



MIDDLE EAST PRESS REVIEW

(OCTOBER 26-01 2009)

Table of Content

A. Politics

- A.1. Alwani: The political bloc hangs its problems on Kirkuk
- A.2. Saddam establishes a complete plan to escape from prison
- A.3. Iraqi election delay could stall US troop pullout
- A.4. Failure to adopt a new election law in Iraq
- A.5. Hashimi decides to join bloc of Iyad Alawi and Salih Al-Mutlaq
- A.6. Hill discuss with political blocs in Parliament solutions to issue of Kirkuk
- A.7. Hakim: Turkmen, Arabs insist on non-recognition of Kurdish majority in Kirkuk
- A.8. Iraqi elections facing possible delay
- A.9. Iraqi parliament delays vote on election law again
- A.10. Election Law Stalemate
- A.11. Council of Representatives hold a deliberative session, and adjourned until Sunday
- A.12. Accountability and Justice Committee demands the resignation of Interior Minister
- A.13. Salih: We will strengthen the achievements and will handle past failures
- A.14. Barham Salih promises to unite the security and financial institutions in the Kurdistan government
- A.15. Kuwait announces the completion of preparations for the maintenance of border signs between Kuwait and Iraq
- A.16. Czech Republic indicates its willingness to open up to Iraq in all fields
- A.17. Iraqis' election-law battle rages over status of Kirkuk
- A.18. Kurdish official says new Kurdistan Government to readdress many files
- A.19. Kirkuk: Voices from a divided city
- A.20. An intense verbal argument between MPs and Samara'i interferes
- A.21. Tareq al-Hashemi decides to join Iyad Allawi and Saleh Mutlaq bloc
- A.22. Ammar al-Hakim: Demands of Arabs and Turkmans over Kirkuk "exaggerated to some extent"

- A.23.** Austria seeks stronger ties with Kurdistan – ambassador
- A.24.** PKK elements are concerned of the Turkish plots to liquidate them
- A.25.** Parliament will hold a voting session tomorrow
- A.26.** Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Masud Barzani voiced much support for Turkish opening-up to Kurds in Turkey
- A.27.** Clerics urge MPs to end Iraqi elections deadlock
- A.28.** Assassination of senior officer investigating Baghdad bombings by his fellow officers shocks security ministers, political leaders
- A.29.** IHEC proposes Three irreplaceable options, warning that each day that passes over elections law constitutes a danger
- A.30.** IHEC controls ad campaigns of political entities and candidates
- A.31.** International border between Iran and Iraq opened for pilgrims to the holy shrines
- A.32.** Sistani's representative warns of deteriorating security situation as elections with the approach
- A.33.** IHEC: 1.2 million Iraqis abroad will participate in the voting process
- A.34.** Iraq MPs fail to reach quorum for election law vote
- A.35.** Turkish minister inaugurates new consulate in Basrah
- A.36.** IHEC imposing new campaign regulations
- A.37.** Iraqi religious figures urge passage of election law
- A.38.** Turkish ministers in Arbil
- A.39.** Turkish Consulate Opened in Governorate of Basra
- A.40.** Time to rebuild Middle East, Davutoğlu says in Arbil
- A.41.** Iraq clerics urge MPs to end election law deadlock
- A.42.** From Iraq, Lessons for the Next War

B. Security

- B.1.** A new batch of local policemen graduate in Baghdad
- B.2.** An explosion targets Sahwa leader in Tikrit
- B.3.** Iraqi authorities avert the media access to Sunday's blasts
- B.4.** Bombing Atrocity Threatens Iraqi Elections
- B.5.** Dozens of security officials detained in Iraq bombings
- B.6.** Deep Corruption Rattles Iraq's Fragile State
- B.7.** Security force members held over Baghdad bombs
- B.8.** Iraqi security in the spotlight
- B.9.** A suicide bomber blows himself up in Tal Afar
- B.10.** Parliamentary committee calls for hosting Maliki to explain recent explosions
- B.11.** IED targeting headquarters of Mashhadani
- B.12.** Police officer killed in terrorist attack west of Mosul
- B.13.** Al-Iraq News - IP Find a cache of weapons and ammunition near Tikrit
- B.14.** Military increases its forces in Anbar borders to stop any infiltration
- B.15.** An investigation officer in the Interior Ministry assassinated
- B.16.** Two US soldiers killed in two separate non-combat incidents

- B.17.** An officer responsible for the investigation into Sunday's bombings has been killed in Baghdad
- B.18.** Religious leaders slam Iraq authorities over attacks
- B.19.** US general in Iraq warns of rise in pre-poll violence
- B.20.** Iraqi Air Force Acquires Advanced Radar System
- B.21.** 87 wanted men arrested in Babel
- B.22.** Iraqi security officials held in blast aftermath
- B.23.** Iraq increases border security along Anbar province
- B.24.** Military increases its forces in Anbar borders to stop any infiltration

C. Economics

- C.1.** Iraq to sign deals with BP
- C.2.** Exxon: Certainly Interested In Iraq, Talks Ongoing
- C.3.** Sa'adun demands that Baghdad commit to paying the financial dues of oil companies in the Kurdistan region
- C.4.** Iraqi oil ministry to announce the winner of the giant West Qurna oil field
- C.5.** Syrian Minister of Transportation: No tension between Iraq and Syria in the transportation field

D. Culture and Society

- D.1.** UNHCR works to settle refugees
- D.2.** Hundreds of displaced families return to Aakerkof township in Abu Ghraib District
- D.3.** Iraq Government bans alcohol sale or transport in Baghdad's green zone
- D.4.** Maysan police celebrates the third Basic rule of law graduation
- D.5.** US funded bridge opened in Muthanna
- D.6.** Maysun al-Damluji asks to improve the condition of women in Iraq

E. Relations with Turkey

- E.1.** Turkish ministers and businessmen arrive in Basra this morning
- E.2.** Turkish Minister Davutoğlu tours many Iraqi cities
- E.3.** Erbil prepares enthusiastic welcome for Davutoğlu
- E.4.** Turkish Foreign Minister: Threatening the Iraqi security affects Turkey
- E.5.** Time to rebuild Middle East, Davutoglu says in Erbil
- E.6.** Turkish Minister Davutoglu tours many Iraqi cities
- E.7.** KRG president praises Turkish initiatives for Kurds
- E.8.** Iraqi Kurdish leader backs Turkey's reform steps
- E.9.** Turkey to open two more border crossings with Iraq, Çaglayan

A. POLITICS

A.1. Alwani: The political bloc hangs its problems on Kirkuk (Khabaar website)

Iraqi Accordance Front, Ahmad al-Alwani criticized some parties for hanging their political issues to Kirkuk.

"The Kurds do not want an open list due to problems between the Kirkuk parties, in addition to the emergence of opposition forces, considered a rival to the governing Kirkuk parties. The Kirkuk cause is national and must be resolved by the Iraqis. Kirkuk parties hold into their demands and do not give in. The Kurdistan Alliance members withdrew from the quorum, which led to the parliament session adjournment to Saturday." Alwani stated.

IHEC: 1.2 million Iraqis abroad will participate in the voting process (al-Iraqiya TV Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) announced that the number of displaced and migrated Iraqis residing in 23 different Arab and Western States who would participate in the voting process have reached 1.2 million people.

IHEC clarified that with the help of the Iraqi Ministries of Interior and Displacement and Migration in addition to the cooperation of the International Migration Organization they were able to identify the above mentioned number of Iraqis who would participate in the voting process.

A.2. Saddam establishes a complete plan to escape from prison (EXSUM)

The book revealed that the former President Saddam Hussein had prepared a full plan before his arrest to escape from jail with the help of the Iraqi resistance factions and special task forces comprised from his bodyguards. The task of the forces was to storm the prison where he was detained if he was arrested.

The plan, which was supposed to be implemented in the summer of 2006, called for task forces to intensively shell the Green zone where other forces to begin shelling Marines sites in the airport to keep them busy.

While all these actions were in progress, another task force would go to close all exit and entrance routes that Saddam would use following his liberation. Saddam said in his memoir that he had refused offers to get out of Iraq before the war.

Saddam noted the Americans had told through a non-diplomatic mediation that they would pressure any country that he may seek to hand him over. In the event that he stayed in Iraq, they [the Americans] will detain him in any way.

In his last meeting with his lawyer two days before his execution, Saddam stated that he hoped that the Iraqi people would not forget him.

A.3. Iraqi election delay could stall US troop pullout (AP)

U.S. troops could leave Iraq later than currently planned if the fragile nation's elections are delayed, the Pentagon said Thursday.

Military commanders have said they want to keep the 117,000 soldiers now in Iraq in place for about two months after the scheduled Jan. 16 elections to ensure security during the government transition.

But with a political deadlock in Baghdad over how to register voters in the northern oil-rich Kirkuk province, the balloting could be delayed.

"That's why we are hanging on to as large a force as we are in Iraq," Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell told reporters at a news briefing.

"Obviously, we'll make judgments and assessments based upon how far it's delayed and whether or not we need to retain this certain force level for longer," he added.

Under a Jan. 1 security agreement, the U.S. will withdraw all of its troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. President Barack Obama also has set an Aug. 31, 2010, deadline to end U.S. combat missions in Iraq - in part by sending home all but 50,000 soldiers.

But Sunday's bombings at government ministries in Baghdad that killed 155 people underscore the security threats and vulnerability in a nation where some U.S. officials have declared the war is all but over.

Morrell said the "horrific and deplorable" suicide bombing attacks have not "caused anybody to reevaluate or reassess or reconsider the drawdown plan, nor has it prompted the Iraqis, for that matter, to ask for our forces to come back in to Baghdad to assist in the aftermath of this attack."

Iraqi authorities have detained dozens of security officials responsible for protecting the area where the bombings happened and are investigating whether they had a role in the attack. Tensions between Arabs and Kurds - a struggle at the heart of the Kirkuk voter registration dispute - in part illustrates that Iraq "is years away from achieving lasting security and stability," warned Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"The recent bombings in Iraq have shown that the Iraq war is scarcely over," Cordesman wrote in a report released Thursday. "It is far too early to say that Iraq can achieve lasting security and stability, maintain a pluralistic form of government, or avoid becoming caught up in another violent round of internal or regional power struggles."

A.4. Failure to adopt a new election law in Iraq (Russia Today website)

The Iraqi parliament failed on Thursday for the sixth time to reach a compromise on the elections law, especially with the ongoing dispute over the Kirkuk issue.

The conflict resulted in incomplete quorum after the withdrawal of the Kurdistan Alliance bloc. Thus, the meeting was converted to a trading session after it was supposed to be a critical one to vote on the law.

The council decided to hold a session next Sunday to pursue discussion to resolve the crisis. Initially, 138 MPs should attend the session devoted to the vote on the resolution of the new election. Only 100 MPs were present, after the Kurdistan Alliance boycotted the meeting, leading to lack of quorum.

The prevalent dispute between the Iraqi parties is the oil rich Kirkuk province, which Kurdish lawmakers insisted on their inclusion within the Iraqi Kurdistan. The situation that the Arab and Turkmen lawmakers oppose fiercely.

Additionally, two points raised controversy in the discussion: The adoption of the open-list election during the vote and doubling the parliamentary seats from 275 to 311 seats.

The Iraqi parliament is expected to hold a hearing on October 31. The political standoff facing the Iraqi lawmakers, may question the possibility of holding the general elections, scheduled for January 16, 2010. The central elections commission might be unable to organize it, due to time constriction.

A.5.Hashimi decides to join bloc of Iyad Alawi and Salih Al-Mutlaq (Al-Malaf)

Iraqi Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi has decided to join the new political bloc formed by former Prime Minister Iyad Alawi and President of the National Dialogue Front Salih Al-Mutlaq.

Agence-France Presse reported that Hashimi's aide Saif al-Din Abd al-Rahman said that Hashimi will be a part of this new bloc running in the upcoming elections. Member of Parliament Jamal Al-Batikh has confirmed that there is continuing communication with the president of the Tajdeed (Renewal)

List Tariq Al-Hashimi, MP from Ninawa Province Usama Al-Najaiifi, and Vice President Rafia' Al-Issawi encouraging them to join the new coalition.

Batikh confirmed that his bloc has agreed with the bloc led by Iyad Alawi and the National Dialogue Front headed by Salih Al-Mutlaq concerning the formation of an alliance named the "Iraqi National Movement," in preparation to run in legislative elections early next year.

Batikh denied that there is an alliance between the Dialogue Front and the Iraqi List as an interface for the dissolved Ba'ath Party. He confirmed the adherence of his bloc's announced stance on the prohibited party.

Batikh added that "the statements about the Ba'ath Party and his choice regarding [some of its] figures does not deter the resolve of his list concerning its serious work." He pointed out that his list has asked that "Ba'athists present an official apology to the Iraqi people for the previous era and hand over those involved in the perpetration of crimes to the courts."

It is expected that there will be an announcement on Thursday of a new electoral coalition bearing the name "The Coalition of Will and Change." According to a well informed source, more than 50 entities, groups, parties, and independent personalities are included in the coalition.

They hope to realize gains to benefit the national forces that are looking to supplement the political process with new blood and faces. The primary goal is to maintain Iraq's unity, its wealth, and make it a powerful country resistant to attack.

The source added that "this coalition represents the elite from the forces, entities, young personalities, tribes, social and civil society groups, human rights groups, women's organizations, and students who have weight inside and outside of Iraq." The source revealed that this coalition will be headed by Shaykh Mahmud Al-Daham.

A.6.Hill discuss with political blocs in Parliament solutions to issue of Kirkuk (Al-Sumaria)

MP of Kurdistan Alliance, Abd Al-Bari Zebari, said, "On Thursday afternoon, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Christopher Hill, held series of meetings at the Council of Representatives, with leaders of political blocs to reach a compromise on the issue of Kirkuk."

Zebari added that "Ambassador Hill is trying to bridge the gap between the political blocs' views in Parliament to allow the adoption of the electoral law on Thursday's session, noting that Hill did not meet with the Kurdistan Alliance so far, but has met with a number of the political blocs in the council."

The Kurdistan Alliance has threatened to veto any proposal that gives the city of Kirkuk a special status in the election law, and the Arab and Turkmen MPs will refuse to vote on the election law if the voters' registry of 2009 is adopted.

In a recent development published by the same outlet, MP of the National Dialogue Front, Muhammad Tamim, said, "Ambassador Hill ended his talks with the political blocs without reaching any significant results."

In an interview with Al-Sumaria News, Tamim said, "The talks Hill conducted with the political blocs did not address the obvious solutions to the issue of organizing elections in Kirkuk, noting that Hill focused on noting the attitudes of the political blocs on the issue of Kirkuk."

Tamim added that the failure to reach agreement returned the re-negotiations between the political blocs to square one, indicating that the Arabs and Turkmen deputies will be given a greater opportunity for dialogue to reach a solution satisfactory to all political parties.

A.7.Hakim: Turkmen, Arabs insist on non-recognition of Kurdish majority in Kirkuk (Radio Nawa)

President of the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq (SICI) Ammar Al-Hakim has said that the demands of the Turkmen and Arabs concerning holding elections in Kirkuk have been exaggerated to a certain extent.

Hakim said in a statement to the American newspaper the Washington Post that Kirkuk is not the issue that is delaying elections, but rather the laws linked the election. The issue between the parties is two or three seats with at most 275 recognized seats. He expressed his belief that the demands of the Turkmen and Kurds have been exaggerated to a certain degree. He indicated that there is a Kurdish majority in Kirkuk, and the other side has not admitted this and wants that which the Kurds have, which is the essence of the problem.

The United Nations has presented a proposal for holding elections in Kirkuk on the appointed day in accordance with voter registration records from 2009, on an exceptional basis, after which voter registration would be updated.

A.8. Iraqi elections facing possible delay (CNN)

The fate of Iraq's national elections hung in the balance Thursday as the nation's lawmakers failed to convene for an official session and adopt an election law, a move that could spark a delay in the upcoming vote.

Members of the 275-member Council of Representatives caucused over the proposed election law legislation but not enough of the politicians were present for a quorum. Lawmakers told CNN that they hope to convene as early as Sunday to consider the measure.

Elections are scheduled for January 16, and the constitutional deadline for the elections is January 31. But Iraq's election commission will need at least 90 days after passage of the law to carry out elections, which U.S. and Iraqi government officials call a vital step in Iraqi efforts to solidify a democratic system in the post-Saddam Hussein era.

Officials fear that it would be impossible to get administrative needs in place for the election if the measure isn't passed soon. That would mean either a delay in the election or holding it under a law that was in effect for Iraqi elections several years ago.

A secure environment and political stability during and after the polls will be key as the U.S. looks to withdraw combat troops by next August, leaving 50,000 in advisory roles, and then withdraw all U.S. forces by the end of 2011.

The vote has been stymied by disagreements, particularly the electoral status of Kirkuk, the ethnically mixed Tameem province city, and the question of open and closed voting lists. The disagreement in Kirkuk involves how to apportion votes among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen, the main ethnic groups there. Under the Saddam Hussein regime, Kurds were kicked out of Kirkuk and many Arabs moved in, a policy called "Arabization." But Kurds later returned to the city in droves after the Saddam regime was toppled.

There are sharp disagreements over which voter registries should be used in the elections, with the Kurds wanting a current one and the Arabs and Turkmen wanting registries from

several years ago. Kurds have long regarded Kirkuk as an integral part of Kurdistan and many want to be part of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. Arabs and Turkmens have their claims to the city and all the groups want their voices and votes to be fairly represented in the political system.

There had been talk that the Kurds were going to boycott Thursday's session, but several lawmakers said that hasn't happened despite the lack of quorum.

