

Jyoti Basu's condition stable

PTI, Kolkata

Nonagenarian Marxist leader Jyoti Basu, who was hospitalised on Sunday with a blood clot in the brain, is stable, doctors said yesterday after he was examined by the medical board and also an eminent neurosurgeon.

Nebrosurgeon R P Sengupta, who arrived from the UK, also expressed satisfaction over the treatment being given to the 94-year-old leader, a medical bulletin issued by AMRI hospital said.

"Basu is stable and keeping well. He had a normal diet," the bulletin said.

The former Chief Minister had suffered injuries in a fall in his Salt Lake residence on Thursday night.

Four dead as strong quake jolts Iran

AFP, Tehran

A powerful earthquake jolted southern Iran yesterday, killing four people on an island in strategic Gulf waters and destroying some buildings, officials and news reports said.

The US Geological Survey said the 6.1 magnitude quake hit at 1100 GMT about 53 kilometres south-west of the port of Bandar Abbas, which is home to an oil refinery and the country's main naval base.

"So far, four people have been killed and 26 people have been injured," the head of the country's emergency services, Abbas Hassani, was quoted as saying by state television.

The deaths occurred on Qeshm island, which lies just of the Gulf coast from Bandar Abbas in the strategic oil route of the Strait of Hormuz.

Rockslide toll climbs to 62 in Egypt

AFP, Cairo

At least 62 people were killed in a massive rockslide that crushed dozens of homes in a Cairo slum over the weekend, a security official said yesterday with the toll expected to rise further.

The number of victims has gone up to 62 and 58 are injured," the official told AFP, asking not to be identified.

Many other bodies are feared buried under the rubble after giant boulders flattened dozens of homes in the shantytown of Manshiyet Nasser on Saturday, burying whole families.

Four killed in Indonesian landslide

AFP, Jakarta

Four people were killed in a landslide triggered by heavy rains in the eastern Indonesian province of Maluku yesterday, a health ministry official said.

"Four people have been killed and two others were hospitalised when a landslide struck the city of Ambon, Rustam Pakaya, chief of the health ministry's crisis centre, told AFP in a text message.

The landslide struck at 7:00 am (2200 GMT) and roads in the area had been cut off.

There had been heavy rain in the area since late Tuesday, he said.

Landslides and flooding are common in Indonesia during the rainy season, which peaks between December and February.

Five countries account for all child executions

AFP, New York

Five countries, led by Iran, account for all executions of children in the world, Human Rights Watch said yesterday, urging an end to the practice.

Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen are the only countries that continue to impose the death penalty on people younger than 18 when they committed a crime. The United States outlawed execution of juvenile offenders in 2005.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) urged the United Nations, which holds its annual General Assembly next week, to pressure for greater protections for children.

"We are only five states away from a complete ban on the juvenile death penalty," said HRW's Clarissa Bencomo. "These few holdouts should abandon this barbaric practice so that no one ever again is executed for a crime committed as a child."

