallout. Its leaders have come to the defense of India, one of Israel's biggest military customers, amid criticism of India's confused response to the attack.

Some Israeli analysts suggested that Israel's military backing for India in its fight to retain control of Kashmir might have served as one excuse for the attackers.

Detroit's 'Big Three' present their bailout plans to a skeptical Congress

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Detroit's Big Three automakers on Tuesday gave lawmakers detailed plans to restore each manufacturer to viability, a starting point for getting a \$25 billion government bailout to help them survive the current recession.

The automakers are expected to promise to downsize their manufacturing operations, move more expeditiously into cars that get gas mileage, speed up their efforts to make hybrid cars that rely on battery power as well as gasoline, and pledge to trim their bloated dealership networks and

rein in pay for top executives.

Still, Washington's reaction to the eagerly awaited plans was curt.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., questioned whether the \$25 billion energy loan approved by Congress in September is even available now.

Reid said ultimately the question is not where Congress can find \$25 billion, but "whether there is accountability and viability. We're already spending a lot of money on a lot of things. We can't be throwing good money after bad."

KY religious law sparks a lawsuit

LEXINGTON, Ky. (MCT) — An atheists-rights group is suing the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security because state law requires the agency to stress "dependence on Almighty God as being vital to the security of the Commonwealth."

Edwin Kagan, a Kentucky lawyer and the national legal director of American Atheists, said he was appalled that state law establishes praising God as the first duty of the office.

The state and federal constitutions both prohibit government from getting involved in religion, Kagan said Monday.

NJ leaders praise Obama's choice

WASHINGTON, D.C. (MCT) — Hillary Clinton's selection Monday to be secretary of state shows that she and President-elect Barack Obama can bury their past rivalry to put national interests first, New Jersey leaders and activists said.

Former Gov. Thomas H. Kean, a Republican who served as chairman of the 9/11 Commission, said he thought Clinton is well-qualified to run the State Department.

"I think she's got good judgment, and I think she'll advise Obama well in an area where he's weak," Kean said.

Sino-European relations at stake

BEIJING (MCT) — Relations between China and Europe have frayed suddenly, and a caustic diplomatic row has given way to suggestions that China is again targeting France.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy's plans to go ahead with a meeting with the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, in Poland this coming Saturday.

China Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao warned France on Tuesday that political and diplomatic relations were at stake if Sarkozy went ahead with the meeting.

Hotel hosts house contest

BY JESSICA BODFORD

STAFF WRITER

Chapel Hill residents have a chance to make the phrase "home sweet home" come true this week.

Tuesday marked the beginning of the Siena Hotel's first weeklong gingerbread house contest, which will end Friday afternoon.

Only one group has decorated a house so far, lower participation than the hotel hoped for.

"It's our first time, so we didn't know what to expect," said Cristina Fishel, the hotel's social catering manager. "We just want people to come in and enjoy themselves."

Participants adorned the pre-made gingerbread houses with peppermints, licorice, gumdrops and chocolate candies.

Families can participate for \$25 and corporate groups for \$50. The hotel supplies all the materials.

Each house will be showcased in the hotel's lobby until every group has finished. The best entry will win a dinner party at the Siena.

Katherine Farless, assistant vice president of Harrington Bank in Chapel Hill, came with co-workers Bridget Cook and Carrie DeShazor. She said the hotel asked her group to participate at no cost.

"They actually contacted us from the Siena, and we got a small group together to come," Farless said.

"We're a local bank, so we'd like to support other local businesses in the community. That's one of the reasons we came."

Within an hour, the three colleagues had finished their sugary masterpiece, complete with a gumdrop fence, marshmallow forest



DTH/JESSEY DEARING

Harrington Bank employee Bridget Cook decorates a gingerbread house at a contest Tuesday at the Siena Hotel in Chapel Hill.

and M&M pathway.

Despite low attendance on the competition's opening day — the hotel expected another group that didn't show up hotel employees are excited to join in the fun.

Pastry chefs built the frames of the houses contestants are decorating.