As for the lists, politicians disagree over the use of open lists that name candidates and closed lists that names parties. The law used in the 2005 election calls for a closed list.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Christopher R. Hill and Gen. Ray Odierno, the top U.S. military officials in Iraq, issued a statement on Thursday urging lawmakers to decide that "rules, procedures, and decisions" for the election apply only to that vote.

They argue it should not set precedents "for future political settlements related to Article 140, demographic change, disputed boundaries, or other contested issues," a specific reference to the Kirkuk question. Article 140 is the section of the country's constitution referencing the issue.

"The future of Iraq depends on the Iraqi leadership and people," the statement said. "We urge Iraq's political leaders to work out their differences and take swift action to do what is in the best interest of the Iraqi people so they may exercise their democratic rights on January 16, 2010."

A.9. Iraqi parliament delays vote on election law again (UPI)

Rancorous debate over voting in the disputed Iraqi city of Kirkuk on Thursday once again postponed a parliamentary vote on a new election law.

Parliament convened on Thursday afternoon, but the most important item, a debate on a law to cover voting the January 16 parliamentary elections, was not on the agenda.

Debate over the conduct of elections in the city has forestalled a vote on the law several times in recent weeks. Many Iraqi Kurds hope to make Kirkuk, and its nearby oilfields, the capital of an independent state, calling it their 'Jerusalem.' Iraqi Arab and Turkmen politicians regard the city and surrounding al-Tamim province as an integral part of Iraq.

Under the Iraqi constitution, the parliamentary elections must take place by the end of January. Lawmakers missed the October 15 deadline that would provide election workers the 90 days they say they need to organize elections in time for January 16.

Thursday's postponement came after Kurdish lawmaker Mahmoud Othman told reporters that the Kurdish parliamentary bloc would boycott any vote on a proposal to use the 2004 voter registration rolls for Kirkuk and surrounding al-Tamim province.

The 2009 voter rolls showed a dramatic increase in Kurdish voters in the region. Kurdish politicians have backed a UN proposal that would see Kirkuk vote at the same time as the rest of the country, using the most recent voter rolls.

In a phone interview with the German Press Agency dpa after Thursday's postponement, Kurdish parliamentarian Khalid Shawani again stressed that the Kurdish bloc would boycott any vote on a proposal to use the 2004 lists.

Shawani called such proposals 'chauvinist,' and warned that, if parliament were to pass them, 'it would lose its neutrality and would create problems instead of agreements, and that instead of solving the problems of Kirkuk, it would damage the political process in all Iraq.'

Arab and Turkmen lawmakers look with suspicion at a dramatic increase in Kurdish voters in the city recorded in the 2009 voter rolls from the 2004 rolls, and want them examined.

Kurdish lawmakers have said that they would support such a measure if the voting rolls from other provinces were also examined. Arab lawmakers have rejected this as impractical.

'We have made our position clear,' Sheikh Abdel-Rahman Manshid al- Assi, a member of the Arab Political Council of Kirkuk, told dpa. 'We will not relinquish Kirkuk ... It is up to the Kurds to make concessions.'

'The participation of Arabs and Turkmens will give legitimacy to the process,' he said, calling for the city and its environs to be given a special status.

Ad Melkert, the UN's special envoy to Iraq, on Tuesday presented a plan that would see Kirkuk vote at the same time as the rest of the country, using the 2009 voting rolls. A committee made up of Iraq's top politicians from across the country's sectarian and ethnic divides has suggested either postponing the polls in Kirkuk, using the 2004 voting rolls, or separating the province into two voting districts.

Lawmakers have sought a consensus solution to forestall the possibility that Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, himself an ethnic Kurd, might veto such a measure. Tensions have been high in the region as debate on the elections law has come to a head.

A bomb blast shook central Kirkuk's al-Mansur mosque on Thursday morning, but caused no casualties, police told Aswat al-Iraq. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Speaking after the parliament for northern Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region ratified a new cabinet there Wednesday, Kurdish President Massoud Barzani insisted that Kirkuk must be part of the Kurdish region.

'We want (Kirkuk) incorporated into our region, because the majority of the population is Kurdish,' he said. 'We will not agree to any other solution.'

His statements came as Iraqi soldiers moved into the disputed area of Daquq, 45 kilometres to the south of Kirkuk, Amir Khawa Karam, the head of the local council, told the German Press Agency dpa. Karam, a politician from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, one of the partners in

government in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region to the north, said the soldiers had told Kurdish Peshmerga militias to leave the area.

'We will not accept any form of interference from ... the Iraqi army in the administrative affairs of the region of Daquq,' he said.

A.10. Election Law Stalemate (Al-Iraqiya TV)

Today, the Iraqi Parliament met under the premiership of its speaker Mr. Iyaad Al-Samara'ie. With an agenda that did not include an item indicating a vote has been set on the controversial Election Law. The network correspondent reported that today's session has turned into a deliberative meeting due to the lack of quota; adding that the legal committee in Parliament has failed to reach an agreement of the proposals submitted to Parliament relevant to the election process in the province of Kirkuk.

The delegate for the Independent Arab Block, Mr. A'bed Moutluck Al-Jabourie that the legal committee in Parliament has met appropriately for and pointedly to consider the proposals submitted to Parliament relevant to the election process in the province of Kirkuk. Al-Jabourie categorically dismissed any probability for the committee to reach a compromising solution or a conciliatory posture with regard to the issue. He concluded that he is hopeful that the three proposals could be submitted to the vote in today's session. These are the United Nations proposal, the Primacy council Proposal, and a jointly sponsored Proposal by the Arabs and Turkmen constituencies.

The Kurdistan Alliance suggested that in the event the concerned parties may insist on awarding a special status to the province of Kirkuk, it behooves the Alliance to boycott the elections. Mr. Abdullah Saleh, the delegate for the Alliance, indicated that that his Block (T/N a member of the Alliance) rejects any proposal toward award such status to the province, from an election stand point. He added that President Jallal Talbani, of the Republic shall veto the Parliament's vote should such motion for a special status be considered by Parliament.

The delegate from Al- Fadilah Block (Arabic Translation for the word Virtue, or Integrity) noted that Parliaments vote on the motions or options pertaining to the status of Kirkuk shall be vetoed either by the President Jallal Talbani, of the Republic, Jallal Talbani or his vice president, Tarek Al-Hashemie. He noted that such measure shall hold back the election process, leaving the delegates with one option, namely to acknowledge an Option of Discourse to reach a compromising formula with respect to Kirkuk, and which they have yet to attain.

A.11. Council of Representatives hold a deliberative session, and adjourned until Sunday (Sot Al-Iraq)

House of Representatives held a deliberative session on Thursday, under the chairmanship of Mr. Ayad Samara'i, President of the Council.

The meeting was initiated by reading verses from the Quran, then President of the Council pointed out that an agreement regarding the electoral law is looming on the horizon, and it

crystallized in the meetings of the Political Council for National Security proposals, but the Electoral Commission confirmed that the proposals are not applicable, especially the voter registration for the year 2004 cannot be relied them, because they were organized under the auspices of non-Iraqi parties, as well as some technical issues.

After that, two proposals were submitted; first is to hold elections in Kirkuk in conjunction with other governorates according to a special voters registration in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The second proposed procedure is to hold elections on time and postponement the announcement of the results until the voters registration in Kirkuk is checked. Adding that there had been dialogue since this morning with some representatives of political entities, but the dispute still exists between the parties, even if partial, confirming that there are attempts to bring closer the views of the trends towards the principle of consensus to vote on the law.

Then the Chairman of the Legal committee then read a report expressing his view, pointing out that although there is no agreement yet on the elections for the governorate of Kirkuk, and that there are two opinions were presented, demanding a decision from the Council of Representatives to adopt one of these opinions or put both of them to the vote.

He pointed out that the first option is to hold the elections in Kirkuk province according to the records of 2009, and to form a committee to scrutinize the record during the year, and if there were defects by 38% in the log, elections in the province should be canceled. And the second option to hold the elections according to the 2009 record by four constituencies, allocating three seats for each of the Taza, Shuan and Hawiyjah, and five seats for the for the center of the province.

He called on MPs to issue resolution to determine the day of elections and the electoral system, and the number of seats for the next Council of Representatives. He urged them to continue discussions regarding Kirkuk in the hope of reaching a resolution in the future, or modify the previous election law to include the adoption of the open list, and keep pace with population growth.

Some MPs felt that there were attempts to disrupt the upcoming elections, also stressed the need to hold the elections on time whether an agreement was reached to approve the election law or not, and therefore not disable the function of the House of Representatives and the problems of the country as a whole. Parliament has been adjourned until Sunday.

A.12. Accountability and Justice Committee demands the resignation of Interior Minister (Al Sumaria TV)

Chair of the Accountability and Justice Committee in the House of Representatives, Falah Hassan Shanshal, said that his committee submitted a request to the President of the Council, which bears signatures of 58 MPs, to question the Minister of Interior, Jawad al-Bulani, asking the latter to resign from his post on the background of keeping members of Baath Party in his Ministry.

In a press conference held today, Shanshal said that the Committee submitted a request, to the President of the Council, Iyad al-Samarraie, which bears signatures of 58 MPs representing different Blocs, to question Bulani, noting that the latter did not abide by the agreement made between the Commission and the Representatives from the Ministry, to decontaminate the Ministry from officers who belong to Baath Party.

Shanshal held the responsibility of the bloody Wednesday bombings in August, and the Sunday bombings, which targeted the Ministry of Justice and Baghdad Provincial Council, on the officers, who Bulani brought to his Ministry, affirming that they belong to the former security agencies of the Fedayeen Saddam, Special guards, Intelligence forces and members of the Party.

During a press conference, Shanshal said that he received information by the Undersecretary of the Interior Ministry, Adnan al-Asadi, that reveals the existence of substitutes for these officers, which Bulani did not appoint, adding that the Commission made several meetings to the Interior Ministry, but the Interior Minister instructed to his staff not to deal with the Accountability Committee.

Shanshal said that the corruption files that are owned by the Commission, don't accuse the Minister only, but include other officers in the Ministry, who are charged with financial and administration corruption, and called on Bulani to submit his resignation from his current post.

Shanshal accused the Defense Minister, for negligence of duty, because he didn't move two security officers and former intelligence officer from his Ministry. He noted that the Ministries of Interior and Defense have witnessed the return of members from the Baath Party, who are holding important and serious positions.

A.13.Salih: We will strengthen the achievements and will handle past failures (al Sharqiya TV)

In a statement to al-Sharqiya TV, PM of KRG, Barham Salih, said that his government will work on the enforcement of Article 140 of the Constitution, especially with Kirkuk.

He said that his Government will work on strengthening the achievements of the previous government and will address the failures that have occurred in all areas.

A.14.Barham Salih promises to unite the security and financial institutions in the Kurdistan government (Radio Dijla)

On Wednesday, KRG Barham Ahmad Salih promised to implement the Kurdistan List program improvement and construction, in accordance with the approval of the Kurdistan parliament.

Salih stressed his intention to fight corruption and uniting the military, security and financial institution and denying the party's intrusion in the governmental affairs.

During Kurdistan parliament session, Salih requested to give trust to his government, since the government is new and works under new political era and will face challenges and difficult duties.

The parliament voted for giving trust to the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in the session including 19 ministers. The former governmental ministries were reduced from 40 ministries to 19 and other ministries were converted to independent institutions and commissions.

For the first time, Kurdistan Regional Parliament formed an opposition to the two blocs. The first change bloc includes 25 seats and the service and reform bloc (Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Islamic groups), which has 10 seats and did not vote on behalf of the new government. It withdrew from the session protesting for not informing the ministers and the division of the two main Kurdish parties (Democratic Kurdish Party and the National Kurdistan Union), the main ministries headed by the finance and Pishmerga (acquired by the Kurdistan Democratic Party) and the interior natural resources (obtained by the Kurdistan Democracy Party).

A prominent commander in the new national patriotic government, Salih presides the new government and will be the commander in the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

Three ministries were granted three main components in the region, Christians, Turkmen and Yazidis, in addition to granting ministries to the Kurdish small parties (Kurdistan Islamic Movement, Joint Kurdistan Party and social justice bloc led by the Communist Party). It provided for each of the above, a ministry in the new government.

A.15. Kuwait announces the completion of preparations for the maintenance of border signs between Kuwait and Iraq (Radio Nawa)

Kuwait praised the important and vital role played by the United Nations, especially the Administration of Peacekeeping Operations for the maintenance of border signs between them and Iraq pursuant to the Security Council resolution No. 833 of 1993.

BuZuhair, in a speech by the Permanent mission of the State of Kuwait at the United Nations, said that the State of Kuwait commends the vital and important role played by the United Nations for the maintenance of border signs between Kuwait and Iraq, adding that Kuwait in this regard expresses its appreciation and thanks to the efforts of the administration of Peacekeeping Operations for completing the maintenance work required.

He pointed out that Kuwait has implemented all the recommendations contained in the technical report, by removing obstacles and creating the appropriate conditions for the work of the Technical Committee of the United Nations, to do its part in the maintenance of border markers, stressing Kuwait's readiness to continue to provide the necessary assistance and facilities and logistical support needed by the United Nations to facilitate their mission on the Kuwaiti side of the border.

A.16. Czech Republic indicates its willingness to open up to Iraq in all fields (al-Sabah)

The Czech Republic expressed its readiness to open up to Iraq and develop prospects of bilateral cooperation in all fields. This came after talks held in Baghdad yesterday between Undersecretary of Minister of Trade, Dr. Safa al-Din Safi, his Czech counterpart, Vladimir Tuchowski, and the delegation accompanying him, which focused on the volume of the trade exchange between the two countries.

A source at the National Media Center said that Safi expressed the government's willingness to open trade and industrial cooperation with the Czech Republic, pointing out the opportunities available and that the doors are open to the Czech investor, according to the steps prepared by the Higher Investment Council.

For his part, the visiting minister expressed his country's desire to open up on Iraq and strengthen the ties of cooperation at all levels. The source added that the visiting delegation included the Minister of Defense Jan Folic and his deputy, and Ambassador Bronslava Tomashova.

A.17. Iraqis' election-law battle rages over status of Kirkuk (McClatchy)

Up against the clock, Iraqi politicians spent Wednesday hammering out the final sticking points of an election law they hope to present to parliament for a vote within days to avoid a risky and embarrassing delay of the January polls.

How to handle the oil-rich city of Kirkuk remains the key snag, several Iraqi officials said. The debate now hinges on whether election administrators will count voters based on the city's 2009 population, which would favor Kurds, or include residents from 2004, which would boost Arab representation in the divided city.

A senior aide to the speaker of parliament said there was serious talk of bringing the issue to a vote Thursday, despite the opposition of Kurdish politicians, who seek more time to ensure their interests are addressed.

Massoud Barzani, the president of the Kurdistan region, added to the pressure Wednesday with a public demand to incorporate Kirkuk into his semiautonomous region.

"We will not accept any (other) solution for Kirkuk," Barzani said at the swearing-in of a new Kurdish regional government. "We want it to be annexed to our region because the majority of its population are Kurds."

Timetables set forth by the Iraqi Constitution and the electoral commission make it imperative that an election deal be reached soon. The original deadline was Oct. 15, and there's concern that even a rushed agreement won't leave enough time for election officials to approve candidates, oversee the campaign and ensure voters have enough information before they head to the polls.

Smooth elections are also important for the Obama administration, which had hoped to withdraw most U.S. military forces by next summer and leave Iraq in the care of a newly elected government. A political standoff could leave the country vulnerable to more insurgent

attacks, such as the devastating truck bombings that killed 155 people and wounded hundreds more last Sunday.

"We cannot wait forever for the election law to be passed, and we've said this to parliament," said Judge Qassim al Abboudi, a senior administrator on the elections commission. "But we have seen that there is a real effort to finalize the law. Kirkuk remains the issue. With the grace of God, they should have a final draft within the next few days, and within that time frame we will work night and day in order to make do with what time we have left."

Pushing for an outcome that angers either Arabs or Kurds could backfire, with riots of the sort that occurred after previous debates over election laws. Arabs insist on using the 2004 registry, but Kurds favor a U.N. proposal to use 2009 voter records for the January election until a broader resolution is reached.

Arab and Kurdish camps blamed each other Wednesday for delaying the election law.

Khalid Shwani, a Kurdish legislator, said the "rigidity and stubbornness" of his Arab counterparts were sinking hopes for a consensus. He said the 2009 census was the most accurate count of voters and that the Arabs were pushing to use older records in order to deny the reality of a Kurdish majority in Kirkuk after years of reversing the Saddam Hussein-era policy of "Arabization," which drove Kurds from the city to give it an Arab identity.

"These people, our brothers, call for the use of the 2004 census in order to reap political gains because it will give them the upper hand," Shwani said. "We have failed to reach an accord, and it is they who must bear the responsibility for that."

Sunni Muslim Arab legislators, however, charged that bias toward the Kurds was stalling progress, with the Shiite Muslim- and Sunni Kurd-dominated government throwing its weight behind a proposal that could disenfranchise some Arab voters in Kirkuk.

"In Iraq we've gotten used to resolving our issues by consensus, but if an accord can't be reached today, we will vote tomorrow," said Saleem al Jubouri, a spokesman for the main Sunni Arab political bloc. "Either we have an election law or we don't, (but) we must vote and the vote will be final."

A.18. Kurdish official says new Kurdistan Government to readdress many files (Al-Jazeera)

Al-Jazeera TV in Arabic conducts a live interview with Tariq Jawhar, adviser to the Kurdistan Parliament speaker, to comment on the installation of the new government in the Kurdistan Region led by former Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, as well as on the withdrawal of the Change Bloc, the Islamic Union Bloc and the Islamic Group from the parliament's opening session.