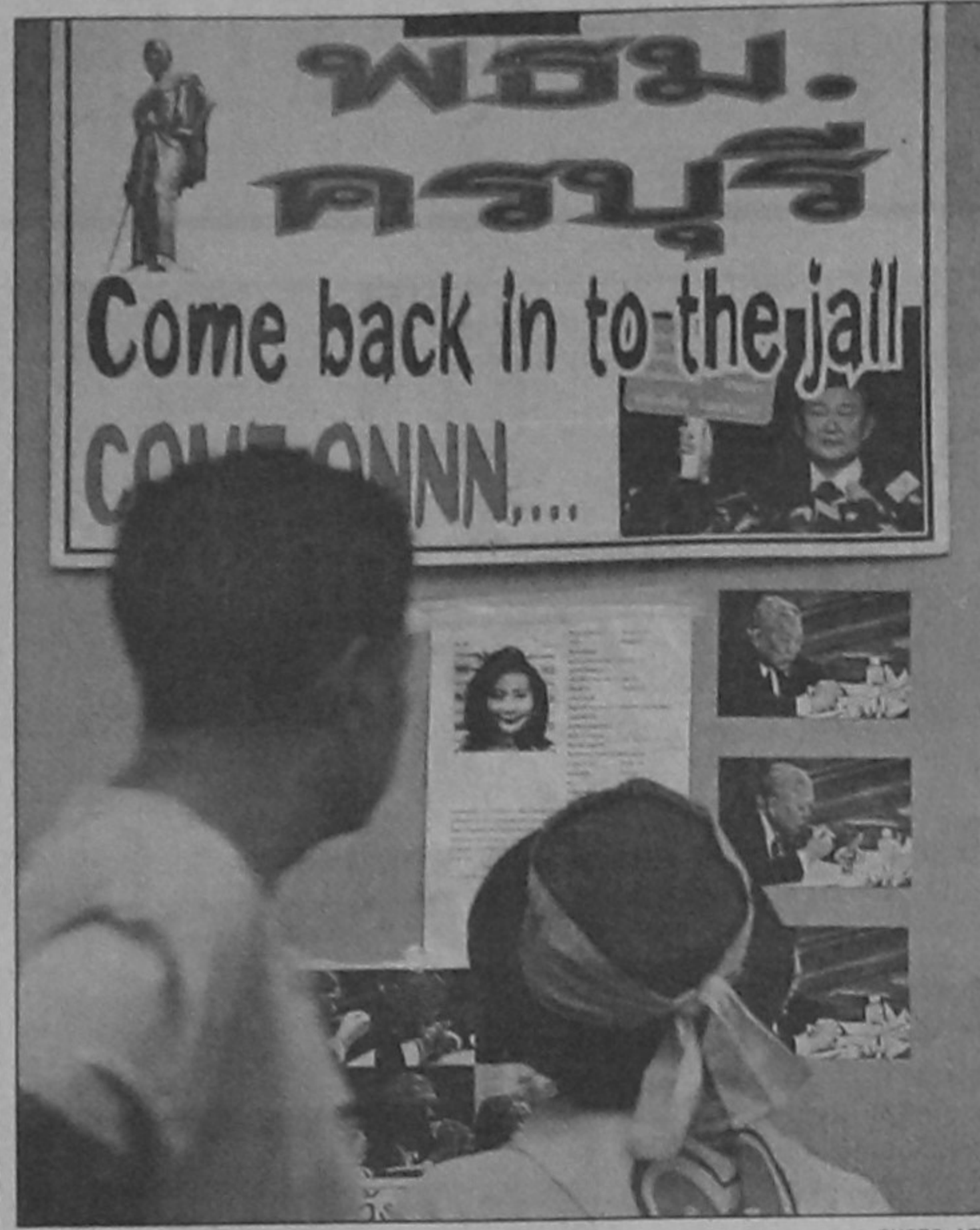


PHOTO: AFP
Anti-government protesters read placards and posters depicting ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra (UP) and removed prime minister Samak Sundaravej inside Government House in Bangkok yesterday. Thailand's ruling party said it was considering candidates for the premiership, backing off a vow to return the job to Samak Sundaravej, who was forced out by a court over his TV cooking shows. The Constitutional Court stripped Samak of his post as prime minister, saying he had illegally accepted payments for hosting two food programmes.

World speculates over Kim Jong Il's health

N Korea officials deny leader is ill

AP, Seoul

North Korea denied yesterday that leader Kim Jong Il is seriously ill, granting a foreign news outlet rare interviews with top officials who dismissed reports questioning Kim's health following his absence from a key ceremony.

Speculation has intensified that Kim may have taken ill after he missed a parade Tuesday commemorating the communist state's founding 60 years ago. That followed weeks of absence from public view and rumors that foreign doctors were brought in to the isolated nation to possibly treat him.

North Korea's No. 2 leader and ceremonial head of state, Kim Yong Nam, yesterday said there is "no problem" with the supreme leader, and senior diplomat Song Il Ho also said reports about Kim Jong Il's health are "not true," according to Japan's Kyodo News agency.

"We see such reports as not only

worthless, but rather as a conspiracy plot," Song told Kyodo in what the agency said was North Korea's first reaction to the reports.

In another indication that the North's leader is alive, Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim sent a birthday greeting Wednesday to Syria's leader.

Kim wished Syrian President Bashar Assad good health and success.

South Korea's main spy agency reported to a parliamentary committee that Kim suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, but he remains conscious and "is able to control the situation," Seoul's Yonhap news agency said.

The National Intelligence Service also told the committee that Kim is in a "recoverable and manageable condition," and that the North is not in a "power vacuum," Yonhap said.

NIS officials could not confirm the report.

Rice holds talks on Indo-US N-deal

PTI, Washington

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has met the powerful Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi on Tuesday, in which they were understood to have discussed the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal.

However, the spokesperson for Pelosi maintained that the discussion revolved around the process for considering the accord once it has been submitted, according to a media report quoting Pelosi's spokesman Nadeam Elshami.