And in his spare time, Siena Hotel pastry chef Johnny Tate used more than 100 pounds of gingerbread to create an edible replica of the hotel.

Although the hotel did not ask Tate to make a model, he spent more than two weeks working on it.

Tate's creation, which will be on display at University Mall, features sugar windowpanes, chocolate balconies and a gelatin fountain.

Hotel employee Nate Plant said

Tate is known for his spontaneity. "He does an awesome job," Plant said. "He has free reign over our dessert menu, so he just creates what he wants."

Although the hotel will not make much money from the competition after the cost of supplies is subtracted, organizers said they hope for higher turnout next year.

"We're trying to bring the community together to enjoy the holidays and have something fun and festive to do," Plant said.

"And of course whoever wins is going to have a great party afterward."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

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CONSTRUCTION

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groups of students."

The new Dental Sciences building will feature a 220-seat auditorium, 110-seat lecture halls, 32-seat seminar rooms and 100-station patient simulation laboratories.

"This space will be designed to encourage collaboration with faculty and student colleagues within the School and outside the School of Dentistry, as well," Williams said.

Abbas Piran, director for engineering information services at UNC, said the new building will also provide an opportunity to integrate more energy efficient and sustainable systems in the building.

In support of the University's sustainability initiatives, this will include heat recovery mechanical systems, rainwater collection and

an incorporation of recycled or renewable-source materials.

Though the dental building was given a boost from the state, other construction projects at UNC have not gotten the money needed from the N.C. General Assembly to complete them.

These include the law school at Carolina North at \$11.5 million, the Morehead Planetarium addition at \$1.8 million and the School of Medicine Biomedical Imaging Research Center at \$35 million.

"We would also like to see those three appropriated projects jump-started like the Dental Sciences Building was, as well," Runberg said. "But I don't know how that will unfold given the current financial difficulties in state revenues."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

RETENTION

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for a year or several years, I think that ... damages your ability," said Betsy Brown, vice provost for faculty affairs at N.C. State University.

While salaries are the most important tool initially, Brown said other factors matter — benefits, the work environment, the state's appeal as a place to live and institutional support for faculty members' work.

"The benefits package in the state is not competitive with a lot of other institutions," Lorden said.

The standard package for UNC-system faculty has state, system and locally issued benefits. State benefits include retirement plans, general health insurance and some more specific types of insurance.

One area where North Carolina is sometimes beat by other states is coverage for family members — the state's benefits package does not include coverage for dependents, said Kitty McCollum, UNC-system vice president for human resources.

The struggling economy could make it difficult in other ways. If there are fewer hires or fewer vacant positions filled, current faculty might have to increase their teaching load and receive less administrative support, Brown said.

As a temporary fix, UNC-C has considered transferring the funding for vacant positions to filled ones.

"That's bad because you're eroding the salaries you have for those vacant positions," Lorden said.

But UNC-Chapel Hill has remained confident, especially about its ability to retain faculty.

Executive Associate Provost Ron Strauss said faculty know they are a priority and will receive increases as long as money is there.

"We have a history of making a lot of positive steps in faculty compensation," he said. "When better times come, UNC will go back to trying to have increased faculty salaries."

Contact the State & National Editor at strtdesk@unc.edu.

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SHOPPING

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"We're in North Carolina. It's hard to find really fabulous stuff here," Jernigen said.

Kasarda said big-box stores didn't necessarily profit this year because although they sold more items, they did so at drastically reduced prices.

He said customers — especially the working poor — were drawn to big-box stores by exclusive sales.

Bonna Bittles, an assistant manager at the Wal-Mart at New Hope Commons in Durham, said her store saw an increase in sales, especially of electronics and video game systems, on Black Friday from last year.

Chris Estes, operations manager at Best Buy at New Hope Commons, said the store had comparable sales to previous years. Personal computers, laptops and DVDs were especially quick to leave shelves, he said.

Kasarda said it's too early to tell if this burst of consumer spending will last the entire holiday season. He said that will depend on stores' willingness to slash prices and consumers' spending money.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.