



Palestinian president-elect Mahmud Abbas and his advisers offer Munajat (prayers) seeking divine blessings for late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat during the celebration of his victory in Ramallah Sunday. PLO chairman Mahmud Abbas officially declared elected president yesterday.

Abbas steps out of Arafat's shadow

Abbas victory stirs hope for ME peace

AFP, Ramallah

Mahmud Abbas, who spent the best part of five decades in Yasser Arafat's shadow, swept to an electoral triumph Sunday and was set to succeed the late leader as the president of the Palestinian Authority.

Abbas, who drew heavily on the historical leader's legacy during his campaign, dedicated his victory "to the memory of our martyred leader Yasser Arafat, as well as all the other martyrs, those who have been wounded as well the 11,000 prisoners behind bars."

"I will work to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people for they are a people who deserve our esteem, our respect and our loyalty," Abbas said after exit polls predicted a crushing victory.

His austere style contrasts with his charismatic predecessor, whose trademark keffiyeh and fiery speeches had made him one of the most recognisable international figures and a global symbol of resistance.

While Arafat was dismissed as an

absolute obstacle to peace by Israel, Abbas is likely to receive an invitation to talks with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in a matter of days after his victory is confirmed.

"The prime minister intends to meet the elected Palestinian president as soon as possible," a senior adviser to Sharon told AFP before voting had even ended.

Abbas for his part has also underlined his intention to jump-start the peace process which has been effectively stuck in a quagmire for the last four years.

"Mr Prime Minister Sharon was elected by his people. We have no right to ask for that to be changed... We have no other choice but to sit with him and we will do our best to convince him of Palestinian rights," he said.

The two men met on several occasions in 2003, including at the launch of the Middle East road map, a peace plan which targets the creation of a Palestinian state this year but has made essentially no progress since its launch at a conference in Jordan attended by US President George W. Bush.

REUTERS, Ramallah

The landslide victory of Mahmud Abbas in the Palestinian election to choose Yasser Arafat's successor raised hopes yesterday for reviving talks with Israel after years of bloodshed.

"A moderate man was elected, an intelligent man, an experienced man. Let's give him a chance," veteran Israeli peacemaker Shimon Peres told Israeli Army Radio.

"There is a new legitimate Palestinian leadership whose leaders definitely are against terror and war," Peres said.

In another sign of change in the Middle East, a new Israeli government led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon but with Peres' center-left Labour Party a main partner, was expected to take office later in the day.

It will restore Sharon's parlia-

mentary majority for the first time in six months and pursue a Gaza pull-out plan, uprooting Jewish settlers for the first time from some land where Palestinians want a state. But any optimism for a new era of diplomacy will still be vulnerable to militants defying Abbas' calls to end armed struggle. Meanwhile, neither Palestinians nor Israelis show room for compromise on fundamental issues behind decades of conflict.

Abbas, 69, claimed victory on Sunday after exit polls showed he had won 65 percent of the vote in the presidential election in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem -- as big a margin as any that had been expected.

Turnout looked healthy despite a boycott call by Islamic militants, strengthening his mandate for change after Arafat's death at the age of 75 on Nov. 11.

He had promised to seek peace

with Israel, but also to battle widespread corruption and revive the crumbling Palestinian Authority -- the legacy of four years of debilitating violence and Arafat's chaotic rule.

"Victory is beautiful but it will be more beautiful to fulfil the pledges," said Abbas, candidate of the dominant Fatah movement. "The smallest jihad (holy struggle) is over and the biggest jihad is ahead."

Israeli officials have said that Sharon, who accused Arafat of fomenting violence and shunned him for years, would seek a meeting with Abbas in days. But Abbas aides said he wanted assurances that it would be more than a photo opportunity.

"The main challenges are still ahead. Will he fight against terrorists and try to stop the bloody war against the state of Israel?" said Israeli Vice Premier Ehud Olmert.

