

## India, Israel to strengthen military ties

PTI, London

India and Israel have agreed to fulfil a number of bilateral equipment deals and conduct a joint air manoeuvre later this year as a mark of their burgeoning defence ties, a leading defence weekly has claimed.

The third joint working group at its meeting in Tel Aviv last December discussed New Delhi purchasing Israel Aircraft Industries Heron II medium-altitude, long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles and jointly extending the range of the Barak point defence system for the Indian Navy, the Jane's Defence Weekly, in its latest issue, said.

The two sides also agreed to hold joint exercises in which Israeli F-16 multi-role fighters would be pitted against India's Russian-made Sukhoi Su-30MKI multi-role fighters. The venue and schedule of the manoeuvres is yet to be disclosed.

The eight-member Indian delegation led by Defence Secretary Ajaik Vikram Singh met Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz and Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Defence Amos Yaron and allayed concerns that New Delhi's security relations with Tel Aviv would decline under the UPA government that assumed office in May last year, the report said.

## IRA denies hand in N Ireland bank raid

AFP, Belfast

The IRA, Northern Ireland's main Roman Catholic paramilitary group, issued a formal statement on Tuesday denying it was responsible for carrying out one of Britain's biggest-ever bank robberies.

Sources within the Irish Republican Army have previously rejected allegations that it carried out the raid, which took place in December, but the brief statement was the first official word from the group's leadership.

"The IRA has been accused of involvement in the recent Northern Bank robbery," it said. "We were not involved."

The statement was signed "P O'Neill", the pseudonym used for statements released by the IRA's Army Council, its leadership.

The daring heist at the Northern Bank on December 20, in which the families of two staff members were taken hostage, saw \$49.5 million stolen.



US soldiers and the Iraqi police secure the area close to debris from a vehicle in central Baghdad yesterday. Insurgents went on a six-car bomb rampage killing more than a dozen in attacks aimed at the Australian embassy and the nascent Iraqi security forces, days prior to the 30 January national elections.

## Global poll slams Bush leadership

BBC NEWS ONLINE

More than half of people surveyed in a BBC World Service poll say the re-election of US President George W Bush has made the world more dangerous.

Only three countries - India, Poland and the Philippines - out of 21 polled believed the world was now safer.

The survey found that 47% now viewed US influence in the world as largely negative and such unfavourable feelings extended towards Americans as a whole.

None of the countries polled supported contributing their troops to Iraq.

"This is quite a grim picture for the US," said Steven Kull, director of the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA), which carried out the poll with GlobeScan.

"Negative feelings about Bush are high and are generalising to the American people who re-elected him."

On average across all countries, 58% of people - and 16 out of 21 countries polled - said they believed Mr Bush's re-election to the White House made the world more dangerous.

Most negative feelings were

found in Western European, Latin American and Muslim countries.

They include traditional US allies such as Germany, France, Britain and Italy as well as neighbours Canada and Mexico.

The only European country to buck the trend was Poland, one of the new members of the European Union, which gave the thumbs up to both President Bush and the US.

Turkey topped the anti-Bush list, with 82% believing his re-election would be negative for global security.

The result is bad news for the president as Turkey is a US ally and the only Muslim member of Nato, says the BBC's Chris Morris in Brussels.

Other predominantly Muslim countries - Indonesia and Lebanon - were also high up the list.

But, any warmer feelings in Indonesia towards the US following its tsunami relief operations would not show up as the poll was carried out before the disaster struck, says the BBC's Dan Isaacs.

Anti-Bush sentiments also appeared to be strong in Latin America. Argentina, with 79%, and Brazil, with 78%, follow Turkey in the list.

## Abbas seeks to secure ceasefire

Palestinian forces to be deployed on Gaza border

AFP, Gaza City

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas was to hold talks with armed factions Wednesday in a bid to persuade them to end attacks on Israel, after the latest Hamas suicide bomb killed a Shin Beth security agent.

With Israel threatening its own large-scale invasion of the Gaza Strip unless attacks are halted, the head of national security also confirmed that Palestinian security forces would be deployed along the border in the next few days.

