

## 'European govts provided intelligence on Iraq'

AFP, London

Two foreign intelligence services, thought to be those of France and Italy, supplied Britain with the information for its controversial claim that Saddam Hussein's Iraq had sought uranium from Africa, the Financial Times newspaper reported Monday.

Britain made the uranium claim in a dossier last September despite being told the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had "reservations" about its inclusion.

The paper said its information came from senior Whitehall sources.

US administration officials have criticised the inclusion of a reference to the nuclear claim in President George W. Bush's January 28 State of the Union Address and the nation, and pointed out that it had not been corroborated by Washington's intelligence network.

## Delhi won't send troops to Iraq

### US Senate okays bill to cut aid to India

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian government Monday announced it will not send troops to Iraq to join a stabilisation force, ending months of dithering on the politically-explosive issue.

The decision came after two hours of deliberations within the security cabinet headed by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The security cabinet suggested that troops could be deployed should the United Nations endorse such a force, Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha said.

"There were to be an explicit UN mandate for the purpose, the government of India could consider the deployment of our troops in Iraq," Sinha told reporters after the cabinet meeting ended.

"The government of India has given careful thought to the question of sending Indian troops to Iraq."

"India remains ready to respond to the urgent needs of the

Iraqi people for their stability, security, political progress and economic reconstruction," he said.

Vajpayee's cabinet, however, decided to contribute to the reconstruction of the war-wrecked nation.

"The government of India is ready to consider contributing to the reconstruction of infrastructure in Iraq... and other needs of the Iraqi people," Sinha said, reading out a statement.

The decision ends India's vacillation over a US request to send about 17,000 troops to join a stabilisation force in Iraq, where American soldiers are now under random attacks.

Though some of the prime minister's top aides had supported the US request, Vajpayee faced resistance from the opposition and members of his BJP-led coalition government, who argued that Indian troops must work only under the UN flag, not a US-British command.

IANS adds: The US Senate has unanimously backed a proposal to cut foreign aid to India and some other countries that owe New York city back payment of property taxes on their consulates or missions.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Charles Schumer, a Democrat from New York, is expected to move quickly through the House of Representatives to cut foreign aid by 110 per cent of the amount owed and leave the remaining funding intact.

The legislation comes in the wake of a lawsuit filed three months ago by the city against four foreign governments that owe over \$100 million in property taxes. The countries that reportedly owe taxes are India, Mongolia, Turkey, and the Philippines.

These nations contend they need not pay the taxes because of diplomatic immunity.

New York city alleges that these countries have been renting out

portions of their properties to staff members or private businesses. The Philippines, for example, leased space to Philippines Airlines, a bank and a restaurant. According to city law, that makes their property taxable.

The money these countries owe is huge. Turkey owes nearly \$70 million in property taxes and interest dating back to the 1980s, according to a report in Newsday, a daily published from New York city.

"New York city is still recovering from terrorist attacks, and we need every single tax dollar we are owed," Schumer said. "It's amazing how many of these consulates flout the law. Just because you work in the land of the free doesn't mean you get a free pass," he said.

As part of the city's tax exemption rules, consulates are required to file forms allowing the city to inspect their property in search of violations, but Schumer said some countries don't return the form.



PHOTO: AFP  
Iraqi soldiers of former president Saddam Hussein argue with US soldiers on Monday during a protest demanding payment of their first salaries in four months at a former Baghdad airport. Some 300 soldiers and officers took part in the tense stand off.

## 10 killed in fresh Kashmir violence

AFP, Srinagar

Five Islamic militants, three Indian security force personnel and two civilians were killed in a fresh spate of separatist-violence in Indian Kashmir, officials said Monday.

Panic gripped the busy Regal Chowk area of the summer capital Srinagar on Monday when suspected rebels opened fire at a security force patrol, killing a policeman and injuring a shop-keeper, police and witnesses said.

The shooting sparked panic in the bustling shopping area, with people seen running for cover fearing retaliation from the police.

In the village of Hapatnar in the northern Kupwara district Muslim rebels Monday ambushed an army patrol killing two soldiers, a police spokesman said.

Army reinforcements rushed to the village and launched a search operation.

