

# Blair hopes all Iraqis will take part in polls

British PM visits Baghdad as US air strike kills 6, Iraq unveils polling day plan

AFP, Baghdad

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on a surprise visit to Baghdad yesterday, said he hoped all Iraqis would take part in next month's elections, describing the situation in the country as a "battle between democracy and terror."

"I hope it goes ahead on an inclusive basis," he said at a joint press conference with interim prime minister Iyad Allawi.

But Blair, whose visit was kept secret until his arrival in the Iraqi capital because of security concerns, acknowledged that violence would continue both before and after the January 30 elections.

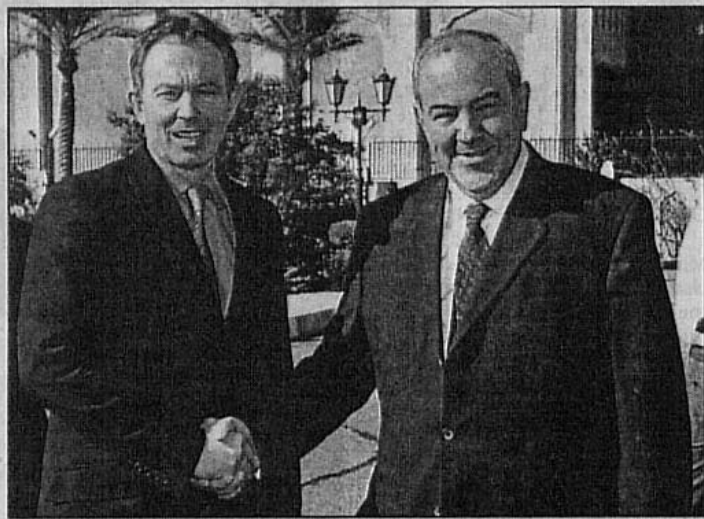
"There are major problems -- but holding the elections will have its own impetus towards greater security," Blair said.

"I think that everyone understands there will be violence that will continue even after the election... On the other hand we will have a very clear expression of democratic will."

Blair staunchly defended the US and British-led stewardship of Iraq since their forces ousted Saddam Hussein in April 2003, unleashing a torrent of violence on the country.

Blair lashed out at those who blame the violence on the US-led forces and not the insurgency, saying the situation was a "battle between democracy and terror."

An US air strike killed six people and wounded 10 in the western Iraqi town of Hit overnight, the head of



British Prime Minister Tony Blair (L) shakes hands with Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi in Baghdad yesterday.

the local hospital said yesterday.

The strike left six dead and 10 others wounded, Dr Nazzar al-Kubaisi of Hit general hospital told AFP. "The toll is higher than this but we received only this number."

Iraq's electoral commission yesterday announced the polling day timetable of the landmark January 30 elections as well as measures for ensuring a fair and transparent vote.

"Voting time will be over 10 hours, beginning at 7:00 am (0400 GMT) and ending at 5:00 pm (1400 GMT)," commission spokesman Farid Ayar in a statement.

Counting will be done in the 7,000-odd polling stations themselves, a move Ayar justified on security grounds, saying it was easier to protect the stations than vehicles carrying ballot boxes elsewhere for counting.

Members of different groups and political parties will be allowed to observe both the vote and the count in the hope of ensuring transparency, said Ayar.

Ballot boxes for the 275 National Assembly members, the Kurdish autonomous region's 111 seats and the 18 provincial councils would all have different colours.

## 50 killed in Peru bus crash

AP, AFP, Lima

A passenger bus careened off a mountain road in Peru and plunged into a jungle river, killing 50 people and injuring 15 others, police said.

The accident occurred on Sunday in the Andean jungle, 346km northeast of the capital, officer Juan Siu Gomez said on Monday via telephone from Aguaytia, near the crash site.

The bus was headed from Lima to the jungle town of Pucallpa, about 483km to the northeast, when it crashed, police said. There were no foreign passengers on board. Police Capt Omar Martin said from Pucallpa that the number of dead reached 49 after rescue workers pulled victims from the bus, which was submerged in the Yurac River.

## Bush will push for guest worker plan

REUTERS, Washington

President Bush said flatly on Monday that America's immigration system is not working and that in his new term he would push for a temporary guest worker programme.

At a news conference, Bush spoke at length about US immigration problems. Last January he proposed allowing some of the estimated 8 million to 10 million illegal immigrants in the United States to gain legal work visas for at least six years.

But the US Congress did not pass the plan. Some in Bush's own Republican Party oppose concessions to illegal immigrants and would like to see restrictions placed on legal immigration as well.