"The Speaker looks forward to reviewing the submission in detail and consulting with Chairman Berman and members of the leadership in determining the appropriate course of action," Elshami said.

The importance and urgency of the nuclear deal from the perspective of the administration and Congress is reflected in the fact that Speaker Pelosi broke away

from a Press Conference on Energy with top leaders of her Party saying that she had a meeting with the Secretary of State on India.

"...I have to excuse myself as I have to meet secretary of state -- I think the subject is India. I'm not sure and I have to excuse myself -- but I'm sure my colleagues here will be pleased to answer any questions" Pelosi said before leaving the briefing, according to a transcript.

Earlier in the day Rice had a meeting with powerful Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Howard Berman which was passed off as a "private meeting" by top Congressional aides.

But it was generally believed that Rice discussed the modalities of winning Congressional approval for the civilian nuclear deal in the 110th Congress, technically due to end on September 26, 2008.

US strike kills 4 al-Qaeda operatives in Pakistan

AFP, Peshawar

A US missile strike targeting a top Taliban commander in Pakistan's northwest killed four mid-level al-Qaeda operatives, a security official and a militant source said yesterday.

Meanwhile at least 11 militants were killed early yesterday when government troops pounded their hideouts in Pakistan's restive northwestern Swat valley, the military said.

Monday's strike in North Waziristan failed to kill Jalaluddin Haqqani or his son, Sirajuddin, accused by Afghan and Western forces of orchestrating the ongoing insurgency across the border in Afghanistan.

Five missiles fired by suspected US drones destroyed a seminary and an underground tunnel built by the Haqqanis in Darpa Dandekhen, near Miranshah, the main town in the troubled Pakistani tribal district, killing 21.

"According to local sources the strike killed four al-Qaeda operators and some extended family members of Haqqani's," a security official told AFP.

A source in Haqqani's group confirmed the death of four

Arabs, identified as Abu Harris, Abu Hamza, Abu Qasim and Abu Musa Alkhyar.

The operation in Swat valley was launched in the Koza Banda area where rebels have stepped up their activities during the past two weeks, said military spokesman Colonel Nadeem Anwar.

"We have confirmed reports that 11 militants were killed and seven others wounded seriously in heavy artillery fire on their hideouts," he said.

He added that Pakistan air force jets also conducted reconnaissance flights over the area to collect information about other rebel bases.

"However, fighter jets did not bomb the area," he added.

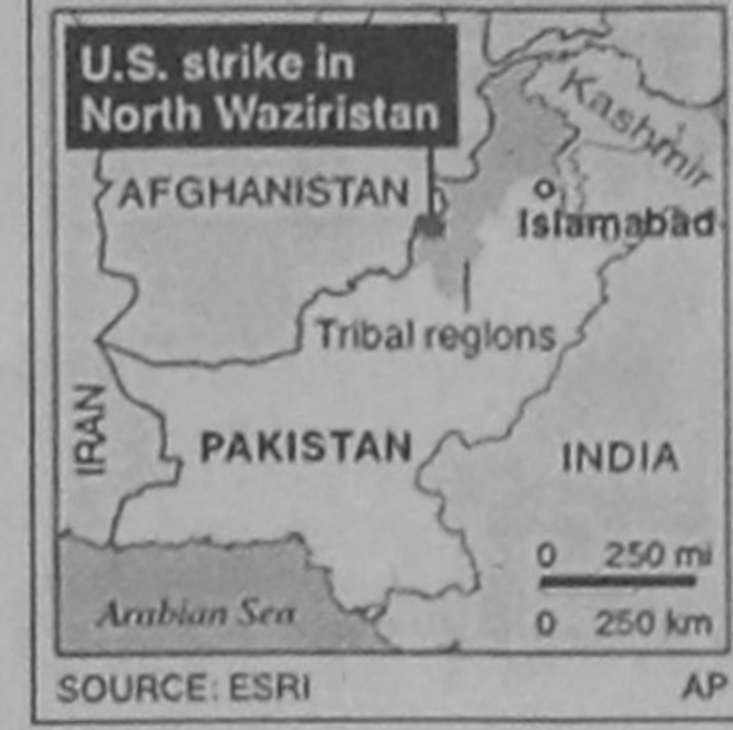
The latest attack came two days after 10 militants were killed in clashes with troops in the Kabal district of the scenic Swat valley.

