

## Inspectors prepare for 1st crucial test in Iraq

### UNSC urged to foil US attempt to attack Baghdad

AFP, Larnaca

A team of UN arms inspectors prepared to leave here Monday for the first inspection of Iraqi weapons sites seen as the litmus test of Baghdad's compliance with a UN mandate that could avoid another war.

"It is an absolutely crucial test, cooperation is figured into the success of weapons inspections, and this is what we will be playing close attention to," International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) spokesperson Melissa Fleming told AFP.

A total of 17 inspectors will leave on a UN-chartered Hercules C-130 plane from Larnaca airport at around 1.15 p.m. (1115 GMT) to begin the first probe of Iraq's weapons capabilities for four years.

They are scheduled to start their first inspections on Wednesday, but the site earmarked for the debut visit is a closely guarded secret.

"We know where it is, but we are not telling anyone where it is," Fleming said, adding, "unannounced inspections are the key to our mandate."

Iraq has strongly denied having any weapons of mass destruction and says the inspectors will find nothing incriminating.

The inspectors are operating on behalf of the IAEA and the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

They are equipped with a strong mandate under the UN Security Council's resolution 1441 to find the biological, chemical and nuclear weapons that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's regime is suspected of develop-

ing. "We do expect a different kind of cooperation this time round because a lack of cooperation does have serious consequences," Fleming said.

Frenchman Jacques Bauch will be leading the IAEA inspection team and Greek Demetrios Perricos will head the UNMOVIC group. Members of the teams come from Australia, Britain, Egypt, Finland, Russia and the United States.

Among them will be people who took part in the last inspections in Iraq during the late 1990s, to ensure the inspectors are not going in "cold", said Fleming.

Meanwhile, Iraq called on the Security Council Monday to foil any US and British attempt to attack Iraq by exploiting the tough terms of UN Resolution 1441, which calls for the country's disarmament.

"Members of the Security Council should assume their legal and moral responsibilities to exploit terms of the this twisted resolution to attack Iraq," said Ath-Thawra newspaper, mouthpiece of the ruling Baath party.

UN inspectors, due in Baghdad later Monday to search for evidence of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, come equipped with a tough new UN Security Council mandate, Resolution 1441, passed on November 8 that grants them the right to conduct no-holds barred inspections.



Women hold candles while taking part in a march on Monday in Kathmandu. Some 100 women activists marched for an end to violence against women.

## 50 Maoists killed in Nepal

PTI, Kathmandu

The security forces have killed at least 50 Maoist rebels during an intensified search and destroy operations carried out at Fulungiri area of Lamjung district, official sources said.

The security forces had encountered the armed rebels at the border of Gorkha and Lamjung districts, while they were on their way to attack Besishahar, the district headquarter of Lamjung, 250 km from Kathmandu, said State-run 'The Rising Nepal' quoting Defence Ministry sources.

The Maoist area commander of the district was among those killed during the gun battle, they said, adding many rebels were also injured during the counterattack.

An injured soldier has been rescued from the site and sent to local hospital for medical treatment, they said.

A huge amount of arms and ammunition was recovered from the site, as also strategic maps and plans to carry out attacks at various parts of the country.

Meanwhile, the ultras have released 16 policemen they had captured during attacks in Khalanga area of Jumla district a fortnight ago where over 100 Maoists and 37 security personnel were killed in the fighting. The policemen were released on condition of quitting their jobs.

Three ultras were killed in a retaliatory attack in Gupsheshwar area of Bhojpur district on Sunday, while they were installing electric trap against the security personnel, the sources said, adding two security personnel also sustained injuries.

The Maoists have killed a 35-year-old teacher of a local school at Bilaspur area of Kanchanpur district and have set fire on 15 village development committee buildings of Kapilvastu district in western Nepal.

Meanwhile, the violent Maoist insurgency in Nepal has killed thousands of people and devastated the economy but it is now threatening the Himalayan kingdom's environment in the form of its precious forests, officials say.