After holding talks with the Hamas leadership after he arrived in Gaza late Tuesday, Abbas was scheduled to meet with the representatives of other factions including Islamic Jihad on Wednesday.

Plans for roundtable talks with all the factions were however cancelled.

Hamas said Tuesday's two-hour meeting, which featured the movement's two top leaders in its Gaza stronghold, Mahmud Zahar and Ismail Haniya, took place in a "positive" atmosphere.

"We listened to Abu Mazen

(Abbas) about the issue of the ceasefire and the movement informed him that we will study this subject," Hamas spokesman Mushir al-Masri told AFP.

"The meeting was a positive one. We exchanged opinions and everyone was concerned that we reach an understanding to ensure the strength of our national unity."

A source who attended the meeting said that while a formal ceasefire may not be announced, he was hopeful that a "cooling down period" was on the cards.

Ziad Abu Amr, an independent Gaza MP and former minister who was instrumental in persuading the factions to agree a ceasefire in the summer of 2003, voiced confidence that an agreement could be reached.

"The meeting was a positive and serious one and we can be optimistic," Abu Amr told AFP.

Palestinian security forces will be deployed along the border between the Gaza Strip and Israel this week after newly elected leader Mahmud Abbas gave orders to prevent militant attacks, a top security official

said Wednesday.

"We have agreed to redeploy the joint Palestinian security forces inside the cities to ensure security," General Abdelrazeq al-Majaydeh told reporters after a meeting with Abbas in Gaza City.

"We also agreed that preparations will continue for national security forces to be redeployed along the border in the next two days to prevent the violations," Majaydeh, head of national security for the West Bank and Gaza, added.

The move comes after a suicide attack by the Islamic militant movement Hamas in the southern Gaza Strip in which an Israeli security agent was killed.

Other security sources said that joint units, which will be under the control of the national security council, would also be deployed inside the main Palestinian cities from Wednesday in a bid to limit the carrying of weapons on the streets.

Abbas has pledged to end what he calls the "armed chaos" on Palestinian streets where militants are often seen openly carrying firearms.

## Bush celebrates second term in office

AP, Washington

President Bush launched his inaugural celebrations on Tuesday by thanking two groups that played major roles in his election to a second term: the military that prosecuted the war in Iraq and his most ardent and generous political supporters.

On the first of four days of non-stop festivities that some have criticized as too extravagant amid war, deficits and natural disaster, the president and first lady Laura Bush crossed Washington into the evening to hobnob with soldiers, young Republicans and GOP bigwigs.

Bush takes the oath of office Thursday to begin his next four years in the White House.

Bush gave four speeches

throughout the day, but the centerpiece was a salute to the military. The more than two-hour extravaganza was held at a sports arena in downtown Washington, its seats only about half full with thousands of uniformed military and their families, including soldiers recuperating at a nearby Army hospital from wounds suffered in Iraq. The event was also piped to troops stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"As we prepare to celebrate our nation's 55th presidential inauguration, I can think of no better way to begin than by giving thanks for our freedom and those who make it possible," Bush said as he paid tribute to military personnel and families who have lost someone in war.

"With the election behind us, the

American people come together in unity to celebrate our freedom," he added. "A presidential inauguration is a testament to the power of democracy, a symbol of our confidence in the popular will and a sign of hope for freedom-loving people everywhere."

The salute, complete with pop stars and comics alongside somber documentaries, was meant to set the stage for the week's theme of celebrating freedom and honoring service. But inaugural planners and Bush aides also hoped the high-profile placement of the event at the head of the schedule would dispel talk that the festivities - which could cost more than \$50 million, with millions more in taxpayer dollars for security - should be toned down.

## American pleads guilty in oil-for-food scam

REUTERS, Washington

An Iraqi-American illegally acted as an agent for Iraq under Saddam Hussein and received millions of dollars worth of oil from the country's UN oil-for-food program, US court documents showed on Tuesday.

Samir Vincent, 64, a naturalized American citizen, pleaded guilty to four charges as part of a plea deal with the government, which is investigating whether US laws were violated in the \$64 billion oil-for-food program.