Asked how the Barham Salih government will tackle the outstanding files with the central government, Jawhar says: "Let us be optimistic about the prospects of coordination and cooperation between the Region and Baghdad in the upcoming phase. I think that Barham

Salih is a key young Iraqi leader, who has had an effective influence on the situation in Iraq over the past few years."

He adds: "The man has a wide experience in this respect. He has an experience in how governance goes in Baghdad. Also, he is aware of all the details of the differences between Baghdad and Arbil."

Asked if the withdrawal of some Kurdish blocs from today's parliament session is a sign of "an internal dissension" in the Kurdistan Region, he says: "There is opposition in any democratic system. If the opposition handles the government's activities and services both objectively and constructively, this will benefit the new Kurdistan Government. After all, diagnosing any disadvantages and defects will serve the government, the prime minister and the participant parties. It will also serve the interest of the Kurdistan people."

He adds: "I believe that Barham Salih enjoys wide support from the politicians and the major parties in the Kurdistan Region. The Kurdistan Parliament supports him too. The man has a large-scale program to readdress many files that serve the good of the Kurdistan people, including working out drastic solutions to the problems with Baghdad in accordance with the Constitution. He will also address issues related to the distribution of powers according to the Iraqi Constitution, the reorganization of the administrative and service-related matters in the Kurdistan Region, adhering to the oil policy, supporting investment and agriculture and improving the standard of living of the martyrs' families."

A.19. Kirkuk: Voices from a divided city (BBC)

Iraqi lawmakers have been in deadlock over laws covering nationwide elections in January, with one of the thorniest issues being the vote in the oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk.

Control of the city is contested between ethnic Arabs, Kurds and Turkmen, which has been complicated by major demographic changes under Saddam Hussein's "Arabisation" programme and a large influx of Kurdish since the fall of the regime.

Here, Kirkukis from different ethnic backgrounds share their thoughts on the city's political future.

ARAB: ABU ALI AL-BAYATI, 25, DOCTOR

Kirkuk is not for anyone to claim, it's the land of all Iraqis, whether they are Arab, Kurd or Turkmen.

The same argument goes for the oil and all the natural resources of the region. It should not be monopolised by any group.

I realise some Kurds want the city to be part of Iraqi Kurdistan. But any attempts to separate Kirkuk from the rest of Iraq will only lead to clashes between the different ethnic groups.

People here are trying to get on with their lives but tensions are being heightened by the rhetoric of different ethnic factions who are stalling the elections.

There will be major problems if the elections go ahead in Iraq's 18 provinces but not Kirkuk. This may become a flashpoint of future violence.

I would participate in the elections but only with the "open" lists.

We cannot give the vote to Kurds who have recently come to this city from other parts of Iraq or neighbouring countries. That movement of people has affected the ethnic make-up of the region and will impact on the election.

But I do not mind the participation of those Kurds who left during Saddam's rule and are now returning.

KURD: HAWAR, 60, KIRKUK

According to the Iraqi constitution each person will have one vote in the upcoming elections. So it is important that all Kirkukis have the right to elect our own representatives to the parliament.

There must also be a reversal of the Saddam-era Arabisation of the area - as outlined in the constitution. It is only a handful of Turkmen and pro-Saddam Arabs that do not want this to take place.

The ultimate future of this city must be decided by the people in a referendum.

If people want Kirkuk to return to Kurdistan then I will support it. If the majority want it to stay under the authority of Baghdad, or become a separate federal entity then I would support that as well.

Some people think Kurds want Kirkuk just because of its oil. This is not true. Today oil is being found at a rapid rate across Kurdistan. This city has always been part of Kurdistan - this is shown on Ottoman maps.

There is tension, but it is between political parties not ordinary people. Any anger between ordinary people is limited and based on racist perceptions.

I have Arab and Turkmen friends who I have known since Saddam's reign. Today we invite one another to our houses and spend time together.

TURKMAN: NERMEEN AL-MUFTI, 49, JOURNALIST

There can be no stability in the area, the country and the wider region as long as the Kurds claim Kirkuk for their own. I am not against an autonomous Kurdish region, but I do not think it should cover this city.

Kirkuk should have a special status and should remain an Iraqi city. The various ethnic groups must be protected. For hundreds of years different groups lived here side by side. I have friends of other backgrounds. There has been years of inter-marriage.

There has been a fabricated division between people since the Saddam-era Arabisation of the area. The problem today is not between the various ethnic groups who have always been here, but between the general population and the Kurds who have recently settled here.

There have been too many Kurds coming to this area in recent years. It is unfair to allow them all to vote in the election as this may tip the balance away from the other communities. Power in the city should be shared between the various ethnic groups. The temporary power-sharing agreement between [Muslim] Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Christians should continue.

A.20. An intense verbal argument between MPs and Samara'i interferes (Sot Al-Iraq)

A parliamentary sources report the widening divergence of views between members of the House of Representatives on the issue of Kirkuk, and the failure to reach a compromise today.

The source, who declined to be named, in a telephone interview with Khabar News Agency, said, "This morning, the situation developed into a verbal argument, almost a fist fight, between the Kurdistan Alliance MP Khalid Ashwani, Turkmen MP from the Sadr trend, Fawzi Akram, and the representative of the Arab bloc, Omar Al-Jubouri."

The source added that the situation prompted Parliament President, Ayad Samara'i, to intervene to settle the dispute between the deputies, and striking with his hand firmly on the table to silence the MPs.

A.21. Tareq al-Hashemi decides to join Iyad Allawi and Saleh Mutlaq bloc (Buratha News)

Tareq al-Hashemi has decided to join the new bloc with former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi and President of the National Dialogue Front, Saleh al-Mutlaq.

The French press agency quoted from Al-Hashemi assistant Sayf al-Din Abdul Rahman saying that Hashemi will be part of this new bloc for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Jamal Al-Bateqi, Iraqi National List Deputy has confirmed, "We continued contacts with the head of the renewal list Tareq al-Hashemi, deputy Osama Nujaifi Ninawa province, the Deputy Prime Minister Rafie al-Issawi, to urge them to join the new coalition."

Al-Bateqi said the bloc led by Iyad Allawi, the Sunni National Dialogue Front led by Saleh al-Mutlaq decided to form an alliance called "the Iraqi National Movement", in preparation for run the elections early next year.

Al-Bateqi said "Talk about the Baath Party and his choice of characters does not deter the resolve of his list of serious work," noting that the list called Baathists formal apology for the previous phase of the Iraqi people and bring the perpetrators of crimes to the courts.

A.22. Ammar al-Hakim: Demands of Arabs and Turkmen over Kirkuk "exaggerated to some extent" (AKnews)

President of Islamic Supreme Council today said that the linking issue of Kirkuk with the elections is the problem, because Kirkuk is one of the important files in the Iraqi situation,

indicating that the demands of the Arabs and Turkmen on the course of the elections in the city is "exaggerated to some extent."

Ammar al-Hakim told the Washington Post that Kirkuk is not the problem in delaying the election law but the problem is linking Kirkuk with the election law, and the difference between all parties is on two or three seats at the maximum, out of the 275 seats.

Hakim expressed his belief that the demands of the Arabs and Turkmen are exaggerated to some extent, and Kurd brothers are saying if you want let's go back to the status of Kirkuk, as it was in 1957 before all these changes, or do you want to go back to the situation at the beginning of the fall of the regime.

He pointed out, "There is a relative Kurdish majority in Kirkuk, and the other party does not recognize that and wants to clamor for what the Kurds have acquired, and this is the essence of the problem according to my perception."

A.23. Austria seeks stronger ties with Kurdistan – ambassador (Aswat al-Iraq)

Austrian ambassador to Iraq Franz Horlberger, who is currently visiting Iraqi Kurdistan, said that his government is ready to support the region's cabinet and to strengthen relations between the two sides.

"The ambassador is contented over this visit," said a release posted on Thursday on the web site of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). It said that Horlberger stressed the impotence of enhancing Austrian-Kurdish relations.

A.24. PKK elements are concerned of the Turkish plots to liquidate them (al-Jazeera TV)

Kurdistan Region President Masoud Barazani praised the steps taken by the Turkish Government in dealing with the Kurdish crisis. Barazani's statements came after talks conducted with the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmet Davutoglu in Irbil.

Al-Jazeera correspondent from Irbil prepared the following report on Minister Davutoglu's visit:

"It was an ordinary visit that generated from Basra, southern Iraq to inaugurate the new Turkish Consulate in the province; however, the visit was characterized as exceptional and thus after it included Irbil of Kurdistan Region, Iraq."

"This is the first visit of its kind, where a high-level Turkish official such as the Foreign Minister, who is the new planner for the Turkish foreign policy in the region."

"Davutoglu met with Barazani and discussed with him opening a Turkish Consulate in Irbil in the future, he further discussed the support that the Kurds can provide to facilitate the return of the Kurdish Labor Party elements to Turkey."

"After their meeting a joint press conference was conducted where Minister Davutoglu stated: 'We have agreed on a common-vision related to the future of the Middle East and it's built on comprehensive economy and political dialogue for peaceful religious and national coexistence among the entire people in the region, thus I believe it is time to take courageous steps in this regard.' Barazani stated: 'We are ready to provide whatever support is needed to help the Turkish State's new policy, which I see it as a positive policy.'

"The Kurdish side in Iraq feels comfortable and optimistic about the visit, as for the PKK elements, who take Kurdistan Mountains located along the Turkish-Iraqi borders as their refuge are concerned about the Turkish new political goals."

Ahmad Dienz, official for PKK's foreign policies stated: 'The Turkish State claims that it wants to settle the Kurdish issue from one side, but on the other side and during its disclosed and undisclosed meetings conspire to liquidate the PKK elements.'

"For a high-level Turkish official to come to the region to meet with Kurdish officials is a huge political development."

A.25. Parliament will hold a voting session tomorrow (Al Sharqiya TV)

The Iraqi Parliament will hold a session tomorrow, and it is expected that they will vote on the election law, according to Parliamentary members.

For sixth continuous time Parliament failed to vote on the adoption of the election law, because of the Kirkuk issue and the voters registration issue in Kirkuk. Parliamentary sources, who attended the meeting of the Presidency Council with the Legal Committee in the Council, warned about returning back to the 2005 election law, and adopting the Closed List

A.26. Iraqi Kurdistan Region President Masud Barzani voiced much support for Turkish opening-up to Kurds in Turkey (KUNA)

Speaking at a joint news conference with visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu late Friday, Barzani appreciated the new Turkish policy aiming to resolve the Kurdish issue in Turkey, saying he was ready to help in this respect.

"I'd like to say that the policy adopted by the Turkish government for settling the Kurdish issue in Turkey is a good one," he said. He hailed the Turkish foreign minister's visit as of great importance to the development of relations between Turkey and Iraq in general and Kurdistan in particular.

"We are pleased at this visit and the Turkish government's decision to open a consulate in Irbil is a significant step in our relations," he said.

He went on to say, "It is possible for Turkey to make Kurdistan Region a bridge linking it to Iraq, where security and stability prevail." For his part, the Turkish foreign minister hailed good relations between Turkey and Kurdistan Region, saying Turkey was seeking to "build a new Middle East involving Turks, Arabs, Persians, Shiites and Sunnis." He said that Iraq, which includes different components, is important to Turkey, adding any threat to its security would negatively affect Turkey.

A business delegation is accompanying the Turkish minister in his visit to Kurdistan in the hope of winning trade and investment contracts there. Davutoglu is the most important Turkish official to visit Kurdistan since the downfall of Saddam Hussein's defunct regime.

A.27. Clerics urge MPs to end Iraqi elections deadlock (EXSUM)

Iraqi clerics, both Shia and Sunni, called on members of parliament yesterday to end a protracted deadlock over a key election law that threatens to delay polls scheduled for January.

A representative of Shia spiritual leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali Al Sistani, warned of the security implications of any postponement following two massive bombings which killed 153 people in central Baghdad last Sunday.

"The current period is very sensitive, and terrorist forces are working to weaken people's confidence in the government and political parties," Sheikh Abdul Mahdi Al Karbalai told worshippers at his mosque in the central shrine city of Karbala.

"The time left to organise elections has become shorter - they must take place on time because holding them on their current date is a democratic and constitutional principle.

"Delaying the elections will have dangerous effects on security," he warned.

A Sunni cleric in the southern port city of Basra delivered a similar message. It was echoed by Shiite clerics from the radical faction of Moqtada Sadr in Baghdad and from the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council in the shrine city of Najaf.

Stalemate over the bill has sparked concern that the polls, scheduled for January 16, will have to be delayed because electoral authorities will not have enough time to organise them. The latest attempt to put the draft electoral law to a vote failed on Thursday, when parliament failed to reach a quorum because Kurdish MPs stayed away amid a long-running dispute over the northern oil province of Kirkuk.

The impasse comes despite intense lobbying from both the United Nations and the United States, and pressure from Prime Minister Nouri Al Maliki. Karbalai also sharply criticised the government over Sunday's twin suicide attacks at the justice ministry and the Baghdad

provincial government offices, which came just two months after similar attacks killed around 100 people at the finance and foreign ministries.

"With insurgents having repeated the same bombings, with the same style and in the same secure area, we have to review the security plan that has been implemented in Baghdad," he said.

"I demand immediate and urgent checks for the reasons that led to the bombings."

Security remains tight in Baghdad, with several roads closed off, and stringent checks at multiple checkpoints across the capital. More than 60 members of the Iraqi security forces have been arrested in connection with the attacks, and the prime minister and his interior and defence ministers are to face questions in parliament. Baghdad governor Salah Abdul Razzaq has called for both Interior Minister Jawad Al Bolani and Baghdad Operations Command chief Lieutenant General Abboud Qanbar to be sacked.

Sunday's twin suicide bombings, targeting government offices in central Baghdad, killed 153 people and left more than 500 wounded, the deadliest attacks in the country in more than two years.

A.28. Assassination of senior officer investigating Baghdad bombings by his fellow officers shocks security ministers, political leaders (Al-Sharqiya)

Al-Sharqiya at 2200 reports: "Mystery surrounds the assassination of a senior police officer who is part of the team investigating the (25 Oct) criminal blasts that targeted the Justice Ministry and Baghdad Provincial Council in Al-Salihyah in central Baghdad. Police sources said that the officer was found shot dead in his office.

The assassination comes amid accusations against some security agencies of colluding with the bombers and granting them the access they need to carry out the bombings, not to mention accusations to them of favoring certain political blocs and serving their agendas before the parliamentary elections.

Once reports of the above assassination emerged [Baghdad Operations Command spokesman] Qassim Ata was quick to deny that the officer is a member of the team investigating the Baghdad bombings, adding that the officer died in an accidental gun discharge. Ata, whose statements are generally doubtful, did not explain how the incident occurred inside an official security institution that is supposed to be fortified. One in which guns are not used randomly and are only used if it comes under attack. Security authorities are yet to issue a statement on the matter."

At 2300 al-Sharqiya reports: "The murder of a senior officer involved in the investigation regarding the planners and perpetrators of the 25 October bombings in Baghdad has raised

more questions on the depth of the division in the security institution and the magnitude of power struggle raging in the capital."

Observers in Baghdad said that the senior officer's assassination has shocked security ministers and political leaders in the country because it revealed the struggle behind the scenes that can bring anyone down at any time.

The observers ruled out the possibility that the real culprits of this new crime would be revealed during the investigations which will uncover the mysterious Baghdad's bombings, the parties involved in them and the political and electoral motives behind them

Al- Sharqiya added that, "the senior officer, Major Arkan Jiyad, Fell dead covered in his blood when his fellow officers entered his Office and shot him in the head and the rest of his body."

It noted that Qassim Ata referred to the incident as an "accidental gun discharge that happened while a number of offices were playing with their guns, and that this information was conveyed to Prime Minister Maliki and Minister of Interior Bulani whom ordered to open an immediate investigation to reveal the mystery of this incident and its political and security circumstances."

The news anchorwoman concluded: the big question in Baghdad... remains, is it the time to uncover the perpetrators of Sunday's bloody bombings? which political and security influential side, which assassinate the officer Arkan and sought to cover up the role of governmental parties and sides while Baghdad is witnessing bloody bombings on which the cards and questions are still mixed?

A.29. IHEC proposes Three irreplaceable options, warning that each day that passes over elections law constitutes a danger (Al-Iraqiya TV)

The Independent High Electoral Commission [IHEC], which may have three options only to organize its work and meet the deadline [for holding the elections], has warned that each day that passes, every delay and any consultations over the Election Law constitute a danger.

The three options are;

- 1- Approving the new law
- 2- Amending the old law
- 3- Postponing the elections as a last solution, which the political entities do not want.

This is followed by a report by Mohammad al-Khafaji, who says, "The Council of Representatives has no choice but to approve one of the three options that IHEC proposed to save time, and adopt a law through which it can finish its preparations for holding the elections on its time on January 16, 2010."

Faraj al-Haydari, head of the IHEC says, "The Council of Representatives has three options. It can amend the old law because it will be difficult to legislate a new law in two or three days. It can make whatever amendments it(COR) wants to the old law or postpone the elections date or adopt the old law. These are the only options. This is what we should tell our people as we cannot hide that from our people ."

Deputy Hadi al-Amerri says, "We can open dialogue to find a solution, but there is the track of finding a solution to Kirkuk problem and another track which is the track of the elections which should be held, otherwise, everybody will be accused of acting illegitimately and this will result in a constitutional vacuum which is a big danger that will not only threaten everybody but the whole political process."

Correspondent al-Khafaji says, "Members of the Kurdistan Alliance rejected any proposals regarding the issue of Kirkuk or any solutions that are not compatible with the Iraqi Constitution." Deputy Abdallah Salih says, "We are committed to the Iraqi Constitution on which the people voted. We will not accept the slightest violation of the constitution, which is the judge and the framework of the political process."