## 15 killed in twin attacks on Kashmir temples

AFP, Jammu

The death toll from attacks overnight by suspected Islamic militants on two adjoining Hindu temples in Indian Kashmir stood at 15 Monday, including 10 civilians, police said.

Two policemen and three rebels were also among the dead.

One militant attacked Raghunath Temple in Jammu, winter capital of Indian-administered Kashmir, and another attacked a nearby smaller Hindu shrine Sunday night, before Indian security forces killed them both.

Police said at least 48 people were injured in the encounter, which ended around 2:30 am Monday (2100 GMT Sunday) when the attacker in the smaller shrine was shot dead.

There was fresh firing in the area early Monday as police searched for other militants, witnesses said.

Indian Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was to visit the sites of the attacks later in the day.

A curfew came into effect in Jammu Monday, with no public transport available and schools and colleges closed.

Police said they had information that both militants had sneaked in from Pakistan to India and belonged to outlawed Lashkar-e-Taiba militant group.

Meanwhile, a surge in violence in Indian Kashmir marks a show of strength by Islamic rebels, leading Indian hardliners to blame the liberal stance of the troubled state's new government along with arch-rival Pakistan.

More than 50 people have died in Kashmir since Friday, in a flurry of attacks culminating in a siege of a Hindu temple late Sunday in which 14 people were killed.

The bloodshed marks a sudden turn of events.

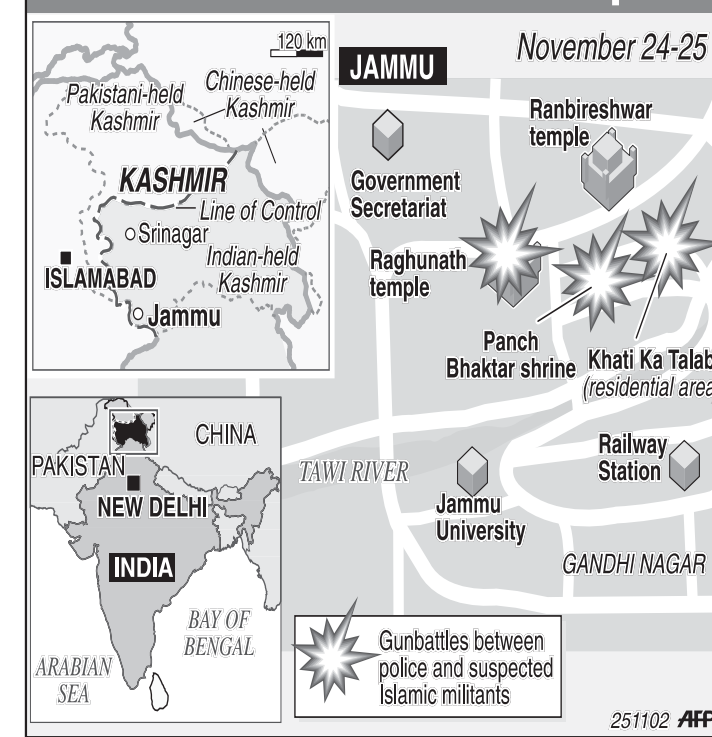
Rebels fighting to end Indian rule for 13 years in Kashmir had remained mostly silent after Mufti Mohammad Sayeed became the province's new leader November 2 on promises to end the violence through dialogue.

"The militants want to make it clear that nothing has changed since the new government took over," said Kashmir analyst Showket Ahmed.

"By launching such deadly attacks the militants have sent a message that they are the key to peace in the state," said another analyst and columnist, Sibte Siddiq.

Sayeed has vowed to bring a "healing touch" to Kashmir and has already begun setting free separatists.

## Rebels attack Hindu temples



Security forces take up a position at the Raghunath temple on Sunday in Jammu after gunmen stormed the temple and began shooting. Suspected Islamic rebels attacked the temple in the Kashmir's winter capital, sparking a fierce gunbattle with 10 civilians, 2 security personnel and 3 militants killed.