Radical pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlullah launched a violent campaign to enforce harsh Islamic Sharia law in the region last year. Since then, the former popular tourist destination has been rocked by fierce clashes.

Pakistan's army has intensified its campaign against

Top al-Qaida operatives killed

Officials say two top al-Qaida operatives were killed in a suspected U.S. missile strike Monday in Pakistan's tribal region.



Fazlullah's fighters in recent weeks, killing hundreds of them.

New President Asif Ali Zardari, who was sworn in on Tuesday, has pledged to combat the Islamic militancy that has been plaguing the country and neighbouring Afghanistan.

Zardari is the widower of slain former premier Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated in a gun and suicide attack at an election rally in December.

Lankan army bombs rebel areas: 21 dead

PTI, AP, Colombo

Air force jets attacked a rebel intelligence base deep in northern Sri Lanka early yesterday, stepping up a punishing wave of airstrikes a day after Tamil Tiger fighters launched a surprise attack on a military base, the military said.

A total of 21 people were killed in separate battles.

Meanwhile UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has expressed "concern" over escalating violence between government forces and LTTE rebels in northern Sri Lanka and reminded the two parties of their obligation to ensure safety of civilians.

Ban statement comes in the wake of Sri Lanka government's request that United Nations relief workers relocate from conflict affected areas.

The United Nations has already announced its decision to withdraw its aid workers from Sri Lanka's embattled north, where a major military offensive is underway.

The Tamil Tigers said the bombs hit a civilian settlement in the rebel's administrative capital of Kilinochchi, destroying 12 houses.

Separate battles between the two sides killed 19 rebels and two soldiers, the military said.

The air force has conducted a series of bombing raids over rebel-held territory in the north.

The military said that attack killed 13 troops, 1 civilian and 11 of the attackers. The rebels said at least 20 government troops and 10 rebel fighters were killed.

The raid also injured two Indian technicians who were servicing a radar system at the base, said Dinkar Asthana, a spokesman for the Indian High Commission in Colombo.

The UN Secretary General reminded all parties "of their responsibilities to take active steps to ensure the safety and freedom of movement of civilians, to allow humanitarian organisations to do their work in safety."

China landslide toll rises to 128: reports

AP, Beijing

Rescuers used heavy equipment to search yesterday for survivors buried under a torrent of sludge, mud and mining waste that plowed into buildings in northern China, killing at least 128 people, state media reported.

The landslide in Shanxi province on Monday also injured 35 people five seriously, Xinhua News Agency reported, citing the local rescue headquarters.

A preliminary investigation showed that a dam collapse at a mine in Xiangfen county caused the landslide, a top safety official said.

The accident underscores two major public safety concerns in China: the failure to enforce protective measures in the country's notoriously deadly mines, and the unsound state of much of its aging infrastructure.

Xinhua said more than 1,500 police, firefighters and villagers were searching for survivors.

Xinhua cited local government official Lian Zhendong as saying

rescuers had searched through 70 percent of the rubble. The People's Daily newspaper, the mouthpiece of the Communist Party, said on its Web site that the missing could number in the hundreds. The Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy said in a statement that the death toll could exceed 500 people. It did not attribute the figure to anyone.

The landslide knocked down a mine warehouse, trapping an unknown number of people inside, Xinhua said. A three-story office building, a market and some houses were also destroyed, the report said.

The preliminary investigation showed the landslide was caused by the collapse of a dam used to enclose tailings from an iron mine, said Wang Dexue, deputy head of the State Administration of Work Safety.

"The amount stored far exceeded the capacity of the space. In addition, there was a bit of rain and the collapse took place as a result," Wang said in an interview broadcast on state TV.

El Baradei will not see re-election as IAEA chief

AFP, Vienna

IAEA Director General Mohamed El Baradei will not stand for re-election as head of the UN nuclear watchdog when his contract expires next year, a memo to the body's board of directors revealed yesterday.

El Baradei, who has headed the International Atomic Energy Agency since 1997 serving for three terms, "is not available for a further term of office," said the restricted memo, a copy of which was obtained by AFP.

The document, dated September 5, has been circulated to the IAEA's board of governors. The Egyptian born diplomat's current term as director general expires on November 30, 2009.

Malaysia's Badawi suspends official over racial remarks

AP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's ruling party has suspended an official whose racially charged tirade against the ethnic Chinese minority raised fears of a split in the multiethnic ruling coalition.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says Ahmad Ismail has been stripped yesterday of his post as a district chief in the United Malays National Organisation party.

