

## 134 nations drop death penalty

REUTERS, United Nations

A total of 134 countries have given up capital punishment, 10 more than had done so at the start of 2003, a campaigner against capital punishment reported on Friday.

Of the total, 81 have abolished the death penalty completely, 14 have abolished it for ordinary crimes, one — Russia — has pledged to abolish it, and six are observing moratoriums, the Rome-based organisation Hands Off Cain said.

Another 32 countries allow capital punishment but have in effect abolished it by not carrying out an execution for at least the past 10 years, the group said.

Since the start of 2003, Benin, Ghana, Malawi and Morocco had in effect abolished the practice by not executing anyone for at least 10 years while Kazakhstan and Tajikistan had put in place a legal moratorium on the practice, it said.



PHOTO: AFP  
Iraqi police gather at the site of a suicide car bomb at a police station outside Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone yesterday. At least seven people were killed and 40 wounded in the attack, a day after 26 people died in twin attacks in the capital, raising new fears that unrest will mar Iraq's January election.

## Hamas may back truce for election

BBC ONLINE

The militant Hamas group could consider suspending attacks against Israel as Palestinian elections approach, says leading figure Mahmoud al-Zahar.

But Zahar cautioned that any such suspension would be conditional on the halting of "aggression" by Israel.

In a speech, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said Israel would halt offensive military operations in Palestinian areas if calm prevailed.

Later, Israeli forces killed an Islamic Jihad member in a West Bank house raid.

Zahar, a Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, met interim Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas for talks before heading to reporters on Thursday evening.

He said Hamas would begin negotiations with officials from the Fatah movement, probably next

week, over halting attacks on Israel ahead of Palestinian elections on 9 January.

Zahar said: "Israel is responsible for all the violence in the area, and we are in a position of self-defence."

"If the Israelis stop their aggression against the Palestinian people, I think that through negotiations... we can reach a final agreement."

Hamas has called on its members to boycott the elections of a new leader of the Palestinian Authority, but according to Fatah officials who attended Thursday's meeting, Zahar demonstrated willingness to work with the new administration.

Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, has held several talks with Hamas leaders in an attempt to secure a ceasefire since the death of Yasser Arafat on 11 November.

In a speech to journalists on Thursday, Mr Sharon said Israel would halt offensive military operations in Palestinian areas if calm prevailed.

## 5 blasts hit Madrid service stations

AFP, Madrid

Five bombs went off at Madrid service stations Friday, causing no injuries but snarling traffic on the eve of a holiday weekend, in what authorities said was likely the work of Basque separatist group ETA.

Spanish Interior Minister Jose Antonio Alonso said "everything points to ETA" in the first attacks to hit the Spanish capital since the March 11 train bombings earlier this year, which killed 191 and injured nearly 2,000.

The low-intensity blasts went off at nearly the same time in the early evening shortly after a caller to the Basque newspaper Gara, claiming to represent the militant separatist group, warned the attacks were imminent.

Alonso told a news conference the bombs hit the gas stations along main roads leading out of the capital. The service stations were evacuated before the blasts, no one was hurt and there was no damage, he said.

## Putin calls US policy 'dictatorial'

REUTERS, New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin accused the United States on Friday of pursuing a dictatorial foreign policy and said mounting violence could derail progress toward bringing peace and democracy to Iraq.

Putin also criticised the West for setting double standards on terrorism, pursuing Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan and Iraq while giving refuge to "terrorists" demanding Chechnya's independence from Russia.

The Kremlin leader's tough remarks came on a visit to former Cold War ally India, where he and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh issued a joint call for greater cooperation in stabilizing and rebuilding Iraq.

Unilateralism increased risks that weapons of mass destruction might fall into the hands of terrorists, and would stoke regional conflicts, Putin said in a hard-hitting speech to an invited audience.

## BJP says no to new law to replace Pota

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

India's opposition parties Friday disapproved new legislation to replace a controversial anti-terror law that was enacted by the previous government, saying it was adequate for the purpose.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance opposition moved a statutory resolution disapproving the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Pota) repeal ordinance, promulgated earlier this year.

Though the new Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill 2004, introduced in the Lok Sabha Thursday, was listed for consideration and passing, the house began its discussion on the motion of disapproval.

While the opposition argued that POTA was the appropriate law to deal with the terrorist activities in the country, the Congress-led ruling coalition pointed out that the law has largely been misused to "frame" the minorities.

## Ukraine parliament works on revote law

Runoff election on Dec 26

AP, Kiev

Ukraine's Parliament prepared for a marathon weekend session to pass legislation needed to hold a rerun of a presidential runoff election, a revote ordered by the Supreme Court in a major victory for opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko.

The court on Friday threw out the official results of last month's runoff between Yushchenko and his Kremlin-backed rival, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich, ruling that a revote must be held on Dec. 26. The opposition had claimed the runoff was rigged in favor of Yanukovich, and Western nations refused to recognise the results.

Yushchenko's supporters in Parliament planned to push for changes in the election law in hopes of preventing vote fraud and in the membership of the 15-member

Central Election Commission.