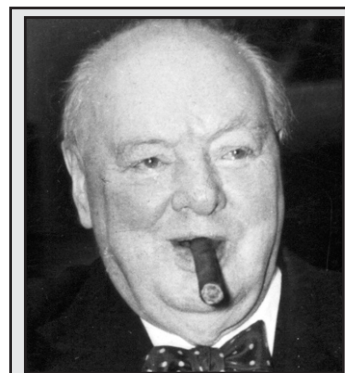
## Troops enforce curfew in Nigerian city

REUTERS, Kaduna

Warning shots rang out in the Nigerian city of Kaduna during the night as troops enforced a curfew after Christian-Muslim riots, sparked by plans for a Miss World pageant, killed at least 175 people.

After organisers scrapped plans to host the contest in Nigeria's capital Abuja on December 7 because of the deaths, a plane-load of relieved beauty queens arrived in London where it will now be held on the same date.

Anxiety gripped the mainly Muslim city on the fourth night of a curfew imposed to stop the rioting, which broke out last week after a newspaper enraged Muslims by saying the Prophet Muhammad would probably have married a Miss World contestant.



## Churchill greatest Briton of all time

AFP, London

World War II leader Winston Churchill was elected Sunday the "greatest Briton", beating out candidates including Princess Diana and John Lennon in a nationwide vote of more than one million people.

The wartime Conservative prime minister who told the people of Britain after coming to power in May 1940 he had "nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat" came in a clear first with 447,423 votes, 56,000 ahead of second-placed Isambard Kingdom Brunel, builder of the first transatlantic steam vessel.

Other top 10 finalists in the competition held by the BBC were William Shakespeare, Admiral Horatio Nelson, naturalist Charles Darwin, astronomer and physicist Isaac Newton, Elizabeth I and Oliver Cromwell.

## FBI must trace Saudi money trail of Sept 11 hijackers: Senators

REUTERS, Washington

US lawmakers urged the White House on Sunday to more aggressively investigate reports that Saudi Arabia funnelled money to two of the Sept. 11 hijackers, a charge denied by the kingdom, and whether the FBI failed to pursue the alleged ties.

With US investigations of the allegations ongoing, Democratic Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut criticised the Bush administration for not investigating the matter more fully. Republican Sen. John McCain of Arizona questioned the White House's policy toward Saudi Arabia, and Sen. Charles Schumer, a New York Democrat, demanded an independent investigation by the Justice Department's inspector general.

"This administration ought to be demanding a full public accounting

by the FBI and the CIA about what they know about Saudi involvement," Lieberman said on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Sen. Richard Shelby, an Alabama Republican and member of the US Senate Intelligence Committee, said the FBI "ought to relentlessly pursue these leads wherever they go."

"If it's the royal family, we need to put it out and the American people need to know," Shelby told NBC's "Meet the Press."

The lawmakers reacted strongly to the charges, first outlined by Newsweek magazine, which said payments reached the hijackers, possibly via two Saudi students living in the United States who had obtained them from an account in the name of Princess Haifa al-Faisal, wife of the Saudi ambassador to Washington.

## Haider's party plummets in Austrian polls

AP, Vienna

Austria's far right suffered crushing losses in general elections, but the party led by Joerg Haider still stood a good chance of renewing its governing coalition with the conservatives following that party's overwhelming win.

The conservative People's Party of Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel won over 42 percent of the vote in Sunday's elections, according to preliminary results released by the Interior Ministry.

## 27 die as bus falls into river in India

AFP, New Delhi

Twenty-seven people died when a bus plunged off a bridge into a river in India's Madhya Pradesh state, an official said Monday.

The bus was travelling in the Sidhi district when its tyre burst and it fell into the Sone river late Sunday, a senior district official told the Press Trust of India news agency.

The official said the river was almost dry but the high number of casualties resulted from the bus falling from a great height.

## Ex-colonel elected Ecuador President

AP, Quito

A populist former army colonel who led a coup in 2000 and has pledged to fight corruption was elected as Ecuador's sixth president in six years, despite concerns that some of his radical supporters would scare investors.

