



The Gulf Today

UAE D

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UAE D

Blair, Qadhafi agree to take on Al Qaeda

London welcomes Libya back to international arena

COMBINED AGENCY DISPATCHES

TRIPOLI: British Prime Minister Tony Blair sealed Libya's return to the international fold on Thursday after a historic handshake with Muammar Qadhafi and an agreement to fight Al Qaeda together.

Blair said at a press conference after meeting Qadhafi for more than an hour that Libya recognised "a common cause with us in the fight against Al Qaeda, extremism and terrorism, which threatens not just the western world but the Arab world also."

Libyan Foreign Minister Mohammed Abderrhmane Chalgham said like the West, his country opposed the Al Qaeda.

"They are a real obstacle against our progress, against our security against any

change in our region," he said.

The British prime minister said that Libya's rejection of banned weapons and rapprochement with the West could act as a template for other Arab nations to turn their back on extremism.

London played the leading role in persuading Libya to renounce banned weapons.

to defeat the common enemy of extremist fanatical terrorism driven by Al Qaeda," he said. "It is a very, very important signal for the whole of the Arab world."

Blair said he was struck by Qadhafi's "insistence on Libya's determination to carry on down this path of co-operation" and "his recognition

partnership today, we do not forget the past," he said. "But we do try in the light of the genuine changes happening to move beyond it."

On the first trip to Libya by a British leader since 1943 when Winston Churchill visited, Blair was whisked to a ceremonial tent outside Tripoli to meet the Libyan leader. The two leaders then symbolically shook hands for the cameras.

"You are looking good, you are still young," Qadhafi said, speaking in English, while greeting Blair.

Gains to British business from the diplomatic thaw were notched up even before Blair arrived. Oil giant Royal Dutch/Shell won a \$200 million (Dhs 730 million) gas exploration deal with Libya.

Blair also announced that defence contractor BAE Sys-

Iraq war led Libya to negotiate: Straw — Page 9

"It is remarkable progress, given where we have been," said Blair.

He said Qadhafi had convinced him that steps he had taken were "irrevocable."

"We are showing by our engagement with Libya today that it is possible for countries in the Arab world to work with the United States and the UK

that Libya's own future is best secured by a new relationship with the outside world."

The UK leader pledged not to forget the pain caused by the 1988 Lockerbie bombing which killed 270 people but said Libya should be welcomed back into the international fold.

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COMBINED AGENCY DISPATCHES

BAGHDAD: Three US soldiers and ten Iraqis were killed in various parts of the country, reports said on Thursday amid warnings that attacks may increase with fewer than 100 days left before the coalition hands over sovereignty.

The US-led coalition on Thursday formed an Iraqi defence ministry that will report directly to Paul L. Bremer, the

US administrator, a senior coalition official said.

One of the US soldiers was killed and two were wounded when a homemade bomb exploded near Baquba, the military said.

Another was killed in fighting that occurred on Wednesday near Taji, just north of the capital. A US soldier was also wounded. Three resistance fighters were killed.

In Fallujah, west of Baghdad, a US Marine was killed and

two wounded in an attack on a convoy. Two Marines were wounded.

Again in Fallujah, fighters attacked a US military convoy

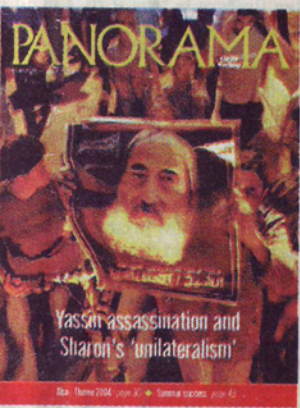
Spain hints at debate on occupation at UN — Page 6

and television footage showed an empty Humvee in flames. One Iraqi driver in a civilian car was killed in the crossfire.

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With today's issue



World champion Charles Deleau celebrates his mens professional freestyle success with 2nd-placed Cedric Le Rest and 3rd-placed Pierre Durand Jorris.



Ladies professional freestyle champion Gabriel Steindl with 2nd-placed Sandrine Maunier and third placed Moira MacFarlane (left).

Kerhoeven joins world champion on podium

BY A STAFF REPORTER

DUBAI: Dubai-based German kitesurfer Bernd Kerhoeven joined world champion Charles Deleau on the victory podium on Friday as the Red Bull King of the Air reached its climax in Dubai.

While Deleau underlined his status as the extreme sports top professional rider, Kerhoeven clinched the men's amateur freestyle title to earn a trip to Hawaii for the final of the Red Bull King of the Air series in October.

Another UAE-based rider, Venetia Maunsell, won the ladies amateur freestyle crown as the three-day event drew to

its conclusion at Le Meridien Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina.

Even though light winds restricted the final day action, the week's activities in Dubai have ensured that kitesurfing in the Gulf is on course for another rise in popularity.

The event showcased the skills which have taken Deleau to the world title and gave Arab nationals and other Gulf-based enthusiasts the perfect opportunity to study and learn from the master.

UAE's Sheikh Ahmed Hamdan Al Nahyan, Abdullah Al Muhairy and Ali Al Mahar, and Kuwait's Ahmed Al Sabah, were among a 32-competitor line-up,

sharing the stage with Deleau and a cluster of other kitesurfers.

And while Deleau, as anticipated, took the mens' professional freestyle title to underline his status as the reigning Kiteboard Pro World Tour champion, the Red Bull King of the Air provided fresh impetus to the continued growth of the exciting extreme water sport in the Gulf.

Other competitors representing Poland, South Africa, Britain, New Zealand, Holland, Germany, and Austria, as well as the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar, underlined the international flavour of the event which was organised by Dubai International Marine Club (DIMC) in

Red Bull King of the Air results:

Freestyle
Men - professional: 1. Charles Deleau (France), 2. Cedric Le Rest (UAE), 3. Pierre Durand Jorris (France).
Ladies - professional: 1. Gabriel Steindl (Austria), 2. Sandrine Maunier (France), 3. Moira MacFarlane (UAE).
Men - amateur: 1. Bernd Kerhoeven (Dubai), 2. Jacob Scesny (Poland), 3. Ray Corbett (UAE).
Ladies - amateur: 1. Venetia Maunsell (UAE), 2. Astrid Woltgruber (UAE), 3. Sally Anne Munroe (UAE).

association with the UAE Marine Sports Federation.

With winds picking up in the late afternoon, the event was being rounded off by a downwind race and a tricks competition in front of an enthusiastic crowd of spectators gathered on the beach at Le Meridien Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina.



Nepal team with ECB board officials Abdur Rahman Falaknaz, Mohammed Redha Abbas and Abdul Razak Kazim at the Sharjah Cricket stadium before their ICC Intercontinental Cup match against ECB.