According to documents filed in the US District Court in New York, Vincent pleaded guilty to conspiring and acting as an unregistered agent of a foreign government, violating economic sanctions and income tax fraud violations.



A husband and wife waded through a flooded street with their belongings after a flash flood damaged their house in Jakarta yesterday.

## 'We will not tolerate abuse' Says Blair spokesman

AFP, London

Prime Minister Tony Blair has made it clear that Britain "will not tolerate abuse of any kind", his spokesman said Wednesday as a court martial continued of three British soldiers accused of mistreating Iraqi civilians.

"We will make it clear whenever we can, wherever we can, within the rules of procedure, that we will not tolerate abuse of any kind," the spokesman said.

He stressed that there was no evidence of any widespread abuse by British soldiers, and that the reputation of Britain's contingent in Iraq should be upheld.

"In general, we do not believe there is any evidence of systematic abuse within the army," he said. "What's important is that the activities of all those who served in Iraq should not be judged by allegations against a few and that it is the activities of the majority of the soldiers which should be recognized," he said.

Three British soldiers are facing court martial before a military tribunal in Germany, charged with offenses ranging from sexual acts, to



British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

prejudicing good military order.

Some 22 photographs have been released to the media by the court judge, taken by soldiers as souvenirs of the acts alleged carried out in May, 2003 at an aid storage depot known as the "bread basket" near Basra, southern Iraq.

Head of the British Army, General Sir Mike Jackson, has said he "con-

demns utterly" abuse, as three soldiers face charges of mistreating Iraqi civilians.

Sir Mike would not comment on the case directly, or on 22 photographs depicting the alleged abuse of Iraqi prisoners taken from the cameras of five servicemen, which were shown to the court.

But he stressed that of the 65,000 British troops who had served in Iraq only a "small number" had been accused of any mistreatment.

The general said the court martial's outcome would be studied to see if it raised any further issues for the army.

Sir Mike said: "I have every confidence in the military investigative and judicial system," he added.

The photographs include a picture of two naked Iraqi men simulating anal sex with their thumbs raised to the camera and a photograph of two Iraqi men simulating oral sex.

Defence counsel for Lt/Cpl Larkin, 30, from Oldham, Greater Manchester, told the court martial he had always admitted responsibility for the "unacceptable and mindless" assault, which he said had "brought shame on his proud regiment and his proud family".

## Iran warns US over military action

AFP, Tehran

Iran accused the United States Wednesday of trying to disrupt its nuclear negotiations with the European Union by evoking the threat of a military strike, and warned Washington it would respond to any "unwise measure."

"With reliance on enormous popular support, diplomatic capacity and full military capability, the Islamic Republic of Iran will firmly respond to any unwise measure or plan," foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said in a statement responding to "recent comments by US officials."

On Monday US President George W. Bush said he could not rule out a resort to military action if the United States failed to persuade Iran to abandon a nuclear energy programme it charges is a cover for developing the bomb.

US secretary of state-designate Condoleezza Rice also called Tuesday for world action to keep Iran from building nuclear weapons, and repeated a threat to haul the Islamic republic before the UN Security Council for sanctions.

"We see such moves as a psychological campaign and political pressure," Asefi said.

He said one of the aims of the US

administration was "not to help and encourage Europe to peacefully settle some disagreements through diplomacy and talks, but to disrupt the Iran-EU nuclear talks by pretending they are unsuccessful."

The EU's "big three" -- Britain, France and Germany -- have been spearheading diplomatic efforts with Iran and are in the midst of crucial talks aimed at finding a long-term solution that would ease international worries.

"We recommend the new American foreign minister avoids repeating past mistakes by reviewing America's wrong and unsuccessful policies of unilateralism and oppression," Asefi said of Rice.

"The United States of America has fallen into an abyss of several crises as a result of the wrong attitude of hard line neo-conservatives. There is no way out unless it reviews and corrects past mistakes."

The foreign ministry statement also followed a report in the New Yorker magazine Monday that US commandos had been operating inside Iran since mid-2004 to search out potential targets for attack -- something the magazine said could come as early as mid-2005.