Lucio Gutierrez, 45, won 54.3 percent support in Sunday's runoff vote, topping the 45.7 gained by billionaire Alvaro Noboa, who counts among his friends several members of the Kennedy clan and Hollywood actors such as Charlton Heston.

Gutierrez's run for the presidency worried some Ecuadorians because of his support from a small Marxist party, radical Indian groups and leftist-led unions.

## 'US to address Pak nukes after Iraq'

AFP, Patna

The United States is expected to press harder on allegations Pakistan has exported nuclear equipment after the crisis with Iraq has passed, a pro-India US congressman said Monday.

Frank Pallone, on a visit to the eastern Indian state of Bihar, said he was pushing for Congress to invoke the 1976 Symington Amendment, which bans most US economic and military assistance to any country delivering or receiving nuclear material or technology.

"I am initiating a move in the US House of Representatives to invoke the Symington Amendment to stop military assistance to Pakistan for its clandestine nuclear program," Pallone told AFP in an interview.

"The US administration is seriously worried about the possibilities of Pakistani nuclear armory falling

in wrong hands and I assume the action will come once the Iraqi imbroglio is settled."

The New York Times reported last month that Pakistan had provided North Korea with equipment that may have included gas centrifuges to make weapons-grade uranium.

In return, the newspaper said, Pakistan got North Korean missiles to counter India's nuclear arsenal.

Pakistan has dismissed the reports as "baseless," and the US State Department has refused to comment.

The United States imposed sanctions on India and Pakistan after they carried out back-to-back nuclear tests in 1998. Most restrictions were lifted after the arch-rivals joined the US-led "coalition against terrorism" after the September 11 attacks last year.

Pallone, who helped found a pro-

India caucus in the House, said the United States viewed New Delhi as a power and was eager to expand trade.

"The US has understood the importance of India as a strategic partner and its tacit acquiescence to India as a nuclear power emanates from that," Pallone said.

"There are weaknesses in US policy toward Pakistan, jeopardising its relations with India, but they should be put behind in developing bilateral cooperation."

Pallone, a Democrat, represents a New Jersey district near New York City that has a large Indian-American community.

He was touring Bihar, India's poorest state, at the invitation of constituents who originated from the province. He is also due to visit New Delhi.

## Dissenting PPP MPs form their own party

AFP, Islamabad

Dissenters from former premier Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Monday launched a new splinter faction after lending crucial support to the army-backed prime minister Zafarullah Jamali.

"We have formed our own group," Makhdoom Faisal Saleh Hayat, a veteran PPP activist who led the rebels in voting for Jamali instead of the PPP's own candidate, told AFP.

Hayat has been handsomely rewarded for his defiance of the PPP with the powerful post of Interior Minister in the new cabinet, and was sworn in on Saturday.

The new party, defecting from the PPP Parliamentarians (PPPP) - which was formed to contest October 10 elections after Bhutto was banned from the poll - will be called PPPP-Patriot (PPPPP), its deputy secretary general Zaheer Abbas Khokhar said.

## Provincial govts sworn in as Pak power transfer continues

AFP, Islamabad

Legislatures in the key Pakistani provinces of Punjab and the Islamist-dominated North West Frontier Province (NWFP) were sworn in Monday, swinging the focus of the country's power transfer to the country's east and west.

The Punjab assembly, the country's largest with 371 seats, was sworn in by the army-backed Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid's Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, a former house speaker.

Elahi was appointed chief minister-designate by a cross-party meeting last week. He is expected to take up his post later in the week, giving the PML-Q control of Pakistan's most populous province.

In the NWFP capital Peshawar, 121 members of the 124-seat house took oath. The six-party Islamic alliance Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) took 68 provincial seats in a sweep of last month's polls in NWFP, giving them firm control of the all-important Afghan border province.

The MMA's Akram Durrani is expected to take up the chief minister slot by the end of the week.



Anti-US demonstrators stage a die-in protest in front of the Philippine armed forces headquarters in Manila on Monday. The protesters charge that a controversial Military Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) signed between the Philippines and the US last week could lead to the return of US bases in the country.