Helicopter crash, aftershock rock tsunami aid effort

AFP, Banda Aceh

A US helicopter crashed and a strong aftershock struck off Indonesia's traumatised Sumatra island Monday as aid groups struggled to reach survivors of the tsunamis that killed more than 156,000 people around Asia, while rich countries promised debt relief.

At least four crew were injured when a US Navy Sea Hawk helicopter carrying aid crashed into a paddy field shortly after dawn as it flew from the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier moored off the Sumatra coast, officials said.

Navy relief operations on the northern tip of Sumatra, where more than 100,000 people were killed in last month's disaster, were briefly suspended following the crash, the cause of which was not immediately known.

US navy spokesman John Bernard said all 10 people on board survived and had been

returned to the Lincoln for medical attention.

Dozens of US military aircraft and vessels were rushed to Indonesia, the country worst affected by the December 26 catastrophe, to take part in one of the largest ever international humanitarian operations.

The helicopters have been a lifeline for many people trapped in isolated stretches of coastline obliterated by the full force of the onrushing water.

Despite the unprecedented aid effort, rescue workers fear some survivors in more isolated parts of Aceh may still be awaiting help.

The first United Nations team -- totalling five people -- arrived in the remote west coast town of Meulaboh on Sumatra two weeks after it was almost totally destroyed by the tsunami.

The UN, racing to prevent outbreaks of disease, said it was rushing vaccines to Aceh after confirming a

case of measles.

"Vaccinations against measles are a priority," said Shannon Strother of the UN's Children's Fund. "We have already one case of measles confirmed here."

In an ominous reminder of the trigger of the tragedy, a strong earthquake was recorded off Sumatra at 6:18 am (2218 GMT Sunday) close to the site of the massive quake that unleashed the tsunamis, the Hong Kong Observatory said.

The earthquake, with its epicentre initially determined to be at sea about 60 km southwest of Banda Aceh, the capital of Aceh province, was estimated to measure 6.2 on the Richter scale, the observatory said in a statement.

Meanwhile, with billions of dollars already promised in aid, French Finance Minister Herve Gaymard said the Paris Club of creditor nations had also agreed on a moratorium on debt repayments for countries hit by the tsunami.

Maoists release 300 abducted passengers

AFP, Kathmandu

Maoist rebels released 300 bus passengers Sunday several hours after abducting them for defying a blockade of the highway linking southeastern Nepal to India, a security source said.

The Maoists stopped seven buses on the Mahendra Highway and held the passengers for several hours before releasing them, the source said.

"Several hours after their abduction, the passengers were set free unharmed in the presence of local journalists, human rights activists and lawyers but the rebels kept all these buses," the source said.

Maoist rebels have organized frequent traffic blockades in the past three months on roads leading from the capital Kathmandu to disrupt commerce and force the government to negotiate on demands for a constituent assembly to redraft the country's constitution.

In December, Nepal's government invoked anti-hoarding and price control laws to stem rises in food and fuel prices to combat a traffic blockade of the capital.

Violence has also escalated ahead of a January 13 deadline set by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba for the Maoists to resume peace talks.

World's small islands press for early warning system after tsunami

AFP, Port Louis

A UN conference on small islands opened in Mauritius yesterday with a call to set up an early warning system in the wake of the tsunami disaster in Asia that left more than 156,000 dead.

"We meet here in Mauritius at a time of terrible death and destruction caused by the Asian tsunami two weeks ago," said UN official Anwarul Chowdhury as he opened a week-long UN conference on small islands.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is due to attend the conference later this week after touring the Maldives, a cluster of 1,192 low-lying islands scattered across the Indian Ocean that was hard hit by the December 26 tidal waves.

"His recent call for a global early warning system needs serious attention from this conference," said Chowdhury, the secretary-general of the meeting.

An early warning system, which makes use of seismic stations throughout the world to locate earthquakes capable of unleashing giant waves, is already in place for Pacific Ocean countries.

Providing such technology and expertise for Indian Ocean coun-

tries has been singled out as one of the urgent measures to be taken in the aftermath of the tsunami, which the United Nations has said is the worst natural disaster in its history.