## India deploys spy drones in Kashmir

AFP, New Delhi

The Indian army has deployed for the first time Israeli-built spy planes to track Kashmiri guerrillas, officials said yesterday.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) were first used over the Kishtwar mountain heights in southern Kashmir on December 17, two days after insurgents raided an arms dump in the region's Singpora town, they said.

"We conducted sorties over two days and the data we downloaded from the UAV were vital," a senior official from the army's aviation wings said in New Delhi.

The drones, fitted with high-powered cameras, flew for several hours on each sortie.

"The drones failed to detect enemy movement but returned with

very valuable information for our mappers," he said, adding that the UAVs were after Lashkar-e-Taiba guerrillas suspected to be behind the arms raid.

India in 1999 used French-built Mirage 2000s and Russian MiG jets to bombard militants occupying Kashmir's strategic Kargil peaks, escalating a skirmish which resulted in the deaths of 1,000 combatants on both sides.

"But we are keeping our drones well within Indian territory and if the sorties pay us dividends then we will continue to use them in other parts of Kashmir as well," said the official, who asked not to be named.

India in recent years has developed close military ties with Israel which, besides the UAVs, has agreed to sell it three Phalcon airborne early warning systems.

## PRE-POLLS CASH HANDOUTS

## EC gets tough against Laloo, his party

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

A key member of Indian government and colourful politician Laloo Prasad Yadav finds himself in trouble after the country's Election Commission filed an FIR against him on charges of bribery ahead of fresh assembly polls in his home state of Bihar.

Taking a tough stand, the Election Commission also issued a show cause notice to Railway Minister Prasad's party Rashtriya Janata Dal, which rules Bihar, asking why it should not be de-recognised for alleged violation of the model code of conduct for elections.

The polls watchdog had on

Friday last announced the schedule for assembly elections in Bihar and two other states Jharkhand and Haryana to be held in next February following expiry of tenure of legislatures there. Under Indian laws, the model code of conduct comes into effect with the Commission's announcement of polls schedule.

Taking suo moto notice of media reports on alleged distribution of money by Laloo Prasad to some people in a village in Bihar on Saturday last, the Election Commission went into a huddle Monday afternoon and came out with the decision to file an FIR against him soon after.

## Fresh prison abuse allegations hit US

BBC ONLINE

Fresh allegations have emerged of serious mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners by US military personnel.

Memos between FBI officials detailing abuses, some dated after the Abu Ghraib jail scandal, were released as part of a lawsuit against the government.

Others allege serious abuse of inmates held at the Guantanamo Bay naval base, mostly captives from the Afghan war.

The American Civil Liberties Union brought the case to determine whether the US was mistreating prisoners.

ACLU executive director Anthony Romero said the documents raised grave questions about who was to blame for widespread detainee abuse.

"Top government officials can no longer hide from public scrutiny by

pointing the finger at a few low-ranking soldiers," he said.

Last week documents released for the case threw up fresh revelations of abuse in Iraq by US marines, 13 of whom have been convicted and some jailed.

The documents, which were obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, are mostly made up of communications between FBI agents concerned at seeing interrogation techniques they are prohibited from using in their own investigations.

One of the memorandums released on Monday provided the account of an agent who observed "serious physical abuses" in Iraq.

It was dated 24 June - two months after the extent of abuse at Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison was revealed - and was marked "urgent" and sent to FBI Director Robert Mueller.

## Chilean court okays Pinochet trial

REUTERS, Santiago

Murder charges against former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in a major human rights case can proceed, an appeals court said on Monday in an unprecedented ruling immediately appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Santiago Appeals Court denied a defence motion filed last week seeking to stop the case against 89-year-old retired Gen. Pinochet, who was still in the hospital after hospital officials said he suffered a mild stroke on Saturday.

Critics said the hospital stay was a Pinochet strategy to evade charges

of murder and kidnapping in the 1970s disappearances of 10 leftists under Operation Condor, a South American spy network aimed at eliminating political opponents to military leaders. "The injunction was rejected by three votes to zero, that means unanimously," Juan Escobar, one of the three judges on the appeals court, told reporters.

The only previous time a human rights case against Pinochet reached this stage in Chile's courts, the appeals court threw out the charges with a 2001 ruling that his mild dementia made him too ill to stand trial.

The Supreme Court upheld that ruling in 2002.



A Nepalese rickshaw rider pushes his tourist passenger along a road leading to the airport in Kathmandu yesterday on the second day of general strike called by Maoist rebels. A strike called by a pro-Maoist group in Nepal closed schools, shops and slowed transport in the Kathmandu valley, witnesses said.