Meanwhile, three militants were killed during a night-long clash with border guards in the central Kashmir district of Budgam, said Tirtha Acharya, spokesman for India's Border Security Force (BSF) in Srinagar, the Kashmiri summer capital.

He said all three were top ranking members of the hardline Jaish-e-Mohammad, including two

Pakistani nationals, with one of them allegedly working with the Pakistani army.

"Three BSF men were injured during the fighting," he added.

Three AK rifles, a radio set and a photograph of Osama bin Laden -- the main accused in the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States -- were recovered from the bodies of the slain rebels.

Photographs of the world's most wanted terrorist have been recovered in the past from rebels but officials have yet to establish any link between his al-Qaeda terrorist network and Muslim rebels fighting Indian rule in Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Indian troops shot dead two more rebels in the neighbouring district of Doda late Sunday during a cordon and search operation, police said.

In south Kashmir district of Anantnag a Muslim forest guard died during a cross-fire between rebels and security force personnel, while a 21-year-old Muslim woman was shot dead by suspected rebels, police said.

More than 38,000 people have died in Indian Kashmir since the eruption of an anti-Indian rebellion in the scenic Himalayan region in 1989. Separatists put the toll twice as high.

## 'Most Britons feel Blair misled them'

AFP, London

Two thirds of British voters feel Prime Minister Tony Blair misled them over the case for launching a war in Iraq, according to a poll in the Daily Mirror newspaper Monday.

Sixty-six per cent of those questioned in the ICM Research poll said the prime minister had misled them -- whether on purpose or not -- over the reasons for going to war.

Twenty seven per cent said they believed Blair knowingly misled the British people, while 39 per cent said the Prime Minister had misled them, but not knowingly.

Over a third, 35 per cent, said that their confidence in Blair had decreased as a result of his handling of the the confrontation with Iraq.

However the poll also showed that dissatisfaction with Blair's role in the Iraq war does not appear to have seriously dented his ruling Labour Party's chances of winning the next general election.

## Costs of Iraq occupation May reach \$ 100b

AFP, Washington

The cost of attacking and occupying Iraq is expected to reach 100 billion dollars by the end of next year, raising concerns that other military needs will go unmet, the Washington Post reported Sunday.

The war already has cost about 50 billion dollars, representing a 14-percent increase in military spending planned for this year, the daily said.

Administration officials concede that spending levels in Iraq are considerably higher than anticipated.

As the war began in March, Dov Zakheim, the Pentagon's chief financial officer, told the Post that post-combat operations were expected to cost about 2.2 billion dollars a month. By early June, he had adjusted that forecast to three billion a month, and costs could climb even higher, the Post said.

Defence experts worry that the cost of remaining in Iraq could hurt other military needs, such as the proposed transformation of the US military into a smaller, more rapidly deployed force.

## World leaders seek makeover for '3rd way'

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair and a host of world leaders will on Monday plot the future path of center-left politics in a bid to give the "Third Way" brand of the 1990s a much-needed makeover.

The summit comes as center-left governments battle growing public disillusionment with their achievements that has already ushered in the Right in some countries and is forcing Third Way leaders still in power to rethink their strategy aimed at marrying the best of capitalism and socialism.

It also brings together leaders from Western and Eastern Europe and Latin America who clashed over the Iraq war, at a time when politicians and the public are questioning the case made by Britain and America for attacking Baghdad.

Blair, who led his Labour Party to victory in 1997 on the back of the Third Way brand, is himself struggling to secure a route to an historic third term but is aware his cherished political project is in need of fresh momentum.



PHOTO: AFP  
Indian schoolboys make their way along a flooded street in Kolkata on Monday. The monsoon rain has flooded large areas in the north Indian state of Assam and flashed major connecting hill tracks of the north West Bengal districts.

## Top JI bomber escapes from Philippines jail

AFP, Manila

A top bomb-maker and Indonesian pointman for the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) terrorist network escaped from a Philippines prison on Monday, police said, dealing a major blow to Southeast Asia's war on terrorism.

Fathur Rohman Al-Ghozi, who is serving 17 years for possession of explosives, escaped from a cell inside the national police headquarters with two Filipino guerrillas from the Abu Sayyaf network, police said.

Al-Ghozi is one of the most senior operatives of JI ever to be caught by Asian law enforcement agencies.