The legislature was also expected to demand that President Leonid Kuchma fire Yanukovich and appoint a new Cabinet following a no-confidence vote earlier this week, parliamentary speaker Volodymyr Lytvyn said late Friday.

Friday's court ruling sparked jubilation in the streets of Kiev, with a massive crowd of Yushchenko backers chanting his name, blowing horns and waving balloons and orange flags his campaign color.

"We have proven that we are a nation that could defend our choice," Yushchenko told his supporters gathered at Independence Square, the epicenter of the opposition protests. "We have changed the nation in the last 12 days. These are different people, they are now citizens."

Yushchenko scheduled another rally for Saturday, urging his sup-

porters not to abandon their demonstration in the square until the government is fired, the Election Commission replaced and a date formally set for new elections by the election commission and Parliament.

The Supreme Court found the runoff was distorted by abuses in pro-Yanukovich regions such as tampering with voters' lists and people voting more than once. It concluded that "the violation of the principles of the election law ... make it unable to determine the voters' will."

The court's decision was a sharp rebuke to Kuchma, who had appointed Yanukovich as his successor, and a slap to Russian President Vladimir Putin, who had strongly supported Yanukovich, fearing Ukraine would tilt further to the West under Yushchenko.

## Moscow now backs India's UNSC berth with veto power

PTI, New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin has clarified that India should have veto powers as a permanent member in an expanded UN Security Council, External Affairs Ministry spokesman said yesterday.

In his meeting today with Vice President Bhaishri Singh Shekhawat and Leader of the Opposition LK Advani, President Putin categorically rejected the interpretation given by some newspaper reports on his remarks on Friday about veto powers in an expanded Security Council.

He said Putin had emphasised the need of retaining the instrument of veto as a means of ensuring the effectiveness of the UN Security Council.

In extending full support to India's candidature, Putin felt that India, as a new member should have the full rights of permanent membership, including the right of veto, the spokesman said.

## 'Pakistan has broken back of al-Qaeda'

REUTERS, Mexico City

Pakistan has broken the back of al-Qaeda forces by capturing its "big wigs" even if Osama bin Laden is still at large, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said on Friday.

On a visit to Mexico, Musharraf defended his country's record in the US-led war on terror and said Pakistan had arrested 600 al-Qaeda militants since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

al-Qaeda militants, who Washington holds responsible for the attacks, fled to Pakistan after US-led forces entered Afghanistan in late 2001.

Many are thought to have taken shelter in Pakistani tribal regions near the Afghan border, or have slipped into major cities after fleeing the US hunt for them in Afghanistan.

"We have sorted them out in the cities; all the big wigs of al-Qaeda caught by Pakistan alone," Musharraf said.

"So anyone who thinks that Pakistan is not doing anything on terrorism: if Pakistan is not doing anything, then no one in the world is doing anything," Musharraf said.

"All the big names: who caught them? Pakistan caught them, 600 of them."

The Pakistani president said his country had crushed al-Qaeda's operational and logistics bases. "They are on the run in small pockets. We have broken their back in Pakistan."

The United States recognizes Pakistan as a key ally in its war on terror against al-Qaeda and its leader bin Laden who is believed to be hiding in a remote part of Pakistan or in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Pakistani officials say they do not believe Washington's most wanted man is in Pakistan.

Musharraf was in Mexico to meet President Vicente Fox and business leaders to promote trade.

## Bush to urge Congress for passing 9/11 bill

AP, Washington

President Bush will make a final appeal to Congress to find a way to pass legislation before the end of the year that would make the Sept. 11 commission's terror-fighting recommendations law, White House officials said Friday.

Bush plans to send a letter to congressional leaders outlining his wishes on stalled legislation to create a national intelligence director position to coordinate the nation's spy agencies and enact other anti-terror measures. The House and Senate return next week and will take a last stab at getting a solution.

Congressional aides said the White House has told them the letter would not be available on Friday.

House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., refused to bring a House-Senate compromise up for a vote two weeks ago after two House chairmen, GOP Reps. Duncan Hunter and James Sensenbrenner, opposed the solution.



PHOTO: AP  
A photo found posted on a commercial photo-sharing website operated by a woman who said her husband brought the photos from Iraq after his tour of duty appears to show prisoners in the back of a truck with a foot atop one of the detainees. The Navy SEALs have launched a criminal investigation into photographs that appear to show commandos in Iraq sitting on hooded and handcuffed detainees, and photos of what appear to be bloodied prisoners, one with a gun to his head.

## US probes new Iraqi prison abuse photos

AP, Coronado

The US military has launched a criminal investigation into photographs that appear to show Navy SEALs in Iraq sitting on hooded and handcuffed detainees, and photos of what appear to be bloodied prisoners, one with a gun to his head.

Some of the photos have date stamps suggesting they were taken in May 2003, which could make them the earliest evidence of possible abuse of prisoners in Iraq. The far more brutal practices photographed in Abu Ghraib prison occurred months later.

