

UN unmoved by US draft resolution for troops, cash

UNITED NATIONS

The UN Security Council was unmoved Monday by a US draft resolution seeking cash and troops, while Turkey's government opted to deploy soldiers in Iraq.

Washington hoped made no headway in drumming up support for a resolution it hoped would persuade wary nations to help stabilize and rebuild Iraq.

US ambassador John Negroponte denied that the measure had been all but killed off by the harsh criticism of the past few days, much of it from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

"Now is just the time to take a brief pause," he said, acknowledging that no date had even been set to reopen debate on the draft.

Council diplomats suggested that Washington was in a quandary

after Annan forcefully opposed the resolution. He said it left no UN role in shaping post-war Iraq's political process.

Annan, France and Germany favored a quick handover of power to Iraqis who would then write a constitution and hold elections.

The United States wanted a constitution written first, which could take a year or more before elections. Britain and Spain, which supported the war on Iraq, backed the resolution.

Handing over power too quickly to Iraqis risks dooming the nation to failure, US officials said.

In Ankara, the government's spokesman, Justice Minister Cemil Cicek, told reporters that all ministers had signed a motion calling on parliament to authorize the dispatch of Turkish soldiers to Iraq, in response to a US request for military

troops to help its US ally restore stability in its neighbor's territory.

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Smoke billows from a cinema in Islamabad yesterday after an angry mob charged through the capital following funeral prayers for slain Sunni extremist MP Azam Tariq. Hundreds of mourners rampaged through the Pakistani capital, setting fire to a mosque of the rival Shiite community, a cinema and petrol pumps, and pelting cars with rocks.

One killed in Pak riot over death of Sunni MP

AFP, Islamabad

A Pakistani man was killed during riots yesterday by angry mobs rampaging through Islamabad after funeral prayers for slain hardline Sunni Muslim MP Azam Tariq, a doctor and witnesses said.

An employee of the Melody cinema, identified as Ghafoor, was sleeping inside when mobs set the moviehouse on fire, doctor Rashid Qureshi told AFP.

"He was brought to the hospital dead," Qureshi told AFP. Another six people were being treated at the Polyclinic hospital for burns, smoke inhalation and cuts sustained when they tried to flee the blazing cinema, police and witnesses said.

Ten people had fled into the cinemas as the angry mobs approached, and were inside when it was torched. Four escaped uninjured.



Outgoing Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (R) Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda (C) and Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri (R) smiles before the start of the Asean meeting with three leaders from China, Japan and South Korea at Nusa Dua, Bali yesterday.

Asean says goodbye to Mahathir

AFP, Nusa Dua

Southeast Asian leaders including a tearful Indonesian president paid tribute yesterday to one of their most forceful and outspoken colleagues, veteran Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, at his farewell summit.

Asia's longest-serving elected leader steps down as premier on October 31 after 22 years in power.

Indonesia's Megawati Sukarnoputri, host of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit, choked back tears as she delivered a tribute to Mahathir and presented a memento -- a photograph of Asean leaders signed by all of them.

"The mark of his statesmanship has been implanted deep in our consciousness. The reach of his mind is so far and wide," she said, hailing Mahathir as a "steadfast friend and respected colleague".

"He always has strong and informed views and never hesitated

to say the unpleasant things. There is no way of counting the things he did for Asean. Dr. Mahathir may leave office but he will never abandon involvement with Asean," Megawati said.

Mahathir, 77, said Asean had proved its relevance since its founding in 1967. "How else can we explain the willingness of the countries of Northeast Asia and South Asia to hold dialogues with us?"

The leaders of China, Japan, South Korea and India are attending the two-day summit on the resort island of Bali.

Mahathir said Asean must not "rest on our laurels" but address challenges by transforming the grouping into an Asean community akin to the European Union.

Southeast Asia must also deepen relations with East Asia, he said, developing a constant theme of his foreign policy over the years. "An East Asian Community, with Asean at its core, is inevitable."

Qorei makes truce with Israel his top priority

Palestinians poised for crackdown on militants, Israel under fire at UN

AFP, Abu Dis

New Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qorei told AFP yesterday that he would make the pursuit of a mutual ceasefire with Israel the main goal of his government.

Asked about his top priorities ahead of the first meeting of his new cabinet, Qorei said: "Trying to reach a mutual ceasefire with the Israeli side."

The outgoing speaker of parliament, who was installed as prime minister on Sunday night as Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat declared a state of emergency in the West Bank and Gaza, also said that he sought a broad dialogue with all strands of Palestinian political life.

He wanted to "establish an inter-Palestinian dialogue more serious than anytime before in order to

reach a common ground on the way of ending the present crisis."

Sources close to Qorei had said on Monday that the government would move against hardline factions such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad but Qorei is also understood to be determined to avoid any descent into civil war in Palestinian ranks.

He also called for an end to the Israeli army's siege of Arafat in his Ramallah headquarters. Israel has declared Arafat an absolute obstacle to peace and threatened to "remove" him from the West Bank.