A.30. IHEC controls ad campaigns of political entities and candidates (Sot al-Iraq)

IHEC, in cooperation with the Municipality of Baghdad, is imposing new regulations for electoral propaganda for political parties intending to participate in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

1. Reduce the phenomenon of intrusion on buildings, streets and public places because of the indiscriminate posting of images, logos, posters and other means of election propaganda.
2. Requiring participating political parties and blocs not to write on the walls using paint or spray.
3. Prevent the use of adhesives such as glues.
4. The importance of using means of modern propaganda, such as cloth and plastic signs, adding to ease of removal.
5. Campaigning through various media and audio-visual and other modern methods, which will not cause a distortion of the face of the city of Baghdad.
6. Identify specific places to hang posters of the candidates, and the use of state buildings and mosques for electoral propaganda is prohibited.
7. Some places have been identified by the secretariat of Baghdad as may not be used in election campaigns, by the relevant municipalities in the provinces.
8. A joint committee will be formed between the secretariat of Baghdad and the Commission to monitor violations of blocs and political parties for random advertising.
9. Electoral Commission will formulate a campaign in the light of these controls and will inform the agents of such parties and entities to follow the procedures.
10. The Commission will also impose fines on violators and allow them 48 hours to remove their transgressions, otherwise fine will be doubled, and the name of the blocs and political parties in violation will be published to the media.

11. The need for cooperation from political entities and parties that intend to participate in the elections with the secretariat of Baghdad and IHEC, for the preservation of the capital and distortion of its image.

A.31. International border between Iran and Iraq opened for pilgrims to the holy shrines (Radio Dijla)

The mayor of the Iranian city of Qasr Shirin, Bahram Timuri, announced Friday the opening of the international border between Iraq and Iran and the area of Khosravi for pilgrims to holy shrines.

The Timuri said in a statement to the press Friday that the international border between Iran and Iraq in the area of Khosravi was opened on the occasion of the birth of Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Reza, peace be upon him.

He noted the commitment of the Iraqi side to provide security for visitors who go to the holy shrines in the framework of organized caravans for pilgrimage visits. Timuri said that two caravans from the Iranian province of Kerman province headed on Friday to Iraq, and four Iraqi caravans headed towards Iran to visit the holy sites there. He expressed his expectation that the area of Khosravi will receive 10,000 visitors daily. He pointed out that the passage of caravans in this area was impossible because of some security issues, but today they can pass because of improvements in the situation.

A.32. Sistani's representative warns of deteriorating security situation as elections with the approach (EXSUM)

In Friday's prayer speech, the representative of the religious reference Grand Ayatollah, Ali Sistani warned of the deteriorating security situation as the election approaches.

The representative of Sistani, Sheikh Abdel Mahdi, said in Karbala we need a comprehensive and accurate review of the security plans in Baghdad, after the attacks were repeated in the same manner and in the same place.

Mahdi stressed there should be an urgent analysis for the reasons that led to such explosions.

"It is inappropriate to rely on speculation and probabilities that are not based on evidence because it reveals that we cannot protect the country from potential attacks before the elections," Mahdi said.

He also warned of new attacks and said the coming period is very sensitive and the terrorist seek to undermine the confidence citizens have toward government and to security agencies.

A.33. IHEC: 1.2 million Iraqis abroad will participate in the voting process (al-Iraqiya)

Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) announced that the number of displaced and migrated Iraqis residing in 23 different Arab and Western States who would participate in the voting process have reached 1.2 million people. IHEC clarified that with the help of the Iraqi Ministries of Interior and Displacement and Migration in addition to the cooperation of the International Migration Organization they were able to identify the above mentioned number of Iraqis who would participate in the voting process.

A.34. Iraq MPs fail to reach quorum for election law vote (AFP)

Iraqi lawmakers again put off a vote on a key electoral bill on Thursday after failing to reach a quorum when a compromise version was presented, raising the prospect of January polls being delayed.

The stalemate comes despite intense lobbying from both the United Nations and the United States, as well as pressure from religious leaders and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

"A boycott by Kurdish MPs today is the main reason there was no vote in parliament," said Fawzi Akram, a lawmaker in radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr's bloc.

Another MP, speaking on condition of anonymity, said "insufficient MPs were present. There were only 100 MPs, and the quorum is 138." Parliament speaker Iyad al-Samarrai told reporters "consultations will continue, and there will be another meeting of parliament on Saturday," without specifying whether MPs would vote on the bill.

The key stumbling block to enacting a law has been the status of the oil-rich province of Kirkuk, an ethnically mixed northern region along the border with the autonomous region of Kurdistan. Kirkuk's majority Kurds have long demanded incorporation into Kurdistan, but that has met fierce opposition from the province's Arabs and Turkmen.

While Kurds favour using current voter registration lists and keeping Kirkuk as one electoral constituency, Arabs and Turkmen want 2004 or 2005 records to be used, or for Kirkuk to be split into two constituencies.

"Arab MPs refused a new proposal put forward by the UN to hold elections in Kirkuk using voter records from 2009, before updating those records and holding another election in 2010 (only in Kirkuk)," said Salim al-Juburi, deputy chairman of parliament's legal committee.

The late dictator Saddam Hussein pursued a policy of Arabisation in Kirkuk, which included driving Kurds out. But since Saddam's fall in 2003, Kurds have returned in large numbers.

The proposed amendments would also address whether parties list candidates' names on ballot papers or use the current system under which voters see only party names.

Stalemate over the bill has sparked concern that the polls, scheduled for January 16, will have to be delayed because electoral authorities will not have enough time to organise them. Pressure on MPs has come from a wide variety of people, including US President Barack Obama, the United Nations and Iraqi religious leaders, as well as Maliki.

On Thursday, US Ambassador Christopher Hill and General Ray Odierno, the top US commander in Iraq, reiterated that "the rules, procedures, and decisions adopted for the January elections should apply only to that election."

"They should not serve as precedents for future elections or for future political settlements" related to disputes over Kirkuk, they said in a joint statement.

In the event of disagreement on a common text, two proposals would be put forward -- one advanced by the UN and another by a senior political committee including Maliki, Samarrai and President Jalal Talabani. The bill garnering the most votes would be adopted.

Diplomats have expressed concern that elections in Kirkuk would have to be delayed because of disputes over voting lists there. The political committee's proposal offers three options relating to Kirkuk: postponing elections there, using voter records from 2004 or separating the province into two electoral constituencies.

The political deadlock threatens the poll as the electoral law is supposed to be in place 90 days before voting takes place. Constitutionally, the election must be held by January 31. Supporters of the closed system argue that their system pushes party programmes of action to the fore.

Critics say sitting MPs who support the closed list are in fact concerned that they could lose their seats. A closed list was used in national elections in January 2005, the first to take place after dictator Saddam Hussein's overthrow in the US-led invasion of 2003. In contrast, provincial polls in January of this year adopted an open system.

A.35. Turkish minister inaugurates new consulate in Basrah (al-Sharqiya)

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu officially announced the opening of the Turkish consulate in Basrah. Iraqi Trade Minister Safa'a Al-Din Al-Safi said Turkey's increased presence in Iraq will encourage greater economic and commercial activity between the province and Turkish firms.

A.36. IHEC imposing new campaign regulations (Sot al-Iraq)

In coordination with the Municipality of Baghdad, Independent High Electoral Commission officials released a series of new regulations for political parties intending to participate in the upcoming elections. The new statutes prohibit the use of state buildings and mosques for electoral purposes, outlining grounds for disqualification.

A.37. Iraqi religious figures urge passage of election law (AFP)

Iraqi clerics in Baghdad, Karbala, Basrah and Najaf presented Friday sermons urging the Iraqi Council of Representatives to pass revised election legislation. Shaykh Abdul Mahdi Al-Karbalaï said the elections “must take place on time because holding them on their current date is a democratic and constitutional principle.”

A.38. Turkish ministers in Arbil (Al-Sharqiya)

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and State Minister for Foreign Trade Zafer Çağlayan conducted their first official visit to Arbil, during which they attended a meeting of Iraqi and Turkish businessmen.

Earlier on, the two ministers and their accompanying delegation were briefed on the city's investment plans and held a series of business meetings with Iraqi Businessmen, and discussed investment opportunities for Turkish companies in the Kurdistan Region.

For his part, Mas'oud Barzani, president of the Kurdistan Region, welcomed the visit and expressed the region's readiness to develop relations with Turkey in various fields.

A.39. Turkish Consulate Opened in Governorate of Basra (Al-Iraqiya)

Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has officially announced the opening of the Turkish consulate in the Governorate of Basra. Following his arrival there a news conference was held at the reception hall of the Governorate of Basra. Heading a delegation of prominent businessmen, Davutoglu said that his government is keen on the stability of the security situation in Iraq.

Safa'a al-Din al-Safi, acting Minister of Trade, also held a meeting with the Turkish minister of foreign trade and the accompanying investment delegation and stressed that this economic and commercial meeting will contribute to activating investment in the city.

A.40. Time to rebuild Middle East, Davutoğlu says in Arbil (Today's Zaman)

Turkey extended a regional peace drive to Iraqi Kurds when Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu met with top Kurdish officials in a landmark visit to Arbil.

“It is time for Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis to rebuild the Middle East. Therefore, it is time for everyone to take brave steps,” Davutoğlu told a joint press conference with Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani late on Friday. Barzani praised Davutoğlu's visit, saying it is even more significant now as the Middle East is passing through such a sensitive time.

Davutoğlu's visit to Arbil, the first by a Turkish foreign minister, is a sign that a taboo maintained in Turkish foreign policy until recently is no longer in place. Acknowledging the very existence of the Kurdish administration, which has enjoyed de facto autonomy from Baghdad since 1991, had been taboo among Turkish politicians.

It was only last year when Davutoğlu, then the chief foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and then Turkey's special envoy to Iraq, Murat Özçelik, had public

talks with senior Kurdish official Nechirvan Barzani in Baghdad, breaking a lengthy period of no-dialogue over tensions due to the presence of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the mountains of northern Iraq. Previously, Turkish officials refused to talk to Iraqi Kurdish leaders, and Kurdish officials harshly criticized Turkey on every occasion of cross-border operations inside northern Iraq against PKK targets by the Turkish military.

But the atmosphere in Arbil on Friday was far from tense. “We felt at home here,” Davutoğlu told reporters, reiterating once again that Turkey was soon to open a consulate in Arbil. “Barzani's friendship with Turkey goes back a long time,” he added, praising Barzani as a “foresighted leader.”

“The role of Turkey is very important for the future of the region and the development of economic relations,” Barzani said.

The foreign minister also said Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds were seeing eye-to-eye on how the future of the Middle East should be shaped. “We have a common vision, and this vision is about the way we look at the Middle East,” he said. This vision, he said, allows a shared stance on security, political dialogue among regional actors and the peaceful coexistence of ethnic and religious groups. “Let's rebuild the entire region. Let people travel from Basra [in southern Iraq] to Edirne [in northwestern Turkey] without any security concerns.”

The government, since it first came to power in 2002, has pursued a policy of “zero problems with neighbors.” It recently scrapped visa requirements with Syria, agreed to open two more border gates with Iraq and announced an agreement with Iran to jointly explore gas in the Southern Pars fields. It also signed a protocol with Armenia to restore relations, suspended since 1993.

Davutoğlu, who visited Basra earlier in the day and inaugurated a Turkish consulate there, said the deepening friendship with Iraq will help both countries. “Turkey is becoming Iraq's door to Europe, and Iraq is becoming Turkey's door to the Gulf region,” he said. “Let's not allow anyone to harm this brotherhood.”

Turkey and Iraq signed 48 agreements on strategic cooperation earlier this month in Baghdad,. Davutoğlu's visit to Iraq on Friday was a follow-up to the signing of these agreements, with Davutoğlu and Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan, who accompanied him, exploring possibilities on the implementation of the deals.

“The security and well-being of Iraq, which we see as a model for the Middle East, are very important for Turkey. Any threat directed against the security of Iraq is a threat directed at us,” Davutoğlu said, emphasizing that Turkey and Iraq could very easily defeat the threat of terrorism, which targets both countries. “The mountains will not separate us, they will unite us. Then the Middle East region will be one of the top centers of attraction in the world.”

A.41. Iraq clerics urge MPs to end election law deadlock (AFP)

Iraqi clerics, both Shiite and Sunni, called on members of parliament on Friday to end a protracted deadlock over a key election law that threatens to delay polls scheduled for January.

A representative of Shiite spiritual leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, warned of the security implications of any postponement following two massive bombings which killed 153 people in central Baghdad last Sunday.

"The current period is very sensitive, and terrorist forces are working to weaken people's confidence in the government and political parties," Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalai told worshippers at his mosque in the central shrine city of Karbala.

"The time left to organise elections has become shorter -- they must take place on time because holding them on their current date is a democratic and constitutional principle.

"Delaying the elections will have dangerous effects on security," he warned.

A Sunni cleric in the southern port city of Basra delivered a similar message. It was echoed by Shiite clerics from the radical faction of Moqtada Sadr in Baghdad and from the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council in the shrine city of Najaf.

Stalemate over the bill has sparked concern that the polls, scheduled for January 16, will have to be delayed because electoral authorities will not have enough time to organise them.

The latest attempt to put the draft electoral law to a vote failed on Thursday, when parliament failed to reach a quorum because Kurdish MPs stayed away amid a long-running dispute over the northern oil province of Kirkuk.

The impasse comes despite intense lobbying from both the United Nations and the United States, and pressure from Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

Karbalai also sharply criticised the government over Sunday's twin suicide attacks at the justice ministry and the Baghdad provincial government offices, which came just two months after similar attacks killed around 100 people at the finance and foreign ministries.

"With insurgents having repeated the same bombings, with the same style and in the same secure area, we have to review the security plan that has been implemented in Baghdad," he said.

"I demand immediate and urgent checks for the reasons that led to the bombings."

Security remains tight in Baghdad, with several roads closed off, and stringent checks at multiple checkpoints across the capital.

More than 60 members of the Iraqi security forces have been arrested in connection with the attacks, and the prime minister and his interior and defence ministers are to face questions in parliament.

Baghdad governor Salah Abdul Razzaq has called for both Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani and Baghdad Operations Command chief Lieutenant General Abboud Qanbar to be sacked.

A.42. From Iraq, Lessons for the Next War (NY Times)

I came to Iraq three days after Saddam Hussein fled Baghdad. It was April 12, 2003. At the time, Iraqis bristled when asked if they were Sunni, Shiite or Kurd. It made no difference, they said, they were brothers. And, in the heady aftermath of the war, for a short while it almost seemed true. That mood seems to be upon the country again, and it is most welcome after the last six years of bloody murders between Shiites and Sunnis; between Arabs and Kurds; between Muslims and Christians.

Will it last? Or are Americans, as they have been in Kosovo and Bosnia and perhaps now in Afghanistan, turning away from the inconvenient realities of ethnic and religious differences, the depth of animosities, of struggles for power and territory? As the country's attention turns east to Afghanistan, I too have made the journey to Kabul, as my new assignment. It is tempting to make analogies between the two troubled places, and there are some, but there are at least as many differences.

What are the lessons of Iraq that I carry with me? The cultures are as different as mountains and desert, and for outsiders, there is a familiar struggle to see the place as it truly is, not as we might wish it would be. Back in 2003, the Americans wanted to believe that an age of brotherhood and integration, loosed by American military might, had come to Iraq. Many Iraqis wanted to believe it, too. Thinking too much about the depth of distrust, long latent between sects and ethnicities, would mean acknowledging that a frenzy of violence waited in the wings. They swept into the desert sands the centuries-long struggle of Sunnis and Shiites for dominance in the fertile river basin between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. It was as if officials thought that perhaps by saying they were brothers, they would become them.

Americans wanted to believe that their version of democracy was just waiting to spring to life in Iraq — a peaceful multi-ethnic, multi-religious society adhering to the rule of law. That longing to find in another country a mirror of ourselves trumped cold analysis and led to years of denial that came to an end only when the mutilated bodies at the Baghdad morgue mounted each day: to 30, 40 and finally 75 to 100. Shiites murdered by Sunnis; Sunnis murdered by Shiites.

I realized that a sectarian fight was starting to play out in November 2003, but I had no idea how far it would go. I should have been the canary in the coal mine — but like so many others around me, I did not want to believe what I saw. I was working for The Los Angeles Times then; it would be nearly four years before I would come to this newspaper.

It was early winter, gray and damp, and in a poor neighborhood called Washash a blind imam had been assassinated as he walked home from the dawn prayer on the first day of Ramadan. Killed with him was his brother and a small boy who acted as his guide. The area was run

down, the houses cramped, the narrow streets littered. Under tattered awnings, an open-air fruit market sold mangy cauliflowers, browning romaine lettuce and bruised oranges. The neighborhood was predominantly Shiite although most surrounding areas were Sunni. Two years later Shiite thugs and killers would force many of the Sunnis to flee, but that hadn't happened yet.

People in the market didn't want to talk about the imam, who was a Sunni. They shrugged when I asked what had happened. I asked if he had debts, if he had hurt anyone. They shook their heads; even the Shiites among them were afraid of the gunmen. I found the imam's house, a humble building with just one room to a floor on one of two streets where Sunnis lived. His son told me his father's story. Blind for many years, his father preached at a small mosque just a few blocks away, rising every morning before dawn, using his blind man's stick to help him arrive in time to offer the prayer. Soon after the fall of Saddam Hussein, the imam began to hear threats; when he had finished cleaning the mosque and emerged alone into the street, people would whisper that his time was up. Sunnis were no longer welcome there.

The day he was shot, it was early, but hardly a time when the streets are empty. Yet no one in the neighborhood admitted to having seen anything. "They want us to leave," said a cousin of the imam. "Who?" I asked. He shrugged and said nothing. Was it Shiite neighbors or outsiders? No one would say. The family asked me to leave. Having a foreigner there drew attention. The imam's wife was packing a battered suitcase; they would go stay with relatives.

