

Election to boost battle against Tamil Tigers

COLOMBO, Dec 22 : The re-election of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga is seen here as a vote to strengthen a military drive against Tiger rebels who tried to assassinate her on the eve of the polls, reports AFP.

Kumaratunga, 54, who narrowly escaped death in a Tamil Tiger bomb attack, appeared on national television a day before the vote and urged Sri Lankans to unite with her efforts to "wipe out terrorism."

Asian diplomats here said the election may have raised expectations of a tougher line against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels who were blamed for Saturday's attempt on Kumaratunga's life.

"The hard-line elements within the (majority) Sinhalese community had sided with her closer to the election," an Asian

diplomat noted. "They may expect the president to use military muscle against the Tigers."

Kumaratunga's campaign towards its final stages sent conflicting signals to the minority Tamils with her accepting some hard-line elements from the opposition. Results released Wednesday showed Tamils voted against her.

Political analysts noted that the president could now afford to take a tough stand on any issue because she is not risking her political career. Constitutionally her second term is also her last and she is debarred from contesting the presidency again.

"She will have to appease the electorate either by stepping up pressure on the Tigers militarily or politically," a Western diplomat said. "But the mood in the country does not seem to favour talks after the attempt

on her life."

Said radical newspaper editor Sunanda Deshapriya: "The president will lose credibility if she goes for talks without weakening the Tigers. This is a vote for war."

The Tamil Tigers had described her five-year rule as a "curse" on the minority community and that may have even helped to polarise some of the moderate Sinhalese votes in Kumaratunga's favour.

The surge of Tamil votes for Kumaratunga's main opponent Ranil Wickremesinghe was insufficient to offset the losses in majority Sinhalese areas. Wickremesinghe had advocated foreign-aided talks with the Tigers.

"Tigers by trying to assassinate the president may have actually helped her benefit from a sympathy vote too," an analyst

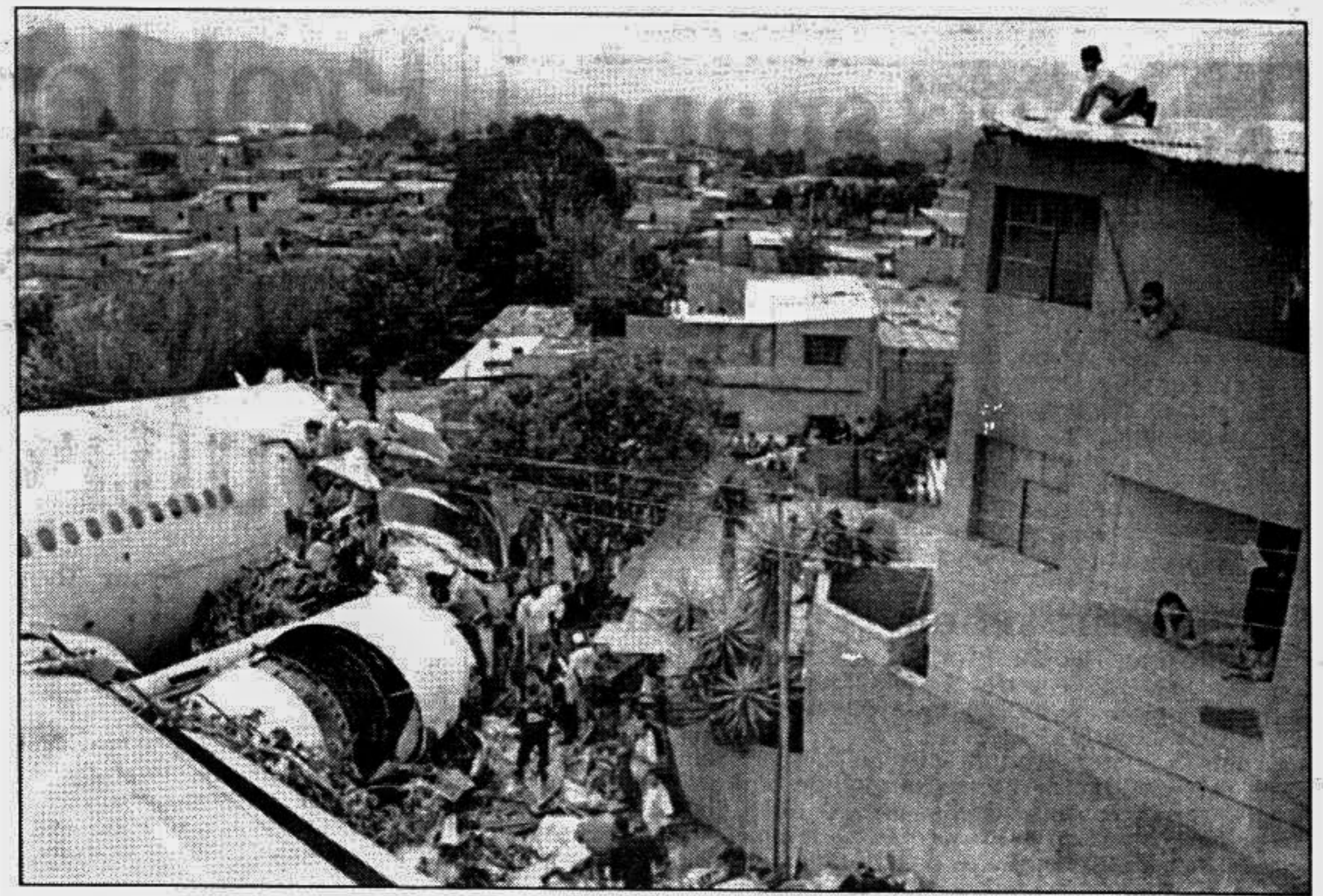
here said.