An Associated Press reporter found more than 40 of the pictures among hundreds in an album posted on a commercial photo-sharing Web site by a woman who said her husband brought them from Iraq after his tour of duty. It is unclear who took the pictures, which the Navy said it was investigating after the AP furnished copies to get comment for this story.

These and other photos found by the AP appear to show the immedi-

ate aftermath of raids on civilian homes. One man is lying on his back with a boot on his chest. A mug shot shows a man with an automatic weapon pointed at his head and a gloved thumb jabbed into his throat. In many photos, faces have been blacked out. What appears to be blood drips from the heads of some. A family huddles in a room in one photo and others show debris and upturned furniture.

"These photographs raise a number of important questions regarding the treatment of prisoners of war (PoWs) and detainees," Navy Cmdr. Jeff Bender, a spokesman for the Naval Special Warfare Command in Coronado, said in a written response to questions. "I can assure you that the matter will be thoroughly investigated."

The photos were turned over to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, which instructed the SEAL command to determine whether they show any serious crimes. Bender said Friday. That investigation will determine the identities of the troops and what they were doing in the photos.

## Colombia drug kingpin extradited to US

AP, Bogota

Drug kingpin Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela, wearing handcuffs and a bulletproof vest, flew late Friday aboard US government plane for trial in the United States, becoming the most powerful Colombian trafficker to ever be extradited to the United States.

A phalanx of helmeted police armed with assault rifles escorted the leader of the once-feared Cali drug cartel to the plane at a military airfield on the edge of Bogota. It took off into the night sky minutes later. Top American and Colombian authorities hailed the extradition.

"Every day judicial cooperation between our two countries is becoming more effective and more visible," Col. Oscar Naranjo, chief of Colombia's Judicial Police, told The Associated Press. "This means that the criminals will not find any sanctuary to evade justice."

US Attorney General John Ashcroft said: "Those who violate federal drug laws should never believe that drug trafficking from outside our borders puts them beyond the reach of justice ... Rodriguez-Orejuela will now stand trial for his actions."



PHOTO: REUTERS  
Filipino typhoon survivors get free cans of biscuits as they ride on a truck going to an evacuation center in Real town in Quezon province yesterday. Weather improved in the Philippines yesterday after four heavy storms in two weeks, helping rescuers reach thousands cut off by landslides and floods, but supplies were short and fears of disease were spreading.

**Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO)**  
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- Sealed bids are hereby invited from local bona fide suppliers/manufacturers for Supply of 230V, Single Phase, 2-Wire, 10(40) A (Horse Current), Electro-Mechanical KWh Meter in One-Envelope System.
- The Bid Documents will be available for selling during office hours from December 6, 2004 to January 02, 2005 at the office of the Manager (Finance & Accounts), DESCO on submission of a written application and upon payment of non-refundable fee of Tk.1,000.00 (Taka One Thousand) only in the form of Pay Order/ Demand Draft from any scheduled Bank in Bangladesh in favor of "Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO)".
- The bid shall accompany a fixed Bid security of Tk. 2,00,000.00 (Taka Two Lac) and shall be enclosed in the Bid. The bid security shall be submitted in the form of Pay Order/ Demand Draft/ Bank Guarantee in favour of "Dhaka Electric Supply Company Ltd. (DESCO)" issued from any Scheduled Bank in Bangladesh.
- Bids will be received at the office of the Company Secretary, (DESCO) at House # 3, Road # 24, Block # K, Banani Model Town, Dhaka-1213 up to 12.00 Noon on January 04, 2005. The bids shall be opened on the same day at 12.30 hours in the presence of bidders representative, if any.
- Bids submitted by a joint venture of two or more firms shall comply with the requirements as detailed in the bid document.
- DESCO authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the bids without assigning any reason whatsoever. Bids received through fax / telex / post/ courier / E-mail etc. will not be accepted.

Memo No. DESCO/CS/Local Tender/2004/6855  
Date: December 02, 2004

A.H.M. Nurul Huda  
Company Secretary

## US National Guard hiring recruiters

AP, Coriopolis

Increasing numbers of soldiers are deciding not to join the Army National Guard after they leave active duty, a trend so troubling that the Guard is hiring 1,400 new recruiters to reverse it.

The Guard's new recruiters, plus its 2,700 already on the job, will be aiming to get high schoolers and 20-somethings to sign up like they never have before.

In fiscal 2004, the Guard had expected 7,100 soldiers to sign up after active duty tours. Instead, only 2,900 did, not even half. As a result, what's supposed to be a 350,000-member organization had just 342,918 soldiers when the year closed out on Sept. 30.

"If a soldier is near the end of their term of service and looking to stabilize their life, they know the likelihood is they're going to be deployed if they join the Guard," said Lt. Col. Mike Milford, spokesman for the Guard's headquarters in Arlington, Va.

In Pennsylvania, recruiters are enlisting just 200 of the 300 soldiers statewide they must sign up every month to keep the Pennsylvania Army National Guard 16,000 soldiers strong. Right now, according to spokesman Lt. Col. Chris Cleaver, it has 14,982.

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