After that, I didn't trust the flowery words of brotherhood between Sunni and Shiite. I didn't trust the claims that sect didn't matter.

Now the language of brotherhood is welling up again. Iraqis, for the most part, are tired, at least of sectarian warfare, and as candidates organize themselves to run for the Parliament in the 2010 elections they have latched on to a narrative of nationalism. They are creating cross-sect parties. Perhaps it is true that the worst of the bloodletting has run its course, but my fear is that the wars of division are not over.

Even before the horrific bombings last week at government buildings in the heart of Baghdad, several trips I took in the last six months writ large for me the uncertainty on the road ahead — the difficulty of integrating people who distrust each other. The first was a drive from Sulaimaniya, in Iraqi Kurdistan, to Baghdad. The journey traverses the arching mountain peaks of northern Iraq near the Iranian border, the high plains that lie just to the south and the low scrub desert near Baghdad.

The invisible line that separates Iraqi Kurdistan from Iraq's lower provinces should be little different than crossing from, say, Michigan into Illinois; instead, it is reminiscent of the border between Mexico and the United States. Kurdish guards known as pesh merga look into your vehicle, you must show identification and go into a small border office to show an official letter and answer a few questions. It can take an hour or more.

On one side of the border, bright lights flash on the streets of Erbil and Sulaimaniya, the region's largest cities. There are luxury hotels with Internet in the rooms; many women wear Western clothes and do not cover their hair; music and alcohol are offered at some government sponsored functions. Most Westerners feel at home.

South of the border is another country — metaphorically, at least. Almost every day brings news of another killing. Some are by Sunni extremists trying to sow hatreds among the different sects and faiths in the area; some are more mundane crimes, and some are revenge killings between Turkmen and Kurd; Arab and Turkmen; Muslim and Christian.

The checkpoints south of the Kurdistan border make a stab at integrating the different groups who exist uneasily, but the troops from the army, the local police and the national police speak different languages, wear different uniforms and appear bound in their own cocoons of language and custom. They watch one another warily: Turkic speakers from the Turkoman minority, Kurdish pesh merga and the mostly Arab local police. The national police, who are predominantly Shiites, seem to be at sea. Many are from the south and are even less at ease here than the other security forces. Are these polyglot checkpoints a sign that the country is coming together or falling apart?

I want to believe the former, but it might go either way: while the sectarian killing may have run its course, the ethnic hatreds and distrust may not have played themselves out yet.

South of Baghdad is a different story. The road goes through towns on the edge of Baghdad: Mahmudiya, Latifiya and Yusufiya, once known as the Triangle of Death. There, some of the most brutal Sunni extremists made their stand. These were monsters who threw up fake checkpoints to catch Shiites, judging them culpable because of a tape in the car or the name on an identification card. They tortured them, beheaded and mutilated their bodies. They ambushed Westerners, kidnapping and sometimes killing them. I used to be afraid, when I traveled that road, that I would be recognized as valued prey. I rode in the back seat, my breathing shallow, resolutely looking into the car instead of out the window, so that it would be hard for passersby to get a clear view of my face.

Now the road is safe. Army checkpoints — legal ones — are the only ones that stop you, but huge posters of Imam Ali punctuate the streets, a signal that this is now Shiite-land. Imam Ali is revered as a founder of the Shiite branch of Islam, but a poster of him is also a silent rebuke to Sunnis, a way of marking territory, of reminding them that the Shiites run things now. It is a sign of victory as much as peace.

And victory in Iraq almost always begets revenge.

In my five years in Iraq, all that I wanted to believe in was gunned down. Sunnis and Shiites each committed horrific crimes, and the Kurds, whose modern-looking cities and Western ways seemed at first so familiar, turned out to be capable of their own brutality. The Americans, too, did their share of violence, and among the worst they did was wishful

thinking, the misreading of the winds and allowing what Yeats called “the blood dimmed tide” to swell. Could they have stopped it? Probably not. Could it have been stemmed so that it did less damage, saved some of the fathers and brothers, mothers and sons? Yes, almost certainly, yes.

So the lesson I take away is never to underestimate hatred or history or the complexity of alien places. I came to love Iraq’s scrub desert, its date palm groves and marshlands, but most of all its courageous people who despite great personal losses did not lose faith in their country’s possibilities: the imams who prayed despite threats, my Shiite friend Salama Khafaji, who lost her eldest son in a Sunni ambush in the Triangle of Death, yet continues to work for integration. Terrible things happened in Iraq over the last six years, and I go to Afghanistan feeling that we owe it to everyone who has died in Iraq — Iraqi and American — not to forget, not to gloss over, not to think in terms of success and failure, or victory and defeat, but to see as best we can, through a glass darkly.

B. SECURITY

B.1. A new batch of local policemen graduate in Baghdad (Radio NAWA)

On Thursday a new batch of local policemen graduated in Baghdad from their training course, which shows the insistence of the Iraqis to continue the effort to maintain security and stability in Iraq.

Baghdad Police chief, Maj. Gen. Ali Adnan, in a press statement said that the total number of graduates is 1727 associates received theoretical and practical information. The purpose of this training session is to contribute to the development of associates on the combat and tactical aspect.

Commander of the training center, Aqeel Issam, said that the associates during the training period were trained on the vocabulary of the basic military training and the principles of shooting, human rights, and interaction with citizens.

B.2. An explosion targets Sahwa leader in Tikrit (Al-Iraq News website)

Today, a bomb, targeting an al-Sahwa leader exploded while he was driving toward Bayji district, 30km north of Tikrit, Salah ad-Din province.

According to a security source, Ibrahim al-Azzawi was targeted in the explosion that only caused damaged to his car. Azzawi escaped a previous assassination attempt from al-Qaeda, since he was one of the key fighters against them in the province.

B.3. Iraqi authorities avert the media access to Sunday's blasts (Hayat website)

Iraqi forces closed several streets and roads in Baghdad, including Abu Nuwas in al-Karada, al-Canadi and al-Zaytun surrounding the Green Zone. Operations command denied the media access to Sunday's blasts, which killed and wounded hundreds.

MP Aliya Nasif considered the decision to ban journalists from covering the incident "An attempt to cover the security services failure."

"The problem lies in delaying the legislative law on Freedom of the press and use of 111 Article law, 1969 Penal Code. The legislation delay intends to put pressure on the media and prevent them to work freely."

Nasif pointed out the decision to close the streets is according to the services estimations, but excluding the reporters from the bombings site is an attempt to hide the truth. Accordance Front MP, Sulman al-Jamili considered Baghdad operations' decision, expressing the regression endured by the political process in Iraq, such as the massive violations to human rights, torture and random arrests.

Jamili added the attempts to silence the media and prevent them from covering incidents and facts is a way to hide the truth. It represent the political process and change in Iraq setback.

"The constitution guarantees freedom of speech and media. The security services took new unconstitutional measures." According to him. Also, the defense assembly passed the freedom of press statement yesterday, blaming the political parties, security and parliament officials for restricting the freedom of press after Sunday's blasts. The assembly called the political parties to 'stop violations'.

According to the statement, the attempts restricting the freedom of press is not only unconstitutional, unbearable by the government and security services, but also by the political parties participating in the government or represented in the parliament.

The statement called the blocs and parties that have sworn their commitment to democracy, strengthening and supporting the freedom of press.

"For the past days, unprecedented repression towards reporters, when they were prevented from covering important events and abusing them and framing charges against them. Several journalists were wounded during the latest blasts, while covering the horrible events. They were brought to the hospital for treatment due to trauma and injuries." The statement concluded.

B.4. Bombing Atrocity Threatens Iraqi Elections (By Ali Karim in Baghdad)

The devastating aftermath of this week's double bombing in Baghdad has cast doubt on the government's ability to guarantee security and prompted fears such violence may affect voter turnout in anticipated January elections.

At least 155 people were killed and more than 500 wounded after two truck bombs exploded on October 25 outside heavily protected government buildings in the Salehiya neighbourhood, close to the capital's fortified Green Zone.

The attacks come just over two months after so-called Bloody Wednesday (August 19), when a string of bombs in the same area killed more than 100 people. The Iraqi government has blamed al-Qaeda in Iraq and Baathist elements in Syria for both attacks, calling for an

international tribunal to bring those responsible to justice. But it was clear where public anger in the wake of the bombings was directed.

Sitting next to a wounded colleague in a Baghdad hospital, Anwar Ahmed, employed at the ministry of justice - one of the targets - was furious that the government she had helped elect had failed to keep the extremists at bay. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has pointed to improved security as one of his main achievements.

"How are we going to head to polls again when the people we had elected in the past have not protected us?" asked the 42-year-old. "How could that car bomber get into a vital area where the security forces were?"

Ghalib Salih Hamad, a 30-year-old taxi driver, was also disillusioned. "People do not have the desire to participate in the next elections," he said. "They will vote neither for Maliki nor for anybody else."

"For what sin were these poor people killed in such a brutal, criminal way?" asked survivor Hasan Abu Ali, a shopkeeper in his 40s.

"I cannot describe what I saw. Charred bodies everywhere, the wounded crying for help, I could not know who to save or help."

Among the buildings hit were two kindergartens in which at least 24 children were killed. Ali Hussien Hamza's five-year-old daughter, Istabraq, was among the wounded.

"I would like to talk to each official and ask him, what was this girl's sin?" the 35-year-old told IWPR. "Why you do not provide us with security? Why are you only busy with your disputes?"

Walid al-Helli, of the ruling Dawa party, denied that the attacks would affect Maliki's support in the parliamentary elections scheduled for January.

"Such attacks will not weaken Maliki or undermine people's confidence in his government," he said, adding that those responsible for the atrocities were supporters al-Qaeda and Baath party elements in neighbouring countries.

"The bombs are a clear proof of their hatred towards the Iraqi people."

But elsewhere there was widespread acknowledgement that the bombings would affect voter turnout at the upcoming poll.

Maliki's rivals in the elections, the Shia-led Iraqi National Alliance, warned the whole political process would be undermined if such atrocities kept people away from the ballot box.

"These [latest] bombings, together with the ones on Bloody Wednesday, killed Iraqis' hopes of having a stable security situation; it is a very dangerous matter," said Ridha Jwad Taqi, a legislator from the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council, ISCI, the party that heads the alliance. The party has lobbied Maliki to join its coalition.

"Everybody should take responsibility."

"I expect a low turnout in the elections if matters go on this way," said Mithal al-Alosi, an independent member of parliament and the deputy head of the foreign relations parliamentary committee.

"The wounds of Bloody Wednesday have not healed yet and the Salehiya bombs have deepened those wounds," he added. Alosi called on the government to press ahead with demands for a probe of Syria's alleged involvement in the attacks.

"This time the government should act on its demand for an international tribunal," he said. "We must not ask the citizens of Iraq to be patient each time."

At the same time, the parliamentary security and defence committee called for an investigation to show just how the security in such a sensitive area had been breached.

"We will hold urgent meetings with security personnel to establish the failings of security measures in the area," said Adil Barwari, a member of the committee. "Those bombs will affect the elections, one way or another."

On October 29, more than 60 security force members, including 11 officers, were arrested as part of investigations into the truck bombings. Salah Abdul Razzaq, the governor of Baghdad, told IWPR, that heads would roll over the security breach.

"The provincial council voted for the resignation of the minister of interior and the Baghdad operation command. We also voted for investigations to continue, so we can know the real reason behind these horrible explosions. It is the time for security leaders to resign and get out of the Green Zone to take part in real life along with their people," he said.

Military experts estimate that a tonne of explosives was placed in each of the two vehicles, which had passed multiple security checkpoints to reach their targets. A retired army officer, Naji al-Ameri, said, "A bombing using such an amount of explosives in such a sensitive area shows how fragile and infiltrated the Iraqi security system and intelligence are."

He explained that armed groups were pursuing a new tactic of conducting massive attacks at governmental institutions, operations which need a high level of financial and logistic support.

Security was on top of Maliki's list of achievements when campaigning in this year's provincial elections, alongside promises to provide public services and job opportunities. Maliki is hoping for international investment to invigorate Iraqi paralysed economy. But investors seeking a stable country may be deterred by news of such bombings.

"Terrorists aim to show the world, as well as big corporations willing to invest in Iraq, that the situation is still insecure and unsuitable for investment," said Mahmud Othman, a Kurdish legislator.

B.5. Dozens of security officials detained in Iraq bombings (CNN)

More than 60 people responsible for security in the area of Baghdad where bombers killed 160 people this week have been detained amid growing criticism of a security breakdown in the capital.

Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta, spokesman for the Baghdad Operations Command, confirmed the detentions but did not say whether the people were negligent or complicit in the attack. However, the detentions come amid sharp criticism in Baghdad of security forces, including a call from the Baghdad provincial council for the sacking of senior security officials, including the interior minister.

Of 61 people detained, 11 were officers, including senior police and army commanders, and 50 were security forces, Atta said. They had been responsible for security in Salhiya district in central Baghdad, where suicide blasts targeted government offices Sunday.

One of the bombs exploded outside Baghdad's provincial building, the other outside the Justice Ministry. The bombs detonated in quick succession about 10:30 a.m., officials said. At least 540 people were wounded in Sunday's attacks, the deadliest in the country in more than two years.

The location is very close to the Foreign Ministry, and many people were shocked that the attackers were able to hit an area where security was supposed to have improved in the past two months. Some government officials, such as Baghdad Gov. Salah Abdul Razzaq, whose office was targeted, asked how the suicide bombers passed through multiple checkpoints.

Abdul Razzaq said security forces made mistakes and were negligent in their work, and he demanded a court-martial for those who allowed explosive-laden vehicles to get through checkpoints.

"If this was complacency, let all those responsible for this be held responsible," he said. "We should be decisive about this and have a public court-martial. ... Enough, no nation can put up with this."

The blasts also sparked questions about the ability of Iraqi security forces to maintain proper security in the upcoming national elections, scheduled for January.

In August, more than 100 people were killed in a series of bombings that led to tightened security in Baghdad. Blast walls were installed across the city and checkpoints added.

Two years earlier, three truck bombings killed hundreds in Qahtaniya, in northern Iraq. Sunday's attacks were the deadliest for Iraqi civilians since the blasts in August 2007.

B.6. Deep Corruption Rattles Iraq's Fragile State (NY Times)

As Iraqi officials work to assign blame for the deadly attacks on the heart of the government on Sunday, concern is rising that a greater security threat may come from within the system in the form of corruption, from the top leadership of ministries down to soldiers who man checkpoints.

A recent internal report on corruption by the inspector general of the Interior Ministry specifically mentions the bribery of checkpoint guards: The blast on Sunday at the Justice Ministry, surrounded by checkpoints, killed nearly 160 people, while a similar attack in August on the Foreign and Finance Ministries killed at least 122.

“These car bombs didn’t come from the sky!” said Judge Abdul Sattar al-Beiriqdar, spokesman for the Higher Judicial Council. “They must have been driven in streets until they reached their target. If there were no corruption, the attackers wouldn’t risk passing through these checkpoints.”

But the corruption runs much deeper, endangering the fragile sense of security in Iraq as America draws down its forces, with security services that seem aimed as much at enriching themselves as protecting average Iraqis, according to dozens of interviews with police officers and officials as well as the report by the Interior Ministry.

“Corruption is a phenomenon that forms a real threat to the structure of the state,” Jawad Bolani, the interior minister, said in a recent interview. His ministry is Iraq’s second largest, employing one of every four Iraqis working in the public sector, which accounts for a vast majority of the jobs in Iraq.

The report details how corruption is carried out in his ministry, which he argues has still made great strides in curbing it.

Money is skimmed off of salaries. Contracts are manipulated and fudged to wring personal profit. Ghost police officers are listed on payrolls so commanders can take the salaries, and other police officers are told they are fired even as commanders continue to take their pay. Criminals and insurgents are freed with a well-placed bribe, criminal records are expunged for payment, detainees are abused by guards in order to extort money from relatives.

Beyond the outright financial corruption, there is also political corruption, in which the parties vying for power here look to secure the loyalty of large chunks of the security apparatus, according to Iraqi and Western officials.

Police officers corroborated much of what is in the report and gave other examples of the kind of corruption that threatens the stability of the security forces.

“Our brigade commander steals \$34,000 out of the \$41,000 allocated monthly for the food,” said one police officer. “He replaced our battalion commander four times because they were not cooperating with him.”

Another officer described how some people on the payroll never showed up for work but came only to get their pay, which they shared with their patron.

“Every officer with the rank of a colonel or higher has at least 10 policemen from whom he takes all or part of their salaries,” said the officer. “We call those policemen ‘fadhaei,’ ” which translate roughly as aliens from outer space.

The corruption runs from the highest officials to the street corner police officer, according to senior investigators, but the report itself is careful not to name officials directly.

Mr. Bolani defended his ministry's efforts to cut down on corruption, progress that Western officials and other experts also recognize. He cited the elimination of death squads, which used to operate from within the ministry, as a "revolution." Over the last two years roughly 62,000 employees who had criminal records were fired.

Despite the purge of the ministry, Aqeel al-Turaihi, the ministry's inspector general, said there were thousands more people on the payroll with troubling backgrounds.

In the first half of this year alone, inspectors have found \$122 million in stolen funds, only a fraction of what corrupt officials have siphoned off from the immense bureaucracy, according to the report.

Experts say there are parts of Iraq's government that have shown slow improvement.

In the first six months of this year, 1,455 arrest warrants have been issued by the Iraqi Commission of Public Integrity, in charge of corruption prosecutions (though only 397 people have been convicted on corruption charges since the commission began its work in 2004 until the end of last year).

Earlier this year, the minister of trade was forced to resign after a fraud scandal relating to the distribution of food.