Kumaratunga came to power in 1994 promising peace and opened talks with the LTTE which eventually pulled out of a truce and returned to fighting in April 1995.

Kumaratunga then intensified the war against the rebels but failed to succeed with the stick where her carrot of political negotiations failed.

In August 1995, she unveiled a radical power-sharing plan widely called the "political package" which seeks to turn the country into a de facto federal state in exchange for ethnic peace. The Tigers rejected the plan.

Analysts say Kumaratunga's carrot-and-stick approach to the problem while offering a political deal and at the same time mounting military pressure on the rebels in the hope of getting them to the table had backfired.



Residents observe rescue operations before the crashed Cubana Airlines DC-10 plane Tuesday in Guatemala City. At least 26 people died when the Cuban state airliner overshoot a rain-slicked runway and crashed into nearby homes. The flight was carrying 298 people, including 16 crew members and 270 Guatemalan students who had been visiting Cuba. — AFP photo

BRIEFLY

Mozambique President reelected:

Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano has been re-elected and his party has won parliamentary elections, according to official results published Wednesday, AFP reports from Maputo.

The announcement of final official results was delayed on Monday in order to verify the results with the political parties involved, the National Elections Commission had said. The former rebel Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) had already called for a re-run before the final results were published, claiming that the vote had been rigged.

13 pirates to die in China: Thirteen pirates -- 12 Chinese and one Indonesian -- were sentenced to death on Wednesday for slaughtering 23 sailors in the worst ship hijacking in China in 50 years, court officials said, reports AFP.

The men were among 38 accused of hijacking the Hong Kong-owned "Changsheng" cargo ship on November 16, 1998, murdering the crew of 23 Chinese and throwing the bodies in the sea as they sailed down the coast from Shanghai. The Intermediate People's Court in the southern port of Shanwei in Guangdong province did not say when the executions would be carried out.

ULFA threatens to step up separatist campaign

GUWAHATI, India, Dec 22 : Separatist guerrillas in India's northeastern state of Assam today threatened to intensify their campaign for an independent homeland by uniting all rebel groups in the region, reports AFP.

The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) said it would enhance its "striking power" by strengthening the "armoury" of its militants and "lobby in international forums on matters pertaining to sovereignty and human rights violation" by Indian soldiers.

Two hostages freed in stand-off drama at German bank

AACHEN, Germany, Dec 22 : A man holding three people captive at a bank in the western city of Aachen since Monday released two of his hostages today, police said, reports AFP.

The hostage-taker was still holding one person.

Those released were a 30-year-old man and a 30-year-old woman.

The Bild newspaper, the most widely read daily in Germany, reported Wednesday that the hostage-taker was a German who apparently knew the bank well.