## Most Americans want Rumsfeld to step down

AFP, Washington

A majority of Americans want Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to step down, according to a poll released Monday, as the Pentagon chief faces a barrage of criticism over his handling of the Iraq war.

The CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll shows 52 percent of Americans surveyed want Rumsfeld to resign, while only 36 percent say the embattled defence secretary should remain at the post he has held since 2001.

His approval rating has dropped from 71 percent in April 2003, when Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was toppled, to 41 percent in the new poll.

Rumsfeld has come under fire on a range of issues from prisoner abuse in Iraq to his alleged insensitivity to equipment problems plaguing US troops. He faced new heat after reports he used a machine to sign his condolence letters to families of soldiers killed in Iraq.

Despite mounting criticism from US lawmakers, including fellow Republicans, President George W. Bush defended Rumsfeld during a news conference Monday, saying the Pentagon chief was doing "a really fine job" and would stay on.



## VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

### PROMOTION OF DEVELOPMENT AND CONFIDENCE BUILDING IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Bangladesh seeks applications from female and male Bangladeshi nationals for the following positions under the "Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the Chittagong Hill Tracts" Project:

#### 1. Programme Officer (CHT Institutional Capacity Building):

Job Duration : 1 (one) year (renewable), Duty Station : Dhaka

#### Duties and Responsibilities:

The Programme Officer (CHT Institutional Capacity Building) will work under direct supervision of the Institution Capacity and Development Specialist and will be part of UNDP's Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) team. The main duties and responsibilities include: Contribute substantially in elaborate designing and implementation of the Institution Capacity Building (ICB) components of the Programme, including: development strategies; enhancing management systems and practices; human resource training; regional planning; institutional community outreach; information technology; and research, policy and advocacy; Develop and maintain relevant database; Provide necessary backstopping to the partner institutions; Liaise with the relevant GoB Ministries and institutions; Organize workshop/seminar/roundtable meetings; Provide specialized inputs and support in the maintenance and development of contents of CHTDF and LCG websites; Monitor the various Institutional Capacity Building related activities; Prepare monthly and quarterly reports, etc.

#### Qualifications:

- At least 3 to 5 years of experience in development programming, preferably in the field of institutional capacity building and/or human resource development; \*At least Masters degree in social science, development studies, management, or any other relevant field.

#### 2. Programme Officer (Confidence Building):

Job Duration : 1 (one) year (renewable); Duty Station : Dhaka

#### Duties and Responsibilities:

The Programme Officer (Confidence Building) will work under direct supervision of Policy Development & Confidence Building Specialist and will be part of UNDP's Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) team. The main duties and responsibilities include: Contribute substantially in elaborate designing and implementation of the following Confidence Building Initiatives: Dialogue & Partnership for Joint Actions, Study Tours on Innovative Development, Exchange Visits across the CHT, Support to GoB Initiative on Land, Piloting Community Managed Forestry in the CHT, Capacity Building of the Police Force in the CHT, Support to GoB Electoral Initiatives, Promotion of Cultural Diversity, Introducing Incentive Programmes, Support to GoB Initiatives on Returned Refugees/Ex-combatants and Internally Displaced Peoples; Develop and maintain relevant database; Provide necessary backstopping to the partners; Liaise with all institutional partners and other stakeholders; Facilitate 'dialogue' among and between various groups; Facilitate 'study tours'; Organize "Exchange visits"; Liaise with the relevant Ministries and institutions; Organize workshop/seminar/roundtable meetings; Assist in organizing periodic meetings of the Sub-group of the Local Consultative Group (LCG) on CHT; Monitor the various Confidence Building related activities, etc.

#### Qualifications:

- At least 3 to 5 years of experience in development programming, particularly in the field of policy development, dispute resolution and/or institutional capacity building; \*At least Masters degree in social science, development or any other relevant field.

#### 3. Programme Officer (CHT Region-wide Initiatives)

Job Duration : 1 (one) year (renewable), Duty Station : Dhaka

#### Duties and Responsibilities:

The Programme Officer (Region-wide Initiatives) will work under direct supervision of the Director/ Deputy Director of Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) and will be part of UNDP's CHTDF team. The main duties and responsibilities include: Contribute substantially in elaborate designing and implementation of the following region-wide initiatives: Youth Employment, Marketing Systems and Rural Infrastructure for CHT Products, Private Sector Investment, Environmental Protection and Management, Disaster Preparedness & Management, Critical Health Interventions and Support to Basic Education; Develop and maintain relevant database; Provide support to Director/ Deputy Director, CHTDF in the day to day operational matters; Provide necessary backstopping to the partners organizations/ NGOs; Collaborate and liaise with all institutional partners and other stakeholders; Facilitate dialogues; Liaise with the relevant Ministries and institutions; Organize workshop/seminar/roundtable meetings; Provide necessary inputs and support in the maintenance and development of contents of CHTDF and LCG websites; Monitor the various Region-wide Initiatives related activities, etc.