And this month, the deputy transportation minister was arrested after being caught trying to bilk a security firm for more than \$100,000 in order to get a contract to provide security at Baghdad International Airport, according to Iraqi officials.

Corruption has long plagued Iraq but as Americans play less of a direct role in security operations, it is more of a threat than ever before, both Iraqi and American officials say.

"The endemic corruption within the Iraqi system — not only the security forces, but the system — is still probably the biggest problem facing Iraq," said Gen. Ray Odierno, the commander of American forces in Iraq, during a recent interview with the BBC.

Laws that would strengthen the hand of investigators and those battling corruption have stalled in Parliament, making reform more difficult. That difficulty can be seen in the Interior Ministry's attempts to get rid of ghost soldiers.

"We have tried our best to control the mechanism of salary distribution," said Abdul Basit Turki, the head of the Board of Supreme Audits, which audits all government agencies. However, they found they could make progress only by visiting every local and federal police station in the country on salary day.

After finding widespread discrepancies, they were told by local commanders that the names on the list that they could not verify were people on vacation.

“Now we would have to check the names of the nearly 500,000 employees to see who was on vacation then,” he said.

Going after corruption here can also have a high cost. Mr. Turki, after issuing an audit report on the Iraqi Supreme Criminal Court, which examines the crimes committed under Saddam Hussein, was informed — through the local media, he said — that a judge on that court had issued an arrest warrant for him.

“The judge said at first that the accusation against me was for ‘the extermination of the human race,’ ” he said. “It was changed, and I am now accused of fraud.”

B.7. Security force members held over Baghdad bombs (AFP)

More than 60 security force members including 11 officers have been arrested over twin bombings in Baghdad that killed 153 people, army spokesman General Qasim Atta told AFP on Thursday.

Those arrested were deployed in the Salhiya section of the capital where the devastating suicide blasts on Sunday targeted government buildings and wrought havoc in the streets, said Atta, spokesman for Baghdad military command.

"The commission of inquiry into the double attack on Sunday ordered the arrest of 11 officers of various ranks and 50 members of the security forces responsible for the protection of Salhiya," he said.

The health ministry said on Thursday the toll from the attacks claimed by Al-Qaeda but blamed by the government on members of the outlawed Baath party stood at 153 people killed and more than 500 wounded.

Among those arrested, said Atta, are four senior army officers and seven senior policemen, including the chief of police of Salhiya under whose jurisdiction the justice ministry, one of the targets of the attacks, falls.

Also rounded up, he added, are the commanders of 15 security checkpoints in Salhiya.

Baghdad's governor, Salah Abdul Razzaq, on Monday blamed negligence or even collusion by the security forces for the bombings in the heart of the capital, Iraq's deadliest day in more than two years.

"It's a human failure... It can only be negligence or collusion," Razzaq told AFP, noting that footage showed a white Renault truck carrying two tonnes of explosives driving up to the justice ministry building.

The logo of the Department of Water in Fallujah, a former insurgent bastion west of Baghdad, was painted on the side of the truck, he said. "How did it get from Fallujah to here?"

Trucks are barred from entering Baghdad, especially Salhiya neighbourhood, during daylight hours.

Razzaq said that the vehicle that was blown up in front of the other target, a provincial government building, was a Kia minibus.

Defence ministry spokesman Major General Mohammed al-Askari told AFP earlier this week that security forces raided two houses in Baghdad, where they found bomb-making materials, and made arrests, but did not specify how many.

"It looks like the same materials used on Bloody Wednesday," he said, referring to August 19 bombings at government ministries in Baghdad that killed around 100 people.

Askari said the evidence found confirmed the bombers were linked to Al-Qaeda and supporters of the Baath Party of ousted dictator Saddam Hussein.

B.8. Iraqi security in the spotlight (BBC)

The arrest of more than 60 members of the Iraqi security forces in connection with the double suicide bombing in Baghdad has reinforced what many in Iraq already suspect - that the police and the army are open to pressure and infiltration.

Security officials in Baghdad said the detainees included the commanders of 15 checkpoints around the site of the blasts. Some of those being questioned are senior officers.

The blasts took place in the administrative centre of the Iraqi capital, notionally one of the most highly protected areas in the country.

The question is: how did two car-bombs of such magnitude slip through the security cordon.

Sunday's attack was one of the deadliest in Iraq since the 2003 invasion. But it is not the first time this year that government buildings have been hit.

On 19 August 2009, two truck bombs targeting the Foreign and Finance Ministries killed nearly 100 people.

The Iraqi government is compiling a dossier to present to the United Nations, which it says includes evidence of Syria's role in supporting and providing refuge to the Saddam Hussein loyalists and members of al-Qaeda that they suspect are behind the attacks.

Syria has denied the accusation, but Iraq's Foreign Minister says he is in no doubt.

"We have very solid, concrete evidence," Hoshyar Zebari told the BBC. "The same people, the same networks that carried out the August bombing, it is the same perpetrators who carried out the Sunday 25th (October) bombing."

The attacks raise serious questions now about the Pentagon's timetable for withdrawal.

The US force in Iraq is still 120,000 strong. But the current plan foresees all combat troops leaving the country by the end of August next year, in preparation for a full military withdrawal by the end of 2011.

"We are committed to the timetable of the withdrawal," Mr Zebari said. "But we need to maintain a reasonable level of security and stability. Otherwise it may impact on their withdrawal plans, they could be modified."

The Foreign Minister called for more engagement from the US in the aftermath of the attacks, nearly four months after US forces handed over control of security in urban areas to Iraqi forces.

"The Americans cannot just wash their hands and say we are no longer engaged or interested," he said.

"From now until 2011 I think Iraq is going through some very serious challenges. Iraq is not yesterday's story. It is today's story, for everybody."

B.9. A suicide bomber blows himself up in Tal Afar (Independent Press Agency website)

A suicide bomber wearing an explosive belt blew himself up when the Iraqi military forces attempted to arrest him this afternoon, Thursday in Tal Afar district in Ninawa province. A security source said the forces found the suicide bomber while conducting a search operation in a house, among other raid and search operations in the district.

The source added the suicide bomber blew himself up when he could escape. In the incident, no casualties were reported and material damages occurred in several nearby houses.

B.10. Parliamentary committee calls for hosting Maliki to explain recent explosions (Al-Sumaria)

Thursday, the security and defense committee in the Iraqi Parliament called to set a date to host an urgent hearing with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki and number of security leaders to explain the real reasons behind the deterioration of security, demanding that the security ministries handed over a report on Salihiya bombings within 48 hours.

In a press conference at the Council of Representatives, the deputy chairman of the committee, MP Abdel Karim Al-Samara'i, said "The committee identified the security leaders that will be hosted: the ministers of defense, interior and national security, as well as the commander of Baghdad Operations, the director of intelligence, the director of the office of the adjutant general of the armed forces."

Samara'i added that, "The Commission asked the security ministries, via the presidency of the council, to prepare a detailed report on the recent bombings in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad last Sunday, indicating that it set a deadline of 48 hours to deliver the report.

It is noteworthy that number of members of Iraq's Parliament blamed the Iraqi government, Baghdad Operations Command and the Ministry of Interior, for the bombings on Sunday, calling for the need to review the security plans implemented in Baghdad.

B.11. IED targeting headquarters of Mashhadani (Independent Press Agency)

An IED exploded Thursday night at the National Movement Office headed by Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani on Palestine Street. Alaa Jassim, the director of the information office, said that this criminal act was deliberate and planned in advance.

He added that "those behind this work seek to hide the power of the political process and split Iraqi unity. The Iraqi government is responsible for our security like any other influential parties in the state."

The sources said the Civil Defense estimated 50 percent damage to the headquarters building, including the anterior wall and parts of the front of the house but no loss of life. The headquarters of the National Movement Office (Mashhadani) in the province of Babil had been bombed last month.

B.12. Police officer killed in terrorist attack west of Mosul (Al-Iraq News)

An unidentified gunmen attacked a police patrol in Zndjeli west of Mosul, Ninewa province. A security source said, "The attack resulted in the death of a lieutenant colonel and three members of the patrol," adding the scene was cordoned off to search for the militants who fled to an unknown destination after the attack."

B.13. Al-Iraq News - IP Find a cache of weapons and ammunition near Tikrit (EXSUM)

Iraqi Police said " IP find cache of weapons and ammunition in Toz 60 km east of the city of Tikrit, Salah Al-Din province. A security source said after receiving intelligence information we rush to the location intended and we found a cache was hidden in an orchard in the judiciary.

B.14. Military increases its forces in Anbar borders to stop any infiltration (Mawtani website)

Iraqi Interior Ministry announced taking tight security measures on the international Iraqi borders, dividing Anbar province from other neighboring countries. The goal is to stop the infiltration of al-Qaeda and foreign terrorist to the province. Anbar Police Chief, Maj. Gen. Tariq Yusuf al-Asal said military forces started using reconnaissance aircraft to transfer immediate information on any infiltration by terrorists across the border from the neighboring countries.

Assal pointed out, "There is coordination between the ground forces commander and the Iraqi Minister of Defense, Lt. Gen, Ali Ghaidan to explore the border areas via reconnaissance aircrafts and to monitor any infiltration."

Assal added Anbar police command mobilized additional forces from the emergency team to close all the gaps in the important areas at the borders, especially the ones behind the Iraqi border forces. Even though, Assal did not disclose any further details, Iraqiya mentioned large Iraqi units already deployed few days ago on the Iraqi-Syrian border, anticipating any terrorist infiltration across the border.

According to a security source, the troops deployed since October 23 after a detainee (Jordanian National) in Anbar, confessed that foreign suicide bombers intend to cross the Iraqi-Syrian border. Security and political side warned against al-Qaeda strengthening their networks in Iraq, coinciding the legislative elections on January 16.

B.15. An investigation officer in the Interior Ministry assassinated (Azzaman website)

According to Iraqi political sources, the assassination of a senior investigation officer in his offices yesterday in the Interior Ministry, raised concern among Iraqi high officials.

The incident is an indication of a new phase of assassinations and liquidations, which targets investigator officers exposing the circumstances and reasons behind the bloody Sunday bombings in Baghdad. The investigation commission discovered new leads in Sunday's attack in which hundreds were killed and wounded, confirming personalities and political figures involvement in the bombings.

Elevated distress hover on Baghdad after the assassination of the senior officer in the investigation commission, who was appointed by PM Nuri al-Maliki. According to a security source, the officer was shot in his offices by a 9mm with a silencer. Its the first of its kind, since the offices are usually surrounded by heavy guards and only limited people have access. Baghdad Forces Spokesperson, Qassim al-Maksoussi quickly denied that the officer was a member of the investigation team and said the incident was an accidental shooting, after news agencies spread the news of the assassination through high security sources.

The assassination occurred only one day after 60 security members were arrested, including 13 senior officers, in the aftermath of the latest blasts in Baghdad. Al-Salahiyah, al-Jaafar and al-Muthana, al-Karkh police chiefs and "Karkh Rescue" intelligence officer were arrested. Also arrested, were six senior officers from Brigade 22 of the Sixth Division in the Iraqi Army.

In a separate statement, Baghdad operation command decided to arrest and question the commander of mobilized and other checkpoints in which security violations occurred. Iraqi Alliance MP, Bassim Sharif said the case is national and we must as members of the parliament call the commanders in a special session, to hear their interpretations regarding the blasts. Baghdad Governor, Salah Abdu al-Razak criticized the role played by the security commanders. "They must leave IZ and all Baghdad should be a Green Zone, otherwise no security could be achieved."

B.16. Two US soldiers killed in two separate non-combat incidents (Al-Sharqiya TV)

In two separate statements, U.S. Army announced Friday's evening the killing of two soldiers in two non-combat incidents. In the first statement, U.S. Army said that a Soldier of the Multi-National Division-South died on Friday of wounds sustained from a non-combat incident. The U.S. Army did not mention any details about the nature of the incident. The second statement, said that a Soldier of the Multi-National Division-Baghdad was killed in a traffic accident on Friday too.

B.17. An officer responsible for the investigation into Sunday's bombings has been killed in Baghdad (Al-Arabiya TV)

According to the Iraqi police Lt. Col. Ihsan Haytham al-Samurai has been killed by a bullet in his office in Baghdad while in the company of another officer. Samurai was an explosives expert and specialized in criminal evidence, and was responsible for the investigation into Sunday's bloody bombings the previous bombings. He was killed in the midst of other officials no comments have been made regarding the incident. (Correspondent Majid Hamid)

Reporter 1: What are the circumstances of this incident?

Hamid: According to sources in the Iraqi security apparatus Lt. Col. al-Samurai was in his office and requested the presence of one of the accused in the investigation of the Sunday bombings. A policeman of the rank deputy was bringing the accused and brought him into Samurai's office. During questioning the policeman who brought the accused put his firearm to his side, the accused was able to take possession of the firearm and he opened fire on Samurai and the policeman. Both were killed. He turned towards the door to escape but security forces that were present in the Police Station opened fire in the direction of the office. The accused was not killed but was injured and is at an Iraqi hospital. Samurai was a member of the committee investigating the bombings but was not the lead investigator.

Reporter 1: We have lost an important person in the investigation.

Hamid: Yes the source said that the entire investigation was being written by one writer who was internationalizing the proposals and taking statements, and was still taking them from Samurai, and from those accused. There were other experts with Samurai and they are still investigating these incidents. The source said that the investigation is continuing by means of the Ministry of the Interior. And we will find out more about these circumstances. The spokesman Qasim 'Atta for the Plan to Impose Law has said that this operation was not planned but the accused was merely able to get his hands on a firearm.

B.18. Religious leaders slam Iraq authorities over attacks (EXSUM)

Muslim clerics slammed Iraqi authorities in their Friday prayer sermons over massive bombings last week, as a top US general warned that he expected insurgents to plan more

spectacular attacks. Among Baghdad's critics was Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalai, a representative of Iraq's top Shiite religious leader, who called for a review of security measures in the capital. Sunday's twin suicide bombings, targeting government offices in central Baghdad, killed 153 people and left more than 500 wounded, the deadliest attacks in the country in more than two years.

"With insurgents having repeated the same bombings, with the same style and in the same secure area, we have to review the security plan that has been implemented in Baghdad," Karbalai said, referring to similar attacks on other ministries in August that killed around 100 people.

"I demand immediate and urgent checks for the reasons that led to the bombings," said the representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. Security remains tight in Baghdad, with several roads closed off, and stringent checks at multiple checkpoints across the capital. More than 60 members of the Iraqi security forces have been arrested in connection with the attacks, and the prime minister and his interior and defence ministers are to face questions in parliament.

Baghdad's governor Salah Abdul Razzaq has called for Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani and Baghdad Operations Command chief Lieutenant General Abboud Qanbar to be sacked over the attacks, which have been claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq, a group linked to Al-Qaeda. US Major General John D. Johnson, the deputy commander of US operations in Iraq, warned in an interview with AFP that American and Iraqi security forces expected insurgents to plan more massive attacks like Sunday's.

"I think we can't rule out some of these groups' desires to conduct a large attack because they're able to garner a lot of media attention and it's an attempt on their part to be relevant ... and an attempt to intimidate the people," he said.

Asked whether he expected insurgents to attempt more such bombings, he replied: "I can't speak for what it is that they want to try to do, these are the kinds of things that we expect them to attempt to do." Johnson added that while he expected the security situation to stabilise by the middle of next year, politically motivated violence aimed at influencing the shape of the next government was a concern. Karbalai's remarks in the central shrine city of Karbala were echoed by clerics in Baghdad, the southern port city of Basra and the shrine city of Najaf.

In the predominantly Shiite Baghdad district of Sadr City, Imam Muhannad al-Mussawi called on Iraq's army and police to reveal "the facts which are hidden from people's eyes about the bombings."

"We demand that the security forces be cleared up, removing all those who cooperate with the terrorists and the occupiers," Mussawi, who is close to radical anti-US cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, told worshippers.

B.19. US general in Iraq warns of rise in pre-poll violence (EXSUM)

US forces expect insurgents to plan more spectacular attacks like massive bombings in Baghdad last week in the run-up to January polls and are braced for an upswing in violence, a senior general warned in an interview with AFP.

Major General John D. Johnson added that while he expected the security situation to stabilise by the middle of next year, politically motivated violence aimed at influencing the shape of the next government was a concern.

"I think we can't rule out some of these groups' desires to conduct a large attack because they're able to garner a lot of media attention and it's an attempt on their part to be relevant ... and an attempt to intimidate the people," said Johnson, the deputy commander of US operations in Iraq.

Asked whether he expected insurgents to attempt more bombings like the twin suicide attacks that killed 153 people in central Baghdad last Sunday, he said: "I can't speak for what it is that they want to try to do, these are the kinds of things that we expect them to attempt to do."

The massive vehicle bombings outside the justice ministry and the Baghdad provincial government offices followed similar attacks which killed around 100 people at the finance and foreign ministries on August 19.

The latest bombings came just a day after Iraqi army chief Lieutenant General Ali Ghaidan Majeed warned of an increase in violence in the run-up to the general election. Johnson said he believed there was a risk of more violence not only before the vote, but also after it as the various factions in the new parliament thrash out a new government line-up.

"Certainly, we are looking at that as a possibility, and working with our Iraqi counterparts to make sure that they are the best prepared they can be in the event that that's what happen," he said.

"So if it happens, it certainly won't catch us by surprise.

"There is a likelihood that those who want Iraq not to progress into the future, who don't want political solutions to the issues that the Iraqis face, will try to use violence to disrupt that ... in the run-up to the election, and after the election.

"They will know that the election is a very important point, but that the seating of the government after the election is equally important."

The number of attacks in Iraq, and the overall death toll, is sharply down on a year ago, but spectacular bombings continue to exact a high loss of life. The number killed in last Sunday's bombings was almost as high as the death toll for the whole of September.