It identified the hostages as Rudolf B., 41, manager of the Koetter security firm based in Wuerstelen near Aachen, his 30-year-old secretary and a 30-year-old driver.

Bild said at least one of the hostages had a grenade attached to his or her neck.

Fresh rebel attempt to break out of Grozny, 30 killed

MOSCOW, Dec 22 : Around 30 Chechen rebels were killed overnight when they attempted once again to break Moscow's stranglehold on the capital Grozny, military officials said today, cited by Interfax news agency, reports AFP.

Some 200 guerrillas tried to break past Russian troops to the mountainous south, the officials said. There was no information about federal losses, they added.

Some 20 Chechen fighters were wiped out outside the Chechen capital in a similar failed assault, according to Moscow, Interfax said the attempted break-out had taken place on Monday night.

Around 100 "bandits" had

separated into two groups to attack federal troops simultaneously to the north and south of Grozny, General Viktor Kazantsev said late Tuesday from his base in Mozdok northern Ossetia, cited by ITAR-TASS.

"This attempt failed," he said, adding that only one Russian soldier had been wounded.

Russia pummels Grozny

Another report says, Russia today kept rebel defenders guessing when it would move on the Chechen capital Grozny, with one report saying an operation could begin within hours as artillery pummeled the ruined city.

The city's mayor, Lecha Dudaev, said federal forces overnight had unleashed the fiercest artillery barrage on Grozny in the past 10 days.

He said the blitz had begun late Tuesday and continued until daybreak. "Missiles were exploding all over the city," Dudaev said, cited by Interfax news agency.

Meanwhile, the AVN military news agency cited a high-ranking source at federal military headquarters as saying an assault to capture the city would begin shortly, perhaps even within a matter of hours.

The source said the Russian military had received orders to take control of Grozny nearly 10 days ago.

Russia-Belarus union treaty ratified in parliament

MOSCOW, Dec 22 : The Federation Council, upper house of parliament, on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved a Russia-Belarus union treaty that sets the stage for a possible merger between the two ex-Soviet states, reports AFP.

The council ratified the treaty, approved by the lower house earlier this month, in a 158-2 vote.

The union will create a Higher Council comprising the presidents, premiers, and speakers of the two countries, although its precise role and powers remain vague. A joint

action program on putting the treaty's provisions into practice was also signed.

Authoritarian Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, in strong favor of union with Russia, lamented during the treaty's December signature with his counterpart Boris Yeltsin that a true merger between the two may not happen for another decade.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said that Russia's union with Belarus, overwhelmingly approved by parliament Wednesday, strongly enhanced the country's military potential.

Taliban execute foreign 'spies' tracking Laden

DUBAI, Dec 22 : Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia have executed a Jordanian and a citizen of a Gulf state for spying on indicted terrorist Osama bin Laden, a newspaper reported today, says AFP.

Al-Hayat daily quoted Arab travellers returning from Afghanistan as sources for the report.

Six days earlier the London-based Arabic newspaper had reported that Jordanian Abu Al-Moutassim had been arrested by the Taliban on suspicion of spying on Bin Laden for a for-

eign power.

The Jordanian's wife had admitted in a letter to the Taliban that her husband was working for an unnamed intelligence service and pleaded for his life to be spared, Al-Hayat said.

Jordan announced last week that 13 Arab supporters of Bin Laden had been arrested in the kingdom after returning from Afghanistan where they received weapons training.

Washington said the arrests were linked to threats to bomb US targets.

India to introduce women's quota bill in parliament: PM

NEW DELHI, Dec 22 : A bill to reserve a third of the Indian parliament's seats for women will be introduced in the lower house on Thursday, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said today, reports AFP.

Vajpayee told reporters most of the political parties were in favour of an early introduction of the Women's Reservation Bill to set apart 33 percent of seats for women in parliament and provincial legislatures.

"The government will introduce the bill on Thursday," Vajpayee said.

Leaders of 25 political parties, including opposition leader Sonia Gandhi, met with Vajpayee on Wednesday in a bid to evolve a consensus on the bill.

"Socialist leaders had disrupted parliamentary proceedings on Tuesday demanding sub-quotas for lower-caste Hindu women and women from religious minorities."

But Vajpayee said the government would introduce the bill "in the present form."