"Many lives could have been saved had there been an appropriate early warning mechanism in the Indian Ocean," Paul Berenger, the prime minister of Mauritius, told the opening of the conference.

Berenger appealed to the leaders of small islands and their donor partners attending the conference to "seriously reflect on concrete recommendations regarding the setting up of early warning systems and methods of operating them."


World leaders at a summit in Jakarta last week called for setting up the early warning system and Thailand said it was ready to host the headquarters for the facility.

The new mechanism is likely to dominate talks next week at the UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe, Japan.

The tsunami unleashed by an earthquake off the Indonesian island of Sumatra has underscored the need to help islands cope with more powerful and frequent hurricanes, cyclones and storms that many experts see as the effects of climate change.



Anwarul K. Chowdhury, United Nations under secretary general and top representative, reads his opening remarks to the delegates of the International UN summit on the Developing Small Island States yesterday in Port Louis. The summit opened with a call to set up an early warning system to prevent a repeat of the tsunami disaster in Asia that left more than 156,000 dead.



MODERNISATION OF ISLAMIC FOUNDATION PRINTING PRESS (REVISED)
ISLAMIC FOUNDATION BANGLADESH
Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Ref: IF Press/4978/1/2003-04/385 Dated: 03-01-2005

Invitation for International Tender

Modernisation of Islamic Foundation Printing Press Project (Revised) invites International Tender in 02 (two) envelope system (one for technical and one for financial) for the supply installation, testing and commissioning of following machine from the bonafide manufacturer, their principal or their authorised agents as per specification, terms and conditions given in the prescribed tender documents.

Sl No	Description	Cost of tender document (non-refundable)	Earnest money (refundable)	Last date of sale of tender documents, time & date of receiving & dropping of tender, time & date of opening the tender
1.	Heavy duty Sheet-fed Bi-Color Convertible Perfector Offset Press	Tk 4000/- (four thousand)	Tk 5,10,000/- (five lac ten thousand)	Last date for sale of tender 19-02-2005, receiving/dropping 10.00 hrs to 12.00 hrs on 23-02-2005, tender opening at 2.00pm on 23-02-2005
2.	Sheet-fed Bi-Color Offset Press	Tk 3000/- (three thousand)	Tk 4,20,000/- (four lac twenty thousand)	-do-
3.	Demai Bi-Color Convertible Perfecting Offset Press	Tk 2,000/- (two thousand)	Tk 2,94,000/- (two lac ninety-four thousand)	-do-
4.	Knife Grinder	Tk 1,000/- (one thousand)	Tk 38,000/- (thirty-eight thousand)	-do-
5.	Hot Stamping	Tk 1,000/- (one thousand)	Tk 45,900/- (forty-five thousand nine hundred)	-do-

Complete set of tender documents may be purchased on submission of application by any tenderer on payment of cost of documents from the following addresses on all working days during office hours.

The tender documents will be available at the following offices:

- Sr Asst Secretary (Org), Ministry of Religious Affairs, Building No-6, Room No-1516, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.
- Asst. Director (Finance), Mosque Based Children Education and Mass Literacy Project, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh, Baitul Mukarram, Dhaka-1000.
- Secretary, Islamic Foundation, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.

Tenderers shall have to submit mentioned earnest money. Said earnest money must be submitted in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order available in any local scheduled bank in favour of the "Modernisation of Islamic Foundation Printing Press Project" along with their offers.

Tenders will be opened on the schedule date & time in presence of the tenderer/tenderers authorised representative (if any). Due to any unavoidable situation on the tender opening day, the same will be opened at the following working day at the same venue.

Any tenderer from abroad may also participate directly by post or through other services. In such case, the tender must reach at undersigned office within the schedule closing time.

No tender will be received through Fax or E-mail.

The authority reserves the right to reject/accept all or any of the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

A M Badruduza
Secretary
Islamic Foundation Bangladesh
Phone # 9119952



A US military personnel walks past a US Navy Seahawk helicopter which crashed on a rice field near a military air base in Banda Aceh yesterday. A US navy Seahawk helicopter bringing aid to victims of the tsunami disaster on Indonesia's Sumatra island crashed yesterday leaving four people slightly injured, aid officials said.