His escape embarrassed and angered Philippines President Gloria Arroyo as she hosted Australian Prime Minister John Howard to discuss anti-terror initiatives earlier Monday.

## Prudence in N Korea watching

THE KOREA HERALD/ANN, Seoul

A recent series of media reports indicates that North Korea will imminently emerge as a nuclear power.

They included a New York Times article earlier this month which said American satellites had identified an advanced nuclear testing site in an area called Yongdeokdong where North Koreans are developing technology to make nuclear warheads small enough to fit atop their missiles.

The small nuclear weapons put Japan -- and naturally US troops stationed in the country -- at risk, the newspaper reported, quoting CIA sources.

In Seoul last week, Ko Young-koo, director of the National Intelligence Service, told National Assemblymen that North Korea is known to have carried out high explosive tests 70 times at Yongdeokdong near Yongbyon, since 1994. The conventional high explosive tests can be linked to nuclear weapons development as its detonation can set off the explosion of a plutonium device.

## Iraqi council starts work as WMD fallout dogs Bush

AFP, Baghdad

An appointed governing council has started work in Iraq, a landmark step toward rebuilding the country and preparing the ground for democratic elections as early as next year, as US officials sought to mute the fallout over Saddam Hussein's reputed arsenal of banned weapons.

The milestone meeting Monday of the 25-member council was the first of a national executive body since US-led forces wrenched Saddam's Baath Party regime from power in April and was hailed as a historic day for Iraq.

"There are defining moments in history and for Iraq today is definitely one of those," UN special representative Sergio Vieira de Mello said.

"Iraq is now back right where it belongs, at peace with itself and as

a full member of the community of nations."

Delegates representing Iraq's tapestry of Shiite, Sunni, Kurdish, Turkmen and Christian communities met in its new headquarters, the former ministry for military industry.

The council's first decision was to enshrine April 9 -- the day US tanks rumbled into Baghdad to herald the end of Saddam's rule -- as a national holiday, and rescind all those marking Baath Party anniversaries.

The meeting coincided with a major operation by US forces to wipe out remnants of the ousted regime and others blamed for a string of attacks on coalition troops.

The council was to hit the ground running, Iyad Allawi, from the Iraqi National Accord

Movement said, with meetings Monday to discuss council procedure.

Britain hailed the creation of the council as a major step on Iraq's road to democracy.

"This is a pivotal event for the people of Iraq. For the first time in decades Iraq will have an administration broadly representative of Iraq's diverse society," Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said.

"The people of Iraq have taken a momentous step towards the goal of an Iraq run by Iraqis for Iraqis."

The creation of the council was also a major win for the United Nations and Vieira de Mello, whose work helped put the world body in the thick of Iraqi politics.

## 19 killed as heavy rains lash Gujarat

IANS, Ahmedabad

Heavy rains in Gujarat have killed 19 people so far with five deaths being reported in the last two days.

Three of the 19 died of electrocution, said officials.

All the deaths have been reported from in and around Bharuch district in central Gujarat.

Large areas of the state, including the drought prone areas of Saurashtra and Kutch, have been receiving medium to heavy rains.

Several areas witnessed heavy rains Sunday, bringing life to a virtual standstill in many cities and towns.

Surat in South Gujarat recorded 68 mm rainfall.

The wet conditions are expected to continue with the weather office predicting heavy rains in the next 36 hours.

## US asks diplomats to leave Burundi

AFP, Washington

The United States on Sunday ordered its non-essential diplomats to leave Burundi and warned US citizens there to avoid the country amid increased fighting between government and rebel forces.

The State Department also said Americans already in Burundi should reconsider any plans to stay there as a Hutu rebel group resumed the worst assault on Bujumbura in 10 years of war "to alert the world" to the conflict.

"Due to intensified fighting between government and rebel forces, the Department of State has ordered the departure of non-emergency personnel at the US embassy in Burundi," it said.

"The department recommends that private American citizens in Burundi evaluate their personal security situation in light of the continuing fighting and consider departure while commercial flights remain available," it said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair (R) and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder greet whilst posing for photographers at the Progressive Governance Summit in Berkshire on Sunday. The summit on Sunday night was also attended by 12 other world leaders.