"We have gone quite a while now where the sheer numbers of attacks have been significantly down, but the nature of the attacks, like that one on Sunday, are focused on the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi people in an attempt to garner a lot of attention," Johnson said.

"It seems pretty clear to us that the design of those attacks is to undercut the credibility of the government and to bring into question the capabilities of the security forces." Although Johnson said he believed most Iraqis had confidence in the police and army, a number of politicians expressed anger after Sunday's bombings.

Baghdad Governor Salah Abdul Razzaq charged that there had been negligence or even collusion within the security forces and called for the dismissal of Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani and Baghdad Operations Command chief Lieutenant General Abboud Qanbar. After the August bombings, Iraq accused neighbouring Syria of sheltering the attacks' masterminds and Prime Minister Maliki charged that 90 percent of foreign "terrorists" infiltrating Iraq came across the Syrian border.

Johnson said that infiltration from both Syria and Iran remained a worry despite a drop-off in the numbers of people and weapons being smuggled across.

"Borders are still a concern, especially as we look to who might want to disrupt the elections," he said. "We could see people try to exploit or try to move across either of those borders, or move lethal means across those borders."

Johnson was speaking at the US base at Camp Victory on Baghdad's outskirts. US troops pulled back from Iraqi towns and cities at the end of June. The United States now has around 120,000 soldiers stationed in Iraq. US commanders plan to keep 100,000 US troops in Iraq through the elections to provide security but then embark on a fast paced drawdown that will take their numbers to 50,000 by August. Under a November 2008 security pact between Baghdad and Washington, US combat troops must leave Iraq by the middle of next year, and all US forces must withdraw by the end of 2011.

B.20. Iraqi Air Force Acquires Advanced Radar System (Radio Nawa)

The Iraqi air force advanced its monitoring capabilities for air defense with its acceptance of a digital air surveillance radar, or DASR, Oct. 26 in a ceremony held here.

The DASR system, which includes the radar and the radar control facility, gives Iraqi air traffic controllers the capability to monitor aircraft up to 120 nautical miles away. This permits them to detect aircraft along their borders with Syria, Turkey, and Iran.

“Today, another historical day added to our brothers and the Iraqi air force,” said Brig. Gen. Ahmed Ghani, Iraqi air force, communications director. “Through that system, we will identify more ... aircraft entering our sovereignty.”

The DASR signal will eventually be remotely accessible from Baghdad International Airport so air traffic controllers can see all the airspace in Iraq.

The system also brings the Kirkuk airfield up to international civil aviation and surveillance standards, giving it the potential for future commercial airline use.

“We started this process by installing over \$53 million of air traffic control and navigation capabilities for the Iraqi air force more than three years ago,” said U.S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Robert Kane, director, Iraq Training and Advisory Mission – Air Force.

“Beginning in August of 2006, our governments, air forces and civilian contractors cooperated to not only fund the purchase of this highly technical equipment, but to train the Iraqi air force personnel how to use it and maintain it,” Kane continued. “I’m very proud to say that the Iraqi air force now possesses these capabilities.”

B.21. 87 wanted men arrested in Babel (Sot Al-Iraq)

Sources in Iraqi Ministry of Defense announced the arrest of 87 wanted men, among them three AQI operatives involved in the bombing of popular markets in the city of Hilla, Babel Province. MOD spokesman, General Muhammad Al-Askari, said, "The arrest operation came in the frame works of a major security campaign conducted by Karbala' Operation Command, striking specific targets in northern Babel after the attest incidents in Musaiyab, Haswa and Iskandaria."

Al-Askari stressed that the three arrested terrorists are members in a cell of seven people, that uses northern Babel as a base of their operations, and the search for the other four is underway.

B.22. Iraqi security officials held in blast aftermath (AP)

Iraq detained dozens of security officials responsible for protecting the Baghdad district where twin suicide bombings this week killed 155 people, and authorities said Thursday they are trying to determine whether they were negligent or even had a role in the attack.

The blasts in the heart of the capital infuriated Iraqis, who question how the bombers could have driven their deadly cargo undetected through the multiple checkpoints that dot Baghdad. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government, facing a January election, has been under intense pressure to restore a sense of security and show that the military and police are able to take over when Americans go home.

A military spokesman for the Iraqi capital, Maj. Gen. Qassim al-Moussawi, told The Associated Press that 11 army officers and 50 security officials have been taken into custody over Sunday's bombings, which targeted the Justice Ministry and the Baghdad Provincial Administration.

The suspects were detained because they were responsible for protecting the area where the bombings occurred, al-Moussawi said. He said the investigation will determine whether they were simply negligent or actually helped the insurgents.

"If the investigation results show that other security officials were also negligent or helped the insurgents, we will arrest them," he said. Other suspects have been detained, but al-Moussawi said specifically that these were the first arrests of security officials in relation to the Sunday blasts. The military commander and the police chief of Baghdad's Salhiya district, where the bombs went off, were among those arrested, al-Moussawi said. He refused to give information about the other suspects.

Iraqi officials have already said that the two vehicles likely pass through a number of checkpoints before detonating. Traffic in the capital has been snarled for days after the blast as authorities tightened checkpoints, and flooded the city with security reinforcements. But many Iraqis, jaded by years of attacks, questioned whether the government was really going after the guilty or simply trying to show it is taking some sort of action.

Mouaid Saied, a 34-year old construction worker who lives in eastern Baghdad, said the people who've been arrested are simply easy targets who don't have the political patronage to protect themselves.

"They want to hold them responsible for the last bombings and show that they are solving the problem and finding the perpetrators," Saied said. "The government should find better ways to protect its citizens." Lawmaker Sheik Khalaf Al-Ilyan, the head of the Sunni political faction in parliament, called for greater openness in the investigation, saying that Iraqis want more oversight and transparency of such security inquiries.

"I think this is a very dangerous step," he said of the arrests. Al-Qaida's umbrella group in Iraq has claimed responsibility for Sunday's bombings. The Iraqi prime minister blamed the bloodshed on Baathists and al-Qaida. Iraqi officials have said the blasts were carried out by the same network that carried out bombings in August that also targeted government institutions, killing about 100 people.

Al-Maliki rode to popularity as a leader who was able to bring peace to a shattered country. Violence in the country has dropped dramatically in recent years, but the new attacks in areas that are supposed to be some of the safest in the capital have undermined Iraqis' sense of security. Tim Brown, an intelligence and military analyst with GlobalSecurity.org, questioned

whether the truth would ever come out of such an investigation. Trials are usually secret, he said, if the suspects go to trial at all.

"All this makes it difficult to determine if those detained are actually scapegoats or whether they are in fact responsible for those acts," he said. News of the arrests comes as U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he is sending a senior U.N. official to Baghdad in response to a request from Iraq's prime minister for an investigation into the August suicide bombings. The U.N. leader said he decided to send the envoy before Sunday's bombings. Meanwhile, Kurdish lawmakers Thursday boycotted a parliament session that was to tackle the crucial law needed for January's nationwide balloting. The election law has been held up over whether to use voter lists that favor the Kurds or the Arabs in the city of Kirkuk, which is claimed by Kurds, Arabs and Turkomen.

The city's Arab and Turkmen ethnic groups resent what they perceive as Kurdish efforts to take over Kirkuk, which Kurds see as historically theirs and describe as their "Jerusalem." Next to Sunni-Shiite tensions in Iraq, the issue of Kirkuk and Kurdish-Arab disputes has become a key flashpoint in this fragile nation. A political deadlock now could delay the elections and open the way for new violence and instability.

B.23. Iraq increases border security along Anbar province (al-Sharqiya, Azzaman)

Iraq's Interior Ministry announced efforts to increase security measures along Iraq's borders in Anbar. Anbar Police Chief, Maj. Gen. Tariq Al-Asal said Iraqi Security Forces are now using reconnaissance aircraft to alert border patrol forces of infiltration by terrorists crossing the border from neighboring countries.

B.24. Military increases its forces in Anbar borders to stop any infiltration (Mawtani)

Iraqi Interior Ministry announced taking tight security measures on the international Iraqi borders, dividing Anbar province from other neighboring countries. The goal is to stop the infiltration of al-Qaeda and foreign terrorist to the province.

Anbar Police Chief, Maj. Gen. Tariq Yusuf al-Asal said military forces started using reconnaissance aircraft to transfer immediate information on any infiltration by terrorists across the border from the neighboring countries.

Assal pointed out, "There is coordination between the ground forces commander and the Iraqi Minister of Defense, Lt. Gen, Ali Ghaidan to explore the border areas via reconnaissance aircrafts and to monitor any infiltration."

Assal added Anbar police command mobilized additional forces from the emergency team to close all the gaps in the important areas at the borders, especially the ones behind the Iraqi border forces.

Even though, Assal did not disclose any further details, Iraqiya mentioned large Iraqi units already deployed few days ago on the Iraqi-Syrian border, anticipating any terrorist infiltration across the border.

According to a security source, the troops deployed since October 23 after a detainee (Jordanian National) in Anbar, confessed that foreign suicide bombers intend to cross the Iraqi-Syrian border.

Security and political side warned against al-Qaeda strengthening their networks in Iraq, coinciding the legislative elections on January 16.

C. ECONOMICS

C.1. Iraq to sign deals with BP (By Ahmed Rasheed)

Iraq's Oil Ministry said on Thursday it will sign a final deal on November 3 with BP and China's CNPC to develop its biggest oilfield, Rumaila, the nation's first major oil pact since the U.S. invasion in 2003.

The ministry will also sign an initial deal on November 2 with Eni Spa over the Zubair oilfield, Oil Ministry spokesman Asim Jihad said, after offering improved terms to bring the Italian oil major back to the table.

The agreement with Eni and its partners, Occidental Petroleum Corp and South Korea's KOGAS, must be approved by Iraq's cabinet before a final contract can be signed, Jihad said.

Both deals involve supergiant oilfields and a promise of increased production that could catapult Iraq up to the top ranks of the league of oil producing nations.

Iraq's oil infrastructure is dilapidated after years of war, sanctions and underinvestment, and while it has the world's third largest reserves, it is only the 11th largest producer.

The country hopes foreign investment will help it move up to third place with oil output of around 7 million barrels per day (bpd) – triple current production of around 2.5 million bpd -- within six or seven years.

Rumaila, with estimated reserves of 17 billion barrels, is the workhorse of Iraq's oil sector, producing almost half of the country's total daily output. The deal with BP and CNPC was the only one that emerged from Iraq's first post-invasion auction of oil contracts in June after international firms balked at Iraq's stiff terms.

TAX TERMS

Subsequent negotiations behind closed doors have, however, led to other deals being worked out on some of the fields that were not successfully auctioned off. One of those is the agreement with Eni and its partners over Zubair.

Eni initially refused to develop the field for the \$2/barrel fee Iraq offered but changed its position after Iraq offered to cut taxes, Claudio Descalzi, Chief Operating Officer for Eni's exploration and production unit said.

"The tax terms are different now. Before, taxes were on total revenue (cost oil and profit oil). Now taxes are just on profit oil," he told a conference call with analysts on Thursday.

"We can say that the \$2 of today can be compared more or less to \$4-5 of yesterday in terms of profits per barrel," he added. Eni has said it expects to invest \$10 billion (6.3 billion pounds) in Zubair, which has estimated reserves of 4 billion barrels, and will boost production to 1.125 million bpd from 200,000 bpd within seven years.

Iraq will hold a second round of oilfield tenders on December 11-12 in which largely undeveloped fields will be on offer. Royal Dutch Shell Plc's Chief Financial Officer told a conference call with reporters on Thursday the Anglo Dutch Oil major could participate in the second round auction and was watching with interest in the hope the improved fiscal terms will also be applied to the contracts offered.

C.2.Exxon: Certainly Interested In Iraq, Talks Ongoing (Dow Jones)

Exxon Mobil Corp. (XOM) said Thursday the company continues to look for opportunities to access new reserves around the world, including the possibility of entering Iraq.

"We are certainly interested in Iraq and continuing to dialogue with the Iraqis," David Rosenthal, Exxon Mobil's vice president of investors relations, who was speaking to analysts in a conference call. But the official declined to give any details on the commercial terms the company would accept to be able to have access to Iraq's massive oil resources.

The largest U.S. oil company by market value didn't disclose details either about the news that it's buying a stake in the Jubilee field, a major oil discovery off the coast of Ghana. The stake in question is owned by U.S. company Kosmos Energy LLC, which said it signed a binding agreement with Exxon, at an estimated value of \$4 billion.

ExxonMobil said it expects its 2009 capital expenditure budget to be similar to the \$26 billion it spent in 2008.

C.3.Sa'adun demands that Baghdad commit to paying the financial dues of oil companies in the Kurdistan region (Radio Nawa)

Member of Parliament for the Kurdistan Alliance, Mushin al-Sa'adun has demanded that the federal government in Baghdad commit to paying the dues of oil companies exporting oil extracted from the Kurdistan region. Sa'adun said in a statement to the press Friday that the Kurdistan Regional Government has suspended production and export of oil throughout territory because of protests regarding Baghdad's delay of the payment of financial benefits to oil companies hopeful about the region.

He added that the oil laws in Kurdistan conform to the Iraqi constitution, which requires Baghdad to make a more serious display on this issue.

C.4. Iraqi oil ministry to announce the winner of the giant West Qurna oil field (Iraqi oil media via Nahrain)

The Iraqi Oil Ministry said on Thursday that Iraq plans to announce the winner, for the development of West Qurna giant oil field next week, after a fierce competition between four groups.

Groups led by Total of France, China's CNPC, Exxon Mobil and Russia's Lukoil had amended their offers to develop the oil field, with estimated reserves of 8.7 billion barrels.

A spokesman for the Oil Ministry said the ministry plans to announce the name of the winning consortium for the first phase of West Qurna oil field next week.

The four groups were reluctant to make presentations during the first round in June because of the very strict conditions. Exxon made a joint proposal with Royal Dutch Shell to win the West Qurna contract. Lukoil is working in cooperation with ConocoPhillips. The spokesman also confirmed that the ministry will hold a meeting with the Japanese Nippon Oil Company on Nov. 1 to finalize the details of an agreement to develop Nasiriyah oil field.

C.5. Syrian Minister of Transportation: No tension between Iraq and Syria in the transportation field (PUKmedia)

Dr. Yaarab Suleiman Badr, Syrian Minister of Transportation stressed that trade exchange and transportation between Syria and Iraq, are not affected in the light of the political changes between the two neighboring countries. There is no tension between Iraq and Syria in the field of transportation, and movement of people and vehicles are flowing easily and there is no restriction from both countries.

The Syrian Minister of Transportation, Dr. Badr in a press statement on Thursday, said, "There is continuous work in the economic field between the Iraqi and Syrian ministries of Transportation, and there is an agreement on cooperation in the field of transportation by rail between the two countries and data from the field indicate the smooth movement of trucks between the two countries is still what it was. There are trucks and refrigerators [probably meaning trucks with refrigerated containers] crossing the border between the two countries without any obstacles from both sides.

D. CULTURE AND SOCIETY

D.1. Hundreds of displaced families return to Aakerkof township in Abu Ghraib District (Radio NAWA)

A substantial number of displaced families returned to their residences in Aakerkof Township in the district of Abu Ghraib after security improvements in their area.

Albu Sabrah tribe chief, Adil Tamimi, said that 550 families returned to the Township from out 600 displaced families, after the improvement of the security situation there. Meanwhile, the Minister for Displacement and Migration, Abd al-Samad Rahman said that the ministry in coordination with humanitarian organizations began to distribute construction materials to those whose residences were damaged.

D.2. Iraq Government bans alcohol sale or transport in Baghdad's green zone (EXSUM)

The Iraqi Government has banned alcohol in Baghdad's heavily fortified green zone, home to foreign embassies and some legendary drunken parties in recent years.

Sales of drink are to be banned from Sunday, The Times has learnt, and Iraqi military patrols are already confiscating booze wherever they find it. "It is a new rule from the Prime Minister," said an Iraqi army officer at a green zone checkpoint. "Alcohol cannot be sold or transported. If you want to bring a gift for someone, get a Pepsi."

Venues such as the Freedom Restaurant, near the American Embassy, have been told that they will lose their government licences if they continue to serve alcoholic drinks, and the International Zone Liquor Store has been given a few days to sell its stock before closing.

There are varying interpretations of the ban. Some see it as a sign that hard-won freedoms are receding. Others say the ostentatious application of Islamic rules is an election ploy. Yet others believe that the Prime Minister is sending a subtle message that he thinks it is time for foreign occupiers to go home.

Senior Iraqi officials living in the green zone are not exempt from the new rules. Abdul Bari al-Zebari, a Kurdish member of parliament, was forced to give up two bottles of Chilean red when stopped by guards at the entrance to his residential compound. "It's a sign of how the tables have turned," he said. In the past few years, the compounds that make up this part of central Baghdad have been the site of bacchanalian revelry reminiscent of 19th-century colonial life. Stumbling fully clothed into one of Saddam's palace pools was a rite of passage for young neoconservative Americans sent over after the invasion.

But on July 1 the Iraqi Government took control of the green zone, a symbol of occupation for many Iraqis, and since then the welcome mat has slowly been rolled back. Foreign embassy grounds are sovereign territory, and so exempt from the ban, but staff have not reacted in the most diplomatic fashion.

One South African security guard is said to have threatened an Iraqi police officer with a gun during a stand-off over a bottle of Smirnoff.

"Baghdad is hard enough when you're medicated," said a senior European diplomat. At the bar in the UN compound, drinkers were stunned by the news.

"Sobriety is a 12-step suicide programme here," an aid worker said. A friend agreed, adding: "Might as well go home. Perhaps it's time to withdraw from Iraq."

