



The Gulf Today

COMPLIMENTARY



Friday, March 26, 2004, (Safar 5, 1425)

UAE Dhs2...

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.

"In reaching out the hand of



British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

tems would also... Libyan deal... trade mission... the major spoils... United States... knows the only

3 American soldiers, 10 Iraqis

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

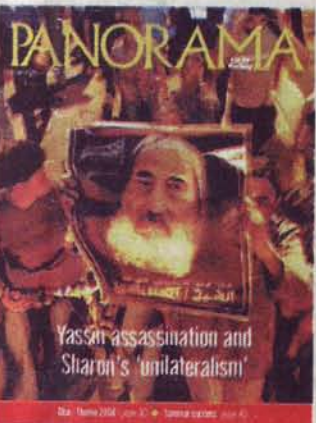
Spain hints at debate on occupation at UN — Page 6

and television footage showed an empty Humvee in flames. One Iraqi driver in a civilian car was killed in the crossfire. On Tuesday, guerrillas at-

tacked a patrol... Hamam Al Ali... north of Baghdad... US soldier, Tro... and killed one

A US milit... said there were... tacks on Iraq... Wednesday, th... southern Babil... and killed. A da... lice recruits w... nearby attack c

Separately, killed, includi



With today's issue



Deleau, Steindl fly high in Red Bull kitesurfing

BY A STAFF REPORTER

DUBAI: World champion Charles Deleau and Austria's Gabriel Steindl took the early honours in the Red Bull King of the Air as the three-day event moved towards its climax in Dubai on Thursday.

Deleau, winner of the 2003 Kiteboard Pro World Tour, outscored fellow Frenchman, UAE-based Cedric Le Rest in Thursday's final of the first men's freestyle event which had been carried over from Wednesday evening at Le Meridien Mina Seyahi Beach Resort and Marina.

Steindl had earlier taken victory in the final of the first ladies' freestyle competition when she edged out France's Sandrine Maunier, another of the extreme sport's top lady professional riders.

While winds of 12 knots gusting to 15 knots prevented Deleau from achieving much of the hang time and spectacular trickery which took him to the world title last November, he still had the edge as he made his way through the first series of freestyle heats towards an eventual showdown with Le Rest on Thursday afternoon.

Another French professional, Pierre Durand Jorris, took third place ahead of UAE-based compatriot Sebastien Leclercq, as the judges assessed the riders for the quality of



Action from the men's freestyle heats in the Red Bull King of the Air.

jumps, manoeuvres such as wave rides, tricks, and transi-

tions, and overall impression.

In the opening Red Bull

King of the Air ladies freestyle series Venetia Maunsell edged out another UAE-based rider, Austrian Astrid Wolfgruber, for third place.

With 25 men and seven lady kitesurfers in action overall, the event, organised by Dubai International Marine Club (DIMC) in association with the UAE Marina Sports Federation, was scheduled to continue later on Thursday afternoon with another series of freestyle heats to be followed by the first downwind race.

Depending on wind conditions, the pattern will be repeated on the final day on Friday.

The UAE's Sheikh Ahmed Hamdan Al Nahyan and Kuwait's Ahmed Al Sabah had both been in action in the men's freestyle event, and while both failed to progress past the first stage they gave a good account of themselves.

Both were hoping for better fortunes in the downwind races. Sabah said: "Last week I was in Qatar where we had winds of up to 35 knots and I was hoping for stronger winds here. But I'm enjoying it and hoping the winds pick up."

Red Bull King of the Air results:

Mens' freestyle 1st series: 1. Charles Deleau (France) 2. Cedric Le Rest (UAE), 3. Pierre Durand Jorris (France) 4. Sebastien Leclercq (UAE).

Ladies 1st freestyle series: 1. Gabriel Steindl (Austria), 2. Sandrine Maunier (France), 3. Venetia Maunsell (UAE), 4. Astrid Wolfgruber (UAE).

Arshad's 143 puts UAE in driver

BY A STAFF REPORTER

SHARJAH: Arshad Ali of ECB became the first centurian of the First Class match for the Associate Member countries of the ICC in the Intercontinental Cup played against Nepal at the Sharjah Stadium.

At the close of play Nepal were 23 for 3 in reply to ECB's 293 declared in 82.1 overs.

After losing two early wickets at the score of 27 runs, ECB's Arshad, in the company of Naemuddin, stabilised the in-

nings with a 63-run partnership to take the score to 100.

Skipper Khuram Khan joined Arshad and both displayed an array of shots all round the wicket. Khuram contributed 75 runs with 9 fours and a six in just 78 balls.

Arshad Ali went for his hundred in grand style. His innings of 143 runs were scored in 216 balls studded with 16 boundaries and 2 huge sixes. Tauqir too contributed 24 runs in the middle order as the ECB side declared at 293 in 82.1 overs.

Binod Kumar Das was the outstanding bowler for Nepal picking up 5 wickets for 61 runs in 23 overs while Mehboob Alam picked up 3 wickets for 26 runs.

In reply, Nepal were stunned by lanky ECB paceman Ali Asad, as he bowled his heart out in an astonishing spell of 10 overs 8 maidens 5 runs for 3 wkts.

At the close of play Nepal were 23 for 3 wickets in 20 overs.

The ICC Intercontinental Cup is a new tournament that will give the top Associate Mem-

ber countries from each region exposure to the longer version of the game.

The ICC's leading three Associate countries from four regions — Africa, Americas, Asia and Europe — will play regional three-day matches with the top team from each region progressing to the semi-finals and final to be held in the UAE in November 2004.

ICC High Performance Manager Bob Woolmer believes the tournament is an essential part of the ICC devel-