The Pentagon said the report was "riddled with errors."

## International concert for tsunami aid

AFP, Bangkok

A star-studded cast of US and Asian pop stars will perform in a concert to raise donations for Asian tsunami victims, music video broadcaster MTV Networks Asia said Wednesday.

Americans Alicia Keys and Kelly Clarkson, Taiwanese rhythm and blues singer Jay Chou and Thailand's Tata Young are among the lineup for the "Asia Aid" show in Bangkok on February 3.

A taped performance by Jennifer Lopez as well as recorded messages from US rapper 50 Cent, Irish crooner Ronan Keating and Chinese actress Zhang Ziyi will also feature in the MTV show, which aims to garner contributions from its audience of more than 400 million households.

Viewers will be able to send in their donations via mobile phone text messages and the MTV website.

MTV announced earlier this

month it would turn its annual awards extravaganza, to be held in Bangkok, into a global benefit for tsunami victims called MTV Asia Aid.

"It's a way young people around the world can become engaged and help in the rebuilding effort as we found a lot of young people really wanted to help but didn't know how to go about it," MTV Networks Asia president Frank Brown told AFP Wednesday.

"The music industry at large also immediately understood that this could be a vehicle for them to bring attention to the need for aid in the recovery effort, so they were very supportive," he said.

Thai pop superstar Tata Young told AFP she had thrown her full support behind the event as she had travelled to the south on the day of the disaster to comfort her best friend, whose father had been killed

by the tsunami.

"It was crazy, everything was torn. It was a picture that you don't want to remember, but you have to remember all the losses and the little children who have lost their parents and who now need our help," said the singer.

Most of the proceeds will be given to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with donations collected in Thailand and India going to their respective government-linked funds.

The programme will air on all of MTV's global channels, but the network is also allowing international broadcasters to air it for free.

"MTV Asia Aid will help to maintain the world's attention on the devastation and loss that the tsunami has caused for millions of people," UNICEF deputy regional director Richard Bridle said in a statement.



A mourner places a flower before a large portrait of former Chinese Communist Party chief Zhao Ziyang in Hong Kong's Victoria Park yesterday. Zhao was mourned here where the late leader was adopted as a symbol of his own struggle for political change.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Executive Engineer

Nishindara, Bogra.

Memo No-LGED/EE-B/2004/3593

Dated: 23-12-04

## Invitation for Tender (IFT)

Tender Notice Number-17/2004-2005

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the eligible tenderers as defined in the tender documents for the undermentioned works as per terms and conditions stated below:

1. Name of project : GOB Maintenance.
2. Name of work : Supplying tools, equipments and standard construction materials for routine maintenance work under all upazila, district-Bogra.
3. Tender security : Tk. 46,300.00
4. Time for completion : 45 days.
5. Price of tender documents : Tk. 300.00
6. Last date, time and places of selling tender documents : 29 January 2005, 4:00pm and (a) The Upazila Engineer, all in Bogra District. (b) The Executive Engineer Office, LGED, Joypurhat. (c) Office of the undersigned. (d) The Deputy Commissioner, Bogra. (e) The Addl. Chief Engineer (Maint), LGED, Dhaka.
7. Last date, time and places of receiving tender : 30 January 2005, 12:00 Noon and (a) The Upazila Engineer, all in Bogra district. (b) The Executive Engineer Office, LGED, Joypurhat. (c) Office of the undersigned. (d) The Deputy Commissioner, Bogra.
8. Date, time and place of opening of tender : 30 January 2005, 3:00pm and office of the undersigned.
9. Tender shall be valid for a period of 119 days after bid opening and must be accompanied by the tender security specified available. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tender without assigning any reason whatsoever. Interested tenderer may obtain further information from the undersigned and purchase the tender documents in cash/treasury challan/bank draft from the places mentioned above. The tenderer or their authorised representatives are allowed to attend the opening of tenders.

Executive Engineer

DFP-31511-29/12/04  
G-05

Local Government Engineering Department  
Bogra.