D.3.Maysan police celebrates the third Basic rule of law graduation (Independent Press Agency website)

On Thursday, Maysan police command celebrated the graduation of 2,000 policemen from Maysan police new session (Third basic rule of law session).

The celebration was held in Maysan's police training courtyard, where the graduates were positioned in groups for the invitees, including the Iraqi media. Maysan Police Chief, Maj. Gen. Saad Ali al-Harbiya, praised the work of the session's teachers for preparing the police cadres to perform their security and duties.

Maj. Gen. Ali added the session helped improving the security and stability situation through the new graduates in the province. Poetry was read and events were held, including the liberation of kidnapped, annulment of IEDs and the protection of people, in addition to combat activities exemplifying police functions in this circumstances.

The graduates in this session received practical and theoretical lessons on human rights, various combat and security missions, in order to hold the tasks and responsibilities contributing to the province security and maintaining the safety.

D.4.US funded bridge opened in Muthanna (Aswat al-Iraq)

A U.S. funded bridge has been opened in al-Muthanna, at a total cost of more than ID1 billion, the province's roads and bridges director said on Thursday.

"The bridge's dimensions are 100 x 12 meters," Engineer Kamil Majhol Nino told Aswat al-Iraq news agency. He said that there are other bridges in al-Muthanna currently being executed. Samawa, the capital city of al-Muthanna province, lies 280 km south of Baghdad.

D.5.Swine flu causes school closures west of Diwaniyah (Radio Nawa)

Provincial Governor Salim Husayn 'Alwan said that he closed all schools in two areas west of Diwaniyah after two cases of swine flu were registered, fearing the spread of the epidemic among the students.

Alwan explained in a statement to the press that all the schools were closed in the district of al-Shamiyah and the neighborhood Ghamas west of Diwaniyah, after registration of two cases of swine flu in the areas. And that the closure came as a message to the people of those areas to take caution and follow the methods of prevention of the disease to prevent its spread.

Diwaniyah Director of Health disclosed Wednesday that two cases of influenza have been registered in the district of Sham, one of them is a teacher, noting that the two persons afflicted were in the hospital for treatment.

D.6. Maysun al-Damluji asks to improve the condition of women in Iraq (Radio Nawa)

Minister of Parliament Maysun al-Damluji has said that putting in place a program to examine the status of women working in Iraq and her economic and social conditions. This will smooth the way for the development of resources the gradual elimination of the phenomenon of poverty among women, particularly those who head or are the breadwinners of their families.

Damluji, in a statement to al-Mustaqbal (Future) News Agency Friday that evaluating a range of international experiences that were carried out in a framework of cooperative programs with countries who have passed these tests and those who live like Iraq and plan to improve the living conditions of women. She pressed for government action for small projects concerned with economic and social activities.

Damluji considers development projects the obligation of the government to carry out. Conducting model (pilot) experiences including assistance to a number of different women, in order to embody the idea of small projects in different sectors be they professional or service, contributes to improving the family's standard of living. Damluji called for the development of a strategy to create an effective role for women in their own advancement, and easing or removing some of the burdens on her.

E. RELATIONS WITH TURKEY

E.1. Turkish ministers and businessmen arrive in Basra this morning (al-Iraqiya TV)

The Turkish Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Trade have arrived in Basra province this morning; the Turkish officials will participate in the opening of the Turkish Consulate in the province.

An Iraqi official source clarified that accompanied by the two Turkish Ministers are about 150 Turkish businessmen, adding that an investment conference will be held in the province to promote investment projects between the Iraqi and Turkish businessmen.

E.2. Turkish Minister Davutoğlu tours many Iraqi cities (al-Jazeera TV)

Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoğlu, conducts a tour to a number of Iraqi cities, including Irbil, the capital city of Kurdistan.

It is the first formal visit by a Turkish official at this level to Kurdistan territory, which Ankara has long refused to recognize its new political situation, as a federal government after Iraq's invasion in 2003.

The process of developing relations between Turkey and Iraq's Kurds is explained by al-Jazeera correspondent in the following report:

"Since his arrival to Ankara as a representative of the Kurdistan National Union Party eight-years ago, Bahrouz Ghalali has been dreaming of this day. He worked behind the scenes to build bridges of trust between Ankara and Iraq's Kurds, but on the way he faced many challenges."

"During the 1990s of the last century, the American interest in the Iraqi Kurds was a concern to Ankara, which was always afraid of the Kurdish region secession from Iraq with the American support."

"The Turkish military thought the only way to address that is through the presence of the Turkish army in the territory under the pretext of pursuing elements of the PKK rebels."

"However; the American invasion of Iraq turned the balance of power in the region, as the Turkish army had to withdrawal and had to hand over Kurdistan's file to the politicians to deal with it with realism and away from the Kurds general ideological position for the first time."

"Ahmet Davutoğlu, the Turkish foreign policy engineer persuaded the Turkish State to trust the Iraqi Kurds and to transform the Kurdistan Region from a disturbing and risky one to a political and economical bridge of openness on Iraq."

"It was a non-easy mission due to the military reservations and the attempts of some Kurdish sides by using the PKK file to bargain with Turkey over the fate of Kirkuk."

"The talks about the American withdrawal and the future of the Kurdish oil projects have had a great impact in changing the balance of power again in Kurdistan region through persuading Iraq's Kurds on the need to consolidate relations with Ankara."

E.3. Arbil prepares enthusiastic welcome for Davutoğlu (EXSUM)

Calling Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's visit to Arbil, the regional capital of the Iraqi Kurdish region, "historic," Barham Salih, the new prime minister of the Kurdish region, said on Thursday they have been preparing a grand welcoming ceremony for Davutoğlu.

Davutoğlu is expected to depart today for a two-day visit to Iraq, the first stop of which will be Basra in southern Iraq. Following the inauguration of Turkey's consulate general in Basra, Davutoğlu and the accompanying delegation -- the state minister for foreign trade, Zafer Çağlayan, and a 70-member business delegation -- will proceed to Mosul and Arbil in the north. The inauguration of Turkey's consulate general in Mosul will take place on Saturday.

The president of the largely autonomous Kurdish region, Massoud Barzani, attaches great

importance to Davutoğlu's visit. Salih said he believed that the visit will pave the way for significant bilateral agreements between Turkey and the region.

"The visit will also serve as a means for new initiatives between the region and Turkey," Salih said, underlining his will for the improvement of bilateral relations between his government and the Turkish government.

Diplomatic sources didn't elaborate on Davutoğlu's contacts in the region and whether he will have talks with Barzani. Yet, Safeen Dizayee, a foreign affairs spokesperson for Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), earlier this week told Agence France-Presse that his talks will include Barzani.

E.4. Turkish Foreign Minister: Threatening the Iraqi security affects Turkey (Independent Press Agency)

During his historic visit to Iraq-Kurdistan Region on Friday night, the Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu stressed Iraq with its different nationalities, is extremely important to Turkey and any threat to its security is a threat to Turkey's security.

Davutoglu said in a joint press conference with Massoud Barzani that Turkey will soon open a consulate in Arbil, to improve relations between the regions and Turkey after years of turbulence and war. Barzani announced that the Kurdistan region enjoys stability and security could be a bridge to Turkey to cross other areas in Iraq.

Also, Barzani praised the steps taken by Turkey towards its Kurd citizens, saying, "I think the Turkish officials can resolve the PKK issues, they took a brave decision and we fully support the convergence policy with the Kurds in Turkey."

Barzani expressed his hope of an end to the violence and a stop to "young Kurds and Turks blood shedding." Davutoglu visit comes as part of a new strategy pursued by the Turkish government to deal with the Kurdish issue, within or outside Turkey. Since it initiated steps, in which the Kurds were granted more rights by Turkey to end the bloody conflict between Turkey and PKK guerrillas.

Turkey hopes that strengthening relations between the Iraqi Kurds will contribute to facilitate solving the PKK issue.

Observers believe the Iraqi Kurds can be mediators between Turkey and the PKK leadership in Iraq to stop the military action, renounce their weapons and return its members to Turkey.

Davutoglu arrived on Friday night at Arbil airport, with his delegation including the Trade Minister, Zafir kaghlian and 70 businessmen and government officials. They were received by the Iraqi-Kurdish Foreign Minister, Hoshyar Zebari and the Iraqi-Kurdish Prime Minister, Barham Salih, Barham Saleh. Davutoglu came from Basrah city after the opening of the Turkish consulate there and will go to Mosul city for the opening of another consulate.

E.5. Time to rebuild Middle East, Davutoglu says in Arbil (EXSUM)

Turkey extended a regional peace drive to Iraqi Kurds when Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu met with top Kurdish officials in a landmark visit to Arbil.

"It is time for Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis to rebuild the Middle East. Therefore, it is time for everyone to take brave steps," Davutoglu told a joint press conference with Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani late on Friday. Barzani praised Davutoglu's visit, saying it is even more significant now as the Middle East is passing through such a sensitive time.

Davutoglu's visit to Arbil, the first by a Turkish foreign minister, is a sign that a taboo maintained in Turkish foreign policy until recently is no longer in place. Acknowledging the very existence of the Kurdish administration, which has enjoyed de facto autonomy from Baghdad since 1991, had been taboo among Turkish politicians. It was only last year when Davutoglu, then the chief foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and then Turkey's special envoy to Iraq, Murat Özçelik, had public talks with senior Kurdish official Nechirvan Barzani in Baghdad, breaking a lengthy period of no-dialogue over tensions due to the presence of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the mountains of northern Iraq. Previously, Turkish officials refused to talk to Iraqi Kurdish leaders, and Kurdish officials harshly criticized Turkey on every occasion of cross-border operations inside northern Iraq against PKK targets by the Turkish military.

But the atmosphere in Arbil on Friday was far from tense. "We felt at home here," Davutoglu told reporters, reiterating once again that Turkey was soon to open a consulate in Arbil.

"Barzani's friendship with Turkey goes back a long time," he added, praising Barzani as a "foresighted leader."

"The role of Turkey is very important for the future of the region and the development of economic relations," Barzani said.

The foreign minister also said Ankara and the Iraqi Kurds were seeing eye-to-eye on how the future of the Middle East should be shaped. "We have a common vision, and this vision is about the way we look at the Middle East," he said. This vision, he said, allows a shared stance on security, political dialogue among regional actors and the peaceful coexistence of ethnic and religious groups.

"Let's rebuild the entire region. Let people travel from Basra [in southern Iraq] to Edirne [in northwestern Turkey] without any security concerns."

The government, since it first came to power in 2002, has pursued a policy of "zero problems with neighbors." It recently scrapped visa requirements with Syria, agreed to open two more border gates with Iraq and announced an agreement with Iran to jointly explore gas in the

Southern Pars fields. It also signed a protocol with Armenia to restore relations, suspended since 1993.

Davutoglu, who visited Basra earlier in the day and inaugurated a Turkish consulate there, said the deepening friendship with Iraq will help both countries. "Turkey is becoming Iraq's door to Europe, and Iraq is becoming Turkey's door to the Gulf region," he said. "Let's not allow anyone to harm this brotherhood."

Turkey and Iraq signed 48 agreements on strategic cooperation earlier this month in Baghdad. Davutoglu's visit to Iraq on Friday was a follow-up to the signing of these agreements, with Davutoglu and Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Çağlayan, who accompanied him, exploring possibilities on the implementation of the deals.

"The security and well-being of Iraq, which we see as a model for the Middle East, are very important for Turkey. Any threat directed against the security of Iraq is a threat directed at us," Davutoglu said, emphasizing that Turkey and Iraq could very easily defeat the threat of terrorism, which targets both countries. "The mountains will not separate us, they will unite us. Then the Middle East region will be one of the top centers of attraction in the world." Barzani gives full support to Kurdish initiative Barzani praised Ankara's steps to address Turkey's decades-old Kurdish issue and called for an end to violence. The government recently launched an initiative that is expected to expand freedoms for Turkey's Kurds.

The reforms, which include easing restrictions on Kurdish language and culture, are important for advancing the country's application for membership in the European Union, which wants Ankara to meet the bloc's human rights standards. "I want to congratulate the prime minister for policies and steps taken for a democratic opening. We support all the steps taken," Barzani said. "God willing, the violence will end as soon as possible, and Turkish and Kurdish youths will shed no more blood," he added.

E.6. Turkish Minister Davutoglu tours many Iraqi cities (al-Jazeera)

Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, conducts a tour to a number of Iraqi cities, including Irbil, the capital city of Kurdistan. It is the first formal visit by a Turkish official at this level to Kurdistan territory, which Ankara has long refused to recognize its new political situation, as a federal government after Iraq's invasion in 2003.

The process of developing relations between Turkey and Iraq's Kurds is explained by al-Jazeera correspondent in the following report:

"Since his arrival to Ankara as a representative of the Kurdistan National Union Party eight-years ago, Bahrouz Ghalali has been dreaming of this day. He worked behind the scenes to build bridges of trust between Ankara and Iraq's Kurds, but on the way he faced many challenges."

“During the 1990s of the last century, the American interest in the Iraqi Kurds was a concern to Ankara, which was always afraid of the Kurdish region secession from Iraq with the American support.”

“The Turkish military thought the only way to address that is through the presence of the Turkish army in the territory under the pretext of pursuing elements of the PKK rebels.”

“However; the American invasion of Iraq turned the balance of power in the region, as the Turkish army had to withdrawal and had to hand over Kurdistan’s file to the politicians to deal with it with realism and away from the Kurds general ideological position for the first time.”

“Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish foreign policy engineer persuaded the Turkish State to trust the Iraqi Kurds and to transform the Kurdistan Region from a disturbing and risky one to a political and economical bridge of openness on Iraq.”

“It was a non-easy mission due to the military reservations and the attempts of some Kurdish sides by using the PKK file to bargain with Turkey over the fate of Kirkuk.”

“The talks about the American withdrawal and the future of the Kurdish oil projects have had a great impact in changing the balance of power again in Kurdistan region through persuading Iraq’s Kurds on the need to consolidate relations with Ankara.”

E.7. KRG president praises Turkish initiatives for Kurds (Reuters, AFP)

Kurdistan Regional Government President Massoud Barzani recently praised the Turkish government’s initiatives to improve Turkish-Kurdish relations. He said, “I want to congratulate the [Turkish] prime minister for the policies and the steps taken for a democratic opening. We support all the steps taken.”

E.8. Iraqi Kurdish leader backs Turkey's reform steps (Reuters)

Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani on Friday praised Turkish steps to address a decades-old Kurdish conflict and called for an end to ethnic violence during a visit to the region by Turkey's foreign minister.

Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's Islamist-rooted AK Party has launched an initiative that is expected to give greater freedom to the 12 million-strong Kurdish minority in Turkey's southeast.

The reforms, which include easing restrictions on the Kurdish language and culture, are important for advancing the country's application for membership in the European Union, which wants Ankara to meet the bloc's human rights standards.

Ahmet Davutoglu is the first Turkish foreign minister to travel to Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdish region.

Ties between Ankara and the government of Iraq's Kurdistan region were marred for years by the presence of Kurdish rebels along the border, but relations have improved under the AK Party government as the two sides have increased cooperation on security and expanded energy and trade deals.

"I want to congratulate the prime minister for the policies and the steps taken for a democratic opening. We support all the steps taken," Barzani told a news conference with Davutoglu.

Acknowledging the very existence of the Kurdistan regional government, which has enjoyed de facto autonomy from Baghdad since 1991, had been taboo among Turkish politicians mindful of reigniting Kurdish hopes of statehood on Turkish soil.

"God willing, the violence will end as soon as possible and Turkish and Kurdish youth will shed no more blood," Barzani said.

Turkey has accused Barzani of failing to stop rebel attacks, even as Iraq's Kurdish leaders have openly called on the separatist PKK to lay down its arms.

Improving ties with Turkey has gained urgency as U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq, leaving behind a possible security vacuum.

Davutoglu called for cooperation in the fight against terrorism. Turkey, along with the EU and the United States, considers the PKK a terrorist group.

"Arabs, Kurds, Shia and Sunni -- we will re-build the Middle East altogether. Everybody must take bold steps. But terror is the most serious threat to this vision," he said.

Turkey will open its next consulate in Arbil, after Mosul and Basra, Davutoglu also said.

The two sides are also keen to work together on energy. Turkey has positioned itself as a key transit route for Middle East gas to Europe. The oil-rich city of Kirkuk, claimed by both Iraqi Kurds and Arabs, is a particularly sensitive issue.

Turkey worries that if the Iraqi Kurds win the battle over Kirkuk, that would give them enough revenues to form a viable state, stoking separatist aspirations among its own Kurds.

Turkey regularly shells PKK targets in northern Iraq. It blames the PKK for 40,000 deaths since 1984, when the group took up arms to carve out a homeland in southeast Turkey.

Turkey and Iraq are major trading partners, and some 500,000 barrels of Iraqi oil a day -- about a quarter of its exports -- are piped through the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

E.9. Turkey to open two more border crossings with Iraq, Çağlayan (EXSUM)

Turkish State Minister Zafer Çağlayan said on Friday that two more border passes would be opened with Iraq by the end of 2010. State Minister for Foreign Trade Çağlayan said Turkey and Iraq signed a memorandum of understanding to open two more border crossings. Speaking to journalists aboard the plane on his way to Iraq, Çağlayan said Turkish

businessmen carried on business in north of Iraq and Baghdad but they were not much active in southern part of Iraq. aglayan said the target of the visit was to diversify areas of business. aglayan said busy traffic in Turkey-Iraq border passes caused delays, and noted that Turkey and Iraq signed the memorandum of understanding to overcome the delays and to contribute to trade. Turkish minister also said establishment of a common logistic center was also on the agenda, "Turkey will also extend support to establishment of a free zone in Iraq".

(Compiled by Seval Kk)