

US-Iraq war of words heats up as Turkey balks on war

AFP, Baghdad

While Baghdad and Washington continued their war of words yesterday, the prospects of real fighting got the cold shoulder from Turkey, home to strategic US air bases, which said it wanted UN approval for war before any action.

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, leader of Turkey's ruling party, said "we and government officials say Turkey will not clarify its decision (on possible military action against Iraq) without a UN Security Council resolution."

Turkey is facing intense pressure from key ally Washington to provide support for a possible operation to topple the regime in Baghdad, which the United States accuses of possessing weapons of mass destruction.

Turkey's government and top brass were due to hold a key meeting yesterday to discuss whether to give that support.

The only Muslim member of NATO, Turkey has long called for a peaceful resolution to the Iraqi crisis, but has also insisted that any military moves against Iraq be based on international legitimacy and consensus.

Meanwhile, UN arms experts carried on with their search for Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction as new tensions simmered over the nuts and bolts of their work.

The latest row was over the terms under which UN inspectors may interview Iraqi scientists involved in weapons development, either now or in the past.

It comes as the Iraqi press said Washington is pursuing a strategy of lies

in order to justify an attack on the country and as Iraq's vice president bridled at US insistence inspectors interview scientists outside Iraq.

As the war of words continued, three convoys of all-terrain vehicles belonging to the UN Monitoring, Control and Inspections Commission (UNMOVIC) left their base at Baghdad's former Canal Hotel at 8:30 am (local time), an AFP correspondent witnessed.

Their destination was not immediately known.

On Thursday, General Hossam Mohammad Amin, head of the Iraqi body that liaises with the United Nations, said inspectors had "found no direct or indirect proof" that Iraq possesses weapons prohibited by the United Nations.

"In the final analysis, the teams have not been able to find any evidence ... to support American and British allegations that Iraq is harbouring or storing banned weapons," Amin said.

Amin also hinted at a possible clash between Iraq and inspectors over scientists now or formerly involved in chemical, biological, nuclear and ballistic missile programs and associated research, development and production facilities.

UN Security Council Resolution 1441, which tightened the inspections regime, requires "immediate, unimpeded, unrestricted, and private access to all officials and other persons" whom UNMOVIC or the International

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CJ urges judges, lawyers to protect human rights

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury yesterday urged lawyers and judges to play their role in protecting fundamental rights of citizens.

"The responsibility of a judge is to ensure justice to a litigant while the duty of a lawyer is to help him to do it properly," he said while addressing the 17th annual conference of the Bangladesh Ain Samity (Bangladesh Law Association) as chief guest at Dhaka University.

Referring to the main objectives of legal profession the chief justice expressed his confidence that both lawyers and judges would contribute their best towards upholding the fundamental, legal and human rights of all people.

"Our Constitution provides for independence of the judiciary and the Supreme Court has already delivered a verdict with several guidelines for separation of the judiciary from the executive," he said and called upon all in the legal profession to prepare themselves to play their due role in this regard.

Samity President Advocate Md Miftah Uddin Chowdhury Rumi presided over the function. It was also addressed by, among others, former chairman of Law Faculty of Dhaka University Prof Azizur Rahman Chowdhury, former presidents of the Samity Advocate Abdullah Abu and Advocate Azmatullah Khan and its general secretary Advocate Anisur Rahman Sarker.

Cinema blasts statements of 8 injured recorded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Justice Sultan Hossain Khan, chairman of the one-member judicial inquiry commission investigating the recent bombings in the four local cinema halls arrived at the Mymensingh Circuit House yesterday noon to continue investigation into the carnage that killed at least 18 persons and many more injured on December 7.

This is the second visit of the probe commission chief to the scene of the serial bomb explosions in the four cinema halls of the town. Earlier on December 14 and 15, he visited Mymensingh in connection with the investigation and recorded statements of 19 employees of the cinema halls.

Yesterday evening, Justice Khan visited bomb-hit Aloka and Chhayabani cinemas. Later, he visited Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) and recorded statements of eight injured victims of the blasts undergoing treatment at the hospital.

He will again visit the MMCH today morning to record some more statements. Later, he will go to Mymensingh Jail to talk to those arrested in connection with the blasts and record statements of the witnesses.

Talking to reporters at the Mymensingh Circuit House in the evening, Justice Khan said it would not be wise to close the investigation in a hurry as extensive investigation was still needed to reveal the fact.

Justice Khan will leave Mymensingh today evening and will again come back here in the first week of January.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia visits the Horticulture Expo International Trade Centre in the Chinese province of Yunnan yesterday as part of her five-day visit to China.