"We categorically reject the situation of Arafat and consider it as an affront to the dignity of our people and we have to work in order to end this situation which constitutes a

blatant Israeli interference in Palestinian affairs," said Qorei.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian leadership was preparing for a long-awaited crackdown on militant groups after Ahmed Qorei was declared head of an emergency cabinet as Israel came in for a torrent of criticism over an air strike on Syrian soil.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat installed Qorei late Sunday as head of a nine-member cabinet in a decree which also declared a state of emergency.

Official sources told AFP Monday the decree would effectively allow the security forces to arrest members of armed factions at will, paving the way for a crackdown on militant groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

S Korea, China, Japan agree to reduce arms

THE KOREA HERALD/ ANN, Bali

South Korea, China and Japan agreed to cooperate in reducing their countries' military weapons in a landmark step to alleviate security tension in Northeast Asia when their top leaders held trilateral summit talks on Monday.

Announcing their first-ever joint statement, the three Asian leaders also agreed to strengthen ties to resolve the one-year-old standoff surrounding North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao met on the sidelines of the summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

"The three countries will reinforce their security dialogue and promote the exchange of military personnel," said the statement that outlines trilateral cooperation in 14 sectors, including defense, trade and investment, and culture.

To this end, they agreed to "take political, diplomatic and administrative measures to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems."

In addition, the three countries pledged to enhance their coopera-

tion in such transnational crimes as terrorism, maritime piracy, human trafficking and drug smuggling.

On the North's nuclear issue, the leaders reaffirmed their countries' position that the Korean Peninsula should be free of nuclear weapons.

They also evaluated the progress made in their countries' joint study of concluding a free trade agreement, but failed to reach any substantial agreement.

To effectively implement the agreements, the three nations agreed to hold a summit on a continual basis and set up a trilateral committee to monitor, adjust and supervise cooperative programmes.

Before the trilateral summit, Roh and Wen held bilateral talks, during which Seoul officials said the Korean president asked for China's continued support to hold the delayed six-nation talks as soon as possible in a bid to peacefully end the North's nuclear threats.

The two leaders also reaffirmed their commitment to further promote economic cooperation between South Korea and the world's fastest growing market as agreed during Roh's visit to Beijing in July.

Lanka grants citizenship to 168,000 Indians

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka granted citizenship yesterday to 168,141 ethnic Tamils who had decided but failed to return to their native India under a bilateral agreement over the past two decades.

The Sri Lankan parliament unanimously approved legislation granting citizenship to the Indians, descendants of indentured labourers brought to the island by British tea and coffee planters.

Interior Minister John Amararatunga said the government decided to absorb the 84,141 people who had obtained Indian passports to return home but could not travel because of the escalation of fighting between government troops and Tamil rebels in 1983.

Another 84,000 people of Indian origin born in Sri Lanka after 1964 were also granted Sri Lankan citizenship, the minister told the legislature.

The two countries had agreed to send hundreds of thousands of people of Indian origin back to India, but the Tamil separatist conflict had stopped the ferry that took back batches of Indians.

Over 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils are still living as refugees in India after fleeing violence in the island's north in the past two decades.

16 more killed in Kashmir explosion, shootouts

AFP, Srinagar

Five Indian soldiers, eight rebels and three civilians were killed in a bomb explosion on a key road and shootouts around Indian-administered Kashmir, officials said Tuesday.

An explosive went off under a bridge, killing three soldiers, said Border Security Force (BSF) spokesman Neeraj, who uses only one name.

He said five BSF troops were on a regular patrol to detect any bombs before the military allows its vehicles to pass through the area at Ganeshpora town, 70 kilometers (43 miles) south of the summer capital Srinagar.

The two other troops were wounded and the bridge suffered damage, Neeraj said, adding they were air-lifted to Srinagar's army hospital.

Ganeshpora, in the Anantnag district, lies on the main road between Srinagar and Pahalgam, the restive Himalayan province's premier mountain resort.

The road was shut down after the blast and police searched house-to-house to track down rebels.

Kashmir's dominant rebel group

Hizbul Mujahedin owned the responsibility for the killing, saying the blast killed five soldiers, a local news agency said.

In the neighbouring village of Sagam, rebels shot dead a soldier in an overnight ambush with automatic rifle fire and hand grenades, a police spokesman said.

Two rebels and an Indian army soldier were killed in an overnight gunbattle in the southern district of Poonch, the spokesman said.

He said three Indian troops were also injured during the ten-hour fight.

Indian soldiers killed three Muslim rebels in two shootouts in the northwestern Kupwara district Tuesday, he said, and another two rebels were shot by the Indian army near Patan township, 30 kilometers (19 miles) north of Srinagar.

Another militant was killed in the neighbouring village of Kangroosa.

Police said three Muslims were killed overnight and Tuesday by suspected militants in the southern districts of Rajouri, Doda and Udhampur.