Abdullah says Ahmad would also be kicked out of the party for three years.

The decision came after the party held a special meeting to determine how to punish Ahmad.

Ahmad is a member of the ethnic Malay majority and ranted the Chinese community by calling them "immigrants" and "squatters" who crave political and economic power.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi chaired a special meeting of the United Malays National Organisation governing party to determine the penalty for Ahmad Ismail, a party district chief who called ethnic Chinese "immigrants" who crave political and economic power.

The Malay party is the linchpin of the 14-party National Front ruling coalition, which includes representatives from all Malaysia's races: the majority Malays and the minority Chinese, Indians and others.

Ahmad incensed Malaysia's ethnic Chinese last month by describing them as "squatters" and "immigrants" who did not deserve equal rights with Malays.


The uproar over his comments escalated when he gave a news conference Monday warning Chinese Malaysians "not to become like the Jewish in America, where it is not enough that they control the economy, but they also want to dominate politics."

The outcry comes as coalition leaders are struggling to present a united front amid a threat by opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim to seize power by luring government lawmakers to his side by next week.


Malay Muslims make up about 60 percent of Malaysia's 27 million people. Most Chinese and Indian Malaysians are descendants of 19th and early 20th century immigrants who came as traders, laborers and miners during British colonial rule.



PHOTO: AFP
Asian labourers work in a street in Kuwait City yesterday. Kuwait said yesterday it was considering alternatives for its widely-criticised employee sponsor system after violent protests by foreign workers. Under the system, any foreign worker in Kuwait must be sponsored by a Kuwaiti employer, thus keeping expatriates at the mercy of their bosses.



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Team Assistant:
The IFC-SEDF, of the World Bank Group is seeking to recruit suitably qualified candidates to fill the post of a Team Assistant in its Access to Finance Unit. The Team Assistant will provide wide range of support to the Access to Finance Unit in meeting its objectives and support the team.

The incumbents should be well organized professional, and capable of operating effectively in a very demanding fast-paced environment. The position is based in Dhaka.

Responsibilities:

- Schedule meetings, conference calls, video conferences and preparation of materials for meetings.
- Management of correspondence, including institution of an appropriate filing and tracking system, maintenance of files etc.
- Preparation and clearance of travel related activities including travel related clearances, hotel reservations, maintaining contract information and up-to-date work unit project/travel and other files (both paper and electronic)
- Draft and edit routine correspondences, i.e. letters, emails, power point presentations, spread sheet date and memorandum.
- Assist the team in the preparation and logistical planning for various events.
- Coordinate flow of information acting as the point of contact for general information relating to the A2F support and program interventions and activities to the internal clients. This includes reviewing and responding to inquiries, routine follow-up of correspondence.
- Provide support in logistical planning of visiting consultants/missions.
- Act as back up to other Assistant during their absence or during busy periods.

Selection Criteria:

- Graduation degree with at least 5 year's of experience.
- Proficient English language skills and passing scores on the World Bank's entry test for English grammar, and proof reading
- Good interpersonal skills and an effective team player in a multicultural environment
- Excellent office technology skills, particularly Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint and etc
- Experience of working with IFC / The World Bank and other donors will be considered an added advantage

All eligible candidates for above position are advised to apply to the following address within September 18, 2008 to:

e-Zone HRM Limited
Planners Tower (10th Floor), 13/A Sonargaon Road, Dhaka-1000
Phone: 8651161, 8652455
Website: www.ezonehrm.com

No phone calls, or faxes please. Only short-listed candidates will be contacted.

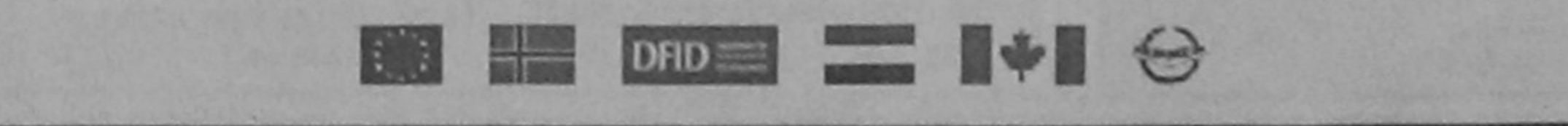




PHOTO: AFP
Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim waves to his supporters outside the Sessions Court in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Anwar was in court to face a sodomy charge similar to one filed against him a decade ago and which he claim as politically motivated. The case was postponed until September 24.