Iraqi insurgency gathers steam ahead of polls

AFP, Tikrit

Violence has spiked against Iraqi and US forces in the battleground provinces of north-central Iraq, with less than three weeks to go before landmark national elections.

US Army officers at their headquarters in Saddam Hussein's old palace in Tikrit describe an insurgency that has grown since last March despite the best efforts to win over the Iraqi people living in the northern provinces of Salahuddin, Diyala and Tammim, home to Iraq's alienated Sunni Muslims.

"What we've seen was the insurgency gather steam since last April and May. It probably would have gained steam a whole lot faster if it were not for courageous Iraqi National Guard and police standing

up for their country," said Major General John Batiste, commander of the First Infantry Division (1st ID).

Despite the insurgency's ability to recruit new members, Batiste believes the US Army is winning in Iraq. He points to the training of 11,000 Iraqi national guardsmen in his area of operations which he considers a success story.

"These things take time. You have to take a long view," Batiste said.

Batiste said Iraqi officials are determined to hold elections in the 1st ID provinces of Salahuddin, Diyala, Tammim and Sulaimaniyah and hope for a 50 percent turnout at the polls.

Security plans will rely on the Iraqi army and police, with US forces in a back-up role, Batiste said.

But his officers warned that

Moro rebels attack troops violating truce: 21 killed

AFP, Manila

Thirteen Muslim separatist rebels and eight government soldiers were killed yesterday as Muslim guerrillas attacked an army outpost in the southern Philippines, violating a two-year-old ceasefire.

Three soldiers were also abducted and two are still missing as the guerrillas from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) virtually overran the outpost in the town of Mamasapano in the southern island of Mindanao, military officials said.

It was not clear how the clashes would affect ongoing peace talks scheduled to resume early this year.

Two soldiers were also wounded in the attack that began late Sunday when some 100 MILF rebels, armed with mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, swooped on the outpost.

Colonel Franklin del Prado, spokesman of the Philippine Army's 6th Infantry Division in the area, said the slain soldiers all belonged to the battalion base attacked by the MILF.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Agricultural Extension

Project Implementation Wing

Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka-1215

Memo No. DAE/PIW/Engg./NCDP-8-2004/1269 Dated: 28-12-2004

Request for Expressions of Interest (EOI)

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a credit from Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the cost of North-West Crop Diversification Project (NCDP) and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this fund to payments under the contract for Conducting Farmers' Need Assessment (FNA) for NCDP.

The services include Conducting Farmers' Need Assessment (FNA) in the villages of 60 selected upazilas of 16 districts of Rajshahi division where small farmer groups are formed by the participating NGOs and engaged in the production of High Value Crops (HVCs). The scope of this FNA should include (but not limited to) Farmers' Training & Extension, Farmer Mobilization & Credit Support, Marketing Support, Gender Issues, Pilot Agribusiness Credit Line etc.

The Project Implementation Wing (PIW) now invites eligible applicants to indicate their interest in providing the services. Interested consultants are invited to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the following services.

- Brochures to be submitted by the applicants summarizing their facilities and areas of expertise.
- Descriptions of similar assignments.
- Experiences in similar operating conditions.
- Availability of appropriate experience and professional qualifications among applicants staff and resources to carry out the assignment, and
- Administrative strength and financial capability.

For further information if necessary, Project Director, NCDP, 6th Floor, Middle Building, Khamarbari, Farmgate, Dhaka may be consulted.

A consultant will be selected in accordance with the Public Procurement Regulations-2003 and Public Procurement Procedures issued by the GOB.

Expressions of interest shall be submitted in sealed envelope, delivered to the address of the undersigned shown above by clearly marked "Request for Expressions of Interest for FNA under NCDP" up to 11-30 AM on 30.01.2005.

DFP-31673-30/12/04

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Md Jamaluddin

Executive Engineer

Project Implementation Wing

Khamarbari, Dhaka