PHOTO: PID

India, Pakistan to exchange list of N-installations

Talks on missile defence Jan 15-16

PTI, Islamabad

India and Pakistan are set to exchange lists of their nuclear installations on January 1 under an agreement that prohibits the two countries from attacking each other's nuclear facilities.

Both the countries complied with the agreement signed in 1991 and began exchanging the lists of the nuclear installations on January 1, 1992.

Even at the height of tensions between the two countries following the December 13 attack on India's Parliament last year, India and Pakistan exchanged the lists on January 1, 2002. Now they are again poised to exchange the same and officials on both sides do not see any problem in that.

The 1991 agreement prohibits both the countries from attacking against each other's nuclear installations and facilities in times of war.

The last year's list contained 11 Indian nuclear installations against six on Pakistani side, local daily The News reported.

"The exchange of the lists of nuclear installations on the first day of the New Year would herald a new era of conciliation and rapprochement as both India and Pakistan have given a firm commitment to the international community to bolster the set of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) leading to a structured dialogue," the paper quoted western diplomats in Brussels as saying.

Meanwhile, proliferation of missile systems in many countries,

including North Korea, will figure in the first talks on missile defence between Indian and US officials here on January 15 and 16, official sources said on Thursday.

The Indian delegation will be led by Sheelkant Sharma, Joint Secretary, Disarmament in the External Affairs Ministry, the sources said.

The Indo-US missile defence talks are reportedly part of a series planned in the capitals of the two countries.

The officials are expected to discuss East Asia in February when the Indian delegation will be headed by Nalin Surie of the East Asia division of the External Affairs Ministry, the sources added.

PDB dillydallies in feeder handover Thousands in Godagari yet to get power connection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An estimated 4208 subscribers of the Rural Electrification Board (REB) in 44 villages in Godagari upazila are yet to be brought under its electricity supply network.

The problem has arisen because the Power Development Board (PDB) is not handing over its Rajabari feeder, under Godagari power sub-station, to the REB, violating several departmental and ministerial orders in this respect, sources said.

The PDB authorities, however, had handed over the Rajabari feeder, a 70-kilometre line (11 KV)

from Anchara village to Rajabari via Haripur, to the REB in 1999. Under the Fourth Action Plan, the PDB is bound to hand over all its lines to the REB in REB areas.

But violating all the rules, the PDB forcibly took back the feeder on August 23, 1999, without serving any notice to the REB, just three days after its formal handing over.

And since then the PDB has been dillydallying with the implementation of the decision of handing over the feeder on various excuses, making it impossible for the REB to supply electricity to its 4208 subscribers at 44 villages.

Meanwhile, the REB has built the required electricity lines and set up other essential establishments to bring the 44 villages under its supply network.

The decision to set up a parallel feeder was taken under the Fourth Action Plan in 1998, to enable the REB to save Tk 6 crore.

The issue of handing over the feeder was discussed several times at the District Development Coordination Committee (DDCC) meetings, and the authorities concerned always directed the PDB to supply electricity to its 4208 subscribers at 44 villages.

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ASM NURUNNABI

Management of Dhaka City's wastes has always been a challenging task. As it is, this task isn't normally done well with the result that such slipshod management practices sometimes create horrendous public health hazards. In particular, management of hospital wastes is an important public health issue requiring priority consideration in the interest of preserving public health.

Hospitals generate many types of wastes that can do great harm to people's health. Experts say that exposure to toxic elements like lead, cadmium, mercury, DDT, PCB and certain chemicals can pose serious health problems. In developed countries, most of these risks have already been identified and brought under control, but not so in the developing world where many such risks remain beyond the ken of expert knowledge.

Even where any such risks are readily identifiable, it is not an easy task to impose controls. This has indeed very harmful implications. As global warming induced by the greenhouse effect has increased

DOWN TO EARTH

Careless disposal of hospital wastes A growing health hazard

the planet's heat-related diseases, it has also changed the pattern of distribution of infection and vector-borne diseases entailing heavy tolls on human life.

This makes it all the more important to install an effective mechanism to safely dispose of hospital wastes, much of which may be highly toxic and life-threatening.

With the growing urbanisation resulting in proliferation of health clinics and hospitals in the private sector in many parts of the city in addition to the government hospitals, the hazards from careless disposal of hospital wastes have aggravated ominously. This is due to the fact that there are no func-

tional rules or regulations regarding disposal of hospital wastes in the country. The presence of used needles, syringes, bloodstained gauze and bandages in the garbage dumps in the vicinity of such establishments is a common phenomenon. The greater danger is that these deadly wastes are often collected and sold in the market by unscrupulous elements putting public health in great danger.