No group has taken responsibility for the killings.



A Chinese-made DF-1 missile stands out among other military and space equipment on display as the Chinese Military Museum yesterday in Beijing, China, whose space ambitions date back to 1970 when a Chang Zheng (Long March) rocket boosted the country's first satellite into orbit, is set to be the third country in the world to launch a manned space flight, expected to happen in mid-October, as the country continues to develop its space exploration plans.

Prison hostage drama ends in Philippines

AFP, Manila

A detained member of the Abu Sayyaf kidnap gang and three policemen were killed yesterday in a three-hour hostage drama in the Philippines national police headquarters in a fresh embarrassment to the much-criticised security forces.

One police hostage was shot in the head while two of the officers who came to his aid were killed as they stormed the building where Abu Sayyaf member Buyungan Bungkak was holed up, police spokesmen said.

Three other policemen were also wounded in the firefight on Camp Crame, said police chief investigator Eduardo Matillano.

The security breach at the prison is the latest embarrassment for President Gloria Arroyo, who is attending a Southeast Asian summit in Bali, Indonesia, that is focusing on security and trade issues.

18 dead as boat sinks in India

AFP, Hyderabad

At least 18 people died yesterday when a ferry packed with farmers and schoolchildren was sucked into a whirlpool in a river in southern India, officials said.

The boat capsized as it plied between two islands in the Krishna river near Nagyalanka in Andhra Pradesh state, 300 km east of the provincial capital Hyderabad, officials said.

"Eighteen bodies have been recovered and around 10 are still missing," said Sampat Kumar, the senior administrator for the Krishna district where the accident took place.

"Between 50 and 60 people were on the boat when it got trapped in a whirlpool. Many of them swam to shore," Kumar told AFP by telephone.

He said most of the victims were farmers and other labourers travelling between islands in the delta region as they plant rice paddy.

The crowded early-morning ferry also carried children heading to school, but most of the students survived the accident, Kumar said.

"We're using swimmers from the area to recover the bodies. We hope to finish the work by (Tuesday) evening," he said.



People attempt to cross a flooded street hold a security line Monday in Tuxtla, state of Chiapas, Mexico. Mexico declared a state of emergency in much of its East Coast, south of the Guatemalan border as Tropical Storm "Larry" lashed the Gulf Coast and two others threatened the Pacific side Sunday. The intense rains caused by Larry killed more than 50 people and affected thousands.

Iran to continue its uranium enrichment

REUTERS, Tehran

Iran will not suspend uranium enrichment despite intense pressure from nations worried it is seeking nuclear arms, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi was quoted as saying by the official IRNA news agency yesterday.

A suspension of uranium enrichment is one of the demands of an Oct. 31 deadline set by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that is calling on the Islamic Republic to prove it is not seeking a nuclear warhead.

"We will not allow anyone to deprive us of our legitimate right to use nuclear technology, particularly enrichment for providing fuel for nuclear plants," Kharrazi told a conference of prayer leaders late Monday.

Gaddafi deserts Arabs

AFP, Tripoli

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, once a devoted and energetic champion of Arab unity, announced this weekend his definitive separation from the Arabs, whom he heavily criticized.

Standing before a group of women, in a Mediterranean villa in Syrte about 500 km east of Tripoli, Gaddafi declared himself more than ever African, claiming to be "forever beyond nationalism and Arab unity."

Admittedly, Colonel Gaddafi is famous for his verbal excesses and spectacular rebuttals, but his declaration Saturday sounded like an irreconcilable divorce from the Arabs, coming from the mouth of an aging Gaddafi who in recent years has never given up on the ideals from his youth.

When he took power September 1, 1969, the young leader, raised in

the cult of the former president, the Egyptian unionist Jamal Abdel Nasser, threw himself body and soul into attempting unity.

He would court Egypt, the Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, regardless of whether they bordered on Libya.

On Saturday, he also referred to the symbolic date September 28, 1961 which ushered in the end of the Syrian-Egyptian union which had for three years formed the United Arab Republic to better support their common agenda.

"The era of nationalism and of Arab unity is forever gone. These ideas which once mobilized masses no longer have any value," he said.

Gaddafi called on the Popular Congress, the basic structure of the Libyan political system, to "confirm Libya's withdrawal from the Arab League," envisioned by Tripoli for months but never realized.

"The Arab League is in the mid-

dle of giving up the ghost, and Arabs will never be strong even if they unite... They will remain content every night to watch bloody news-reels from Palestine and Iraq."

Colonel Gaddafi had some strong words for the Arabs, denying them human qualities, and publicly challenging their former policy of helping movements and political groups from Arab countries.

"Libya has for too long endured the Arabs, for whom we have paid blood and money," he said, adding that as a result, his country had been "boycotted by the US and demonized by the West."

"In return, the Arabs joined forces with the US and Israel against Libya," he continued, as he confirmed his African orientation, viewing the continent as "a source of great force" for his country.