"Our efforts to create consensus on the issue will continue," he added.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan said "no political party had opposed the women's reservation issue in principle ... most felt the bill should be introduced on Thursday."

A quota for women in federal and state assemblies was first mooted in 1996 but opposed by conservative male MPs.



India's main opposition party leader and Congress President Sonia Gandhi (L) talks with senior Congress Party leader Manmohan Singh at an all party meeting in Parliament House yesterday. — AFP photo

Barak holds secret meet with Arafat

JERUSALEM, Dec 22 : Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak held a secret meeting late Tuesday with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Ramallah in the West Bank, Israeli public radio reported, says AFP.

It was the first face-to-face meeting between the leaders in the Palestinian territories, the radio said. Up to now, all meetings between the two have taken place in Israeli-controlled areas.

Barak had postponed Saturday a summit with Arafat that was to have taken place Sunday in Jericho, in the West Bank. The premier later explained to his cabinet that he wanted to

show his displeasure at that meeting being announced precipitously by Palestinian officials.

He also said that he wanted the meeting to take place discreetly, away from the media spotlight.

The radio said that Barak had tried to reassure Arafat over the course of the Middle East peace process, soothing his fears that Israeli-Syrian negotiations, restarted last week after a four-year lapse, might undermine discussions with the Palestinians.

The radio said the Ramallah talks also covered the draft

framework accord determining the final status of the Palestinian territories which must be presented mid-February according to a previous agreement.

The accord framework is to address the future of Jewish settlements, Jerusalem, borders, Palestinian refugees, water and security, before the signing of a global accord in September next year.

The Palestinians accused Israel Monday of wanting to keep control of all the Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories and insisted that construction cease.

India not dictated to sign CTBT: FM

NEW DELHI, Dec 22 : India's Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh today said New Delhi was not being dictated to by any country to sign a global nuclear test ban treaty, reports AFP.

"The signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is not dictated by any country and it is the sovereign right of India," Singh told the lower house of parliament.

The United States, which slapped sanctions on India after its May 1998 nuclear tests, eased sanctions against 51 Indian companies last week and allowed them to source goods and technologies from Washington.

Singh said the lifting of the curbs was not linked to the signing of the CTBT. "There is no hidden agenda. The imposition of sanctions was unilateral and total lifting would contribute to improving the environment. It is a step in the right direction," he said.

"CTBT is totally separate

(issue) and not connected with it (lifting of sanctions)," Singh said.

India has been engaged in a dialogue with the United States on a nuclear arrangement, with Washington pushing New Delhi to sign the CTBT.

A senior US official told Indian journalists in Washington on Tuesday that New Delhi could have a minimum nuclear deterrent "at the level it chooses" even if it signed the CTBT.

The statement was seen by the Indian press as a first recognition by Washington of the Indian need for a nuclear deterrent.

The Indian External Affairs Ministry termed the US official remarks as "self-evident truths" and said "it has always been clear that India will determine and define its security requirements and nuclear deterrent."

Two Indian officials are this week in Washington for talks on non-proliferation issues to

prepare for another round of discussions in January between Singh and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.

US President Bill Clinton is also expected to visit India early next year.

India refuses to be pressured to sign the CTBT, saying it would first engage in building the right consensus to take steps in this direction.

The Indian government had meetings recently with the main parties to try to evolve a consensus.

New Delhi has criticised the treaty for being biased in favour of the five recognised nuclear powers -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

The CTBT was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 1996, but before it can enter into force it must be ratified by a list of 44 countries judged to have nuclear facilities.

R&H, Notice Inviting Tender

- Tender Notice No : 42/EE WD, Dhaka/1999-2000.
- Name of work : As per group list in the following table.

