

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UK Labour trails behind Conservatives in new opinion polls

LONDON, 8 Oct—Three new opinion polls showed Sunday the ruling Labour trailing behind the opposition Conservatives after Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced there would be no General Election this year or next.

One in the News Of The World gives the Conservatives a six-point lead, which puts the Conservatives on 44 percent, a score that would have seen the Brown's Commons majority wiped out and resulted in a hung Parliament, according to Sky News Sunday.

The latest survey for the

News Of The World suggests the Conservatives led by David Cameron would have deposited 49 Labour MPs.

The Conservatives were also ahead in two other polls, enjoying a three-point lead in a YouGov survey for the *Sunday Times* and a one point advantage in a poll for the Mail On Sunday.

As Conservative voters are more likely to go to the polls than Labour supporters, these results could be exaggerated even more at the General Election, the Sky News report said.

David Cameron has called Gordon Brown's decision (not to hold an election) a "humiliating retreat," which Cameron said was the result of "great weakness and indecision."

Liberal Democrat leader Sir Menzies Campbell accused Brown of putting party politics above the national interest.

MNA/Xinhua



Police try to prevent protesters from pulling down a fence in Parliament Square during an anti-Iraq demonstration in London on 8 Oct, 2007. —INTERNET

Iraq President says 100,000 US troops will leave soon

WASHINGTON, 8 Oct—At least 100,000 US troops could return home from Iraq by the end of 2008, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said in an interview aired on Sunday although he proposed that several American military bases stay in Iraq. Speaking on CNN television, Talabani envisioned faster US troop reductions than US commanders have discussed in public. But he stressed that the pace of withdrawal was up to those commanders and did not explain why he foresaw a faster pullout.

"I think it is possible at the end of the next year that a big part of the American Army will be back here," said Talebani, who gave the interview during a trip to the United States. "More than 100,000

(troops) can be back by the end of the next year." But Talabani, a Kurd and former guerilla leader who fought Saddam Hussein, said he was not pushing for an independent Kurdistan in Iraq's North, because neighbouring countries would never agree to it.

He also expressed confidence in Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, an Arab from the Shi'ite Muslim majority, saying

Maliki was not personally corrupt despite allegations of widespread corruption in his government. "He is a clean man," Talebani said. The United States currently has about 165,000 troops in Iraq. Under pressure from opposition Democrats and some senior Republicans for big cuts in troops, President George W Bush last month approved a plan from his top commander in Iraq to

gradually reduce the US force by 20,000 to 30,000 by mid-2008.

Pentagon Chief Robert Gates says he hopes for cuts of around 20,000 more troops by January 2009, when the next president will take office. But even if that happens, the pullouts would add up to only about half the number Talebani is saying could leave in the same period of time.

MNA/Reuters

Pakistani families flee Waziristan battle zone

MIRANSHAH, Pakistan, 9 Oct — Thousands of families began fleeing a town in a Pakistani tribal region after three days of fierce clashes between pro-Taleban militants and security forces that killed nearly 200 people, witnesses said on

Tuesday.

Around 150 militants and 45 soldiers were killed in fighting around Mir Ali, a town in North Waziristan tribal region known as an al Qaeda haunt.

Families streamed out of the town of 50,000 people and outlying

villages, making their way on foot, in tractor trailers and cars.

"Eighty to ninety percent of families of Mir Ali have gone. Just one or two people are staying behind in each house to guard their belongings," Sher Khan, a resident, told Reuters.

"The main bazaar of Mir Ali is sealed by the Army. All shops are closed. We have nothing to eat. That's why I have sent my family to Bannu," he said, referring to a town in the North West Frontier Province at the gateway to the tribal region bordering Afghanistan.

Waziristan is a hotbed of support for Taleban and al Qaeda militants, who fled to the region after US-led forces drove them out of Afghanistan in late 2001. — MNA/Reuters



Students hold banners with the image of late Argentine-born Cuba's revolutionary leader Ernesto 'Che' Guevara during a ceremony in his honour at his monument in Santa Clara, on 8 Oct, 2007. —INTERNET

US troops' mistaken fire kills two Afghans

KABUL, 8 Oct—US troops based in Afghanistan's eastern Kunar Province opened fire on a civilian vehicle Saturday morning, killing two persons, spokesman of provincial government Zarghon Shah Khaliqyar said.

"The US troops mistakenly opened fire on a local car in Manogai District at around 8:00 am local time this morning, leaving two civilians dead and injuring three others," Khaliqyar told *Xinhua*.

He did not give more details. The US military officials were not immediately available to make comment.

MNA/Xinhua



Young women amuse themselves during a carnival in Vaparaíso of Chile, on 5 Oct, 2007. The carnival featuring human skin paintings attracted many visitors on Friday. — INTERNET