#### Qualifications:

- At least 3 to 5 years of experience in development programming, research and/ or enterprise development; \*At least Masters degree in business, social science, development or any other relevant field.

#### Common Qualifications (for all three positions):

- Professional understanding of the socio-economic and cultural context of the CHT and prior development/research work in/on the CHT are desirable; Ability to work independently and as well as in a team environment; Strong interpersonal communication skills; Strong MS Office skills; especially, MS Access and MS Excel skills; Fluency in verbal and written English, including professional level drafting and analytical skills. Proficiency in a language of the CHT and/or Chittagonian dialect is desirable, but not essential.

**Submission of applications:** Applications should be submitted in English and include a covering letter, a recent passport size photograph and the curriculum vitae. Applications should be addressed, quoting the post title on the envelope, to the Assistant Resident Representative (Human Resources), UNDP, GPO Box: 224, Dhaka, or delivered to the Deposit Box at the IDB Bhaban (Reception at the Ground Floor), E/8-A, Begum Rokeya Sharani, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka on or before 10th January 2005. Any attempt to influence the process of selection will result in automatic disqualification of the recommended applicant. UNDP is a non-smoking environment. Potential female candidates are encouraged to apply.

## Bush renews warning to Syria, Iran

AFP, Washington

President George W. Bush on Monday cautioned Iran and Syria not to interfere in Iraq's internal politics, saying the United States had a variety of ways to retaliate if the two countries failed to heed his warning.

The message is the second within a week from the US president to Tehran and Damascus to refrain from "meddling" in Iraq.

"When I said the other day that I expect these countries to honor the political process in Iraq without meddling, I meant it. And hopefully those governments heard what I said," Bush said at a news conference.

"We have sent messages to the Syrians in the past and we will continue to do so. We have tools at our disposal -- a variety of tools, ranging

from diplomatic tools to economic pressure," he said.

The president told reporters he has consulted with US military officials about whether there are former Saddam loyalists in Syria funneling money to insurgents in Iraq.

"My attitude is if there's any question that they're there, we ought to be working with the Syrian government to prevent them from either sending money and/or support of any kind," Bush said.

Iraqi authorities and US-led forces are battling to neutralize Iraq's deadly insurgency ahead of general elections next month -- the first multi-party polls in the country in half a century.

Baghdad and Washington frequently blame long-time foe Iran and the Baathist regime in Syria for supporting the unrest in Iraq.

## Ukraine's PM tries to recover after defeat in TV debate

AFP, Kiev

Ukraine's pro-Russia presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich scrambled to recover yesterday from blows dealt by his Western-leaning presidential rival in a televised debate just days before an election rematch.

Yanukovich, a prime minister of two years who has gone on leave during the campaign, denied he was trying to inflame divisive tendencies among his supporters ahead of his December 26 rematch with opposition leader Viktor Yushchenko.

"I will not tolerate attempts to divide Ukraine, to separate my people from their territory, their language or their religion," he told diplomats early Tuesday.

"The unity of our country, its independence and sovereignty is for me a supreme value that I will defend in no matter which posts and no matter what conditions," he said.

Yanukovich spoke a day after Yushchenko convincingly won their sole debate, showering Yanukovich with bruising blows ahead of the weekend election.



পাওয়ার গ্রীড কোম্পানী অব বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড  
POWER GRID COMPANY OF BANGLADESH LTD.  
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

## EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB) plans to lease out one pair of PGCB's Dhaka-Chittagong optical fiber network of around 250 km for telecommunication purposes. The parties interested to take lease are requested to submit an Expression of Interest in accordance with the guideline and requirements of the EOI Document.

The EOI Document is available from the date mentioned below for purchase at a price of Taka five thousand (Bangladesh currency) through demand draft or pay order in favour of Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Limited from the following office:

<b>Company Secretary</b>	Tel: 8850476, 9888589
Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Limited, Red Crescent Concord Tower (7 <sup>th</sup> Flr), 17 Mohakhali C/A, Dhaka -1212	9888970 Fax: 9888501 E-mail: pgcb@citecho.net, Website: www.pgcb.org

The EOI document will be sold until **15 February 2004 14:00 hrs** and to be submitted by the closing date as mentioned below:

**Closing Date: 16 February 2005 at 14:00 hours**

**Availability of EOI Document: from 19 December 2004**

Completed Expression of Interest and any requests for additional information or questions concerning the EOI Document are requested to be submitted to the address mentioned above.