Group No	Name of work	Estimated cost	Amount of earnest money	Time for completion of work	Head of expenditure
(Ka)	Supply of parts for repairing Pajero Jeep Dhaka Metro Ka-1456 under R&H, Workshop Division, Dhaka	As per schedule	2% (two per cent) of the estimated cost	30 (thirty) days	T&R
(Kha)	Supply of materials for 210 HP Voibopenta Engine under R&H, Workshop Division, Dhaka	Do	Do	Do	Do
(Ga)	Supply of spare parts for repairing Pajero Jeep Dhaka Metro-Bha-3061 and Pajero Jeep Dhaka Metro-Ga 2251 (Petrol) under R&H, Workshop Division, Dhaka	Do	Do	Do	Do
(Gha)	Supply of materials for making fans for ferry under R&H, Workshop Division, Dhaka	Do	Do	Do	Do

- Eligibility of contractors : All classes of contractors enlisted with the R&H Department as per financial and regional capability.
- Offices where tender and schedule will be available : Workshop Division, Dhaka/Mymensingh/Equipment Control Division, Dhaka/Workshop Sub-Division, Dhaka during office hours. May be purchased at a cost of Taka 510/- including Bangladesh Form No 2908 (Non-refundable) till the last day of receiving tender.
- Officials and offices to receive tender and schedule : Superintending Engineer, R&H, Workshop Circle, Tejgaon, Dhaka/Executive Engineer, R&H, Workshop Division, Dhaka/Mymensingh, Executive Engineer, R&H, Equipment Control Division, Dhaka.
- Last date of selling tender : 28-12-99.
- Last date and time of receiving sealed tender : 29-12-99 till 12.00 Noon.
- Date and time of opening sealed tender : 2-01-2000 at 12-30 PM.
- Date of lottery (if necessary) : 2-01-2000 at 1-30 PM.

Md Abdus Sattar
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(Mechanical)
Workshop Division,
Tejgaon, Dhaka

DFP-28234-20/12
G-2150



US steps up its warning against int'l terrorism

WASHINGTON, Dec 22 : The United States stepped up its world-wide warning for possible anti-American terrorist attacks over the New Year saying that despite the arrests of suspected conspirators, such activities may be still being planned, reports AFP.

"The US government believes that terrorists may be planning to conduct attacks against official and non-official Americans in and around the New Year period," the State Department said in a statement late Tuesday.

It noted the recent arrests in Jordan of suspects believed to be affiliated with suspected Saudi terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden and said "intensive investigative work" had shown their alleged targets to be

"hotels, tour buses and tourist sites" in the Middle East country.

"We cannot rule out the possibility that attacks still may be planned for this and other parts of the world," the statement said.

On December 11 following the arrests in Jordan, the department issued a similar warning to US citizens but did not include specifics about what kinds of sites might be targets for possible attacks.

Since then, an Algerian man who officials believe may have ties to bin Laden was arrested after attempting to smuggle explosives in the state of Washington from Canada, further raising fears of potential attacks.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer (R&H) Workshop Division, Santahar, Bogra

R&H Auction Sale Notice

Auction Notice No 2 (two)/year 1999-2000 (2nd call)

This is for information of the members of the public that sealed tenders are invited for selling the goods mentioned below on 'as and where it is' basis. Description of the goods to be sold in auction is given below:

Name of goods	Location	Quantity	Earnest money
Russian generator (Dynamax, self starter, generator exite, LT switch board excetor without handle)	R&H Workshop Division, Santahar, Bogra compound	As per group list	At the rate of 10% (ten per cent) of the quoted cost in the forms of BD from any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favour of the Executive Engineer (R&H), Workshop Division, Santahar, Bogra, which can be exchanged at Santahar in Bogra.

The goods as stated can be inspected on all working days except government holidays during office hours with the permission of the Sub-Divisional Engineer (R&H), Workshop Sub-Division, Santahar, Bogra. Schedule can be purchased from the office of the undersigned, office of the Executive Engineer (R&H), Equipment Control Division, Bogra/Workshop Division, Rajshahi/Ferry Division, Bogra till 28-12-99 everyday during office hours except government holiday at a cost of Taka 100/- (one hundred) taka in cash per set.

Tenders will be received in the office of the Superintending Engineer (R&H), Workshop Circle, Bogra/Ferry Division, Bogra/Workshop Division, Rajshahi and in the office of the undersigned till 12-00 Noon 29-12-99 and box will be opened the same day at 12-30 PM before the tenderers present (those who will remain present).

All envelopes of tender auction will be opened on 04/01/2000 at 12-00 Noon after collecting all these before the tenderers present (those who will remain present).

Mir Aminul Islam
Executive Engineer (R&H)
Workshop Division, Santahar
Bogra

DFP-27983-15/12
G-2151