It is not unusual to come across shady characters in the vicinity of some hospitals and clinics who may be seen busy laying out used bandages on the grass to dry and washing used 'one-time use' syringes with water to sell them

back to some equally shady medicine shops. It is not difficult for such shady operatives to make such used items look like new with the help of easily available machinery to make new plastic labels or packets. These fake products are presented to customers so ingeniously that they are unable to tell the real product from the fake one.

Then an equally vital issue is the safe disposal of blood, urine and swab samples after the laboratory tests are done. Health experts are of the opinion that even when these harmful substances are poured into covered drains or flushed down toilets, there is no guarantee that

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Suicide bomb kills 41 in Grozny

AFP, Moscow

Forty-one people were killed yesterday in a suicide bomb attack on pro-Russian Chechen government headquarters in Grozny, the separatist republic's representative to Russia's parliament was quoted as saying by Interfax.

Two huge explosions went off within a minute of each other, devastating the five-storey government building, Russia's NTV television said, reports Reuters.

The head of the pro-Russian administration in Chechnya, Akhmad Kadyrov, was not hurt in the attack, which Russian news agencies said had been carried out by suicide bombers.

Television pictures showed stunned people drenched in blood stumbling out of the wreckage, helped by Russian soldiers and civilians. Debris was strewn over a large area and cars parked nearby were smashed and gutted.

Govt to halt transfer of rest of FP workers

'One stop' services uncertain

NAIMUL HAQ

The government has decided to stop absorption of family planning workers in the health department, thereby halting the unification process to give both health and family planning services from one centre.

The decision came at a time when services of 70 per cent of the 44,000 family planning workers have been transferred from the development budget to the revenue budget under the health department.

The process to transfer their services began in 1999 to develop a system to give 'one stop' services in health, family planning and nutrition from community clinics (CCs) in

rural areas. About 11,000 CCs have already been constructed and majority of those are functional now, the sources said. Each CC caters to the need of about 6000 people in a union.

Sources said the decision to cancel the process was taken at a ministerial meeting on December 21, as health ministry officials disapproved it and suggested reintroduction of door-to-door service by family planning workers.

The officials said at the meeting that family size in rural areas is on the rise and contraceptive acceptance rate is falling since suspension of the door-to-door service, the sources said.

However, they said, an order

implementing the decision will be given after discussion with development partners (DPs). It is likely to be effective from next month.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Moshraf Hossain, State Minister for Planning Anwarul Kabir Talukder, ERD Secretary Anisul Haq Chowdhury and secretaries of the ministries of health, finance, establishment, and some members of the planning commission attended the meeting, they said.

The decision is a "breach" of the government's agreement with Dps

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HARVEST OF DELIGHT... A colourful procession brought out of the Institute of Fine Arts in the city to celebrate the nabanna festival yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Road accidents kill six in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

At least six people were killed and others injured in two separate road accidents on the Dhaka-Mymensingh Highway in the district yesterday.

Police said six passengers of a Dhaka bound taxicab were injured when it collided head on with a truck at Raimoni in Trishal upazila at around 7:30 am.

Two of the injured succumbed to their injuries at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH). They were identified as taxicab driver Malek, 40, and passenger Ashraf Uddin, 40.

The rest four of the injured -- Dipu, 20, Rani, 37, Habib, 40, and an unidentified man -- are undergoing

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SI Elias was killed allegedly by outlawed party cadres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sub-inspector Elias Hossain of Jhowdia police camp in Jhenidah was killed allegedly by armed cadres of the newly floated outlawed party, Nutan (new) Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP), as he launched an 'undeclared war' against them, sources said.

Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan, one of the ringleaders of NBCP, is the mastermind behind the killing.

SI Elias was ambushed and killed when he was returning to the police camp on Tuesday evening after giving testimony in a double murder case at Kushtia magistrate's court. He was the IO of a case. The

killers also took away his motorcycle, revolver and walkie-talkie.

Elias had swooped several times on hideouts of NBCP and outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) in Jhenidah and arrested 13 armed cadres along with six illegal firearms.

Cadres of NBCP became very much annoyed when Elias cracked down on the accused of the double murder case, the sources said.

SI Elias joined Jhaudia police camp in December 5 from Chowrang police camp. His alleged killers took advantage of the freestyle movement of this brave police officer who did never give in to threat of extremists, said Khulna Range DIG of police Enayetullah Dewan.

The DIG said combing operations are going on to arrest the killers of SI Elias.

"I have asked policemen not to move without uniform and sufficient strength, particularly in the outlaw-infested areas", the DIG said.

Abdur Rashid Malitha alias Tapan, who earlier belonged to PBCP, along with Anwar Hossain Debu of Sramajibi Mukti Andolon and Mrinal of Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) floated the NBCP recently.

Both Debu and Tapan hail from Bishakhali village under Jhenidah Sadar upazila and Mrinal is from

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